

PREPARATION FOR THE PASSION

539. The Judaeans in Lazarus' House.

18th December 1946.

A large imposing group of Judaeans enter Bethany on magnificent mounts. They are scribes and Pharisees, some Sadducees and Herodians, whom I have seen previously, if I am not mistaken, at the banquet in Chuza's house to induce Jesus to proclaim Himself king. They are followed by servants on foot.

The riding-party go slowly through the little town, and the hoofs resounding on the hard ground, the jingling of the trappings and the voices of the men draw out of their houses the inhabitants, who look and with evident astonishment bow humbly, then they rise again and gather in groups whispering.

« Have you seen that? »

« All the members of the Sanhedrin from Jerusalem. »

« No. Joseph the Elder, Nicodemus and others were not there. »

« Nor the most famous Pharisees. »

« Nor the scribes. »

« And who was the one on horseback? »

« They are certainly going to Lazarus' house. »

« He must be on the point of dying. »

« I don't understand why the Rabbi is not here. »

« How can you expect Him to be here, if those in Jerusalem want to kill Him? »

« You are right. Nay, I am sure that those snakes who have just gone by, have come to see whether the Rabbi is here. »

« Praised be the Lord that He isn't! »

« Do you know what they said to my husband, at the market in Jerusalem? To be ready, because He will soon proclaim Himself king, and we shall all have to help Him to... What did they say? Well! A word that meant something like... if I said that I will send everybody away from the house, and make myself the landlady. »

« A plot?... A conspiracy?... A rebellion?... » they ask, making suggestions at the same time.

A man says: « Yes. They told me as well. But I don't believe it. »

« But those who say that, are disciples of the Rabbi!... »

« H'm! I am not prepared to believe that the Rabbi will make use of violence and remove the Tetrarchs, usurping a throne that, rightly or wrongly, belongs to the Herodians. You ought to tell Joachim not to believe all the rumours... »

« But do you know that those who help Him will be rewarded on the Earth and in Heaven? I would be very happy if my husband were one of them. I have a large family and life is difficult. If he could have a job among the servants of the King of Israel! »

« Listen, Rachel, I think it is better for me to look after my kitchen garden and my dates. Oh! if He should tell me, then I would leave everything to follow Him. But if other people tell me!... »

« But they are His disciples. »

« I have never seen them with Him and then... No. They pretend to be lambs, but their scoundrelly faces do not convince me. »

« That is true. Strange things have happened for some time and they always say that the Rabbi's disciples are the cause of them. The day before the Sabbath, some of them manhandled a woman who was taking eggs to the market, and they said: "We want them in the name of the Galilean Rabbi". »

« Do you think it can be Him Who wants such things, as He always gives and never takes? And just Him Who could live among rich people and prefers to be with the poor, and He gave away His mantle, as that leprous woman, who was cured and whom Jacob met, told everybody? »

Another man who approached the group and has been listening says: « You are right. And what about the other thing they say? That the Rabbi will bring about great trouble, because the Romans will punish us all owing to His urging the crowds? Do you believe it? I say - and I don't think I am wrong because I am old and wise - I say that those who tell us poor people that the Rabbi wants to usurp the throne and drive away the Romans - I wish He did! if it were possible to do so! - and those who do violence in His name, and those who incite us to rebel promising future profit, and those who would like us to hate the Rabbi as a dangerous person who will lead us into trouble, are all enemies of the Rabbi and they are anxious to ruin Him so that they may triumph. Don't believe them! Don't believe the false friends of the poor people! Did you notice how arrogantly they passed by? They almost gave me a blow with a cudgel, because I had difficulty in moving the sheep aside and I was preventing them from proceeding... And you say they are our friends? Never. They are our vampires, and, God forbid it, they are also His vampires. »

« As you live near Lazarus' fields, do you know whether he is dead? »

« No. He is not dead. He is between life and death... I asked Sarah who was picking aromatic leaves to wash him. »

« Well, why did they come? »

« Who knows! They went right round the house, then round the leper's house, then they went away towards Bethlehem. »

« I told you! They came to see whether the Rabbi is here! To do Him wrong. Do you realise what it meant to them to be able to harm Him? And just in Lazarus' house? Tell me, Nathan. That Herodian... was he not the lover of Mary of Teophilus some time ago? »

« He was. Perhaps that is how he wanted to revenge himself on

Mary... »

A little boy runs towards them. He shouts: « How many people there are in Lazarus' house! I was coming from the stream with Levi, Marcus and Isaiah, and we saw them. The servants opened the gate and took the mounts. And Maximinus ran to meet the Judaeans and other servants came making low bows. And Martha and Mary came out of the house to greet them with their maidservants. We wanted to go on watching, but they closed the gate and they all went into the house. » The boy is very excited because of the news he has brought and of what he has seen...

The adults are commenting.

540. The Judaeans with Martha and Mary.

19th December 1946.

Martha, although broken-hearted and exhausted, is always a lady who knows how to welcome guests, honouring them with the perfect urbanity of a true-born lady. Thus, after leading the group into one of the halls, she gives instructions to bring the refreshments that are customary, so that the guests may have what can restore them.

The servants move around pouring hot drinks or vintage wines and offering beautiful fruit, dates as fair as topazes, raisins, something like our sweet grapes, in bunches fantastically perfect, liquid honey, all served from precious amphorae, cups, plates and trays. And Martha watches carefully that no one is neglected, nay, she instructs her domestics to serve the guests according to their ages and to each individual, whose tempers are well known to her. She stops a servant, who is going towards Helkai with an amphora full of wine and a chalice and she says to him: « Tobias, don't offer him wine, but honied water and the juice of dates. » And she says to another one: « I am sure John will prefer wine. Offer him some of our white raisin wine. » And she personally offers old Hananiah, the scribe, warm milk, which she sweetens with plenty golden honey, saying: « It will do your cough good. You sacrificed yourself by coming here, particularly as you are poorly, and it is a cold day. It affects me to see you all so thoughtful. »

« It is our duty, Martha. Eucheria belonged to our race. A true Jewess who honoured us all. »

« The homage paid to the venerated memory of my mother touches my heart. I will repeat your words to Lazarus. »

« But we want to greet him. He is such a good friend! » says Helkai with his habitual falseness, approaching her.

« Greet him? It is not possible. He is too exhausted. »

« Oh! We shall not disturb him. Shall we, my friends? It is enough for us to say goodbye to him, from the threshold of his room » says

Felix.

« I cannot, I really cannot. Nicomedes has forbidden fatigue and emotions. »

« A glance at our dying friend will not kill him, Martha » says Callascebona. « It would grieve us too much not having greeted him! »

Martha is upset and hesitant. She looks towards the door, perhaps to see whether Mary is coming to help her. But Mary is absent.

The Judaeans notice her excitement, and Sadoc, the scribe, points it out to Martha: « It looks as if our visit is upsetting you, woman. »

« No. Not at all. Have sympathy for my grief. I have been living for months near my dying brother and... I am no longer able... and I no longer know how to behave at parties, as I did in the past... »

« Oh! it is not a party! We did not even expect you to honour us thus! Perhaps... Perhaps you want to hide something from us and that is why you are not letting us see Lazarus and you forbid us to go to his room. Eh! It is obvious! But be not afraid! The room of a sick person is a sanctuary for everybody, believe me... » says Helkai.

« There is nothing to be concealed in our brother's room. There is nothing hidden in it. There is only a dying man, who for pity's sake ought to be spared all painful memories. And you, Helkai, and you all, are painful memories for Lazarus » says Mary in her beautiful harmonious voice, appearing at the door and holding the curtain to one side with her hand.

« Mary! » says Martha moaning imploringly, to check her.

« Nothing, sister. Let me speak... » She then addresses the others: « And to remove every possible doubt of yours, one of you - it will thus be only one memory of the past renewing grief - may come with me, if the sight of a dying man does not disgust him and the stench of a dying body does not make him sick. »

« And are you not a grieving memory? » asks ironically the Herodian, whom I have already seen, but I do not remember where, coming away from his corner and standing in front of Mary.

Martha utters a groan, Mary looks like an angry eagle. Her eyes are flashing. She draws herself up proudly, forgetting the fatigue and grief that bent her body, and with the countenance of an offended queen she says: « Yes. I am a memory as well. But not of sorrow, as you say. I am the memory of God's Mercy. And Lazarus is dying in peace seeing me, because he knows that he is giving up his spirit into the hands of Infinite Mercy. »

« Ha! Ha! Those are not the words of days gone by! Your virtue! You may display it to those who do not know you... »

« But not to you, is that right? But I am going to place it right under your eyes, to tell you that birds of a feather, flock together. In those days, unfortunately, I was near you, and I was like you. Now I am near the Holy One, and I am becoming honest. »

« What has been destroyed cannot be rebuilt, Mary. »

« In fact, you, all of you, can no longer rebuild your past. You cannot rebuild what you have destroyed. You cannot, personally, as you horrify me. And none of the rest can, who offended my brother, when he was grieved, and now you pretend to be his friends, for a wicked purpose. »

« Oh! You are bold, woman. The Rabbi may have driven many demons out of you, but He did not make you become mild! » says one who is about forty years old.

« No, Jonathan ben Annas. He did not make me weak. He made me stronger with the boldness of one who is honest, of one who wants to become honest once again and has broken all ties with the past to start a new life. Come on! Who is coming to see Lazarus? » She is as authoritative as a queen. She dominates them all with her frankness, with no mercy even towards herself. Martha, instead, is dejected, with tears in her eyes looking imploringly at Mary that she may keep quiet.

« I will come! » says Helkai, sighing like a victim, and he is as false as a serpent. They go out together.

The others address Martha: « Your sister!... Still the same character. But she should not behave like that. She has so much to be forgiven for » says Uriel, the rabbi seen at Giscala, the one who struck Jesus with stones.

Under the lash of such words, Martha recovers her strength and she says: « God has forgiven her. No other forgiveness is thus required. And her present life is an example for the world. » But her daring soon abates and turns into tears. She moans weeping: « You are cruel! Towards her... and towards me... You have no pity for our past or our present sorrow. Why did you come? To offend and grieve us? »

« No, woman. No. Only to greet the great Judaeen who is dying. For no other reason! You must not take our good intentions amiss. We heard from Joseph and Nicodemus that he was growing worse, and we came... as they did, the two great friends of the Rabbi and of Lazarus. Why do you want to treat us differently, since we love the Rabbi and Lazarus, as they do? You are not fair. Can you deny that they have come with John, Eleazar, Philip, Joshua and Joachim, to hear how Lazarus was, and that also Manaen has come?... »

« I am not denying anything. But I am surprised that you are so well informed. I did not think that also the interior of houses is pried into by you. I did not know that there is a new precept in addition to the sixhundred and thirteen: that is, to inquire into and spy upon the intimate affairs of families... Oh! Excuse me! I am offending you! Sorrow is depriving me of my senses and you are aggravating it. »

« Oh! we understand you, woman! And because we thought you

would be both deprived of your senses, we have come to give you some good advice. Send for the Master. Also yesterday seven lepers have come to praise the Lord because the Rabbi had cured them. Send for Him also on behalf of Lazarus. »

« My brother is not a leper » shouts Martha convulsively. « Is that why you wanted to see him? Is that why you have come? No, he is not a leper! Look at my hands. I have cured him for years and there is no leprosy on me. My hands are reddened by spices, but I am not a leper. I have no... »

« Peace! Peace, woman. And who said that Lazarus is a leper? And who suspects such a dreadful sin in you, as that of hiding a leper? And do you think that, for all your power, we would not have struck you, if you had sinned? In order to have the precepts obeyed we are quite prepared to pass over our fathers and mothers, our wives and children. I, Jonathan of Uziel, am telling you. »

« Certainly! That's right! And now we tell you, out of the love we have for you and we had for your mother and for Lazarus' sake, send for the Master. Are you shaking your head? Do you mean that it is too late by now? What? You, Martha, the faithful disciple, have no faith in Him? That's bad! Are you beginning to doubt as well? » says Archelaus.

« You are blaspheming, scribe. I believe in the Master as I believe in the true God. »

« Why do you not want to try, then? He has raised the dead... At least so they say... Perhaps you do not know where He is? If you wish, we will look for Him, we will help you » says Felix in an insinuating way.

« No! In Lazarus' house they certainly know where the Rabbi is. Tell us frankly, woman, and we will depart and look for Him and we will bring Him to you, and we shall be present at the miracle to rejoice with you, with all of you » says Sadoc tempting her.

Martha is hesitant, she is almost tempted to yield. The others insist while she says: « I do not know where He is... I really do not know... He went away some days ago and He said goodbye to us like one who goes away for a long time I would be relieved if I knew where He is... If at least I knew But I do not know, that is the truth... »

« Poor woman! But we will help you We will bring Him to you » says Cornelius.

« No! It is not necessary. The Master You are speaking of Him, are you not? The Master said that we must hope beyond hope, and in God only. And we will do that » says Mary in a thundering voice, as she comes back with Helkai, who departs from her at once and goes towards three Pharisees bending down to speak to them.

« But he is dying, according to what I hear! » says Doras, who is one of the three.

« So what? Let him die! I will not obstruct God's decree and I will not disobey the Rabbi. »

« And what do you expect after his death, foolish woman? » says the Herodian mockingly.

« What? Life! » Her voice is a cry of absolute faith.

« Life? Ha! Ha! Be sincere. You know that He has no power against real death, and in your foolish love for Him you do not want that to become known. »

« Go out, all of you! It would be for Martha to tell you. But she is afraid of you. I am only afraid of offending God, Who has forgiven me. And I am telling you in Martha's stead. Go out, all of you. There is no room in this house for those who hate Jesus Christ. Out! Go to your gloomy dens! All out! Or I will get the servants to drive you out like a herd of unclean beggars. »

She is imposing in her wrath. The Judaeans slink away in the most cowardly way, in front of the woman. It is true that that woman looks like an enraged archangel...

As they leave the hall and cross the threshold passing in front of Mary, she glares at them, creating for each an immaterial Caudine Fork under which the pride of the defeated Judaeans is compelled to stoop. The hall is at last cleared out.

Martha collapses on the carpet bursting into tears.

« Why are you weeping, sister? I do not see why you should... »

« Oh! you offended them... and they offended you, they offended us... and now they will avenge themselves... and... »

« Be silent, silly woman! On whom do you expect them to avenge themselves? On Lazarus? They must decide first, and before they do that... No one revenges oneself on a man who is done for! On us? Are we in need of their bread to live? They will not touch our property. The shadow of Rome is cast over it. On what then? And even if they were able to do that, are we not both young and strong? Shall we not be able to work? Is Jesus not poor? Was our Jesus not a workman? Shall we not be more like Him, if we are poor and workers? You ought to be proud in becoming so! Hope for it! Ask God to grant it! »

« But what they said to you... »

« Ah! What they said to me! It's the truth. And I repeat it to myself. I was unclean. I am now the ewe-lamb of the Shepherd! And the past is dead. Come on, come to see Lazarus. »

541. Martha Sends a Servant to Inform the Master.

20th December 1946.

I am still in Lazarus' house and I see Martha and Mary go out into the garden in the company of a rather elderly man, who looks very dignified and I would say that he is not a Hebrew because his

face is clean-shaven, as is customary with Romans. As soon as they are at a little distance from the house, Mary asks him: « Well, Nicomedes? What do you think of our brother? We see that he is seriously... ill... Tell us. »

The man opens his arms in a gesture of commiseration and acknowledgement of the ineluctable situation, and he stops and says: « He is very ill... I have never deceived you since I began to attend him. I have tried everything, as you know. But to no avail. I also... hoped, yes, I hoped that he might at least live reacting against the exhaustion of the disease with the good nourishment and the cordials I prepared for him. I tried also with poisons that preserve the blood from corruption and support one's strength, according to the old schools of the great masters in medicine. But the disease is stronger than the means we use to cure it. Such diseases are like corrosions, they destroy one. And when they appear exteriorly, the inside of the bones has already been affected, and like the lymph that in a tree ascends from the roots to its top, also in this case, the disease has spread from his feet to his whole body... »

« But only his legs are diseased... » says Martha plaintively.

« Yes, but a high temperature causes damage to parts of the body that instead you think are healthy. Look at this little branch that has fallen off that tree. It seems to be warm-eaten only here, where it is broken. But, look... (he crumbles it with his fingers). See? Under the bark, which is still smooth, it is rotten right to the top, where there still seems to be life, because there are still some little leaves. Lazarus is now... dying, poor sisters! The God of your fathers, and the gods and demigods of our medicine have not been able to do anything... or they did not want to do it. I am speaking of your God... Therefore... I do foresee that his death is close at hand, also because his temperature has risen, a symptom of the deterioration of his blood brought about by his disorderly heart-beats, and by the lack of stimuli and reactions in the invalid and in all his organs. As you can see, he gets no nourishment any more, he cannot hold the little food he takes and he does not assimilate the little he can hold. It's the end... And - believe a doctor who is grateful to you because he remembers Theophilus - the thing to be most desired now is death... Such diseases are dreadful. For thousands of years they have destroyed man and man cannot destroy them. Only the gods could if... » He stops, he looks at them rubbing his clean-shaven chin. He is pensive. He then says: « Why do you not call the Galilean? He is a friend of yours. He can cure him because He can do everything. I have examined people who were doomed and who have been cured. A strange power emanates from Him. It is a mysterious fluid that revives and gathers together the scattered reactions and makes them wish to recover... I don't know. I know that I have followed Him, being also mingled with the crowd, and I have seen wonderful

things... Send for Him. I am a Gentile. But I pay homage to the mysterious Thaumaturge of your people. And I would be happy if He could do what I could not do. »

« He is God, Nicomedes. That is why He can. The power that you call fluid is His will of God » says Mary.

« I do not ridicule your faith. On the contrary I spur it to reach impossible limits. In any case... We read that at times the gods have descended upon the Earth. I... had never believed it... But, with the science and conscience of a man and a doctor, I must admit that it is so, because the Galilean works such cures that only a god can work. »

« Not a god, Nicomedes. The true God. » insists Mary.

« All right. As you wish. And I will believe in Him and become one of His followers if I see Lazarus... rise from the dead. Because we must speak of resurrection now, rather than recovery. So send for Him urgently... because, if I have not become a fool, he will die within the next three days, at most. I said "at most". But it could be sooner, now. »

« Oh! I wish we could! But we do not know where He is... » says Martha.

« I know where He is. I was told by one of His disciples who was going to meet Him taking some sick people, two of whom were my patients. He is beyond the Jordan, near the ford. So he said. Perhaps you know the place better than I do. »

« Ah! He is certainly in Solomon's house! » says Mary.

« Is it very far? »

« No, Nicomedes. »

« Then send a servant at once to tell Him to come. I will come back later and I will stay here to see His action on Lazarus. Hail, ladies. And... give courage to each other. » He bows to them and goes away towards the exit, where a servant is waiting for him to hold his horse and open the gate to him.

« What shall we do, Mary? » asks Martha after she sees the doctor depart.

« We will obey the Master. He told us to send for Him after Lazarus' death. And we will do that. »

« But when he is dead... what is the use of having the Master here? It will only help our hearts, I agree. But with regard to Lazarus!... I am going to send a servant to call Him. »

« No. You would destroy the miracle. He said that we must be able to hope and believe against every adverse reality. And if we do so, we shall have the miracle, I am sure of it. If we do not do so, God will leave us with the presumption that we can act better than He can, and He will grant us nothing. »

« But don't you see how much Lazarus is suffering? Have you not heard, when he recovers consciousness, how he longs to see the

Master? You are hard-hearted if you want to deny our poor brother this last joy!... Our poor brother! We shall soon have no brother! No father, no mother, no brother! The family is destroyed, and we are all alone, like two palm-trees in a desert. » She is overwhelmed by grief and I would say that she falls into hysterics, in typically eastern style, and she tosses herself, striking her face and ruffling her hair.

Mary grasps her. She commands her to be silent saying: « Be quiet! Be quiet, I tell you! He may hear you. I love him more and better than you do, and I can control myself. You look like a sickly woman. Be silent, I tell you! It is not with such frenzies that one can change situations or move hearts. If you behave thus to move mine, you are making a mistake. Think about it. My heart breaks, but it obeys: it persists in obedience. »

Martha, overwhelmed by the strength of her sister and by her words, calms down a little but in her grief, which is more composed, she moans invoking her mother: « Mother! oh! mother, console me. I have had no peace since you died. If you were here, mother! If sorrows had not killed you! If you were here, you would guide us and we would obey you, for the welfare of us all... Oh! »

Mary changes colour and she weeps noiselessly, she looks dejected and wrings her hands without speaking.

Martha looks at her and says: « When our mother was about to die, she made me promise that I would look after Lazarus like a mother. If she were here... »

« She would obey the Master, because she was a just woman. You are trying to move me in vain. You can say to me that I murdered my mother through the pains I gave her. I will say to you: "You are right". But if you want to make me say that you are right in wanting the Master, I say to you: "No". And I will always say: "No". And I am sure that from Abraham's bosom she approves of me and blesses me. Let us go into the house. »

« We have nothing left! Nothing left! »

« Everything! You must say everything! You do listen to the Master and you seem to pay attention while He speaks, but later you do not remember what He says. Has He not always said that to love and obey makes us the children of God and the heirs to His Kingdom? So how can you say that we will be left without anything, if we have God and we possess the Kingdom through our loyalty? Oh! it is true that one must be firmly determined in evil, as I was, in order to be, to know how to be, and to want to be firmly determined in good, in obedience, in hope, in faith, in love!... »

« You allow the Judaeans to laugh at and throw out innuendoes against the Master. You heard them the day before yesterday... »

« Are you still thinking of the chattering of those crows, of the cheeping of those vultures? Let them spit out what they have inside!

What does the world matter to you? What is the world as compared with God? Look: it is less than this filthy bluebottle, which is benumbed or poisoned with the filth it has sucked and which I trample on thus » and with a vigorous blow of her heel she crushes a horse-fly that is creeping slowly on the gravel of the avenue. She then takes Martha by the arm saying: « Come into the house and... »

« At least let us inform the Master. Let us send someone to tell Him that Lazarus is dying, without saying anything else... »

« As if He needed to be told by us! No! It is useless. He said: "Let Me know when he is dead". And that is what we will do. But not before his death. »

« No one takes pity on my grief! Least of all you... »

« Stop weeping like that. I cannot bear it... » In her own sorrow she bites her lip to encourage her sister and restrain her tears.

Marcella runs out of the house followed by Maximinus: « Martha! Mary! Quick! Lazarus is not well. He does not reply any more... »

The two sisters rush back into the house... and shortly afterwards one can hear Mary's loud voice giving orders for the circumstance, and see servants run with cordials and basins steaming with boiling water, whispering and making gestures of sorrow...

Calm slowly takes over after so much excitement. I see the servants talking to one another in low voices, less excitedly, but with gestures of deep depression to give emphasis to their words. Some shake their heads, some raise them looking at the sky and stretching out their arms as if to say: « It is so », some weep, and some still hope for a miracle.

Martha appears again. She is as white as death. She turns round to see whether she is being followed. She looks at the servants who press round her anxiously. She turns round again to see whether anyone has come out of the house to follow her. She then says to a servant: « Come with me. »

The servant leaves the group and follows her towards the jasmine pergola and goes into it. Martha speaks, still keeping an eye on the house, which can be seen through the thickly entangled branches, and she says: « Listen to me carefully. When all the servants have gone back into the house, and I have given them orders to keep them busy inside, you shall go to the stables, you shall take one of the fastest horses and saddle it... If anyone should by chance see you, say that you are going to call the doctor... You will not be telling a lie and I am not teaching you to lie, because I am really sending you to the blessed Doctor... Take some fodder for the horse and some food for yourself and this purse for what you may need. Go out through the small gate and through the ploughed fields, where the hoofs make no noise, when you go away from the house. Then take the Jericho road and gallop without ever stopping, not even at night. Have you understood? You must never stop. The new moon will illuminate

the road for you if it gets dark while you are still galloping. Bear in mind that the life of your master is in your hands and depends on your speed. I rely on you. »

« Mistress, I will serve you as a faithful slave. »

« Go to the Bethabara ford. Cross the river and go to the village after Bethany beyond the Jordan. You know... where John used to baptise at the beginning. »

« I know. I went there as well to be purified. »

« The Master is in that village. Anybody will tell you the house where He is a guest. But it is better if you follow the banks of the river, instead of taking the main road. You will not be noticed so much and you will find the house by yourself. It is the first one on the only road of the village and it takes one from the country to the river. You cannot go wrong. It's a low house, with no terrace or upper room, with a kitchen garden, when coming from the river, before the house, and the kitchen garden is enclosed by a small wooden gate and a hawthorn hedge, I think, a hedge, in any case. Is that clear? Repeat those details. »

The servant repeats them patiently.

« All right. Ask to speak to Him, to Him alone, and tell Him that your mistresses have sent you to inform Him that Lazarus is very ill, that he is dying, that we cannot resist any longer, that Lazarus wants Him and ask Him to come at once, at once, for pity's sake. Have you understood? »

« Yes, I have, mistress. »

« Then come back here immediately, so that no one may notice your absence. Take a lamp with you, you will need it when it gets dark. Go, be quick, gallop, run the horse off its legs, but come back quickly with the Master's reply. »

« I will do so, mistress. »

« Go now! See? They have all gone back into the house. Go at once. No one will see you making preparations. I will bring you some food myself. Go! I will leave it on the threshold of the small gate. Go! And may God be with you. Go!... »

She pushes him anxiously and then she runs into the house cautiously, and shortly afterwards she steals out from a back door on the southern side of the house, with a little bag in her hands, she walks along a hedge as far as the first opening, she turns and disappears...

542. Lazarus' Death.

21st December 1946.

They have opened all the doors and windows in Lazarus' room, to make it easier for him to breathe. And around him, who is unconscious, in a coma - a deep coma like death, from which it differs

only because of his breathing movement - there are his two sisters, Maximinus, Marcella and Naomi, intent on the least act of the dying man.

Every time the pangs of death contract his mouth and it seems to assume the expression of one about to speak, or his eyes can be partly seen when he half-opens his eyelids, the two sisters bend over him to catch a word, a glance... But in vain. They are nothing but movements lacking coordination, independent of his will and intelligence, which are by now both inert and lost. They are acts brought about by the suffering flesh, just like the perspiration that makes the face of the dying man shiny, and the tremor that at intervals shakes his skeletal fingers, making them look like contracted claws. The two sisters also call him, with all their love in their voices. But his name and their love collide with the barrier of intellectual insensibility, and the silence of death is the reply to their calling.

Naomi, weeping, continues to place warm bricks, enveloped in strips of woollen cloth, near his feet, which must be very cold. Marcella is holding in her hands a cup into which she dips a piece of thin linen, which Martha uses to moisten her brother's dry lips. Mary with another piece of linen wipes the plentiful perspiration which streams down the skeletal face and wets the hands of the dying man. Maximinus, leaning against a tall dark cabinet near Lazarus' bed, watches standing behind Mary, who is bent over her brother.

There is no one else. There is dead silence, as if they were in an empty house, in a desert place. The maidservants who bring the warm bricks are barefooted and make no noise walking on the marble floor. They look like apparitions.

At a certain moment Mary says: « His hands seem to become warm. Look, Martha, his lips are not so pale. »

« Yes. And he is breathing more freely. I have noticed that for some time » remarks Maximinus.

Martha bends over him and calls him in a low voice, in a very warm tone: « Lazarus! Lazarus! Oh! Look, Mary! He seemed to smile and to bat his eyelids. He is improving, Mary! He is getting better! What time is it? »

« It's one hour past sunset. »

« Ah! » and Martha stands up, pressing her hands against her breast, raising her eyes in a visible gesture of mute but confident prayer. A smile brightens her face.

The others look at her in amazement and Mary says to her: « I fail to see why the fact that it is evening should make you happy... » and she scans her face suspiciously and anxiously.

Martha does not reply, but she resumes the same posture she had previously.

A maid comes in with some bricks, which she hands to Naomi. Mary says to her: « Bring two lamps. It is getting dark and I want to see him. » The maid goes out noiselessly and soon comes back with two lighted oil-lamps, and she lays one on the cabinet near Maximinus, and the other on a table encumbered with bandages and tiny amphorae, on the other side of the bed.

« Oh! Mary! Mary! He is really less pale. »

« And not so exhausted looking. He is reviving! » says Marcella.

« Give him a few more drops of that spicy wine that Sarah prepared. It did him good » suggests Maximinus.

From the top of the cabinet Mary takes a tiny slender-necked amphora, shaped like the beak of a bird, and she carefully pours a few drops of wine between Lazarus' half-closed lips.

« Slowly, Mary. That he may not choke! » advises Naomi.

« Oh! he swallows it! He wants it! Look, Martha! Look! He is sticking his tongue out, seeking it... »

They all bend to look, and Naomi calls him:« Darling! Look at your wet-nurse, o blessed soul! » and she moves forward to kiss him.

« Look! Look, Naomi, he is drinking your tears! One fell near his lips, he felt it, he sought it and he absorbed it. »

« Oh! my darling! If I had the milk of days gone by, I would squeeze it out for you drop by drop, my little lamb, even if I had to squeeze my heart and then die! » I gather that Naomi, Mary's wet nurse, nursed also Lazarus.

« Mistresses, Nicomedes has come back » says a servant appearing at the door.

« Let him come in! He will help us to make him recover. »

« Look! Look! He is opening his eyes and moving his lips » says Maximinus.

« He is pressing my fingers with his own! » shouts Mary. And she bends saying: « Lazarus! Can you hear me? Who am I? »

Lazarus really opens his eyes and looks, an uncertain veiled look, but still a look. He moves his lips with difficulty and says:« Mother! »

« I am Mary. Mary! Your sister! »

« Mother! »

« He does not recognise you and he is calling his mother. Dying people always do that » says Naomi, whose face is wet with tears.

« But he speaks. After such a long time he speaks. It is already a good deal... He will feel better later. Oh! my Lord, reward your maidservant! » says Martha once again with the gesture of fervent confident prayer.

« But what happened to you? Have you seen the Master? Did He appear to you? Tell me, Martha. Relieve my anguish! » says Mary.

Nicomedes' coming in prevents a reply. They all address him telling him how after his departure Lazarus had grown worse, so much so that he was on the point of dying, and in fact they believed

that he was dead, then, with some aids they had made him come to himself, but only as far as to make him breathe. And how, a short time ago, with a spicy wine prepared by one of the women, he had begun to warm up again, he had swallowed some and tried to drink, and he had also opened his eyes and had spoken... They are all speaking together, with revived hope, contrasting with the somewhat sceptical calmness of the doctor who lets them speak without uttering one word.

At last, when they have finished, he says: « All right. Let me see. » He pushes them aside as he approaches the bed and asks them to bring some lights and to close the window, as he wants to uncover the patient. He bends over him, he calls him, he questions him, he moves an oil-lamp to and fro in front of the face of Lazarus, who has now opened his eyes and seems amazed at everything; he then uncovers him, studies his breathing, his heartbeats, the temperature and stiffness of his limbs... They are all anxiously awaiting his word. Nicomedes covers the patient again, looks at him and is pensive. He then turns round looking at the people present and says: « It is undeniable that he has recovered strength. He has improved since the last time I saw him. But do not delude yourselves. It is nothing but the fictitious improvement of death. I am so certain, as I was certain that it is the end, that, as you can see, I have come back, after freeing myself of my commitments, to make his death less painful, as far as I can do so... or to see the miracle if... Have you taken action? »

« Yes, Nicomedes, we have » says Martha interrupting him. And to prevent him from asking further questions, she says: « But did you not say that... within three days... I... » She weeps.

« I said. I am a doctor. I live amidst agonies and tears. But the habitual sight of grief has not yet turned me into a heartless man. And today... I prepared you... with a rather long... and vague date... But my medical knowledge warned me that the end would come sooner, and my heart misrepresented the truth as a pitiful deception... Now! Be brave... Go out... We never know how much dying people understand... » He pushes them out, while they weep, repeating: « Be brave! Be brave! »

Maximinus remains with the dying man... The doctor also goes away to prepare some medicines capable of making the agony less distressing, as he says: « I foresee that it will be very painful. »
« Make him live!

Make him live till tomorrow. It is almost night, as you can see, Nicomedes. It is no problem for your science to keep a man alive for less than one day! Make him live! »

« Madam, I do what I can. But when the wick ends, nothing can keep the flame alive! » replies the doctor, and he goes away.

The two sisters embrace each other, weeping disconsolately, and Mary is the one who is weeping more. Her sister has a hopeful

heart...

They hear Lazarus' voice coming from his room. A loud authoritative voice that startles them because it is unexpected from such a weak person. He calls them: « Martha! Mary! Where are you? I want to get up. I want to get dressed! I want to tell the Master that I am cured! I must go to the Master. A wagon! At once. And a fast horse. It was certainly He Who cured me... »

He speaks fast, syllabising the words, sitting on his bed, flushed with a high temperature, trying to get out of the bed, prevented from doing so by Maximinus, who says to the women rushing into the room: « He is raving! »

« No! Let him go. The miracle! The miracle! Oh! I am so happy that I provoked it! As soon as Jesus was told! God of our fathers, may You be blessed and praised for Your power and because of Your Messiah... » Martha, who has dropped on her knees, is beside herself with joy.

In the meantime Lazarus continues to speak, excited more and more by his temperature, which Martha does not understand is the cause of everything, and he says: « He came so often to see me, when I was ill. It is fair that I should go to Him and say: "I am cured". I am cured! I feel no more pains! I am strong. I want to get up. I want to go. God wanted to test my resignation. I shall be called the new Job... » He assumes a hieratic attitude and making wide gestures he says: « "The Lord was moved by Job's penance... and gave him double what he had before. And the Lord blessed the last years of Job more than the first ones... and he lived until... No, I am not Job! I was among the flames and He pulled me out, I was in the belly of the monster and I have come back to light. So I am Jonah, and I am the three children of Daniel... »

The doctor, called by someone, comes in. He looks at him: « It's delirium. I was expecting it. The corruption of the blood affects the brains. » He strives to lay him down and exhorts the others to hold him carefully, and he goes out again to attend to his decoctions.

Lazarus at times becomes rather impatient of being held, at times he weeps like a child.

« He is really delirious » moans Mary.

« No. None of you understand anything. You cannot believe. Of course! You do not know... By now the Master is aware that Lazarus is dying. Yes, I informed Him, Mary! I did it without saying anything to you... »

« Ah! wretch! You have destroyed the miracle! » shouts Mary.

« No! As you can see, he began to feel better when Jonah reached the Master. He is raving... Certainly... He is weak, and his brain is still dulled with death that had already grasped at him. But he is not raving as the doctor thinks. Listen to him! Are those the words of a delirious person? »

Lazarus in fact is saying: « I bent my head to the decree of death and I tasted how bitter it is to die, and God has now said that He is satisfied with my resignation and He is restoring me to life and giving me back to my sisters. I shall still be able to serve the Lord and sanctify myself with Martha and Mary... With Mary! What is Mary? Mary is Jesus' gift to poor Lazarus. He had told me... What a long time since then! "Your forgiveness will do more than anything else. It will help Me". He promised me: "She will be your joy". And on that day that I was upset because she had brought her shame here, near the Holy One, what words He spoke inviting her to come back! Wisdom and Charity had joined together to touch her heart... And the other day, when He found me offering myself for her redemption?... I want to live to rejoice with my redeemed sister! I want to praise the Lord with her! Streams of tears, insults, shame, bitterness... everything has pierced me and killed my life because of her... Here is the fire, the fire of the furnace! It is coming back, with its memory... Mary of Theophilus and Eucheria, my sister, the prostitute. She could have been a queen and she became the filth that even a pig tramples on. And my mother who dies. And not being able to go among people any longer without having to put up with their mockery. Because of her! Where are you, you wretch? Were you lacking bread, perhaps, that you should sell yourself? What did you suck from the nipple of your wet-nurse? What did your mother teach you? Lust the former? Sin the latter? Go away! Disgrace of our family! »

His voice is a shout. He seems to be mad. Marcella and Naomi hasten to close the doors and to draw the heavy curtains to deaden the sound, whilst the doctor, who has come into the room, strives in vain to calm the delirium that is becoming more and more violent. Mary, prostrated dejectedly on the floor, is sobbing under the implacable charge of the dying man who goes on:

« One, two, ten lovers. The shame of Israel passed from one embrace to another one... Her mother was dying, she was rejoicing in her obscene love affairs. Beast! Vampire! You sucked your mother's life. You destroyed our joy. Martha was sacrificed because of you. No one marries the sister of a prostitute. I... Ah! I! Lazarus, a knight, the son of Theophilus... The urchins in Ophel used to spit at me!! "Here is the accomplice of an adulteress and of a prostitute" the scribes and Pharisees used to say shaking their garments meaning that they rejected the sin of which I was foul through her contact! "Here is the sinner! He who is not capable of striking the culprit is guilty himself" the rabbis used to shout when I went up to the Temple, and I was bathed in perspiration under the fiery eyes of the priests... The fire. You! You vomited the fire that was within you. Because you are a demon, Mary. You are filthy. You are anathema. Your fire clung to everybody, because your fire comprised many

fires, and there was some for lustful people who looked like fish caught in a drag-net whenever you passed by... Why did I not kill you? I shall burn in Gehenna for allowing you to live ruining so many families, scandalising thousands of people... Who said: "Alas for the man who provides scandal"? Who said so? Ah! the Master! I want the Master! I want Him! That He may forgive me. I want to tell Him that I could not kill her because I loved her... Mary was sunshine in our house... I want the Master! Why is He not here? I don't want to live! But I want to be forgiven for the scandal that I stirred up by allowing the cause of scandal to live. I am already enveloped in flames. It's the fire of Mary. It is burning me. It burnt everybody. To give lust to her, to bring hatred against us, to bum my flesh. Take these blankets away, take everything away! I am on fire. It is burning my flesh and my spirit. I am lost because of her. Master! Master! Forgive me! He is not coming. He cannot come to Lazarus' house. It's a dunghill because of her. So... I want to forget. Everything. I am no longer Lazarus. Give me some wine. Solomon says: "Give wine to those who are broken-hearted, let them drink and forget their misery, so that they may remember their grief no more". I don't want to remember any more. Everybody says: "Lazarus is rich, the richest man in Judaea". It's not true! It is all straw. It is not gold. And the houses? They are clouds. His vineyards, oases, gardens, olive-groves? Nothing. Deceit. I am Job. I have nothing. I had a pearl. Beautiful! Of infinite value. She was my pride. Her name was Mary. I no longer have her. I am poor. The poorest of them all. The most deceived... Jesus also deceived me. Because He told me that He would give her back to me, instead she... Where is she? There she is. The woman of Israel, the daughter of a holy mother, looks like a heathen hetaera! Half-naked, drunk, mad... And around her, with their eyes fixed on the naked body of my sister, the pack of her lovers... And she enjoys being admired and craved for thus. I want to make amends for my crime. I want to go through Israel saying: "Don't go near the house of my sister. Her house is the path to hell and it descends into the abyss of death". Then I want to go to her and tread on her, because it is written: "Every unchaste woman will be trampled on like dung on the road". Oh! Have you the nerve to show yourself to me who am dying like a dishonoured man, destroyed by you? After I offered my life to redeem your soul, and to no avail? Are you asking me how I wanted you? How I wanted you in order not to die thus? This is how I wanted you: like the chaste Susanna. Are you saying that they tempted you? And did you not have a brother to defend you? Susanna, who was all alone, replied: "I prefer to fall innocent into your power, than to sin in the eyes of the Lord", and God made her innocence shine. I would have spoken the necessary words to those who tempted you and I would have defended you. Instead, you went

away. Judith was a widow and she lived in seclusion, wearing sackcloth and fasting and she was held in high esteem by everybody, because she feared the Lord and people sing of her: "You are the glory of Jerusalem, the joy of Israel, the honour of our race, because you acted in a manly manner and bravely, because you loved chastity and after your marriage you have known no other man. That is why the hand of the Lord made you strong and you will be blessed for ever". If Mary had been like Judith, the Lord would have cured me. But He could not cure me because of her. That is why I did not ask to be cured. There can be no miracle where she is. But it is nothing to die, to suffer. I would suffer ten times as much and die several times, provided she were saved. Oh! Most High Lord! I am prepared to suffer all deaths and all sorrows, but let Mary be saved! To enjoy her company for one hour, for one hour only, when she has become holy and as pure as she was in her childhood! One hour of that joy! To be proud of her, the golden flower of my house, the kind gazelle with meek eyes, the evening nightingale, the loving dove... I want the Master to tell Him that that is what I want: Mary! Mary! Come! Mary! How grieved is your brother, Mary! But if you come, if you redeem yourself, my sorrow will turn into delight. Look for Mary! I am at the end! I am dying! Mary! Light! Air... I... I'm suffocating... Oh! what I feel!... »

The doctor makes a gesture and says: « It is the end. After delirium, sopor then death. But he may have a revival of intelligence. Come close to him. You in particular. It will make him happy » and after laying Lazarus down with care, exhausted as he is with so much excitement, he goes towards Mary, who has been weeping all the time moaning on the floor: « Make him keep quiet! ». He lifts her up and takes her to the bed.

Lazarus has closed his eyes. But he must be suffering dreadfully. His whole body trembles spasmodically. The doctor tries to help him with potions... Some time goes by thus.

Lazarus opens his eyes. He does not seem to remember what happened before, but he is conscious. He smiles at his sisters and tries to take their hands and to reply to their kisses. He turns deadly pale. He moans: « I am cold... » and his teeth chatter as he tries to cover his face with the bedclothes. He groans: « Nicomedes, I cannot resist the pain any longer. Wolves are eating the flesh of my legs and devouring my heart. How painful it is! And if this is agony, what will death be like? What shall I do? Oh! if I had the Master here! Why did you not bring Him to me? I would have died a happy death on His lap... » he says weeping.

Martha casts a severe glance at Mary. Mary understands the meaning of that glance, and still crushed by her brother's frenzy, she is conscience-stricken and kneeling against the bed, she bends to kiss Lazarus' hand saying plaintively: « I am the guilty one. Martha

wanted to do so two days ago. I did not let her. Because He told us that we had to inform Him only after your death. Forgive me! I have been the cause of all the grief of your lifetime... And yet I loved you and I love you, brother. After the Master, I love you more than anybody and God knows that I am not lying. Tell me that you absolve me of my past, that I may have peace... »

« Madam! » says the doctor reproachingly. « The patient is in no need of emotions. »

« That is true... Tell me that you forgive me for not calling Jesus »

« Mary! Jesus came here for you... and He comes because of you because you know how to love... more than all the rest... You have loved me more than the rest... A life... of delights would not have given me... not have given me... the joy that I experienced because of you... I bless you... I say to you that you did the right thing in obeying Jesus... I did not know I know... I say... it is right Help me to die! Naomi... you knew once... how to... make me fall asleep... Martha blessed my peace Maximinus... with Jesus. Also... for me My share to the poor to Jesus... for the poor And forgive everybody Ah! what atrocious pangs!... Air! Light!... Everything is trembling... There a kind of light around you and it dazzles me if... I look at you... Speak... loud... » He has laid his left hand on Mary's head and has abandoned his right one into Martha's hands. He is panting...

They lift him carefully adding pillows, and Nicomedes makes him sip some more drops of potions. His poor head hangs and dangles in deadly languor. The only sign of life is his breathing. And yet he opens his eyes and looks at Mary who is holding his head and he smiles at her saying: « Mother! She has come back Mother! Speak! Your voice You know... the secret... of God Have I served... the Lord? »

Mary in a low voice, which grief has made as thin as a girl's, whispers: « The Lord is saying to you: " Come with Me, My good and faithful servant, because you have listened to every word of Mine and you have loved the Word Whom I sent". »

« I can't hear. Speak louder! »

Mary repeats in a louder voice...

« It is really mother!... » says Lazarus contentedly relaxing his head on his sister's shoulder...

He does not speak any more. Only wails and spasmodic tremor, only perspiration and heavy breathing. Insensible by now to the Earth, to affections, he sinks into the more and more absolute darkness of death. His eyelids close on his glassy eyes in which his last tears shine.

« Nicomedes! He is getting heavier! He is becoming cold!... » says Mary.

« Madam, death is a relief for him. »

« Keep him alive! Jesus will be certainly here tomorrow. He will have left at once. Perhaps He has taken the servant's horse or another mount » says Martha. And addressing her sister she says: « Oh! If you had let me send him earlier! » She then orders the doctor convulsively: « Make him live! »

The doctor stretches out his arms. He tries with some cordials. But Lazarus does not swallow any more.

His death-rattle increases... It is heart-rending...

« Oh! we cannot bear this any more! » says Naomi moaning.

« Yes. It's a long agony... » says the doctor assenting.

But he has hardly finished speaking when with a convulsion of his whole body, that arches and then collapses, Lazarus breathes his last.

His sisters shout... seeing his spasm, they shout seeing him collapse. Mary calls her brother, kissing him. Martha clings to the doctor as he bends over the dead body and says: « He is dead. It is now too late to wait for the miracle. There is nothing to wait for. Too late!... I am going, dominae. There is no reason why I should remain. Make haste for the funeral, because the body is already decomposed. » He closes the eyelids of the dead man and looking at him he says: « What a misfortune! He was a virtuous and intelligent man. He shouldn't have died! » He turns towards the sisters, he bows and greets them: « Ave! Dominae! » and he goes away.

Mournful laments fill the room. Mary has no more self-control and she throws herself on her brother's body shouting her remorse and invoking his forgiveness. Martha is weeping in Naomi's arms.

Then Mary shouts: « You did not have faith or obedience! I killed him first, you have killed him now; I, with my sins, you, with your disobedience. » She seems to have gone mad. Martha lifts her up, embraces her and apologises.

Maximinus, Naomi, Marcella try to bring both to reason and to resignation. And they succeed by remembering Jesus... Their grief quietens down, and while the room becomes crowded with weeping servants, and those responsible for the preparation of the corpse come in, the two sisters are led into another room to give vent to their grief.

Maximinus who is leading them says: « He passed away at the end of the second watch of the night. »

And Naomi says: « He will have to be buried early tomorrow, before sunset, when the Sabbath begins. You said that the Master wants solemn funeral ceremonies... »

« Yes. I leave that to you, Maximinus. I am not in the right frame of mind » says Martha.

« I am going and I will send servants to all the people concerned, both close at hand and far away, and I will give all the necessary instructions » says Maximinus and he withdraws.

The two sisters are weeping in each other's arms. They no longer reproach each other. They weep and try to console each other...

Some hours go by. The dead body is prepared in the room: a long figure enveloped in bandages under the sudarium.

« Why is he already covered like that! » exclaims Martha reproachingly.

« Mistress... A bad smell came from his nose and he threw up tainted blood when we moved him » says a servant apologising.

The sisters weep more loudly. Lazarus is already more remote under those bandages... A further step, towards the remoteness of death.

They keep vigil by his bedside weeping, until dawn, when the servant comes back from beyond the Jordan. The servant is dismayed, but he informs them of his fast journey to bring them the news that Jesus is coming.

« Did He say that He is coming? Did He not reproach us? » asks Martha.

« No, mistress. He said: "I will come. Tell them that I will come and to have faith". And before that He said: "Tell them not to worry. It is not a deadly disease. But it is for the glory of God, that His power may be glorified in His Son-." »

« Did He say exactly that? Are you sure? » asks Mary.

« Mistress, I have been repeating His words all the way back! »

« Go, then. You are tired. You have done everything well. But it is too late, now!... » says Martha with a sigh. And she bursts into tears as soon as she is left with her sister.

« Martha, why?... »

« Oh! in addition to his death, there is disappointment! Mary! Mary! Are you not considering that the Master is wrong this time? Look at Lazarus. He is really dead! We have hoped against hope, but to no avail. When I sent for Him, I certainly made a mistake, for he was more dead than alive. And our faith had no result or reward. And the Master has sent word that it is not a deadly disease! So is the Master no longer the Truth? He is no longer... Oh! That's the end of everything! »

Mary is wringing her hands. She does not know what to say. Facts are facts... But she does not speak. She does not say one word against her Jesus. She weeps. She is really exhausted.

Martha has a fixed idea in her heart: that she delayed too long. « It's your fault » she says reproachingly. « He wanted to test our faith thus. By obeying, I agree, but also by disobeying out of faith, to show to Him that we believed that He alone could and had to work the miracle. My poor brother! And he longed for Him so much! At least that: to see Him! Poor Lazarus! Poor brother! » And her weeping changes into howling, which is echoed in the adjoining rooms by the howls of the maids and servants, according to the eastern custom...

543. The Servant, of Bethany Informs Jesus of Martha's Message.

22nd December 1946.

It is already nightfall when the servant, who is proceeding through the brushwood near the river, spurs his horse, steaming with perspiration, to overcome the difference in level between the river and the road leading to the village. The poor animal's sides are heaving because of the long fast run. Its dark coat is all veined with perspiration and its breast is spread with the white foam of the bit. It puffs arching its neck and shaking its head.

They are now on the narrow road and they soon reach the house. The servant jumps to the ground, ties the horse to a hedge and gives a shout.

From the rear of the house the head of Peter appears and in his harsh voice he asks: « Who is calling? The Master is tired. He has not had any peace for many hours. It is almost dark. Come back tomorrow. »

« I do not want anything of the Master. I am healthy and I have only to speak a few words to Him. »

Peter comes forward saying: « From whom, if you do not mind me asking you? I will not let anybody pass without safe identification, particularly those who stink of Jerusalem, as you do. » He has come slowly forward as his suspicion has been aroused more by the beauty of the richly harnessed dark horse than by the man. But when he is in front of him, he is amazed: « You? Are you not one of Lazarus' servant? »

The servant does not know what to say. His mistress told him to speak only to Jesus. But the apostle seems to be quite determined not to let him pass. As he knows that Lazarus' name has great influence over the apostles, he makes up his mind and says: « Yes, I am Jonah, Lazarus' servant. I must speak to the Master. »

« Is Lazarus not well? Has he sent you? »

« No, he is not well. But don't make me waste time. I must go back as soon as possible. » And to convince Peter he says: « The members of the Sanhedrin came to Bethany... »

« The members of the Sanhedrin!!! Come in! Come in! » and he opens the gate saying: « Bring the horse in. We will water it and give it some grass, if you wish so. »

« I have some fodder, but some grass will not do it any harm. We will give it some water later, it may be harmful now. »

They go into the large room where the beds are and they tie the horse in a corner to protect it from draughts; the servant covers it with a blanket that was tied to the saddle, he gives it some fodder and the grass that Peter has brought from I do not know where. They go out again and Peter takes the servant into the kitchen and gives him a cup of warm milk that he takes from a pot near the fire,

instead of the water that the servant had asked for. While the servant drinks it and warms himself near the fire, Peter, who is heroic in not asking curious questions, says: « Milk is better than the water you wanted. And since we have it! Did you come all the way without a stop? »

« Without a stop. And I'll do the same going back. »

« You must be tired. And can the horse stand it? »

« I hope so. In any case, on my way back, I shall not gallop as I did coming. »

« It will soon be dark. The moon is already rising... How will you manage at the river? »

« I hope to arrive there before the moon sets. Otherwise I shall stop in the wood until dawn. But I shall get there before. »

« And then? It's a long way from the river to Bethany. And the moon sets early. She is in her first days. »

« I have a good lamp. I will light it and go slow. No matter how slow I may go, I shall be approaching home. »

« Would you like some bread and cheese? We have some. We have also some fish, I caught it. Because I remained here with Thomas. But Thomas has now gone to get some bread from a woman who helps us. »

« No, don't deprive yourself of anything. I had some food on the way, but I was thirsty and I needed something warm. I am all right now. But will you go to the Master? Is He in? »

« Yes, He is. If He had not been here, I would have told you at once. He is in that room, resting. Because so many people come here... I am even afraid that the news may spread and that the Pharisees may come and disturb. Take some more milk. You have to let the horse eat... and rest. Its sides were beating like a badly secured sail... »

« No, you need the milk. You are so many. »

« Yes. But with the exception of the Master, Who speaks so much that His chest aches, and of the older ones, we, who are sturdy, prefer food that keeps our teeth busy. Take some. It's the milk of the sheep left by the old man. When we are here, the woman brings it to us. But, if we want more, everybody is willing to give it to us. They like us, here, and they help us. And... tell me: were there many members of the Sanhedrin? »

« Oh! they were almost all there and other people with them: Sadducees, scribes, Pharisees, wealthy Judaeans, some Herodians... »

« And why did all those people come to Bethany? Was Joseph with them? And Nicodemus? »

« No. They had come previously. Manaen also had come. The others were not friends of the Lord. »

« Eh! I believe that! They are so few the members of the Sanhedrin who love Him! But what did they want exactly? »

« To greet Lazarus, so they said coming in... »

« H'm! How strange their love is! They have always shunned Him for so many reasons!... Well!... Let us believe it... Did they stay long? »

« Quite a long time. And they were upset when they left. I do not work in the house, so I was not serving at the tables. But the other servants who were serving in the house say that they spoke with the mistresses and they wanted to see Lazarus. Helkai went into Lazarus' room and... »

« A fine crook!... » whispers Peter between his teeth.

« What did you say? »

« Oh! nothing! Go on. And did he speak to Lazarus? »

« I think so. He went with Mary. But later, I do not know why... Mary became irritated and the servants, who rushed there from the nearby rooms, say that she turned them out ruthlessly... »

« Well done! Just what is needed! And have they sent you to tell us? »

« Don't make me waste more time, Simon of Jonah. »

« You are right. Come. »

He takes him towards a door and knocks saying: « Master, there is one of Lazarus' servants who wants to speak to You. »

« Let him come in » says Jesus.

Peter opens the door, lets the servant enter, closes the door and withdraws, meritoriously, to the fireplace, to mortify his curiosity.

Jesus, sitting on the edge of His little bed in the small room where there is hardly space for the bed and the person who lives in it, and which previously was certainly a store-room as there are still hooks on the walls and shelves, looks smiling at the servant who has knelt down and He greets him: « Peace be with you. » And He then adds: « What news do you bring Me? Stand up and speak. »

« My mistresses have sent me to tell You to go to them at once, because Lazarus is very ill and the doctor says that he will die. Martha and Mary implore You and they have sent me to say to You: "Come, because You alone can cure him. »

« Tell them not to worry. This is not a disease that will cause his death, but it is for the glory of God, that His power may be glorified in His Son. »

« But his condition is very serious, Master! His body is affected with gangrene and he no longer takes any food. I have worn out my horse to arrive here in the shortest possible time... »

« It does not matter. It is as I say. »

« But will You come? »

« I will come. Tell them that I will come and to have faith. Tell them to have faith. Absolute faith. Have you understood? Go. Peace to you and to those who sent you. I tell you once again: "They must have faith. Absolute faith". Go. »

The servant greets Him and withdraws.

Peter rushes towards him saying: « You were quick in telling Him. I thought that it was a long speech... » He looks at him intently... His face is shot through with the anxiety to be informed. But he checks himself...

« I am going. Will you give me some water for the horse? Then I will leave. »

« Come. Some water!... We have a whole river to give you some, in addition to our well » and Peter, holding a lamp, walks before him and gives him the water he asked for.

They water the horse. The servant removes the blanket, he checks its shoes, the belly-band, the reins, the stirrups. He explains: « It has run so much and so fast! But everything is in order. Goodbye, Simon Peter, and pray for us. »

He leads the horse out. Holding it by the bridle he goes out on to the road, puts one foot in the stirrup and is about to mount.

Peter holds him back putting one hand on his arms saying: « There is only one thing I wish to know: is there any danger for Him to stay here? Have they made threats? Did they want to learn from the sisters where we were? Tell me, in the name of God! »

« No, Simon. No. They never said that. They came for Lazarus... We suspect that they came to see whether the Master was there and whether Lazarus was leprous, because Martha was shouting out loud that he is not leprous and she was weeping... Goodbye, Simon. Peace be with you. »

« And with you and your mistresses. May God accompany you back home... » He watches him depart... and soon disappear at the end of the street, because the servant prefers to take the main road, clear in the moonlight, rather than the dark path in the wood along the river. He remains thoughtful. Then he closes the gate and goes back into the house.

He goes to Jesus, Who is still sitting on the little bed, leaning His hands on its edge, engrossed in thought. But He rouses Himself when He hears Peter come close to Him and look at Him inquisitively. He smiles at the apostle.

« Are You smiling, Master? »

« I am smiling at you, Simon of Jonah. Sit down here, near Me. Have the others come back? »

« No, Master. Not even Thomas. He must have found someone to speak to. »

« That is all right. »

« All right that he should speak? All right that the others should be late? He speaks even too much. He is always cheerful! And the others? I am always worried until they come back. I am always afraid. »

« Of what, My dear Simon? No harm will befall us for the time

being, believe Me. Set your mind at rest and imitate Thomas who is always cheerful. You, on the contrary, have been very sad for some time. »

« I defy anyone who loves You not to be so! I am old now and I ponder more than the younger ones. Because they also love you, but they are young and less thoughtful... But if You like me more when I am happy, I will be so, I will strive to be so. But in order to be able to be so, give me a reason for it. Tell me the truth, my Lord. I am asking You on my knees (he in fact kneels down). What did Lazarus' servant tell You? That they are looking for You? That they want to harm You? That... »

Jesus lays His hand on Peter's head saying: « No, Simon! Nothing of the kind. He came to tell Me that Lazarus has got worse, and we spoke only of Lazarus. »

« Really? »

« Really, Simon. And I told them to have faith. »

« But do You know that those of the Sanhedrin have been to Bethany? »

« Which is natural! Lazarus' household is a great one. And according to our custom such honours are to be given to a powerful man who is dying. Do not distress yourself, Simon. »

« But do You really think that they did not use that as an excuse to... »

« To see whether I was there. Well, they did not find Me. Cheer up, do not be so frightened as if they had already captured Me. Come here, beside Me, poor Simon, who on no account will be convinced that no harm can befall Me until the moment decreed by God, and that then... nothing will be able to defend Me from Evil... »

Peter throws his arms round Jesus' neck and keeps Him quiet by kissing His lips and saying: « Be quiet! Be quiet! Don't tell me such things! I don't want to hear them! »

Jesus succeeds in releasing Himself so that He can speak and He whispers: « You do not want to hear them! That is the error! But I pity you... Listen, Simon. Since you were the only one to be here, only you and I are to know what happened. Do you understand Me? »

« Yes, Master. I will not mention it to any of my companions. »

« How many sacrifices, is that right, Simon? »

« Sacrifices Which? It is pleasant to be here. We have what is necessary. »

« The sacrifice of not asking questions, of not speaking, of putting up with Judas... of being away from your lake... But God will reward you for everything. »

« Oh! if that is what You mean!... In place of the lake I have the river and... I make it suffice. With regard to Judas... I have You Who make up for him fully... And with regard to the other things!... Trifles! And they help me to become less coarse and more like You.

How happy I am to be here with You! In Your arms! Caesar's palace would not seem more beautiful than this house, if I could always be in it thus, in Your arms. »

« What do you know of Caesar's palace? Have you seen it? »

« No, and I shall never see it. And I do not care. But I imagine it large, beautiful, full of lovely things... and of filth. Like the whole of Rome, I suppose. I would not stay there even if they covered me with gold! »

« Where? In Caesar's palace or in Rome? »

« In neither. Anathema! »

« But because they are like that, they are to be evangelized. »

« And what do You expect to do in Rome?! It is a brothel! There is nothing to be done there, unless You come. Then!... »

« I will come. Rome is the capital of the world. Once Rome is conquered, the world is conquered. »

« Are we going to Rome? You are proclaiming Yourself king, there! Mercy and power of God! That is a miracle! »

Peter has stood up and with raised arms he is standing before Jesus Who smiles and replies to him: « I will go there in My apostles. You will conquer it for Me. And I shall be with you. But there is someone out there. Let us go, Peter. »

544. At Lazarus' Funeral.

23rd December 1946.

The news of Lazarus' death must have had the same effect as a stick stirred inside a beehive. Everybody in Jerusalem talks about it. Notables, merchants, common people, poor people, the townspeople, people from the nearby country, foreigners passing through but familiar with the place, strangers who are there for the first time and ask who is the man whose death is the cause of so much commotion, Romans, legionaries, members of the staff, and Levites and priests who continually gather together and then part, running here and there... Small knots of people discussing the event with different words and expressions. Some utter words of praise, some weep, some feel they are more pauper than usual now that their benefactor is dead, some moan: « I shall never have such a master again », some mention his merits, some describe his wealth and kindred, his father's services and offices and his mother's beauty and riches and her « regal » birth; some, on the contrary, recall family events over which one should draw a veil of kindness, particularly when a dead man is involved who has suffered through them...

The small groups of people come up with the most desperate news on the cause of Lazarus' death, on the place of his burial, on the absence of Christ from the house of His great friend and protector just in that circumstance. The prevailing opinions are two: one is that

all this happened, nay, was brought about by the bad behaviour of Judaeans, members of the Sanhedrin, Pharisees and the like towards the Master; the other, that the Master, being faced with a real deadly disease, sneaked away because His deceit would not be successful in this case. Also without being astute one can understand the source of the latter opinion, which embitters many who retort: « Are you a Pharisee as well? If you are, take care of yourself because the Holy One is not to be cursed in our presence! You abominable vipers born of hyenas coupled with Leviathan! Who pays you to curse the Messiah? » Squabbles, insults, also some blows, pungent rude remarks addressed to the richly dressed Pharisees and scribes, who pass by giving themselves the airs of gods, without condescending to look at the common people shouting in favour or against them, in favour or against the Messiah, resound in the streets. And how many accusations!

« This man is saying that Jesus is a false Master! He is certainly one who has put on weight with the money he received from those snakes who have just gone by! »

« With their money? With ours, you should say! They fleece us for such noble purposes! But where is he? I want to see whether he is one of those who came yesterday to tell me... »

« He has run away. But, blessed be the Lord, we must join together and take action. They are too insolent. »

Another conversation: « I have heard you and I know you. I will tell the people concerned what you said of the Supreme Court! »

« I belong to Christ, and the slaver of a demon does me no harm. If you wish, you can tell Annas and Caiaphas, and may it help them to become more honest. »

And farther away: « Me? You say that I am a perjurer and a blasphemer because I follow the living God? You are a perjurer and a blasphemer since you offend and persecute Him. I know who you are. I have seen you and heard you. You corrupt informer! Come! Take this!... » and in the meantime he begins to cuff the ears of a Judaeon whose bony greenish face reddens.

« Cornelius, Simon, look! They are bullying me » says another one farther away, addressing a group of members of the Sanhedrin.

« Endure it with faith and do not soil your hands and lips on a Sabbath's eve » replies one of the men, who had been called, without even turning to look at the unlucky person to whom a group of common people are dispensing rough justice...

Women are shouting calling their husbands whom they entreat not to compromise themselves.

Legionaries on patrol go around dispersing the crowds with their lances and threatening arrests and punishments.

Lazarus' death, the main fact, is the starting point to go on to secondary facts, to give vent to the long lasting tension in hearts...

The members of the Sanhedrin, the elders, scribes, Sadducees, the mighty Judaeans go by slyly, with indifference, as if all the outbursts of petty anger, of personal revenge, of nervousness were not rooted in them. And as the time goes by the agitation and the excitement increase more and more.

« Listen to this, these people here say that the Christ cannot cure sick people. I was a leper and now I am healthy. Do you know who they are? I do not come from Jerusalem, but I have never seen them among the disciples of the Christ these last two years. »

« Those men? Let me see the one in the middle! Ah! you rascal and thief! You are the one who last month came to me to offer me money in the name of the Christ, saying that He hires men to seize Palestine. And you now say... But why did you let him escape? »

« Have you seen that? How mischievous they are! And they almost caught me! My father-in-law was right! There is Joseph the Elder with John and Joshua. Let us go and ask them whether it is true that the Master wants to assemble an army. They are just and they know. » They all rush towards the three members of the Sanhedrin and ask their question.

« Go home, men. One sins and does harmful things in the streets. Do not argue. Don't take fright. Mind your own business and take care of your families. Don't listen to agitators or dreamers and don't allow yourselves to be beguiled. The Master is a master, not a warrior. You know Him. And He speaks His mind. He would not have sent other people to ask you to follow Him as warriors, if He wanted you to be such. Don't do any harm to Him, to yourselves and to our Fatherland. Home, men! Home! Do not allow what is already a misfortune - the death of a just man - to become a series of misfortunes. Go back to your houses and pray for Lazarus, who was charitable to everybody » says Joseph of Arimathea, who must be loved and listened to by the people who know him to be a just man.

Also John (the man who was jealous) says: « He is a peaceful not a warlike man. Don't listen to false disciples. Remember how different the others were, who said they were the Messiah. Remember and ponder, and your justice will tell you that those instigations to violence could not come from Him! Go home! Go back to your women who are weeping and to your children who are frightened. It is said: "Woe to those who are violent and to those who encourage brawls". »

A group of weeping women approach the three members of the Sanhedrin and one of them says: « The scribes have threatened my man. I am afraid! Joseph, please speak to them. »

« Yes, I will. But let your husband be quiet. Do you think that you are assisting the Master by means of these agitations and that you are honouring the dead man? You are wrong. You are harmful to both of them » replies Joseph and he leaves them to go towards

Nicodemus, who is coming from one of the streets, followed by servants, and he says to him: « I was not hoping to meet you, Nicodemus. I do not know myself how I managed. Lazarus' servant came to me at the end of the fourth watch to inform me of the sad event. »

« And he came to me later. I left at once. Do you know whether the Master is at Bethany? »

« No, He is not there. My steward in Bezetha was there at the third hour and he told me that the Master is not there. »

« I do not know how... miracles for everybody but not for him! » exclaims John.

« Probably because He gave the household more than a miraculous cure: He redeemed Mary and granted peace and honour... » says Joseph.

« Peace and honour! Of good people to good people. Because many... have not paid and do not pay honour even now that Mary... You do not know... Three days ago Helkai and many others were there... and they did not pay honour. And Mary drove them away. They were furious when they told me, and I just let them say what they liked, as I did not want to disclose my heart to them... » says Joshua.

« And are they going to the funeral now? » asks Nicodemus.

« They have been informed and they have met at the Temple to decide. Oh! their servants have been very busy running about at dawn this morning! »

« Why such hurry for the funeral? Immediately after the sixth hour!... »

« Because Lazarus was already rotten when he died. My steward told me that although resins are burning in the rooms and perfumes have been spread profusely on the dead body, the stench of the corpse is smelt even at the porch of the house. In any case the Sabbath begins at sunset. It was not possible to do otherwise. »

« And you say that they held a meeting at the Temple? Why? »

« Well... in actual fact the meeting had already been called to discuss Lazarus' case. They wanted to state that he was leprous... » says Joshua.

« Surely not. He would have been the first to live in isolation according to the Law » says Joseph defending him. And he adds: « I spoke to their doctor. He excluded it without any possibility of doubt. He was affected by putrid consumption. »

« So what did they discuss, since Lazarus was already dead? » asks Nicodemus.

« Whether they should go to the funeral, after Mary has driven them away. Some wanted to go, some were against it. Those who wanted to go were the majority and for three reasons. To see whether the Master was there, the first reason agreed to by everybody. To see whether He will work a miracle, the second reason.

The third reason: the remembrance of words spoken recently by the Master to some scribes at the Jordan near Jericho » explains Joshua once again.

« The miracle! Which, if he is already dead? » asks John shrugging his shoulders, and he concludes: « The usual... seekers of what is impossible! »

« The Master has raised other people from the dead » remarks Joseph.

« That is true. But if He had wanted him to be alive, He would not have let him die. The reason mentioned by you previously is correct. They have already been granted much. »

« Yes. But Uziel and Sadoc have recalled a challenge of many months ago. The Christ said that He will give proof that He can recompose also a decomposed body. And Lazarus is such. And Sadoc, the scribe, also says that, near the Jordan, the Rabbi spontaneously told him that at the new moon he would see half of the challenge being accomplished. That is: a decomposed person that revives, without further decomposition or disease. And their opinion prevailed. If that happens, it is because the Master is there. And if that happens, there will be no more doubts about Him. »

« Providing that is not detrimental... » whispers Joseph.

« Detrimental? Why? The scribes and Pharisees will be convinced... »

« Oh! John! Are you a stranger that you should say that? Do you not know your fellow-citizens? When has the truth ever made them holy? Does it mean nothing to you that no invitation to the meeting was brought to my house? »

« It was not brought to mine either. They suspect us and they often leave us out » says Nicodemus. Then he asks: « Was Gamaliel there? »

« His son was there. And he will come also in place of his father, who is unwell at Gamala in Judaea. »

« And what did Simeon say? »

« Nothing. Nothing at all. He listened. Then he went away. Not long ago he passed with some of his father's disciples, going towards Bethany. »

They are almost at the gate leading onto the road to Bethany. And John exclaims: « Look! It is garrisoned. Why? And they are stopping those coming out. »

« There is agitation in town... »

« Oh! But it is not a very fierce one... »

They arrive at the gate and they are stopped like everybody else.

« What is the reason for this, soldier? I am well known to everybody in the Antonia, and you cannot speak ill of me. I respect you and your laws » says Joseph of Arimathea.

« It is the order of the Centurion. The Commander is about to enter the town and we want to know who comes out of the gates, particularly

of this one that opens onto the Jericho road. We know you. But we also know the feelings of the Judaeans towards us. You and those who are with you may go on. And if you have influence on the people tell them that it is better for them to be calm. Pontius does not like to change his habits because of subjects who cause him trouble... and he might be too severe. A piece of sincere advice to you who are sincere. » They go on.

« Did you hear that? I foresee troublesome days... It will be necessary to advise the others, rather than the people... » says Joseph.

The Bethany road is crowded with people all going in the same direction: to Bethany. They are all going to the funeral. One can see members of the Sanhedrin and Pharisees mingled with Sadducees and scribes, with peasants, servants, with the stewards of the various houses and estates that Lazarus owned in town and in the country, and the more one approaches Bethany, the more people pour into the main road from paths and other side roads.

There is Bethany. Bethany mourning for its greatest citizen. All the inhabitants, wearing their best clothes, have already left their houses, which are locked as if no one lived in them. But they are not yet in the house of the dead man. Curiosity holds them back near the gate and along the road. They watch the people who have been invited, as they pass by, they mention their names and exchange impressions.

« There is Nathanael ben Faba. Oh! Old Mattathias, Jacob's relative! Annas' son! He is over there with Doras, Callascebona and Archelaus. Oh! How did those of Galilee manage to come? They are all there. Look: Eli, Johanan, Ishmael, Uriah, Joachim, Elias, Joseph... Old Hananiah with Sadoc, Zacharias and Johanan, the Sadducees. There is also Simeon of Gamaliel. He is all alone. The rabbi is not there. There is Helkai with Nahum, Felix, Annas the scribe, Zacharias, Jonathan ben Uriel! Saul with Eleazar, Triphon and Joazar. Fine rascals these last ones! Another son of Annas. The youngest. He is talking to Simon Camit. Philip with John Antipatrides. Alexander, Isaac and Jonah of Babaon. Sadoc. Judas, a descendant of the Asideans, the last one, I think, of that class. There are the stewards of the various buildings. I do not see any of the faithful friends. How many people! »

Really! How many people. They are all supercilious, some with an expression for the occasion, some with the signs of true grief on their faces. They are all swallowed up by the wide open gate, and I see pass by all those who in successive stages appeared to be friendly or hostile to the Master. Everybody, with the exception of Gamaliel and of Simon, the member of the Sanhedrin. And I see also other people, whom I have never seen before, or whom I may have seen without knowing their names, disputing round Jesus... Rabbis pass by with their disciples, and scribes in close groups. And

Judaeans go along while I hear their riches being listed... The garden is full of people who, after going to express their sympathy with the sisters - who, probably according to the local custom, are sitting under the porch, and are therefore outside the house - come back and spread out in the garden in continuous blending of colours and bowing in salutation.

Martha and Mary are worn out. They are holding each other's hand like two little girls, frightened of the sad gap in their family, of the emptiness of their days now that they no longer have to take care of Lazarus. They listen to the words of visitors, they weep with true friends, with loyal subordinates, they bow to the icy imposing stiff members of the Sanhedrin who have come more to attract attention to themselves than to honour the dead man, and although they are tired of repeating the same things hundreds of times, they reply to those asking them about Lazarus' last moments.

Joseph, Nicodemus, the most devoted friends are near them speaking only few words, but their friendship comforts them more than any word.

Helkai comes back with the more intransigent members of the Sanhedrin, to whom he has been speaking for a long time and he asks: « Could we see the dead body? »

Martha grievously wipes her forehead with her hand and asks: « When is that ever done in Israel? It is already prepared... » and tears stream slowly from her eyes.

« It is not the custom, that is true. But that is what we wish. The more loyal friends are certainly entitled to see their friends for the last time. »

« We also, as his sisters, should have been entitled to see him. But it was necessary to embalm him at once... And when we went back into Lazarus' room we only saw the form of his body wrapped in linen cloths... »

« You should have given clear instructions. Could you not have had the sudarium removed from his face? Can you not remove it now? »

« Oh! it is already decomposed... And it is time for the funeral... »

Joseph joins in the conversation: « Helkai, I think that we... out of excess of love, are the cause of grief. Let us leave the sisters in peace... »

Simeon, Gamaliel's son, moves forward to prevent Helkai from replying: « My father will come as soon as he is able. I represent him. He held Lazarus in high esteem. So do I. »

Martha replies bowing: « May the honour of the rabbi for our brother be rewarded by God. »

As Gamaliel's son is there, Helkai stands aside without insisting further, and he talks the matter over with the others who point out to him: « Can you not smell the stench? Do you wish to doubt it? In

any case we shall see whether they wall up the sepulchre. One cannot live without air.»

Another group of Pharisees approach the sisters. They are almost all from Galilee. After receiving their homage Martha cannot restrain herself from expressing her surprise at their presence.

« Woman, the Sanhedrin is in session to resolve upon matters of great importance and we are in town for that purpose » explains Simon of Capernaum, and he looks at Mary whose conversion he certainly remembers. But he just looks at her.

Then Johanan comes forward with Doras, the son of Doras, and with Ishmael, Hananiah, Sadoc and others whom I do not know. Their viperous faces express their intentions before their words do. But in order to strike they wait till Joseph goes away with Nicodemus to speak to three Judaeans. It is old Hananiah who with his clucking voice of a decrepit old man delivers the blow: « What do you think, Mary? Your Master is the only one to be absent among the many friends of your brother. Peculiar friendship! So much love while Lazarus was well! And so much indifference when it was time to love him! Everybody receives miracles from Him. But there is no miracle here. What do you say, woman, of such a situation? He has deceived you bitterly, the handsome Galilean Rabbi, hey! Did you not say that He told you to hope beyond what can be hoped for? So did you not hope, or is it of no avail to hope in Him? You were hoping in the Life, you said. Of course! He says that He is the "Life", hey! But in there there is your dead brother. And over there the entrance of the sepulchre is already open. But the Rabbi is not here. Hey! Hey! »

« He can give death, not life » says Doras with a sneer.

Martha lowers her head covering her face with her hands and weeps. That is the real situation. Her hope has been bitterly disappointed. The Rabbi is not there. He did not even come to console them. And by now He could be there. Martha is weeping. She can but weep.

Mary is weeping, too. She also has to face facts. She believed, she hoped beyond what is credible... but nothing happened and the servants have already removed the stone from the entrance to the sepulchre because the sun is beginning to set and it sets early in winter, and it is Friday and everything must be done in time so that the guests may not have to infringe the law of the Sabbath that is about to begin. She has hoped so much, always, she hoped too much. She has consumed her energies in that hope. And she is disappointed.

Hananiah insists: « Are you not replying to me? Are you now persuaded that He is an impostor who has taken advantage of you and scoffed at you? Poor women! » and he shakes his head among his friends who imitate him saying also: « Poor women! »

Maximinus approaches them saying: « It is time. Give the order. It's for you to give it. »

Martha collapses on the floor, she is assisted and carried away among the cries of the servants, who realise that the time to lay their master in the sepulchre has come and they intone their lamentations.

Mary wrings her hands convulsively. She implores: « A little longer! A little longer! And send servants on the road to En-shemesh and to the fountain, on every road. Servants on horseback. To see whether He is coming... »

« Are you still hopeful, poor wretch? How can one convince you that He has betrayed and disappointed you? He has hated you and sneered at you... »

It is too much! With her face wet with tears, tortured but still faithful, in the semicircle formed by the guests who have gathered together to see the corpse go out, Mary proclaims: « If Jesus of Nazareth has done that, it is well done, and great is His love for us all in Bethany. Everything for God's glory and His own! He said that this will bring about glory to the Lord because the power of His Word will shine completely. Execute the order, Maximinus. The sepulchre is no obstacle to the power of God... »

She moves away, supported by Naomi who has approached her, and she makes a gesture... The corpse, enveloped in linen cloths, departs from the house, crosses the garden between the crowds forming a double hedge and shouting their grief. Mary would like to follow the corpse, but she staggers. She follows the crowds when they are all near the sepulchre. And she arrives in time to see the long motionless body disappear in the darkness of the sepulchre, where the reddish light of the torches held high by the servants illuminates the steps for those who are descending with the corpse. Lazarus' sepulchre in fact is rather deep in the ground, probably to take advantage of strata of underground rock.

Mary utters a cry... It is a torture... She shouts... And with the name of her brother she utters also Jesus!. She looks as if they were tearing her heart. And she only mentions those two names, and she repeats them until the heavy thud of the stone placed against the entrance of the sepulchre tells her that Lazarus is no longer on the Earth, not even with his body. She is then overwhelmed and loses consciousness. She collapses into the arms of those supporting her and while sinking into a deep swoon she whispers again: « Jesus! Jesus! ». They carry her away.

Maximinus remains to dismiss the guests and thank them on behalf of all the relatives. He remains to hear them all say that they will come back to condole every day...

They disperse slowly. The last to depart are Joseph, Nicodemus, Eleazar, John, Joachim, Joshua. And at the gate they find Sadoc

with Uriel, who laugh maliciously saying: « His challenge! And we were afraid of it! »

« Oh! He is really dead. How he stank notwithstanding the aromatic essences! There is no doubt about it! It was not necessary to remove the sudarium. I think that he is already decadent. » They are happy.

Joseph looks at them. His glance is so severe that it cuts short words and laughter. They all make haste to go back to be in town before sunset is over.

545. Jesus Decides to Go to Lazarus.

24th December 1946.

It is getting dark in the little kitchen garden of Solomon's house, and the trees, the outlines of the houses beyond the road, and the very end of the road itself, where it disappears in the woodland near the river, are becoming more and more vague, blending into one only line of shadows, which are more or less clear, more or less dark, in the deepening twilight. Rather than shades, the things spread on the Earth are by now sounds. Voices of children from houses, calls of mothers, cries of men urging sheep or donkeys, the late squeaking of well-pulleys, the rustling noise of leaves in the evening breeze, sharp cracks as of clashing branches or sticks spread in the woodland. High above the first twinkling of stars, still feeble as there is still a reflection of daylight and because the early phosphorescent moonlight is beginning to spread in the sky.

« You will tell the rest tomorrow. That's enough now. It is getting dark. Let everybody go home. Peace to you. Peace to you. Yes... Of course... Tomorrow. Eh? What did you say? You have a scruple? Sleep on it till tomorrow and then, if you still have it, come back. That would be the last straw! Also scruples to make Him more weary! And men craving for wealth! And mothers-in-law who want young wives to recover their wits, and young wives who want their mothers-in-law to be less sharp, while both would deserve to have their tongues cut off. And what else is there? Ehi! you? What are you saying? Oh! this one, yes, poor little thing! John, take this little boy to the Master. His mother is ill and she has sent him to tell Jesus to pray for her. Poor child! He has been left at the rear because he is so small. And he comes from so far. How will he be able to go back home? Ehi! all you over there! Instead of standing there to enjoy His company, could you not put into practice what the Master told you: to help one another and that the stronger ones should help the weaker ones? Come on! Who is taking this boy home? God forbid it, he might find his mother dead... Let him at least see her... You have got some donkeys... It is night-time? And what is there more beautiful than night-time? I worked for years and years

by starlight, and I am healthy and strong. Are you taking him home? May God bless you, Ruben. Here is the boy. Has the Master comforted you? He has? Go then, and be happy. But we must give him some food. Perhaps he has had none since this morning. »

« The Master has given him some warm milk and bread, and some fruit; he has them in his little tunic » says John.

« Then go with this man. He will take you home on his donkey. » At last all the people have gone, and Peter can rest with James, Judas, the other James and Thomas, who have helped him to send to more obstinate ones home.

« Let us close the door, lest someone may change his mind and come back, like those two over there. Ugh! The day after the Sabbath is really toilsome! » says Peter going into the kitchen and closing the door. And he adds: « We shall be in peace now. »

He looks at Jesus Who is sitting near the table, engrossed in thought, with one elbow on the table and His head resting on His hand. Peter approaches Him and laying his hand on His shoulder he says: « You are tired, eh! So many people! They come from all parts of the country notwithstanding the season. »

« They seem to be afraid of losing us soon » remarks Andrew who is gutting some fish. Also the others are busy preparing the fire to roast them, or stirring some chicory in a boiling pot. Their shadows are projected on the dark walls, which are illuminated more by the fire than by the lamp.

Peter looks for a cup to give some milk to Jesus Who looks very tired. But he does not find the milk and he asks the others about it. « The boy drank the last drop of milk we had. The rest was given to the old beggar and to the woman whose husband was ill » explains Bartholomew.

« And the Master has been left without! You should not have given it all away. »

« He wanted that... »

« Oh! He would always like that. But we must not let Him do so. He gives away His garments, He gives away His milk, He gives Himself away and He wastes away... » Peter is dissatisfied.

« Be good, Peter! It is better to give than to receive » says Jesus quietly, coming out of His engrossment.

« Of course! And You give and keep giving and You are worn out. And the more You show people that You are willing to be generous, the more men take advantage of You. » And in the meantime he rubs the table with some coarse leaves exhaling a scent that is a mixture of bitter almond and chrysanthemum, he cleans it thoroughly to lay bread and water on it, and he puts a cup in front of Jesus.

Jesus pours Himself some water as if He were very thirsty. Peter puts another cup on the opposite side of the table near a plate containing

some olives and stalks of wild fennel. He adds the tray of chicory already dressed by Philip, and together with his companions he draws some very rustic stools near the table adding them to the four chairs available in the kitchen, but quite insufficient for thirteen people. Andrew, who has been grilling the fish, puts it on another plate and with more bread he goes towards the table. John takes the oil-lamp and puts it in the middle of the table.

Jesus stands up while they all approach the table for supper and He prays in a loud voice, offering the bread and blessing the table. He sits down imitated by the others and He hands out the bread and the fish, that is, He lays the fish on the thick large slices of bread, part new part stale, that each apostle has placed in front of himself. They then help themselves to the chicory using the large wooden fork served with the chicory. Also for the vegetables the slice of bread serves as plate. Jesus alone has in front of Himself a large metal plate, which is rather in bad condition, and He makes use of it to divide the fish giving a dainty now to this one now to that one. He looks like a father among his children, even if Nathanael, Simon Zealot and Philip are old enough to be His fathers, and Matthew and Peter look like His older brothers.

They eat and speak of the events of the day and John laughs heartily at Peter's disdain of the shepherd of the Gilead mountains, who expected Jesus to go up there, where his herd was, to bless it and thus make him earn much money for his daughter's dowry.

« There is nothing to laugh at. While he said: "My sheep are suffering from a disease and if they die I am ruined" I felt pity for him. We fishermen would feel the same if our boat became worm-eaten. One would no longer be able to work and earn one's daily bread. And we are all entitled to live. But when he said: "And I want my sheep to be healthy because I want to become rich and dumbfound the village on account of the dowry I will give Esther and of the house I will build for myself", then I got angry. I said to him: "And you have come from so far just for that? Have you nothing at heart but the dowry and your wealth and sheep? Have you no soul?". He replied to me: "There is time for that. My sheep and the marriage interest me more at present because it is a good match and Esther is becoming old". Then, if I had not remembered that Jesus says that we must be merciful towards everybody, he would have been for it! I really almost lost my temper when speaking to him... »

« And we thought that you were never going to stop. You never took breath. The veins in your neck were bulging and protruding like sticks » says James of Zebedee.

« The shepherd had already gone for some time and you were continuing to preach. It's a good job that you say that you are not able to speak to people! » adds Thomas. And he embraces him saying: « Poor Simon! He was beside himself with fury! »

« But was I not right? What is the Master? The fortune maker of all the fools in Israel? The procurer of other people' weddings? »

« Don't get angry, Simon. The fish will give you indigestion if you eat it with so much poison » says good-natured Matthew teasingly.

« You are right. I taste all the flavour of the banquets in the houses of Pharisees, when I eat bread with fear and meat with anger. »

They all laugh. Jesus smiles and is silent.

They are at the end of the meal. They remain round the table, somewhat lazily satisfied with food and heat. They are not so talkative and some are dozing. Thomas enjoys himself drawing with a knife a little branch with flowers on the wood of the table.

They are roused by the voice of Jesus Who, opening His arms, which were folded, leaning on the edge of the table, and stretching out His hands as the priest does when he says: "The Lord be with you", says: « And yet we must go! »

« Where, Master? To the shepherd? » asks Peter.

« No, Simon. To Lazarus. We are going back to Judaea. »

« Master, remember that the Judaeans hate You! » exclaims Peter.

« They wanted to stone You not long ago » says James of Alphaeus.

« No, Master, it is not prudent! » exclaims Matthew.

« Do You not care for us? » asks the Iscariot.

« Oh! My Master and brother, I beseech You in the name of Your Mother, and also in the name of the Divinity that is in You: do not allow satans to lay their hands on Your person, to stifle Your word. You are alone, all alone against the world that hates You and is powerful on the Earth » says Thaddeus.

« Master, protect Your life! What would happen to me, to all of us, if we no longer had You? » says John who is upset and looks at Him with the wide open eyes of a frightened grieved child.

After his first exclamation, Peter has turned round to speak excitedly to the older apostles and to Thomas and James of Zebedee. They are all of the opinion that Jesus must not go near Jerusalem, at least until Passover time may make His stay there safer because, they say, the presence of a very large number of followers of the Master, who come from everywhere in Palestine for the Passover festival, will defend the Master. None of those who hate Him will dare touch Him when all the people crowd round Him with love... And they tell Him anxiously, almost overbearingly... Love makes them speak.

« Peace! Peace! Are there not twelve hours in the day? A man who walks in the daytime does not stumble because he has the light of this world to see by, but if he walks at night he stumbles because he cannot see. I know what I am doing because the Light is in Me. Allow yourselves to be guided by Him Who can see. And bear in mind that until the hour of darkness comes, nothing sinister will take place. But when that hour comes, no distance or power, not

even Caesar's armies, will be able to save Me from the Judaeans. Because what is written must take place and the powers of evil are already working secretly to accomplish their deed. Do let Me do as I wish and do good while I am free to do so. The hour will come when I shall no longer be able to move a finger or utter one word to work the miracle. The world will be devoid of all My power. A dreadful hour of punishment for man. Not for Me. For man who will have refused to love Me. An hour that will repeat itself, through the will of man who will have rejected Divinity to the extent of making himself godless, a follower of Satan and of his cursed son. An hour that will take place when the end of this world is close at hand. The prevailing lack of faith will make My power of miracle of no use, not because I can lose it, but because no miracle can be granted where there is no faith and no will to have it, where a miracle would be made a butt of and an instrument of evil, by using the good received to turn it into greater evil. Now I can still work miracles, and work them to give glory to God. So let us go to our friend Lazarus who is sleeping. Let us go and wake him from his sleep, that he may be fresh and ready to serve his Master. »

« But if he is sleeping, it is a good thing. He is sure to get better. Sleep itself is a cure. Why wake him? » they point out to Him.

« Lazarus is dead. I waited until he died, before going there, not for his sisters and for him. But for you. That you may believe. That you may grow in faith. Let us go to Lazarus. »

« All right! Let us go! We shall all die as he died and You want to die » says Thomas, a resigned fatalist.

« Thomas, Thomas, and you all who are criticising and grumbling in your hearts, you ought to know that he who wants to follow Me must have for his life the same care that a bird has for a passing cloud. That is, to let it pass and go wherever the wind blows it. The wind is the will of God Who can give you life or take it away as He wishes, neither you must regret it, as the bird does not regret the passing cloud, but it sings just the same as it is sure that the sky will clear up again. Because the cloud is the incident, the sky is reality. The sky is always blue even if clouds seem to make it grey. It is and remains blue above the clouds. The same applies to true Life. It is and remains, even if human life ends. He who wants to follow Me must not be anxious about his life or afraid for it. I will show you how one conquers Heaven. But how can you imitate Me if you are afraid to come to Judaea, whereas no harm will be done to you now? Are you hesitating about showing yourselves with Me? You are free to leave Me. But if you want to stay you must learn to defy the world, with its criticism, its snares, its mockery, its torments, in order to conquer My Kingdom. So let us go and bring back from the dead Lazarus, who has been sleeping in his sepulchre for two days, as he died on the evening that his servant came here from

Bethany. Tomorrow at the sixth hour, after dismissing those who have been waiting for the morrow to be comforted by Me and receive the reward for their faith, we shall depart from here and cross the river, stopping for the night in Nike's house. Then at dawn we shall set out towards Bethany, via Enshemesh. We shall be in Bethany before the sixth hour. And there will be many people and their hearts will be roused. I promised it and I will keep My promise... »

« To whom did You promise it, Lord? » asks James of Alphaeus almost fearfully.

« To those who hate Me and those who love Me, to both in the most clear manner. Do you not remember the dispute with the scribes at Kedesh? It was still possible for them to say that I was mendacious, as I had raised from the dead a girl who had just died and a man who had been dead for one day. They said: "You have not yet recomposed a decomposed body". In fact God only can make a man from dust and remake a healthy living body from rot. Well, I will do that. At the moon of Chislev, on the banks of the Jordan, I Myself reminded the scribes of this challenge and I said: "At the new moon it shall be accomplished". That with regard to those who hate Me. I promised the sisters, who love Me in a perfect manner, to reward their faith if they continued to hope against credibility. I have tried them severely and grieved them deeply and I alone am aware of how much their hearts suffered in the past days and I only know how perfect is their love. I solemnly tell you that they deserve a great reward because they grieve more at the possibility that I may be derided than over the fact that they cannot see their brother raised from the dead. I looked absorbed, tired and sad. I was close to them with My spirit and I could hear their wailing and I counted their tears. Poor sisters! I am now eager to bring a just man back to the Earth, a brother to the embrace of his sisters, a disciple back to My disciples. Are you weeping, Simon? Yes, you and I are Lazarus' greatest friends, and in your tears there is your sorrow for Martha's and Mary's grief and there is also the agony of a friend, but there is also the joy of knowing that he will soon be brought back to our love. Let us move and prepare our bags and go to rest in order to get up at dawn and tidy up here where... our return is not certain. We shall have to hand out to the poor everything we have and tell the most active ones to keep pilgrims from looking for Me until I am in a safe place. We shall also have to tell them to warn the disciples to look for Me at Lazarus' house. There are so many things to be done. They shall be done before the pilgrims arrive... Let us go. Put the fire out and light the lamps and let everyone do what is to be done and go to rest. Peace to you all. » He stands up, blesses them and withdraws to His little room...

« He has been dead for some days! » says the Zealot.

« That is a miracle! » exclaims Thomas.

« I want to see what excuse they will find then to be in doubt! » says Andrew.

« But when did the servant come? » asks Judas Iscariot.

« The evening before Friday » replies Peter.

« Did he? Why did you not tell us? » asks the Iscariot again.

« Because the Master told me not to mention it » replies Peter.

« So... when we arrive there... he will have been in the sepulchre four days? »

« Certainly! Friday evening one day, the Sabbath evening two days, this evening three days, tomorrow four... So four days and a half... Eternal power! But he will be decomposing! » says Matthew.

« He will be decomposing... I want to see also that and then... »

« What, Simon Peter? » asks James of Alphaeus.

« Then if Israel does not become converted, not even Jahweh among lightning will be able to convert her. »

And they go away speaking thus.

546. Resurrection of Lazarus.

26th December 1946.

Jesus is coming towards Bethany from En-shemesh. They must have marched really hard up the difficult paths on the Adummim, mountains. The apostles, who are out of breath, find it difficult to follow Jesus Who walks rapidly, as if love carried Him on its ardent wings. A smile brightens Jesus' face as He proceeds ahead of them all, with His head raised, in the mild midday sunshine.

Before they arrive at the first houses of Bethany, a barefooted boy, who is going to the fountain near the village with an empty copper pitcher, sees Him and gives a shout. He lays the pitcher on the ground and runs away, with all the speed of his little legs, towards the centre of the village.

« He is certainly going to inform them that You are arriving remarks Judas Thaddeus after smiling, like everybody else, upon the quick... decision of the little boy, who also left his pitcher at the mercy of the first passer-by.

The little town, as seen from the fountain, which is a little higher up, seems quiet as if it were deserted. Only the grey smoke rising from chimneys indicates that in the houses women are busy preparing the midday meal, and the thick voices of men in the vast silent olive-groves and orchards inform one that men are working. Even so Jesus prefers to take a path that runs round the rear of the village, so that He may arrive at Lazarus' house without drawing the attention of the citizens.

They have gone almost half way when they hear the boy mentioned previously come after them; he runs past them and then stops thoughtfully in the middle of the path looking at Jesus... »

« Peace to you, little Mark. Were you afraid of Me that you ran away? » asks Jesus caressing him.

« No, Lord, I was not afraid. But as for many days Martha and Mary have been sending servants on the roads leading here to see whether You were coming, when I saw You I ran to tell them that You were coming... »

« You did the right thing. The sisters will be preparing their hearts to see Me. »

« No, Lord. The sisters are not preparing anything, because they do not know. They would not let me tell them. They got hold of me when I entered the garden saying: " The Rabbi is here" and they drove me out saying: "You are a liar or a fool. He is not coming any more because He knows by now that He cannot work the miracle any more". And as I said that it was really You, they gave me two mighty slaps as I never had before... Look how red my cheeks are. They are smarting! And they pushed me away saying: "That will purify you for looking at a demon". And I was looking at You to see whether You had become a demon. But I can't see any... You are always my Jesus, as beautiful as an angel, as my mother tells me. »

Jesus bends to kiss his cheeks, which have been slapped, saying: « They will no longer smart. I am sorry that you had to suffer because of Me... »

« I am not sorry, Lord, because those two slaps made You give me two kisses » and he clings to His legs hoping to receive more.

« Tell me, Mark. Who was it that drove you away? Those of Lazarus' household? » asks Thaddeus.

« No. The Judaeans. They come to condole every day. They are so many! They stay in the house and in the garden. They come early and go away late. They behave as if they were the masters. They ill-treat everybody. Can't you see that there is nobody in the streets? The first days people remained to watch... then... Now only children wander about to... Oh! my pitcher! My mother is waiting for water... She will give me a beating as well!... »

They all laugh at his distress over the prospect of further smacks, and Jesus says: « Hurry up then... »

« The fact is... that I wanted to go in with You and see You work the miracle... » and he concludes: « ... and see their faces... to avenge myself for the slaps... »

« No, that's wrong. You must not wish for revenge. You must be good and forgive... But your mother is waiting for the water... »

« I will go, Master. I know where Mark lives. I will tell the woman and then join You... » says James of Zebedee running away.

They set out again slowly and Jesus holds the delighted boy by the hand...

They are now at the garden railing. They walk along it. Many

mounts are tied to it, watched by the owners' servants. Their whispering draws the attention of some Judaeans who turn towards the open gate just when Jesus sets foot on the border of the garden.

« The Master! » exclaim the first to see Him, and the word flies from group to group like the rustling of the wind; it spreads, like a wave that comes from afar and breaks on the shore as far as the walls of the house and enters it, certainly carried by the many Judaeans present, or by some Pharisees, rabbis or scribes or Sadducees, scattered here and there.

Jesus advances very slowly while people, although rushing from every directions, move away from the alley along which He is walking. As no one greets Him, He does not greet anybody, as if He did not know any of the many people gathered there looking at Him with eyes full of anger and hatred, with the exception of a few who, being secret disciples or at least righteous-hearted, even if they do not love Him as Messiah, respect Him as a just man. And those are Joseph, Nicodemus, John, Eleazar, the other John the scribe, whom I saw at the multiplication of the loaves, and another John, the one who fed the people that had come down from the mountain of the beatitudes, Gamaliel with his son, Joshua, Joachim, Manaen, the scribe Joel of Abijah, seen at the Jordan in the episode of Sabea, Joseph Barnabas the disciple of Gamaliel, Chuza who looks at Jesus from afar, somewhat shy seeing Him again after the mistake he had made, or perhaps fear of what people may think prevents him from approaching Him as a friend. It is a fact that neither friends nor those who look at Him without hatred nor enemies greet Him. And Jesus does not greet anyone either. He just bowed lightly when setting foot in the alley. He has then moved straight on as if He were a stranger to the large crowd around Him. The little boy is walking beside Him all the time, in his garments of a poor little peasant and barefooted, but with the bright countenance of one who is really enjoying himself, his lively dark eyes wide open to see everything... and to defy everybody...

Martha comes out of the house with a group of Judaeans among whom there are Helkai and Sadoc. With her hand she shades her eyes tired of weeping from the sun, as the light hurts them, so that she may see where is Jesus. She sees Him. She departs from those accompanying her and she runs towards Jesus Who is at a few steps from the fountain shining in the sunshine. She throws herself at Jesus' feet after bowing to Him and kisses them, while bursting into tears she says: « Peace to You, Master! »

Jesus also, as soon as she is close to Him, says to her: « Peace to you! » and He raises His hand to bless her, releasing the hand of the boy, who is taken by Bartholomew and held a little back.

Martha goes on: « But there is no more peace for Your servant. » Still on her knees she looks up at Jesus and with a cry of grief that

is clearly heard in the prevailing silence she exclaims: « Lazarus is dead! If You had been here, he would not have died. Why did You not come sooner, Master? » There is an unintentional tone of reproach in her question. She then reverts to the depressed tone of one who no longer has the strength to reproach and whose only comfort is to recollect the last acts and wishes of a relative to whom one has tried to give what he wanted, and there is therefore no remorse in one's heart, and she says: « Lazarus, our brother, has called You so much!... Now, see! I am grieved and Mary is weeping and she cannot set her mind at rest. And he is no longer here! You know how much we loved him! We were hoping everything from You!... »

A murmur of pity for the woman and of reproach for Jesus is heard, approving the understood thought: « ... and You could have satisfied our request because we deserve it for the love we have for You, whereas You have disappointed us » and the murmur passes from one group to the next one as people shake their heads or cast derisory glances. Only the few secret disciples mingled with the crowd look compassionately at Jesus, Who, pale and sad, listens to the grieved woman speaking to Him. Gamaliel, his arms folded across his chest in his wide rich robe of very fine wool adorned with blue tassels, a little apart in a group of young men among whom is his son and Joseph Barnabas, stares at Jesus, without hatred and without love.

Martha, after wiping her face, resumes: « But even now I hope because I know that whatever You ask of God, He will grant You. » A sorrowful heroic profession of faith uttered in a trembling weeping voice, with her eyes full of anxiety and her heart throbbing with the last hope.

« Your brother will rise again. Stand up, Martha. »

Martha stands up, stooping out of respect before Jesus to Whom she replies: « I know, Master. He will rise again at the resurrection on the last day. »

« I am the Resurrection and Life. Whoever believes in Me, even if he dies, will live. And whoever believes and lives in Me will never die. Do you believe all that? » Jesus, Who had previously spoken in a rather low voice, addressing Martha only, raises His voice when saying these sentences in which He proclaims His power of God, and its perfect timbre resounds like a golden blare in the vast garden. The people present quiver with an emotion resembling fear. Then some sneer shaking their heads.

Martha, into whom Jesus seems to wish to instill a stronger and stronger hope by holding His hand on her shoulder, raises her lowered head. She raises it towards Jesus staring with her sad eyes at the Christ's bright ones and pressing her hands against her breast with a different anxiety she replies: « Yes, I do, my Lord. I believe all that. I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,

that You have come to the world and that You can do everything You want. I believe. I am now going to tell Mary » and she disappears quickly into the house.

Jesus remains where He was. That is, He takes a few steps forward and approaches the flower-bed that surrounds the basin of the fountain. The flower-bed is strewn on one side with the diamond drops of the very fine droplets of water of the jet, blown to that side by a light breeze, like silver down, and Jesus seems to be lost in contemplating the fish wriggle in the limpid water and play describing silver commas and golden reflections in the crystalline water shining in the sunshine.

The Judaeans are watching Him. They have involuntarily divided into clearly distinct groups. On one side, in front of Jesus, all those who are hostile to Him, usually separated from one another by sectarian spirit, but now concordant in opposing Jesus. Beside Him, behind the apostles who have been joined by James of Zebedee, there are Joseph, Nicodemus and others who are well-disposed to Him. Farther away there is Gamaliel, still in the same place and attitude, and all alone, because his son and disciples have parted from him and joined the two main groups to be closer to Jesus.

With her usual cry: « Rabboni! » Mary runs out of the house with her arms stretched out towards Jesus and throws herself at His feet, which she kisses sobbing deeply. Several Judaeans who were in the house with her and who have followed her, weep with her with doubtful sincerity. Also Maximinus, Marcella, Sara, Naomi have followed Mary, as well as all the servants and their wailing is loud and high-pitched. I think that there is no one left in the house. When Martha sees Mary cry thus, she cries copiously, too.

« Peace to you, Mary. Stand up! Look at Me! Why weep thus, like one who has no hope? » Jesus stoops to say these words in a low voice, His eyes staring at Mary's, who on her knees, relaxing on her heels, stretches her hands towards Him imploringly and is unable to speak, so deep is her sobbing: « Did I not tell you to hope beyond what is credible in order to see the glory of God? Has your Master perhaps changed, that you are so depressed? »

But Mary does not listen to the words that aim at preparing her for too great a joy after so much anguish, and being able to speak at last, she shouts: « Oh! Lord! Why did You not come sooner? Why did You go away from us? You knew that Lazarus was ill! If You had been here my brother would not have died. Why did You not come? I still had to prove to him that I loved him. He should have lived. I had to show him that I persevered in honesty. I afflicted my brother so much! And now! And now that I could have made him happy, he has been taken away from me! You could have left him with me. You could have given poor Mary the joy of comforting him after grieving him so deeply. Oh! Jesus! Jesus! My Master! My

Saviour! My hope! » and she collapses again, her forehead on Jesus' feet, which are washed once again by her tears, and she moans: « Why have you done that, Lord?! Also on account of those who hate You and are now rejoicing at what has happened... Why have You done that, Jesus?! » But there is no reproach in Mary's tone as there was in Martha's, there is only the anguish of a woman, who is grieved not only as a sister but also as a disciple who feels that the opinion of her Master is diminished in the hearts of many people.

Jesus, Who has bent very low to hear those words whispered with her face near the ground, stands up and says in a loud voice: « Mary, do not weep! Also your Master is suffering for the death of His faithful friend... for having had to let him die... »

Oh! How sneering and radiant with hateful joy are the faces of the enemies of Christ! They feel that He is defeated and rejoice, whilst His friends are becoming sadder and sadder.

Jesus says in an even louder voice: « But I tell you: do not weep. Stand up! Look at Me! Do you think that I, Who loved you so much, have done this without a reason? Can you believe that I have grieved you thus in vain? Come. Let us go to Lazarus. Where have you put him? »

Jesus' question, rather than to Mary and Martha, who cannot speak as they are crying even louder, is addressed to all the others and particularly to those who have come out of the house with Mary and look more upset. Perhaps they are older relatives, I do not know.

And they reply to Jesus, Who is clearly distressed: « Come and see. » and they set out towards the place of the sepulchre, which is at the end of the orchard, where the ground is undulated and veins of calcareous rock appear on its surface.

Martha, beside Jesus Who has forced Mary to stand up and is now guiding her, as she is blinded by her copious tears, points out to Jesus where Lazarus is, and when they are near the place she also says: « It is there, Master, that Your friend is buried » and she points at the stone placed across the entrance of the sepulchre.

Jesus, followed by everybody, has to pass in front of Gamaliel, in order to go there. But neither He nor Gamaliel greet each other. Gamaliel then joins the others stopping with all the more rigid Pharisees a few metres from the sepulchre, while Jesus goes on, very close to it, with the two sisters, Maximinus and those who are perhaps relatives. Jesus looks at the heavy stone placed as a door against the sepulchre, a heavy obstacle between Him and His dead friend, and He weeps. The wailing of the sisters grows louder, as well as that of intimate friends and relatives.

« Remove that stone » shouts Jesus all of a sudden, after wiping His tears.

Everybody is surprised and a murmur runs through the crowd

that has become larger as some people of Bethany have entered the garden and have followed the guests. I can see some Pharisees touch their foreheads and shake their heads meaning: « He is mad! ». No one carries out the order. Even the most faithful ones are hesitant and feel repugnance to do it.

Jesus repeats His order in a louder voice astonishing even more the people, who urged by opposed feelings react at first as if they wanted to run away, but immediately afterwards they wish to draw closer, to see, defying the stench of the sepulchre that Jesus wants opened.

« Master, it is not possible » says Martha striving to restrain her tears to be able to speak. « He has been down there for four days. And You know of what disease he died! Only our love made it possible for us to cure him... By now he will certainly smell notwithstanding the ointments... What do You want to see? His rottenness?... It is not possible... also because of the uncleanness of putrefaction and... »

« Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God? Remove that stone. I want it! » It is the cry of divine will...

A subdued « oh! » is uttered by every mouth. Faces grow pale. Some people shiver as if an icy wind of death had blown over everybody.

Martha nods to Maximinus who orders the servants to get the necessary tools to remove the heavy stone.

The servants run away and come back with picks and sturdy levers. And they work inserting the points of the shining picks between the rock and the stone, and then replacing the picks with the sturdy levers and finally lifting the stone carefully, letting it slide to one side and dragging it cautiously against the rocky wall. An infected stench comes out of the dark hole making everyone withdraw.

Martha asks in a low voice: « Master, do You want to go down there? If You do, torches will be required... » But she is won at the thought of having to go down.

Jesus does not reply to her. He raises His eyes to the sky, He stretches out His arms crosswise and prays in a very loud voice syllabising the words: « Father! I thank You for hearing Me. I knew that You always hear Me. But I said so for those who are present here, for the people surrounding Me, that they may believe in You, in Me, and that You have sent Me! »

He remains thus for a moment and He becomes so transfigured that He seems to be enraptured, while without uttering any sound He says more secret words of prayer or adoration. I do not know. What I know is that He is so transhumanised that it is not possible to look at Him without feeling one's heart quiver. His body seems to become light, spiritualised, rising in height and also from the earth. Although the shades of His hair, eyes, complexion, garments

remain unchanged - contrary to what happened during the transfiguration on mount Tabor when everything became light and dazzling brightness - He seems to shed light and that His whole body becomes light. Light seems to form a halo around Him, particularly round His face raised to the sky, certainly enraptured in the contemplation of His Father.

He remains thus for some time, then He becomes Himself, the Man, but powerfully majestic. He proceeds as far as the threshold of the sepulchre. He moves His arms forward - so far He had held them crosswise, the palms turned upwards - now with palms turned downwards, so that His hands are already inside the hole of the sepulchre and their whiteness is outstanding in the darkness of the hole. His blue eyes are blazing and their flash forecasting a miracle is today unsustainable, in the silent darkness, and in a powerful voice and with a cry louder than the one He uttered on the lake when He ordered the wind to abate, in a voice that I never heard in any other miracle, He shouts: « Lazarus! Come out! » His voice is echoed by the sepulchral cave and coming out of it, it spreads all over the garden, it is repeated by the undulations of the ground of Bethany, I think it travels as far as the first hills beyond the fields and then comes back, repeated and subdued, like an order that cannot fail. It is certain that from numberless directions one can hear again: « out! out! out! »

Everybody is thrilled with emotion and if curiosity rivets everyone in his place, faces grow pale and eyes are opened wide while mouths are closed involuntarily with cries of surprise already on their lips.

Martha, a little behind and to one side, seems fascinated looking at Jesus. Mary, who has never moved away from the Master, falls on her knees at the entrance of the sepulchre, one hand on her breast to check her throbbing heart, the other holding the edge of Jesus' mantle unconsciously and convulsively, and one realises that she is trembling because the mantle is shaken lightly by the hand holding it.

Something white seems to emerge from the deep end of the sepulchre. At first it is just a short convex line, then it becomes ovalshaped, then wider and longer lines appear. And the dead body, enveloped in its bandages, comes slowly forward, becoming more visible, more mysterious and more awful.

Jesus draws back, imperceptibly, but continuously, as the other moves forward. Thus the distance between the two is always the same.

Mary is compelled to drop the edge of the mantle, but she does not move from where she is. Joy, emotion, everything, nail her to the place where she is.

An « oh! » is uttered more and more clearly by the lips previously

closed by the anxiety of suspense: from a whisper hardly distinguishable it changes into a voice, from a voice into a powerful cry.

Lazarus is by now on the threshold of the sepulchre and he remains there rigid and silent, like a plaster statue just rough-hewed, thus shapeless, a long thing, thin at the head and legs, thicker at the trunk, as macabre as death itself, ghost-like in the white bandages against the dark background of the sepulchre. As the sun shines on him, putrid matter can be seen dripping already here and there from the bandages.

Jesus shouts out in a loud voice: « Unbind him and let him go. Give him clothes and food. »

« Master!... » says Martha, and perhaps she would like to say more, but Jesus stares at her subduing her with His bright eyes and He says: « Here! At once! Bring a garment. Dress him in the presence of all the people and give him something to eat. » He orders and never turns round to look at those who are behind and around Him. He looks only at Lazarus, at Mary who is near her resurrected brother, heedless of the disgust caused to everybody by the putrid bandages, and at Martha who is panting as if she felt her heart break and does not know whether she should shout for joy or weep...

The servants rush to carry out the instructions. Naomi is the first to run away and to come back with garments folded on her arm. Some untie the bandages after rolling up their sleeves and tucking up their garments so that they may not touch the dripping rot. Marcella and Sarah come back with amphoras of perfumes followed by servants carrying basins and jugs of water steaming hot or trays with cups of milk, wine, fruit, honey-cakes.

The very long narrow bandages, which I think are of linen, with selvedge on each side, obviously woven for that purpose, unroll like rolls of tape from a reel and pile up on the ground, heavy with spices and pus. The servants move them to one side by means of sticks. They have started from the head, but even there there is matter that has certainly dripped from the nose, ears and mouth. The sudarium placed on the face is soaked with putrid matter and Lazarus' face, which is very pale and emaciated, with his eyes closed with the pomade placed in the eye-sockets, with his hair and thin short beard sticking together, is soiled with it. The shroud placed round his body falls off slowly as the bandages are removed, freeing the trunk that they had enveloped for days, restoring a human figure to what they had previously transformed into something like a huge chrysalid. The bony shoulders, the emaciated arms, the ribs just covered with skin, the sunken stomach begin to appear slowly. And as the bandages fall off, the sisters, Maximinus, the servants busy themselves removing the first layer of dirt and balms and they insist continuously changing the water made detergent with spices, until the skin appears clean.

When they uncover Lazarus' face and he can look, he directs his gaze towards Jesus before looking at his sisters, and he seems absent-minded and does not pay attention to what is happening while he looks at his Jesus with a loving smile on his lips and tears shining in his deep-sunken eyes. Jesus also smiles at him, His eyes shining with tears, and without speaking He directs Lazarus' gaze towards the sky; Lazarus understands and moves his lips in silent prayer.

Martha thinks that he wishes to say something but has no voice yet and she asks: « What are you saying to me, my Lazarus? »

« Nothing, Martha. I was thanking the Most High. » His pronunciation is steady, his voice loud.

The crowds utter an « oh! » of amazement once again.

He has now been freed and cleaned down to his sides. And they can put on him his short tunic, a kind of a short shirt that reaches below his inguen falling on his thighs.

They make him sit down to untie his legs and wash them. As soon as they appear Martha and Mary utter a loud cry pointing to the legs and bandages. And whilst on the bandages tied round the legs and on the shroud placed under the bandages the putrid matter is so copious as to stream down the cloth, the legs are completely healed. Only red cyanotic scars indicate the parts affected by gangrene.

All the people shout their amazement more loudly; Jesus smiles and Lazarus smiles, too, looking for a moment at his healed legs, then he becomes engrossed again in looking at Jesus. He never seems to gratify his desire to see Him. The Judaeans, Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, rabbis come forward cautiously in order not to contaminate their garments. They examine Lazarus closely. They examine Jesus closely. But neither Lazarus nor Jesus minds them. They look at each other and all the rest means nothing to them.

They now put sandals on Lazarus' feet and he stands up, agile and steady. He takes the tunic that Martha hands him, he puts it on by himself, he fastens his belt and adjusts the fold of the garment. And there he is, lean and pale, but like everybody else. He washes again his hands and arms as far as his elbows, after tucking up his sleeves. And with clean water he washes his face and head again, until he feels that he is thoroughly clean. He dries his hair and face, hands the towel to the servant and goes straight towards Jesus. He prostrates himself. He kisses His feet.

Jesus bends, lifts him up, presses him to His heart saying: « Welcome back home, My dear friend. May peace and joy be with you. Live to accomplish your happy destiny. Raise your face that I may greet you with a kiss. » And He kisses Lazarus' cheeks and is kissed by him.

Only after worshipping and kissing the Master, Lazarus speaks

to his sisters and kisses them; he then kisses Maximinus and Naomi, who are weeping for joy, and some of those who I think are related to the family or are very close friends. He then kisses Joseph, Nicodemus, Simon Zealot and a few more.

Jesus goes personally towards a servant who is carrying a tray on which there is some food and He takes a honey-cake, an apple, a goblet of wine, and He offers them to Lazarus, after offering and blessing them, so that he may nourish himself. And Lazarus eats with the healthy appetite of one who is well. A further « Oh! » of amazement is uttered by the crowd.

Jesus seems to see no one but Lazarus, but in actual fact He observes everything and everybody and when He sees with what furious gestures Sadoc, Helkai, Hananiah, Felix, Doras and Cornelius and others are about to go away, He says in a loud voice: « Wait a moment, Sadoc. I want to have a word with you, with you and your friends. »

They stop with the sinister look of criminals.

Joseph of Arimathea makes a gesture as if he were frightened and beckons to the Zealot to restrain Jesus. But He is already going towards the rancorous group and is already saying loud: « Sadoc, is what you have seen enough for you? One day you told Me that in order to believe, you and your peers needed to see a decomposed dead body be recomposed and in good health. Are you satisfied with the rottenness you have seen? Can you admit that Lazarus was dead and that now he is alive and healthy, as he has never been for many years? I know. You came here to tempt these people, to increase their grief and their doubt. You came here looking for Me, hoping to find Me hiding in the room of the dying man. You did not come with feelings of love and with the desire to honour the deceased man, but to ensure that Lazarus was really dead, and you have continued to come rejoicing all the more as time went by. If the situation had evolved as you were hoping, as you believed it would evolve, you would have been right in exulting. The Friend Who cures everybody, but does not cure His friend. The Master Who rewards everybody's faith, but not the faith of His friends in Bethany. The Messiah powerless against the reality of death. That is what was making you exult. Then God gave you His reply. No prophet had ever been able to put together what was decomposed, in addition to being dead. God did it. That is the living witness of what I am. One day it was God Who took some dust and made it into a form and He breathed the vital spirit into it and man was. I was there to say: "Let man be made in our own image and likeness". Because I am the Word of the Father. Today, I, the Word, said to what is even less than dust, I said to rottenness: "Live", and decomposition was recomposed into flesh, into wholesome, living, breathing flesh. There it is looking at you. And to the flesh I joined the

spirit that had been lying for days in Abraham's bosom. I called him with My will, because I can do everything, as I am the Living Being, the King of kings to Whom all creatures and things are subject. What are you going to reply to Me now? »

He is in front of them, tall, ablaze with majesty, really Judge and God. They do not reply.

He insists: « Is it not yet enough for you to believe, to accept what is ineluctable? »

« You have kept but one part of Your promise. This is not the sign of Jonah... » says Sadoc harshly.

« You shall have that one as well. I promised it and I will keep My promise » says the Lord. « And another person, who is present here, and is waiting for another sign, shall have it. And as he is a just man, he will accept it. You will not. You will remain what you are. »

He turns round and sees Simon, the member of the Sanhedrin, the son of Elianna. He gazes at him. He leaves the previous group and when He is face to face with him, He says in a low but incisive voice: « You are fortunate that Lazarus does not remember his stay among the dead! What have you done with your father, o Cain? »

Simon runs away with a cry of fear that he changes into a howl of malediction: « May You be cursed, Nazarene! » to which Jesus replies: « Your curse is rising to Heaven and from Heaven the Most High throws it back at you. You are marked with the sign, you wretch! »

He goes back to the groups that are astonished, almost frightened. He meets Gamaliel who is going towards the road. He looks at Gamaliel, who looks at Him. Jesus says to him without stopping: « Be ready, rabbi. The sign will come soon. I never lie. »

The garden slowly becomes empty. The Judaeans are dumbfounded, but most of them are bursting with wrath. If glances could reduce one to ashes, Jesus would have been pulverised a long time ago. They speak and discuss among themselves while going away, and they are so upset by their defeat that they are unable to conceal the purpose of their presence here under the hypocritical appearance of friendship. They go away without saying goodbye to Lazarus or to the sisters.

Some remain behind as they have been conquered to the Lord by the miracle. Among them there is Joseph Barnabas, who throws himself on his knees before Jesus worshipping Him. Another one is Joel of Abijah, the scribe, who does the same thing before departing. And there are others as well, whom I do not know, but they must be influential people.

In the meantime Lazarus, surrounded by his more intimates, has withdrawn into the house. Joseph, Nicodemus and other good people greet Jesus and go away. The Judaeans who were staying with

Martha and Mary depart giving low bows. The servants close the gate. The house becomes peaceful again.

Jesus looks about Himself. He sees smoke and flames at the end of the garden, towards the sepulchre. All alone, standing in the middle of a path Jesus says: « Rottenness that is being destroyed by fire... The rottenness of death... But no fire will ever destroy the corruption of hearts... of those hearts... Not even the fire of Hell. It will last for ever... How horrible!... Worse than death... Worse than putrefaction... And... But who will save you, o Mankind, if you love so much to be corrupt? You want to be corrupt. And I... I have torn a man from his sepulchre with one word... And with a multitude of words... and a multitude of sorrows I shall not be able to tear away from sin man, men, millions of men. » He sits down and with His hands He covers His face dejectedly...

A servant, who is passing by, sees Him. He goes into the house. Shortly afterwards Mary comes out. She goes towards Jesus walking so lightly that she does not seem to be touching the ground. She approaches Him and says in a low voice: « Rabboni, You are tired... Come, my Lord. Your tired apostles have gone to the other house, except Simon the Zealot... Are You weeping, Master? Why? ... »

She kneels at Jesus' feet... she watches Him...

Jesus looks at her. He does not reply. He stands up and directs His steps towards the house followed by Mary.

They go into one of the halls. Lazarus is not there, neither is the Zealot. But Martha is there, she is happy, transfigured by joy. She turns towards Jesus explaining: « Lazarus has gone to the bathroom. To purify himself further. Oh! Master! Master! What shall I tell You? » She adores Him with her whole being. She becomes aware of Jesus' sadness and says: « Are You sad, Lord? Are You not happy that Lazarus... » She becomes suspicious: « Oh! You are grave with me. I have sinned. It is true. »

« We have sinned, sister » says Mary.

« No. You did not. Oh! Master, Mary did not sin. Mary obeyed. I only disobeyed. I sent for You... because I could no longer bear their insinuations that You were not the Messiah, the Lord... and I could no longer put up with all that suffering... Lazarus was so anxious to have You. He called You so much... Forgive me, Jesus. »

« Are you not saying anything, Mary? » asks Jesus.

« Master... I... I suffered then only as a woman. I suffered because... Martha, swear, swear here, before the Master that you will never tell Lazarus of his frenzy... my Master... I have known You completely, o Divine Mercy, during Lazarus' last hours. Oh! my God! How much You have loved me, as You have forgiven me. You, God, You, Pure, You... if my brother, who does love me, but is a man, only a man, has not forgiven me everything from the bottom of his heart?! No. I am wrong. He has not forgiven my past and when his

weakness on the point of death blunted his goodness, which I thought was oblivion of the past, he shouted his grief and his indignation against me... Oh!... » Mary weeps...

« Do not weep, Mary. God has forgiven you and has forgotten. Lazarus' soul has also forgiven and forgotten, it wanted to forget. The man has not been able to forget everything. And when the flesh overwhelmed the weakened will with its last pangs, the man spoke. »

« I am not indignant at it, Lord. It helped me to love You more and to love Lazarus more. But it was from that moment that I also wished to have You here... because it was too distressing to think that Lazarus should die without peace through my fault... and later, when I heard the Judaeans deride You... when I saw that You were not coming even after his death, not even after I had obeyed You hoping beyond what is credible, hoping till the moment when the sepulchre was opened to receive him, then my spirit suffered. Lord, if I had anything to expiate, and I certainly had it, I did expiate... »

« Poor Mary! I know your heart. You deserved the miracle and let that confirm you in hoping and believing. »

« My Master, I will always hope and believe now. I will never doubt again, Lord. I will live on faith. You have enabled me to believe what is unbelievable. »

« And what about you, Martha? Have you learned? No. Not yet. You are My Martha. But you are not yet My perfect worshipper. Why do you act and you do not contemplate? It is holier. See? Your strength, as it is too inclined towards earthly things, yielded to the ascertainment of earthly matters that at time seem without remedy. In actual fact earthly matters are without remedy, unless God intervenes. That is why human creatures must be able to believe and contemplate, and love to the utmost power of their whole being, with thought, soul, flesh, blood; I repeat: with all the strength of man. I want you to be strong, Martha. I want you to be perfect. You did not obey because you did not believe and hope completely, and you did not believe and hope because you did not love absolutely. But I absolve you. I forgive you, Martha. I raised Lazarus today. I will now give you a stronger heart. I gave him life. I will instil into you the strength to love, believe and hope perfectly. Be happy now and in peace. Forgive those who offended you in the past days... »

« Lord, I have sinned against that. Not long ago I said to old Hananiah, who had sneered at You in previous days: "Who has triumphed? You or God? Your mockery or my faith? Christ is the Living Being and the Truth. I knew that His glory would shine more brightly. And you, old man, make yourself a new soul, if you do not want to know what death is. »

« You spoke the truth, but do not contend with the wicked, Mary.

And forgive. Forgive if you want to imitate Me... Here is Lazarus. I can hear his voice. »

Lazarus in fact comes in, wearing fresh clothes and clean-shaven, his hair dressed and scented. Maximinus and the Zealot are with him. « Master! » Lazarus kneels down once again worshipping.

Jesus lays a hand on his head and smiles saying: « The test is over, My friend. For you and for your sisters. Be happy and strong now in serving the Lord. What do you remember, Me friend, of the past? I mean of your last hours? »

« A great desire to see You and a great peace in the love of my sisters. »

« What did you regret most to leave dying? »

« You, Lord, and my sisters. You, because I would not have been able to serve You, them... because they have given me every joy... »

« Oh! me, brother! » says Mary with a sigh.

« You more than Martha. You have given me Jesus and the measure of what is Jesus. And Jesus has given you to me. You are the gift of God, Mary. »

« You said so also when you were dying... » says Mary and she scrutinises her brother's face.

« Because it is my constant thought. »

« But I have grieved you so deeply... »

« Also my disease was painful. But through it I hope I have expiated the faults of old Lazarus and that I have risen purified to be worthy of God. You and I, the two who have risen again to serve the Lord, and Martha between us, as she has always been the peace of the house. »

« Do you hear that, Mary? Lazarus is speaking words of wisdom and truth. I will now withdraw and leave you to your joy... »

« No, Lord. Stay here with us. Stay in Bethany and in my house. It will be lovely... »

« I will stay. I want to make up for what you have suffered. Martha, do not be sad. Martha thinks that she has grieved Me. But My grief is not brought about by you, but by those who do not want to be redeemed. They hate more and more. Their hearts are poisoned... Well... let us forgive... »

« Let us forgive, Lord » says Lazarus with his mild smile... and it all ends on that word.

Jesus says: « The dictation dated 23rd March 1944 on Lazarus' Resurrection can be put here. »

23rd March 1944.

Jesus says:

« I could have intervened in time to prevent Lazarus' death. But I did not want to do that. I knew that his resurrection would be a

double-edged weapon, because it would convert the righteous-minded Judaeans and would make the non-righteous-minded ones even more rancorous. The latter, because of this final blow of My power, would sentence Me to death. But I had come for that and it was now time that that should be accomplished. I could have gone at once, but I needed to convince the most stubborn incredulous people by means of a resurrection from advanced rottenness. And also My apostles, destined to spread My Faith in the world, needed a faith supported by miracles of the first magnitude.

There was so much humanity in the apostles. I have already said so. It was not an insurmountable obstacle, on the contrary it was a logical consequence of their condition of men called to be My apostles when they were already grown-up. The mentality, the frame of mind of a person cannot be changed between one day and the next one. And, in My wisdom, I did not want to choose and educate children bringing them up according to My thought to make them My apostles. I could have done that, but I did not want to, lest souls should reproach Me for despising those who are not innocent and should justify themselves with the excuse that I also had made it clear that those whose characters are already formed cannot change. No. Everything can be changed if one is willing. In fact I turned cowardly, quarrelsome, usurious, sensual, incredulous people into martyrs, saints and evangelizers of the world. Only those who did not want, did not change.

I loved and still love little and weak people - you are an example - providing they are willing to love and follow Me, and I turn such "nonentities" into My favourites, My friends, My ministers. I still make use of them, and they are a continuous miracle that I work to lead others to believe in Me, and not to kill the possibility of miracles. How languishing that possibility is at present! Like a lamp lacking oil it is in the throes of death and it dies, killed by the scanty or lacking faith in the God of miracles.

There are two forms of insistence in requesting a miracle. God yields to one with love. He turns His back disdainfully to the other. The former asks, as I taught to ask, without lack of confidence and without tiredness, and does not admit that God may not grant the request, because God is good and who is good grants, because God is powerful and can do everything. That is love and God hears those who love. The latter is the overbearingness of rebels who want God to be their servant and to lower Himself to their wickedness and to give them what they do not give Him: love and obedience. This form is an offence that God punishes by denying His graces.

You complain that I no longer work collective miracles. How could I work them? Where are the communities that believe in Me? Where are the true believers? How many true believers are there in a community? Like surviving flowers in a wood burnt by a fire

I can see a believing spirit now and again. Satan has burnt the rest with his doctrines. And he will burn them more and more.

I beg you to bear in mind My reply to Thomas, as a supernatural rule for yourselves. It is not possible to be My true disciples if one cannot give human life the importance it deserves: a means to conquer the true Life, not an aim. He who wants to save his life in this world will lose eternal Life. I have told you and I repeat it. What are trials? Passing clouds. Heaven remains and is waiting for you after the trial.

I conquered Heaven for you through My heroism. You must imitate Me. Heroism is not laid aside exclusively for those who are to suffer martyrdom. Christian life is perpetual heroism because it is a perpetual struggle against the world, the demon and the flesh. I do not compel you to follow Me. I leave you free. But I do not want you to be hypocrites. Either with Me and like Me, or against Me. You cannot deceive Me. No, I cannot be deceived, and I do not form alliances with the Enemy. If you prefer him to Me, you cannot think that you can have Me as your Friend at the same time. Either him or Me. Make your choice.

Martha's grief is different from Mary's because of the different psyche of the two sisters and because of their different behaviour. Happy are those who behave in such a way as to have no remorse for grieving one who is now dead and can no longer be comforted for the sorrow caused to him. But how much happier is he who has no remorse for grieving his God, Me, Jesus, and is not afraid of the day he will have to meet Me, on the contrary he pines for it, as for a joy anxiously dreamt of for a whole lifetime and at long last achieved.

I am your Father, Brother and Friend. So why do you offend Me so often? Do you know how long you still have to live? To live in order to make amends? No, you do not know that. So act righteously hour by hour, day by day. Always righteously. You will always make Me happy. And even if sorrow comes to you, because sorrow is sanctification, it is the myrrh that preserves you from the putridity of sensuality, you will always be certain that I love you - and that I love you also in that grief - and you will always have the Peace that comes from My love. You, My little John, know whether I can comfort one also in grief.

In My prayer to the Father there is repeated what I said at the beginning: it was necessary to rouse the opacity of the Judaeans and of the world in general by means of a main miracle. And the resurrection of a man who had been buried four days and had gone down into the tomb after a long, chronic, disgusting well-known disease is not an event that can leave people indifferent or doubtful. If I had cured him while he was alive, or if I had infused the spirit into him as soon as he had breathed his last, the acidity of

enemies might have raised doubts on the entity of the miracle. But the stench of the corpse, the putrefaction of the bandages, the long period in the sepulchre left no doubts. And, a miracle in the miracle, I wanted Lazarus to be freed and cleaned in the presence of everybody so that they could see that not only life but also the wholesomeness of the limbs had been restored where previously the ulcerated flesh had spread the germs of death in the blood. When I grant a grace I always give more than what you ask for.

I wept before Lazarus' tomb. And many names have been given to My tears. In the meantime you must bear in mind that graces are obtained through grief mixed with unfaltering faith in the Eternal Father. I wept not so much because of the loss of My friend and because of the sorrow of the sisters, as because three thoughts that had always pierced My heart like three sharp nails surfaced then, more lively than ever, like depths stirred up.

The ascertainment of the ruin that Satan had brought to man by seducing him to Evil. A ruin the human punishment of which was sorrow and death. Physical death, the symbol and living metaphor of spiritual death that sin causes to the soul, hurling it into infernal darkness, whereas it was destined, like a queen, to live in the kingdom of Light.

The persuasion that not even this miracle, worked almost as a sublime corollary to three years of evangelization, would convince the Judaic world of the Truth of which I was the Bearer. And that no miracle would in future convert the world to Christ. Oh! How grievous it was to be so close to death for so few!

The mental vision of My imminent death. I was God. But I was also Man. And to be the Redeemer I was to feel the weight of expiation. Therefore the horror of death and of such a death. I was a living healthy being who was saying to himself: "I shall soon be dead, I shall be in a sepulchre like Lazarus. Soon the most dreadful agony will be my companion. I must die". God's kindness spares you the knowledge of the future. But I was not spared it.

Oh! believe Me, you who complain of your destiny. None was more sad than Mine, because I always clearly foresaw everything that was to happen to Me, joined to the poverty, the hardships, the bitterness that accompanied Me from My birth to My death. So, do not complain. And hope in Me. I give you My peace. »

[undated]

Marginal notes on Lazarus' resurrection and in connection with a sentence of St. John. Jesus says:

« In the Gospel of John, as it has now been read for ages, there is written: "Jesus had not yet come into the village of Bethany" (John 9, 30). To avoid possible objections I wish to point out that, with regard to this sentence and the one of the Work which states

that I met Martha a few steps away from the fountain in Lazarus' garden, there is no contradiction of events, but only a discrepancy of translation and description. Three quarters of the village of Bethany belonged to Lazarus. Likewise a large part of Jerusalem belonged to him. But let us speak of Bethany. As three quarters of it belonged to Lazarus, one could say: Bethany of Lazarus. So the text would not be wrong even if I had met Martha in the village or at the fountain, as some people wish to say. In actual fact I had not gone into the village, to prevent the people of Bethany, who were all hostile to the members of the Sanhedrin, from rushing towards Me. I had gone round the back of Bethany to reach Lazarus' house, which was at the opposite end with respect to one who entered Bethany coming from En-shemes. So John rightly says that I had not yet entered the village. And equally right is little John who says that I had stopped near the basin (fountain for the Jews) already in Lazarus' garden, but still very far from the house. One should also consider that during the period of mourning and uncleanness (it was not yet the seventh day after Lazarus' death) his sisters did not leave the house. So the meeting took place within the enclosure of their property. Note that little John states that the people of Bethany came into the garden only when I had ordered the stone to be removed. Previously the people of Bethany did not know that I was in Bethany, and only when the news was spread they rushed to Lazarus' house. »

547. In Jerusalem and in the Temple after the Resurrection of Lazarus.

27th December 1946.

If the news of the death of Lazarus had shaken and agitated Jerusalem and a large part of Judaea, the news of his resurrection ended by shaking and penetrating also where the news of the death had not caused any excitement.

Perhaps the few Pharisees and scribes, that is the members of the Sanhedrin present at the resurrection, did not mention it to the people. But the Judaeans certainly have spoken about it, and the news has spread in a flash, and the voices of women repeat it from house to house, from terrace to terrace, while the common people propagate it in the streets with great jubilation for Jesus' triumph and for Lazarus. People fill the streets running here and there, thinking they are the first to give the news, but they are disappointed because it is already known in Ophel as well as in Bezetha, in Zion as at the Sixtus market. It is known in synagogues, in warehouses, in the Temple and in Herod's palace. It is known at the Antonia and from there, or vice versa, it spreads to the guard-rooms at the gates. It fills mansions and hovels: « The Rabbi of Nazareth

has raised from the dead Lazarus of Bethany, who died the day before Friday and was buried before the beginning of the Sabbath and he rose again today at the sixth hour. » The Jewish acclamations to the Christ and to the Most High mingle with the various « By Jove! By Pollux! By Libitina! » etc. of the Romans.

The only ones I do not see among the crowds talking in the streets are the members of the Sanhedrin. I do not see even one of them, whereas I see Chuza and Manaen come out from a stately mansion and I hear Chuza say: « Wonderful Wonderful! I sent word to Johanna at once. He is really God! »; and Manaen replies to him: « Herod, who came from Jericho to pay his respects to... the chief, Pontius Pilate, seems to have gone mad in his palace, while Herodias is frantic and she presses him to have the Christ arrested. She trembles dreading His power; he is torn with remorse. With chattering teeth he tells his devoted followers to defend him from... ghosts. He got drunk to muster up courage and the wine eddying in his head makes him see phantasms. He shouts saying that the Christ has raised also John who is now yelling God's maledictions close to him. I ran away from that Gehenna. I was content with saying to him: "Lazarus has been raised from the dead by Jesus the Nazarene. Mind you do not touch Him, because He is God". I stimulate his fear so that he may not yield to her murderous intents. »

« On the contrary, I shall have to go there... I must go. But I wanted to call on Eliel and Elkanah first. They live in seclusion, but their opinions are always highly thought of in Israel! And Johanna is pleased that I honour them. And I... »

« A good protection for you. That is true. But not so good as the Master's love. That is the only protection that matters... » Chuza does not reply. He is pensive... I lose sight of them.

Joseph of Arimathea comes forward hurriedly from Bezetha. He is stopped by a group of citizens who are still uncertain whether they should believe the news. They ask him.

« It's true. Very true. Lazarus has risen and he has also been cured. I saw him with my own eyes. »

« So... He is really the Messiah! »

« His deeds are such. His life is perfect. This is the right time. Satan fights Him. Let each man conclude in his own heart who is the Nazarene » says Joseph wisely and fairly at the same time. He greets them and goes away.

They continue to discuss and end up by saying: « He is really the Messiah. »

There is a group of legionaries and one of them says: « I will go to Bethany tomorrow if I can. By Venus and Mars, the gods I prefer! I may travel all over the world, from the hot deserts to the icy German lands, but never again shall I find a man who comes to life again after being dead for days. I want to see what a man, who

comes back from death, is like. He will be black with the water of the rivers of the beyond... »

« If he was a virtuous man, he will be bluish after drinking the sky-blue water of the Elysian Fields. There is not only the Styx there... »

« He will tell us what the meadows of asphodels in Hades are like... I will come as well... »

« If Pontius will allow us... »

« Of course he will! He sent a messenger to Claudia at once telling her to come. Claudia loves these things. I have heard her more than once converse, with the other women and her Greek freedmen, about souls and immortality. »

« Claudia believes in the Nazarene. According to her He is greater than any other man. »

« Yes, but according to Valeria He is more than a man. He is God. A kind of Jupiter and Apollo with regard to power and handsomeness, they say, and wiser than Minerva. Have you seen Him? I came here with Pontius and it is the first time that I have been here, so I do not know... »

« I think that you have arrived in time to see many things. Not long ago Pontius was shouting as loud as Stentor saying: "Everything is to be changed here. They must understand that Rome is the ruler and that they, all of them, are servants. And the greater they are, the more servile they are, because they are more dangerous". I think it was because of that tablet that Annas' servant took to him... »

« Of course. He will not listen to them... And he keeps shifting us... because he does not want us to be friendly with them. »

« Friendly with them? Ah! Ah! With those big-nosed types stinking like billy-goats? Pontius suffers from indigestion because he eats too much pork. If anything... we are friendly with some of the women who do not disdain the kisses of clean-shaven lips... » says a mischievous one laughing.

« It is a fact that after the unruliness at the feast of the Tabernacles he insisted in having all the troops changed with the result that we have to go away... »

« That is true. The arrival of the galley bringing Longinus and his century was already notified at Caesarea. New officers and new troops... and all because of those crocodiles of the Temple. I liked this place. »

« I preferred Brindisi... But I shall get accustomed to this place » says the one who arrived in Palestine recently.

They also move away.

Some guards of the Temple pass by with wax-tablets. People watch them and say: « The Sanhedrin is meeting with urgency. What are they going to do? »

A man replies: « Let us go up to the Temple and see... » They set out towards the street leading to the Moriah.

The sun disappears behind the houses in Zion and the western mountains. Night falls and the streets are soon cleared of curious people. Those who went up to the Temple come down looking upset because they have been driven away from the gates, where they had lingered to see the members of the Sanhedrin pass by.

The inside of the Temple, now empty, desert, enveloped in moonlight, seems immense. The members of the Sanhedrin slowly gather in their meeting hall. They are all there, exactly as they were for Jesus' death sentence, but those who were then acting as clerks are not present (1). Only the members of the Sanhedrin are there, some sitting in their places, some in groups near the doors.

Caiaphas comes in with his face and body resembling those of an excessively fat and wicked frog, and he goes to his seat.

They begin to discuss the events at once and they become so impassioned of the matter that the session is soon animated. They leave their seats, they go down into the empty space gesticulating and speaking in loud voices.

Some counsel calm and circumspection before taking a decision. Others answer back: « But have you not heard those who came here after the ninth hour? If we lose the most important Judaeans, what is the use of accumulating charges? The longer He lives, the less we shall be believed if we accuse Him. »

« And this fact cannot be denied. We cannot say to the many people who were there: "What you have seen is not true. It is a make-believe. You were drunk". The man was dead. Putrid. Decomposed. The corpse was placed in a closed sepulchre and the sepulchre was properly walled up. The corpse had been enveloped in bandages and covered with balms for several days. And it was tied. And yet it came out of its place, it came as far as the entrance by itself without walking. And when it was freed, the body was no longer dead. It breathed. There was no putrefaction. Whereas before, when it was alive, it was covered in sores, and when it died it was rotten. »

« Have you heard the most influential Judaeans, whom we urged to go there to have them completely on our side? They came and said to us: "As far as we are concerned He is the Messiah". Almost every one of them has come! Not to mention the people!... »

« And those cursed Romans full of nonsense! What about them? They say that He is Jupiter Maximus. And if they get that idea into their heads! They made us acquainted with their stories, and it was a curse. Cursed be those who wanted Hellenism among us and out of flattery desecrated us with foreign usages! But it helps us to know

(1) The present chapter was written after the one describing Jesus being sentenced to death and which is part of volume 5.

people. And we know that the Romans are quick in demolishing and elevating by means of plots and coups d'etat. Now if anyone of these mad people goes into raptures over the Nazarene and proclaims Him Caesar, and therefore, divine, who will ever dare touch Him? »

« Certainly not! Who do you think would dream of doing that? They do not give a fig for Him or for us. No matter how great is what He does, He is always "a Jew" as far as they are concerned. So nothing but a miserable wretch. Fear has turned your brain, dear son of Annas! »

« Fear? Did you hear how Pontius replied to my father's invitation? He is upset, I tell you. He is upset by this last event, and he is afraid of the Nazarene. How wretched we are! That man has come to ruin us! »

« I wish we had not gone there and we had not almost ordered the most mighty Judaeans to go as well! If Lazarus had risen without witnesses... »

« So? What would have changed? We certainly could not have made him disappear for good to make people believe that he was always dead! »

« Certainly not. But we could have said that it was apparent death. You can always find witnesses bribed to commit perjury. »

« But why so much excitement? I can see no reason for it! Has He perhaps provoked the Sanhedrin and the Pontificate? No, He has not. He just worked a miracle. »

« Just?! But are you mad or has He bribed you, Eleazar? Did He not provoke the Sanhedrin and the Pontificate? What else do you want? The people... »

« People can say what they like, but the situation is exactly as Eleazar said. The Nazarene has only worked a miracle. »

« That's another one defending Him! You are no longer fair, Nicodemus! You are no longer just! That is an action against us. Against us, do you realise it? Nothing will convince the crowds any longer. Ah! How miserable we are! Today some Judaeans scoffed at me! At me they scoffed! »

« Be quiet, Doras! You are only a man. It's the principle that is attacked! Our laws! Our prerogatives! »

« You are right, Simon, and we must defend them. »

« How? »

« By offending and destroying His! »

« That is easily said, Sadoc. But how can you destroy them if with your own power you cannot even make a midge come to life again? What is required here is a miracle greater than His. But none of us can work it because... » The speaker cannot explain why.

Joseph of Arimathea completes the sentence: « Because we are just men, only men. »

They rush upon him asking: « And what is He, then? »

Joseph of Arimathea replies without hesitation: « He is God. If I still had had any doubt... »

« But you had no doubt. We know, Joseph. We are well aware. You may state clearly that you love Him! »

« There is nothing wrong if Joseph loves Him. I also admit that He is the greatest Rabbi in Israel. »

« Are you, Gamaliel, saying that? »

« Yes, I maintain that. And it is an honour to me to be... dethroned by Him, because so far I had kept the tradition of the great rabbis, the last one of whom was Hillel, but after me I do not know who was able to receive the wisdom of centuries. Now I shall go away happily, because I know that it will not be lost, on the contrary it will grow greater, as it will be increased by His own wisdom, in which the Spirit of God is certainly present. »

« But what are you saying, Gamaliel? »

« I am speaking the truth. It is not by closing our eyes that we can ignore what we are. We are no longer wise, because the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and we are sinners without the fear of God. If we had such fear we would not trample on the just, neither would we be foolishly greedy for the wealth of the world. God gives and God takes away, according to merits and demerits. And if God deprives us of what He had given us, in order to give it to other people, may He be blessed because holy is the Lord and holy are all His deeds. »

« But we were talking of miracles and we meant that none of us can work them because Satan is not with us. »

« No. Because God is not with us. Moses parted the waters and he struck the rock, Joshua stopped the sun, Elijah raised the boy from death and made the sky give rain, but God was with them. I remind you that there are six things that God hates and the seventh He 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 and he who sows dissension among brothers. We do all these things. I say: we. But you only do them. Because I refrain from shouting "Hosanna" and from crying "Anathema". I am waiting. »

« For the sign! Of course! You are waiting for the sign! But what sign can you expect from a poor madman, even if we want to forgive Him all the rest? »

Gamaliel stretches his hands and arms forward, and with closed eyes and lightly lowered head, looking most grave, he says in a slow distant voice: « I have anxiously asked the Lord to show me the truth, and He enlightened for me the words of Jesus the son of Sirach. These ones: "The Creator of all things spoke to me and gave me His instructions, and He Who created me rested in my Tabernacle

and said to me: 'Dwell in Jacob, make Israel your inheritance, take root among My chosen people... And He enlightened also the following words and I have acknowledged them: "Approach Me, you who desire Me, and take your fill of My fruits because My spirit is sweeter than honey and My inheritance is sweeter than the honeycomb. The memories of Me will last for ever. They who eat Me will hunger for more, they who drink me will thirst for more; whoever listens to Me will never have to blush, whoever works for Me will never sin, whoever explains Me will have eternal life". And the light of God became brighter in my spirit while my eyes were reading these words: "All these things are contained in the book of Life, the will of the Most High, the doctrine of Truth... God promised David that from him would descend the most powerful King Who is to sit on the throne of glory for ever. His wisdom brims like the Pishon and the Tigris in the season of fruit, like the Euphrates He brims with intelligence, He rises like the Jordan at harvest time. He diffuses wisdom like light... He was the first to become perfectly aware of it". That is what God had enlightened for me! Alas! I say that the Wisdom among us is too great to be understood by us, neither can we contain a thought vaster than oceans nor an advice deeper than the great abyss. And we hear Him shout: "Like an immense watercourse I gushed out of Paradise and I said: 'I am going to water My garden', and then my watercourse became a river, and the river a sea. Like dawn I shed My doctrine on everybody, and I shall make it known to the remotest peoples. I shall descend into the lowest parts, I shall cast glances on those who are sleeping, I shall enlighten those who hope in the Lord. I shall pour out teaching like prophecy and I shall leave it to those who seek wisdom, I shall not stop announcing it until the holy century. I have not toiled for Myself alone, but for all who are seeking the truth". This is what God, the Most High God, made me read » and he lowers his arms and raises his head.

« So, according to you He is the Messiah?! Tell us! »

« He is not the Messiah. »

« He is not? Then what is He according to you? Not a demon. Not an angel. Not the Messiah... »

« He is He Who is. »

« You are raving! Is He God? Is that madman God according to you? »

« He is He Who is. God knows what He is. We see His works. God sees also His thoughts. But He is not the Messiah because Messiah to us means King. He is not and never will be king. But He is holy. And His works are those of a holy man. And we cannot threaten the Innocent without committing sin. I will not assent to sin. »

« But with your words you have almost said that He is the Expected One! »

« I have said so. While the light of the Most High lasted I saw Him as such. Then... as the hand of the Lord no longer held me uplifted in His light, I became man again, the man of Israel, and the words were only those to which the man of Israel, I, you, those before us, and, God forbid it, those after us, attach the meaning of their, of our thoughts, not the meaning they have in the eternal Thought that dictated them to His servant. »

« We are talking, digressing, wasting time. And the crowds in the meantime are excited » says Hananiah in a croaking voice.

« You are right! It is necessary to take a decision and act, to save ourselves and to triumph. »

« You say that Pilate would not listen to us when we asked his help against the Nazarene. But if we informed him... You said previously that if the troops become excited they may proclaim Him Caesar... Eh! A good idea! Let us go and point this danger out to the Proconsul. We shall be honoured as faithful servants of Rome and... and if he takes action we shall get rid of the Rabbi. Let us go! Since you, o Eleazar of Annas, are more friendly with him than we are, be our guide » says Helkai laughing malignantly.

There is some hesitancy, then a group of the most fanatics leaves to go to the Antonia. Caiaphas remains with the others.

« At this time! He will not receive them » remarks one.

« On the contrary! It's the best time. Pontius is always in high spirits after eating and drinking as a pagan does... »

I leave them there discussing, and I see the scene at the Antonia.

They cover the short distance quickly and without difficulty, so bright is the moonlight that is so different from the red light of the lamps lit in the entrance-hall of the praetorium building.

Eleazar is successful in sending in his name to Pilate, and they are led into a large empty hall. It is completely empty. There is only a heavy chair with low back covered with a purple cloth that stands out strongly against the complete whiteness of the hall. They remain in a group, somewhat timid and cold, standing on the white marble floor. No one comes in. There is dead silence, broken at intervals by remote music.

« Pilate is at table. He is certainly with friends. The music is played in the triclinium. There will be dances in honour of the guests » says Eleazar of Annas.

« They are corrupt. I will purify myself tomorrow. Lust oozes from these walls » says Helkai with disgust.

« Why did you come, then? It was your idea » replies Eleazar.

« For the honour of God and the welfare of our fatherland I can make any sacrifice. And this is a great one! I had purified myself after approaching Lazarus... and now!... A dreadful day, this one!... »

There is no sign of Pilate. Eleazar, being familiar with the place,

tries the doors. They are all closed. The Judaeans in the hall are seized with fear. Frightening stories come to light again. They regret having come. They feel that they are already lost.

At long last, on the side opposite to them, who are near the door through which they came in and thus close to the only chair available in the hall, a door is opened and Pilate comes in, wearing a tunic as white as the hall. He comes in speaking to some guests. He is laughing. He turns round to instruct a slave, who is holding up the curtain beyond the door, to throw essences into a brazier and to bring scents and water for their hands and a slave to come with mirror and combs. He pays no attention to the Hebrews, as if they were not there. They get enraged but they dare not react...

Over there, in the meantime, they bring braziers, they spread resins on the fire and pour scented water on the hands of the Romans. And a slave, with skilful movements, tidies their hair according to the fashion of rich Romans of those days. And the Hebrews get enraged.

The Romans laugh and jest among themselves looking now and again at the group waiting at the other end, and one of them speaks to Pilate who has never turned round to look; but Pilate shrugs his shoulders making gesture of boredom and he claps his hands to call a slave whom he orders in a loud voice to bring sweets and to let in the dancers. The Hebrews tremble with rage and are scandalised. Just imagine Helkai compelled to watch girls dancing! His countenance is a poem of suffering and hatred.

The slaves come back with sweets in precious cups, and they are followed by the dancers wearing garlands of flowers and hardly covered with fabrics that are so light as to seem veils. Their very white bodies appear through their light garments dyed pink and blue, when they pass before the burning braziers and the many lights placed at the other end. The Romans admire the gracefulness of bodies and movements and Pilate asks them to repeat a dance that he particularly liked. Helkai, imitated by his companions, turns indignantly towards the wall not to see the dancers move as lightly as butterflies with their dresses fluttering indecorously.

When the short dance is over Pilate dismisses them putting in the hand of each a cup full of sweets and he throws a bracelet into each cup nonchalantly. And at last he condescends to turn round and look at the Hebrews saying to his friends in a weary voice: « And now... I must pass from dreams to reality... from poetry... to hypocrisy... from gracefulness to the filthy things of life. The miseries of being a Proconsul!... Hail, friends, and have pity on me. »

He is left alone and he slowly approaches the Hebrews. He sits down, he examines his well-cared for hands and he discovers something wrong under one nail. He attends to it anxiously taking from under his tunic a tiny thin golden stick with which he remedies the

great damage of an imperfect nail...

He is then so kind as to turn his head round slowly. He sneers seeing the Hebrews still bowing servilely and he says: « You! Here! And be quick. I have no time to waste on trifles. »

The Hebrews approach Pilate in an attitude that is always servile until he shouts: « That's enough. Don't come too close » and his words seem to nail them to the floor. « Speak! And stand up straight because animals only stoop towards the ground » and he laughs.

The Hebrews straighten themselves at the sneering words and remain stiff.

« So? Speak! You insisted on coming. Speak, now that you are here. »

« We wanted to tell you... We are told... We are faithful servants of Rome... »

« Ah! Ah! Faithful servants of Rome! I will let divine Caesar know and he will be happy! He will certainly be happy! Speak up, you clowns! And be quick! »

The members of the Sanhedrin quiver with indignation, but they do not react. Helkai speaks on behalf of everybody: « We must inform you, o Pontius, that a man was raised from the dead today at Bethany.. »

« I know. Is that why you have come? I was informed several hours ago. He is a lucky man as he already knows what it is to die and what the next world is like! What can I do if Lazarus of Theophilus has been raised from the dead? Has he perhaps brought me a message from Hades? » He is ironic.

« No. But His resurrection is a danger... »

« For him? Of course! The danger of having to die again. Not a very pleasant event. So? What can I do? Am I perhaps Jupiter? »

« A danger not for Lazarus. But for Caesar. »

« For?... Domine! Am I perhaps drunk? Did you say: for Caesar? And how can Lazarus be harmful to Caesar? Are you afraid that the stench of the sepulchre may infect the air that the Emperor breathes? Do not worry! He is too far away! »

« No, not that. The fact is that Lazarus by rising from the dead may have the Emperor dethroned. »

« Dethroned? Ah! Ah! That's a bigger fib than the whole world! So you are drunk, not I. Perhaps the fright has deranged your minds. To see a man rise... I think it may upset one. Go, go to bed. And have a good rest. And a warm bath. A very warm one. It is very good against deliriums. »

« We are not delirious, Pontius. We are telling you that unless you take a decision you will go through a sad time. You will certainly be punished, if not killed, by the usurper. The Nazarene will soon be proclaimed king, king of the world, do you understand? Your very legionaries will proclaim Him. They have been enticed by the

Nazarene and today's event has elated them. What servant of Rome are you, if you do not take care of her peace? So, do you want to see the Empire upset and divided because of your inertness? Do you want to see Rome defeated, the ensigns pulled down, the Emperor killed, everything destroyed... »

« Be silent! I will now speak. And I say to you: you are mad! You are even worse. You are liars. You are criminals. You deserve death. Get out of here, you filthy servants of your own interests, of your hatred, of your meanness. You are servants, not I. I am a Roman citizen and Roman citizens are not subject to anybody. I am an imperial official and I work for the welfare of our fatherland. You... are our subjects. You... are under our rule. You... you are the galley-slaves tied to the benches and you fret in vain. The lash of the chief is over you. The Nazarene!... Would you like me to kill the Nazarene? Would you like me to put Him in prison? By Jove! If for the safety of Rome and of the divine Emperor I should imprison dangerous subjects or kill them here where I am the governor, I should leave free and alive the Nazarene and His followers, and them alone. Go away. Clear off and never come back here again. You riotous fellows, instigators, thieves and accomplices of thieves! I am well aware of all your manoeuvres. You had better know that. And bear in mind that new weapons and fresh legionaries have served to discover your snares and your instruments. You complain of Roman taxes. But how much have you paid for Melkiah of Gilead, and Jonah of Scythopolis, and Philip of Shochoh, and John of Beth-aven and Joseph of Ramoth, and for all the others who will soon be caught? And do not go towards the caves in the valley because there are more legionaries there than stones, and the law and galley are the same for everybody. For everybody! Do you understand? For everybody. And I hope to live long enough to see you all in chains, slaves among slaves under the heel of Rome. Get out! Go and report - you as well, Eleazar of Annas whom I do not wish to see any more in my house - that the time of clemency is over, and that I am the Proconsul and you the subjects. The subjects. And I give orders. In the name of Rome. Go out! You night snakes and vampires! And the Nazarene wants to redeem you? If He were God, He ought to strike you by lightning! Thus the most revolting stain would disappear from the world. Out! And dare not conspire, or you will become acquainted with sword and whip. »

He stands up and goes away slamming the door before the dismayed members of the Sanhedrin, who have no time to come to themselves because an armed squad comes in and drives them out of the hall and of the building as if they were dogs.

They go back to the hall in the Sanhedrin. They make their report. The excitement is great. The news of the arrest of many highwaymen and of raids into caves to catch more upsets very much all

the members who have remained. Many, in fact, tired of waiting, have gone away.

« And yet we cannot let Him live » shout some of the priests.

« We cannot leave Him alone. He is active. We are doing nothing. And we are losing ground day by day. If we leave Him free, He will continue to work miracles and everybody will believe in Him. And the Romans will end up by opposing us and destroying us all together. Pontius says so. But if the crowds should proclaim Him king, oh! Pontius will have to punish all of us. We must not allow that » shouts Sadoc.

« All right. But how? The attempt... by Roman law has failed. Pontius is sure of the Nazarene. The attempt... through our law is impossible. He does not commit sin... » points out one of the members.

« If no sin exists, one can be invented » insinuates Caiaphas.

« It's a sin to do that! To swear what is false! To have an innocent condemned! It's... too much!... » say most of them in horror. « It's a crime, because it would be His death. »

« So? Does that frighten you? You are foolish and you understand nothing. After what happened Jesus must die. Do you not consider that it is better for us if one man dies instead of many? So let Him die to save His people so that all our country may not perish. In any case... He says that He is the Saviour. So let Him sacrifice Himself to save everybody » says Caiaphas with disgusting cold sly hatred.

« But... Caiaphas! Consider! He... »

« I have spoken. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, the High Priest. Woe to those who do not respect the Pontiff of Israel. The thunderbolts of the Lord upon them! We have waited enough! We have had enough flurry! I order and decree that whoever knows where the Nazarene is must come and inform us of the place, and anathema on those who will not obey my word. »

« But Annas... » say some objecting.

« Annas said to me: "Whatever you do will be holy". Let us close the meeting. We shall all be here on Friday between the third and the sixth hour to decide what to do. All of us, I said. Inform those who are absent. And ensure that all the heads of families and classes, all the cream of Israel are summoned. The Sanhedrin has spoken. Go. »

And he is the first to withdraw to the place from which he came, whilst the others go in different directions and they leave the Temple speaking in low voices while going home.

548. At Bethany after the Resurrection of Lazarus.

30th December 1946.

It is pleasant to rest among loving friends and near the Master in sunny days that show the early charms of springtime, contemplating the fields growing verdant with the tender sprouts of corn, admiring the meadows that break the even green winter shade with the first little many-coloured flowers, gazing at the hedges displaying gems that begin to open smiling in the more sunny spots, looking at almond-trees the tops of which are covered with early foamlike flowers. And Jesus rejoices at the sight, as well as the apostles and the three friends at Bethany. And everything seems far and remote: malevolence, sorrow, sadness, illness, death, hatred, envy, all the painful, tormenting, worrying things on the Earth.

All the apostles are overjoyed and they say so. They express their conviction - that is so certain, so triumphant - that Jesus has now defeated all His enemies, that His mission will now proceed without any obstacle, that He will be acknowledged as the Messiah also by those who have been most tenacious in opposing Him. And they speak, somewhat elated, rejuvenated, happy as they are, making plans for the future, dreaming... dreaming so much... and so humanly.

The most elated, also because of his psyche that carries him to extremes, is Judas of Kerioth. He congratulates himself on having waited, on his ability in acting, on his lasting faith in the Master's triumph, on defying the threats of the Sanhedrin... He is so elated that he ends up by telling what he has concealed so far, amid the utter astonishment of his companions: « Yes, they wanted to bribe me, they wanted to entice me with blandishments, and when they saw that they were of no avail, with threats. If you only knew! But I paid them back in their own coin. I pretended to love them as they feigned to love me. I allured them as they allured me, I betrayed them as they wanted to betray me... Because that is what they wanted to do. They wanted to make me believe that they were testing the Master to be able to proclaim Him the Holy Man of God solemnly. But I know them, I know them very well. And in all their plans of which they informed me, I contrived to make Jesus' holiness shine more brightly than the sun at midday in a cloudless sky... It was a dangerous game! If they had realised that! But I was prepared for every eventuality, even to die, to serve God in my Master. And thus I was informed of everything... Eh! at times I must have seemed to be mad, wicked, bad-tempered. If you had known what the situation was like! I alone know what I suffered at night, the precautions I had to take to do a good turn without attracting anybody's attention! You were somewhat suspicious of me. I know. But I bear you no grudge. My behaviour could have roused suspicion. But my purpose was good and that was all I worried about. Jesus

is not aware of anything. That is, I think that He also suspects me. But I will keep quiet without wishing to be praised by Him. And I ask you not to say anything either. One day, one of the first times I was with Him - and you, Simon Zealot, and you, John of Zebedee, were with me - He reproached me because I boasted of having a practical sense. Since then... I never enhanced this quality of mine in His presence, but I continued to make use of it, for His own good. I did what a mother does for her inexperienced child. She removes obstacles from his way, she bends a thornless branch towards him, she pushes aside one that may hurt him, or with shrewd acts she gets him to do what he must learn to do and to avoid what is bad, without the child being aware of it. On the contrary, the son believes that he succeeded by himself in walking without stumbling, in picking a lovely flower for his mother, in doing this and that thing spontaneously. I did the same with the Master. Because holiness is not sufficient in a world of men and demons. It is necessary to fight with equal weapons, at least as men... and at times... it is not a bad thing to add a pinch of infernal cunning to the other weapons. That is my idea. But He will not listen to me... He is too good... Well. I understand everything and everybody, and I excuse everybody for the evil thoughts you might have had about me. You now know. And now we love one another as good companions, and we do everything for His love and His glory » and he points at Jesus Who is walking farther away in a sunny alley speaking to Lazarus, who listens to Him smiling ecstatically.

The apostles go away towards Simon's house. Jesus instead comes closer with His friend. I listen to them.

Lazarus says: « Yes. I had understood that there was some great purpose, certainly a good one, in letting me die. I thought it was to spare me the sight of their persecution against You. And, You know whether I am telling the truth, I was glad to die so that I would not see it. It embitters me. It upsets me. See, Master. I have forgiven those who are the chiefs of our people many things. I had to forgive up to my last days... Helkai... But death and resurrection have cancelled all previous things. Why remember their last efforts to grieve me? I have forgiven Mary everything. She seems to doubt it. And more than that, I do not know why, since I came to life again she has taken an attitude that is so... I do not know how to define it. She is so mild and submissive, which is so strange with my Mary... Not even during the first days when she came here, after being redeemed by You, was she like that... Perhaps You know something and You can tell me, because Mary tells You everything... Do You know whether those who came here have reproached her too severely? I have always tried to weaken the memory of her fault when I saw her engrossed in the thought of her past, in order to alleviate her suffering. She cannot set her mind at rest over it. She

seems so... above what might be dejection. Some people may even think that she does not show much regret... But I understand... I know. Everything makes one expiate. I think she does a great deal of penance, of all kinds. I would not be surprised if she wore a cilice under her dresses and if her flesh were familiar to the blows of the scourge... But the brotherly love I have for her and that aims at supporting her by laying a veil between past and present, is not shared by anybody else... Do you know, by any chance, whether she was ill-treated by someone who is not capable of forgiving... and who needs to be forgiven? »

« I do not know, Lazarus. Mary has not mentioned it to Me. She only told Me that she suffered very much on hearing the Pharisees insinuate that I was not the Messiah because I was not curing you or raising you from the dead. »

« And... has she not said anything to You about me? You know... I was suffering so much... I remember that my mother in her last hours revealed things that had escaped Martha's notice and mine. It was as if the depths of her soul and of her past surfaced again with the last agitations of her heart. I hope that... My heart has suffered so much because of Mary... and it has striven in every way not to give her the sensation of what I suffered because of her... I would not like to have struck her now that she is good, whilst out of brotherly love first, and then for Your sake, I never struck her in infamous days when she was a disgrace. What did she say to You about me, Master? »

« Her grief for having had too short a time to give you her holy love as your sister and fellow-disciple. Your loss made her measure the extent of the treasures of love that she had crushed under her feet once... and now she is happy to be able to give all the love that she wishes to give you, to tell you that you are her holy beloved brother. »

« Ah! that is it! I realised that! I am glad of that. But I was afraid I might have offended her... Since yesterday I have been thinking over and over again... I have been trying to remember... but I cannot... »

« But why do you want to remember? There is your future in front of you. Your past was left in the sepulchre. Nay, it was not even left there. It was burnt with the funeral bandages. But if it serves to give you peace, I will tell you your last words to your sisters. To Mary in particular. You said that it was because of Mary that I came and I come here, because Mary knows how to love more than anybody else. That is true. You said that she has loved you more than all the others who have loved you. That is also true, because she has loved you renovating herself for God's sake and for yours. You said to her, and quite rightly, that a whole life of delights would not have given you the joy that you received through her. And you

blessed your sisters as a patriarch used to bless his dearest creatures. You equally blessed Martha, whom you called your peace; and Mary, whom you called your joy. Are you happy now? »

« Yes, Master, my mind is at peace now. »

« Then, as peace gives mercy, forgive also the chiefs of the people who are persecuting Me. Because that is what you wanted to say: that you can forgive everything, except the evil they do Me. »

« It is so, Master. »

« No, Lazarus, I forgive them. You must forgive them if you want to be like Me. »

« Oh! Like You! I cannot! I am only a man! »

« The man was left down there. The man! Your spirit... You know what happens at the death of a man... »

« No, Lord. I remember nothing of what happened to me » interrupts Lazarus vehemently.

Jesus smiles and replies: «I was not referring to your personal knowledge, to your particular experience. I was speaking of what every believer knows will happen to him when he dies. »

« Ah! The particular Judgement. I know. I believe. The soul presents itself to God, and God judges it. »

« It is so. And the judgement of God is just and inviolable. And it has infinite value. If the soul is judged mortally guilty it becomes a damned soul. If it is lightly guilty it is sent to Purgatory. If it is just it goes to the peace of Limbo awaiting Me to open the gates of Heaven. So I called your soul back after it had been judged by God. If you had been damned I could not have called you back to life, because by doing so I would have cancelled My Father's judgement. For damned souls no further changes are possible. They are judged for ever. So you belonged to the number of those who were not damned. So you either belonged to the class of the blessed souls, or to the class of those who will be blessed after being purified. But consider this, My dear friend. If the sincere will of repentance that man can have while being still a man, that is, body and soul, is valid as purification; if the symbolical rite of baptism in water, that one wants out of spirit of contrition to be cleansed of the foulness contracted in the world and because of one's flesh, has the value of purification for us Hebrews; what value will repentance have, a more real and perfect repentance, a much more perfect repentance of a soul freed from the body, aware of what God is, enlightened on the gravity of its errors, enlightened on the extent of the joy that had moved away for hours, for years, for ages: the joy of the peace of Limbo that will soon be the joy of the achieved possession of God: the double, treble purification of perfect repentance, of perfect love, of the bath in the ardour of the flames lit by the love of God and by the love of spirits, in which and by which the spirits are stripped of all impurity and emerge as beautiful as seraphim, crowned with

what does not even crown seraphim: their earthly and ultra-earthly martyrdom against vices and for the sake of love? What will it be? Tell Me, My dear friend. »

« Well... I do not know... perfection. Better still... a new creation. »

« There you are: you have said the right word. The soul becomes as if it were created again. It becomes like the soul of an infant. It is new. The past no longer exists. Its past of man. When the original Sin falls, the soul without stain and the shadow of stain, will be super-created and worthy of Paradise. I called back your soul that had been re-created through your willing attachment to Good, through the expiation of pain and death, and through your perfect repentance and your perfect love, achieved beyond death. So your soul is as innocent as the soul of a baby a few hours old. And if you are a new-born baby, why do you want to put on your spiritual childhood the heavy cumbersome clothes of an adult? The cheerful spirit of a child has wings, not chains. They imitate Me quite easily as they have not yet assumed any personality. They become like Me, because My figure and My doctrine can be impressed on their souls devoid of all traces without any confusion of lines. Their souls are free from human memories, from resentment, from prejudice. There is nothing in them, so I can be there, perfect and absolute as I am in Heaven. You, who are born again, a new-born, because in your old flesh the driving power is new, clean, without past and without traces of what it was, you, who have come back to serve Me, and only for that purpose, you must be as I am, more than anybody else. Look at Me. Look at Me carefully. Look at yourself in Me, and mirror Me in yourself. Two mirrors that look at each other to reflect in each other the figure of what they love. You are a man and a child. A man by age, a child by the purity of your heart. You have the advantage over children of being already acquainted with Good and Evil, and of choosing Good even before your Baptism in the fire of love. Well, I say to you, to the man whose spirit has been cleansed by the purification received: "Be as perfect as our Father in Heaven is perfect and as I am. Be perfect, that is, be like Me Who have loved you so much as to go against all the laws of life and death, of heaven and the earth, in order to have once again on the Earth a servant of God and a true friend of Mine, and a blessed soul, a great blessed soul in Heaven". I say that to everybody: "Be perfect". And they, the majority, do not have the heart that you had, worthy of the miracle, worthy of being used as an instrument to glorify God in His Son. And they do not have your debt of love with God... I can say that, I can exact it from you. And first of all I exact it by asking you to bear no grudge on those who offended you and now offend Me. Forgive, Lazarus, forgive. You have been immersed in the burning flames of love. You must be "love", so that you may no longer know anything but the embrace of God. »

« And by doing so shall I fulfil the mission for which You have raised me from the dead? »

« By doing so you will fulfil it. »

« That is enough, Lord. I need not ask or know more. It was my dream to serve You. If I served You by doing nothing, as a sick man and a dead body, and if I shall be able to serve You by doing much, as a man who has recovered, my dream has come true and I do not ask for anything else. May You be blessed, my Jesus, Lord and Master! And may He Who sent You be blessed with You. »

« May the Almighty Lord God be always blessed. »

They go towards the house stopping now and again to watch the reawakening of trees and Jesus, tall as He is, lifts one arm and picks a little bunch of flowers from an almond-tree that is getting warm in the sun, against the southern wall of the house.

Mary comes out and sees them and she approaches them to hear what Jesus is saying: « See, Lazarus? Also to these flowers the Lord said: "Come out". And they obeyed to serve the Lord. »

« What a mystery germination is! It seems impossible for such fragile petals and such tender stems to sprout from a hard trunk or hard seeds and to change into fruit or plants. Is it wrong, Master, to say that the lymph or the germ is like the soul of the plant or of the seed? »

« It is not wrong because it is the vital part. It is not eternal in them, but was created for each species on the first day that plants and cereals existed. In man it is eternal, like its Creator, created each time a new man is conceived. But matter is alive through it. That is why I say that only through his soul man is alive. And he does not live only here. But also in the beyond. He lives because of his soul. We Hebrews do not draw designs on sepulchres as the Gentiles do. But if we did, we should not design an extinguished torch, an empty sand-glass or any other item symbolising the end, but the seed that is thrown into the furrow and grows into an ear. Because it is the death of the body that frees the soul from the bark and makes it fructify in the flower-beds of God. The seed. The vital spark that God put into our dust and becomes an ear if through our good will and also through sorrow we can fertilise the clod that encloses it. The seed. The symbol of life that lasts for ever... But Maximinus is calling you... »

« I will go, Master. Some of the stewards have probably come. Everything came to a standstill these last months. They are now making haste to show me their accounts... »

« That you approve in advance because you are a good master. »

« And because they are good servants. »

« A good master makes servants good. »

« So I shall certainly become a good servant because I have You as a perfect Master » and he goes away smiling, walking nimbly, so

different from the poor Lazarus as he had been for years.

Mary remains with Jesus.

« And what about you, Mary, will you become a good servant of your Lord? »

« You only know, Rabboni. I... only know that I was a big sinner. »

Jesus smiles: « Have you seen Lazarus? He, too, was seriously ill, and yet do you not think that he is quite well? »

« It is so, Rabboni. You have cured him. What You do is always complete. Lazarus has never been so strong and cheerful as he has been since he came out of the sepulchre. »

« You are right, Mary. What I do is always complete. Thus also your redemption is complete because I worked it. »

« That is true, my beloved Saviour and Redeemer, my King and God. It is true. And, if You want it, I also shall be a good servant of my Lord. As for me, I want it, Lord. I do not know whether you do. »

« I want it, Mary. A good servant of Mine. Today more than yesterday. Tomorrow more than today. Until I will say to you: "Enough, Mary. It is time for you to rest". »

« Agreed, Lord. I would like You to call me, then. As You called my brother out of the sepulchre. Oh! call me out of this life! »

« No, not out of this life. I will call you to the Life, to the true Life I will call you out of the sepulchre that is the flesh and the Earth. I will call you to the wedding of your soul with your Lord. »

« My wedding! You love virgins, Lord... »

« I love those who love Me, Mary. »

« You are divinely good, Rabboni! That is why I could not set my mind at rest when I heard people say that You were bad because You were not coming. Everything seemed to be collapsing around me. How hard it was to say to myself: "No. You must not accept this evidence. What seems to you to be obvious is only a dream. The real fact is the power, the goodness, the divinity of your Lord". Ah! How much I suffered! So much grief for Lazarus' death and for his words... Did he say anything to You? Does he not remember? Tell me the truth... »

« I never lie, Mary. He is afraid that he may have spoken and said what had grieved his life. But I reassured him, without lying, and he is now tranquil. »

« Thank You, Lord. Those words... have done me good. Yes. Just like the cure of a doctor who lays bare the roots of a disease and burns them. They finished destroying the old Mary. I still had too high an opinion of myself. Now... I measure the bottom of my abjection and I know that I must go a long way to climb out of it. But I will do it, if You help me. »

« I will help you, Mary. I will help you also when I have gone away. »

« How, my Lord? »

« By increasing Your love in an immeasurable way. There is not other way for you. »

« Too mild when compared with what I have to expiate! Everybody is saved through love. Everybody obtains Heaven. But what is sufficient for the pure, the just, is not sufficient for the great sinner. »

« There is no other way for you, Mary. Because, whatever way you may take, it will still be love. Love if you help people in My name. Love if you evangelize. Love if you live in isolation. Love if you martyrize yourself. Love if you will make people martyrize you. You can but love, Mary. It is your nature. Flames can but burn whether they creep on the ground, burning straw, or they arise like a bright embrace around a trunk, a house or an altar to ascend towards the sky. Everyone has his nature. The wisdom of the masters of the spirit rests in the ability to exploit the inclinations of men directing them along the way where they can develop profitably. Such a law exists also among plants and animals and it would be silly to pretend that a fruit-tree should yield flowers only, or should bear other fruit than its natural ones, or that an animal should fulfil the functions typical of another species. Could you pretend that a bee, destined to make honey, should become a little bird that sings among the leafy branches of a hedge? Or that this little branch of an almond-tree that I am holding in My hands, with all the tree from which I picked it, instead of yielding almonds should exude sweet-smelling resins from its bark? A bee works, a bird sings, an almond-tree bears fruit, a resiniferous plant secretes resins. And each fulfils its task. Souls do the same. Your task is to love. »

« Then inflame me, Lord. Grant me it as a grace. »

« Is the power of love that you possess not sufficient for you? »

« It's too little, Lord. It could have served to love men. Not to love You Who are the infinite Lord. »

« And just because I am such, a limitless love would be required... »

« Yes, my Lord. That is what I want: that You give me a limitless love. »

« Mary, the Most High Who knows what love is, said to man: "You shall love Me with all your strength". He does not exact more than that. Because He is aware that it is already a martyrdom to love with all one's strength... »

« It does not matter, my Lord. Give me an infinite love that I may love You as You deserve to be loved, that I may love You as I have not loved anybody else. »

« You are asking Me for a suffering that is like a fire that burns and consumes, Mary. It burns and consumes slowly... Think about it. »

« I have been thinking about it for such a long time, my Lord. But I dared not ask You. Now I know how much You love me. Just now I am aware of how much You love me and I dare to ask You. Give me that infinite love, Lord. »

Jesus looks at her. She is in front of Him, still thin after so many long hours of watch and so much grief, wearing a modest dress and with her hair arranged in a simple way, like a girl without malice, her pale face full of eagerness, her imploring eyes already shining with love, looking more like a seraph than a woman. She is really the contemplator asking for the martyrdom of absolute contemplation.

Jesus says one word only after looking at her carefully, as if He wanted to weigh her will: « Yes. »

« Ah! my Lord! What a grace to die out of love for You! » she says falling on her knees and kissing Jesus' feet.

« Stand up, Mary. Take these flowers. They are those of your spiritual wedding. Be as sweet as the fruit of the almond-tree, as pure as its flower and as bright as the oil that is extracted from its fruit, when it is lit, and as sweet smelling as this oil when sated with essences it is spread in banquets or on the heads of kings, scented with your virtues. Then you will really spread on your Lord the balm that He will appreciate infinitely. »

Mary takes the flowers but she does not stand up and in advance of her balms of love she kisses and sheds tears on the feet of her Master.

Lazarus joins them and says: « Master, there is a little boy who wants You. He had gone to Simon's house looking for You and found only John who brought him here. But he does not want to speak to anybody but You. »

« All right. Bring him here. I shall go under the jasmine pergola. »

Mary goes back into the house with Lazarus. Jesus goes under the pergola. Lazarus comes back holding by the hand the boy whom I saw in the house of Joseph of Sephoris. Jesus recognises him at once and greets him: « You, Martial! Peace be with you. How come you are here? »

« They have sent me to tell You something... » and he looks at Lazarus who understands and is about to go away.

« Stay, Lazarus. This is Lazarus, a friend of Mine. You can speak before him, My boy, because I have no other friend more faithful than he is. »

The boy is reassured. He says: « Joseph the Elder has sent me, because I live with him now, to tell You to go at once to Bethphage, to the house of Cleanthes. He must speak to You at once. But it must be at once. And he said that You are to come by Yourself. Because he must speak to You in all secrecy. »

« Master! What is happening? » asks Lazarus worriedly.

« I do not know, Lazarus. There is only one thing to do: to go there. Come with Me. »

« At once, Lord. We can go with the boy. »

« No, Lord. I am going alone. Joseph insisted on that. He said: "If you can do it properly and by yourself, I will love you as if I were your father", and I want to be loved as a son by Joseph. I am going away at once, and I will run. Come after I have gone. Hail, Lord. Hail, sir. »

« Peace to you, Martial. »

The boy runs away as swift as a swallow.

« Let us go, Lazarus. Bring Me My mantle. I will proceed because, as you can see, the little boy cannot open the gate, and he certainly does not wish to call anybody. »

Jesus walks fast towards the gate, Lazarus hastens towards the house. The former releases the iron lock of the gate for the boy, who runs away. The latter brings Jesus' mantle to Him and walks beside Him on the road towards Bethphage.

« I wonder what Joseph wants? If he sent a boy with so much secrecy... »

« A boy escapes the notice of anyone who may be watching » replies Jesus.

« Do You think that... do You suspect... Do You feel that You are in danger, Lord? »

« I am certain, My dear friend. »

« What? Even now? But You could not have given a greater proof!... »

« Hatred becomes more furious when urged by facts. »

« Oh! it's because of me, then! I have harmed You!... My grief is incomparable! » exclaims Lazarus who is deeply grieved.

« Not because of you. Do not be distressed without reason. You have been the means, but you must understand that the cause was the necessity to give the world the proof of My divine nature. If it had not been you, it would have been somebody else, because I had to prove to the world that I, being God, can do anything I want. And to bring back to life a body that has been dead for days and is already decomposed, can only be the work of God. »

« Ah! You want to comfort me. But my joy, all my joy has vanished... I am distressed, Lord. »

Jesus makes a gesture as if He wanted to say « Who knows! » and then they both become silent.

They walk fast. The distance between Bethany and Bethphage is a short one, and they soon arrive there.

Joseph is walking up and down the street at the beginning of the village. He has his back turned when Jesus and Lazarus come out of a path concealed by a hedge. Lazarus calls him.

« Oh! Peace to you. Come, Master. I waited for You here so that

I might see You at once, but let us go into the olive-grove. I do not want anybody to see us... »

He takes them behind the houses into a thick olive-grove that is a comfortable shelter where they can speak without being noticed, as the ruffled leafy branches of the trees conceal the slopes.

« Master, I sent the boy who is smart and obedient and very fond of me, because I had to speak to You but I was not to be seen. I came along the Kidron to get here... Master, You must go away, at once. The Sanhedrin has ordained Your arrest and the announcement will be read in the synagogues tomorrow. Whoever knows where You are, must denounce You. I need not tell you, Lazarus, that your house will be the first one to be watched. I came out of the Temple at the sixth hour and I acted at once, because while they were discussing I had already planned what to do. I went home and I took the boy. I came out through Herod's Gate on horseback, as if I were leaving the town. Then I crossed the Kidron and followed it. I left my mount at Gethsemane and I sent the boy who knew the way as he had already been to Bethany with me. Go away at once, Master. To a safe place. Do You know where to go? Have You got a place where to go? »

« But is it not enough for Him to go away from here? At most from Judaea? »

« It is not enough, Lazarus. They are furious. He must go where they do not go... »

« But they go everywhere, they do! You surely do not want the Master to leave Palestine!... » says Lazarus excitedly.

« Well! What can I tell you?! That's what the Sanhedrin wants... » « Because of me, is that right? Tell me! »

« H'm! Well... yes. Because of you that is, because everybody is being converted to Him, and they... they do not want that. »

« But it is a crime! It's a sacrilege It's... »

Jesus, pale but calm, lifts His hand imposing silence and He says: « Be silent, Lazarus. Everybody is doing his work. Everything is written. I thank you, Joseph, and I assure you that I will go away. Go, you may go, Joseph. So that your absence may not be noticed... May God bless you. I will get Lazarus to let you know where I am. Go. I bless you, Nicodemus and all righteous-hearted people. » He kisses him and they part. Through the olive-grove Jesus goes towards Bethany with Lazarus, while Joseph goes towards the town.

« What will You do, Master? » asks Lazarus who is anguished.

« I do not know. In a few days' time the women disciples will be coming with My Mother. I would have liked to wait for them... »

« With regard to that... I could receive them in Your name and then I would bring them to You. But, in the meantime, where are You going? I don't think You can go to Solomon's house... nor to any

of the well-known disciples. Tomorrow!... You must go away at once! »

« I have a place. But I would like to wait for My Mother. Her anguish would begin too early if She did not find Me... »

« Where would You go, Master? »

« To Ephraim. »

« To Samaria? »

« To Samaria. The Samaritans are less Samaritans than many people and they love Me. Ephraim is at the border... »

« Oh! and to spite the Judaeans they honour and defend You! But... wait! Your Mother will either come via Samaria or along the Jordan. I will go with some servants along one route, Maximinus with other servants along the other, and either one or the other will find Her. We will come back only when we meet them. You know that no one in Lazarus' house will betray You. In the meantime You will go to Ephraim. At once. Ah! it was my destiny that I should not enjoy Your company! But I will come. Across the Adummim mountains. I am sound now. I can do what I like. Nay! Yes. I will make them believe that I am going to Ptolemais via Samaria to sail to Antioch. Everybody knows that I own land there... My sisters will remain at Bethany... You... Yes. I will now have two carts equipped for You and you can all go to Jericho in them. Then tomorrow at dawn you will resume the journey on foot. Oh! Master! My Master! Take care of Yourself! » After the excitement of the first moment Lazarus becomes sad and weeps.

Jesus sighs, but does not say anything. What can He say?...

They are now in Simon's house. They part. Jesus goes into the house. The apostles, who are surprised that the Master had gone away without saying anything, press round Him as He says: « Take your garments. Prepare your bags. We must depart from here at once. Be quick. And join Me in Lazarus' house. »

« Also the clothes that are damp? Can we not get them when we come back? » asks Thomas.

« We shall not come back. Take everything. »

The apostles go away casting meaningful glances at one another.

Jesus goes to get His belongings in Lazarus' house and He says goodbye to the dismayed sisters...

The two carts are soon ready. Two heavy carts with tilts, drawn by strong horses. Jesus says goodbye to Lazarus, to Maximinus and to the servants who have rushed there. They get on the carts that are waiting at one of the gates at the rear of the house. The drivers urge on the horses and the journey begins along the same road by which Jesus had come a few days previously to raise Lazarus.

549. Going to Ephraim.

2nd January 1947.

In the fresh clear early dawn the fields around Nike's house are all green with new shoots of corn only a few centimetres high, as delicate in shade as very clear emeralds. The orchard, which is closer to the house and is still bare, looks even darker and more massive, compared with the delicate stems and with the paradisiac serenity of the airy sky. The white house is crowned in the early sunshine with the flights of doves.

Nike is already up and she is diligently ensuring that the departing persons have what may comfort them during their journey. First of all she dismisses Lazarus' two servants who were kept by her for that night and who, after taking some refreshment, go away trotting their horses. She then goes back into the kitchen where the maidservants are preparing milk and food on big fires. And from a large earthen pot she pours some oil into two smaller ones, and then some wine into two small wineskins. She urges a servant who is preparing loaves of bread as thin as buns to take them to the stone-oven that is ready. From large boards, on which cheese is desiccated in the warmth of the kitchen, she picks the best whole ones. She takes some honey and pours it slowly into some small vessels fitted with firm taps. She then makes up several bundles containing the foodstuffs, and one of them contains a whole kid or lamb that a servant takes off the spit on which it was roasted. Another contains apples as red as corals. In another there are edible olives. In a third one there are dried currants. There is one of peeled barley.

She is closing this last package when Jesus enters the kitchen and greets all the people present.

« Master, peace to You. Are You up already? »

« I should have been up earlier. But My disciples were so tired that I let them sleep on. What are you doing, Nike? »

« I am preparing... They will not be heavy, see? Twelve parcels. And I have taken into consideration the strength of the bearers. »

« And what about me? »

« Oh! Master! You already have Your burden... » and tears begin to shine in Nike's eyes.

« Let us go outside, Nike. We shall be able to speak in peace. »

They go out and they move away from the house.

« My heart is aching, Master... »

« I know. But it is necessary to be strong considering that you have not grieved Me... »

« Oh! Let that never happen! But I thought that I would be able to stay near You and that is why I came to Jerusalem. Otherwise I would have stayed here, where I own these fields... »

« Also Lazarus, Mary and Martha thought they would be able to

be with Me. And you can see!... »

« Yes, I can see. I am not going back to Jerusalem any more as You are not there. I shall be closer to You if I remain here and I shall be able to help You. »

« You have already given so much... »

« I have not given anything. I would like to be able to take my house wherever You go. But I will come, I will certainly come to see what You need. What You told me to do now is right. I shall stay here until they are convinced that You are not here. But later... »

« It is a long and difficult road for a woman, and it is not safe either. »

« Oh! I am not afraid. I am too old to be pleasant and attractive as a woman, and I do not carry treasures to be sought as a prey. Highwaymen are better than many people who consider themselves holy and instead are thieves and want to rob you of your peace and freedom... »

« Do not hate them, Nike. »

« That is more difficult for me than anything else. But I will try not to hate them for Your sake... I wept all night, Lord! »

« I heard you go to and fro in the house as indefatigable as a bee. And you seemed a mother anxious about her persecuted son... Do not weep. Guilty people must weep. Not you. God is good to His Messiah. In the most grievous hours He always makes Me find a motherly heart close to Me... »

« And what are You going to do about Your Mother? You told me that She was coming soon... »

« She will come to Ephraim... Lazarus is going to inform Her. Here is Simon of Jonah with My brothers... »

« Do they know? »

« Not yet, Nike. I will tell them when we are far away... »

« And when I come, I will tell You what happens here and in Jerusalem. »

They join the apostles who are coming out of the house one after the other looking for Jesus.

« Come, brothers. Take some food before departing. Everything is ready. »

« Nike did not sleep last night to provide for us. Thank the good disciple » says Jesus entering the large kitchen where on a refectory table - it is so long - there are cups full of milk steaming hot and sweet smelling buns just out of the oven. And Nike spreads butter and honey generously on them, saying that they are invigorating food for people who have to go on a long journey when the weather is still cold.

The meal is soon over. Nike in the meantime has made up the last parcels with the crisp fragrant bread just taken out of the oven. Each apostle takes his bundle that has been tied in such a way as to be

carried without much trouble.

It is time to go. Jesus greets and blesses. The apostles say goodbye. But Nike wants to go with them as far as the border of her fields and she then goes back slowly weeping in her veil, while Jesus with His apostles goes away along a secondary road pointed out to Him by Nike.

The country is still desert. The path runs through fields of new corn and bare vineyards. Thus there are no shepherds either, as they do not take their flocks into cultivated fields. The morning air is warmed a little by the sun. The first little flowers on the edges of the fields are shining like gems under the veil of dew brightened by sunshine. The birds are singing the first love songs. The good season is coming. Everything is beautiful and fresh. Everything is love... And Jesus is going into the exile that precedes His death brought about by hatred.

The apostles are silent. They are pensive. The sudden departure has disconcerted them. They were so certain that everything was settled by now! They are proceeding with their backs more curved than the weight of their bags and of Nike's provisions can bend them. They are bent by disappointment and by the ascertainment of what the world and men are.

Jesus instead, although He is not smiling, is neither sad nor dejected. He is walking with His head erect, ahead of everybody, without arrogance, but also without fear. He is proceeding like one who knows where to go and what to do. He walks courageously, like a hero, whom nothing shakes or frightens.

The secondary road joins with a main one, which Jesus takes going northwards. And the apostles follow Him, without speaking. As the road comes from Galilee and through the Decapolis and Samaria goes to Judaea, there are wayfarers on it, mostly caravans of merchants.

As time goes by the sun becomes pleasantly warmer and warmer, when Jesus leaves the main road to take another path that across corn fields goes towards the first hills.

The apostles cast glances at one another. Perhaps they begin to understand that they are not going towards Galilee along the road in the Jordan valley, but are instead going towards Samaria. But they remain silent.

When they arrive at the first woods on the hills, Jesus says: « Let us stop and rest while we take some food. The sun indicates that it is midday. »

They are near a torrent with little water in it as it has not rained for some time. But its little water is clear in the gravel-bed and its banks are spread with large stones that can be used as tables and seats. They sit down after, Jesus has blessed and offered the food and they eat in silence and as if they were lost in thought.

Jesus rouses them saying: « Are you not asking Me where we are going? Do your worries of the future make you dumb or do I no longer seem to you to be your Master? »

The Twelve raise their heads: twelve distressed or at least bewildered faces that turn towards the tranquil face of Jesus and one only « Oh! » is exclaimed by twelve mouths. And the exclamation is followed by the reply of Peter who speaks on behalf of everybody: « Master, You know that we always consider You our Master. But since yesterday we are like people who have received hard blows on their heads. And everything seems a dream to us. And although we see and know that it is You, You seem to be already... far away. We somehow have had this impression since You spoke to Your Father before calling Lazarus, and since You brought him out of his sepulchre, tied as he was, only by means of Your will, and You made him live only by the strength of Your power. You almost frighten us. I am speaking of myself... but I think it is the same for everybody... And now... We... This departure... so sudden and so mysterious! »

« Have you a double fear? Do you feel that the danger is more impending? Do you not have, do you feel that you do not have the strength to face and overcome the last trials? Speak without restraint. We are still in Judaea. We are near the low roads that take one to Galilee. Everyone may go if he wishes, and you can go in time to avoid being hated by the Sanhedrin... »

The apostles are roused by these words. Those who were almost lying on the grass warmed by the sun, sit up. Those who were sitting, stand up.

Jesus goes on: « Because as from today I am the legally Persecuted One. Bear that in mind. Just now they are about to proclaim in the five hundred and more synagogues in Jerusalem and in those of the towns that have received the ban issued yesterday at the sixth hour, that I am the great sinner, and that whoever knows where I am must denounce Me to the Sanhedrin so that I may be captured... »

The apostles shout as if they already saw Him captured. John clings to His neck moaning: « Ah! I have always foreseen that! » and he sobs loud. Some curse the Sanhedrin, some invoke divine justice, some weep, some become petrified.

« Be silent and listen. I have never deceived you. I have always told you the truth. When possible I defended and protected you. Your presence near Me has been as pleasant as that of sons. I did not even hide My last hour... My dangers... My passion from you. But those were problems that concerned Me exclusively. Now your dangers, your safety, and that of your families are to be taken into consideration. I ask you to do that. With absolute freedom. Do not consider them in the light of your love for Me, or of your election made by Me. As I am releasing you from every obligation towards

God and His Christ, just imagine that we have met here, now, for this first time and that, after listening to Me, you decide whether it is convenient for you or not to follow the Unknown man whose words have moved you. Imagine that you hear and see Me for the first time and that I say to you: "Bear in mind that I am persecuted and hated and that whoever loves Me is persecuted and hated as I am, in his person, his interests, his affections. Remember that persecution may end up with death and the confiscation of the family property". Think it over and decide. I will love you just the same if you say to me: "Master, I cannot come with You any more". Are you becoming sad? No, you must not. We are good friends who decide with peace and love what is to be done, with reciprocal compassion. I cannot let you face the future without making you ponder over it. I do not disesteem you. I love you all. I am the Master. It is obvious that the Master should know His disciples. I am the Shepherd and it is obvious that a shepherd should know his lambs. I know that My disciples, if they had to face a test without being sufficiently prepared not only in the wisdom coming from their Master, and which is therefore good and perfect, but also in their own ponderation of the situation, might fail, or at least they would not triumph like athletes in a stadium. To measure oneself and to evaluate circumstances is always a wise rule. In little and great things. I, the Shepherd, must say to My lambs: "Here, I am now going to enter a place of wolves and butchers. Have you enough strength to go among them?". I could also tell you now which of you will not have the strength to withstand the trial, although I can assure and reassure you that none of you will fall at the hands of the executioners who will sacrifice the Lamb of God. My capture is of such weight that it will suffice them... So I say to you: "Think it over". Once I said to you: "Be not afraid of those who kill". I said: "He who, having laid his hand on the plough, looks back to consider the past and what he may lose or acquire, is not fit for My mission". But they were rules to give you the measure of what it meant to be disciples, and rules for the future that will take place when I am no longer the Master, but My believers are the masters. They served to strengthen your souls. But even such strength, which is undeniable you have acquired, as compared with the nonentities you were - I am referring to your spirits - is still too little with respect to the greatness of the trial. Oh! do not think in the secrecy of your hearts: "The Master is scandalised at us!". I am not scandalised. On the contrary I tell you that you must not be scandalised, neither now nor in the future, at your own weakness. In all future times there will always be people among the members of My Church, both lambs and-shepherds, who will be inferior to the greatness of their mission. There will be periods when the idol shepherds and the idol believers are more numerous than the true shepherds

and the true believers. Periods of eclipse of the spirit of faith of the world. But an eclipse is not the death of a star. It is only a temporary more or less partial obscuring of a star. Afterwards its beauty reappears and it looks brighter. The same will happen to My Fold. I say to you: "Ponder over it". I say so to you as your Master, Shepherd and Friend. I leave you completely free to discuss the matter among yourselves. I am going over there, to that thicket, to pray. One by one will come and tell Me what you have decided. And I will bless your sincere honesty, whatever it may be. And I will love you for what you have given Me so far. Goodbye. » He stands up and goes away.

The apostles are terrified, puzzled, moved. At first they cannot even speak. Then Peter is the first to say: « May hell swallow me if I want to leave Him! I am sure of myself. Even if all the demons in Gehenna led by Leviathan should come against me, I would not move away from Him out of fear! »

« Neither would I. Am I to be inferior to my daughters? » says Philip.

« I am sure that they will do Him no harm. The members of the Sanhedrin threaten but they do so to convince themselves that the Sanhedrin still exists. They know very well that they have no power if Rome is not agreeable. Their sentences! It's Rome that judges! » says the Iscariot boldly.

« But the Sanhedrin is still concerned with religious matters » remarks Andrew.

« Are you afraid perhaps, brother? Bear in mind that there have never been cowards in our family » says Peter threateningly, as he feels that his heart is overflowing with warlike spirit.

« I am not afraid and I hope I shall be able to prove it. I am only telling Judas what I think. »

« You are right. But the mistake of the Sanhedrin consists in wishing to make use of a political weapon, as they do not wish to say or to be told that they have lifted their hands against the Christ. I know that for certain. They would like, that is, they would have liked to make Jesus commit sin and thus make Him contemptible to the crowds. But with regard to killing Him! Ehi! No. They are afraid! Their fright has no human comparison, because their souls are frightened. They do know that He is the Messiah! They know that very well. So much so that they realise that they are done for, because the new time is coming. And they want to overthrow Him. But will they overthrow Him!? No. That is why they are seeking a political reason so that the Proconsul, that is Rome, should overthrow Him. But the Christ does no harm to Rome, and Rome will do no harm to Him, and the members of the Sanhedrin are howling in vain. »

« So are you staying with Him? »

« Of course. More than anybody else! »

« I have nothing to lose or to gain by staying or going away. I have only to love Him. And I will do that » says the Zealot.

« I recognise Him as the Messiah and consequently I will follow Him » says Nathanael.

« So will I. I have believed Him to be the Messiah since John the Baptist pointed Him out to me as such » says James of Zebedee.

« We are His brothers. To our faith we add the love of kinship. Is that right, James? » says Thaddeus.

« He has been my sun for years and I follow His course. If He falls into the abyss dug by His enemies, I will follow Him » replies James of Alphaeus.

« And what about me? Can I forget that He has redeemed me? » asks Matthew.

« My father would curse me seven times seven if I should leave Him. In any case, even if it were only for Mary's sake, I would never part from Jesus » says Thomas.

John does not speak. His head is lowered, he looks dejected. The others mistake his attitude for weakness and many ask him.

« And what about you? Are you the only one who wants to go away? »

John looks up, so pure also in his attitude and eyes, and fixing his limpid blue eyes on those who are questioning him he says: « I was praying for all of us. Because we want to say and do things and we rely on ourselves, and by doing so we do not realise that we challenge the words of the Master. If He says that we are not prepared, it means that we are not. If we have not become prepared in three years, we shall not become so in few months... »

« What are you saying? In few months? What do you know? Are you a prophet, perhaps? » They assail him with questions, almost reproaching him.

« I know nothing. »

« So? What do you know? Has He perhaps told you? You always know His secrets... » says Judas of Kerioth with envy.

« Do not hate me, my friend, if I understand that the fine weather is over. When will it be? I do not know. I know that it will happen. He says so. How many times has He said so! We do not want to believe it. But the hatred of the others confirms His words... So I pray. Because there is nothing else to be done. I pray God to make us strong. Do you not remember, Judas, when He told us that He had prayed His Father to have strength against temptations? All strength comes from God. I imitate my Master, as is right to do... »

« Well, are you staying or not? » asks Peter.

« And where do you want me to go if I do not stay with Him Who is my life and welfare? But as I am a poor boy, the most miserable of all, I ask everything of God, the Father -of Jesus and ours. »

« That is settled. So we are all staying! Let us go to Him. As He is certainly sad, our loyalty will make Him happy » says Peter.

Jesus is prostrated in prayer. With His face on the ground, in the grass, He is certainly imploring His Father, but at the shuffling of feet He stands up and looks at His apostles. He looks at them with a rather sad gravity.

« Be happy, Master. None of us are going to leave You » says Peter.

« You have decided too soon and... »

« Hours or ages will not change our minds » says Peter.

« Neither will threats change our love » proclaims the Iscariot.

Jesus stops looking at them as a group and He gazes at them one by one. A long look which everyone withstands fearlessly. His eyes delay in particular on the Iscariot, who looks at Him more resolutely than the others. He opens His arms in a gesture of resignation and He says: « Let us go. You, all of you, have signed your destiny. » He goes back to the place where He was, He picks up His bag and says: « Let us take the road to Ephraim, the one they pointed out to us. »

« To Samaria?! » They are utterly astonished.

« To Samaria. Or, at least, to its borders. John also went to live there until the hour fixed for his preaching the Christ. »

« But that did not save him! » objects James of Zebedee.

« I am not trying to save Myself, but to save. And I will save at the appointed hour. The persecuted Shepherd is going to the most unfortunate sheep. So that, forlorn as they are, they may have their share of wisdom to prepare them for the new time. »

He strides away, after the stop that has served both to rest and to respect the Sabbath, as He wishes to arrive before the paths become impassable at night.

When they arrive at the little torrent that flows from Ephraim towards the Jordan, Jesus calls Peter and Nathanael and gives them a bag saying: « Go ahead and look for Mary of Jacob. I remember that Malachi told Me that she is the poorest woman in the village, in spite of her large house, now that she has no sons and daughters in it. We shall stay with her. Give her plenty money so that she may give us hospitality without applying to many people. You know where the house is. It is the large one, shaded by four pomegranate trees, near the bridge across the torrent. »

« We know, Master. We will do as You say. » They go away quickly and Jesus follows them slowly with the others.

From the dell, in the middle of which the torrent flows, one can see the white houses of the village in the late daylight and in the early moonlight. There is not a soul about when they arrive at the house that is all white in the moonlight. Only the torrent can be heard in the silence of the night. Turning round and looking at the horizon, one can see a large stretch of the starry sky bend over a

large expanse of ground that slopes downwards towards the desert plain that stretches as far as the Jordan. A solemn peace reigns over the Earth.

They knock at the door. Peter opens it. « Everything is settled, Lord. The old woman wept when we gave her the money. She had not a coin left. I said to her: "Do not weep, woman. There is no more pain where Jesus of Nazareth is". She replied to me: "I know. I have suffered all my life and just now I was at the very limit of endurance. But Heaven opened on the evening of my life and brought me the Star of Jacob to give me peace". She is now preparing the rooms that have been closed for such a long time. H'm! There isn't very much. But the woman appears to be very good. Here she is! Woman! The Rabbi is here! »

A very thin old woman comes forward, her meek eyes full of melancholy. She stops perplexed a few steps from Jesus. She feels uneasy.

« Peace to you, woman. I shall not give you much trouble. »

« I wish You could walk on my heart, to make it more pleasant for You to enter my poor house. Come in, Lord, and may God enter with You. » She has recovered her breath and taken heart in the light of Jesus' glance.

They all go in and close the door. The house is as large as a hotel and as empty as a desert. Only the kitchen looks cheerful because of a bright fire in the fireplace in the middle of the room.

Bartholomew, who was tending the fire, turns round and says smiling: « Console the woman, Master. She is sad because she cannot honour You. »

« Your heart is enough for Me, woman. Do not worry about anything. We will provide tomorrow. I am poor as well. Bring her our provisions. Poor people share their bread and salt without shame, but with brotherly love. Filial love in your case, woman. Because you could be My mother. And I honour you as such... »

The woman weeps the silent tears of an old distressed soul, wiping her tears with her veil and she whispers: « I had three sons and seven daughters. One of the sons was carried away by the torrent and another one by a disease. The third one has left me. Five of the girls caught the same disease as their father had and died, the sixth died of childbirth and the seventh... What death did not do, sin did. In my old age I am not honoured by my children and it makes me so... In the village they are good to me... that is, to the poor woman. You are kind to the mother... »

« I have a mother, too. And in every woman who is a mother I honour Her. But do not weep. God is good. Have faith, and the children who are still left may come back to you again. The others are in peace... »

« I think it is a punishment, because I come from this place... »

« Have faith. God is more just than men »

The apostles who had gone to their rooms with Peter come back. They bring provisions. They warm up on the fire the little lamb that Nike had roasted. They put it on the table. Jesus offers and blesses them and He wants the little old woman to sit at the table with them, instead of sitting in her little corner, eating the poor chicory of her supper.

The exile at the border of Judaea has begun

550. The First Day at Ephraim.

8th January 1947.

« Peace to You, Master » say Peter and James of Zebedee coming back home laden with pitchers full of water.

« Peace to you. Where are you coming from? »

« From the stream. We went to get some water, and we shall go for more, to keep the house clean. Considering that we are stopping... And it is not fair that the old woman should work for us. She is in the other room where she lit a fire to warm the water. My brother went to the wood to get some firewood. It has not rained for some time and it burns like heath » explains James of Zebedee.

« Of course. But the trouble is that, although it was hardly daybreak, they saw us both at the stream and in the wood. And I went to the stream to avoid going to the fountain... » says Peter.

« Why, Simon of Jonah? »

« Because there are always people at the fountain, and they might have recognised us and come here... »

While they are speaking, Alphaeus' two sons, Judas of Kerioth and Thomas have come into the long corridor that divides the house, and thus they can hear Peter's last words and Jesus' reply: « What might not have happened at daybreak today, would certainly have happened later, tomorrow at the latest, because we are staying here... »

« Here? But... I thought we were stopping only to rest... » many of them say.

« We are not stopping to rest. But to stay. We shall depart from here only to go back to Jerusalem for Passover. »

« Oh! I thought that when You referred to the place of wolves and butchers, You meant this region through which You wanted to pass, as You did in the past, to go to other places without taking the roads frequented by Judaeans and Pharisees... » says Philip who has just arrived, and others say: « I also thought that. »

« You have misunderstood. This is not the place of wolves and butchers, although real wolves hide in its mountains. But I am not referring to animals... »

« Oh! that was quite clear! » exclaims Judas of Kerioth somewhat

ironically. « As You refer to Yourself as the Lamb, one understands that the wolves are men. We are not completely stupid. »

« No. You are not stupid but in what you do not want to understand. That is, in what concerns My nature and mission, and the grief you give Me by not working assiduously at preparing your future. It is for your own good that I speak and teach you by means of deeds and words. But you reject what upsets your human nature through presage of sorrows or what exacts efforts against your egos. Listen to Me before strangers come here. I will now divide you into two groups of five apostles and guided by the head of each group you will go across the nearby countryside, as you did when I sent you in the early days. Remember what I told you then and put it into practice. The only exception is that now you will pass through villages announcing also to Samaritans that the day of the Lord is close at hand, so that they may be ready when it comes, and it may be easier for you to convert them to the Only God. Be full of charity and wisdom and devoid of prejudice. You can see, and you will realise this even more, that we are granted here what we are denied in other places. So be kind to these people who, although innocent, are expiating the sins of their ancestors. Peter will be at the head of Judas of Alphaeus, Thomas, Philip and Matthew. James of Alphaeus will be the guide of Andrew, Bartholomew, Simon Zealot and James of Zebedee. Judas of Kerioth and John will stay with Me. That will apply as from tomorrow. Today we shall rest making the necessary preparations for future days. We shall spend the Sabbath together. So you must be here before the Sabbath, in order to leave the day after it. It will be a day of love for us, after loving our neighbour in the flock that has left the fold of the Father. Go now and attend to your tasks. »

He remains alone and withdraws to a room at the end of the corridor.

The house resounds with steps and voices, although they are all in their rooms and no one can be seen but the old woman who goes up and down the corridor several times, attending to her household duties, one of which is certainly baking bread because her hair is spread with flour and her hands are covered with dough.

After some time Jesus comes out and goes up to the terrace of the house. He walks up and down meditating up there and now and again He looks at the view around Him.

He is joined by Peter and Judas of Kerioth who do not look very cheerful. Perhaps it is painful for Peter to part from Jesus. And perhaps it is painful for the Iscariot not to be able to do so and show off in the villages. They certainly look very thoughtful when they go up to the terrace.

« Come here. Look what a beautiful view you can see from here. » And He points at the varied landscape. To north-west high woody

mountains stretching like a spine from north to south. One of them behind Ephraim is a real giant overlooking the others. To northeast and south-east there are mild undulating hills. The village is in a green valley with distant flat backgrounds between the two higher and lower chains, that from the central part of the region slope down to the Jordan plain. Through a fissure in the lower mountains it is possible to see the green plain beyond which flows the blue Jordan. At the height of springtime this must be a beautiful place, all green and fertile. At present the dark shades of vineyards and orchards interrupt the green of fields of cereals, the tender stems of which sprout from the clods of earth, and the verdant pastures nourished by the rich soil.

If what lies beyond Ephraim is called a desert by John, it means that the desert of Judaea was a very mild one, at least in this area, or at least it was a desert only because it was devoid of villages, all covered with woods and pastures among cheerfully gurgling streams, quite different from the land near the Dead Sea, an arid land that can rightly be called a « desert », as it is devoid of vegetation, with the exception of the low thorny twisted shrubs that grow in deserts among scattered stones and the sand rich in salt. But this pleasant desert, which lies beyond Ephraim, is widely adorned with vineyards, olive-groves and orchards, and the almond-trees are now smiling at the sun, scattered here and there like white-pink tufts, on the slopes that will soon be covered with the festoons of the new vine-shoots.

« I almost seem to be in my own town » says Judas.

« It looks also like Juttah. The only difference is that there the torrent is down in the plain and the town up on the hill. Here instead the town seems to be in a wide valley with the river in the middle. A country rich in vines! It must be lovely and very profitable, for owners, to own such land » remarks Peter.

« It is written: "May his land be blessed by Yahweh with the fruit of the sky and with dews, with the springs gushing from the abyss, with the fruit blessed by the sun and the moon, with the fruit from the tops of the ancient mountains, with the fruit of the eternal hills and with plentiful crops of the land". And on those words of the Pentateuch they base their proud obstinacy in considering themselves superior. It is so. Even the word of God and the gifts of God, if they descend into hearts full of pride, become the cause of ruin. Not through their own fault, but because of the pride that adulterates their good juice » says Jesus.

« Of course. And of just Joseph they have kept only the fury of a bull and the neck of a rhinoceros. I do not like to stay here. Why do You not let me go with the others? » says the Iscariot.

« Do you not like to stay with Me? » asks Jesus, Who stops looking at the landscape and turns round to look at Judas.

« I do love to be with You, but not with the people of Ephraim. »

« What a very fine excuse! And what about us then? As we shall be going through Samaria and the Decapolis - because we shall be able to go only to these places in the time prescribed between one Sabbath and the next one - are we perhaps going among saints? » says Peter, reproaching Judas who does not reply.

« What does it matter to you who is near you, if you can love everything through Me? Love Me in your neighbour, and all places will be alike as far as you are concerned » says Jesus calmly.

Judas does not reply to Him either.

« Just think of it! I have to go away... whereas I would stay here so willingly. After all... considering what I can do. At least appoint Philip or Your brother head of the group, Master. I... as long as I have to say: let us do this, let us go to that place, I can still manage. But if I have to speak!... I spoil everything. »

« Obedience will make you do everything well. What you do will please Me. »

« In that case... if it pleases You, it will please me. It is enough for me to make You happy. But there they are! I told You! Half of the town is coming... Look! The head of the synagogue... the notables... their women... the children and the people!... »

« Let us go down and meet them » says Jesus and He hastens down the staircase calling the apostles so that they may leave the house with Him.

The inhabitants of Ephraim are coming forward with signs of the deepest respect, and after the customary salutations, one of them, perhaps the head of the synagogue, speaks on behalf of everybody:

« May the Most High be blessed for this day, and blessed be His Prophet Who has come to us because He loves all men in the name of the Most High God. May You be blessed, Master and Lord, as You have remembered our hearts and our words, and You have come to rest among us. We will open our hearts and homes to You, asking You to speak to us for our health. May this day be blessed, because through it he who receives Him with upright spirit will see the desert bear fruit. »

« What you said is correct, Malachi. He who knows how to receive with an upright spirit Him Who has come in the name of God, will see his desert bear fruit and the sturdy but wild plants in it become cultivated. I shall stay with you. And you will come to Me. As good friends. And My apostles will take My word to those who can accept it. »

« Will You not teach us, Master? » asks Malachi somewhat disappointed.

« I have come to collect My thoughts and pray, to prepare Myself for the great events of the future. Are you sorry that I have chosen your town for My tranquillity? »

« Oh! no. The very fact of seeing You pray will make us wise. Thank for choosing us for that purpose. We shall not disturb Your prayers and we will not allow Your enemies to disturb them. Because it is already known what happened and happens in Judaea. We shall keep good watch. And we shall be satisfied with Your word when it is not troublesome for You to give it to us. Accept in the meantime our gifts of hospitality. »

« I am Jesus and I do not reject anybody. So I will accept what you are offering Me to prove to you that I do not reject you. But if you want to love Me, from now on give to the poor people of the village or to those passing by what you would give Me. I need only peace and love. »

« We know that. We know everything. And we feel sure that we shall give You what You need, so as to make You exclaim: "The land that was to be for Me like Egypt, that is sorrow, was for Me, as for Joseph of Jacob, the land of peace and glory". »

« If you love Me by accepting My word, I will say so. »

The citizens hand their gifts to the apostles and then withdraw, with the exception of Malachi and two more men who speak to Jesus in low voices. The children also stay, captured by the usual charm emanating from Jesus; they remain, turning deaf ears to their mothers who call them, and they only go away after Jesus has caressed and blessed them. Then, as garrulous as swallows, they run away, followed by the three men.

551. Jesus Respects the Precept of Love More Than the Sabbatic Law.

11th January 1947.

The ten apostles, tired and covered in dust, have come back to the house. When the woman greets them opening the door, they ask her at once: « Where is the Master? »

« I think He is in the wood, praying as usual. He went out very early this morning and has not come back yet. »

« And has no one gone to look for Him? What are those two doing?! » shouts Peter excitedly.

« Don't become impatient, man. He is as safe among us, as He would be in His Mother's house. »

« Safe! Of course! Do you remember the Baptist? Was he safe? »

« He was not because he could not read the hearts of those who spoke to him. But if the Most High allowed that for the Baptist, He will certainly not allow it for His Messiah. You must believe that more than I do, as I am a woman and a Samaritan. »

« Mary is right. But where did He go exactly? »

« I don't know. At times He goes one way, at times He goes another. At times He is all alone, at times with children who are

so fond of Him. He teaches them how to pray by seeing God in everything. He is probably alone today because He did not come back at midday. When the children are with Him, He always comes back because they are little birds who want to be fed at the right time... » says the old woman smiling, as she perhaps remembers her ten children, and then she sighs... because joys and sorrows are in all the memories of one's life.

« And Judas and John, where are they? »

« Judas has gone to the fountain, John to get firewood. I have none left as I finished it all washing all your clothes to let you have them clean when you depart. »

« May God reward you, mother. We are making you work hard... » says Thomas laying his hand on her thin bent shoulder, as if he wished to caress her.

« Oh!... It is not hard work. I feel as if I had my children again... » she says smiling again as tears begin to shine in her hollow eyes.

John comes in bent under a huge bundle of sticks, and the rather dark corridor seems to brighten up as he enters it. I have always noticed the brilliance that seems to light up wherever John is. His childish smile that is so sweet and candid, his limpid eyes that smile like a beautiful April sky, his joyful voice that is so affectionate in greeting his companions, are like sunbeams or a rainbow of peace. Everybody loves him except Judas of Kerioth; I do not know whether he loves him or hates him, he certainly envies him, he often makes a fool of him and at times offends him. But Judas for the time being is not here.

They help him to lay down his load and they ask him where Jesus may be. John also becomes somewhat frightened at the delay. But, confiding in God more than the others he says: « His Father will deliver Him from evil. We must believe in the Lord. » And he adds: « But... come. You are tired and covered in dust. We have prepared food and hot water for you. Come... »

Judas of Kerioth also comes back with his dripping pitchers. « Peace to you. Have you had a good trip? » he asks, but there is no kindness in his voice. It is mingled with mockery and discontent.

« Yes. We began from the Decapolis. »

« Because you were afraid of being pelted with stones or of being contaminated? » asks the Iscariot ironically.

« We were afraid of neither. We did it out of prudence as beginners. And the proposal was made by me, who - I do not wish to reproach you for anything - have grown hoary over parchments » says Bartholomew.

Judas does not reply. He leaves the kitchen where the apostles who have just come back refresh themselves with what has been Prepared.

Peter looks at the Iscariot depart and shakes his head. But he does

not say anything. Thaddeus instead plucks at John's sleeves and asks: « How did he behave these past days? Always so cross? Be frank... »

« I'm always sincere, Judas. But I can assure you that he caused no trouble. The Master is almost always isolated. I stay with the old mother who is so kind, and I listen to those who come to speak to the Master, and then I tell Him. Judas instead goes about the village. He has made some friends... What can we do! He is just like that... He cannot live tranquilly, as we would do... »

« As far as I am concerned he can do what he likes. I am happy providing he does not cause grief. »

« No. He does not do that. He certainly grows weary. But... Here is the Master! I can hear His voice. He is speaking to somebody... »

They rush out and see Jesus coming forward, in the deepening twilight, carrying two children in His arms and one clinging to His mantle, and He is comforting them as they are weeping.

« May God bless You, Master! But where are You coming from at this late hour? »

Jesus on entering the house replies: « I am coming from the highwaymen. I got My prey as well. I walked after sunset, but My Father will absolve Me because I accomplished a deed of mercy... John, and you, Simon, take them... My arms are aching with tiredness... I am really tired. » He sits on a stool near the fireplace. He smiles: He is tired but happy.

« From the highwaymen? But where have You been? Who are these children? Have You had anything to eat? But where were You? It is not wise to be out when it is dark and to be so far away!... We were worried. Were You not in the wood? » they all ask at the same time.

« I was not in the wood. I went towards Jericho... »

« How imprudent of You! On those roads You may find someone who hates You! » says Thaddeus reproaching Him.

« I took the path that they told us. I had been wanting to go there for days... There are poor wretches to be redeemed. They could do Me no harm. And I went just in time for these children. Give them something to eat. I do not think they have had any food, because they were afraid of the highwaymen. And I had no food with Me. If at least I had found a shepherd!... But because of the oncoming Sabbath all the pastures had been deserted... »

« Of course! We are the only ones who for some time have not kept the Sabbath... » remarks Judas of Kerioth who is always sharp.

« What are you saying? What are you insinuating? » they ask him.

« I am saying that for two Sabbaths we have worked after sunset. »

« Judas, you know why we had to walk on last Sabbath. It is not always the sin of the person who commits it, but also of those who force one to commit it. And today... I know. You want to tell Me

that also today I have infringed the Sabbath. My reply is that if the law of the Sabbath rest is great, the precept of love is very great. I am not obliged to justify Myself with you. But I am doing it to teach you meekness, humility and the great truth that in the case of a holy necessity one must apply the law with resilience of spirit. Our history has many instances of such necessity. At dawn I went towards the Adummim mountains, because I know that there are some wretches there, whose souls are affected with the leprosy of crime. I was hoping to meet them, speak to them and come back before sunset. I found them. But I was not able to deliver them the intended speech, because there were other things to be said... They had found these three children weeping at the entrance of a poor fold in the plain. They had gone down during the night to steal lambs and also kill, if the shepherd had opposed resistance. Hunger pains are dreadful in the mountains in winter... And when cruel hearts suffer them, they make men more ferocious than wolves. These children were there with a little shepherd not much older than they are, but just as frightened as they were. The father of the children, I do not know why, had died during the night. Perhaps he had been bitten by some beast, or because of heart failure... His cold body was lying on the straw near the sheep. The oldest son, who was sleeping beside him, became aware of it. So the highwaymen, instead of making a massacre, found a dead man and four weeping children. They left the dead man and drove away the sheep and the little shepherd, and as even in the most wicked people there can be a piety hard to be beaten, they took also the children... I found them while they were consulting one another on what to do. The more ferocious ones wanted to kill the ten-year-old boy, who was a dangerous witness of their theft and refuge; the less fierce ones wanted to send him away after threatening him and they intended to keep the flock. They all wanted to keep the little ones. »

« To do what? Have they no family? »

« Their mother is dead. That is why the father had taken them with him to the winter pastures, and he was now going back to his lonely home crossing these mountains. Could I have left the little ones to the highwaymen to bring them up like themselves? I spoke to them... In all truth I tell you that they understood Me more than many other people. So much so that they left the little ones with Me and tomorrow they will take the little shepherd to the road to Shechem. Because the brothers of the children's mother live in that part of the country. In the meantime I accepted the children. I shall keep them until their relatives arrive. »

« And You flatter Yourself that the highwaymen... » says the Iscariot and he laughs...

« I am sure that they will not hurt the little shepherd in the least. They are wretches. We must not judge why they are such, but we

must try to save them. A good deed may be the beginning of their salvation... » Jesus bends His head, absorbed in I wonder what thought.

The apostles and the old woman speak to one another pitying the frightened children whom they do their best to comfort...

Jesus raises His head when the youngest one, a brunet hardly three years old, begins to weep, and He says to James, who in vain busies himself to give the child some milk: « Give Me the boy and go and get My bag... » and He smiles as the little one calms down on His knees and greedily drinks the milk that he had previously refused. The others, who are a little older, eat the soup placed before them, but tears stream from their eyes.

« Dear me! How much misery! Now! It is fair that we should suffer, but innocent children!... » says Peter who cannot bear to see children suffer.

« You are a sinner, Simon. You are reproaching God » points out the Iscariot.

« I may be a sinner. But I am not reproaching God. I am only saying... Master, why must children suffer? They have not committed any sin. »

« Everybody has sins, at least the original one » says the Iscariot.

Peter does not reply to him. He awaits Jesus' reply. And Jesus, Who is lulling to sleep the child now sated and drowsy, replies: « Simon, sorrow is the consequence of sin. »

« All right. So... after You have removed sin, children will no longer suffer. »

« They will still suffer. Do not be scandalised, Simon. Sorrow and death will always be on the Earth. Also the purest people suffer and will suffer. Nay, they are the ones who will suffer on behalf of everybody. The victims propitiatory to the Lord. »

« But why? I don't understand... »

« There are many things that you do not understand on the Earth. You must at least believe that they are wanted by the perfect Love. And when Grace restored to men makes the holiest men know the hidden truths, then one will see the holiest people wish to be victims, because they will have understood the power of sorrow... The child has fallen asleep. Mary, will you take him with you? »

« Certainly, Master. We say: a frightened child sleeps little and weeps much, and a bird without nest needs a motherly wing. My bed is a very large one now that I am its only occupant. I will put the children in it and watch over them. These other ones are also about to fall asleep and forget their sorrow. Come, let us put them to bed. »

She picks up the little one from Jesus' lap and she goes out followed by Peter and Philip as James of Zebedee comes back with Jesus' bag.

Jesus opens it and rummages in it. He pulls out a heavy tunic, he unfolds it and examines its width. He is not satisfied. He looks for the mantle of the same dark shade as the tunic. He puts them aside, closes the bag and hands it back to James.

Peter comes back with Philip. The old woman has remained with the three children and Peter sees at once the garments unfolded and laid aside and he asks: « Are You going to change your clothes, Master? Tired as You are, a hot bath should refresh You. There is hot water and we will warm Your clothes, then we shall have supper and go to bed. This story of the poor children has moved me deeply... »

Jesus smiles but He does not make any remark on the matter. He only says: « Let us praise the Lord Who has led Me here in time to save the innocent children. » He then becomes silent, as He is obviously tired...

The old woman comes back with the children's garments. « They should be changed... They are torn and dirty... But I no longer have my children's garments to replace them. I will wash them tomorrow... »

« No, mother. When the Sabbath is over you will make three small garments out of Mine... »

« But, Lord, do You realise that You have only three tunics left? If You give one away, what will You be left with? Lazarus is not here, as when You gave Your mantle to the leprous woman! » says Peter.

« Never mind! There will be two left, and they are too many for the Son of man. Take this, Mary. Tomorrow at sunset you will begin your work, and the Persecuted One will rejoice in helping the poor whose worries He understands. »

552. The Following Day at Ephraim. Parable on the Remembrance of Man's Eternal Destiny.

12th January 1947.

« Get up and let us go along the stream. Like the Jews who live abroad and where there are no synagogues, we shall celebrate the Sabbath among ourselves. Come children... » says Jesus to the apostles idling in the kitchen garden, and He stretches out His hand to the three poor children who are in a group in a corner.

They go towards Him with an expression of timid joy on their faces prematurely pensive of children who have seen things far greater than themselves, and the two older ones put their hands in those of Jesus, but the little one wants to be taken in His arms, and Jesus satisfies him saying to the oldest one: « You will stay beside Me just the same and you will hold on to My tunic as you did yesterday. Isaac is too tired and too young to walk by himself... » The boy

is delighted with Jesus' smile and he agrees, being satisfied with walking like a little man beside Jesus.

« Give me the child, Master. You must be tired after yesterday's fatigue, and Ruben is not happy because You are not taking him by the hand... » says Bartholomew and he stretches his arms to take the child who clings to Jesus' neck.

« He is as stubborn as all his race! » exclaims the Iscariot.

« No. He is frightened. You have no experience of children. Babies are like that. When they are distressed or scared they seek shelter in the first person who has smiled at them and comforted them » replies Bartholomew, and as he cannot take the youngest one in his arms, he takes the oldest one by the hand after caressing his head and smiling at him in a fatherly way.

They leave the house where only the old woman remains and they follow the stream beyond the village. Its banks are beautiful, covered as they are with fresh grass and studded with wild flowers. The clear water gurgles among stones and, although meagre, it sounds as sweet as a harp and rustles breaking against the larger stones scattered in its bed or insinuating itself into the recesses of some tiny island covered with reeds. Birds fly away from the trees near the banks trilling merrily, or they perch on boughs in the sunshine singing the first songs of springtime, or they fly down to the ground gracefully and lively, seeking insects and worms or drinking near the banks. Two wild turtledoves are bathing at a bend of the stream pecking at each other and cooing; they then fly away carrying in their beaks strands of wool left by some sheep on a plant of hawthorn, the top branches of which are beginning to bloom.

« They do that to build their nest » says the oldest boy. « They certainly have young ones... » He lowers his head and, after smiling faintly when uttering the first words, he weeps silently wiping his eyes with his hand.

Bartholomew takes him in his arms, as he realises what anguish the two turtle-doves have brought about with their care for their nest. And Bartholomew, who has the kind heart of a good father of a family, sighs deeply. The boy weeps on his shoulder and the other one, the second one, seeing him weep, begins to cry as well, imitated by the third one who calls his father in the thin voice of a little child who has just begun to speak.

« This is going to be our Sabbath prayer today! You could have left them at home! Women are better suited to such cases and... » remarks the Iscariot.

« But she does nothing but weep herself! As I feel like doing myself... Because such situations... do make one weep... » replies Peter taking the second boy in his arms.

« Yes, they do make one weep. That is true. And Mary of Jacob, a poor old distressed soul, is not very good at consoling... » confirms

the Zealot.

« We do not think that she is very successful either. The only one capable of consoling was the Master. And He did not do it. »

« He did not do it? And what else should He have done? He convinced the highwaymen, He walked for miles with the children in His arms, He had their relatives informed... »

« All trifling matters. Since He has power also over death He could, nay He should have gone down to the fold and raised the dead shepherd. He did it for Lazarus, who was of no use to anybody! In this case there was a father, and a widower into the bargain, and there are children who are left all alone... That resurrection should have been worked. I do not understand You, Master... »

« And we do not understand you, as you are so disrespectful... »

« Peace, peace! Judas does not understand. He is not the only one who does not understand the reasons of God and the consequences of sin. You also, Simon of Jonah, do not understand why children should suffer. So do not judge Judas of Simon, who does not understand why the man has not been raised from the dead. If Judas ponders on the matter, since he always reproaches Me for going far away all alone, he will realise that I was not able to go so far... Because the fold was in the Jericho plain, but beyond the town, near the ford. What would you have said if I had been away for at least three days? »

« You could have ordered the man to rise again with Your spirit. »

« Are you more exacting than the Pharisees and scribes, who wanted the proof of a decomposed body, so that you may say that I really do raise the dead? »

« They wanted that because they hate You. I would like it because I love You and I would like to see You crush all Your enemies. »

« Your old feelings and your disorderly love. You have not been able to extirpate the old plants from your heart and replace them with new ones; and the old ones, fertilised by the Light that you approached, have become even sturdier. Many people make your error at present and many will make it in future. It is the error of those who, notwithstanding the assistance from God, do not improve themselves because they do not correspond to God's help with heroic wills. »

« Have these men, who, like me, are Your disciples, destroyed the old plants? »

« They have at least pruned them down and engrafted them considerably. You did not. You did not even examine them carefully to see whether they deserved to be engrafted, pruned or removed. You are an improvident gardener, Judas. »

« But only with regard to my soul. Because I know what to do with gardens. »

« You know what to do. You are an expert with all earthly matters. »

I would like to see you equally capable in matters concerning Heaven. »

« But Your light should work wonders in us by itself! Is it really good? If it fertilises evil and invigorates it, it cannot be good, and it is its fault if we do not become good. »

« Speak for yourself, my friend. As far as I know, the Master has not made my bad tendencies any stronger » says Thomas.

« I agree. » « I agree, too » say Andrew and James of Zebedee.

« With regard to me, His power has freed me from evil and has made a new man of me. Why do you say that? Do you not consider what you say? » asks Matthew.

Peter is about to say something, but he prefers to go away, and he begins to walk fast with the child astride his shoulders imitating the rolling of a boat to make him laugh, and when he passes near Thaddeus he takes him by the arm and shouts: « Come on, let's go to that island! It's full of flowers like a basket. Come, Nathanael, Philip, Simon, John... In one bound we are there. The torrent, divided as it is, is only two brooks, one on each side of the island... » And he is the first to jump resting his foot on a sandy protrusion a few metres wide, covered with grass like a meadow and so full of early flowers that it looks like a carpet, with in its middle only one tall thin poplar, the top of which is swaying in a light breeze. He is slowly joined by those he called and then by the others who were closer to Jesus, Who is left behind speaking to the Iscariot.

« But has he not finished yet? » Peter asks his brother.

« The Master is working at his heart » replies Andrew.

« Eh! it is easier for me to make figs grow on this tree than it is for justice to enter Judas' heart. »

« And his mind » adds Matthew.

« He is a fool because he wants to be so, and when he likes » says Thaddeus.

« He is upset because he has not been selected to evangelize. I know » says John.

« As far as I am concerned... If he wants to go in my place... I am not at all anxious to wander about! » exclaims Peter.

« None of us are anxious. But he is. And my Brother does not want to send him. I spoke to Him this morning because I was aware of Judas' mood and of its causes. But Jesus said: "Just because his heart is so unsound I am keeping him with Me. Those who suffer and are weak need a doctor and someone to support them". »

« Of course!... Well!... Come, children. We shall now take these lovely reeds and make little boats with them. See how beautiful they are! And we shall put these little flowers in them to act as fishermen. Look: do they not seem heads with white and red caps?... We shall make the harbour here, and here... the fishermen's little houses... Now let us tie the boats to these lovely slender grass-blades,

and you will put them in the water, like that... then you will beach them when you finish fishing... You can also make the tour of the island... and watch the rocks, eh!... » Peter's patience is wonderful. He cuts the reed into pieces with a knife, from knot to knot, removing one side to make little boats, he puts daisies still in bud in them as fishermen, he digs a Lilliputian harbour in the sand and makes some little houses with the damp sand, and when he is successful in pleasing the children he sits down satisfied whispering: « Poor children!... »

Jesus sets foot on the island just when the two children are beginning to play and He caresses them putting down the little one who joins in the game of his brothers.

« Here I am with you. Let us speak of God now. Because to speak of God and to God is a preparation for one's mission. And after praying, that is, after speaking to God, we shall speak of God, Who is present in everything to teach men good things. Stand up and let us pray » and He intones some psalms in Hebrew and the apostles join Him singing in chorus.

The children, who had moved aside with their little boats, on hearing the men sing, stop playing and prattling in their shrill voices, and approach the group. They listen attentively, their eyes fixed on Jesus Who is everything to them, then, with the spirit of imitation of children, they take the same posture of the praying apostles humming the tune as they do not know the words of the psalms. Jesus looks at them with a smile that encourages the humming of their innocent voices. They feel as if He approved of them and they are encouraged...

The singing of the psalms comes to an end. Jesus sits down on the grass and begins to speak: « When the kings of Israel, of Edom and of Judah united to fight the king of Moab and they applied to the prophet Elisha for advice, he replied to the kings' messenger: "If I did not respect Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, I should not even look at you. Now bring me someone who can play the lyre". And as the harpist played, God spoke to His prophet ordering ditch on ditch to be dug in the wadi so that it might be filled with water for men and animals. And the following morning at the hour of the oblation, although there was neither wind nor rain, the torrent was filled as the Lord had said. According to you, what is the teaching of that episode? Speak up! »

The apostles consult with one another. Some say: « God does not speak to an agitated heart. Elisha wants to appease his anger, brought about by seeing the king of Israel appear in his presence, so that he may hear God. » Some instead say: « It is a lesson of justice. Elisha, in order not to punish the innocent king of Judah, saves also the guilty one. » Others say: « It is a lesson of faith and obedience. They dug the ditches obeying an apparently silly order, and they

waited for the water although it was a clear windless day. »

« Your replies are correct but not complete. God does not speak to an agitated heart. That is true. But lyres are not required to calm a heart. It is sufficient to have charity, which is the spiritual lyre with paradisiac notes. When a soul lives in charity, its heart is calm and it can hear and understand the voice of God. »

« So Elisha did not have charity because he was upset. »

« Elisha lived at the time of Justice. We must learn to transfer ancient episodes to the time of Charity and see them not in the light of thunder and lightning but in the light of stars. (1) You belong to the new times. So why are you so often more irascible and agitated than people of the ancient times? Divest yourselves of the past. I repeat that to you, although Judas does not like to hear it being repeated. Extirpate, prune, engraft, plant new trees. Renovate yourselves, dig the ditches of humility, obedience and faith. Those kings were able to do so although two of them did not come from Judah, and they did not hear God but the prophet of God repeat the orders of the Most High. Had they not obeyed they would have died of thirst in the arid land. They obeyed and the water filled the ditches they had dug, and they were not only saved from dying of thirst but they also defeated their enemies. I am the Water of Life. Dig ditches in your hearts in order to be able to receive Me. And now listen. I am not going to make long speeches. I will just give you some simple thoughts on which you can meditate. You will always be like these children and even inferior to them, because they are innocent and you are not, and thus the spiritual light will be dimmer in you, if you do not get accustomed to meditation. You always listen but you never remember, because your intelligence is asleep instead of being awake. So listen. When the son of the woman of Shunem died, she wanted to go to the prophet although her husband told her that it was not the first day of the month or the Sabbath. But she knew that she had to go, because for certain matters no delay is allowed. And as she was able to understand the matter from a spiritual point of view, she had her son restored to life. What do you say about that? »

« That it is a reproach to me because of the Sabbath » says the Iscariot.

« So, Judas, do you realise that you understand things when you want to? So open your heart to justice. »

« Yes... but You did not infringe the Sabbath to raise the man from the dead. »

« I did more than that. I prevented their ruin and death, their true

(1) Allusion to the lightning that accompanied the manifestations of the ancient Law (Exodus 19, 1 - 20,21) and to the star that indicated the coming and manifestation of Jesus in the world (Matthew 2, 1 - 12).

death. And I reminded the thieves that... »

« Wait before consoling Yourself with the idea of having done some good! I don't believe they obeyed You... »

« If the Master says so... »

« Also Elisha, in the story of the woman of Shunem, says: "The Lord has hidden it from me". So not even the prophets always know everything » replies the Iscariot.

« Our Brother is greater than a prophet » remarks Thaddeus.

« I know. He is the Son of God. But He is also the Man. And as such He may be subject to being unaware of secondary matters like this one concerning a conversion and a return... Master, do You always, really always, know everything? I often wonder... » says the Iscariot with stubborn insistence.

« And with what mind do you wish to know? For the sake of peace, of advice, or to be upset? » asks Jesus.

« Well... I do not know. I wonder and... »

« And you seem to be upset even in wondering » says Thomas.

« Me? Of course perplexity always upsets one... »

« How many quibbles! I do not worry about so many problems. I believe without inquiring, and I am not perplexed or upset about anything. But let us allow the Master to speak. I do not like this lesson. Tell us a beautiful parable, Master. The children also will like it » says Peter.

« I have still one question to ask you. This one. According to you, what is the meaning of the flour that removed the bitterness from the soup of the prophet's children? »

Dead silence is the reply to the question.

« What? Can you not reply? »

« Probably because the flour absorbed the bitterness... » says Matthew with no certainty.

« Everything would have been bitter, also the flour. »

« Because of a miracle of the prophet who did not want to mortify his servant » suggests Philip.

« Yes. But not only for that. »

« The Lord wanted the power of the prophet to shine also on common matters » says the Zealot.

« Yes. But it is not yet the right meaning. The lives of prophets anticipate what will take place in the fullness of time: Mine, they reflect My earthly days by means of symbols and figures. So... »

There is silence. They look at one another. Then John lowers his head blushing and he smiles.

« Why do you not express your thought, John? » asks Jesus. « There is no lack of love in speaking, because you do not intend to mortify anybody. »

« I think it means this. That in the time of hunger for Truth and of famine of Wisdom, that is, this time when You came, every tree

has become wild and has yielded bitter fruits as inedible as poison for the sons of men, who thus in vain pick them and prepare them to nourish themselves. But the Eternal Father's Bounty sends You, the flour of selected corn, and with Your perfection You remove the poison from all food, restoring both the trees of the Scriptures again, perverted throughout ages, and the palates of men, corrupted by concupiscence. In this case it is the Father Who orders the flour to be brought and He pours it into the bitter soup, and You are the flour that sacrifices itself to become food for men. And after Your consummation no bitterness will be left in the world, because You will have re-established our friendship with God. I may be wrong. »

« You are not wrong. That is the symbol. »

« Oh! and what made you think that? » asks Peter, who is astonished.

Jesus replies to him: « I will tell you with the very words you spoke a few minutes ago. One bound and you are in the peaceful flowery island of spirituality. But one must have the courage to make a leap leaving the shore, the world. It is necessary to jump without worrying whether there is someone who may laugh at our clumsy jump or may deride us for our simplicity in preferring a lonely islet to the world. One must jump without being afraid of getting hurt or wet or being disappointed. You must leave everything to take refuge in God. One must remain on the island separated from the world and leave it only to distribute the flowers and pure water picked up on the island of the spirit, where there is only one tree, the tree of Wisdom, to those who are left on the shores. By being close to that tree, away from the noise of the world, one catches all its words and becomes a master, being aware of being a disciple. Also that is a symbol. But we shall now tell the children a lovely parable. Come here close to Me. »

The three children go so close to Him as to sit on His knees. Jesus embraces them and begins to speak.

« One day the Lord God said: "I will make man, and man will live in the Earthly Paradise where the great river is that then divides into four water-courses, which are the Pishon, the Gihon, the Euphrates and the Tigris, that flow on the Earth. And man will be happy as he will have all the beautiful and good things of Creation and My love for the joy of his spirit". And He did so. It was as if man were in a large island, more flowery than this one, with all kinds of trees and animals, and upon him there were the love of God shining like a sun on his soul, and the voice of God were heard in the winds, more sweet-sounding than the songs of birds.

But suddenly a serpent crept into that beautiful flowery garden, among all the animals and plants, and that serpent was different from all those that had been created by God and were good, without poisonous teeth and without fierceness in the spires of their flexuous

bodies. Also that serpent had dressed itself with a skin having the shades of gems as the other snakes had, nay, it was even more beautiful than they were, so much so that it looked like a huge jewel of a king wriggling among the wonderful trees in the Garden. It went and coiled round a tree growing in the middle of the garden, a beautiful solitary tree that was much taller than this one and it was covered with marvellous leaves and fruits. And the serpent looked like a beautiful jewel around the lovely tree, and it shone in the sun, and all the animals were looking at it because none of them remembered seeing it being created, or seeing it before. But none of them approached it, nay, they all moved away from the tree, now that the snake was round its trunk.

Only the man and woman went near it, and the woman before the man, because she liked that bright thing shining in the sun and moving its head like a flower still half-closed, and she listened to what the serpent was saying, and she disobeyed the Lord and she made Adam disobey. Only after their disobedience they saw the snake for what it was and they understood sin, as by now they had lost the innocence of their hearts. And they hid themselves from God Who was looking for them and then they lied to God Who was questioning them.

God then put some angels at the borders of the Garden and drove the men out. And they felt as if they had been thrown from the safe shore of Eden into the rivers on the earth full of water, as when they are flooded in springtime. But in the hearts of the men who had been driven out God left the remembrance of their eternal destiny, that is, of the passage from the beautiful Garden, where they heard the voice of God and felt His love, to Paradise where they would enjoy God completely. And with that remembrance He left the holy incentive to ascend to the place they had lost, by means of a life of justice.

But, My dear children, you have just now experienced that as long as the boat sails with the stream its voyage is easy, whereas while it sails against the stream it finds it difficult to keep afloat, without being swept away by waves or being wrecked among the vegetation, sand or stones of the river. If Simon had not tied your little boats with the thin withes of the shores, you would have lost them all, as it happened to Isaac who did not hold his withe.

The same happens to men thrown into the streams of the Earth. They must always remain in the hands of God, trusting their will, which is like a withe, to the hands of the good Father Who is in Heaven and Who is the Father of all men, and in particular of innocent people, and they must be on the look-out to avoid herbs and bog grass, stones, whirlpools and mud that might hold back, shatter or swallow up the boat of their souls by tearing away the thread of the will that keeps them joined to God. Because the Serpent,

which is no longer in the Garden, is now on the Earth, and it really tries to wreck souls, preventing them from going up the Euphrates, the Tigris, the Gihon and the Pishon to the Great River that flows in the eternal Paradise and nourishes the trees of Life and Health, that yield perpetual fruits, that will be the delight of all those who have been able to go upstream to be united to God and to His angels, without having to suffer any further for ever. »

« My mother also used to say that » says the oldest boy.

« Yes, she did » lisps the youngest one.

« You don't know. I do, because I am big. But if you say things that are not true you will certainly not go to Paradise. »

« But our father used to say that it was not true » says the second-born son.

« Because he did not believe in the Lord of our mother. »

« Was your father not a Samaritan? » asks James of Alphaeus.

« No. He came from another place. But mother was, and we are as well, because she wanted us to be like her. And she told us of Paradise and of the Garden, but not so well as You did. I was afraid of the serpent and of death, because mother used to say that one was the devil and our father said that death puts an end to everything. That is why I was so unhappy to be alone and I also said that it was quite useless to be good now, because as long as father and mother lived, we made them happy by being good, but now there was nobody to make happy if we were good. But now I know... And I will be good. I will never take my thread away from the hands of God so that I will not be carried away by the waters of the Earth. »

« Did mother go upstream or downstream? » asks the second son perplexedly.

« What do you mean, child? » asks Matthew.

« I mean: where is she? Did she go to the river of the eternal Paradise? »

« Let us hope so, my child. If she was good... »

« She was a Samaritan... » says the Iscariot contemptuously.

« Then is there no Paradise for us, because we are Samaritans? Then shall we not have God? He called Him the "Father of all men". As an orphan I liked to think that I still have a Father... But if there is not one for us... » he says lowering his head sadly.

« God is the Father of everybody, My child. Have I loved you less because you are a Samaritan? I contended with the highwaymen for you, and I will contend with the demon for you, in the same way as I would contend for the little son of the High Priest of the Temple in Jerusalem, if he did not consider it disgraceful that the Saviour should save his son. Nay: I would contend for you more firmly because you are alone and unhappy. There is no difference for Me between the soul of a Judaeon and that of a Samaritan. And before long there will be no division between Samaria and Judaea,

because the Messiah will have one people only that will bear His Name and will comprise all those who love Him. »

« I love You, Lord. But will You take me to my mother? » asks the oldest of the three boys.

« You do not know where she is. That man over there said that we can only hope... » says the second-born son.

« I do not know, but the Lord knows. He knew even where we were, whereas we do not even know where we were. »

« With the highwaymen... They wanted to kill us... » Terror appears again on the little face of the second son.

« The highwaymen were like demons. But He saved us because our angels called Him. »

« The angels saved also my mother. I know because I always dream of her. »

« You are a liar, Isaac. You cannot dream of her because you do not remember her. »

The little one weeps saying: « No. No. I dream of her. I do... »

« Don't call your brother a liar, Ruben. His soul can really see his mother, because the good Father Who is in Heaven can grant that the little orphan may dream of her and may know her partly, as He allows us to know Him, so that from such limited knowledge we may be willing to know Him perfectly, which is achieved by being always good. "And now let us go. We have spoken of God, and the Sabbath has been sanctified. » He stands up and intones more psalms.

Upon hearing the chorus some people from Ephraim go towards them and they respectfully wait until the psalm is ended in order to greet Jesus and say to Him: « Did You prefer to come here instead of coming to us? Do You not love us? »

« None of you invited Me. So I came here with My apostles and these children. »

« That is true. But we thought that Your disciple had informed You of our wish. »

Jesus looks at John and Judas. And Judas replies: « I forgot to tell You yesterday; and today, with these children, I never thought of it. »

Jesus in the meantime leaves the islet and He crosses the tiny stream of water and goes towards the people of Ephraim. The apostles follow Him while the children delay unfasting the two remaining little boats, and as Peter urges them, they reply: « We want to keep them to remember the lesson. »

« And what about me? I lost mine. And I will not remember. And I will not go to Paradise » says the youngest one weeping.

« Wait! Don't weep. I'll make a little boat for you at once. Of course, you must remember the lesson as well. Eh! We ought all to have a little boat with a withe tied to its prow in order to remember.

And we men more than you children! Well! » and Peter makes another little boat with its withe. He then takes the three children in his arms, in one armful, and jumps the stream going towards Jesus.

« Are these the ones? » asks Malachi of Ephraim.

« Yes, they are. »

« And are they from Shechem? »

« That is what the young shepherd said. He said that their relatives lived in the country. »

« Poor children! But if their relatives should not come, what would You do? »

« I would keep them with Me. But they will come. »

« Those highwaymen... Will they not come, too? »

« They will not come. Do not be afraid of them. Even if they came... I would be their plunderer, and they would not be your pillagers. I have already snatched four preys from them and I hope I have also snatched part of their souls from sin, at least in some of them. »

« We shall help You with these children. You will let us do that. »

« Yes, I will. But not because they come from your region, but because they are innocent, and love for innocent people leads one quickly to God. »

« But You are the only one who makes no distinction between innocents and innocents. Neither a Judaeen nor a Galilean would have picked up these little Samaritans. People do not love us. And they dislike not only us but also those who do not even yet know what a Samaritan or a Judaeen is. And that is cruel. »

« Yes, it is. But it will no longer be so when people follow My Law. See, Malachi? They are in the arms of Simon Peter, of My brother and of Simon Zealot. None of them are Samaritans or fathers. And yet not even you would press your own children to your heart as these disciples of Mine are pressing the orphans of Samaria. The Messianic idea is this: to re-unite everybody in love. This is the truth of the Messianic idea. One people only on the Earth under the sceptre of the Messiah. One people only in Heaven under the glance of one God only. »

They go away... speaking, towards the house of Mary of Jacob.

553. Jesus Explains to Peter the Mandate for Remitting Sins and Why Saints and Innocents Suffer.

15th January 1947.

Jesus is alone in a little room. He is thinking or praying sitting on a little bed. The tiny yellowish flame of a small oil lamp is quivering on a shelf. It must be night-time because there is no noise in the house or in the street. Only the rustling of the stream outside the house seems to sound louder in the silence of the night.

Jesus raises His head and looks at the door. He listens. He stands up and goes to open it. He sees Peter outside. « Is it you? Come in. What do you want, Simon? Are you still up and you have to walk such a long way? » He has taken him by the hand and pulled him inside, closing the door noiselessly. He makes him sit on the bed beside Himself.

« I wanted to tell You, Master... Yes, I wanted to tell You that even today You have seen what I am worth. I am only capable of making poor children enjoy themselves, of comforting an old woman, of reconciling two shepherds who are quarelling over a ewe-lamb that has lost its milk. I am a poor man, so dull that I do not even understand what You explain to me. But that is another matter. Now I wanted to tell You that just because of that, You should keep me here. I am not anxious to go around when You do not come with us. And I am not good at anything... Content me, Lord. » Peter is speaking eagerly with his eyes fixed on the coarse chipped bricks of the floor.

« Look at Me, Simon » Jesus orders him. And, as Peter obeys, Jesus stares at him intensely asking: « Is that all? Is that the only reason for your being awake? The only reason why you are begging Me to keep you here? Be sincere, Simon. You are not grumbling if you tell your Master the other part of your thought. You must be able to tell the difference between an idle word and a useful one. A word is idle, and sin generally flourishes in idleness, when one speaks of other people's faults with someone who can do nothing about them. Then it is plainly lack of charity, even if what one says is true. As it is lack of charity to reproach someone more or less sharply without giving advice at the same time. And I am referring to just reproaches. The others are unfair and they are a sin against our neighbour. But when one sees one's neighbour commit sin, and one suffers because that person offends God and injures his soul, and one realises that one cannot estimate the gravity of someone else's sin, neither does one feel wise enough to speak words that may work a conversion, and then one applies to a just and wise person confiding one's anxiety, then one does not commit sin, because one's disclosure aims at putting an end to a scandal and at saving a soul. It is the same as if one had a relative suffering from a shameful disease. One will certainly try to conceal it from people, but one will go secretly to a doctor and say: "My relative is suffering from so and so and I do not know how to advise and cure him. Please come or tell me what I must do". Does one in that case lack love for one's relative? No. On the contrary one would lack love if one feigned not to notice the disease and allowed it to progress and bring about death, through a mistaken feeling of prudence and love. One day, and that day is not remote, you and your companions will have to listen to the secrets of hearts. Not as you listen to them now as men,

but as priests, that is doctors, masters, and pastors of souls, as I am Doctor, Master and Pastor. You will have to listen, decide and give advice. Your judgement will have the same value as if God Himself had passed it... »

Peter frees himself from Jesus Who was holding him close to Himself and standing up he says: « That is not possible Lord. Never impose that on us. How can You expect us to judge like God, if we are not even able to judge like men? »

« Then you will be able, because the Spirit of God will hover over you and will penetrate you with its light. You will know how to judge taking into consideration the seven conditions of the facts proposed to you in order to have your advice or to be forgiven. Listen to Me carefully and try to remember. In due time the Spirit of God will remind you of My words. But at the same time try to remember with your own intelligence, as God give it to you so that you may use it without laziness and spiritual presumptions that lead one to expect and pretend everything from God. When you are Master, Doctor and Pastor in My place and My stead, and when a believer comes to weep at your feet over his perturbation brought about by his own or other people's deeds, you must always bear in mind the following seven questions:

Who: Who sinned?

What: What is the matter of the sin?

Where: In which place?

How: In which circumstances?

With what or with whom: The instrument or person that was the material for the sin?

Why: Which incentives brought about the environment favourable to the sin?

When: In which conditions and reactions, and whether by accident or by unwholesome habit?

Because see, Simon, the same sin may have infinite nuances and grades according to all the circumstances that caused it and to the people who committed it. For instance... Let us take into consideration two of the most common sins: lust of the flesh and lust for riches.

A man has committed a sin of lewdness, or he thinks that he has committed such a sin. Because at times man mistakes temptation for sin, or he considers of the same degree the incentives brought about artificially by an unwholesome appetite, and considers also to be equal those thoughts that are the consequence of a painful disease or come to one's mind because the flesh and blood at times have sudden voices resounding inwardly before the mind has time to be wary of them and suffocate them. He comes to you and says: "I committed a sin of lewdness". An imperfect priest would say: "Anathema on you". But you, My Peter, must not say so. Because you are

Jesus' Peter, you are the successor of the Mercy. So before condemning you must consider and touch the heart weeping before you, kindly and prudently, in order to ascertain all the aspects of the sin or supposed sin, and of the scruple.

I said: kindly and prudently. You must remember that besides being a Master and Pastor, you are a Doctor. A doctor does not irritate wounds. If there is gangrene he will cut it off, but he knows also how to uncover and treat a wound with a light hand when lacerated tissues are to be re-united, not removed. And you are to remember that in addition to being a Doctor and Pastor, you are a Master. A master adapts his words to the age of his pupils. And scandalous would be that teacher who should disclose animal laws to innocent children who were unacquainted with them and would thus acquire mischievous knowledge precociously. And in dealing with souls one must be prudent in asking questions. You must respect yourself and other people. It will be easy for you if in every soul you see a son of yours. A father is by nature the master, doctor and guide of his children. So love with fatherly love every person who comes to you upset by sin, or by fear of sin, and you will be able to judge without hurting or scandalising anybody. Do you follow Me? »

« Yes, I do, Master. I have understood You very well. I must be cautious and patient, I will have to convince people to disclose their wounds, but I shall have to examine them by myself, without attracting the attention of other people to them, and only when I should see that there is a real wound, I ought to say: "See? You have hurt yourself here by doing so and so". But if I see that a person is only afraid of being hurt, having seen ghosts, then... I should blow away the fog without giving, through useless zeal, explanations capable of throwing light on real sources of sin. Is that right? »

« Yes, quite right. So. If one says to you: "I have committed a sin of carnal lust", you must consider the person who is in front of you. It is true that sin can be committed at every age. But it is easier to find it in adults than in children, so the questions to ask or the answers to give a man or a boy will be different. Consequently, after the first question, comes the second one on the matter of the sin, then the third one on the place of the sin, then the fourth on the circumstances, then the fifth on the accomplice to the sin, then the sixth on the causes of the sin, and the seventh on the time and number of the sin.

In general you will find that in the case of adults living in the world a circumstance of true sin will appear to correspond to each question, whereas in the case of children by age or by spirit, for many questions you will have to say: "There is only the fear of sin here, but no real sin". Nay, at times you will see that instead of filth there is a lily that quivers with fear of being splashed with

mud, and mistakes the drop of dew that descended on its calyx for • splash of mud. They are souls so eager for Heaven that fear, as • stain, also the shadow of a cloud that overshadows them for a moment, interposing between them and the sun, and then passes leaving no trace on the spotless corolla. They are souls so innocent and so anxious to remain such, that Satan frightens them with fanciful temptations or instigating the incentives of the flesh or the flesh itself, taking advantage of true diseases of the flesh. Those souls are to be comforted and supported, because they are not sinners, but martyrs. Always bear that in mind.

And always remember to judge with the same method also those who commit the sin of greed for other people's riches or property. Because if it is a cursed sin to be greedy without need and without pity, robbing the poor, and acting against justice by harassing citizens, servants, or peoples, the sin of him who steals some bread to appease the hunger of his children and his own, after his neighbours refused to give him some, is by far less grave. Remember that if for a lustful man and a thief, the number, circumstances and gravity of the sin are to be taken into account when judging them, one must also consider what knowledge the sinner had of the sin when he was committing it. Because he who acts with full knowledge, sins more than he who acts out of ignorance. And he who acts with the free consent of his will sins more than he who was forced to sin. I solemnly tell you that there will be deeds that are apparently sinful, but are really martyrdom and they will be given the reward that is granted to those who suffered martyrdom. And above all remember that in each case, before condemning, you must bear in mind that you have been a man as well and that your Master, in Whom no one was ever able to find sin, never condemned anyone who had repented of having sinned.

Forgive seventy times seven, and even seventy times seventy, the sins of your brothers and children. Because to shut the doors of Salvation upon a sick man, only because he had a relapse, is to want to let him die. Have you understood? »

« Yes, I have. I have understood that very clearly... »

« Well, then, tell Me what you have in mind. »

« Yes! I will tell You, because I can see that You know everything, and I realise that I am not grumbling if I tell You to send Judas around in my place, because he suffers if he does not go. I am not telling You meaning that he is jealous or because I am scandalised, but to give peace to him and... to You. Because it must be really troublesome for You to have such a stormy wind near You all the time... »

« Has Judas complained again? »

« Well! He has! He said that every word of Yours hurts him. Also what You said to the children. He says that it is true that You were

referring to him when You said that Eve went to the tree because she liked that thing that shone like a king's crown. Truly, I did not think of any comparison. But I am ignorant. Bartholomew and the Zealot, instead, said that Judas has been "touched on the rawest raw", because he is bewitched by everything that shines and allures one's vainglory. And they must be right because they are wise. Be good to Your poor apostles, Master! Make Judas happy and me as well. In any case! See? I am good only at amusing children... and at being a child in Your arms » and he presses against His Jesus, Whom he really loves with all his strength.

« No. I cannot please you. Do not insist. You, because you are what you are, will go to evangelize. He, because he is what he is, will stay here. My brother also mentioned it to Me, and although I love him so much, I replied "no" also to him. I would not yield even if My Mother should ask Me. It is not a punishment, but a medicine. And Judas must take it. If it does not help his spirit, it will help Mine, because I will not have to reproach Myself for omitting anything that might sanctify him. » Jesus is severe and authoritative in saying so.

Peter lets his arms droop and lowers his head with a sigh.

« Do not worry about it, Simon. We shall have an eternity to be together and love each other. But you had something else to tell Me... »

« It's late, Master, and You must sleep. »

« And you more than I, Simon, as you have to set out at dawn. »

« Oh! as far as I am concerned! I rest more staying here with You than I would in bed. »

« Speak up, then. You know that I sleep very little... »

« Well! I am a blockhead, I know and I say so without being ashamed. And if it depended on me, I would not care to be very learned, because I think that the greatest wisdom consists in loving, following and serving You wholeheartedly. But You send me here and there. And people ask me questions and I must reply to them. I think that what I ask You, other people may ask me. Because the thoughts of men are alike. Yesterday You said that innocent and holy people will always suffer, nay they will be the ones who will suffer on behalf of everybody. I find it difficult to understand that, even if You say that they will wish that themselves. And I think that as it is difficult for me, it may be so also for other people. If they ask me, what shall I tell them? In this first journey a mother said to me: "It was not fair that my little girl should die with so much pain, because she was good and innocent". And as I did not know what to say, I repeated Job's words: "The Lord has given. The Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord". But I was not convinced myself. And I did not convince her. The next time I would like to know what to say... »

« It is just. Listen. It seems an injustice, but it is a great justice that the best should suffer on behalf of everybody. Now tell Me, Simon. What is the Earth? All the Earth? »

« The Earth? A great, a very great expanse, made of dust and water, of rocks, with trees, animals and human beings. »

« And then? »

« Then, nothing else... Unless You want me to say that it is the place of punishment and exile for man. »

« The Earth is an altar, Simon. A huge altar. It was to be the altar of everlasting praise to its Creator. But the Earth is full of sin. Therefore it must be the altar of endless expiation and sacrifice, on which the victims are consumed. The Earth, like the other worlds with which Creation is strewn, ought to sing psalms to God Who created it. Look! »

Jesus opens the wooden shutters, and through the wide open window comes in the cool of the night, the noise of the torrent, a moonbeam, and one can see the sky studded with stars.

« Look at those stars! They are singing the praises of God with their voices that are light and motion in the infinite spaces of the firmament. Their song, which rises from the blue fields of the sky to the Heaven of God, has lasted for thousands and thousands of years. We can imagine stars, planets and comets as sidereal creatures that like sidereal priests, levites, virgins and believers are to sing the praises of the Creator in an unlimited temple. Listen, Simon. Listen to the breeze rustling among the leaves and to the noise of the stream in the night. Also the Earth, like the sky, sings with the winds, with the water, with the voices of birds and animals. But if the luminous praise of the stars that people the sky is sufficient for the vault of heaven, the song of winds, waters and animals is not sufficient for the temple that is the Earth. Because on it there are not only winds, waters and animals unconsciously singing the praises of God, but there is also man, the perfect creature, superior to all beings living in time and in the world, gifted with matter, like the animals, minerals and plants, and with spirit, like the angels of Heaven, and like them destined, if faithful in the trial, to know and possess God, through grace at first, and in Paradise later. Man, the synthesis comprising all natures, has a mission that no other creature has and that should be for him a joy, besides being his duty: to love God. To give God a cult of love intelligently and voluntarily, repaying God for the love that He gave man by granting him life and Heaven in addition to life. To give an intelligent cult.

Consider this, Simon. What benefit does God get from Creation? What profit? None. Creation does not make God greater, it does not sanctify Him, it does not make Him rich. He is infinite. He would have been such even if Creation had never existed. But God-Love

wanted to have love. And He created to have love. God can get only love from Creation, and that love, which is intelligent and free only in angels and in men, is the glory of God, the joy of angels, the religion for men. The day that the great altar of the Earth should omit the praises and entreaties of love, the Earth would cease existing. Because once love is extinguished also expiation would cease, and the wrath of God would destroy the Earth that had become an earthly hell. So the Earth must love in order to exist. And also: the Earth must be the Temple that loves and prays with the intelligence of men. But which victims are always offered in the Temple? The pure, spotless, faultless victims. Those are the only victims agreeable to the Lord. They are the early fruits. Because the best things are to be given to the Father of the family, and the first fruits of everything and choice things are to be given to God, the Father of the human family.

But I said that the Earth has a double duty of sacrifice: that of praise and that of expiation. Because Mankind that has spread over the Earth sinned in the First men, and continuously sins by adding to the sin of estrangement from God the other countless sins of its consent to the voices of the world, of the flesh and of Satan. A guilty, very guilty Mankind that, although it has likeness to God, having its own intelligence and divine help, is more and more sinful. Stars obey, plants obey, elements obey, animals obey and they praise the Lord as best they can. Men do not obey and do not praise the Lord enough. Hence the necessity of victim-souls that may love and expiate on behalf of everybody. They are the children who, innocent and unaware, pay the bitter punishment of sorrow for those who can do nothing but sin. They are the saints who willingly sacrifice themselves for everybody.

Before long - a year or a century is always a short time as compared to eternity - no more sacrifices will be celebrated on the altar of the great Temple of the Earth, that is, of victim-men, consumed with the perpetual sacrifice: victims with the perfect Victim. Do not be upset, Simon. I am not saying that I will establish a cult like those of Molech, Baal and Ashtoreth. Men themselves will immolate us. Do you understand? They will immolate us. And we shall face death happily to expiate and love on behalf of everybody. And then the days will come when men will no longer immolate men. But there will always be pure victims that love consumes with the Great Victim in the perpetual Sacrifice. I mean the love of God and the love for God. Truly they will be the victims of the future days and of the future Temple. No longer lambs and kids, calves and doves, but the sacrifice of one's heart is what pleases God. David realised that. And in the new times, the times of the spirit and of love, only that sacrifice will be pleasant.

Consider, Simon, that if a God had to become incarnate to appease

divine Justice for the great Sin, for the many sins of men, in the times of the truth, only the sacrifices of the spirits of men can appease the Lord. You are thinking: "Why then did He, the Most High, order men to immolate the offspring of animals and the fruits of plants to Him"? I will tell you: because, before I came, man was a stained holocaust and Love was not known. Now it will be known. And man, who will know Love, because I will give Grace back to him, and through it man will know Love, man will come out of his lethargy, he will remember, understand, live and he will replace kids and lambs, as a victim of love and expiation, on the model of the Lamb of God, his Master and Redeemer. Sorrow, so far a punishment, will turn into perfect love, and blessed are those who will embrace it out of perfect love. »

« But children... »

« You mean those who cannot yet offer themselves... And do you know when God speaks in them? The language of God is spiritual. A soul understands it and a soul has no age. Nay, I tell you that a child's soul, as it is without malice, with regard to its capacity of understanding God, is more adult than the soul of an old sinner. I tell you, Simon, that you will live so long as to see many children teach adults, and even yourself, the wisdom of heroic love. But in those little ones who die for natural reasons, God acts directly for motives of so high a love that I cannot explain to you, as they are part of the wisdom written in the books of Life, and that only in Heaven will be read by the blessed souls. I said read, but in actual fact it will suffice to look at God to know not only God, but also His infinite wisdom... We have let the moon set, Simon... It will soon be dawn and you have had no sleep... »

« It does not matter, Master. I have lost a few hours of sleep and I have gained so much wisdom. And I have been with You. But if You allow me, I will now go. Not to sleep. But to think of Your words again. »

He is already at the door and is about to go out, when he stops pensively and then says: « One more question, Master. Is it right for me to say to someone who suffers, that sorrow is not a punishment but a... grace, something like... like our vocation, beautiful even if toilsome, beautiful even if it may seem an unpleasant and sad thing to people who do not know? »

« Yes, you can say that, Simon. It is the truth. Sorrow is not a punishment, when one knows how to accept it and use it rightly. Sorrow is like a priesthood, Simon. A priesthood open to everybody. A priesthood that confers great power on the heart of God. It is a great merit. Sorrow that was born at the same time as sin can appease the Justice. Because God can use for good purposes also what Hatred created to give sorrow. I did not chose any other means to cancel the Sin. Because there is no means greater than this one. »

554. On a Sabbath at Ephraim Jesus Speaks in the Synagogue.

17th January 1947.

It must be another Sabbath because the apostles are once again all together in the house of Mary of Jacob.

The children are still with them, near Jesus, by the fireside. And just because of that Judas Iscariot says: « So a week has gone by and their relatives have not come » and he laughs shaking his head.

Jesus does not reply to him. He caresses the second-born son.

Judas asks Peter and James of Alphaeus: « And you say that you went along the two roads that take one to Shechem? »

« Yes, we did. But thinking it over, it was quite useless. Highwaymen certainly do not take busy roads, particularly now that Roman squads patrol them continuously » replies James of Alphaeus.

« Why did you go along them, then? » insists the Iscariot.

« Well!... It's the same to us to go here or there. So we took those. »

« And was nobody able to tell you anything? »

« We did not ask anybody. »

« And how were you expecting to know whether they had passed or not? Do people carry banners or leave traces when they go along a road? I don't think so. Because otherwise we would have been found at least by our friends. Instead not one of them has been here since we came » and he laughs sarcastically.

« We do not know why no one has come here. The Master knows. We don't. When people withdraw to a place unknown to everybody, as we did, without leaving any trace of their passage, no one can go to them unless one is informed of the place of their refuge. Now we do not know whether our Brother has told our friends » says James of Alphaeus patiently.

« Oh! Would you believe or make us believe that He did not tell at least Lazarus and Nike? »

Jesus does not say anything. He takes one of the children by the hand and goes out...

« I do not want to believe anything. But even if it is as you say, you and none of us can yet pass judgement on the reasons for our friends' absence... »

« Those reasons are easily understood! No one wishes to have trouble with the Sanhedrin, least of all who is rich and powerful. That's all! We are the only ones who are good at endangering our lives. »

« Be fair, Judas! The Master did not force any of us to stay with Him. Why did you stay, if the Sanhedrin frightens you? » remarks James of Alphaeus.

« And you can go away whenever you wish. You are not in chains... » says the other James, the son of Zebedee.

« No! Never! We are here, and we are staying here. All of us. Who wanted to go away, should have gone away before. Not now. I oppose

that, if the Master does not » says Peter slowly but decidedly, striking the table with his fist.

« Why? Who are you that you want to give orders instead of the Master? » Judas asks him violently.

« A man who reasons not like God, as He does, but as a man. »

« Are you suspecting me? Do you think I am a traitor? » asks Judas excitedly.

« You have said it. Not because I think that you would do it deliberately; but you are so... thoughtless, Judas, so fickle! And you have too many friends. And you are too keen on standing out, in everything. Oh! you would not be able to keep quiet! You would speak, either to confute some wicked enemy, or to show that you are the Apostle. So you are here and you are staying here. This way you will do no harm and you will not feel any remorse. »

« God does not force the freedom of man, but you wish to do so? »

« Yes, I do. But after all, tell me. Is it raining on you? Have you not enough bread? Is the air harmful to you? Do the people offend you? None of all that. The house is solid, even if it is not a rich one, the air is good, we have never been short of food, the people honour you. So why are you so restless here, as if you were in jail? »

« "There are two nations that my soul detests, and the third one hated by me is not even a nation: the inhabitants of Mount Seir, the Philistines and the stupid people living at Shechem". I have replied to you with the words of the Wise Man. And I am right in thinking so. Consider whether these people love us! »

« H'm! To tell you the truth I don't think that the other peoples, yours and mine, are much better. We were pelted with stones in Judaea and in Galilee, in Judaea even more than in Galilee, and in the Temple in Judaea more than in any other place. I cannot say that we have been ill-treated in the territory of the Philistines, or here, or anywhere else... »

« Anywhere else? We have not been anywhere else, fortunately. But even if we had had to go somewhere else I would not have come with you, neither will I come in future. I do not want to get more contaminated. »

« Contaminated? That is not what worries you, Judas of Simon. You do not want to alienate those of the Temple. That is what troubles you » says calmly Simon Zealot, who has remained in the kitchen with Peter, James of Alphaeus and Philip. The others have gone out, one after the other together with the two boys and have joined the Master. A meritorious flight as it was made to avoid being uncharitable.

« No. Not because of that. But because I do not like to waste my time and give wisdom to fools. Look! What good has it served to take Ermasteus with us? He went away and has never come back. Joseph told us that he parted from him saying that he would come

back for the feast of the Tabernacles. Have you seen him? A renegade... »

« I do not know why he has not come back and I cannot judge him. But I ask you: is he the only one who left the Master and has become His enemy? Are there no renegades among us Judaeans and among the Galileans? Can you prove that? »

« No. It's true. But I am ill at ease here. If they only knew that we are here! If they knew that we familiarise with the Samaritans to the extent of going to their synagogues on Sabbaths! He wants that... Woe to us if we were found out! The charge would be justified... »

« And you mean that the Master would be condemned. But He is already condemned. He has been condemned before people know. Nay He was condemned after He raised a Judaeans from the dead in Judaea. He is hated and accused of being a Samaritan and the friend of publicans and prostitutes. He has been... all the time. And you know better than anybody else whether He has been hated. »

« What do you mean, Nathanael? What do you mean? What have I got to do with that? What do I know more than you do? » He is very excited.

« You look like a mouse surrounded by enemies, my boy! But you are not a mouse, neither are we provided with clubs to capture and kill you. Why are you so frightened? If you are at peace with your conscience, why do you become upset over innocent words? What did Bartholmai say to make you so excited? Is it not true that no one more than we, His apostles, who sleep and live near Him, can be aware and witness that He does not love the Samaritan, the publican, the sinner, the prostitute, but He loves their souls, and He takes care of them alone, and only because of them He goes with Samaritans, publicans and prostitutes, and only the Most High knows what effort His Most Pure Son must make to approach what we men and sinners call "filth"? You do not understand and you do not know Jesus yet, my boy! You know Him less than the very Samaritans, Philistines, Phoenicians and any other peoples you may wish... » says Peter and he utters the last words sadly.

Judas does not speak any more and also the others become silent.

The old woman comes back in saying: « In the street there are some people from the town. They say that it is the Sabbath prayer time and that the Master has promised to speak... »

« I will go and tell Him, woman. You can tell those from Ephraim that we are coming » replies Peter and he goes out into the kitchen garden to inform Jesus.

« What are you going to do? Are you coming? If you do not want to come, go away, go out before He is grieved by your refusal » says the Zealot to Judas.

« I am coming with you. One cannot speak here! I seem to be the

greatest sinner. Every word of mine is misunderstood. »

As Jesus enters the kitchen, they stop speaking.

They go out into the street and join the people from Ephraim and they go into town with them. They stop only when they are before the synagogue, at the door of which there is Malachi, who greets them and invites them to go in.

I do not notice any difference between the Samaritan place of prayer and those I have seen in other regions. There are always the usual lights, the usual lecterns or shelves with rolls, the seat of the head of the synagogue or of the person who teaches in his stead. If anything, the rolls are much fewer here than in the other synagogues.

« We have already said our prayers while waiting for You. If You wish to speak... Which roll do You want, Master? »

« I do not need any. In any case you would not have what I wish to explain » (1) replies Jesus, and He then turns towards the people and begins to speak:

« When the Hebrews were sent back to their country by Cyrus, the king of the Persians, so that they might rebuild Solomon's Temple that had been destroyed fifty years previously, the altar was rebuilt on its base, and the daily holocaust was offered on it morning and evening, as well as the extraordinary one on the first day of each month and those of the solemnities sacred to the Lord and the holocausts of voluntary offerings made by individuals. Later, after accomplishing what is essential and indispensable for the cult, in the second year after their return, they began to deal with what can be called the frame of the cult, its outward appearance, which is not guilty because it is done to honour the Eternal Father, but it is not indispensable. Because the cult of God is love for God, and love is perceived and consumed in one's heart, not by means of dressed stones, precious woods, gold and perfumes. All that is outward appearance that aims more at satisfying one's national or civic pride than at honouring the Lord.

God wants the Temple of the spirit. He is not satisfied with a Temple of walls and marbles that is devoid of spirits full of love. I solemnly tell you that the temple of a pure loving heart is the only one that God loves and in which He dwells with His light, and that foolish are the contests that divide regions and towns with regard to the beauty of their places of prayer. Why vie in the riches and ornaments of the houses in which God is invoked? Can the finite satisfy the Infinite, even if it were a finite ten times more beautiful than Solomon's Temple and all the royal palaces put together? God, the Infinite Who cannot be contained and honoured by any

(1) Of all the Books of the Bible the Samaritans accepted only the five Books of the Pentateuch.

space or by any material magnificence, finds one place only worthy of honouring Him as befits Him, and He can be, nay He wants to be contained in the heart of man, because the spirit of a just man is a temple over which the Spirit of God hovers, among the perfumes of love; and it will soon be a temple in which the Spirit will really dwell, One and Trine, as It is in Heaven.

And it is written that as soon as the masons had laid the foundations of the Temple, the priests went with their ornaments and trumpets and the Levites with cymbals, according to David's orders. And they sang that "God is to be praised because He is good and His mercy is everlasting". And the people rejoiced. But many priests, heads of families, Levites, elderly people were shedding torrents of tears thinking of the previous Temple, and thus the sound of the people's weeping could not be distinguished from the shouts of joy, as they were so confused. And we also read that the peoples of nearby districts disturbed those who were building the Temple to avenge themselves on the builders who had rejected them when they had offered to build with them, as they also sought the God of Israel, the Only True God. And those disturbances interrupted the work until God was pleased to let them continue. That is what we read in the book of Ezra.

How many and what lessons does the passage that I mentioned give us? First of all the one already mentioned on the necessity that the cult is perceived by one's heart and not professed by stones or wood or also by clothes or cymbals and songs, which are devoid of the spirit. Then that the lack of reciprocal love is always the cause of delays and trouble, even when a good purpose is involved. Where there is no charity, God is not there either. It is useless to seek God unless we put ourselves in a suitable condition to find Him. God is found in charity. He or those who settle in charity find God also without having to make any painful search. And he who has God with him is successful in all his enterprises.

In the psalm that sprang from the heart of a wise man after meditating on the painful events that accompanied the reconstruction of the Temple and of the walls it is said: "If the Lord does not build the house, in vain the masons toil at it. If the Lord does not guard the city and protect it, in vain the sentries watch".

Now how can God build the house, if He knows that its inhabitants do not have Him in their hearts, since they do not love their neighbours? And how will He protect the city and give strength to its defenders, if He cannot be in them as they are devoid of Him through their hatred for their neighbours? Has it helped you, peoples, to be divided by barriers of hatred? Has it made you greater? Richer? Happier? Neither hatred nor rancour is ever of any avail, he who is alone is never strong, he who does not love is never loved. And it is of no use, as the psalm says, to get up before daybreak

to become great, rich and happy. Let every man rest to console himself in the sorrows of life, because sleep is a gift of God as is light and all the other things that man enjoys; let every man rest but let him have charity as his companion in his sleep and in his watch, and his work, his family and his business will thrive, and above all his spirit will prosper and conquer the royal crown of the children of the Most High and heirs to His Kingdom.

It is written that while the crowd was singing hosannas, some people were shedding torrents of tears because they were thinking of and regretting the past. But it was not possible to distinguish the different voices in the clamour of shouts.

Children of Samaria! And you, My apostles, children of Judaea and of Galilee! Also nowadays there are people who sing hosannas and people who weep while the new Temple of God is rising on eternal foundations. Also nowadays there are people who hinder the work and people who seek God where He cannot be found. Also nowadays some people want to build according to Cyrus' order and not according to God's, that is according to the order of the world and not according to the voices of the spirit. And also nowadays there are people who weep with foolish human regret over an inferior past, a past that was neither good nor wise, so much so that it roused the anger of God. Also nowadays we have all those situations, as if we were still in the obscurity of remote days and not in the days of Light.

Open your hearts to the Light, fill yourselves with the Light, so that at least you, to whom I-Light am speaking, may see. This is the new time in which everything is rebuilt. But woe to those who will refuse to enter it and will hinder those who are building the Temple of the new faith, of which I am the corner Stone and to which I will give My whole self to make mortar for the stones, so that the building may rise holy and strong, admirable for ages, as wide as the Earth that will be completely covered by its light. I say light, not shadow, because My Temple will be made of spirits, not of opaque matters. I shall be its stone with My Eternal Spirit, and all those who follow My word and the new faith will be incorporeal bright holy stones for it. And the light will spread over the Earth, the light of the new Temple, and will cover it with wisdom and holiness. And only those will be left out of it who with impure tears weep and regret the past, because it was for them the source of completely human profits and honours.

Open to the new time and to the new Temple, o men of Samaria! Everything is new in it, and the ancient separations and borders, of thought and spirit, no longer exist. Sing, because the exile out of the city of God is about to come to an end. Are you happy to be considered as exiles and lepers by the other peoples of Israel? Do you rejoice feeling that you are like people rejected by the bosom

of God? Because that is what you feel, what your souls feel, your poor souls, which are closed in your bodies and are under the control of your arrogant thought that refuses to say to other men: "We erred, but like lost sheep we are now going back to the Fold". You do not want to say that to other men: and that is wrong. But at least say so to God. Even if you stifle the cries of your souls, God hears their groaning, as they are unhappy to be exiled from the house of the universal and most holy Father.

Listen to the words of the gradual psalm. You really are pilgrims who for ages have been going towards the high city, towards the true Jerusalem, the celestial one. From there, from Heaven, your souls descended to vivify a body, and they sigh to go back there. Why do you want to sacrifice your souls and disinherit them of the Kingdom? Which fault is theirs if they descended into bodies conceived in Samaria? They come from Only One Father. They have the same Creator as the souls of Judaea and Galilee, of Phoenicia and of the Decapolis. God is the aim of every spirit. Every soul tends to that God, even if all kinds of idolatry, or baleful heresies, schisms, or lack of faith, keep it in the ignorance of the true God, an ignorance that would be absolute if the soul did not have an indelible embryonal remembrance of the Truth and did not yearn for it. Oh! make that remembrance and yearning grow greater. Open the doors to your souls. Let the Light enter! Let the Life enter! Let the Truth enter! Let the Way be open! Let everything gush in brightly and vitally, like the rays of sunlight and the waves and the winds of equinoxes, so that the plant may grow from its embryo and rise upwards, closer and closer to its Lord.

Come out from your exile! Sing with Me: "When the Lord brings captives home, their souls seem to dream with joy. Our mouths are filled with smiles and our lips with songs. We shall now say: 'The Lord has worked marvels for us' ". Yes, the Lord has done great things for you and you will be overflowing with delight.

Oh! My Father! I pray to You for them as I pray for everybody. O Lord, let these prisoners of ours come back home, because, for You and for Me, they are prisoners in the chains of obstinate error. Lead them back, of Father, like a torrent that flows into the great river, lead them to the great sea of Your mercy and peace. My servants and I, shedding tears, are sowing Your truth in them. Father, grant that at the time of the great harvest, we, Your servants in teaching Your Truth, may reap the chosen corn of Your granaries with joy in these furrows, which now seem spread only with bramble and poison. Father! Father! Through our fatigue, and tears, and grief, and labours, and dead companions, who were and will be our companions in sowing, grant that we may come to You carrying, as sheaves, the choice part of this people, the souls reborn to Justice and Truth for Your glory. Amen. »

The silence, which was really impressive, so absolute as it was in such a large crowd that filled the synagogue and the square in front of it, is broken by a whispering that grows louder and louder and becomes a murmur... a cry... a hosanna. The crowds gesticulate, comment and applaud...

What a difference from the conclusion of the speeches in the Temple! Malachi says on behalf of everybody: « You only can tell the truth thus, without offending and mortifying anybody! You are really the Holy One of God! Pray for our peace. We have been hardened by ages of... beliefs and by ages of insults. And we must break this hard crust of ours. Bear with us. »

« Even more than that: I love you. Be of good will, and the crust will break by itself. May the Light come to you. »

He makes His way through the crowd and goes out followed by the apostles.

555. The Arrival of the Relatives of the Children with Many People of Shechem.

18th January 1947.

Jesus is all alone in the little island in the middle of the stream. The three children are playing on the bank on the other side of the stream and they are whispering in low voices in order not to disturb Jesus' meditation. Now and again the youngest one utters a cry of joy when he finds a beautifully coloured pebble or a fresh little flower, and the others tell him to be quiet saying: « Be quiet! Jesus is praying... » and their whispering is resumed when their little swarthy hands build sand blocks and cones that in their childish imagination are supposed to be houses and mountains.

The sun is shining high in the sky causing gems to swell on trees and buds to open in meadows. The green-grey leaves of the poplar tree are quivering in the breeze, and the birds up there, on the top, are engaged in love or rivalry skirmishes that at times end in a song, at times in a screech of pain.

Jesus is praying. Sitting on the grass, with a tuft of bog grass separating Him from the path along the bank, He is absorbed in His mental meditation. At times He looks up to watch the little ones playing over there on the grass. He then lowers His eyes again and becomes engrossed in His thoughts.

The shuffling of feet among the plants on the bank and the sudden arrival of John on the little island put to flight the birds that fly away from the top of the poplar putting an end to their carousel with screeches of fear.

John does not see Jesus at once, as He is concealed by the bog grass and he shouts rather perplexedly: « Where are You, Master? » Jesus stands up while the three children shout from the other

bank: « He is there! Behind the tall grass. »

But John has already seen Jesus and goes to Him saying: « Master, the relatives have come. The children's relatives. And many people from Shechem are with them. They went to Malachi, and Malachi brought them to our house. I have come looking for You. »

« And where is Judas? »

« I do not know. He went out immediately after You came here, and he has not come back yet. He must be in town. Shall I look for him? »

« No, it is not necessary. Stay here with the children. I want to speak to the relatives first. »

« As You wish, Master. »

Jesus goes away, and John joins the children and begins to help them in the enterprise of building a bridge across an imaginary river made of long reed leaves placed on the sand to simulate water...

Jesus enters the house of Mary of Jacob, who is at the door waiting for Him and says to Him: « They have gone up to the terrace. I took them there to let them rest. But here is Judas coming from the village. I will wait for him and then I will prepare some food for the pilgrims who are very tired. »

Jesus also waits for Judas in the vestibule, which is rather dark compared to the light outside. Judas does not see Jesus at once and while going in he says to the woman arrogantly: « Where are those from Shechem? Have they already left? And the Master? Is no one calling Him? John... » He sees Jesus and changes tone saying: « Master! I ran here when I was told, just by sheer chance... Were You already at home? »

« John was here and he came looking for Me. »

« I... I should have been here as well. But at the fountain they asked me to explain certain things to them... »

Jesus does not reply. He speaks only to greet those who are waiting for Him, sitting some on the low walls of the terrace, some in the room that opens on to it, and they all stand up to pay their respects to Him as soon as they see Him.

After greeting the group collectively, Jesus greets some of them calling them by their names, and they are so pleasantly surprised that they say: « Do You still remember our names? » They must be the people from Shechem.

And Jesus replies: « Your names, your faces and your souls. Did you come with the children's relatives? Are they the ones? »

« Yes, they are. They have come to take them and we joined them to thank You for Your pity for the little children of a woman from Samaria. You alone can do such things!... You are always the Holy One Who does nothing but holy things. We have always remembered You, too. And we came, because we heard that You were here. To see You and tell You that we are grateful to You for choosing us

as Your shelter place and for loving us in the children of our blood. But listen to the relatives. »

Jesus, followed by Judas, turns His steps towards them greeting them once again and inviting them to speak.

« We, I do not know whether You know, are the brothers of the children's mother. And we were very angry at her, because she foolishly and against our advice wanted this unhappy marriage. Our father was weak with the only daughter of his numerous offspring, so much so that we got angry with him as well, and for several years we did not speak to him or see him. Later, knowing that the hand of God lay heavy on the woman and there was poverty in her house, because an impure marriage is not defended by divine blessings, we took our old father in our house again, so that his only grief might be the poverty in which the woman languished. Then she died and we were told. You had passed by recently and people spoke of You... And overcoming our indignation, we suggested to her husband, through these two men from Shechem, that we would take the children. They were, by half, of our blood. He said that he would rather see them all die a bad death than live on our bread. He would not give us the children and not even the corpse of our sister, that it might be buried according to our rites! So we swore hatred to him and to his seed. And hatred struck him like a curse, so that from a free man it made him a servant and from a servant... a dead body like a jackal in a stinking den. We would never had known, because for a long time everything had come to an end between us. And we had a terrible fright, only that, when a week ago we saw those highwaymen appear on our threshing-floor. Then, when we heard why they had come, disdain, not grief, tormented us like poison, and we sent them away hurriedly offering them a good reward to make them friendly, and we were surprised to hear them say that they had already made their profit and did not want anything else. »

Judas suddenly breaks the dead silence of everybody with an ironical laugh and he shouts: « Their conversion! Complete! Really! »

Jesus looks at him severely, the others look at him seized with astonishment, and the man who was speaking, continues: « And what else could you expect from them? Is it not quite a lot that they came leading the young shepherd and daring danger, without accepting any reward? A miserable custom befits a miserable life. The prey taken from the foolish man who died like a tramp, was not a rich one! It wasn't rich at all! Hardly sufficient for those who had to stop plundering for at least ten days. And we were so astonished at their honesty, that we asked them which voice had spoken to them instilling so much pity into their hearts. So we learned that a rabbi had spoken to them... A rabbi! You only. Because no other rabbi in Israel could do what You did. And after they left we questioned the frightened shepherd boy in detail and we obtained a more

accurate account of the events. At first we only knew that our sister's husband was dead and that the children were at Ephraim with a just man, and then that the just man, who was a rabbi, had spoken to them and we at once thought that it was You. And when we arrived at Shechem at dawn, we consulted with these people, because we had not yet made up our minds whether we should accept the children. But these people said to us: "What? Has the Rabbi of Nazareth loved the children in vain? Is that what you want? Because it is certainly Him, have no doubt. Nay, let us all go to Him, because the kindness of His heart towards the children of Samaria is great". And after settling our business, we came here. Where are the children? »

« Near the stream. Judas, go and tell them to come. »

Judas goes away.

« Master, it is a difficult meeting for us. They remind us of all our troubles, and we are still undecided whether we should accept them. They are the sons of the worst enemy we ever had... »

« They are the children of God. They are innocent. Death cancels the past and expiation obtains forgiveness, also from God. Do you want to be more severe than God? And more cruel than the highwaymen? And more obstinate than they? The highwaymen wanted to kill the young shepherd and keep the children: the former as a prudent measure of defence, the latter out of human pity for defenceless children. The Rabbi spoke to them, and they did not kill and they have agreed, to the extent of bringing the young shepherd to you. Shall I have to admit defeat in righteous hearts, when I defeated crime?... »

« The matter is... We are four brothers, and there are already thirty-seven children in our house... »

« And where thirty-seven little sparrows find food, because the Father in Heaven makes them find grains, will forty not find any? Will the power of the Father not be able to provide food for three, nay, four more children of His? Is there a limit to His divine Providence? Will the Infinite God be frightened to fecundate your seeds, your plants and your sheep more than at present, so that bread and oil and wine and wool and meat be sufficient for your children and for four more poor boys who are now all alone? »

« They are three, Master! »

« They are four. The young shepherd is an orphan as well. If God should appear to you here, would you be able to maintain that your bread is so measured that you cannot feed an orphan? Pity for an orphan is prescribed by the Pentateuch... »

« No, we would not, Lord. That is true. We shall not be inferior to the highwaymen. We will give bread, clothes and lodging also to the young shepherd. And out of love for You. » « Out of love.

Out of all the love. For God, for His Messiah, for

your sister, for your neighbour. That is the homage and the forgiveness to be paid to your blood! Not a cold sepulchre for her dust. Forgiveness is peace. Peace for the spirit of man, who sinned. But it would only be false and entirely exterior forgiveness, and no peace for the spirit of the dead woman, who is your sister and the children's mother, if to the just expiation of God you add to torment her, the knowledge that her sons, although innocent, are expiating her sin. God's mercy is infinite. But add your own to give peace to the dead woman. »

« Oh! We will do that! We will! Our hearts would not have submitted to anybody, but they yield to You, o Rabbi, as You passed one day among us, sowing a seed that did not and will not die. »

« Amen! Here are the children... » and Jesus points at them on the bank of the stream, coming towards the house, and He calls them.

And they leave the hands of the apostles and run shouting: « Jesus! Jesus! » They go in, they climb the steps, they are on the terrace and they stop frightened by the presence of so many strangers looking at them.

« Come, Ruben, and you, Elisha, and you, Isaac. These men are the brothers of your mother and they have come to get you and join you to their sons. See how good the Lord is? Just like Mary of Jacob's pigeon, that we saw the day before yesterday feed a young one that was not its own, but of its dead brother. He has gathered you and gives you to these people so that they may take care of you and you will thus be no longer orphans. Come on! Greet your relatives. »

« The Lord be with you » gentlemen says the oldest one shyly, looking at the ground, and the two younger ones repeat his words.

« This one is very much like his mother, and this one also, but this other one (the oldest) is his father's double » remarks one of the relatives.

« My friend, I do not think that you are so unfair as to love differently because of a resemblance of faces » says Jesus.

« Oh! no. Certainly not. I was watching him... and thinking... I would not like him to have the same heart as his father. »

« He is still a tender child, and his simple words disclose that his love for his mother is by far deeper than any other love. »

« She kept them much better than we expected. Their clothes and shoes are decent. Perhaps she made her fortune... »

« My brothers and I have new garments because Jesus clothed us. We had neither shoes nor mantle, we were exactly like the shepherd » says the second-born who is not so timid as the first-born.

« We will compensate You for everything, Master » replies one of the relatives and he adds: « Joachim of Shechem had the offerings of the town, but we will add some more money... »

« No, I do not want any money. I want a promise: that you will love these children whom I snatched from the highwaymen. The

offerings... Malachi, take them for the poor who are known to you and give some to Mary of Jacob, because her house is really poor. »

« As you wish. If they are good we will love them. »

« We will be good, lord. We know that we must be so to find our mother and go up the river, as far as the bosom of Abraham, and that we must not take away the ropes of our boats from the hands of God in order not to be carried away by the current of the demon » says Ruben all in one breath.

« But what is the boy saying? »

« A parable I told them. I told it to comfort their hearts and to guide their spirits. And the children have understood it and they apply it to each of their actions. Familiarise with them while I speak to these people from Shechem... »

« Master, one more word. What amazed us in the highwaymen was their request to tell the Rabbi, Who had the children, to forgive them, if it had taken them a long time to come, considering that not every road is open to them and that the presence of a boy among them prevented them from marching long distances through wild gorges. »

« Did you hear that, Judas? » says Jesus to Judas who does not reply.

Then Jesus moves to one side with the people from Shechem, who wring the promise from Him of a visit, even a short one, before the summer heat. And in the meantime they inform Jesus of events of the town, and they tell Him that those who were cured by Him, in their bodies or souls, do remember Him.

Judas and John in the meantime are busy getting the children to fraternise with their relatives...

556. The Parable of the Drop That Excavates the Rock.

21st January 1947.

Jesus is walking along a solitary road. The children's relatives are ahead of Him, the people from Shechem are beside Him. They are in a wild area. No town is in sight. The children have been put on the backs of some donkeys and their relatives are holding the reins and watching them. The donkeys without any rider, as the people of Shechem have preferred to go on foot to be near Jesus, are going ahead of the men, in a herd and are braying, now and again, for joy of going back to their stables, without any load, on a wonderful day, between banks covered with fresh grass into which they dip their nostrils now and again to enjoy a mouthful of it, and then they caracole with joyful amble and join their companions laden with riders. Which makes the children laugh.

Jesus is speaking to the people of Shechem or is listening to what they say. The Samaritans are obviously proud to have the Master

with them and they are dreaming more than is convenient. So that they say to Jesus, pointing at the high mountains on the left of people going northwards: « See? Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim have a bad reputation. But, at least as far as You are concerned, they are much better than Zion. And they would be completely so, if You wanted that, by choosing them as Your dwelling place. Zion is always the den of the Jebusites. And the present ones are more hostile to You than the ancient ones were to David. By making use of violence David captured the citadel; but as You do not make use of violence, You will never reign there. Never. Stay with us, Lord, and we will honour You. »

Jesus replies: « Tell Me: would you have loved Me if I had tried to conquer you through violence? »

« Not... really. We love You because You are all love. »

« So it is through love that I reign in your hearts? »

« Yes, it is, Master. But it is so because we have accepted Your love. But those in Jerusalem do not love You. »

« That is true. They do not love Me . But since you are all expert in trading, tell Me: when you want to sell, buy and make a profit, do you lose heart because in certain places people do not love you, or do you do your business just the same, as you are only anxious to make good purchases and good sales, without worrying whether the money you have earned is devoid of the love of those who sold to you or bought of you? »

« We are only anxious to do good business. It does not matter if it lacks the love of those who deal with us. Once the business is done, there is no more connection. Only the profit remains, the rest... is of no importance. »

« Well, I do the same. Since I came to look after the interests of My Father, I must take care of them only. Then if I find love or derision or harshness where I look after them, it does not worry Me. In a trading town one does not make a profit, purchases or sales with everybody. But even if you deal with one person only and you make a good profit you say that your journey was not a useless one and you go back again and again. Because what you achieve with one person only the first time, you achieve with three people the second time, with seven the fourth time, with ten and ten thereafter. Is it not so? I act for the conquests for Heaven, as you do for your business. I insist, I persevere, I find that the little, in number, or the great are sufficient, because even only one soul saved is a great thing, the great reward obtained through My work. Every time that I go somewhere and I overcome what may be the reaction of the Man, so that as King of the spirit I may conquer only one subject, I do not say that My going there was useless or that I suffered or worked in vain. But I say that mockery, insults, accusations were holy, loving and desirable. I would not be a good conqueror if I

stopped before the obstacles of granitic fortresses. »

« But it would take You ages to defeat them. You... are a man. You will not live for ages. Why waste Your time where You are not wanted? »

« I shall live much less. Nay, I shall soon be no longer among you, I shall no longer see dawns and sunsets like milestones of days that rise and of days that end, but I shall only contemplate them as the beauties of creation and for them I will praise the Creator Who made them and Who is My Father; I shall no longer see trees blossom and corn ripen, neither shall I need the fruits of the earth to keep alive, because when I go back to My Kingdom, I will feed on love. And yet I will demolish the many fortresses closed in the hearts of men. Look at that stone up there, under that spring, on the slope of the mountain. The spring is a very scanty one, I would say that the water does not flow, but it drips: a drop that has been falling for ages on that rock protruding from the side of the mountain. And the stone is a very hard one. It is not crumbly limestone or soft alabaster, it is very hard basalt. And yet see how at the centre of the convex rock, and despite its shape, a tiny sheet of water has formed, not any larger than the calyx of a water-lily, but sufficient to reflect the blue sky and quench the thirst of birds. Did man perhaps make that cavity on the convex rock to place a blue gem on the dark rock and a refreshing cup for birds? No. Man took no part in it. In the many centuries during which men have passed before this rock that a drop of water has been hollowing out for ages with unrelenting rhythmical erosive action, we are perhaps the first to notice this dark basalt with its liquid turquoise in its centre, we admire its beauty and we praise the Eternal Father Who wanted it to delight our eyes and to refresh the birds that nest in the vicinity. But tell Me. Was it perhaps the first drop that leaked under the basaltic ledge above the rock and fell from that height on this block, was it that drop that excavated the cup which reflects the sky, the sun, clouds and stars? No. Millions and millions of drops have followed one another, leaking through like tears up there, sparkling as they descended to strike the rock and dying on it with the note of a harp, and excavated the hard material for so tiny a depth that is immeasurable, And thus for ages, marking the time like a sandglass, so many drops an hour, so many during a watch, so many between dawn and sunset, and between night and daybreak, so many a day, so many from Sabbath to Sabbath, so many from new moon to new moon, so many from Nisan to Nisan, and from one century to the next one. The rock resisted, the drop persisted. Man, who is proud and thus impatient and lazy, would have thrown away mallet and gouge after the first strokes saying: "It cannot be scooped out". The drop excavated it. It was what it had to do. What it was created for. And it groaned, one drop after the other, for ages, until it

hollowed out the rock. And afterwards it did not stop, saying: "Now the sky will see to nourishing the cup, which I excavated, with dews and rain, with frost and snow". But it continued to drop and by itself it fills the tiny cup during the warm summer months, during the rigours of winter, while pelting or drizzling rains wrinkle the sheet of water but cannot embellish or widen or deepen it, because it is already full, useful and beautiful. The spring knows that its daughters, the drops, go to die in the little basin, but does not hold them back. On the contrary it urges them towards their sacrifice, and to avoid them being left alone and becoming sad, it sends new sisters after them, so that the dying ones are not lonely and they see themselves perpetuated in the others . Likewise, being the first to strike the solid fortresses of hardened hearts thousands of times and being perpetuated in My successors, whom I will send until the end of time, I will open a way into them and My Law will enter like a sun wherever there are human creatures. If they refuse the Light and close the ways opened with unexhausted work, My successors and I will not be guilty in the eyes of our Father. If that spring of water had followed a different course, seeing the hardness of the rock, and had fallen in drops farther away, where the soil is covered with grass, tell Me, would we have that shining gem, and would the birds have that clear refreshment? »

« No, it would not have even been seen, Master »; « At most... some grass, thicker also in summer, would have indicated the spot where the spring dripped » « Or also... less grass than elsewhere, as its roots rotted in the perpetual dampness »; « And slush. Nothing else. Thus a useless trickle. »

« You are right. Useless, or at least worthless. I also would accomplish an imperfect task, if I were to prefer only those places where hearts are willing to accept Me out of justice or fondness. Because I would work but without any fatigue, nay, with great satisfaction of My ego, with a complaisant compromise between duty and pleasure. It is not toilsome to work where one is surrounded by love and where love makes souls ductile to work on. But if there is no fatigue there is no merit, neither is there much profit because few conquests are made if one limits oneself to those who are already in justice. I would not be Myself if I did not try to redeem all men first to the Truth and then to Grace. »

« And do You think that You will succeed? What else can You do in addition to what You have already done to persuade Your enemies to accept Your word? What, if not even the resurrection of the man in Bethany has served to make the Jews say that You are the Messiah of God? »

« I have still something greater to do, something much greater than that. »

« When, Lord? »

« When the moon of Nisan will be full. Pay attention then. »

« Will there be a sign in the sky? They say that when You were born the sky made it known by means of lights, songs and unusual stars. »

« It is true. To tell men that the Light had come to the world. Then, in Nisan, there will be signs in the sky and on the earth, and it will seem to be the end of the world, because of the darkness and the shaking and the roaring of thunder in the firmament and of the earthquakes in the opened bowels of the Earth. But it will not be the end. On the contrary, it will be the beginning. Previously, when I came, Heaven gave birth to the Saviour for men, and as it was a deed of God, peace was the companion of the event. At Nisan the Earth, of its own free-will, will give birth to the Redeemer for itself, and as it will be a deed of men, peace will not be its companion. But there will be a dreadful convulsion. And in the horror of the hour of the century and of hell, the Earth will tear its bosom under the burning arrows of divine wrath, and will shout its will, too inebriated to understand its purport, too strongly possessed by Satan to stop it. Like a mad woman in labour, it will think it is destroying the fruit believed to be cursed, and will not understand that it is instead rising it thus to places where neither sorrow nor snares will reach it. The tree, the new tree, will then spread out its branches all over the Earth, for ever and ever, and He Who is speaking to you will be acknowledged, either with love or with hatred, as the true Son of God and the Messiah of the Lord. And woe to those who will recognise Him without admitting it and without being converted to Me. »

« Where will that happen, Lord? »

« In Jerusalem. It is the city of the Lord. »

« So we shall not be there because in the month of Nisan we have to stay here for Passover. We are faithful to our Temple. » « It would be better if you were faithful to the living Temple that is neither on the Moria nor on the Gerizim, but being divine, is universal. But I can wait for your hour, when you will love God and His Messiah in spirit and truth. »

« We believe that You are the Christ. That is why we love You. »

« To love is to leave the past and enter My present time. You do not love me perfectly yet. »

The Samaritans look at one another stealthily without speaking. Then one of them says: « For Your sake, to come to You, we would do it. But even if we wanted, we cannot enter where there are Judaeans. You know that. They do not want us... »

« And you do not want them. But be at peace. Before long there will no longer be two regions, two Temples, two opposed opinions, but one people only, one Temple only, one faith only for all those eager for the Truth. But I will leave you now. The children by now

have been comforted and their attention has been distracted, and long is My way back to Ephraim to arrive there before it gets dark. Do not become excited. Your behaviour might attract the attention of the little ones, and it is better if they do not notice My departure. Go on, I am stopping here. May the Lord guide you along the paths of the Earth and on those of His Way. Go. »

Jesus draws close to the mountain and lets them go away. The last thing that is noticed, of the caravan going back to Shechem, is a child's joyful laughter that spreads along the silent mountain way.

557. Pilgrims Arrive in Ephraim from the Decapolis. Manaen's Secret Mission.

22nd January 1947.

The news that Jesus is in Ephraim, either because the citizens themselves have boasted about it, or for some other reason unknown to me, must have spread because many people come now looking for Jesus: mostly sick people, some distressed people and also some who wish to see Him. I realise that because I hear the Iscariot say to a group of pilgrims who have come from the Decapolis: « The Master is not here. But John and I are here and it is the same thing. So tell us what you want and we will please you. »

« But you will never be able to teach what He teaches » says one protesting.

« We are His representatives and are just like Him, man. Always bear that in mind. But if you really want to hear the Master come back before the Sabbath and go away after it. The Master now is a true Master. He no longer speaks in all the streets, in woods or rocky mountains like a stray, and at all hours like a servant. He speaks on the Sabbath here, as befits Him. And He is right, considering what He gained by wearing Himself out with fatigue and love! »

« But it is not our fault if the Judaeans... »

« Everybody! Everybody! Both Judaeans and non Judaeans! You are all alike and will always be so. He has given you everything. You have given Him nothing. He gives. You do not give; not even the mite that one, gives a beggar. »

« But we have an offering for Him. Here it is, if you do not believe us. »

John who has been silent all the time, but with evident embarrassment, looking at Judas with eyes that implore and reproach, or rather admonish him, can no longer be silent. And when Judas is already stretching out his hand to take the offering, he lays his hand on his companion's arm to hold him back and says to him: « No, Judas. Don't. You know the Master's order » and he addresses the

pilgrims saying: « Judas has explained himself badly and you have misunderstood him. That is not what my companion meant. It is only an offering of sincere faith, of loyal love that we, I, my companions, you, everybody must give for what the Master gives us. When we travelled around Palestine, He accepted your offerings because they were necessary for our journeys and because we met with many beggars, or we became acquainted with concealed miseries. Now, here, we need nothing - may Providence be praised for that - and we do not meet with beggars. Keep your offering and give it to distressed people in Jesus' name. That is the desire of our Lord and Master, and the order He gives to those among us who go evangelizing through the various towns. If you have sick people with you or anyone really needs to speak to the Master, tell us. And I will look for Him where He withdraws to pray, as His spirit is eager to collect its thoughts in the Lord. »

Judas grumbles something between his teeth but he does not contradict openly. He sits beside the fireplace in which the fire has been lit, as if he wished to take no further interest in the matter.

« Actually... we are not in need of anything special. But we heard that He was here and we crossed the river to come and see Him. But if we have done wrong... »

« No, brothers. It is not wrong to love Him and look for Him also by going to a lot of trouble and fatigue. And your good will will be rewarded. I will go and tell the Lord that you are here and He will certainly come. And if He should not come I will bring you His blessing. » And John goes out into the kitchen garden to go and look for the Master.

« Never mind! I will go » says Judas imperiously and he stands up and runs out.

John looks at him go away and does not make any objection. He goes back into the kitchen where the pilgrims are thronged. But almost at once he suggests: « Shall we go and meet the Master? »

« But if He did not want... »

« Oh! Please do not attach importance to a misunderstanding. You are certainly aware of the reasons why we are here. It is other people who compel the Master to take these measures of restraint, it is not according to His will or His heart. He is always as fond of you all as ever. »

« We know that. On the first days after the ban was announced publicly everybody was looking for Him beyond the Jordan and wherever they thought He might be. At Bethabara, at Bethany, at Pella and at Ramoth-Gilead and also farther away. And we know that the same happened in Judaea and in Galilee. The houses of His friends were closely watched because... if many are His friends and disciples, many are also those who are not such, and who think they serve the Most High by persecuting the Master. Then searches suddenly

stopped and the rumor spread that He was here. »

« But who told you? »

« His disciples. »

« My companions? Where? »

« No. None of them. They were different, new ones, because we never saw them with the Master or with the old disciples. In fact we were surprised that He should send people unknown to us to tell us where He was, then we thought that He might have done it because the new people were not known to the Judaeans as His disciples. »

« I do not know what the Master will say to you. But I think that as from now on you should listen only to the familiar disciples. Be prudent. Everybody in this country knows what happened to the Baptist... »

« Do you think that... »

« If John, who was hated only by one woman, was captured and killed, what will happen to Jesus, Who is hated both by the Royal Palace and the Temple, as well as by Pharisees, scribes, priests and Herodians? So be on the alert, so that later you may not have to repent... But here He comes. Let us go and meet Him... »

It is the dead of night. A moonless but starry night. I could not say what time it is as I cannot see the position or the phase of the moon. I can only see that it is a clear night. The whole of Ephraim has disappeared in the black veil of the night. The torrent also is only a noise, nothing else. Its foaming and sparkling have completely disappeared under the green vault of the trees on its banks as they hinder the faint light of the stars.

A night bird is moaning somewhere. Then it becomes silent because of the rustling noise of broken branches and reeds, a noise that comes nearer and nearer the house following the torrent and coming from the mountain side. Then a tall strong figure comes up from the bank on to the path that climbs towards the house. It stops for a moment as if it wanted to find its bearings. It grazes the wall groping with its hands. It finds the door. It touches it lightly and goes on. Still groping it turns the corner of the house, and proceeds as far as the little gate of the kitchen garden. It feels it, opens it, pushes it and goes in. It now skims the walls along the kitchen garden. It is perplexed at the kitchen door. It then proceeds as far as the outside staircase, it climbs it gropingly and sits on the last step, a dark shade in the shadow. But over there, to the east, the colour of the night sky - a dark velarium that is recognised for what it is only through the stars studding it - is beginning to change its shade, that is, it takes a hue that the eye can perceive as such: a slate-grey that looks like thick smoky fog and is nothing but the first light of dawn coming forth. And it is the new daily miracle

of light slowly coming back.

The person that was crouched on the step, a heap covered with a dark mantle, moves, stretches its arms, raises its head drawing its mantle behind it. It is Manaen. Dressed like an ordinary man in a heavy brown tunic and mantle of the same colour. A rough cloth, as workers or pilgrims wear, without ornaments, buckles or belts. An interlaced woollen cord tightens the garment at his waist. He stands up and stretches himself. He looks at the sky, where the advancing light enables the surroundings to be seen.

A door downstairs opens squeaking. Manaen leans out without making any noise to see who is coming out of the house. It is Jesus, Who cautiously closes the door again and moves towards the staircase. Manaen withdraws a little and clears his throat to attract the attention of Jesus, Who looks up, stopping half-way up the staircase.

« It is I, Master, Manaen. Come quickly because I must speak to You. I have been waiting for You... » whispers Manaen and he bows to greet Jesus.

Jesus climbs the last steps: « Peace to you. When did you come? How? Why? » He asks.

« I think I set foot here immediately after the cock's crowing. But I was in the bushes, down there at the bottom, at the second watch. »

« All night in the open air! »

« It could not be done any other way. I had to speak to You by myself. I had to know which way to come, which was the house, without being seen. So I came by day and I hid in the wood up there. I saw life calm down in town. I saw Judas and John go into the house. Nay, John passed very close to me with his load of firewood, but he did not see me because I was well concealed in the thick of the wood. While there was sufficient light to see, I saw an old woman go in and come out of the house, and the fire blaze in the kitchen, and I saw You descend from here in the deepening twilight. Then the house was closed. Then I came here in the light of the new moon and I studied the road. I also entered the kitchen garden. The little gate is more useless than no gate at all. I heard your voices. But I had to speak to You alone. I went away to come back here at the third watch and be here. I know that You usually get up before daybreak to pray. And I was hoping that You would do the same today. I praise the Most High that it is so. »

« But why had you to see Me with so much trouble? »

« Master, Joseph and Nicodemus want to speak to You and they are thinking of doing it in such a way as to elude everybody's surveillance. They made other attempts, but Beelzebub must be helping Your enemies very much. In each occasion they had to give up coming, because their houses and that of Nike were continuously watched. Actually the woman was to come before me. She is a strong woman and she had set out by herself towards mount Adummim.

But they followed her and stopped her at the Bloody slope (1), and in order not to reveal Your abode and to justify the foodstuffs she had on her mount, she said: "I am going up to one of my brothers who is in a grotto in the mountains. If you wish to come, as you teach the doctrine of God, you will accomplish a holy deed, because he is ill and in need of God". And with her daring she convinced them to go away. But she did not dare to come here any more and she really went to see one who she says lives in a grotto and was entrusted to her by You. »

« That is true. But then, how was Nike able to let the others know? »

« By going to Bethany. Lazarus is not there. But his sisters are. Mary is there. And is Mary a woman to be frightened of anything? She dressed herself perhaps more sumptuously than Judith did to go to the king, and she went to the Temple publicly with Sarah and Naomi and then to her mansion in Zion. And from there she sent Naomi to Joseph with the necessary information. And while... the Jews cunningly went or sent people to her house to... honour her, and everybody could see her, the mistress of the house, old Naomi wearing modest clothes went to Bezetha to inform the Elder. It was then agreed that I should come, as I am the nomad who does not rouse suspicion if I am seen riding at full gallop from one of Herod's dwelling places to another, to tell You that on Friday night Joseph and Nicodemus, the former coming from Arimathea, the latter from Ramah, will meet before sunset at Gofena and will wait for You there. I know the place and the road and I will come here in the evening to take You there. You can trust me. But trust me only, Master. Joseph begs You not to let anybody know that we are meeting. In everybody's interest. »

« Yours also, Manaen? »

« Lord... I am I. But I have no wealth or family interests to protect as Joseph has. »

« And that confirms My statement that material riches are always a burden... But you can tell Joseph that no one will be informed of our meeting. »

« I can go, then, Master. The sun has risen and Your disciples may get up. »

« You may go, and God be with you. I will come with you to show you the spot where we shall meet on Friday night... »

They go downstairs without making any noise and they go out of the kitchen garden and descend at once to the banks of the torrent.

(1) A spot on Mount Adummim was called -Bloody slope- because of the crimes committed there by highwaymen.

558. The Secret Meeting with Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.

23rd January 1947.

The road taken by Manaen to lead Jesus to the place where He is expected is really a difficult one. A mountain road, narrow, covered with stones, running through maquis and woods. A very bright moonlight, in the first phase of the moon, can hardly penetrate the tangle of branches and at times it disappears completely, and Manaen makes up for the lack of light with torches that he has prepared and brought with him carrying them baldricwise like weapons under his mantle. He leads the way, Jesus follows him and they proceed in silence in the dead of the night. Two or three times a wild animal running in the wood simulates the noise of steps, which makes Manaen stop suspiciously. But apart from that nothing else disturbs their journey, which is toilsome by itself.

« Look, Master. That is Gofena over there. Now let us go round here. I shall count three hundred steps and we shall be at the grottoes where they have been waiting for us since sunset. Did You find the journey a long one? And yet we have taken short cuts that I think have complied with the legal distance. »

Jesus makes a gesture meaning: « We could not do it any other way. »

Manaen does not speak any more, intent as he is on counting his steps. They are now in a barren rocky corridor, like an ascending cavern, between the two mountain faces that almost touch each other. One would say that it is a fracture brought about by a cataclysm, so strange it looks. A huge knife-wound in the mountain rock, splitting one third of it from its summit. High above, beyond the sheer mountain faces, beyond the tossing branches of the trees that have grown on the edge of the huge cut, the stars are shining, but the moon gives no light down here, in this abyss. The smoky light of the torch awakes birds of prey, that cheep flapping their wings on the edges of their nests among the fissures.

Manaen says: « Here we are! » and he utters a cry similar to the wailing of a big owl, towards a cleft in the rocky slope.

Moving from the other end a reddish light comes forth along another rocky corridor, the upper part of which is closed like a lobby. Joseph appears: « The Master? » he asks not seeing Jesus Who is a little behind.

« I am here, Joseph. Peace to you. »

« Peace to You. Come! Come. We lit a fire to see snakes and scorpions and to warm the place. I will show You the way. »

He turns round and along the undulations of the path in the bowels of the mountain he leads them towards a place lit up by flames. Near a fire there is Nicodemus who is throwing branches and junipers on it.

« Peace to you, too, Nicodemus. Here I am with you. Speak. »

« Master, has anybody noticed Your coming? »

« Who on earth could, Nicodemus? »

« Are Your disciples not with You? »

« John and Judas of Simon are with Me. The others are evangelizing from the day after the Sabbath to sunset on Fridays. But I left the house before midday telling them not to wait for Me before dawn on the day after the Sabbath. I am too accustomed by now to being absent for several hours to rouse suspicion in anybody. So you need not worry. We have plenty time to talk without worrying about being caught. The place here... is propitious. »

« Yes. Nests of snakes and vultures... and of highwaymen in the good season, when these mountains are full of herds. But nowadays highwaymen prefer other places from which to descend suddenly on folds and caravan tracks. We are sorry that we dragged You so far. But we shall be able to depart from here taking different roads, without attracting anybody's attention. Because, Master, the attention of the Sanhedrin is directed wherever they suspect that You are loved. »

« Well, I disagree with Joseph with regard to that. I think that we now see ghosts where there are none. I also think that the situation has calmed very much these last days... » says Nicodemus.

« You are wrong, my friend. I tell you. It has calmed down because there is no spur to look for the Master, because now they know where He is. That is why He is being watched, and we are not. And that is why I begged Him not to tell anybody that we were going to meet. So that no one might be ready... for anything » says Joseph.

« I don't think that the people of Ephraim... » remarks Manaen.

« Neither the people of Ephraim or anybody else from Samaria. For the only purpose of doing the opposite of what we do on the other side... »

« No, Joseph, not for that. But because they do not have in their hearts the evil serpent that you have. They are not afraid of being despoiled of any prerogative. They have no sectarian or caste interests to defend. They have nothing but an instinctive need to feel that they are loved and forgiven by Him Whom their ancestors offended and Whom they continue to offend by remaining outside the perfect Religion. Outside because, as they are as proud as you are, neither part can lay aside the hatred dividing them and stretch their hands in the name of the Only Father. Even if they had so much good will, you would demolish it. Because you cannot forgive. You cannot say, trampling on all foolishness: "The past is dead because the Prince of the future Century has risen and He gathers us all under His Sign". I have in fact come and I gather. But you! Oh! for you, also what I considered worthy of being gathered is always anathema! »

« You are severe with us, Master. »

« I am just. Can you perhaps say that you do not reproach Me, in your hearts, for some of My deeds? Can you say that you approve of My mercy being the same for Judaeans and Galileans as for Samaritans and Gentiles, nay, even greater for the latter and for big sinners, just because they are in greater need of it? Can you say that you would not expect gestures of violent majesty from Me in order to manifest My supernatural origin, and above all, mind you, and above all, to manifest My mission of Messiah according to your idea of the Messiah? Speak the real truth: apart from the joy of your hearts for the resurrection of your friend, would you not have preferred to such joy that I should have arrived in Bethany as a handsome cruel warrior, as our ancestors were with the Amorites and the Bashanites, and as Joshua was with the people of Ai and of Jericho, or better still: making stones and walls collapse on My enemies with My voice, as Joshua's trumpets did with the walls of Jericho, or drawing huge stones on My enemies from Heaven as it happened on the descent of Beth-horon still in the days of Joshua or, as in more recent times, calling celestial knights galloping through the air, in cloth of gold, troops of lancers fully armed, squadrons of cavalry in order of battle, attacks and charges this way and that, a flourish of shields and armies with helmets brandishing swords and hurling missiles to terrorise My enemies? Yes, that is what you would have preferred because, although you love Me very much, your love is still impure, and it is kindled, in wishing what is not holy, by your thoughts of Israelites, by your old thoughts. What is in Gamaliel as well as in the last man in Israel, what is in the High Priest, in the Tetrarch, in the peasant, in the shepherd, in the nomad, in the man of the Diaspora. The fixed idea of the Messiah conqueror. The nightmare of those who are afraid of being crushed by Him. The hope of those who love the Fatherland with the violence of human love. The eagerness of those who are oppressed under foreign powers, in foreign countries. It is not your fault. The pure concept, as had been given by God with regard to what I am, has been covered, throughout centuries, with layers of useless scum. And only few know how to take the Messianic idea back to its initial purity, and they do so through their own sufferings. And now, as the time is close when the sign, which Gamaliel is expecting, and the whole of Israel with him, is to be given, and now that the time of My perfect manifestation is drawing closer, Satan is working to deteriorate your love and to adulterate your thoughts. His hour is now coming. I tell you. And, in that hour of darkness, also those who at present can see or are only a little blind, will be completely blind. Only few, very few people will recognise the Messiah in the demolished Man. Only few will recognise Him as the true Messiah, exactly because He will be demolished as the

prophets saw Him. For the sake of My friends, I would like them to be able to see Me and know Me, while it is still daytime, so that they may recognise Me and see Me also when I am disfigured and in the darkness of the hour of the world... But tell Me now what you wanted to tell Me. Time passes quickly and it will soon be dawn. I am saying this for your sake, because I am not afraid of any dangerous encounter. »

« Well. We wanted to tell You that someone must have said where You are and that someone is certainly not I or Nicodemus, or Manaen, or Lazarus, or his sisters, or Nike. To whom else have You spoken of the place You chose for Your shelter? »

« To nobody, Joseph. »

« Are You sure? »

« Most definitely. »

« And did You tell Your disciples not to mention it? »

« Before departing I did not speak to them of the place. When we arrived in Ephraim I told them to go and evangelize and to act in My stead. And I am sure of their obedience. »

« And... Are You alone in Ephraim? »

« No. I am with John and Judas of Simon. I have already told you. He, Judas, as I can read his thoughts, cannot have done any harm to Me, through his heedlessness, because he never left the town, and in these days no pilgrims from other places pass through it. »

« Then... it is really Beelzebub that has spoken. Because at the Sanhedrin they know that You are there. »

« So? What are their reactions to My behaviour? »

« Several, Master. And very different. Some say that it is logical. Since they banned You from the holy places, You had no option but to take shelter in Samaria. Others instead maintain that this proves what You are: a Samaritan in Your soul, even more than by race, and that that is enough to condemn You. And they all exult at having been successful in reducing You to silence and at being able to point You out to the crowds as a friend of the Samaritans. They are saying: "We have already won the battle. The rest will be child's play". But we beg You, do not allow that to happen. »

« It will not happen. Let them speak. Those who love Me will not be upset by appearances. Allow the wind to drop completely. It is a wind of the earth. Then the wind of Heaven will blow, the velarium will open and the glory of God will appear. Have you anything else to tell Me? »

« No, nothing concerning You. Be on the alert, be careful, do not leave the place where You are now. And we will keep You informed... »

« No. It is not necessary. Stay where you are. I shall soon have the women disciples with Me and, yes, tell Eliza and Nike to join the other women disciples, if they so wish. Tell the two sisters as well.

As My place is now known, those who are not afraid of the Sanhedrin can now come for our reciprocal comfort. »

« The two sisters cannot come until Lazarus comes back. He left with much pomp, and everybody in Jerusalem knew that he was going to his remote estates, but it is not known when he will come back. But his servant has already come back from Nazareth and he said - and we must tell You also this - he said that Your Mother will be here with the other women disciples before the end of this moon. She is well and so is Mary of Alphaeus. The servant saw them. But they are delaying a little because Johanna wants to come with them, but she cannot until the end of this moon. And then... well, if You will allow us, we would like to help You... as faithful friends even if... imperfect as You say. »

« No. The disciples who go around evangelizing, every Friday evening bring what is necessary for them and for us who remain in Ephraim. Nothing else is required. A workman lives on his wages. That is fair. The rest would be superfluous. Give it to some poor wretch. That is what I told also those in Ephraim and My apostles. My instructions are that when they come back they must not have one farthing left over and that on their way they must give away all the offerings, keeping for us only what is necessary for our very frugal food for one week. »

« Why, Master? »

« To teach them detachment from riches and the superiority of the spirit over the worries of the morrow. And for that and for other good reasons of Mine as a Master, I ask you not to insist. »

« As You wish. But we are sorry that we cannot help You. »

« The day will come when you will do that... Is that not the first light of dawn? » He says looking eastwards, that is to the side opposite to the one He came, and pointing at a timid gleam that becomes visible on remote backgrounds.

« It is. We must part. I am going back to Gofena where I left my horse, and Nicodemus will go down on this other side towards Beeroth, and from there to Ramah, when the Sabbath is over. »

« And what about you, Manaen? »

« Oh! Without hiding myself I will go along the main roads towards Jericho, where Herod is now. My horse is in the house of some poor people who for a mite do not loathe anything, not even a Samaritan, as they believe me to be. But I am staying with You just now. In my bag I have food for two. »

« Well, let us say goodbye. We shall meet again at Passover. »

« No! You are not going to put Yourself to that test! » say Joseph and Nicodemus. « Don't do that, Master! »

« You are really bad friends, because you are advising Me to commit sin and to be cowardly. Would you then be able to love Me, considering what I had done? Tell Me. Be sincere. Where should I go

and worship the Lord at the Passover of the Unleavened Bread? Perhaps on Mount Gerizim? Or should I not appear before the Lord in the Temple in Jerusalem, as every male must do at the three great yearly festivities? Do you not remember that they are already accusing Me of not respecting the Sabbath, although - and Manaen can witness this - even today, to satisfy your request, I departed in the evening from a place that conciliated your desire with the sabbatic law? »

« We also stopped at Gofena for that reason... We will offer a sacrifice to expiate an involuntary transgression brought about by a motive that could not be derogated from. But You, Master!... They will see You at once... »

« Even if they should not see Me, I will try to make them see Me. »

« You want to ruin Yourself! It is the same as if You committed suicide... »

« No. Your minds are enveloped in darkness. It is not the same as if I wanted to kill Myself, it is only obedience to the voice of My Father Who says to Me: "Go. It is Your hour". I have always endeavoured to reconcile the Law with necessities, also on the day that I had to flee from Bethany and take refuge at Ephraim because it was not My hour to be caught. The Lamb of Salvation can only be sacrificed at the Passover of the Unleavened Bread. And if I behaved thus for the Law, do you want Me to do otherwise with regard to the order of My Father? Go, you may go! Do not grieve thus. And why did I come, if it was not that I should be proclaimed the King of all peoples? Because that is the meaning of "Messiah", is it not? Yes, that is what it means. And "Redeemer" also means that. The only trouble is that the meaning of these two words does not correspond to what you fancy. But I bless you, imploring a celestial ray to descend upon you with My blessing. Because I love you and you love Me. Because I would like your justice to be entirely bright. Because you are not wicked, but you, too, are "Old Israel", and you do not have the heroic will to despoil yourselves of the past and become new. Goodbye, Joseph. Be just. Just like him who was My guardian for so many years and who was capable of every renovation to serve the Lord his God. If he were here, among us, oh! how he would teach you to serve the Lord perfectly, to be just, just, just. But it is right that he should already be in Abraham's bosom!... In order not to see the injustice of Israel. Holy servant of God!... A new Abraham, with a broken heart, but with perfect will, he would not have advised Me to be cowardly, but he would have spoken the words that he used to utter when anything painful weighed heavily on us: "Let us raise our spirits. We shall meet the yes of God and we shall forget that it is men who grieve us. And let us do whatever is burdensome, as if the Most High presented it to us. In this way we shall sanctify also the least things,

and God will love us". Oh! He would have said so also to comfort Me to suffer the deepest sorrows... He would have comforted us... Oh! My Mother!... »

Jesus releases Joseph whom He had clasped in His arms and He lowers His head remaining silent, undoubtedly contemplating His imminent martyrdom and that of His poor Mother... He then raises His head and embraces Nicodemus saying: « The first time you came to Me as a secret disciple, I told you that to enter the Kingdom of God and to have the Kingdom of God in you it is necessary for your spirits to be born again and for you to love the Light more than the world loves it. Today, and this is perhaps the last time we shall meet secretly, I repeat the same words to you. Be born again in your spirit, Nicodemus, to be able to love the Light, which I am, and I may dwell in you as King and Saviour. Go now. And God be with you. »

The two members of the Sanhedrin go away in the opposite direction to the one in which Jesus came. When the noise of their steps has faded away, Manaean, who had gone to the entrance of the grotto to see them go away, comes back and with an expressive countenance he says: « And for once they will be the ones who infringe the Sabbath law! And they will have no peace until they settle their debt with the Eternal Father by sacrificing an animal! Would it not be better for them to sacrifice their tranquillity by declaring themselves "Your disciples" openly? Would that not be more pleasing to the Most High? »

« It would certainly be. But do not judge them. They are doughs that rise slowly. But at the right moment, when many, who think they are better than they are, collapse, they will rise against the whole world. »

« Are You referring to me, Lord? Please take my life, but do not let me deny You. »

« You will not deny Me. But there are constituents in you, different from theirs, and they will help you to be faithful. »

« Yes, I am... the Herodian. That is: I was the Herodian. Because as I turned my back on the Council, so I turned my back on the party, when I saw it was vile and unfair towards You just like the others. To be a Herodian!... To the other castes it means being little less than a heathen. I do not mean that we are saints. That is true. For an impure purpose we committed impurity. I am speaking as if I were still the Herodian I was before being Your disciple. According to human opinion, therefore, we are twice impure, because we are the allies of the Romans, and because we did it for our own profit. But tell me, Master, as You always speak the truth and never refrain from it for fear of losing a friend. Between us who have entered into an alliance with Rome to... have fleeting personal triumphs and the Pharisees, the Chief Priests, the scribes, the Sadducees,

who enter into an alliance with Satan to crush You, which are more impure? I, see? Now that I have realised that the party of the Herodians is siding with Your enemies, I left it. I am not telling You to be praised by You, but to tell You what I think. And they, I mean the Pharisees and priests, the scribes and Sadducees, are convinced of getting a profit out of this sudden alliance of the Herodians with them! The wretches! They do not know that the Herodians do it to gain more merits, and thus greater protection from the Romans, and later... once the cause and the reason joining them are defined and finished, they will demolish those with whom they now form an alliance. And they trifle with each other like that. Everything is based on deceit. And that disgusts me so much that I have made myself completely independent. You... You are a great frightening ghost. For everybody! And You are also the pretence for the foul game of the various parties' interests. The religious motive? The sacred indignation for the "blasphemer", as they call You? It's nothing but lies! The only motive is neither the defence of Religion, nor the sacred zeal for the Most High, but their greedy, insatiable interests. They make me sick like filthy things. And I would like... Yes, I would like the few who are not corrupt to be more daring. Ah! A double life is troublesome to me now! I would like to follow You alone. But I can serve You better thus than if I followed You. It's a burden to me... But You say that it will soon be... What... But will You really be sacrificed as the Lamb? But is it not figurative language? The life of Israel is woven with symbols and figures... »

« And you would like it to be so for Me... But Mine is not a figure. »

« Is it not? Are You really sure? I could... Many of us could repeat ancient gestures and have You anointed Messiah, and defend You. One word would suffice and the defenders of the holy wise Pontiff would rise in thousands and thousands. I do not mean an earthly king, as I now know that Your Kingdom is entirely spiritual. But as we shall never again be humanly free and strong, let at least Your holiness support and heal corrupt Israel. No one, as You are aware, loves the present priesthood and those supporting it. Do You want that, Lord? Tell me, and I will do it. »

« You have already gone a long way with your thought, Manaen. But you are still as far from your goal as the Earth is from the sun. I will be Priest, and for ever, immortal Pontiff in an organism that I will enliven to the end of time. But I shall not be anointed with the oil of delight, neither shall I be proclaimed and defended by the gestures of violence brought about by a handful of believers to throw our Fatherland into a wild schism and make it more enslaved than it ever was. And do you think that the hand of a man can anoint the Christ? I solemnly tell you that it cannot. The true Authority that will anoint Me Pontiff and Messiah is that of Him Who sent

Me. No other person, who is not God, could anoint God as King of kings and Lord of lords, for ever. »

« So, nothing!? There is nothing we can do!? How grieved I am! »

Everything, by loving Me. It is everything. By loving not the person whose name is Jesus, but what Jesus is. By loving Me with your humanity and your spirit, as I love you with Spirit and Humanity, in order to be with Me beyond Humanity. Look how beautiful is dawn. The quiet light of the stars did not shine in here. But the triumphant light of the sun does. The same will happen in the hearts of those who succeed in loving Me with justice. Come outside, in the silence of the mountain, clear of the hoarse human voices of interests. Look over there at those eagles, how with wide flights they soar away in search of prey. Can we see that prey? No, we cannot, but they can. Because the eyes of an eagle are more powerful than ours and from above where they rove, they can see a wide horizon and can choose. I do the same. I see what you cannot see, and from above where it hovers, My spirit can choose My sweet preys. Not to tear them to pieces as vultures and eagles do, but to take them with Me. We shall be so happy there, in the Kingdom of My Father, we who loved each other!...

And Jesus, Who while speaking has gone outside to sit in the sun at the entrance of the grotto, embraces Manaen, who was beside Him, and He smiles silently at I do not know which vision...

559. The Saphorim Samuel.

5th February 1947.

Jesus is alone. He is still in the grotto. A fire is lit to give light and warmth, and a strong smell of resins and leafy branches spreads in the cavern amid crackling and sparks. Jesus has withdrawn to the end, in a recess where dry branches have been thrown and He is meditating. The flames waver now and again, they abate and brighten up successively because of gusts of wind blowing through the woods and howling upon entering the cavern that resounds like a bugle-horn. It is not a steady wind. It drops, then it rises like long sea waves. When it whistles louder, ashes and dry leaves are blown towards the narrow rocky corridor through which Jesus has come into the larger part of the grotto, and the flames bend lapping the floor on that side, then, when the gush of the wind drops, they rise again, still sparkling, and they resume shining straight upwards. Jesus pays no attention to them. He is meditating. The sound of the wind is joined by the fall of rain that patters, at first lightly then heavily, on the leafy boughs of the underwood. A real downpour soon changes the paths on the slopes into little roaring torrents. The noise of the water is now the prevailing one as the wind has slowly dropped. The very faint light of the stormy twilight, and that of

the fire, which is reddish but does no longer blaze, for want of fuel, scarcely light up the cavern and the comers are in darkness. Jesus, dressed in dark robes as He is, can no longer be seen; only when He lifts His head, which is bent on His raised knees, it is possible to see a faint gleam against the dark wall.

Outside the grotto, on the path there is the noise of steps and of anxious words, as if they were uttered by someone who is tired and weary. Then in the empty space at the entrance, a dark shadow is outlined dripping water on all sides. The man, because it is a man with a heavy dark beard, utters an « oh! » of relief and throws his drenched headgear on the floor, he shakes his mantle and says to himself: « H'm! Samuel, you can give it a good shaking! It seems to have dropped into a fulling-mill! And my sandals? Boats! Boats sunk in a river! I am drenched to the skin! Look how my hair is dripping! I look like a broken roof gutter leaking through a thousand holes. It's a good start! Is perhaps Beelzebub on His side defending Him? H'm! It's a beautiful stake... but... » He sits on a stone near the fire, in which, as the flame is dead, there are reddish embers forming the strange designs that are the last life of burnt out wood, and he tries to rekindle it by blowing on it. He takes off his sandals and tries to dry his muddy feet with the drier parts of the edge of his mantle. But it is the same as if he were drying himself with water. His effort serves only to remove the mud from his feet and put it on the mantle. He continues to speak to himself: « Cursed be they, He and everybody! And I lost also my bag. Of course! It's a good job I have not lost my life... "It's the safest road" they said. Certainly! But they don't take it! If I had not seen this fire! Who will have lit it? Some poor wretch like me. But where will he be now? There is a hole over there... Perhaps another grotto... They won't be highwaymen, will they? But... what a fool I am! What can they take off me if I have not got even a farthing? But it does not matter. This fire is worth more than a treasure. I wish I had some more branches to rekindle it! I would take my clothes off and dry them. Ho! I say! This is all I have until I go back!... »

« If you want more branches, My friend, there are some here » says Jesus without moving from His place.

The man, whose back was turned towards Jesus, starts at the sudden voice and jumps to his feet turning round. He looks frightened. « Who are you? » he asks, opening his eyes wide trying to see.

« A wayfarer like you. I lit the fire and I am glad it served to guide you. » Jesus approaches him with a bundle of sticks in His arms and He throws them near the fire saying: « Rekindle the flame before everything is covered with ash. I have neither flint nor tinder-box because the man from whom I borrowed them went away after sunset. » Jesus speaks in a friendly way, but He does not come forward so that the fire may illuminate Him. On the contrary, He goes back

to His corner and remains well enveloped in His mantle.

The man, in the meantime, bends to blow hard on some leaves he has thrown on the fire and he remains thus, busy, until they flame rises. He laughs throwing thicker and thicker branches that rekindle the fire. Jesus, sitting in His place, watches Him. « I should now take my clothes off and let them dry. I prefer to be nude rather than be wet. But I cannot even do that. A slope slid down and I found myself under a fall of earth and water. Ah! I am settled now! Look! I have torn my tunic. Cursed journey! I wish I had infringed the Sabbath! I didn't! I stopped until sunset. Later... And what shall I do now? To save myself I let my bag go and now it will be down at the bottom of the valley or it will be entangled in some bush I wonder where... »

« Here is My tunic. It is dry and warm. My mantle is enough for Me. Take it. I am in good health. Be not afraid. »

« And You are good. A good friend. How can I thank You? »

« By loving Me as if I were your brother. »

« By loving You as is You were my brother! But You do not know who I am. And if I were wicked, would you wish to have my love? »

« I would, to make you good. »

The man, who is young, about the same age as Jesus, lowers his head, meditating. He is holding Jesus' garment in his hands, but he cannot see it. He is pensive. And he automatically slips it on over his bare skin because he has stripped himself completely, also of his vest.

Jesus, Who had gone back to His corner asks him: « When did you have some food? »

« At the sixth hour. I was to have a meal when I arrived in the village, down in the valley. But I lost my way, my bag and my money. »

« I have still some remnants of food here. I was to eat them tomorrow. Take them. Fasting is no burden to Me. »

« But... if You have to walk, You will need some strength... »

« Oh! I am not going far. Only as far as Ephraim... »

« Ephraim?! Are You a Samaritan? »

« Does that irritate you? I am not a Samaritan. »

« In fact... Your accent is Galilean. Who are You? Why do You not uncover Your face? Have You to hide Yourself because You are guilty? I will not denounce You. »

« I am a wayfarer. I have already told you. My Name would mean nothing to you, or it would mean too much. In any case, what is a name? When I give you a garment for your frozen body, some food to appease your hunger, and above all My pity for your heart, do you need to know My Name to feel the comfort of dry clothes, of food and love? But if you wish to give Me a name, call Me "Pity". There is nothing disgraceful compelling Me to hide Myself. But not

because of that you would give up denouncing Me. Because in your heart there is a bad thought. And bad thoughts yield fruits of evil deeds. »

The man starts and approaches Jesus. But only Jesus' eyes can be seen and they are almost veiled by His lowered eyelids.

« Take the food, My friend. There is nothing else to be done. »

The man goes back to the fire and begins to eat slowly, without speaking. He is pensive. Jesus is all curled up in His little comer. The man refreshes himself slowly. The warmth of the flames, the bread and roasted meat given to him by Jesus, make him happy. He stands up, he stretches himself, he lays the cord, which he used as a belt, from a rock splinter to a rusty hook, goodness knows who fixed it there and how long ago, and hangs his tunic, mantle, headgear to dry on it, he shakes his sandals and puts them near the fire, which he tends generously.

Jesus seems to be dozing. The man also sits down and is pensive. He then turns round to look at the Unknown Man. He asks: « Are You sleeping? »

Jesus replies: « No. I am thinking and praying. »

« For whom? »

« For all the unhappy people. Of every kind. And they are so many! »

« Are You a penitent? »

« I am a penitent. The Earth is in great need of repentance so that the weak living on it may be given strength to reject Satan. »

« You are right. You speak like a rabbi. I am a good judge because I am a saphorim. I am a disciple of rabbi Jonathan ben Uziel. His dearest disciple. And now, if the Most High helps me, I shall become even dearer to him. My name will be exalted all over Israel. »

Jesus does not reply.

The other man, after a few moments, stands up and sits near Jesus. With one hand he smoothes his hair that is almost dry and tidies his beard saying: « Listen. You said that You are going to Ephraim. Are You going there just by chance, or do You live there? »

« I live in Ephraim. »

« But You are not a Samaritan, so You said! »

« I repeat it. I am not a Samaritan. »

« And who can live there if not... Listen: they say that the cursed outlawed Rabbi of Nazareth has taken shelter at Ephraim. Is it true? »

« It is true. Jesus, the Christ of the Lord, is there. »

« He is not the Christ of the Lord! He is a liar! He is a blasphemer! He is a demon! He is the cause of all our troubles. And no avenger of all the people rises to overthrow Him! » he exclaims with fanatic hatred.

« Has He perhaps done any harm to you, since you speak of Him

with so much hatred in your voice? »

« Not to me. I saw Him just once at the feast of the Tabernacles, and in such a tumult, that I would find it difficult to recognise Him. Because, while it is true that I am a disciple of the great rabbi Jonathan ben Uziel, I have been at the Temple definitively only for a short time. Previously... I was not able for many reasons, and only when the rabbi was at home I used to sit at his feet to drink in justice and doctrine. But You... You asked me whether I hate Him, and I perceived a hidden reproach in Your words. Are You perhaps a follower of the Nazarene? »

« No, I am not. But hatred is condemned by anybody who is just. »

« Hatred is holy when it is against an enemy of God and of the Fatherland. The Nazarene Rabbi is such. And it is holy to fight Him and hate Him. »

« To fight the man or the idea that He represents and the doctrine that He proclaims? »

« Everything! Everything! You cannot fight one thing if you spare the other. In man there is his doctrine and his idea. You either overthrow everything, or it serves no purpose. When you embrace an idea, you embrace the man who represents it and his doctrine at the same time. I know because I experience that with my master. His ideas are mine. His wishes are my law. »

« In fact a good disciples behaves thus. But one must be able to tell whether the master is good, and follow only a good master. Because it is not lawful to lose one's soul for the love of a man. »

« Jonathan ben Uziel is good. »

« No. He is not. »

« What are You saying? And are You telling me? While we are here all alone and I could kill You to avenge my master? I am strong, You know? »

« I am not afraid. I am not afraid of violence. And I am not afraid as I know also that if you strike Me, I will not react. »

« Ah! I see! You are a disciple of the Rabbi, an "apostle". That is how He calls His most faithful disciples. And You are going to join Him. Perhaps the man who was with You was another one like You. And You are waiting for someone like You. »

« Yes, I am waiting for someone. »

« For the Rabbi, perhaps? »

« There is no need for Me to wait for Him. He does not need My word to be cured of His disease. His soul is not diseased, neither is His body. I am waiting for a poor soul that is poisoned and raving. To cure it. »

« You are an apostle! We know in fact that He sends them to evangelize as He is afraid to go Himself, since He was condemned by the Sanhedrin. That is why You follow His doctrine! It is His doctrine not to react against those who offend. »

« It is His doctrine because He teaches love, forgiveness, justice, meekness. He loves both enemies and friends. Because He sees everything in God. »

« Oh! If He should meet me, if, as I hope, I will meet Him, I don't think He will love me! It would be foolish of Him! But I cannot tell You, as You are His apostle. And I regret what I have already told You. You will inform Him. »

« There is no need. But I solemnly tell you that He will love you, nay, He loves you, notwithstanding that you are going to Ephraim to ensnare Him and hand Him over to the Sanhedrin, who have promised a large reward to whoever will do that. »

« Are You... a prophet or have You the python spirit? Has He transmitted His power to You? So You are cursed as well? And I accepted Your bread, your garment, You have been friendly to me! It is written: "You shall not raise your hand against your benefactor". You have done that! Because, if You knew that I... Perhaps to prevent me from acting? But if I spare You, because You have given me bread and salt, fire and clothes, and I would sin against justice by harming You, I will not spare Your Rabbi. Because I do not know Him, and He has not done me any good, but He has done me evil. »

« Oh! poor wretch! Do you not realise that you are raving? How can one whom you do not know have done evil to you? How can you respect the Sabbath, if you do not respect the precept not to kill?... »

« I do not kill. »

« Materially, you do not. But there is no difference between him who kills and him who hands the victim over to the killer. You respect the word of a man who says that you must not harm your benefactor, but you do not respect the word of God, and with a snare, for a handful of money, for a little honour, the filthy honour of being able to betray an innocent person, you are getting ready to commit a crime!... »

« I am not doing it just for the sake of money and honour. But to do something pleasing to Jehovah and beneficial to our Fatherland. I am repeating the gestures of Jael and Judith. » He is more fanatic than ever.

« Sisara and Holofernes were enemies of our Fatherland. They were invaders. They were cruel. But what is the Rabbi of Nazareth? What does He invade? What does he usurp? He is poor and He does not seek riches. He is humble and does not want honours. He is good. To everybody. Thousands of people have been assisted by Him. Why do you all hate Him? Why do you hate Him? It is not lawful to injure your neighbour. You serve the Sanhedrin. But will the Sanhedrin judge you in future life, or will God judge you? And how will He judge you? I do not mean: how will He judge you as killer of the Christ, but I mean: how will He judge you as killer of an innocent

You do not believe that the Rabbi of Nazareth is the Christ, and consequently, because of your belief that He is not, you will not be charged with that crime. God is just and He does not consider guilty an action accomplished without full knowledge. So He will not judge you for killing the Christ, because, as far as you are concerned, Jesus of Nazareth is not the Christ. But He will accuse you of killing an innocent. Because you know that He is innocent. They have poisoned you and by means of words of hatred they have intoxicated you, but not to the extent that you do not understand that He is innocent. His works speak in His favour. Your fear, and your masters are more frightened than their disciples, dreads and sees what does not exist. You are afraid that He may supplant you. Be not afraid. He stretches out His arms towards you saying: "Brothers"! He does not send soldiers against you. He does not curse you. He would only like to save you, both the great ones and their disciples, as He wishes to save the last person in Israel. And He wishes to save you, more than the least person in Israel, more than the child who does not yet know what are hatred and love. Because you are in greater need than ignorant people and children, because you know, and you knowingly sin. Can your conscience of a man, if you clear it of the ideas they have instilled into it, if you cleanse it of the poison that makes you rave, can it tell you that He is guilty? Tell Me. Be sincere. Have you ever seen Him infringe the Law, or advise people to infringe it? Have you ever seen Him being quarrelsome, greedy, lustful, hard-hearted, have you heard Him utter slander? Speak up! Have you seen Him being disrespectful towards the Sanhedrin? He is living like an outlaw, in order to obey the verdict of the Sanhedrin. He could utter a cry and the whole of Palestine would follow Him to march against the few who hate Him. He, instead, advises peace and forgiveness to His disciples. As He gives back life to dead people, sight to the blind, motion to the paralysed, hearing to the deaf, freedom to demoniacs, as neither Heaven nor Hell are insensible to His will, He could strike you by His divine lightning and thus get rid of His enemies. He, instead, prays for you and cures your relatives, He cures your hearts, He gives you bread, clothes, fire. Because I am Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, Whom you are looking for to have the price promised to who hands Him over to the Sanhedrin, and the honour of being the liberator of Israel. I am Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. Here I am. Take Me. As Master and as Son of God I free you from the obligation of not raising your hand and I absolve you of the sin of raising it against your benefactor. »

Jesus has stood up removing His mantle from His head, and He stretches out His hands as if they were to be caught and tied. But tall as He is - and He seems even more slender as He is left with 'only His short close-fitting vest on, with His dark mantle hanging

from His shoulders, holding Himself upright, His eyes, fixed at the face of His persecutor, in the mobile reflection of the flames that illuminate highlights in His flowing hair and make the large pupils of His eyes shine within the sapphire circles of the irises - so majestic, so frank and fearless, He commands more respect than if He were surrounded by an army of defenders.

The man is fascinated... paralysed with astonishment. Only after some time he is able to whisper: « You! You! You! » He does not seem to be able to say anything else.

Jesus insists: « So, take Me! Take that useless cord that you put up to hold a dirty torn tunic, and tie My hands. I will follow you as a lamb follows a butcher. And I will not hate you for taking Me to die. I told you. It is the purpose that justifies an action and changes its nature. As far as you are concerned, I am the ruin of Israel and you think that by killing Me you will save Israel. You believe that I am guilty of all crimes and therefore you are serving justice by suppressing a criminal. So you are not more guilty than the executioner who carries out the order he received. Do you wish to sacrifice Me here, on the spot? Over there, at My feet, there is the knife with which I sliced your bread. Take it. From a blade that served for the love for My neighbour, it can be changed into the knife of the sacrificer. My flesh is not harder than the roasted lamb that My friend had left Me to appease My hunger and that I gave you, to satisfy the hunger of My enemy. But you are afraid of the Roman patrols. They arrest the murderers of an innocent. And they do not allow justice to be administered by us. Because we are the subjects and they are the rulers. That is why you dare not kill Me and then go to those who sent you, with the slaughtered Lamb on your shoulders, like goods that make one earn money. Well: leave My corpse here and go and inform your masters. Because you are not a disciple, you are a slave, so much have you renounced the sovereign freedom of thought and will that God Himself leaves to men. And you serve your masters servilely, to the extent of committing a crime. But you are not guilty. You are "poisoned". You are the poisoned soul that I was waiting for. Come on, then! The night and the place are propitious to crime. I am wrong: to the redemption of Israel! Oh! poor boy! You are speaking prophetic words without being aware of it! My death will really be redemption, and not of Israel only, but of all Mankind. And I have come to be sacrificed. And I am longing to be sacrificed, so that I may be the Saviour. Of everybody. You, the saphorim of learned Jonathan ben Uziel, certainly know Isaiah. Here is the Man of sorrows in front of you. And if I do not seem to be such, if I do not seem to be the man whom also David saw, with My bones laid bare and disjointed, if I am not like the leper seen by Isaiah, it is because you do not see My heart. I am one big sore. Your indifference, your

hatred, your hardness and injustice have wounded and broken Me completely. And did I not hide My face, while you were despising Me for what I really am: the Word of God, the Christ? But I am the man accustomed to suffering! And do you not consider Me as a man struck by God? And do I not sacrifice Myself because I want to do so to cure you through My sacrifice? So! Strike Me! Look: I am not afraid and you must not be afraid. I, because I am the Innocent and I do not fear the judgement of God, and also because by offering My neck to your knife, I have God's will fulfilled, anticipating My hour a little for your welfare. Also when I was born I anticipated the time for your sake, to give you peace before the time. But you have turned My anxiety of love into a weapon of denial... Be not afraid! I do not invoke the punishment of Cain on you or the lightning of God. I pray for you. I love you. Nothing else. Am I too tall for your hand of a man? Well, it is true! Man in fact could not strike God if God of His own will did not put Himself into the hands of man. Well, I kneel down before you. The Son of man is before you, at your feet. So, strike Me! »

Jesus in fact kneels down, and offers the knife, holding it by the blade, to His persecutor, who withdraws whispering: « No! No! »

« Come on! A moment of courage... and you will be more famous than Jael and Judith! Look! I am praying for you. Isaiah says so: "... and He prayed for sinners". Are you not coming yet? Why are you going away? Ah! perhaps you are afraid you may not see how a God dies. Well, I will come there, near the fire. There is always a fire at sacrifices. It is part of them. Here you are. Now you can see Me well. » He has knelt down near the fire.

« Don't look at me! Don't look at me! Oh! where shall I run not to see Your eyes staring at me? » shouts the man.

« Whom? Whom do you not wish to see? »

« You... and my crime. Really, it is my crime that is in front of me! Where shall I run, where? » The man is terrorised...

« On My heart, son! Here, in My arms nightmares and fears disappear. There is peace here. Come! Do come! Make Me happy! » Jesus has stood up and is stretching out His arms. The fire is between them. Jesus shines in the reflection of the flames.

The man falls on his knees, covering his face and shouting: « Have mercy on me, God! Have mercy on me! Cancel my sin! I wanted to strike Your Christ! Mercy! Ah! there can be no mercy for such a crime! I am damned! » He weeps with his face on the ground, sobbing, and he moans: « Mercy » and he swears: « The cursed ones! »...

Jesus walks round the fire and goes towards him, He bends, He touches his head saying: « Do not curse those who led you astray. They obtained the greatest gift for you: that I should speak to you. Thus. And that I should hold you thus in My arms. »

He has taken him by his shoulders and has lifted him up, and sitting

on the ground He draws him to His heart, and the man leans on His knees shedding tears that are less phrenetic, but so purifying! Jesus caresses his dark hair to calm him.

The man at last raises his head and with changed countenance he moans: « Your forgiveness! »

Jesus bends and kisses his forehead. "The man throws his arms round His neck and with his head resting on Jesus' shoulders he weeps and begins to speak; he would like to tell Him how they had worked on him to make him commit the crime. But Jesus stops him saying: « Be quiet! Be quiet! I am aware of everything. When you came in I knew you, both for what you were and for what you wanted to do. I could have gone away from there and eluded you. I remained to save you. And you are saved. The past is dead. Do not recall it. »

« But... are You so confident? And if I should sin again? »

« No, you will not sin again. I know. You are cured. »

« Yes, I am. But they are so astute. Don't send me back to them. »

« And where can you go and not find them? »

« With You. To Ephraim. If You can read my heart, You will see that I am not laying a snare for You, but I am only begging You to protect me. »

« I know. Come. But I warn you that Judas of Kerioth, who sold himself to the Sanhedrin and is the betrayer of the Christ, is there. »

« Divine Mercy! You know also that?! » He is utterly amazed.

« I know everything. He thinks that I do not know. But I know everything. And I know also that you are so converted that you will not speak to Judas or to anybody else about this. But bear in mind this: if Judas can betray his Master, what will he be able to do to harm you? »

The man is pensive, for a long time. He then says: « It does not matter! If You do not reject me, I am staying with You. At least for some time. Until Passover. Until You join Your disciples. I will join them. Oh! if it is true that You have forgiven me, do not drive me away! »

« I will not drive you away. We shall now go over there, on those leaves and wait for daybreak, and at dawn we shall go to Ephraim. We shall say that we met by chance and that you have come to stay with us. It is the truth. »

« Yes. It is the truth. At dawn my clothes will be dry and I will give Your garment back to You... »

« No. Leave those clothes there. A symbol. The man who divests himself of his past and puts on a new uniform. The mother of Samuel, the ancient one, sang in her joy: "The Lord gives death and life, He brings down to Sheol and draws up". You died and are reborn. You are coming from the place of the dead to true Life. Leave the clothes that have been affected by the contact with the

sepulchres full of filth. And live! Live for your true glory: to serve God with justice and possess Him for ever. »

They sit in the recess where the leaves are piled up and they soon fall silent, because the man, tired as he is, falls asleep with his head resting on the shoulder of Jesus, Who is still praying.

... It is a beautiful morning in spring, when they arrive at the house of Mary of Jacob, following the path along the torrent, which is becoming clear after the downpour and is singing more loudly with its increased waters, and is shining in the sun between its banks polished by the rain.

Peter, who is at the entrance, utters a cry and runs to meet them, hurrying to embrace Jesus, Who is all enveloped in His mantle, and he says: « Oh! my blessed Master! What a sad Sabbath You made me spend! I could not make up my mind to go away without seeing You. I would have been upset the whole week if I had to leave with uncertainty in my heart and without Your farewell! »

Jesus kisses him without removing His mantle. Peter is so engaged in contemplating his Master that he does not notice the stranger who is with Him. In the meantime the others have come and Judas of Kerioth utters a cry: « You, Samuel! »

« It is I. The Kingdom of God is open to everybody in Israel. I have come to it » the man replies without hesitation.

Judas has a strange sly laugh, but he does not say anything.

Everybody's attention is focused on the newcomer, and Peter asks: « Who is he? »

« A new disciple. We met by chance. That is: God made us meet, and as I accepted him as one sent to Me by My Father, so I tell you to do the same. And as it is a great feast when one comes to take part in the Kingdom of Heaven, lay down your bags and mantles, you who were about to leave, and let us be all together until tomorrow. And now let Me go, Simon, because I gave My tunic to him and the morning air is nipping Me while I am standing here. »

« Ah! I thought it was! But You will be taken ill, if You do that! »

« I did not want... But He insisted » says the man apologetically.

« Yes. He was swept away by an overflowing large stream and only his will saved him. So to ensure that nothing should remind him of that painful moment, and to enable him to come to us in a clean state, I made him leave his dirty torn tunic where we met, and I made him put on Mine » says Jesus and He looks at Judas of Kerioth who repeats his strange sly laugh, as he did at the beginning and when Jesus said that a great feast is made when one comes to take part in the Kingdom of Heaven. He then goes quickly into the house to dress Himself.

The others approach the newcomer expressing their greetings of peace.

560. What People Say at Nazareth.

6th February 1947.

« And I tell you that you are all foolish if you believe such things. More foolish and ignorant than wethers that do not even know the rules of instinct, mutilated as they are. Some men are going around towns saying anathema of the Master, while others bring orders that, by the living God, cannot be given by Him! You do not know Him. I do. And I cannot believe that He has changed so much! Let them go about! Are you saying that they are His disciples? And who has ever seen them with Him? Are you saying that some rabbis and Pharisees have mentioned His sins? And who has seen His sins? Have you ever heard Him speak about anything obscene? Have you ever seen Him commit sin? So? And can you believe that God would let Him work such great deeds, if He were a sinner? You are foolish, I tell you, foolish slow-witted and ignorant like country bumpkins who for the first time see a mountbank at a market and believe what he says. That's what you are like. Consider whether those who are wise and open-minded allow themselves to be seduced by the words of false disciples, who are the true enemies of the Innocent, of our Jesus, Whom you do not deserve to have as a son of our town! Consider whether Johanna of Chuza, I mean the wife of Herod's superintendent, Johanna, the princess, leaves Mary! Consider whether... Am I doing the right thing in telling you? Of course! I am doing the right thing because I am not speaking just for the sake of speaking, but to convince you all. Last month, did you see that beautiful wagon that came to our village and stopped outside Mary's house? Do you remember? The one whose tilt was as beautiful as a house? Well, do you know who was in it and who came out of it to prostrate himself at Mary's feet? Lazarus of Theophilus, Lazarus of Bethany, do you understand that? The son of the chief magistrate of Syria, of the noble Theophilus, the husband of Eucheria of the tribe of Judah and of the family of David! Jesus' great friend. The richest and most learned man in Israel, both with regard to our history and to that of the whole world. The friend of the Romans. The benefactor of the poor. And above all the man who was raised from the dead after being in his sepulchre for four days. Did he leave Jesus to believe the Sanhedrin? You say that he did so because Jesus raised him from the dead? No. No, because he knows who is the Christ, Who is Jesus. And do you know what he came to tell Mary? To tell Her to be ready because he will take Her back to Judaea. See? As if he, Lazarus, were Mary's servant! I know because I was there when he came in and greeted Her prostrating himself on the floor, on the poor bricks in the little room, dressed as he was like Solomon, a man accustomed to carpets, he was there, on the floor, kissing the hem of Our Lady's dress saying: "Hail, Mary, Mother of my Lord. I, Your servant, the last of Your servants,

have come to speak to You of Him and to place myself at Your disposal". See? I was so moved... that when he greeted me as well calling me: "brother in the Lord", I was not able to speak one word. But Lazarus understood, because he is intelligent. And he slept in Joseph's bed and sent his servants ahead to Sephoris to wait for him. Because he was going to his estates at Antioch. And he told the women to be ready, because at the end of this month he will come and pick them up to spare them the fatigue of the journey. And Johanna will join the caravan with her wagon to take the women disciples of Capernaum and Bethsaida. And does all that mean nothing to you? »

At last good Alphaeus of Sarah can take breath amid the group standing in the middle of the square. And Aser and Ishmael and also Jesus' two cousins, Simon and Joseph - Simon more openly, Joseph more reticently - help him by approving what he said.

Joseph says: « Jesus is not an illegitimate son. If He needs to notify anything, He has relatives here who are willing to become His ambassadors. And He has faithful and powerful disciples, like Lazarus. Lazarus has not mentioned what the others say. »

« And we are His disciples as well. Before we were ass-drivers and as stupid as our asses. But now we are His disciples and we also are capable of saying: "Do this or do that" » says Ishmael.

« But the sentence hanging at the door of the synagogue was brought by a messenger of the Sanhedrin and it bears the stamp of the Temple » some say objecting.

« That is true. So? Since all over Israel we have the reputation of being able to judge the Sanhedrin for what it really is, and we are consequently despised as rogues, are we going to believe that the Temple is wise only with regard to this? So do we no longer know what scribes, Pharisees and chiefs of Priests are? » replies Alphaeus.

« That is true. Alphaeus is right. I have decided to go down to Jerusalem and hear from true friends what is the situation. And I am going tomorrow » says Joseph of Alphaeus.

« And will you stay there? »

« No, I will come back. And I will go back again for Passover. I cannot be away from home for a long time. It is a difficult task I am undertaking, but it is my duty to do so. I am the head of the family and I am responsible for Jesus being in Judaea. I insisted that He should go there... Man errs in judging. I thought that it was a good thing for Him. Instead... May God forgive me! But I must at least follow the consequences of my advice at close quarters, in order to comfort my Brother » says Joseph of Alphaeus in his slow haughty way of speaking.

« That is not what you used to say. But you have been allured as well by the friendship of the mighty ones. Your eyes are clouded by vanity » says a Nazarene.

« The friendship of might people does not allure me, Eliakim. But my Brother's behaviour convinces me. If I made a mistake and I now mend my ways, I prove to be a just man. Because to err is human, but to be stubborn is beastlike. »

« And do you think that Lazarus will really come? Oh! we want to see him! A man that comes back from death, what is he like? He must be dazed, somehow... frightened. What does he say of his stay among the dead? » many ask Alphaeus of Sarah.

« He is just like you and me. Cheerful, lively, tranquil. He does not speak of the other world, as if he did not remember. But he remembers his agony. »

« Why did you not tell us that he was here? »

« Of course! To let you invade the house! I withdrew myself. Some delicacy is necessary, isn't it? »

« But when he comes back will it not be possible for us to see him? Let us know. You will certainly be the caretaker of Mary's house, as usual. »

« Certainly! It's a grace to be near Her. But I will not inform anybody. You will have to do it yourselves. A wagon is easily seen, and Nazareth is not Antioch or Jerusalem so that such a large wagon may pass by unnoticed. Mount guard... and help yourselves. But that is something vain. Ensure at least that His town may not have the reputation of being foolish by believing the words of our Jesus' enemies. Don't believe them! Don't believe those who say that He is Satan or those who provoke you to rise in His name. You would repent one day. Then if the rest of Galilee fall into the trap and believe what is not true, so much the worse for them. Goodbye. I am going because it is getting dark... » And he goes away happily, having defended Jesus.

The others remain to discuss. But although they are divided into two fields and the more numerous is unfortunately the one of those who swallow everything, the proposal of Jesus' few friends prevails in the end, and they decide not to become excited and accept false charges or invitations to rise until the other towns in Galilee do so, as « at present they are more cunning than Nazareth and laugh in the false ambassadors' faces » says Aser, the disciple.

561. False Disciples Arrive in Shechem. At Ephraim Jesus Restores the Tongue to the Dumb Slave of Claudia Procula.

7th February 1947.

The main square in Shechem. A characteristic trait of springtime is given to it by the new foliage of the trees that surround it in a double row along the square-shaped walls of the houses, forming a kind of gallery. The sun plays among the tender leaves of plane-trees projecting an embroidery of light and shadows on the

ground. The basin in the centre of the square is a silver plate in the sunshine. People in groups are discussing their business here and there.

Some people, who are apparently strangers, as everybody is asking who they are, come into the square, they look round and approach the first group they meet. They exchange greetings to everybody's amazement. But when they say: « We are disciples of the Master of Nazareth » all mistrust ends and some go to inform the other groups, while those who remain say: « Did He send you? »

« He did, on a very secret mission. The Rabbi is in great danger. No one loves Him any more in Israel and He, Who is so kind, asks you at least to remain faithful to Him. »

« But that is what we want! What are we to do? What does He want of us? »

« Oh! He wants nothing but love. Because He relies too much in the protection of God. And with what is said in Israel! But you are not aware that He is being accused of satanism and insurrection. Do you know what that means? Reprisals of the Romans against everybody. And we who are already so miserable will be struck even harder! And we shall be condemned by the holy ones of our Temple. It is certain that the Romans... Also for your own sake you ought to take action, and persuade Him to defend Himself and defend Him, and make it almost, nay, make it definitely impossible for Him to be caught and thus be harmful, having no intention of being so. Persuade Him to withdraw to the Gerizim. Where He is now, He is still too exposed and He does not appease the anger of the Sanhedrin or the suspicions of the Romans. The Gerizim is certainly entitled to the right of sanctuary! There is no sense in telling Him. If we told Him He would say that we are anathema because we advise Him to be cowardly. But it is not so. It is love. It is prudence on our part. We are not allowed to speak. But you can! He loves you. He has already preferred your region to the others. So organise yourselves to accept Him. Because you will at least find out for certain whether He loves you or not. If He should refuse your assistance, it would mean that He does not love you, and then it would be better if He went elsewhere. Because, believe us - we are telling you this with sorrow - His presence is a danger for those who give Him hospitality. But you are, of course, the best of His admirers and you do not worry about dangers. However, if you risk reprisals of the Romans, it is fair that you should do so for an exchange of love. We advise you for everybody' sake. »

« You are right. And we will do as you say. We shall go to Him... »

« Oh! be careful! He must not become aware that it was our suggestion! »

« Don't worry! Don't be afraid! We know what to do. Of course! We will let people see that the despised Samaritans are worth a

hundred, a thousand Judaeans and Galileans to defend the Christ. Come. Come to our houses, you messengers of the Lord. It will be the same as if He came to us! Samaria has been waiting for such a long time to be loved by God's servants! »

They go away keeping in the middle of their group those whom I do not think I am mistaken in calling emissaries of the Sanhedrin, and they say: « We realise that He loves us because this is the second group of disciples that He has sent to us in a few days. And we did the right thing in being kind to the first one. It is right to be so kind to Him because of the little children of that dead woman of our town! He knows us by now... »

And they go away looking happy.

All the people of Ephraim pour into the streets to see the unusual event of a procession of Roman wagons passing through the town. There are many wagons and covered litters, flanked with slaves and preceded and followed by legionaries. The people make gestures of mutual understanding and whisper. When the procession arrives at the crossroad for Bethel and Ramah it separates into two parts. A wagon and a litter stop with an escort of armed men, while the rest go on.

The curtains of the litter are drawn for a moment and a lady's white hand studded with gems beckons the head of the slaves to go near it. The man obeys without speaking. He listens. He approaches a group of curious women and asks: « Where is the Rabbi of Nazareth? »

« He lives in that house. But at this time of the day He is usually at the stream. There is a little island there, near those willow-trees, over there, where that poplar is. He stays there praying all day long. »

The man goes back and reports. The litter sets out again. The wagon remains where it was. The soldiers follow the litter as far as the banks of the stream and bar the way. Only the litter proceeds along the stream as far as the islet, which in the process of the season has become well-wooded: a huge impenetrable tuft of greenery surmounted by the trunk and the silvery foliage of the poplar. At an order the bearers with tucked up garments enter the water and the litter crosses to the other side of the little water course. Claudia Procula comes out of it with a freedwoman, and Claudia beckons a dark slave escorting the litter to follow her. The others go back to the bank of the stream.

Claudia, followed by the two people, proceeds into the islet, towards the poplar standing out in the centre. The tall grass stifles the noise of steps. She thus arrives where Jesus is absorbed in thought, sitting at the foot of the tree. She calls Him advancing by herself while with an authoritative gesture she makes her two faithful

attendants stop where they are.

Jesus looks up and He stands up at once as soon as He sees the woman. He greets her holding Himself upright against the trunk of the poplar. He does not appear to be astonished, or annoyed or irritated at the intrusion.

After greeting Him, Claudia enters into the subject promptly: « Master. Some people have come to me, or rather to Pontius... I do not make long speeches. But as I admire You, I say to You what I would have said to Socrates, if I had lived in his days, or to any other virtuous man unjustly persecuted: "I cannot do very much, but I will do what I can". And in the meantime I will write where it is possible for me to do so, to have You protected... and to make You powerful. So many undeserving people live on thrones or in high positions... »

« Domina, I have not asked honours and protection of you. May the true God reward you for your thought. But give your honours and protection to those who long for them. I do not crave after them. »

« Ah! There You are! That is what I wanted! So You really are the Just Man I foresaw! And the others, Your worthless slanderers! They came to us and... »

« You need not tell Me, domina. I know. »

« Do You also know that they say that because of Your sins You have lost all power and consequently You live here as an outcast? »

« I know that, too. And I know that it was easier for you to believe the latter rumour than the former. Because your heathen mind can descry the human power or the human meanness of a man, but it cannot yet understand what is the power of the spirit. You are... disappointed by your gods who in your religion appear to be quarrelling continuously and to have such a failing power, subject to easy interdictions because of their reciprocal contrasts. And you think that the true God is the same. But it is not so. As I was the first time you saw Me cure a leper, such I am now. And such I shall be when I appear to be completely destroyed. That is your dumb slave, is it not? »

« Yes, Master. »

« Tell him to come forward. »

Claudia utters a cry and the man moves forward and prostrates himself on the ground between Jesus and his mistress. His poor heart of a savage does not know whom he should venerate more. He is afraid that to venerate the Christ more than his mistress may cause him to be punished. But even so, after casting a suppliant glance at Claudia, he repeats the gesture he made at Caesarea: he takes Jesus' bare foot in his big dark hands and stooping with his face on the ground he lays the foot on his head.

« Domina, listen. According to you, is it easier for a man to conquer

a kingdom by himself, or to make grow again a part that no longer exists of a human body? »

« To conquer a kingdom, Master. Fortune favours the brave. But no one, that is, only You can make a dead man revive and give eyes to the blind. »

« Why? »

« Because... Because God can do everything. »

« So according to you I am God? »

« Yes... or, at least God is with You. »

« Can God be with a wicked person? I am talking of the true God, not of your idols that are the frenzy of those who seek what they perceive to exist without knowing what it is, and they imagine phantoms to satisfy their souls. »

« No... I would not say so. Even our priests lose their power as soon as they fall into sin. »

« Which power? »

« Well... the power to read the signs of the sky and the responses of victims, the flights and singing of birds. You know... Augurs, haruspices... »

« I know. So? Look. Raise your head and open your mouth, man, whom a cruel human power deprived of a gift of God. And by the will of the true, only God, the Creator of perfect bodies, have what man took away from you. »

He has put His white finger into the open mouth of the dumb man. The freedwoman, who is very curious, cannot remain where she is, and she comes forward to see. Claudia has bowed to watch. Jesus removes His finger shouting: « Speak, and make use of the reborn part to praise the true God. »

And, all of a sudden, like the blast of a trumpet, of an instrument so far mute, a guttural but clear cry replies: « Jesus! » and the negro falls to the ground weeping for joy and he licks, he really licks Jesus bare feet, just as a grateful dog would do.

« Have I lost My power, domina? Give this reply to those who throw out such innuendos. And you... stand up and be good thinking how much I have loved you. I have had you in My heart since that day at Caesarea. And with you all those like you, who are regarded as goods, considered inferior even to brutes, whereas you are men, equal to Caesar, by conception and probably better because of the good will of your hearts... You may withdraw, domina... There is nothing else to be said. »

« Yes. There is something. There is the fact that I doubted... that I, with grief, almost believed what they said about You. And I was not the only one. Forgive us all, except Valeria, who has never changed her mind, nay, nay her mind is more determined than ever. And there is my gift to be accepted: this man. He could no longer serve me now that he can speak, and my money. »

« No, neither. »

« So, are You not forgiving me? »

« I forgive also those of My people, who are twice guilty of not knowing Me for what I am. And should I not forgive all of you, deprived as you are of all divine knowledge? Here. I said that I would not accept your money or the man. I will now accept both and with the money I will free the man. I give your money back to you because I am buying the man. And I am buying him to make him free, so that he may go back to his country to say that on the Earth there is the Man Who loves all men, and the more He sees their unhappiness the more He loves them. Keep your purse. »

« No, Master, it is Yours. The man is free just the same. He is mine. I have given him to You. You are freeing him. No money is needed for that. »

« Well... Have you a name? » He asks the man.

« We used to call him Callisto scoffingly. But when he was caught... »

« It does not matter. Keep that name, and make it real by becoming very handsome in your spirit (1). Go. Be happy because God has saved you. »

Go! The negro does not tire of kissing and saying: « Jesus! Jesus! » and he lays Jesus' foot once again on his head saying: « You. My only Master. »

« I. Your true Father. Domina, you will take upon yourself to let him go back to his country. Use the money for that and give him the rest. Goodbye, domina. And never listen to the voices of darkness. Be just. And strive to know Me. Goodbye, Callisto. Goodbye, woman. »

And Jesus puts an end to the conversation by jumping across the stream to the side opposite to the one where the litter is and He disappears among the bushes, the willows and the reed thickets.

Claudia calls the litter bearers and enters the litter again with a pensive countenance. But if she is silent, the freedwoman and the free slave talk as much as ten people and even the legionaries forget their rigid discipline in the presence of the wonder of a reborn tongue. Claudia is too absorbed in thought to order them to be silent. Reclined in the litter, one elbow resting on pillows, her head supported by her hand, she does not hear anything. She is engrossed in thought. She does not even notice that the freedwoman is not with her but is chattering like a magpie, with the litter bearers while Callisto is speaking to the legionaries who, if they keep lined up, do not keep silent. They are too excited to do so!

Going back the same way, they arrive at the Bethel and Ramah crossroads; the litter leaves Ephraim to join the rest of the procession.

(1) Callisto is in fact a Greek word meaning every beautiful, very handsome.

562. The Man of Jabneel.

7th February 1947.

Several days must have gone by. I am saying so because I see that the corn, which in the last visions was hardly a span high, after the last downpour and the lovely sunshine that followed it, is already tall and is about to give ear. Cereals, still tender in their calami, are waved by a light breeze, that plays with the new leaves of the early fruit trees, which after blossoming or while the petals flutter about and fall, have already opened their light-emerald tender shiny little leaves, as beautiful as everything that is pure and new. The vines, still bare and knotty, blossom later, but on the twisted vine-shoots, which interlace with one another from trunk to trunk, the buds have already burst the dark bark that contained them, and, although still closed in it, they display the silver-grey down that is the nest for future new vine-leaves and tendrils, and the woody twisted festoon-like branches seem to be softened by a fresh gracefulness. The sun, which is already warm, has begun its action by colouring everything and distilling vegetable essences, and while with brighter hues it paints what only a few days ago looked paler, it warms and thus extracts various types of scents from clods of earth, from flowery meadows, from fields of cereals, from vegetable gardens and orchards, from woods, from walls, from the very clothes hanging to dry, blending them harmoniously into a smell that will last throughout summer until it changes into the strong reek of must in the vats where the squashed grapes become wine. There is a loud chorus of birds singing among trees, and an eager bleating of rams among herds. And the singing of men along slopes. And the cheerful voices of children. And the smiles of women. It is springtime. Nature is in love. And man gets pleasure from the love of nature, which will make him wealthier shortly, and he takes delight in his own love, which becomes livelier in such serene revival, and his wife seems more loving to him, while he appears to be a greater protector to his wife, and their children dear to both of them, as at present they are their joy and their care, and in future, when they are old, they will be the joy and protection of their declining age.

Jesus passes along the fields that rise or slope downwards following the inclination of the mountain. He is alone. He is wearing a linen garment, as He gave His last woollen one to Samuel, and a rather bright-blue mantle thrown over one shoulder, softly enveloped round His body and held by His arm across His chest. The strip covering His arm flutters gently in the light breeze and as He is bare-headed, His hair shines in the sunshine. He goes by and where there are children He bends to caress their little innocent heads and to listen to their little secrets, admiring what they hasten to show Him as if they were treasures.

A little girl, who is so small that she still stumbles when running and gets entangled in the little skirt that is too long for her as she probably inherited it from a brother born before her, arrives near Jesus with a smile that makes her eyes shine and displays her tiny incisors between her pink lips. She is carrying a bunch of daisies, a big bunch held with both hands, as many as her tender tiny hands can hold, and she holds up her trophy saying: « Take it! It's Yours. To mummy later. A kiss, here! » and with her little hands, now free, as Jesus has taken the little bunch thanking her with words of admiration, she touches her lips and she stands on her bare feet, with her head bent backwards, almost losing her balance, in the vain effort to stretch her tiny person up to the face of Jesus, Who laughs picking her up in His arms and taking her, nestled up there like a little bird on a tall tree, towards a group of women who are steeping new pieces of cloth in the clear water of a stream, to lay them out in the sunshine later, to bleach them.

The women, bent over the water, stand up greeting and one of them says smiling: « Tamar has been giving trouble to You... But she has been picking flowers here since dawn in the secret hope of seeing You pass by. She would not give me one as she wanted to give them to You first. »

« They are dearer to Me than the treasures of kings. Because they are as innocent as children and have been given to Me by one who is as innocent as a flower. » He kisses the little girl putting her down, and He greets her saying: « May the grace of the Lord come to you. » He greets the women and goes on His way greeting the peasants or shepherds who wave to Him from fields or meadows.

He seems to be going down to the lower part of the country, towards Jericho. But He comes back and takes another path that climbs once again towards the mountains to the north of Ephraim. The crops here are even more beautiful, as the soil is in a more favourable position and sheltered from northern winds. The path runs between two fields and in one of them there are fruit trees planted almost at regular intervals, and the buds of the early fruits are already like pearls on the branches.

A road descending from north to south crosses the path. It must be a rather important road because at the crossroads there is one of the milestones used by the Romans, with: « Neapolis » engraved on its northern side, in the large lapidary letters of the Latins, and strong like them, and under it, in much smaller letters just scratched on the stone: « Shechem »; on the western side: « Shiloh-Jerusalem »; and on the southern one: « Jericho ». There is no name on the eastern side.

But one could say that if there is no name of any town, there is the name of a human misfortune. Because on the ground, between the milestone and the ditch along the road, dug to drain rain-water,

as in all the roads looked after by the Romans, there is a man, benumbed, a bundle of rags and bones, probably dead.

Jesus bends over him when He sees him among the weeds that springtime downpours have made luxuriant in the ditch and He touches him asking: « Man? What is the matter with you? »

A moan is the answer. But the tangle moves, unrolls and an emaciated face, as white as death, appears and two tired, suffering languid eyes look full of astonishment at Him Who is bent over his misery. He tries to sit up pressing his emaciated hands against the ground, but he is so weak that he would not succeed without Jesus' help.

Jesus helps him and props him with his back against the milestone. And He asks him: « What is the matter with you? Are you ill? »

« Yes. » A very faint « yes ».

« But why did you set out all alone, in this state? Have you not got anybody? »

The man nods assent, but he is too weak to reply.

Jesus looks around. There is nobody in the fields. The place is really deserted. To the north, almost at the top of a hill, there is a small group of houses; to the west, among the green vegetation of the slope that rises with more hillocks where fields are replaced by meadows and woods, there are some herdsmen among a flock of restless goats. Jesus looks at the man again and asks him: « If I supported you, do you think you would be able to come to that village? »

The man shakes his head and two tears stream down his cheeks that are so withered that they seem wrinkled by age, whereas his raven beard proves that he is still young. He gathers his strength to say: « They drove me away... Fear of leprosy... I am not... And I am dying... of hunger. » He pants out of weakness. He puts a finger into his mouth and pulls out a greenish pulp, saying: « Look... I have been chewing corn... but it is still green grass. »

« I am going to that shepherd. I will bring you some warm milk. I shall not be long. » And He almost runs where the flock is, about two hundred metres above the road.

He arrives at the shepherd, He speaks to him and shows him where the man is. The shepherd turns round to look, he seems undecided whether he should comply with Jesus' request. He then makes up his mind. He detaches from his belt the wooden bowl that he carries like all shepherds, he milks a goat and gives the full bowl to Jesus, Who goes down the slope cautiously, followed by a boy who was with the shepherd.

He is now once again near the starving man. He kneels beside him, He passes one arm round his back to support him and takes the bowl, in which the milk is still covered with foam, close to his lips. He makes him take small sips. He then lays the bowl on the ground

saying: « That is enough now. If you take it all at once, it will hurt you. Let your stomach recover some strength with the milk I gave you. »

The man does not protest. He closes his eyes and is silent, while the boy looks at him with much surprise.

After some time Jesus offers him the cup again for a longer drink and He goes on thus, at shorter and shorter intervals, until there is no milk left. He hands the bowl back to the boy and dismisses him.

The man recovers slowly. With gestures that are still shaky he tries to tidy himself somehow. He smiles with gratitude looking at Jesus Who has sat down on the grass beside him. He apologises saying: « I make You lose Your time. »

« Do not worry! The time spent in loving one's brothers is never lost. When you feel better we shall speak. »

« I am feeling better. My body is warming up and my eyes... I thought I was going to die here... My poor children! I had lost all hope... And up to that moment I had hoped so much!... If You had not come, I would have died... just like that... along the road... »

« It would have been very sad. That is true. But the Most High looked at His son and assisted him. Have a little rest now. »

The man obeys for some time. Then he opens his eyes again and he says: « I feel a new man. Oh! I wish I could go to Ephraim! »

« Why? Have you got anyone there waiting for you? Do you come from Ephraim? »

« No, I come from the country of Jabneel, near the Great Sea. But I went to Galilee, along the shores, as far as Caesarea. Then I went to Nazareth. Because I have a disease here (he touches his stomach). A disease that no one can cure and it does not let me work the land. And I am a widower. With five children... A man from our place, because I was born at Gaza, of a Philistine father and of a Syro-Phoenician mother, a man of our place was a follower of the Galilean Rabbi and he came to us with another man, and spoke to us of the Rabbi. I heard him, too. And when I was taken ill I said: "I am a Syrian and a Philistine, loathsome to Israel. But Ermasteus used to say that the Rabbi of Galilee is as good as He is powerful. And I believe it. And I am going to Him". And as soon as the weather improved I left the children to the mother of my wife, I took my few savings, because many had been spent for my disease, and I came looking for the Rabbi. But money does not last long when one travels. Particularly when one cannot eat all kinds of food... and one has to stop at inns when pains prevent one from travelling. At Sephoris I sold my donkey because I had no more money left for myself and to give what was due to the Rabbi. I thought that once I was cured, I would be able to eat everything on the road and thus go back home quickly. And working there in my fields and

in those of other people I hoped I would make up for what I had lost... But the Rabbi is neither at Nazareth nor at Capernaum. His Mother told me. She said: "He is in Judaea. Look for Him at the house of Joseph of Sefhoris at Bezetha or at Gethsemane. They will be able to tell you where He is". I came back, on foot. I was getting worse and worse... and my money was diminishing. At Jerusalem, where I had been told to go, I found the people but not the Rabbi. They said to me: "Oh! They drove Him away a long time ago. He is cursed by the Sanhedrin. He ran away but we do not know where". I... felt as if I were dying... just like today. Nay, more than today. I inquired of hundreds and hundreds of people in town and in the country. No one knew. Some wept with me. Many struck me. Then one day, when I began to beg outside the enclosure of the Temple, I heard two Pharisees say: "Now that we know that Jesus of Nazareth is at Ephraim... I lost no time, and weak as I was I came here, begging for some bread, and I was more and more in rags and sick looking. And as I was not familiar with the road, I took the wrong one... Today I came from there, from that village. For two days I had sucked nothing but wild fennels, and I had chewed chicory and green corn. They thought I was a leper because of my pallor and they drove me away pelting me with stones. I was only asking for a piece of bread and to show me the road to Ephraim... I fell here... But I would like to go to Ephraim. I am so close to my goal! Is it possible that I should not reach it? I believe in the Rabbi. I am not an Israelite. But neither was Ermasteus, and He loved him just the same. Is it possible that the God of Israel may treat me with a heavy hand to revenge Himself for the sins of those who procreated me? »

« The true God is the Father of men. He is just, but good. He rewards those who have faith and does not make innocents pay for sins not committed by them. But why did you say that when you heard that the residence of the Rabbi was unknown, you felt as if you were dying more than you were today? »

« Eh! because I said: "I have lost Him even before finding Him". »

« Ah! because of your health! »

« No. Not only for that. But because Ermasteus said certain things about Him that I thought that if I became acquainted with Him, I would no longer be corrupt. »

« So, do you believe that He is the Messiah? »

« I do believe it. I do not know exactly what the Messiah is, but I believe that the Rabbi of Nazareth is the Son of God. »

Jesus' smile is bright when He asks: « And are you sure that if He is such, He will hear you, although you are not circumcised? »

« I am certain because Ermasteus said so. He said: "He is the Saviour of all men. As far as He is concerned there are no Hebrews or idolaters. But only creatures to be saved because the Lord God

has sent Him for that". Many laughed. I believed. If I can say to Him: "Jesus, have mercy on me", He will hear me. Oh! if You come from Ephraim, take me to Him. Perhaps You are one of His disciples... »

Jesus smiles more and more and He suggests: « Try and ask Me to cure you... »

« You are good, man. There is so much peace near You. Yes, You are as good as... the Rabbi Himself, and He has certainly granted You the power to work miracles, because to be as good as You are, You can but be one of His disciples. I have found all those, who told me they were such, to be good. But do not be offended if I say to You that You may be able to cure bodies, but not souls. And I would like also my soul to be cured, as it happened to Ermasteus. To become a just man... And only the Rabbi can do that. I am a sinner besides being diseased. I do not want to be cured in my body and then die one day also with my soul. I want to live. Ermasteus said that the Rabbi is the Life of the soul and that the soul that believes in Him lives for good in the Kingdom of God. Take me to the Rabbi. Be good! Why are You smiling? Probably because You think that I am bold in wanting to be cured without being able to give an offering? But once I am cured I shall be able to cultivate the land once again. I have beautiful fruit. Let the Rabbi come when the fruit ripens and I will pay Him with hospitality as long as He wishes. »

« Who told you that the Rabbi wants money? Ermasteus? »

« No. On the contrary he used to say that the Rabbi takes pity on the poor and He assists them first. But that is the custom with all doctors and... and with everybody, in short. »

« But not with Him. I can assure you. And I tell you that if you can urge your faith to ask for the miracle here, and to believe it possible, you will have it. »

« Is what You say true?... Are You sure? Of course, if You are one of His disciples you cannot lie or be wrong. And although I am sorry not to see the Rabbi... I want to obey You... Perhaps, persecuted as He is... He does not want to be seen... He trusts no one any longer. You are right. But we shall not be the ones who will ruin Him. It will be the true Hebrews... But, well. I say here (he kneels down with difficulty): "Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me!" »

« And let it be done to you as your faith deserves » says Jesus making His gesture of authority over diseases.

The man seems to be dazzled as if he were struck by a sudden light. The man realises - I do not know whether through a flash of his intellect or through a physical sensation or through both at the same time - who is the Man Who is before him, and he utters such a shrill cry that the herdsman, who had come down towards the road probably to see, quickens his pace.

The man is on the ground with his face in the grass. And the herdsman

pointing at him with his crook asks: « Is he dead? More than milk is required when a man is done for! » and he shakes his head.

The man hears and stands up, strong and healthy. He shouts: « Dead? I am cured! I am a new man. He has done this to me. I am no longer languishing with hunger or suffering from any disease. I feel as I did the day I got married! Oh! blessed Jesus! How did I not recognise You before?! Your pity should have told me Your name! The peace I experienced near You! It was silly of me. Forgive Your poor servant! » And he throws himself on the ground once again, worshipping.

The herdsman leaves his goats and goes towards the little village running and jumping.

Jesus sits down near the cured man and says: « You were speaking to Me of Ermasteus, as if he were dead. So you know how he died. I want only one thing of you. That you come to Ephraim with Me and mention how he died to a man who is with Me. Then I will send you to Jericho, to a woman disciple of Mine, so that she may help you on your return trip. »

« If You wish so, I will go. But, now that I am healthy, I am no longer afraid of dying on the road. Even grass can nourish me and it is not shameful to beg because I did not spend everything I had on orgies, but for an honest purpose. »

« That is what I want. You will tell her that you have seen Me and that I am waiting for her here. She can come now. No one will annoy her. Will you be able to tell her that? »

« Yes, I will. Ah! Why do they hate You, when You are so good? »

« Because many men are possessed by demons. Let us go. » Jesus sets out towards Ephraim and the man follows Him without faltering. Only his remarkable leanness is the sign of his past disease and privations.

In the meantime many people are coming down from the little village shouting and gesticulating. They call Jesus. They tell Him to stop. Jesus does not listen to them, on the contrary He quickens His pace. And they follow Him...

There He is once again near Ephraim. The peasants who are getting ready to go home, as the sun is beginning to set, greet Him and look at the man who is with Him.

Judas of Kerioth appears suddenly from a lane. He starts with surprise seeing the Master.

But Jesus does not show any surprise. He only addresses the man saying: « This is one of My disciples. Tell him about Ermasteus. »

« Eh! it is soon said. He was untiring in preaching the Christ, also after he decided to part from his companion to stay with us. He said that we are in greater need than anybody else to know You, Rabbi, and that he wanted to make You known to his fatherland, and that he would go back to You after he had announced Your name publicly

in all the smallest villages. He lived like a penitent. If some pitiful people gave him some bread he blessed them in Your name. If they threw stones at him, he would withdraw blessing them just the same, and he fed on wild fruit or on sea mollusks that he picked off reefs or he dug in the sand. Many said that he was "mad". But nobody really hated him. At most they drove him away as if he were a man of ill omen. One day they found him dead along a road, not far from my place, on the road that takes one into Judaea, almost at the border. It has never been found out of what he died. But the rumour is that he was killed by somebody who did not want the Messiah to be preached. He had a large wound on his head. They said that he had been trampled by a horse. But I do not believe that. He still smiled stretched out on the dust of the road. Yes. He really seemed to be smiling at the last stars of the clearest night in the month of Elul and at the rising sun in the morning. Some marketgardeners found him at daybreak, while they were going to town with their vegetables, and they told me when they came to collect my cucumbers. I rushed there to see him. He was resting in great peace. »

« Have you heard? » Jesus asks Judas.

« Yes, I have. But did You not tell him that he would serve You and have a long life? »

« I did not say exactly that. The time that has gone by has obscured your mind. Has he not served Me evangelizing in places of mission, and has he not got a long life? Which life is longer than that conquered by those who die in the service of God? Long and glorious. »

Judas has that sly laugh that annoys me so much, but he does not reply.

In the meantime those from the little village have joined many people from Ephraim and they are speaking to them pointing at Jesus.

Jesus says to Judas: « Take the man home and finish restoring him. He will leave after the Sabbath that is just beginning. »

Judas obeys and Jesus remains all alone and He walks slowly bending to watch some stalks of corn, on which slight indications of ears are beginning to appear.

Some men from Ephraim ask Him: « This corn is beautiful, isn't it? »

« Beautiful. But the same as that of other regions. »

« Of course, Master. It's all corn! It must be the same. »

« Do you think so? Then corn is better than men. Because if it is skilfully sown it yields the same fruit here as in Judaea or Galilee or, we can say, in the plains along the Great Sea. Men, instead, do not yield the same fruit. And also the soil is better than men. Because when a seed is entrusted to it, it is good to the seed without making any difference whether the seed is from Samaria or

Judaea. »

« It is so. But why do You say that corn and soil are better than men? »

« Why?... Not long ago a man begged for a piece of bread, out of pity, at the gate of a village. And he was driven away because the people of that place thought he was a Judaeon. He was expelled as people threw stones at him and crying him a "leper", which he thought referred to his thinness, but was intended for his origin. And that man almost died of starvation along the road. Thus the people of that village, the people that sent you to question Me and would like to come to the house where I live, to see the man who was cured miraculously, are worse than corn and clods of earth. Because they were not able, although they had been well taught by Me for a long time, to bear the same fruit as was yielded by that man, who is neither a Judaeon nor a Samaritan and had never seen or heard Me, but had accepted the words of one of My disciples and believed in Me without knowing Me. And because they are worse than the clods of earth, as they rejected the man because he was of a different seed. They would now like to come to satisfy their hunger for curiosity, whilst they were not able to satisfy the hunger of a languishing man. Tell them that the Master will not satisfy such vain curiosity. And you all had better learn the great law of love, without which you will never be able to be My followers. It is not your love for Me that by itself will save your souls. But it is the love for My doctrine. And My doctrine teaches brotherly love without distinction of race and census. So let those hard-hearted people who have grieved My Heart go away, and let them repent if they want Me to love them. Because, bear this in your minds, if I am good, I am also just; if I make no distinctions and I love you as I love those of Galilee and Judaea, that must not make you so stupidly proud as to think that you are the favourite people or authorise you to do wrong without being afraid of being reproached by Me. I praise and reproach, according to justice, My relatives and apostles as well as any other person, and there is love in My reproach. And I do so because I want justice in the hearts of people so that one day I may reward those who have practised it. You may go and inform the others so that the lesson may bear fruit in everybody. »

Jesus envelops himself in His mantle and strides towards Ephraim, leaving His interlocutors who go away rather dejectedly to repeat the Master's words to the people of the unmerciful village.

563. Samuel, Judas of Kerioth and John. Parable of the Bees.

10th February 1947.

Jesus is still all alone, engrossed in thought, while walking slowly towards the thick wood to the west of Ephraim. The rustling noise of water rises from the torrent and the songs of birds come from trees. The bright springtime sunshine is pleasant under the tangle of branches, and silent is the tread on the luxuriant grassy carpet. The sunbeams form a mobile carpet of circles or golden strips on the green grass and some flowers still covered with dew shine as if their petals were precious scales, when a disc of light centres on them while all around there is shadow.

Jesus climbs towards a ledge protruding like a balcony over the empty space underneath. A balcony on which a huge oak-tree grows, and from which the flexible twigs of wild blackberries, or dogroses, or ivy and clematis hang down, as they do not find room or supports in their native place, too narrow for their exuberant vitality, and they hang in the empty space like loose dishevelled hair and they stretch out hoping to find something to which they may cling.

Jesus is now at the level of the ledge. He moves towards the most projecting spot, shifting aside the tangle of bushes. A flock of small birds fly away whirring and chirping for fear. Jesus stops watching the man who has preceded Him up there and who, lying on the grass with his face downwards, almost on the edge of the ledge, his elbows pressed on the ground, his face resting in his hands, is looking at the empty space, towards Jerusalem. The man is Samuel, the ex-pupil of Jonathan ben Uziel. He is pensive. He sighs. He shakes his head...

Jesus shakes some branches to attract his attention and, seeing that His attempt has been vain, He picks up a stone from the grass and rolls it down the path. The noise of the stone bouncing down the slope rouses the young man, who turns round surprised saying: « Who is there? »

« It is I, Samuel. You have preceded Me in one of the places where I prefer to pray » says Jesus showing Himself from behind the massive trunk of the oak-tree growing at the edge of the little path and He does so as if He had just arrived there.

« Oh! Master! I am sorry... But I will leave Your place free at once » he says standing up hurriedly and picking up his mantle that he had taken off and he had spread on the ground to lie on it.

« No. Why? There is room for two. The place is so beautiful! So isolated, solitary, suspended over the empty space, with so much light and such a wide view! Why do you want to leave it? »

« Well... to leave You free to pray... »

« And can we not do so together, or meditate, speaking to each other, elevating our spirits to God... forgetting men and their faults,

thinking of God, our Father and the good Father of all those who seek and love Him with good will? »

Samuel shows surprise when Jesus says « forgetting men and their faults... » But he does not say anything. He sits down again.

Jesus sits beside him on the grass and says to him: « Sit here. And let us be together. See how clear the view is today. If we had the eyes of an eagle we should be able to see the white villages on the tops of the mountains around Jerusalem. And, perhaps, we could see a spot shining like a gem in the air and that would make our hearts throb: the golden domes of the House of God... Look. There is Bethel. You can see its white houses and there, beyond Bethel, there is Beeroth. How subtly crafty were the inhabitants of that place and of the neighbourhood! But it turned out well, although deceit is never a good weapon. It turned out well because it placed them at the service of the true God. It is always better to lose human honours in order to gain closeness to divinity. Even if human honours were many and valuable, and the closeness to divinity is humble and unknown. Is that right? »

« Yes, Master. What You say is right. That is what happened to me. »

« But you are sad, although the change should make you happy. You are sad. You are suffering. You live in isolation. You look at the places you left. You look like an imprisoned bird that, pressed against the bars of its prison, looks with so much regret at the place it loved. I am not asking you not to do that. You are free. You may go and... »

« Lord, has Judas perhaps spoken ill of me that You are saying so? »

« No, Judas has not spoken to Me. He has not spoken to Me, but he spoke to you. That is why you are sad. And you live in isolation as you are down-hearted because of that. »

« Lord, if You know all that, although no one has mentioned that to You, You must also know that I am sad not because I want to leave You, because I regret I was converted, or because I have a longing for the past... or because I am afraid of men, as they would like to instil the fear of their punishments into me. I was looking over there. That is true. I was looking towards Jerusalem. But not because I am anxious to go back there. I mean: to go back there as I was previously. Because I am certainly eager, like everybody else, to go back as an Israelite who loves to go into the House of God and worship the Most High, and I do not think that You can reproach me for that. »

« I am the first, in My double Nature, to long for that altar and I would like to see it surrounded by holiness, as befits it. As the Son of God, everything that honours Him is a sweet voice to Me, and as the Son of man, as an Israelite, and therefore a Son of the Law, I see the Temple and the altar as the most sacred place in Israel,

in which our humanity can approach Divinity and become scented with the air surrounding the throne of God. I do not abolish the Law, Samuel. It is sacred to Me because it was given by My Father. I perfect it and complete it with new parts. As the Son of God I can do that. My Father sent Me for that. I have come to establish the spiritual Temple of My Church, against which Temple neither men nor demons shall prevail. And the tables of the Law will have a place of honour in it, because they are eternal, perfect, untouchable. The commandment "do not commit this or that sin" contained in those tables, which in their lapidary conciseness comprise what is necessary to be just in the eyes of God, is not cancelled by My word. On the contrary! I also give those ten commandments to you. I only tell you to keep them with perfection, that is, not for fear of the wrath of God on you, but out of love for your God Who is your Father. I have come to put your hands of sons into the hands of your Father. For how many ages those hands have been divided! Punishment divided them. Sin divided them. Now that the Redeemer has come, sin is about to be cancelled. Barriers are falling. You are once again the sons of God. »

« That is true. You are good and you comfort. Always. And You know. So I shall not tell You my worry. But I ask You: why are men so wicked, insane and foolish? How and with which expedients can they diabolically influence us to do evil things? And why are we so blind as not to see real facts and to believe false ones? And how can we become such demons? And persist when one is close to You? I was looking there and I was thinking... Yes. I was thinking of how many streams of poison come out from there to upset the children of Israel. I was considering how the wisdom of the rabbis can be joined to so much iniquity that misrepresents things in order to deceive people. I was thinking above all of that, because... » Samuel, who had spoken passionately, stops and lowers his head.

Jesus ends the sentence: « ... because Judas, My disciple, is what he is, and he grieves Me and those who are around Me or come to Me, as you did. I know. Judas is trying to send you away from here and he makes insinuations and sneers at you... »

« Not only at me. Yes. He poisons my joy of coming to justice. He poisons it so skilfully that I think I am like a traitor here, betraying You and myself. Myself, because I flatter myself that I am better, whereas I shall be the cause of Your ruin. In fact I do not know myself as yet... and if I meet those of the Temple I may fail in my purpose and be... Oh! if I had done it then, I would have had the excuse of not knowing You for what You are, because I knew of You what I was fold to make a cursed man of me. But if I did it now! What curse will be that of the traitor of the Son of God! I was here... Pensive, yes. I was wondering where I might flee to save myself from myself and from them. I was thinking of fleeing to some

remote place, to join those of the Diaspora... Away, far away, to prevent the demon from making me commit sin... Your apostle is right in not trusting me. He knows me, because he knows us all knowing our Leaders... And he is right in doubting me. When he says: "Don't you know that He tells us that we shall be weak? Just imagine: we are His apostles and have been with Him for such a long time. And you, infected as you are with old Israel, have just come, and you have come when circumstances make us shudder, do you think you have enough strength to remain just?" when he says so he is right. » The man is down-hearted and lowers his head.

« How much grief the sons of men can give themselves! Satan really knows how to make use of that disposition of theirs to terrorise them completely and separate them from the Joy that comes towards them to save them. Because the sadness of the spirit, the fear of the morrow and worries are always weapons that man puts in the hands of his enemy, who frightens him by means of the same phantasms that man himself imagines. And there are other men who really form an alliance with Satan to help him frighten his brothers. But, My dear son, is there not a Father in Heaven? A Father Who, as this fissure in the rock provides for this blade of grass - this fissure full of earth situated in such a way that the moisture of dews flowing on the smooth stone gathers in that thin furrow, so that the blade of grass may live and yield this tiny little flower, which is not less admirable for its beauty than the great sun shining up there: both the perfect work of the Creator - a Father Who takes care of the blade of grass grown on a rock, will He not take care of one of His sons who firmly wants to serve Him? Oh! God really does not disappoint the "good" wishes of man. Because it is He Who kindles them in your hearts. He providently and wisely creates the circumstances to encourage the wishes of His children, not only, but in the event that a desire to honour Him should follow an imperfect path, He straightens and perfects it so that it may follow the right path. You were among the latter. You believed, you wanted and were convinced that you were honouring God by persecuting Me. The Father saw that your heart did not hate God, but it longed to give glory to God by removing from the world Him Who you were told was the enemy of God and the corrupter of souls. So He created the circumstances to comply with your desire to give glory to your Lord. And here you are now among us. And can you believe that God will abandon you, now that He brought you here? Only if you abandon Him, the power of evil will be able to overwhelm you. »

« I do not want that. My will is sincere! » states the man.

« So what are you worried about? About the word of a man? Let him say. He thinks with his own thought. And man's thought is always imperfect. But I will see to that. »

« I do not want You to reproach him. Your assurance that I will not sin is enough for me. »

« I assure you. It will not happen to you because you do not want it to happen. Because see, son, it would not help you to go to the Diaspora or even to the end of the world to preserve your soul from hating the Christ and from being punished for such hatred. Many in Israel will not sully themselves with the Crime materially, but they will not be less guilty than those who condemn Me and execute the sentence. I can speak to you of these matters. Because you are already aware that everything has been arranged for them. You know the names and the thoughts of My most pitiless enemies. You said: "Judas knows us all because he knows all the Leaders". But if he knows you, you also, the minor ones, because you are like lesser stars near the major planets, you also know what is being done, how it is done and who does it, and what plots are made and which means are studied... So I can speak with you. I could not do so with the others... What I can suffer and bear with, others cannot... »

« Master, but how can You, knowing that, be so... Who is coming up the path? » Samuel stands up to look. He exclaims: « Judas! »

« Yes. It is I. I was told that the Master had passed through here, instead I find you. So I will go back, leaving you to your thoughts » and he laughs with his sly laugh that is more mournful than the cry of an owl, so insincere it is.

« I am here as well. Do they want Me at the village? » says Jesus appearing behind Samuel's shoulders.

« Oh! You! So you were in good company, Samuel! And You, too, Master... »

« Yes. The company of one who embraces justice is always good. So you wanted Me, to be with Me. Come, then. There is room for you and also for John, if he were with you. »

« He is down in the village, at grips with other pilgrims. »

« If there are some pilgrims, I must go. »

« No. They will be staying all day tomorrow. John is settling them in our beds for their stay. He is happy to do so. Of course, everything makes him happy. You are really like each other. I do not know how you manage to be always happy even when things are most... worrying. »

« The same question I was going to ask when you came! » exclaims Samuel.

« Ah! Were you? So you are not happy, and you are surprised that other people, in conditions even more... difficult than ours, can be so. »

« I am not unhappy. I am not speaking for myself. But I am thinking from which sources the serenity of the Master may come, as He is aware of His future and yet He is not upset by anything. »

« From heavenly sources, of course! It is natural! He is God! Do

you doubt it? Can a God suffer? He is above sorrow. His Father's love is for Him like... like an exhilarating wine. And the firm belief that His actions... are the salvation of the world is an exhilarating wine for Him. And then... Can He have the physical reactions that we, humble men, have? That is contrary to common sense. If Adam, when innocent, was not aware of any kind of sorrow, neither would he have ever become aware of it if he had remained innocent, Jesus... the Superinnocent, the creature... I do not know whether I should say so: uncreated being God, or created because He has relatives... oh! how many insoluble "whys" for future generations, my Master! If Adam was free from sorrow because of his innocence, can one think that Jesus must suffer? »

Jesus' head is bent. He has sat down once again on the grass. His face is veiled by His hair. So I cannot see His countenance.

Samuel standing in front of Judas, who is also standing, replies: « But if He is to be the Redeemer, He must really suffer. Do you not remember David and Isaiah? »

« I do remember them! But although they saw the figure of the Redeemer, they did not see the immaterial help He would receive to be... shall we say: tortured, without feeling any pain. »

« Which help? A man may love sorrow or suffer it with resignation, according to his perfection of justice. But he will always feel it. Otherwise... if he did not feel it... it would not be sorrow. »

« Jesus is the Son of God. »

« But He is not a ghost! He is true Flesh! And flesh suffers if it is tortured. He is a true Man! And the thought of man suffers if it is offended and despised. »

« His union with God eliminates such human things in Him. »

Jesus raises His head and says: « I solemnly tell you, Judas, that I suffer and shall suffer like every man, and more than every man. But I can be equally happy, enjoying the holy spiritual happiness of those who have achieved freedom from the sadness of the Earth, because they have embraced the will 'of God as their only bride. I am able to do so because I have overcome the human concept of happiness, the uneasiness of happiness, as men imagine it. I do not pursue what, according to men, happiness consists of, but I place My joy in exactly the opposite of what man pursues as such. The things that are avoided and despised by man, because they are considered burdensome and grievous, are the sweetest thing for Me. I am not interested in one hour. I consider the consequences that one hour may bring about in eternal life. My episode will come to an end, but its fruit will last. My sorrow will end, but the value of My sorrow will not end. And what could I do with one hour of the so called "happy state" on the Earth, an hour achieved after pursuing it for years and years, when that hour could not come with Me as delight in eternal life and I had to enjoy it all by myself, without sharing

it with those whom I love? »

« But if You should triumph, we, Your followers, would take part in Your happiness! » exclaims Judas.

« You? And who are you, compared with the past, present and future multitudes to whom My grief will bring joy? I see far beyond earthly happiness. I look at the supernatural beyond it. I can see My sorrow change into eternal delight for a multitude of people. And I embrace sorrow as the greatest power to reach the perfect happiness, which is to love one's neighbour to the extent of suffering to give him joy, to the extent of dying for him. »

« I do not understand that happiness » states Judas.

« You are not wise yet. Otherwise you would understand it. »

« And is John wise? He is more ignorant than I am! »

« From a human point of view he is. But he possesses the science of love. »

« All right. But I do not think that love can prevent clubs from being clubs and stones from being stones and both from causing pain to the bodies they strike. You always say that sorrow is dear to You because it is love for You. But when You are really caught and tortured, if that is possible, I do not know whether You will still be of the same mind. You had better think about it while You can shun pain. It will be dreadful, You know? If men will be able to get hold of You... oh! they will have no respect for You! »

Jesus looks at him. He is very pale. His wide open eyes seem to be seeing, beyond Judas' face, all the tortures awaiting Him, and yet, although sad, they remain meek and kind, and above all, serene: two limpid eyes of an innocent at peace. He replies: « I know. I know also what you do not know. But I hope in God's mercy. He, Who is merciful with sinners, will have mercy also on Me. I will not ask Him not to suffer, but to be able to suffer. And now let us go. Samuel, go a little ahead of us and tell John that I shall soon be in the village. »

Samuel bows and goes away quickly. Jesus begins to descend.

The path is so narrow that they have to proceed one behind the other. But that does not prevent Judas from saying: « You trust that man too much, Master. I told You who he is. He is Jonathan's most hot-headed and excitable disciple. Of course, it is late now. You have Put Yourself into his hands. He is a spy close to You. And You more than once thought that I was a spy and the others thought so more than You did! I am not a spy. »

Jesus stops and turns round. Grief and majesty mingle on His face and in His eyes fixed on His apostle. He says: « No. You are not a spy. You are a demon. You have stolen the Serpent's prerogative to seduce and deceive in order to take people away from God. Your behaviour is neither a stone nor a club, but it hurts Me more than a blow with a stone or a club. Oh! in My atrocious suffering there

will be nothing greater than your behaviour capable of torturing the Martyr. » Jesus covers His face with His hands, as if He wished to conceal so much horror, and then He begins to run down the path.

Judas shouts after Him: « Master! Master! Why are You grieving me? That liar has certainly made a slanderous report to You... Listen to me, Master! »

Jesus does not listen. He runs, He flies down the slopes. He does not stop when He passes by the woodcutters and shepherds who greet Him. He passes, He waves to them but does not stop. Judas resigns himself to being silent...

They are almost down when they meet John who, with his pellucid face brightened by a serene smile, is climbing towards them. He is holding by the hand a little boy who is prattling while sucking a honeycomb.

« Master, here I am! There are people from Caesarea Philippi. They heard that You are here and they came. How strange it is! No one has spoken and everybody knows where You are! They are resting now. They are very tired. I went and asked Dinah to give me some milk and honey because there is a sick person. I put him in my bed. I am not afraid. And little Annas wanted to come with me. Don't touch him, Master; he is all sticky with honey » and kind John, who has many drops and finger-marks of honey on his tunic, laughs. He laughs trying to hold back the boy who would like to go and offer Jesus his half-sucked honeycomb and shouts: « Come. There are so many of them for You! »

« Yes. They are removing the honeycombs at Dinah's. I knew. Her bees swarmed not long ago » says John.

They set out again and arrive at the first house where the beemasters are still making the usual deafening noise near the beehives, I do not know exactly why. Swarms of bees - they look like big bunches of strange grapes - are hanging from some branches and some men are taking them to put them into the new beehives. Farther away, untiring buzzing bees are going in and coming out of beehives already settled.

The men greet Jesus and a woman approaches Him with some lovely honeycombs which she offers Him.

« Why are you depriving yourself of them? You have already given John some... »

« Oh! My bees have made much honey. It's a pleasure for me to offer it. But please bless the new swarms. Look, they are taking the last one. This year we had to double the beehives. »

Jesus goes towards the tiny towns of the bees and He blesses them one by one raising His hand amidst the humming of the workerbees that do not stop working.

« They are all merry and they are also all excited. A new house... » says a man.

« And a new wedding. They really look like women preparing a wedding feast » says another one.

« Yes, but the women do more talking than work. The bees, instead, work in silence and they work also on the days of wedding feasts. They work all the time to build their kingdom and their wealth » replies a third man.

« To be always working in virtue is lawful, nay, it is dutiful. To work always for the sake of gain, no, it is not. Only those can do it who do not know that they have a God Who is to be honoured on His day. To work in silence is a merit that everybody should learn of the bees. Because holy things are done holily in silence. Be like your bees in justice. Untiring and silent. God sees. God rewards. Peace be with you » says Jesus.

And when He is alone with His two apostles He says: « To the workers of God in particular I propose the bees as their model. They deposit in the secrecy of the beehive the honey formed in their interiors through their unremitting work on wholesome corollas. Their fatigue does not even appear to be such, as they do it with so much good will, flying, like golden dots, from flower to flower, and then, laden with juice, going in to elaborate their honey in the privacy of their little cells. People ought to imitate them, choosing lessons, sound doctrines and friendships, capable of producing juices of true virtue, then living in isolation to elaborate, using what has been actively gathered, virtue, justice, which are like the honey extracted from many wholesome elements, of which one of the most important ones is good will, without which the juices collected here and there would be of no use. It is also necessary to meditate humbly, in the secrecy of one's heart, on the good we have seen and heard, without being envious if queen bees are near working bees, that is, if there is someone who is more just than he who meditates. Both queens and workers are necessary in the beehive. It would be a disaster if they were all queens or all workers. Both the former and the latter would die. Because the queens would have no food to procreate if there were no workers, and the workers would no longer exist if the queens did not procreate. And the queens are not to be envied. They have their work and their penitence. They see the sun but once, in their only one nuptial flight. Before it and after it, they are in perpetual seclusion within the amber-coloured walls of the beehive. Each one has its task, and each task is an appointment, and each appointment is an onus besides being an honour. And the working bees waste no time in vain or dangerous flights around diseased or poisonous flowers. They make no adventurous attempts. They do not fail to carry out their mission, they do not rebel against the purpose for which they were created. Oh! Admirable little beings! How much you teach men!... » Jesus becomes silent, lost in His meditation.

Judas suddenly remembers that he has to go I do not know where, and he almost runs away. Jesus and John remain. And John looks at Jesus without letting Him notice. A keen look of anxious love. Jesus raises His head, turns round a little, meeting the eyes of His Favourite apostle who is watching Him. His face brightens when He draws John to Himself.

John, while walking embraced thus, asks: « Judas has grieved You again, has he not? And he must have upset Samuel as well. »

« Why? Has he said anything to you? »

« No. But I have understood. He only said: "Generally speaking when one lives near someone who is really good, one becomes good. But Judas is not, although he has lived with the Master for three years. He is corrupt in the depth of his heart, and the goodness of the Christ does not penetrate him, so full he is of wickedness". I did not know what to say, because it is true... But why is Judas like that? Is it possible that he will never change? And yet... we are all getting the same lessons... and when he came among us, he was not any worse than we were... »

« My John! My meek child! » Jesus kisses his forehead, so open and pure, and He whispers through his fair hair that undulates lightly: « There are people who seem to live to destroy the good that is in them. You are a fisherman and you know what a sail does when a hurricane strikes it. It bends so low near the water that is almost overturns the boat and becomes a danger for it, so that at times it is necessary to lower it, and one is thus left without wings with which to fly towards one's nest, because a sail, struck by a hurricane is no longer a wing, but it becomes ballast that takes one to the bottom, to death and not to salvation. But if the violent blast of the hurricane abates, even for a few moments, then the sail becomes wing at once and the boat sails fast towards the harbour taking the people in it to salvation. The same happens to many souls. It is enough that the hurricane of passions subsides, and the soul that was bent and almost submerged by... by what was not good, begins to yearn for Goodness. »

« Yes, Master. But... so... tell me... will Judas ever reach Your harbour? »

« Oh! Do not make Me look at the future of one of My dearest apostles! I have in front of me the future of millions of souls for whom My sufferings will be useless!... I have in front of Me all the base actions of the world... The nausea upsets Me. The nausea of the seething of filthy things that like a river cover and will cover the Earth, in different ways, but always dreadful for the Perfection, until the end of time. Do not make Me look! Let Me quench My thirst and find comfort at a spring that does not taste of corruption, and let Me forget the verminous rottenness of too many people, by looking at you alone, My peace! » and He kisses him again between his

eyebrows looking deeply into the limpid eyes of the pure loving apostle...

They go into the house. Samuel is in the kitchen chopping the wood to spare the old woman work when lighting the fire.

Jesus asks the woman: « Are the pilgrims sleeping? »

« I think so. I do not hear any noise. I am going to take this water to the mounts. They are in the wood-store. »

« I will do that, mother. You had better go to Rachel's house. She promised me some fresh cheese. Tell her that I will pay her on the Sabbath » says John picking up two tubs full of water.

Only Jesus and Samuel remain. Jesus approaches the man who bending over the fire is blowing to light the flame and He lays His hand on his shoulder saying: « Judas interrupted us up there... I want to tell you that I will send you with My apostles the day after the Sabbath. Perhaps you prefer that... »

« Thank You, Master. I am sorry not to be near You. But in Your apostles I shall find You once again. Yes, I prefer to be far away from Judas. I did not dare to ask You... »

« All right. That is settled. And take pity on him. As I do. And do not tell Peter or anybody else... »

« I can hold my tongue, Master. »

« The disciples will come later. There is Hermas and Stephen, and there is Isaac, two wise men and a just one, and many more. You will like it, among true brothers. »

« Yes, Master. You understand and help us. You really are the good Master » and he bends to kiss Jesus' hand.

564. At Ephraim, before and after the Arrival of Jesus' Mother and of the Women Disciples with Lazarus.

12th February 1947.

In Mary of Jacob's house they are already up although it is hardly daybreak. I would say that it must be a Sabbath, because I see that the apostles also are present, whereas they are usually away evangelizing. They are busy lighting fires and boiling water, and Mary is helped in sieving flour and kneading it to bake bread.

The old woman is very excited, as excited as a little girl, and while working actively she asks this one and that one: « Will it really be today? And are the other places ready? Are you sure that they are not more than seven? »

Peter, who is skinning a lamb preparing it to be cooked, replies on behalf of everybody: « They were to be here before the Sabbath, but the women were probably not yet ready and so they have delayed. But they will certainly come today. Ah! I am happy! Has the Master gone out? Perhaps He has gone to meet them... »

« Yes. He went out with John and Samuel towards the road to central

Samaria » replies Bartholomew coming out with a pitcher of boiling water.

« Then we can be certain that they are arriving. He always knows everything » states Andrew.

« I would like to know why you are laughing like that. What is there to laugh at when my brother speaks? » asks Peter who has noticed the sly laugh of Judas, who is idle in a corner.

« I am not laughing because of your brother. You are all happy and I can be happy as well and laugh without any reason. »

Peter looks at him meaningfully, but he resumes his work.

« Here it is! I managed to find a flowery branch. It is not the branch of an almond-tree, as I wanted. But after the almond-tree has bloomed, She has other branches and She will be pleased with mine » says Thaddeus who comes in dripping dew, as if he had been walking in woods, and carrying a bunch of flowery branches. A miracle' of dewy whiteness that seems to brighten and decorate the kitchen.

« Oh! How beautiful! Where did you find them? »

« At Naomi's. I knew that her orchard is late because of its northern position. And I went up there. »

« That's why you look like a forest tree yourself! The dew-drops shine in your hair and have wet your garment. »

« The path was as damp as if it had rained. It is already the plentiful dew of the most beautiful months. » Thaddeus goes away with his flowers, and shortly afterwards he calls his brother to help him arrange them.

« I will come. I am an expert. Woman, have you an amphora with a thin neck, if possible of red clay? » says Thomas.

« I have what you want and other vases as well... The ones I used on feast days... for the weddings of my sons or some other important occasion. If you wait for me to put these cakes in the oven, only a moment, I will come and open the chest where the beautiful things are kept... Ah! they are only few now, after so much misfortune! But I have kept some to... remember... and to suffer, because even if they are memories of happy days, they now make one shed tears because they remind one of what is finished. »

« In that case it would have been better if no one had asked them of you. I would not like what happened to us at Nob to occur again here. So many preparations for nothing... » says the Iscariot.

« I tell you that a group of disciples informed us! Do you think they had dreamt of it? They spoke to Lazarus. He sent them ahead on purpose. They came to tell us that His Mother would be here before the Sabbath in Lazarus' wagon, with Lazarus and the women disciples... »

« But they have not come... »

« Since you have seen that man, tell me: does he not give you a fright? » asks the old woman drying her hands in her apron after

entrusting her cakes to James of Zebedee and Andrew who take them to the stone oven.

« A fright? Why? »

« H'm! a man who comes back from the dead! » She is utterly moved.

« Don't worry, mother. He is exactly like us » says James of Alphaeus comforting her.

« Rather than be afraid you had better make sure that you do not chatter with other women about it, otherwise we shall have the whole of Ephraim here bothering us » says the Iscariot peremptorily.

« I have never spoken imprudently since you came here, either with the people of the town or with pilgrims. I have preferred to be considered foolish rather than appear wise, in order not to disturb the Master and harm Him. And I will be quiet today as well. Come, Thomas... » and she goes out to show him her hidden treasures.

« The woman is frightened thinking that she will be seeing a man who has been raised from the dead » says the Iscariot laughing ironically.

« She is not the only one. The disciples told me that they were all excited at Nazareth and also at Cana and Tiberias. One that comes back from the dead after being four days in a sepulchre is not as easily found as daisies in springtime. We were also very pale when he came out of the sepulchre! But instead of standing there making idle comments, could you not do some work? Everybody is working and there is still so much to be done... Go to the market, since you can do that today, and buy what is needed. What we bought is no longer sufficient, now that they are coming, and we had no time to go back to town and do some shopping. We would have been held up, where we were, by sunset. »

Judas calls Matthew, who comes into the kitchen dressed up, and they go out together.

The Zealot also comes into the kitchen, he is well dressed as well, and he says: « Our Thomas! He is really an artist. With very little he has decorated the room as if it were for a wedding dinner. Go and see it. »

They all rush to see it, with the exception of Peter, who is finishing his work. Peter says: « I am dying to see them here. Perhaps Marjiam is with them. In a month's time it will be Passover. He must have already left Capernaum or Bethsaida. »

« I am happy, for the Master's sake, that Mary is coming. She will comfort Him more than anybody else. And He needs it » the Zealot replies to him.

« So much. And have you noticed how sad is John also? I have asked him. But in vain. In his kindness he is more firm than all of us, and if he does not want to speak, nothing can make him do so.

But I am sure that he is aware of something. And he seems to be the Master's shadow. He follows Him all the time. And he is always looking at Him. And when he knows that he is not being watched - because, if he knows, he looks at you with such a smile that would make even a tiger mild - when he knows that nobody is watching him, I say, his countenance is very sad. You should try and ask him. He is very fond of you. And he knows that you are more prudent than I am... »

« Oh! certainly not. You have become an example of prudence for all of us. No one would recognise the old Simon in you. You are really the stone that by its hard sound compactness supports us all. »

« Not at all! Don't say that! I am a poor man. Certainly... by staying with Him for so many years, one becomes a little like Him. A little... very little, but quite different from what one was previously. We have all... no, not all of us, unfortunately. Judas is always the same. Here as he was at the Clear Water... »

« And may God grant that he may always be the same! »

« What? What do you mean? »

« Nothing and everything, Simon of Jonah. If the Master heard me He would say: "Do not judge". But I am not judging. I am afraid. I am afraid that Judas is worse than he was at the Clear Water. »

« He certainly is, even if he is as he was then. Because he should have changed very much, he should have grown in justice, instead he is always the same. So in his heart there is the sin of spiritual indolence, which was not there previously. Because at the beginning... yes, he was mad, but he was full of good will... Tell me, the fact that the Master has decided to send Samuel with us and to gather together all the disciples, all those that can be gathered at Jericho for the new moon of Nisan, what does it make you think? Previously He had said that the man was to stay here... and He had also forbidden us to say where He was. It makes me suspicious... »

« No. In my opinion the situation is clear and logical. By now, we do not know by whom and how the news has been spread that the Master is here and it is known all over Palestine. You know that pilgrims and disciples have come here from Kedesh to Engedi, from Joppa to Bozrah. So there is no sense in keeping it secret any longer. Further, Passover is approaching and the Master certainly wants to have His disciples with Him for His return to Jerusalem. You heard that the Sanhedrin says that He has been defeated and has lost all His disciples. And He will reply to it by entering the town at the head of them... »

« I am afraid, Simon. Very much afraid... You have heard that everybody, also the Herodians, have joined together against Him... »

« Yes! It's true. May God help us!... »

« And why is He sending Samuel with us? »

« Certainly to prepare him for his mission. I see no reason why

we should worry... 'They are knocking! It's certainly the women disciples!... »

Peter throws away his bloodstained apron and runs following the Zealot, who has rushed to the door of the house. All the others who are in the house appear from the various doors and shout: « Here they are! Here they are! »

But when they open the door they are so obviously disappointed in seeing Eliza and Nike, that the two women disciples ask: « Is there anything wrong? »

« No! No! The fact is that... we thought it was the Mother and the women disciples from Galilee... » says Peter.

« Ah! you have taken it badly. But we are very happy to see you and to hear that Mary is about to arrive » says Eliza.

« No, we have not taken it badly... We are disappointed! But come! Come in! Peace be with our good sisters » says Thaddeus greeting them on behalf of everybody.

« And to you. Is the Master not in? »

« He has gone with John to meet Mary. We know that She is coming along the Shechem road in Lazarus' wagon » explains the Zealot.

They go into the house while Andrew takes care of Eliza's donkey. Nike has come on foot. They speak of what is happening in Jerusalem, they inquire after friends and disciples... after Annaleah, Mary and Martha, old John of Nob, Joseph, Nicodemus and many more. The absence of Judas Iscariot allows them to speak peacefully and openly.

Eliza, an elderly experienced woman, who at the time they were at Nob, has been in touch with the Iscariot and by now knows him very well and also « she only loves him out of love for God » as she says openly, asks whether he is in the house and does not want to join the others for some whim of his, and only after she learns that he is out, shopping, she speaks of what she knows: « that everything seems to have calmed down at Jerusalem, that not even the well known disciples are questioned any more, that it is rumoured that it happened because Pilate had spoken in a threatening voice to those of the Sanhedrin, reminding them that he is the only one who administers justice in Palestine and therefore they should put an end to their nonsense. »

« But they also say » remarks Nike « - and it is Manaen who says this and other men with him, nay other women, because Valeria is the other voice - that Pilate is really so tired of all the risings that continuously excite the country and that may cause him trouble, and that he is also so struck by the insistence of the Jews in insinuating that Jesus is aiming at proclaiming Himself king, that if he did not have the concordant favourable reports of the centurions and above all, if he were not pressed by his wife, he would end up by punishing the Christ, if only by banishing Him, in order not

to be troubled any more. »

« That would be the last straw. And he is capable of doing it! Quite capable! It is the lightest Roman punishment, and the most used after scourging. But can you imagine that! Jesus all alone, goodness knows where, and we scattered here and there... » says the Zealot.

« Of course! Scattered! That's what you say. But they will not scatter me. I will follow Him... » says Peter.

« Oh! Simon! Can you flatter yourself that they would allow you to do that? They tie you up like a galley slave, and they take you wherever they want, even on a galley or to one of their prisons, and you would no longer be able to follow your Master » says Bartholomew. Peter ruffles his hair looking perplexed and downhearted.

« We shall tell Lazarus. Lazarus will go to Pilate frankly. Pilate will certainly see him with pleasure because the Gentiles love to see extraordinary beings... » says the Zealot.

« He has probably been there before he left, and Pilate may no longer be anxious to see him! » says Peter dejectedly.

« He will then go as Theophilus' son. Or he will take his sister Mary to visit the ladies of rank. They were friends when... well, when Mary was a sinner... »

« Do you know that Valeria, after her husband divorced her, has become a proselyte? She has been in earnest. She lives an honest life and is an example to many of us. She freed all her slaves and she instructs them in the true God. She had gone to live in Zion. But now that Claudia has come, she has gone back to her... »

« Then!... »

« No. She said to me: "As soon as Johanna comes I am going to stay with her. But now I want to convince Claudia"... Claudia does not seem to be able to get over the limit of her opinion on Christ. According to her He is a wise man. Nothing else... Nay before she came to town, she seems to have been somewhat upset by the rumours that were spread and to have said sceptically: "He is a man like our philosophers, and not of the best, because His word does not correspond to His life", and she had some... in short she allowed herself certain things that she had previously given up » says Nike.

« That was to be expected. Heathen souls! H'm! There may be a good one... But the others!... Corrupt! Corrupt! » Bartholomew says sententiously.

« And what about Joseph? » asks Thaddeus.

« Who? The man from Sephoris? He is terrified! Your brother Joseph came. He came and left at once, but he passed by Bethany to tell the sisters that at all costs they should keep the Master from going to town and from remaining there. I was there and I heard him. Likewise I heard that Joseph of Sephoris had a lot of trouble and now he is much afraid. Your brother asked him to keep well informed of what is plotted in the Temple. The man from Sephoris

can find out through that relative who is the husband either of the sister or of the daughter of his wife's sister, I do not know, and who is employed at the Temple » says Eliza.

« How much fear! Now, when we go to Jerusalem, I want to send my brother to Annas. I could go myself, because I also know the sly fox well. But John is more capable. And Annas was very fond of him, when we listened to the words of the old fox believing that he was a lamb! I will send John. He will be able to put up even with abuse without reacting. I... if he said anathema of the Master to me, or even if he only said that I am anathema because I follow Him, I would jump to his neck, I would seize him and squeeze his old stout body as if it were a net out of which water is to be squeezed. I would make him give back the wicked soul he has! Even if all the soldiers and priests of the Temple were around him! »

« Oh! if the Master heard you speak thus! » exclaims Andrew, who is utterly scandalised.

« I am saying so exactly because He is not here! »

« You are right! You are not the only one to have certain wishes. I have them, too! » says Peter.

« And I, too, and not only with regard to Annas » says Thaddeus.

« Oh! in that case I... would serve several of them. I have a long list... Those three old crocks of Capernaum - I leave out Simon, the Pharisee, because he seems to be tolerably good - those two wolves of Esdraelon, and that old heap of bones of Hananiah, and then... a slaughter, a real slaughter, I tell you, at Jerusalem, with Helkai at the head of them all. I cannot bear those snakes lying in wait any longer! » Peter is furious.

Thaddeus, calm in speaking, but even more impressive in his glacial calm than if he were as furious as Peter, says: « And I would give you a hand. But... perhaps I would begin by removing the snakes close at hand. »

« Who? Samuel? »

« No. Not at all! Not only Samuel is close at hand. There are many who show a face but their souls are different from the face they show! I never lose sight of them. Never. I want to be sure before acting. But when I am sure! David's blood is hot, and hot is the blood of Galilee. They are both in me through my paternal and maternal lines. »

« Oh! In the event... tell me! I will help you... » says Peter.

« No. Blood revenge is the concern of relatives. It's for me to take it. »

« But, my dear children! Do not speak thus. That is not what the Master teaches! You look like little furious lions instead of being the lambs of the Lamb! Restrain so much spirit of revenge. The days of David went by long ago! The law of blood and retaliation has been cancelled by the Christ. He confirms the ten unchangeable commandments,

but He cancels the other hard Mosaic laws. The commandments of Moses concerning pity, humanity and justice remain and are condensed and perfected in His greater commandment: "To love God with our whole selves, to love our neighbour as we love ourselves, to forgive those who offend us, to love those who hate us". Oh! forgive me, if I, a woman, have dared to teach my brothers, who are greater than I am! But I am an old mother. And a mother can always speak. Believe me, my children! If you yourselves call Satan by hating enemies, by wishing for revenge, he will come into you and corrupt you. Satan is not strength. Believe me. God is strength. Satan is weakness, a burden, he us sluggishness. You would not be able to move a finger any more, not only against your enemies, but not even to caress our distressed Jesus, if hatred and revenge should enchain you. Cheer up, my dear children, all of you! Also those who are as old as I am, perhaps older. You are all sons for a woman who loves you, for a mother who has found once again the joy of being a mother by loving you as her children. Do not make me feel distressed once again, having lost my dear children again and for good; because if you die cherishing hatred or crime, you die for ever, and we shall not longer be able to gather all together up there, in joy, around our common love: Jesus. Promise me here, at once, as I implore you, promise me, a poor woman, a poor mother, that you will never have such thoughts again. Oh! they even disfigure your faces. You seem strangers to me, you are different! How ugly hatred makes you! You were so meek! But what is happening? Listen to me! Mary would say the same words as mine to you, with greater power, because She is Mary; but it is better if She is not aware of all the grief... Oh! poor Mother! But what is happening? So have I to really believe that the hour of darkness has already come, the hour that will swallow everybody, the hour in which Satan will be king in everybody, with the exception of the Holy One, and he will lead astray also saints, you also, making you cowards, perjurers, as cruel as he is? Oh! so far I have always hoped! I have always said: "Men will not prevail against the Christ". But now! But now I am afraid and I tremble for the first time! I see the great Darkness, whose name is Lucifer, stretch out and invade this serene sky of Adar and darken all of you, and pour poisons that make you sick. Oh! I am afraid! » Eliza, who for some time had been weeping silently, drops with her head on the table at which she was sitting and sobs sorrowfully.

The apostles look at one another. Then, although distressed, they begin to console her. But she does not want consolations and she says so: « One, only one is good for me: your promise. For your own good! So that Jesus may not have the greatest of His sorrows: to see you, His beloved disciples, damned. »

« Of course, Eliza. If that is what you want! Do not weep, woman!

We promise you. Listen. We will not lift a finger against anybody, We shall not even look, so that we may not see. Don't weep! Don't weep! We will forgive those who offend us. We will love those who hate us! Don't weep. »

Eliza raises her face shining with tears and says: « Remember. You have promised it! Repeat your promise! »

« We promise you it, woman. »

« How dear you are, my children! Now I do like you! I see that you are good again. Now that my worry is appeased and that you are once again free from that bitter ferment, let us get ready to receive Mary. What is there to be done? » she asks and she finishes wiping her tears.

« Actually... we have prepared, as men can do. But Mary of Jacob helped us. She is a Samaritan, but she is very good. You will soon see her. She is out at the stone oven watching the bread. She is alone: her children are either dead or have forgotten her, her riches have vanished, and yet she bears no one ill-will... »

« Ah! see! Can you see that there is who knows how to forgive also among heathens and Samaritans? And it must be dreadful, you know, to have to forgive a son!... Better dead than a sinner! Ah! Are you sure that Judas is not here? »

« If he has not become a bird, he cannot be here, because the windows are open, but all the doors are closed, except this one. »

« Then... Mary of Simon has been to Jerusalem with her relative. She came to offer sacrifices at the Temple. Then she came to us. She seems a martyr. How depressed she is! She asked me and everybody whether we had any news of her son. Whether he was with the Master. Whether he had always been with Him. »

« What is the matter with that woman? » asks Andrew quite astonished.

« Her son. Do you not think that it is enough? » asks Thaddeus.

« I comforted her. She wanted to go back to the Temple with us. We all went there together to pray... Then she left, always with her worry. I said to her: "If you stay with us, we shall be going to the Master shortly. Your son is there". She already knew that Jesus is here. It has been known as far as the borders of Palestine. But she said: "No, no! The Master told me not to be in Jerusalem in spring. I am obeying Him. But I wanted to go up to the Temple before He returned. I am in such need of God". And she said a strange word... She said: "I am blameless. But I am so tortured that hell is in me and I am in it"... We repeatedly asked her why. But she would not say anything else, with regard to her torture or to the reasons for Jesus' prohibition. She asked us not to say anything to Jesus or to Judas. »

« Poor woman! So will she not be there at Passover? » asks Thomas.

« No, she will not. »

« Well! If Jesus told her that, He must have a reason... Did you hear what she said, eh? It is really known everywhere that Jesus is here! » says Peter.

« Yes. And some people said that those who were spreading the news were doing so to gather men in His name, to rise "against the tyrants". Others said that He is here because He realises that He has been unmasked... »

« Always the same reasons! They must have spent all the gold of the Temple to send those... servants of theirs everywhere! » remarks Andrew.

There are some knocks at the door. « They are here! » they say and they rush to open.

It is instead Judas with his shopping. Matthew follows him. Judas sees Eliza and Nike and he greets them asking: « Are you alone? »

« All alone. Mary has not come yet. »

« Mary is not coming from the southern regions and thus she cannot be with you. I was asking whether Anastasica is here. »

« No. She remained at Bethzur. »

« Why? She is a disciple, too. Do you not know that from here we shall be going to Jerusalem for Passover? She should be here. If the women disciples and the believers are not perfect, who will be so? Who will form the train of the Master, to discredit the legend that everybody had abandoned Him? »

« Oh! with regard to that, it will not be a poor woman to fill the gaps! Roses are all right among thorns and in enclosed gardens. I act as her mother and I ordered that. »

« So will she not be there at Passover? »

« No, she will not. »

« And that makes two! » exclaims Peter.

« What are you saying? Which two? » asks Judas suspiciously.

« Nothing, nothing! A calculation of mine. Many things can be counted, can they not? Also... flies, for instance, that alight on my skinned lamb. »

Mary of Jacob comes in followed by Samuel and John who are carrying loaves just taken out of the oven. Eliza greets the woman, and so does Nike. And Eliza has a kind word to make her feel at ease: « You are among sisters, in sorrow, Mary. I am alone as I lost husband and children, and she is a widow. So we will love one another, because only who has wept can understand. »

In the meantime Peter says to John: « How come you are here? And the Master? »

« On the wagon. With His Mother. »

« And are you not saying anything? »

« You have not given me time. All the women are there. But you will see how worn out Mary of Nazareth is! She seems to have aged years and years. Lazarus says that She was very upset when he told

Her that Jesus had taken shelter here. »

« Why did that fool tell Her? Before dying he was intelligent. Perhaps His brain became mushy in the sepulchre and it has never recovered. One does not lie dead with impunity!... » says Judas of Kerioth ironically and scornfully.

« Nothing of the kind. You had better wait and listen, before speaking. Lazarus of Bethany told Mary when they were already on the way, as She was surprised at the road that Lazarus was taking » says Samuel sternly.

« Yes. The first time he passed through Nazareth he only said: "I will take You to Your Son in a month's time". He did not even say to Her: "We are going to Ephraim" when they were about to leave, but... » says John.

« Everybody knows that Jesus is here. Was She the only one who did not know? » asks always rudely Judas, interrupting his companion.

« Mary knew. She had heard it being said. But since a muddy stream of several lies flows through Palestine, She did not accept any news as true. She was wasting away with grief, in silence, praying. But once they were on the road, as Lazarus had taken the road along the river, in order to bewilder the Nazarenes, and all those at Cana, Sephoris, Bethlehem of Galilee... »

« Ah! Is Naomi also there with Myrtha and Aurea? » asks Thomas.

« No. They were ordered by Jesus not to come. When Isaac came back to Galilee he brought His order. »

« So... also these women will not be with us as last year. »

« No, they will not be with us. »

« And that's three! »

« Neither our wives and daughters. The Master told them before leaving Galilee. Nay, He repeated His order. Because my daughter Marian told me that Jesus had informed them since last Passover. »

« But... very well! Is at least Johanna there? Salome? Mary of Alphaeus? »

« Yes. And Susanna. »

« And Marjiam certainly... "But what is that noise? »

« The wagons! The wagons! And all the Nazarenes who have not surrendered and have followed Lazarus... and those from Cana... » replies John running away with the others.

Once the door is opened, a tumultuous sight can be seen. Besides Mary sitting near Her Son and the women disciples, besides Lazarus, besides Johanna, in her wagon with Mary and Matthias, Esther and other maidservants and faithful Jonathan, there is a crowd of people: known faces and unknown ones. From Nazareth, Cana, Tiberias, Nain, Endor. And Samaritans from all the villages they passed through on their journey and from other nearby ones. And they rush to the front of the wagons, obstructing the passage to those who

want to come out or go in.

« But what do these people want? Why have they come? How did they know? »

« Eh! those of Nazareth were on the look-out, and when Lazarus came in the evening to leave the following morning, during the night they ran to the nearby towns, and those from Cana did the same, because Lazarus had passed there to get Susanna and to meet Johanna. And they followed and preceded him, to see Jesus and to see Lazarus. And also those of Samaria heard about it and they joined the rest. And here they are, all of them!... » explains John.

« Listen! You who were afraid that the Master would have no train, do you think this one is sufficient? » Philip says to the Iscariot.

« They came for Lazarus... »

« Once they had seen him, they could have gone away. Instead they remained and have come here. Which means that there are also some who came for the Master. »

« Well. Let us have no idle talk. Instead let us make way to let them go in. Come on, boys! In order to get into practice again! We have not elbowed a way through the crowd for the Master for a long time! » and Peter is the first to begin to open a passage through the crowd that sings hosannas, is curious, devout, talkative according to the various moods. And when he succeeds with the help of other people and of many disciples who, spread out among the crowds, are trying to join the apostles, he keeps the space empty so that the women may take shelter in the house with Jesus and Lazarus. He then closes the door, being the last one to go in, and he bars it and bolts it and sends the others to close the door on the side of the kitchen garden.

« Oh! at long last! Peace be with You, blessed Mary! At last I see You! Now everything is beautiful because You are with us! » says Peter greeting Her and he stoops before Mary. A Mary with a sad pale tired face, it is already the face of Our Lady of Sorrows.

« Yes, everything is now less sorrowful because I am here near Him. »

« I had assured You that I was telling nothing but the truth! » says Lazarus.

« You are right... But the sun became obscured for Me and I had no peace when I heard that My Son was here... I understood... Oh! » More tears stream down Her wan cheeks.

« Do not weep, Mother! Do not weep! I was here among these good people, near another Mary who is a mother... » Jesus leads Her towards a room that opens onto the peaceful kitchen garden. They all follow Him.

Lazarus says apologising: « I had to tell Her, because She knew the road, and She could not understand why I was taking that one. She thought that He was with me at Bethany... And at Shechem

also a man shouted: "We are going to Ephraim, too, to the Master". It was impossible for me to find an excuse... I was also hoping to outdistance those people by setting off at night along strange routes. Nothing doing! They were on the alert everywhere, and while one group followed me, another went around spreading the news. »

Mary of Jacob brings some milk, butter and new bread and offers them to Mary first. She looks Lazarus up and down stealthily, half curious, half frightened, and her hand jerks when, offering Lazarus some milk, she touches his hand lightly and she cannot help exclaiming « oh! » when she sees Him eat his cake like everybody else.

Lazarus is the first to laugh and he says in an affable gentlemanly manner, with the confidence of all men of high birth: « Yes, woman. I eat just like you, and I like your bread and your milk. And I am sure I shall like your bed, because I feel tired exactly as I feel hungry. » He turns round saying: « There are many who touch me with some excuse to feel whether I am flesh and bones, whether I am warm and I breathe. It is a bit of a nuisance. And when my mission is over, I will retire to Bethany. If I were near You, Master, I would stir up too many distractions. I have shone, I have borne witness to Your power as far as Syria. I shall now disappear. You alone must shine in the sky of miracles, in the sky of God and in the eyes of men. »

Mary in the meantime says to the old woman: « You have been good to My Son. He told Me how good you have been. Let Me kiss you to tell you how grateful I am to you. I have nothing to give you as a reward, except My love. I am poor, too... and I also can say that I no longer have a son, because He belongs to God and to His mission... And may it always be so, because holy and just is what God wants. »

Mary is kind, but she is already heart-broken... All the apostles look at Her compassionately to the extent of forgetting those who are rioting outside, and of inquiring after their far away relatives.

But Jesus says: « I will go up to the terrace to dismiss and bless the people », and Peter then rouses himself and asks: « But where is Marjiam? I have seen all the disciples but not him. »

« Marjiam is not here » replies Salome, the mother of James and John.

« Marjiam is not here? Why? Is he ill? »

« No. He is well. And your wife is well. But Marjiam is not here. Porphirea did not let him come. »

« Silly woman! In a month's time it will be Passover and he has to come for Passover! She could have let him come with you now and make the boy and me happy. But she is more backward than a sheep in understanding certain things... »

« John and Simon of Jonah, and you, Lazarus with Simon Zealot, come with Me. You, all of you, stay here where you are, until I dismiss

the crowd, separating the disciples from it » orders Jesus, and He goes out with the four closing the door.

Through the corridor and the kitchen He goes out into the kitchen garden followed by Peter, who is grumbling, and by the others. But before setting foot on the terrace, He stops on the little staircase, He turns round laying a hand on the shoulder of Peter who raises his unhappy face. « Listen to Me carefully, Simon Peter, and stop accusing and reproaching Porphirea. She is innocent. She obeyed an order of Mine. Before the feast of the Tabernacles I ordered her not to let Marjiam come to Judaea... »

« But Passover, Lord! »

« I am the Lord. You say that. And as the Lord I can order anything, because every order of Mine is just. So do not be upset by scruples. Do you remember what is stated in Numbers? "If anyone of your country becomes unclean by touching a dead body or is on a journey abroad, such person shall keep Passover for the Lord on the fourteenth day of the second month, in the evening". »

« But Marjiam is not unclean, I hope that Porphirea does not want to die just now, and he is not on a journey... » says Peter objecting.

« It does not matter. That is what I want. There are things that make one unclean more than a dead body. Marjiam... I do not want him to be contaminated. Let Me do as I wish, Peter. I know. Be obedient as your wife is and Marjiam, too. We shall keep the second Passover with him, on the fourteenth day of the second month. And we shall be so happy then. It's a promise. »

Peter makes a gesture as if to say: « Let us resign ourselves », but he makes no objection.

The Zealot remarks: « It is a lot if you do not continue your calculation of how many will not be in town at Passover! »

« I do not feel like counting any more. All this gives me a strange sensation... An icy feeling... Can the others be told? »

« No. I took you aside deliberately. »

« Then... I also have something to tell Lazarus in particular. »

« Tell me. If I can, I will reply to you » says Lazarus.

« Oh! even if you do not reply it does not matter. It is enough for me if you go to Pilate - the idea is of your friend Simon - and talking of various matters, you worm out of him what he is thinking of doing for Jesus, in good or in evil... You know... craftily... Because there are so many rumours!... »

« I will. As soon as I arrive in Jerusalem. I will go to Bethany via Bethel and Ramah instead of Jericho, and I will stop in my mansion in Zion, and I will go to Pilate. Don't worry, Peter, because I shall be skilful and sincere. »

« And you will waste your time for nothing, My dear friend. Because Pilate - you are aware of it as a man, I as God - is but a reed that bends to the side opposite the hurricane, endeavouring

to avoid it. He is never insincere. Because he is always convinced that he wants to take action, and he does what he says in that moment. But a moment later, because of the howling of a storm from another direction, he forgets - oh! he does not break his promise or his will - he forgets, just that, what he wanted previously. He forgets because the cry of a will stronger than his makes him lose his memory, it blows away all the thoughts that another cry had placed in it, and replaces them with new ones. And then, above all the storms that with numberless voices, from that of his wife who threatens to separate if he does not do what she wants - and once he is separated from her, that is the end of all his strength, of his protection with "divine" Caesar, as they say, although they are convinced that this Caesar is more abject than they are... But they can see the Idea in the man, nay the Idea annihilates the man representing it, and one cannot say that the Idea is unclean: every citizen loves, and it is fair that he should love his Fatherland, and should want it to triumph... Caesar is the Fatherland... so... also a miserable man is... great because of what he represents... But I did not want to speak of Caesar, but of Pilate! - So I was saying that above all the voices, from that of his wife to those of the crowds, there is the voice, oh! what a voice! of his ego. Of the small ego of the small man, of the greedy ego of the greedy man, of the proud ego of the proud man; that smallness, that greed, that pride want to reign to be great, they want to reign to have superabundance of money, they want to reign to be able to rule over a multitude of subjects stooping to pay homage to them. Hatred is smouldering underneath, but the little Caesar named Pilate, our little Caesar does not see it... He can only see the backs bent feigning homage and fear before him or really feeling both. And because of the stormy voice of his ego he is prepared to do anything. I say: anything. Provided he may continue to be Pontius Pilate, the Proconsul, the servant of Caesar, the Ruler of one of the many regions of the empire. And because of all that, even if now he is My defender, tomorrow he will be My judge, and inexorable. The thought of man is always uncertain. Most uncertain when that man's name is Pontius Pilate. But, Lazarus, you may satisfy Peter... If that is to console him... »

« Not to console me, but... to calm me a little... »

« Then please our good Peter and go to Pilate. »

« I will go, Master. But You have described the Proconsul as no historian or philosopher could have done. A perfect portrait! »

« I could likewise depict every man in his real image: his character. But let us go to these people who are rioting. »

He climbs the last steps and shows Himself. He raises His arms and says in a loud voice: « Men of Galilee and of Samaria, disciples and followers. Your love, your wishes to honour Me and My Mother and My friend by escorting their wagon, tell Me what your thoughts

are. I can but bless you for such thoughts. But go back to your homes, to your business, now. You from Galilee, go and tell those who remained there that Jesus of Nazareth blesses them. Men of Galilee, we shall meet again in Jerusalem at Passover, and I will enter the town the day after the Sabbath before Passover. Men of Samaria, you may go, too, and do not confine your love for Me to following and looking for Me on the routes of the Earth, but on those of the spirit. Go and may the Light shine in you. Disciples of the Master, part from the believers and remain in Ephraim to receive My instructions. Go. Be obedient. »

« He is right. We are disturbing Him. He wants to be with His Mother! » shout the disciples and the Nazarenes.

« We are going away. But we want His promise first: that He will come to Shechem before Passover. To Shechem! To Shechem! »

« I will come. Go. I will come before going to Jerusalem for Passover. »

« Don't go! Don't go! Stay with us! With us! We will defend You! We will make You King and Pontiff! They hate You! We love You! Down with the Jews! Long live Jesus! »

« Silence. Stop rioting! My Mother suffers because of this shouting that can harm Me more than a voice cursing Me. My hour has not yet come. Go. I will come to Shechem. But remove from your hearts the thought that I, for base human cowardice and a sacrilegious rebellion against the will of My Father, may not fulfil My duty as an Israelite, worshipping the true God in the only Temple in which He can be worshipped, and as Messiah, by being crowned anywhere but in Jerusalem, where I shall be anointed universal King according to the words and the truth foreseen by the great prophets. »

« Down! There is no other prophet but Moses! You are a daydreamer. »

« And you, too. Are you perhaps free? No, you are not. What is the name of Shechem? Its new name? And what happened to Shechem, happened also to many other towns in Samaria, Judaea and Galilee. Because the Roman mangonel has levelled us all alike. Is its name Shechem? No. Its name is Neapolis. As Beth-Shean is named Scythopolis, and many other towns that either by will of the Romans or by the will of adulating vassals have taken the names imposed by domination or by adulation. And you, as individuals, are you going to be worth more than a town, more than our rulers, more than God? No. Nothing can change what is destined for the salvation of everybody. I follow the straight road. Follow Me, if you want to enter the eternal Kingdom with Me. »

He is about to withdraw. But the Samaritan people are uproarious so much so that the Galileans react and those who were in the house rush out at the same time into the kitchen garden, and then

up the staircase and on to the terrace. The sad pale distressed face of Mary is the first to appear behind Jesus' shoulders, and She embraces and clasps Him as if She wished to defend Him from the insults rising from below: « You have betrayed us! You took refuge among us making us believe that You loved us whereas now You despise us! And we shall be more despised through Your fault! » and so forth.

Jesus is approached also by the women disciples, by the apostles, and last by Mary of Jacob, who is frightened. The shouts from below explain the origin of the uproar, a remote but certain origin: « So why did You send Your disciples to us to tell us that You are persecuted? »

« I did not send anybody. Those from Shechem are over there. Let them come forward. What did I say to them one day on the mountain? »

« That is true. He said to us that He can only be a worshipper in the Temple, until the new time comes for everybody. Master, we are not to be blamed, believe us. But they have been deceived by false messengers of Yours. »

« I know. But go now. I will come to Shechem just the same. I am not afraid of anybody. But go now so that you may not harm yourselves and those of your blood. Can you see over there the cuirasses of the legionaries shine in the sun as they go down the road? They have certainly followed you at a distance, seeing such a procession and they have remained waiting in the wood. Your shouting is now attracting them here. Go, for your own sake. »

In fact, far away on the main road that can be seen rising towards the mountains, the one on which Jesus found the starving man, it is possible to see lights gleam and move forward. The people disperse slowly. Those from Ephraim, the Galileans and the disciples remain.

« You may go to your homes as well, you people from Ephraim. And you, too, Galileans, please go away. Obey Him Who loves you. »

They also go away. Only the disciples remain and Jesus orders the apostles to let them go into the house and the kitchen garden. Peter goes downstairs with the others to open.

Judas of Kerioth does not go down. He laughs! He laughs saying: « You will now see how "the good Samaritans" hate You! To build the Kingdom You are scattering the stones. And stones dispelled from a building become weapons to strike. You have despised them! And they will not forget. »

« Let them hate Me. I will not avoid doing My duty for fear of their hatred. Come, Mother. Let us go and tell the disciples what they are to do before I dismiss them » and between Mary and Lazarus He goes downstairs into the house where the disciples who gathered at Ephraim are crowded, and He orders them to spread everywhere

informing all their companions to be at Jericho for the new moon of Nisan and wait for Him until He arrives, and to let the people of the villages through which they pass know that He will leave Ephraim and that they should look for Him in Jerusalem at Passover.

He then divides them into three groups entrusting the new disciple Samuel to Isaac, Hermas and Stephen. Stephen greets Samuel saying: « The joy in seeing you relieves my pain to see that everything becomes an obstacle for the Master. » Hermas instead greets him thus: « You left a man for a God. And God is now really with you. » Isaac, humble and bashful, only says: « Peace be with you, brother. »

After handing out bread and milk that the people from Ephraim kindly think of offering, also the disciples depart and at last there is peace...

But while the lamb is being prepared, Jesus has still something to do. He approaches Lazarus and says to him: « Come with Me along the torrent. » Lazarus obeys promptly as usual.

They move away from the house about two hundred metres. Lazarus is silent waiting for Jesus to speak. And Jesus says: « I wanted to tell you this. My Mother is very depressed, as you can see. Send your sisters here. I will really go towards Shechem with all the apostles and women disciples. But then I will send them on, to Bethany, while I will stay for some time in Jericho. I can still dare to keep some women here in Samaria, but not anywhere else... »

« Master! You really fear... Oh! if so why did You raise me from the dead? »

« To have a friend. »

« Oh!!! If that is the case, well, here I am. All sorrows, if I can comfort You with my friendship, are nothing to me. » « I know. That is why I use and will use you as the most perfect friend. »

« Must I really go to Pilate? »

« If you think so. But for Peter. Not for Me. »

« Master, I will let You know... When are You leaving this place? »

« In eight days' time. There is just enough time to go where I want and then be with you before Passover. I want to acquire new strength at Bethany, the oasis of peace, before plunging into the turmoil of Jerusalem. »

« Are You aware, Master, that the Sanhedrin is quite determined to create charges, since there are none, to compel You to flee for good? I learned that from John, the member of the Sanhedrin, when I met him by chance at Ptolemais, and he was very happy because of the son about to be born to him. He said to me: "I am sorry that the Sanhedrin is so determined. Because I would have liked the Master to be present at the circumcision of my child, as I hope it

will be a boy. He is to be born early in the month of Tammuz. But will the Master still be among us by that time? And I would like... Because I would like little Immanuel, and that name will tell you what I think, to be blessed by Him at his first appearance in the world. Because my son, lucky fellow, will not have to struggle to believe, as we had to. He will be brought up in the Messianic times and it will be easy for him to accept the idea". John has arrived at believing that You are the Promised One. »

« And that one out of many compensates Me for what the others do not do. Lazarus, let us say goodbye here, in peace. And thank you for everything, My dear friend. You are a true friend. With ten friends like you it would have been pleasant to live among so much hatred... »

« Now You have Your Mother, my Lord. She is worth ten... one hundred Lazarus. But remember that whatever You may need, if it is at all possible, I will get it for You. Give me Your orders, and I will be Your servant, in everything. I may not be wise or holy, like other people who love You, but if You exclude John, You will not be able to find another one more faithful than I am. I do not think that I am being proud saying this. "And now that we have spoken of You, I will tell You about Syntyche. I saw her. She is as active and wise as only a Greek woman, who has been able to become Your follower, can be. She suffers to be so far away. But she says that she enjoys preparing Your way. She hopes to see You before she dies. »

« She will certainly see Me. I do not disappoint the hopes of the just. »

« She has a little school attended by many girls of all places. But in the evening she keeps some poor little girls of mixed race, and thus of no religion. And she instructs them in Your doctrine. I asked her: "Why do you not become a proselyte? It would be of great help to you". She replied: "Because I do not want to devote myself to those of Israel, but to the empty altars awaiting a God. I prepare them to receive my Lord. Then, once His Kingdom is established, I will return to my Fatherland, and under the sky of Hellas I will spend my life preparing hearts for the masters. That is my dream. But if I should die before, of a disease or in a persecution, I shall go away equally happy, because it means that I have fulfilled my work and that He calls to Himself the servant who has loved Him since the first time she met Him". »

« It is true. Syntyche has really loved Me since our first meeting. »

« I did not want to tell her how distressed You are. But Antioch resounds like a shell with all the voices of the vast Roman empire, and consequently also with what happens here. And Syntyche is aware of Your grief. And she suffers even more to be far away. She wanted to give me some money, which I refused, and I told her to

use it for her girls. But I took a headgear woven by her with two types of byssus of different thickness. Your Mother has it. With the yarn Syntyche has described Your story, her own and that of John of Endor. And do You know how? By weaving a hem all around the square and representing on it a lamb that defends two doves from a pack of hyenas, one of the doves has both wings broken, and the other has a broken chain that held it fastened. And the story proceeds, alternately, to the flight towards the sky of the dove with the broken wings and the voluntary captivity of the other at the feet of the lamb. It looks like one of those stories that Greek sculptors carve on the marble festoons of temples and on the stelae of their dead relatives, or painters paint on vases. She wanted to send it to You by my servants. I brought it. »

« I shall wear it because it comes from a good disciple. Let us go towards the house. When are you thinking of leaving? »

« Tomorrow at dawn. To let the horses rest. Then I will not stop until I arrive in Jerusalem and I will go to Pilate. If I succeed in speaking to him, I will send You his replies by Mary. »

They go slowly back into the house, talking of minor topics.

565. Parable of the Torn Cloth and Miracle of the Woman in Childbed. Judas of Kerioth Is Caught Stealing.

15th February 1947.

Jesus is with the women disciples and the two apostles on one of the first undulations on the mountain behind Ephraim. Neither the children nor Esther are with Johanna. I think that they have been sent to Jerusalem with Jonathan. So, besides Jesus' Mother, there are only Mary Clopas, Mary Salome, Johanna, Eliza, Nike and Susanna. Lazarus' two sisters are not yet present.

Eliza and Nike are folding garments, which have certainly been washed in a stream that shines down in the valley, or have been brought here from the stream and then laid out on this sunny tableland. And Nike, after examining one of them, takes it to Mary Clopas saying: « Your son has unstitched also the hem of this one. » Mary of Alphaeus takes the garment and puts it near the others that are spread close to her on the grass.

All the women disciples are busy sewing and mending the damages done in the many months when the apostles were alone.

Eliza, who comes close to them with other dry garments, says: « One can see that for three months you have not had an experienced woman with you! There is not one garment in good order, with the exception of that one of the Master, Who on the other hand, has only got two, the one He is wearing and the one washed today. »

« He has given them all away. He seemed to be seized with the mania for not possessing anything. He has been wearing linen clothes

for many days » says Judas.

« Fortunately Your Mother thought She should bring You some new ones. The one dyed purple is really beautiful. You needed it, Jesus, although You look so handsome dressed in linen. You really look like a lily! » says Mary of Alphaeus.

« A very tall lily, Mary! » says Judas satirically.

« But He is so pure as you are certainly not and neither is John. You are wearing a linen garment as well, but believe me, you do not look like a lily! » replies frankly Mary of Alphaeus.

« My hair is dark and so is my complexion. That is why I am different »

« No. It does not depend on that. The fact is that your candour is on your outward appearance, His is instead within Him and it transpires through His eyes, His smile, His word. That is the situation! Ah! How lovely it is to be with my Jesus. » And the good Mary lays her toilworn honest hand of an elderly hard working woman on the knee of Jesus, Who caresses it.

Mary Salome, who is inspecting a tunic, exclaims: « This is worse than a tear! Oh! son! Who closed this hole like that for you? » and scandalised as she is, she shows her companions a kind of... very wrinkled navel, forming a raised ring on the cloth, held together by some very coarse stitches, enough to horrify a woman. The strange repair is the epicentre of a series of puckers that widen out radially on the shoulder of the tunic.

They all laugh. And John is the first - he did the mending - and he explains: « I could not go about with the hole, so... I closed it! »

« I can see that, poor me! I see that! But could you not get Mary of Jacob to mend it for you? »

« She is almost blind, poor woman! And then... the trouble was that it was not a tear! It was a real hole. The garment got stuck to the faggot I was carrying on my shoulder, and when I dropped the faggot from my shoulder, also a piece of the cloth came off. So I just repaired like that! »

« You spoiled it like that, son. I would need... » She inspects the tunic but shakes her head. She says: « I was hoping I could use the hem. But it is no longer there... »

« I took it off at Nob, because it was cut at the fold. But I gave your son the bit I removed... » explains Eliza.

« Yes. But I used it to make cords for my bag... »

« Poor sons! How badly you need us near you! » says the Blessed Virgin mending a garment belonging to whom I do not know.

« And yet some cloth is needed here. Look. The stitches have ended up by tearing the cloth all around, and a great damage has become and irreparable one; unless... I can find something to replace the missing cloth. Then... one will still see it... but it will be passable. »

« You have given Me the starting point for a parable... » says Jesus,

and Judas at the same time says: « I think I have a piece of cloth of that shade at the bottom of my bag, the scrap of a tunic that was too discoloured to be worn; so I gave it to a little man who was so much smaller than I am, that we had to cut almost two palms off it. If you wait, I will go and get it for you. But I should like to hear the parable first. »

« May God bless you. Listen to the parable first. In the meantime I will fit the cords on to this tunic of James'. These ones are all worn out. »

« Speak, Master. Then I will make Mary Salome happy. » « Yes. I compare the soul to a cloth. When it is infused, it is new, without tears. It has only the original stain, but it has no injuries in its structure, or stains or waste. Then with time and the acquisition of vices, it wears out at times to the extent of tearing, it becomes stained through imprudence, it breaks through disorder. Now, when it is torn one must not mend it clumsily, which would be the cause of many more tears, but it is necessary to mend it patiently and perfectly and for a long time to remove the damage already caused as much as possible. And if the cloth is too badly torn, nay if it has been so rent as to be deprived of a bit of it, one must not be so proud as to pretend to repair the damage by oneself, but one must go to Him, Who is known to be able to make the soul strictly honest once again, as He is allowed to do everything and He can do everything. I am referring to God, My Father, and to the Saviour, Who I am. But the pride of man is such that the greater is the ruin of his soul, the more he tries to patch it up with unsuitable means that make the damage more and more serious. You may object that a tear can always be seen. Salome also said so. Yes, one will always see the damage a soul has suffered. But a soul fights its battle, it is therefore obvious that it may be struck. There are so many enemies around it. But no one, seeing a man covered with scars, the signs of as many wounds received in battle to gain victory, can say: "This man is unclean". On the contrary one will say: "This man is a hero. There are the purple marks of his worth". Neither will anyone ever see a soldier avoid being cured, because he is ashamed of a glorious wound, on the contrary he will go to the doctor and say to him with holy pride: "Here I am, I fought and I won. I did not spare myself, as you can see. Now heal my wounds that I may be ready for more battles and victories". He instead who is suffering from foul diseases, brought about by shameful vices, is ashamed of his sores before relatives and friends, and also before doctors, and at times he is so silly that he conceals them until their stench reveals them. Then it is too late to remedy. The humble are always sincere, and they are also valiant fighters who have not to be ashamed of the wounds received in the struggle. The proud are always false and base, through their pride they end up by dying, as

they do not want to go to Him Who can cure, and say to Him: "Father, I have sinned. But, if You want, You can cure me". Many are the souls that because of their pride in not wanting to confess an initial sin end up by dying. Then, also for them, it is too late. They do not consider that divine mercy is more powerful and more extensive than any plague, however powerful and extensive the latter may be, and that it can heal everything. But they, the souls of the proud, when they realise that they have despised all means of salvation, fall into despondency, because they are without God, and when they say: "It is too late ", they condemn themselves to the last death: to damnation. And now, Judas, you may go and get the cloth... »

« I am going. But I did not like Your parable. I did not understand it. »

« But if it is so clear! I have understood it, and I am a poor woman! » says Mary Salome.

« And I have not. Once Your parables were more beautiful... Now... bees... cloth... towns changing names... souls that are boats... Such mean things, and so confused, which I do not like any more and I do not understand... But now I will go and get the cloth, because I say that it is in fact needed, but the garment will always be a spoilt one » and Judas stands up and goes away.

Mary lowered Her head more and more over Her work, while Judas was speaking. Johanna instead raised hers, fixing her eyes on the imprudent apostle with indignant authority. Eliza also raised her head, but then she imitated Mary and Nike did the same. Susanna opened her big eyes wide, being astonished, and looked at Jesus and not at the apostle, wondering why He does not react. But no one has spoken or made any gesture. Mary Salome and Mary of Alphaeus, two women with common manners, looked at each other shaking their heads, and as soon as Judas goes away, Salome says: « It's his head that is spoilt! »

« Yes. That is why he understands nothing, and I do not think that even You will be able to mend it. If my son were like that, I would break his head. Yes, as I made it for him that it might be the head of a just man, so I would break it. It is better to have a disfigured face than a disgraced heart! » says Mary of Alphaeus.

« Be indulgent, Mary. You cannot compare your sons, who were brought up in an honest family, in a town like Nazareth, to this man » says Jesus.

« His mother is good. His father was not a wicked man, so I heard » replies Mary of Alphaeus.

« Yes. But his heart was not lacking in pride. That is why he took his son away from his mother too early, and he also helped in developing the moral heritage, that he had given his son, by sending him to Jerusalem. It is painful to say, but the Temple is certainly

not the place where hereditary pride may diminish... » says Jesus.

« No place in Jerusalem, even if it is a place of honour, is suitable for diminishing pride or any other fault » says Johanna with a sigh. And she adds: « And not even any other place of honour, whether at Jericho or Caesarea Philippi, at Tiberias or at the other Caesarea... » and she sews quickly bending her face over her work more than is necessary.

« Mary of Lazarus is imperious, but not proud » remarks Nike.

« Now. But previously she was very proud, just the opposite of her relatives, who were never such » replies Johanna.

« When are they coming? » asks Salome.

« Soon, if we are to leave in three days' time. »

« Let us work quickly, then. We shall just manage to finish everything in time » says Mary of Alphaeus urging them.

« We were late in coming because of Lazarus. But it was better so, because Mary was spared much work » says Susanna.

« But do You feel You can do so much walking? You are so pale and tired, Mary! » asks Mary of Alphaeus laying her hand on Mary's lap and looking at Her anxiously.

« I am not ill, Mary, and I can certainly walk. »

« No, You are not ill, but You are so distressed, Mother. I would give ten and ten years of my life, and I would embrace all sorrows, to see You once again as I saw You the first time » says John, who looks at Her compassionately.

« Your love is already a medicine, John. I can feel My heart calm down when I see how you all love My Child. Because there is no other cause for My suffering. None, except seeing that He is not loved. I am already recovering here, close to Him, and among you, who are so faithful. Of course... those months... all alone at Nazareth... after seeing Him depart so distressed, already so persecuted... and hearing all those rumours... oh! How much! How much grief! Now, being near Him, I see, I say: "At least My Jesus has His Mother to comfort Him and say words that drown other words", and I see also that love is not completely dead in Israel. And I have peace. A little peace. Not much... because... » Mary does not say anything else. She lowers Her face that She had raised to speak to John, and it is only possible to see the top of Her forehead, that blushes through a mute emotion... and then two tears shine on the dark garment She is mending.

Jesus sighs and stands up, He goes and sits down at Her feet, in front of Her, and He rests His head on Her knees, kissing Her hand that is holding the cloth and remaining thus like a child who is resting. Mary removes the needle from the cloth, in order not to hurt Her Son, and then She lays Her right hand on His head bent on Her knees and She looks up towards the sky, and She certainly prays although She does not move Her lips; from Her whole attitude it

is clear that She is praying. She then bends to kiss Her Son's hair near His bare temple.

The other women do not speak until Salome says: « But how long is it taking Judas? The sun will be setting and I shall not be able to see! »

« Someone has probably detained him » replies John and he asks his mother: « Shall I go and tell him to hurry? »

« You had better go. Because if he has not found the cloth, I will shorten your sleeves, as it will soon be summer, and I will make another garment for you for autumn, because you cannot wear this one any longer, and with the piece I take off, I will mend this one here. It will be all right to go fishing. Because after Pentecost you will certainly come back to Galilee... »

« I will go, then » says John and being always kind he asks the other women: « Have you any garments already mended that I can take to our lodgings? If you have, give them to me. You will have less to carry on your way back. »

The women gather together what they have already mended and give it to John, who turns round to go away but he stops at once seeing Mary of Jacob running towards them.

The old woman is plodding along as fast as her old age allows her, and she shouts to John: « Is the Master there? »

« Yes, mother. What do you want? »

The woman replies while continuing to run: « Adah is ill, very ill... And her husband would like to call Jesus to comfort her... But as those Samaritans have been... so wicked, he does not dare... I said: "You do not know Him yet. I will go and... He will not say no to me". » The old woman is panting after hurrying uphill.

« Don't rush any farther. I will come with you. Nay, I will go ahead. Follow us slowly. You are old, mother, to hurry thus » Jesus says to her. Then He says to His Mother and the women disciples: « I am staying in the village. Peace to you. »

He takes John by the arm and runs down fast with him. The old woman, takes breath and would like to follow Him after replying to the women who ask her questions: « H'm! Only the Rabbi can save her. Otherwise she will die like Rachel. She is becoming cold and is losing her strength and she is writhing in the spasms of pain. »

But the women detain her saying: « But have you tried with hot bricks under her kidneys? »

« No! It is better to envelop her in woollen cloth soaked in wine with spices, as warm as possible. »

« I was helped, for James, by unctions with oil and then by hot bricks. »

« Make her drink a lot. »

« If she could stand straight and take a few steps while a woman rubbed her kidneys hard. »

The women mothers, that is all of them, except Nike and Susanna, and Mary, Who did not suffer the labour pains of every woman when She gave birth to Her Son, advise this or that remedy.

« Everything They have tried everything. But her kidneys are too tired. It's the eleventh child! But I am going now. I have taken breath. Pray for that mother! That the Most High may keep her alive until the Rabbi arrives there. » And she toddles away, the poor good lonely old woman.

Jesus in the meantime is going down fast towards the town that is warmed by the sun. He enters the town at the side opposite the one where their house is, that is at north-west of Ephraim, whereas Mary of Jacob's house is south-east of it. He walks fast, without stopping to speak to those who would like to detain Him. He greets them and goes on.

A man remarks: « He is angry with us. Those from other villages behaved badly. He is right. »

« No. He is going to Janoe. His wife is dying at her eleventh delivery. »

« Poor children! And is the Rabbi going there? How good He is. Although offended, He helps. »

« Janoe did not offend Him. None of us offended Him! »

« But they were men of Samaria. »

« The Rabbi is just and He can tell one from another. Let us go and see the miracle, »

« We shall not be able to go in. It's a woman and she is giving birth. »

« But we shall hear the new-born baby cry and it will be the voice of a miracle. »

They run to join Jesus. Other people also gather together to see.

Jesus arrives at the house, which is disconsolate because of the impending misfortune. The ten children - the oldest is a young girl in tears pressed by younger brothers who are weeping - are in a comer in the vestibule near the wide open door. Old wives are going and coming, whispers are heard and the shuffling of bare feet moving on the brick floor.

A woman sees Jesus and shouts: « Janoe! You can hope! He has come! » and she runs away with a steaming pitcher.

A man rushes and prostrates himself. He makes only a gesture and says: « I believe. Mercy! For them » and he points at his children.

« Stand up and take heart. The Most High helps those who have faith and He has mercy on His distressed children. »

« Oh! come, Master! Come! She is already black. Choked by convulsions. She can hardly breathe. Come! » The man, who has lost his head, and ends up by losing it completely upon hearing the cry of an old woman who shouts: « Janoe, run! Adah is dying! », pushes and pulls Jesus to make Him go quick towards the room of the dying

woman, deaf to Jesus' words: « Go, and have faith! »

The poor man has faith, but what he lacks is the capability to understand the meaning of those words, the secret meaning of the certainty of a miracle. And Jesus, pushed and pulled, climbs the steps to go into the room upstairs, where the woman is. But He stops on the landing of the staircase, at about three metres from the open door, through which it is possible to see the deadly pale face that is already livid and contracted in the mask of agony. The old wives make no further efforts. They have already covered the woman up to her chin and are looking at her. They are petrified awaiting her death.

Jesus stretches out His arms and shouts: « I want it! » and He turns round to go away.

The husband, the old women, the curious people who have gathered together are disappointed, because they probably expected Jesus to do something more astonishing and to see the baby be born at once. But Jesus, elbowing His way and fixing His eyes on their faces while passing before them, says: « Do not be in doubt. Have faith for a little longer. For a moment. The woman has to pay the bitter tribute of childbirth. But she is out of danger. » And He goes downstairs leaving them disconcerted.

But when He is about to go out onto the road, saying to the ten frightened children when passing near them: « Be not afraid! Your mummy is all right » - and in saying so He touches their scared faces with His hand - a loud cry resounds in the house and spreads as far as the road where Mary of Jacob is just arriving and who shouts: « Good gracious! » thinking that that cry meant death.

« Be not afraid, Mary! And go quickly! You will see the baby being born. She has recovered strength and she is in labour again. But there will soon be great joy. »

He goes away with John. No one follows Him because everybody wants to see whether the miracle will take place, nay, more people rush towards the house, because the news has spread that the Master had gone to save Adah. And so, slipping into a secondary little street, Jesus can go without any hindrance to a house which He enters calling: « Judas! Judas! » Nobody replies.

« He went up there, Master. We can go home as well. I will put here the garments of Judas, of Simon and of Your brother James, and then I will put those of Simon Peter, Andrew, Thomas and Philip in Anna's house. »

They do so and I realise that in order to make room for the women disciples, the apostles, if not all of them, at least part of them, have spread out in other houses.

As they have now got rid of all the garments, they go towards the house of Mary of Jacob, talking to each other, and they go in through the kitchen garden little gate, which is always left ajar.

The house is silent and empty. John sees a pitcher full of water laid on the floor, and probably thinking that the old lady had put it there before being called to assist the woman in childbed, he picks it up and goes towards a room that is closed. Jesus loiters in the corridor taking off His mantle and folding it with His customary care before putting it on the chest in the vestibule.

John opens the door and utters « ah! » almost in terror. He drops the pitcher and covers his eyes with his hands, bending as if to grow smaller, to disappear, not to see. From the room comes the noise of coins falling on the floor tinkling.

Jesus is already at the door. It took me longer to describe the scene than it took Him to arrive. He vehemently pushes aside John who moans: « Away! Go away! ». He opens the door that was ajar and goes in.

It is the room where they take their meals, now that the women are there. In it there are two old coffers reinforced with iron fittings and in front of one of them, opposite the door, there is Judas, livid, his eyes full of anger and dismay at the same time, with a bag in his hands... The coffer is open... there are coins on the floor and more fall on it from an open bag, half inclined on the edge of the coffer. Everything testifies, in a manner that leaves no doubt, to what was happening. Judas entered the house, he opened the coffer and stole. He was stealing.

No one speaks. No one moves. But it is worse than if they all shouted and rushed at one another. Three statues. Judas the demon, Jesus the Judge, John terrorised by the revelation of his companion's baseness.

The hand of Judas holding the bag trembles, and the coins in it tinkle with a dull sound.

John is trembling from head to foot, and although he still has his hands pressed against his mouth, his teeth are chattering, while his frightened eyes look more at Jesus than at Judas.

Jesus does not quiver. He is straight and glacial, so stiff as to be glacial. At last He takes a step, He makes a gesture, and utters one word. A step towards Judas; a gesture: to make a sign to John to withdraw; a word: « Go! »

But John is afraid and moans: « No! No! Don't send me away. Let me stay here. I will not say anything... but leave me here, with You. »

« Go away! Be not afraid! Close all the doors... and if anybody comes... whoever it may be... even My Mother... do not let them come here. Go! Obey! »

« Lord!... » John is so entreating and broken-hearted that he seems to be the guilty one.

« Go, I tell you. Nothing will happen. Go » and Jesus moderates His order by laying His hand on the head of His Favourite and caressing it. And I now see that His hand is trembling. And John

feels that it is trembling and takes it and kisses it with a sob that says so many things. He goes out.

Jesus bolts the door. He turns round to look at Judas who must be really crushed if he, who is so daring, dare not say one word or make one gesture. Jesus goes straight in front of him, going round the table, which is in the middle of the room. I cannot say whether He moves fast or slow. I am too frightened by His face to be able to measure time. I can see His eyes and I am afraid like John. Judas himself is afraid, he draws back between the coffer and a wide open window, the red light of which, as it is sunset, is projected on Jesus.

What eyes has Jesus! He does not say one word. But when He sees a kind of picklock stick out from the belt of Judas' tunic, He has a fearful outburst of rage. He raises His arm with its clenched fist as if He wanted to strike the thief, and His lips begin to utter the word: « Cursed! » or « Curse! ». But He controls Himself. He stops His arm that was about to strike, and He breaks the word at the first three letters. And with an effort of self-control that makes His whole body tremble, He just unclenches His fist and lowers His raised arm to the level of the bag that Judas has in his hand and He snatches it and throws it on the floor, saying in a dull voice, while He tramples on bag and coins and scatters them with controlled but dreadful fury: « Away! Filth of Satan! Cursed gold! Spittle of hell! Snake's poison! Away! »

Judas, who uttered a stifled cry when he saw Jesus on the point of cursing him, does not react any further. But another cry is heard from beyond the closed door when Jesus throws the bag on the floor. And John's cry irritates the thief. It gives him back his demoniac daring. It makes him furious. He almost flings himself on Jesus shouting: « You had me spied upon to bring dishonour on me. Spied by a foolish boy who cannot even keep quiet. Who will shame me in front of everybody! That's what You wanted. In any case... Yes! That's what I want, too. I want that! To force You to drive me away! To force You to curse me! To curse me! To curse me! I have tried everything to make You reject me. » He is hoarse with rage and as ugly as a demon. He is panting as if something were choking him.

In a low but dreadful voice Jesus repeats to him: « Thief! Thief! Thief! » and He ends saying: « A thief today. A murderer tomorrow. Like Barabbas. Worse than him. » He breathes that word on his face, as they are now very close to each other, at each sentence of the other.

Judas takes breath and replies: « Yes. A thief. Through Your fault. All the evil I do is attributable to You, and You never get tired of ruining me. You save everybody. You give love and honours to everybody. You accept sinners, prostitutes do not disgust You, You treat thieves, usurers and Zacchaeus' procurers in a friendly

way, You welcome the spy of the Temple as if he were the Messiah, You fool! And You have appointed an ignorant man as our chief, an excise-man as Your treasurer, a fool as Your confidant. But with me, You ration even farthings, You do not leave me a coin, You keep me close to You as a galley-slave is tied to the rowing bench, You do not even want us, I say us, but it is I, only I who must not accept the offerings of pilgrims. Because You do not want me to touch money, You ordered everyone not to take money from anybody. Because You hate me. Well: I hate You, too! You were not able to strike and curse me a little while ago. Your curse would have reduced me to ashes. Why did You not lay Your curse upon me? I would have preferred that, rather than see You so inept, so enfeebled, such a finished defeated man... »

« Be quiet! »

« No! Are You afraid that John may hear? Are You afraid that at long last he may realise who You are and he may leave You? Ah! So You are afraid, although You play the hero! Yes, You are afraid! And You are afraid of me. You are frightened! That's why You could not curse me. That's why You pretend to love me whereas You hate me! To blandish me! To keep me quiet. You know that I am powerful. You know that I am the power. The power that hates You and will defeat You! I promised You that I will follow You until death offering You everything, and I have offered You everything, and I will be near You until Your hour and mine. What a magnificent king who cannot curse and drive people away! King of clouds! Idol king! Foolish king! Liar! Betrayer of Your own destiny. You have always despised me, since the first time we met. You have not corresponded to me. You thought You were wise. You are an idiot. I taught You the good road. But You... Oh! You are the pure one! You are the creature that is man but is God, and you despise the advice of the Intelligent One. You have been mistaken since the first moment and You are mistaken. You... You are... Ah! »

The torrent of words stops suddenly and a lugubrious silence replaces so much clamour and a lugubrious stillness after so many gestures. Because, while I was writing without being able to say what was happening, Judas, bending just like a wild dog that points a prey and approaches it ready to dash on it, has come closer and closer to Jesus, with a face that it was impossible to look at, his fingers hooked like claws, his elbows pressed against his sides, as if he were on the point of assailing Jesus, Who does not show the least sign of fear and moves turning round to open the door with His back to the other, who could attack Him seizing Him by His neck. But he does not do that and Jesus opens the door and looks to see whether John has really gone away. The corridor is empty and almost dark, as John has closed the door opening onto the kitchen garden after going out. Jesus then bolts the door and leans

against it, waiting, without a gesture or word, for the fury to abate.

I am not competent, but I do not think that I am wrong if I say that Satan himself spoke through Judas' lips and that this is a moment of obvious possession by Satan of the perverted apostle, who is already on the threshold of the Crime and is damned through his own will. The very manner how the torrent of words stopped, leaving the apostle dumbfounded, reminds me of other scenes of possession seen in the three years of Jesus' public life.

Jesus, leaning against the door, all white against the dark wood, does not make the least gesture, Only His eyes, powerful in grief and fervour, look at the apostle. If one could say that eyes pray, I should say that Jesus' eyes are praying while He looks at the wretch. Because not only authority transpires from those eyes, which are so distressed, but also the fervour of prayer. Then, towards the end of Judas' words, Jesus opens His arms, so far held pressed against His body, but He does not open them to touch Judas, or to make any gesture towards him, or to raise them towards the sky. He opens them horizontally, taking the posture of the Crucified, there, against the dark wood and the reddish wall. It was then that the last words from Judas' lips slow down and he utters that « Ah! » that interrupts his speech.

Jesus remains still, with His arms stretched out, with His eyes always fixed on the apostle, with a look of sorrow and prayer. And Judas, like one coming out of delirium, rubs his forehead and sweaty face with his hand... he thinks, he recollects, and remembering everything he collapses on the floor, whether weeping or not, I do not know. He certainly falls on the floor, as if his strength failed him.

Jesus lowers His eyes and arms, and in a low but clear voice He says:

« Well? Do I hate you? I could strike you with My foot, I could tread on you calling you "worm", I could curse you, as I freed you from the power that makes you rave. You thought that My impossibility to curse you was weakness. Oh! it is not weakness! It is because I am the Saviour. And the Saviour cannot curse. He can save. He wants to save... You said: "I am the strength. The strength that hates You and will defeat You". I also am the Strength, nay, I am the only Strength. But My strength is not hatred. It is love. And love does not hate and does not curse, never.

The Strength could also win single battles, like this one between You and Me, between Satan who is in you, and Me, and remove your master from you, for good, as I did now by transforming Myself into the sign that saves, the Tau that Lucifer abhors. It could win also these single battles as it will win the oncoming one against incredulous murderous Israel, against the world and against Satan defeated by Redemption. It could win also these single battles as

it will win the last one, remote for those who count by centuries, close at hand for those who measure time with the measure of eternity. But of what avail would it be to infringe the perfect rules of My Father? Would it be justice? Would it be merit? No. It would be neither justice nor merit. It would not be justice with regard to guilty men, who have not been deprived of the freedom of being so, and who on the last day could ask Me the reason for their damnation and reproach Me for My partiality for you alone. Ten thousand and one hundred thousand people, seventy times ten thousand and one hundred thousand people will commit the same sins as yours and will become demons through their own wills, and they will be the offenders of God, the torturers of their fathers and mothers, killers, thieves, liars, adulterers, lewd and sacrilegious people, and in the end deicides, killing the Christ materially on a day close at hand, killing Him spiritually in future times. And each of them could say to Me, when I will come to separate lambs from billy-goats, to bless the former and curse, then, yes, to curse the latter, to curse them because there will be no further redemption then, but glory or damnation, to curse them once again after cursing them individually at their death, first, and at their individual judgement. Because man, and you know this because you have heard Me say so a hundred, a thousand times, because man can save himself while he is alive, up to his last breath. An instant, a thousandth of a minute is sufficient for a soul to say everything to God, to ask to be forgiven and obtain absolution... Each of them, I was saying, each of these damned souls could say to Me: "Why did You not tie us to Good, as You did with Judas?". And they would be right.

Because every man is born with the same natural and supernatural things: a body, a soul. And while the body, being generated by men, may be more or less robust and healthy at birth, the soul, created by God, is the same for everybody, endowed by God with the same properties and gifts. Between the soul of John, I mean the Baptist, and yours, there was no difference, when they were infused into your bodies. And yet I tell you that, even if Grace had not presanctified him, so that the Herald of the Christ might be without stain, as all those who announce Me ought to be, at least with regard to actual sins, his soul would have been, would have become, quite different from yours. Nay, yours would have become quite different from his. Because he would have preserved his soul in the freshness of innocence, nay, he would have adorned it more and more with justice complying with the will of God, Who wishes you to be just, developing the gratuitous gifts received with greater and greater heroic perfection. You instead... You have ruined and dissipated your soul and the gifts God had given it. What have you done with your free will? What with your intellect? Have you kept for your spirit the freedom that belonged to it? Have you used the intelligence

of your mind intelligently? No, you have not. You who do not want to obey Me, I do not say Me-Man, but not even Me-God, you have obeyed Satan. You have used the intelligence of your mind and the freedom of your spirit to understand Darkness. Voluntarily. Good and Evil were placed before you. You chose Evil. Nay, only Good was placed before you: I. Your eternal Creator, Who followed the evolution of your soul, Who was aware of such evolution because the Eternal Thought is aware of everything that happens since Time began to exist, placed Good before you, Good only, because He knows that you are weaker than an alga growing in a ditch.

You shouted to Me that I hate you. Now, as I am One with the Father and with the Love, One here as One in Heaven - because if there are two Natures in Me, and the Christ, because of His human nature and until victory will free Him from human limitations, is at Ephraim and cannot be elsewhere at the same moment; as God, the Word of God, I am in Heaven as on the Earth as My Divinity is always omnipresent and omnipotent - now, as I am One with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the charge you made against Me, you made it against God One and Trine. Against that God Father Who created you out of love, against that God Son Who became incarnate to save you out of love, against that God Spirit Who has spoken to you so many times to instil good wishes into you, out of love. Against that God One and Trine Who has loved you so much, Who brought you on My way, making you blind to the world to give you time to see Me, deaf to the world, to enable you to hear Me. And you!... And you!... After seeing and hearing Me, after coming freely to the Good, realising with your intellect that that was the only path of true glory, you rejected the Good and you have freely given yourself to Evil. But if through your free will you wanted that, if you have always more and more rudely rejected My hand that was offered to you to pull you out of the vortex, if you have always moved farther and farther away from the harbour to plunge into the raging sea of passions, of Evil, can you say to Me, to Him from Whom I come, to Him Who formed Me as Man to try to save you, can you say that We have hated you?

You reproached Me for wanting what is evil for you... Also a sick child reproaches the doctor and his mother for the bitter medicines they make him drink and for the things he wishes to have and they deny him for his own good. Has Satan made you so blind and mad that you do not understand the true nature of the action I took on Your behalf, and that you can call malevolence and wish to ruin you what is a provident cure of your Master, of your Saviour, of your Friend to restore you to health? I kept you close to Me... I took money away from your hands. I prevented you from touching that cursed metal that drives you crazy... But do you not know, do you not feel that it is like one of those magic potions that bring about

an unquenchable thirst, and produce in the blood a fierce heat, a fury that leads one to death? You - I can read your thought reproach Me thinking: "Why, then, for such a long time You allowed me to be the administrator of the money?". Why? Because if I had prevented you from touching money earlier, you would have sold yourself and you would have stolen earlier. You sold yourself just the same because there was little you could steal... But I had to try to avoid that without doing violence to your freedom. Gold is your ruin. Because of gold you have become lustful and treacherous... »

« There You are! You believed Samuel's words! I am not... »

Jesus, Who had become more and more animated in speaking, without ever assuming a violent tone or threatening punishment, suddenly utters a cry of authority, I would say a cry of anger. He darts a furious look at Judas who has raised his face to speak those words and imposes « Be quiet! » in a voice that sounds like the roar of thunder.

Judas falls back on his heels again and speaks no more.

There is silence and Jesus with visible effort recomposes His humanity in such a composure and with such powerful control that testifies by itself the divinity that is in Him. He resumes speaking in His usual voice that is warm and kind also when it is severe, persuasive, conquering... Demons only can resist that voice.

« I am not in need of information from Samuel or anybody else to know what you do. But, you wretch! Do you know in front of Whom you are? It is true! You say that you do not understand My parables any longer. You no longer understand My words. Poor wretch! You do not even understand yourself any more. You do not even understand good and evil any more. Satan, to whom you have given yourself in many ways, Satan whom you have followed in all the temptations he presented to you, has made you stupid. And yet once you understood Me. You believed that I am He Who I am! And you still retain a clear memory of that. And can you believe that the Son of God, that God needs the words of a man to know the thought and the actions of another man? You are not yet perverted to such an extent as not to believe that I am God, and that is where your greatest fault lies. The proof that you believe Me to be such is that you are afraid of My wrath. You realise that you are not struggling against a man, but against God Himself, and you shiver. You shiver, Cain, because you can but see and think of God as the Avenger of Himself and of innocents. You are afraid that it may happen to you as it happened to Korah, Dathan and Abiram and their followers. And yet, as you know Who I am, you struggle against Me. I should say to you: "Cursed!". But I would no longer be the Saviour...

You would like Me to reject you. You do everything, you say, to achieve that. Such reason does not justify your actions. Because

it is not necessary to commit sin in order to part from Me. You can do that, I tell you. I have been telling you since Nob, when you came back to Me, one pure morning, filthy with lies and lust, as if you had come out of hell to fall into the mud of a pigsty, or on the litter of libidinous monkeys, and I had to struggle against Myself not to repel you with the point of My sandal like a revolting rag and to check the nausea that was upsetting not only My spirit but also My bowels. I have always told you. Even before accepting you. Even before coming here. Then, I made that speech just for you, only for you. But you always wanted to stay. For your own ruin. You! My greatest grief! But you, o heretical founder of a large family that will come after you, you think and say that I am above sorrow. No. I am only above sin. I am only above ignorance. Above the former, because I am God. Above the latter, because there can be no ignorance in the soul unspoiled by the Original Sin. But I am speaking to you as a Man, as the Man, as Adam Redeemer Who has come to make amends for the Sin of Adam sinner, and to show what man would have been if he had remained as he was created: innocent. Among the gifts given by God to that Adam was there not an intelligence without impairment and a very great science, as the union with God instilled the light of the Almighty Father into His blessed son? I, the new Adam, am above sin through My own will...

One day, a long time ago, you were surprised that I had been tempted, and you asked Me whether I had ever yielded to temptation. Do you remember? And I replied to you. Yes, as I could reply to you... Because since then you were such... an impoverished man that it was useless to open the most precious pearls of Christ's virtues under your eyes. You would not have understood their value and... you would have mistaken them for... stones, as they were of such an exceptional size. Also in the desert I replied to you repeating the words, the meaning of the words I had spoken to you that evening while going towards Gethsemane. If John or also Simon Zealot had repeated that question to Me, I would have replied in a different manner, because John is pure and he would not have asked with the malice with which you asked, as you were full of malice... and because Simon is an old wise man, and although he is not unacquainted with life, as John is, he has achieved that wisdom that can contemplate every episode without being upset in his ego. But they did not ask Me whether I had yielded to temptations, to the most common temptation, to that temptation. Because in the irreproachable purity of the former there are no memories of lust, and in the contemplative mind of the latter there is so much light to see purity shine in Me. You asked... and I replied to you. As I could. With that prudence that must never be separated from sincerity, both being holy in the eyes of God. That prudence that is like the treble veil, stretched between the Holy and the people, to

conceal the secret of the King. That prudence that adapts words to the person listening to them, to his intellectual power of understanding, to his spiritual purity and to his justice. Because certain truths mentioned to corrupt people become for them the object of laughter, not of veneration...

I do not know whether you remember all those words. I do. And I am repeating them here, just now that we are both on the brink of the Abyss. Because... But it is not necessary to say that. I said in the desert, in reply to the question that My first explanation had not satisfied: "The Master never felt that He was superior to man to be the 'Messiah', on the contrary knowing that He was the Man, He wanted to be so in everything except sin. To be masters it is necessary to have been pupils. I knew everything as God. My divine intelligence was able to make Me understand also the struggles of man through intellectual power and intellectually. But one day some poor friend of Mine could have said: 'You do not know what it means to be a man and to have senses and passions'. It would have been a just reproach. I came here to get ready not only for My mission, but also for temptation. A satanic temptation. Because man could not have had power over Me. Satan came when My solitary union with God ceased and I perceived that I was the Man with real flesh subject to the weaknesses of the flesh: hunger, tiredness, thirst, cold. I felt matter with its needs, morale with its passions. And if through My will I subdued evil passions at birth, I allowed the holy ones to grow". Do you remember those words? And I also said, the first time, to you, to you alone: "Life is a holy gift and is to be loved holily. Life is a means serving a purpose, which is eternity". I said: "Then let us give life what it needs to last and to serve the spirit in its conquest: continence of the flesh in its lusts, continence of the mind in its wishes, continence of the heart in all the passions belonging to humanity, infinite ardour for Heavenly passions, love for God and our neighbour, good will to serve God and our neighbour, obedience to the voice of God, heroism in good and in virtue".

Then you told Me that I was able to do that because I was holy, but you could not do it because you were a young man, full of life. As if to be young and strong were an excuse to be vicious, and only old and sick people, being impotent, because of their age or weakness to do what you were thinking, burning as you are with lewdness, were free from sensual temptations! I could have replied to you with many arguments, then. But you were not able to understand them. You are not able even now, but at least now you cannot smile with your incredulous smile, if I tell you that a healthy man can be chaste, if he does not accept the allurements of the demon and of senses, of his own free will. Chastity is spiritual love, it is an impulse that influences the body and pervades it all, elevating, scenting and preserving it. He who is imbued with chastity has

no room for any other evil incentives. Corruption does not affect him. There is no room for it. And then! Corruption does not enter one from outside. It is not an impulse penetrating inside from outside. It is an impulse that from inside, from the heart, from thoughts comes out and penetrates and pervades the envelope: the flesh. That is why I said that corruption comes from the heart. Every adultery, every lust, every sensual sin does not originate outside. But it comes from the intense activity of the mind, which being corrupt, clothes everything it sees with alluring appearance. All men have eyes to see. How come then that a woman who leaves ten men impassive, as they look at her as a creature like themselves and they also consider her a beautiful work of Creation without feeling obscene incentives and phantasms rise in them, upsets the eleventh man and leads him to shameful concupiscence? Because the heart and thought of the eleventh man are corrupt and where ten see a sister, he sees a female.

Although I did not say that to you then, I told you that I had come just for men, not for the angels. I have come to give back to men their royalty of children of God teaching them to live as gods. God is without lewdness, Judas. But I want to show to all of you that man also can be without lewdness. I wanted to show you that one can live as I teach you. To show you that I had to take a real body and thus be able to suffer the temptations of man and say to man, after instructing him: "Do as I do". And you asked Me whether I had sinned when I was tempted. Do you remember? As I saw that you could not understand that I had been tempted without sinning, because you thought that temptation was unbecoming for the Word and that it was impossible for the Man not to sin, I replied to you that everybody can be tempted, but only those are sinners who want to become so. Great was your surprise and you were incredulous, so much so that you insisted saying: "Have You ever sinned?". It was then possible for you to be incredulous. We had known each other only for a short time. Palestine is full of rabbis whose lives are the antitheses of their doctrine. But now you know that I have not sinned, that I do not sin. You know that even the fiercest temptation provoking a healthy virile man, who lives among men and is circumvented by them and by Satan, does not disturb Me to the extent of making Me commit sin. On the contrary, every temptation, although its virulence increased when it was rejected, because the demon made it fiercer to overcome Me, was a greater victory. And not only with regard to lewdness, a whirl that revolved around Me without succeeding in shaking or scratching My will. There is no sin where there is no consent to temptation, Judas. There is instead sin, even without consummating the act, when one accepts the temptation and contemplates it. It may be a venial sin, but it prepares the way to mortal sin in you. Because when one accepts

the temptation and allows one's thought to linger over it, following the phases of a sin mentally, one grows weaker. Satan is aware of that, and that is why he repeatedly hurls blazing thrusts, always hoping that one may penetrate and work inside... Afterwards... it would be easy to change the person who is tempted into a sinner.

You did not understand that then. You could not understand it. You can now. Now you are less deserving to understand than you were then, yet, I repeat those words that I spoke to you, for you, because it is in you, not in Me, that the repelled temptation does not subside... It does not calm down because you do not repel it completely. You do not consummate the act, but you brood over the thought of it. That is what happens today, and tomorrow... Tomorrow you will fall into real sin. That is why I taught you, then, to ask the help of the Father against temptation, I taught you to ask the Father not to lead you into temptation. I, the Son of God, I, Who had already defeated Satan, asked the Father for help, because I am humble. You did not. You did not ask salvation and preservation of God. You are proud. That is why you collapse...

Do you remember all that? And can you now understand what it means to Me, true Man, with all the reactions of man, and true God, with all the reactions of God, to see you thus: lustful, liar, thief, betrayer, homicide? Do you realise what a stress you impose on Me, having to put up with your being near Me? Do you know how laborious it is for Me to control Myself, as I am doing now, to fulfil My mission for you till the very end? Any other man would have seized you by your throat, seeing you, a thief, intent on picking the lock of a coffer and stealing money, and learning that you are a traitor, and worse than a traitor... I have spoken to you, still with pity. Look. It is not yet summer and the cool breeze of the evening is coming in through the window, and yet I am perspiring as if I had been working at a very hard task. But do you not realise how much you cost Me? Or what you are? Do you want Me to drive you away? No, never. When a man is drowning, he who lets him go is a murderer. You are between two forces attracting you, Satan and Me. But if I leave you, you will have him only. And how will you save yourself? And yet you will leave Me... You have already left Me with your spirit... Well, I will still keep Judas' chrysalis near Me. Your body deprived of the will to love Me, your body inert towards Good. I will keep it until you exact also this nonentity, that is, your mortal remains, to join them to your spirit and sin with your whole self...

Judas!... Will you not speak to Me? Have you not one word for your Master? Not even a prayer? I do not expect you to say: "Forgive me!". I have forgiven you too many times in vain. I know that that word is a mere sound on your lips. It is not an impulse of your contrite spirit. I would like an impulse of your heart. Are you so

dead as to have no further wishes? Speak! Are you afraid of Me? Oh! if you were afraid! At least that! But you are not afraid of Me. If you were afraid of Me, I would repeat the words that I spoke to you on that remote day when we spoke of temptations and sins: "I tell you that also after the Crime of crimes, if its culprit should rush to the feet of God with true repentance, and implored Him with tears to be forgiven, offering himself to expiation with confidence, without despairing, God would forgive him, and through expiation, the culprit would still save his Soul". Judas! If you are not afraid of Me, I still love you. Have you nothing to ask My infinite love in this hour? »

« No. Or at most one thing only: that You order John not to speak. How do You expect me to make amends if I am a disgrace among you? ». He says so with arrogance.

And Jesus replies to him: « And you say so like that? John will not speak. But at least you, and I ask you this, must behave in such a way that nothing may leak out about your ruin. Pick up those coins and put them back into Johanna's bag... I will try to close the coffer... with the tool you used to open it... »

And while Judas with a bad grace picks up the coins that had rolled everywhere, Jesus leans on the open coffer, as if He were tired. The light is fading in the room, but not so much as to prevent one from seeing Jesus weep silently, looking at His apostle stoop to pick up the scattered coins.

Judas has finished. He goes towards the coffer. He takes Johanna's large heavy bag, puts the coins in it and closes it saying: « There it is! » He moves aside.

Jesus stretches out His hand to take the coarse picklock made by Judas, and with a trembling hand He gets the spring-lock to work closing the coffer. He then rests the iron bar on His knee and bends it in V shape, pressing it down completely with His foot, making it unserviceable. He then picks it up and hides it in His chest. In doing so some tears fall on His linen tunic.

Judas at long last has a gesture of resipiscence. He covers his face with his hands and bursts into tears saying: « I am cursed! I am the opprobrium of the Earth! »

« You are the eternal wretch! And to think that, if you wanted, You could still be happy! »

« Swear it to me! Swear that no one will be told... and I swear to You that I will redeem myself » shouts Judas.

« Do not say: "and I will redeem myself". You cannot. I alone can redeem you. He who was speaking through your lips a short while ago, can be defeated only by Me. Tell Me the words of humility: "Lord, save me!", and I will free you from your ruler. Do you not understand that I am waiting more for that word of yours, than for a kiss of My Mother? »

Judas is weeping, but he does not say that word.

« Go. Go out of here. Go up to the terrace. Go wherever you wish, but make no noisy scene. Go. Go. No one will find you out, because I shall be watching. As from tomorrow you will keep the money. Everything is quite useless now. »

Judas goes out without replying. Jesus, now all alone, drops on a seat near the table and with His head resting on His arms folded on the table He weeps distressingly.

After some minutes John enters quietly and stops for an instant at the door. He is as white as death. He then runs towards Jesus and embraces Him imploring: « Do not weep, Master! Do not weep! I love You also for that wretch... » He lifts Him, kisses Him, drinks the tears of his God and weeps, too.

Jesus embraces him and the two fair-haired heads, close to each other, exchange tears and kisses. But Jesus soon controls Himself and says: « John, for My sake forget what happened. I want that. »

« Yes, my Lord. I will try to do that. But do not suffer any more... Ah! How sorrowful! And he made me sin, my Lord. I lied. I had to lie because the women disciples came back. No. The relatives of the woman came first. They wanted You to bless You. A baby boy was born without complications. I said that You had gone back to the mountain... Then the women disciples came and I lied again saying that You were out and that You had probably gone to the house where the baby was born... I could not find any other excuse. I was so dumbfounded! Your Mother saw that I had wept and She asked me: "What is the matter with you, John?". She was excited... She seemed to know. I lied for the third time saying: "I am moved because of that woman... Being close to a sinner can lead to such an extent! To falsehood... Absolve me, my Jesus. »

« Be at peace. Forget all about this hour. Nothing. It was nothing... A dream... »

« But it is Your sorrow! Oh! how changed You are, Master! Tell me this, only this: has Judas at least repented? »

« And who can understand Judas, son? »

« None of us. But You can. »

Jesus replies only with fresh silent tears streaming down His tired face.

« Ah! He has not repented!... » John is terrified.

« Where is he now? Have you seen him? »

« Yes. He looked out of the terrace. He looked to see whether there was anybody, and when he saw me all alone, as I was sitting under the fig-tree, utterly anguished, he ran downstairs and went out through the little gate of the kitchen garden. Then I came in... »

« You have done the right thing. Let us tidy up in here, putting the chairs back in their places, and pick up the amphora, so that there are no traces... »

« Did he scuffle with You? »

« No, John. He did not. »

« You are too upset, Master, to remain here. Your Mother would understand... and She would be grieved. »

« That is true. Let us go out... Give the key to our next-door neighbour. I will go ahead, along the banks of the stream, towards the mountain... »

Jesus goes out and John remains to tidy up the place. Then he goes out as well. He gives the key to a woman who lives in a house nearby and he runs away, hiding among the bushes on the bank, not to be seen.

At about one hundred metres from the house there is Jesus sitting on a rock. Upon hearing the steps of the apostle He turns round. His face is pale in the evening light. John sits on the ground close to Him and rests his head on His lap, raising his face to look at Him. He sees that there are still tears on Jesus' cheeks.

« Oh! do not suffer any more! Do not suffer any more, Master! I cannot bear to see You suffer! »

« And am I not to suffer because of that? My deepest grief! Remember that, John: this will be for ever My deepest grief! You cannot understand everything yet... My deepest grief... » Jesus is depressed. John is holding Him close to himself, with his arms round His waist, anguished at not being able to console Him.

Jesus raises His head, opens His eyes that He had closed to refrain His tears and says: « Remember that we are in three to know: the culprit, you and I. And no one else must know. »

« No one will learn it from me. But how could he do that? While he took the money of the community... But that!... I thought I had become mad when I saw... Horrible! »

« I told you to forget... »

« I am trying hard, Master. But it is too horrible... »

« It is horrible. Yes, John, it is! Oh! John! » And Jesus, embracing His Favourite, rests His head on his shoulder and weeps desolately.

The shadows, which become rapidly deep in the thicket, hide in their darkness the two who are embracing each other.

566. Farewell to Ephraim. Going towards Shilo.

24th February 1947.

« Let us follow You, Master. We shall not trouble You » implore many people of Ephraim who have gathered in front of the house of Mary of Jacob, who is weeping all her tears leaning against the Post of the wide-open door.

Jesus is in the middle of His twelve apostles; farther away, in a group around His Mother there are Johanna, Nike, Susanna, Eliza, Martha and Mary, Salome and Mary of Alphaeus. The men and the

women are in travelling clothes, with tunics tucked up and girded to leave their feet free, with new sandals fastened not only at their ankles but also at the lower part of their legs by means of small strips of interlaced leather, as is customary when one has to take impassable roads. The men have burdened themselves also with the bags of the women disciples.

The people implore Jesus to let them follow Him, while the little ones scream, with their little faces and arms raised: « A kiss! Take me in Your arms! Come back, Jesus! Come back soon to tell us many beautiful parables! I will keep the roses of my garden for You! I will not eat any fruit to keep it for You! Come back, Jesus! My little sheep is about to lamb and I want to give You the lambkin, with its wool You can have a tunic made like mine... If You come soon I will give You the cakes my mother makes with the early corn... » They chirrup like many little birds around their great Friend, they pull His tunic, hang on to His belt trying to climb up to His arms, lovingly despotic, so much so that Jesus is prevented from replying to the adults, because there is always a fresh face to kiss.

« Away! That's enough! Leave the Master alone! Women! Take your children! » shout the apostles who are anxious to set off in the early morning hours. And stretching out their hands they give gentle slaps to the most intrusive ones.

« No. Leave them. Their kindness is fresher to Me than this dawn. Leave them and Me alone. Allow Me to be comforted by their love, which is pure and free from interests and trouble » says Jesus defending His little friends and as he stretches out His arms, His wide mantle hangs down and receives them under its blue protecting wings. And the little ones press against one another in the warm blue dim light and become happily silent, like chicks under motherly wings.

Jesus at last can say to the adults: « You may come, if you think you can do so. »

« And who will stop us, Master? We are in our region! »

« The corn, the vines and orchards need all your work, and the sheep are to be shorn and this is their mating time, and those that mated in the past season are about to lamb, and it is time to make hay... »

« It does not matter, Master. The elderly people can see to the shearing and mating of the sheep, and the children, and women to their lambing, and also to the hay. The orchards and fields can wait. Because if the corn is already hardening in the ears, it is still early to cut it, and vineyards, olive-groves and orchards have only to let their abundant fruit ripen in the sunshine. There is nothing we can do for them until harvest-time, just like the mother of a family who can do nothing to bake the bread until the dough rises. The sun is the yeast of fruits. It's for him to act now, as the wind did previously fecundating the blossoms along the branches. In any case!...

if we should lose some bunches of grapes, or some fruits, or if bearbines or darnels should suffocate some ears of corn, it would be a very small damage as compared with losing one of Your words! » says an old man whom I have always seen highly honoured in the village.

« You are right. So let us go. Mary of Jacob, I thank you and I bless you, because you have been a good mother to Me. Do not weep! Those who have accomplished a good deed must not weep. »

« Ah! I am losing You and I shall not see You again! »

« We shall certainly meet again. »

« Are You coming back here, Lord? » asks the woman smiling through her tears. « When? »

« I shall not come back, as now... »

« Then, where shall we meet again, if I, a poor old woman, cannot come along the roads of the world looking for You? »

« In Heaven, Mary. In the House of our Father. Where there is room for Judaeans and for Samaritans, where there is a place for those who will love Me in spirit and truth. You are already doing so, because you believe that I am the Son of the true God... »

« Oh! I do believe that! But there is no hope for us because You alone love us without discrimination. »

« When I have gone, these (and He points at the apostles) will come in my stead. And in memory of Me they will not ask who it is who requests to join the flock of the true and only Shepherd. »

« I am old, Lord. I shall not live so long as to see that. You are young and strong, and Your Mother will have You for a long time, and those who love You and belong to Your people will have You... Why are You weeping, o Mother of the Blessed Lord? » she asks, amazed at seeing tears drop from the Blessed Virgin's eyes.

« I have nothing but My grief... Goodbye, Mary. May God bless you for what you have done to My Son. And remember that if your sorrow is great, there is no sorrow greater than Mine, and there never will be on the Earth. Never! Remember the sorrowful Mary of Nazareth... Goodbye! » And Mary parts from the old woman weeping after kissing her on the doorstep and She sets off among the women, with John beside Her.

And John, with his usual lightly bent posture and his face raised looking at Her, says: « Do not weep thus, Mary. If many hate Your Jesus, many love Him. Comfort Your spirit, Mother, looking at these who now and in the course of ages will love Your Son with their whole selves » and he concludes in a low voice, almost whispering the words to Mary alone, Whom he guides and supports holding Her elbow so that She may not stumble against the stones of the path, blinded as She is by Her tears: « Not every mother will be able to see her child loved... There are some who will shout distressingly: "Why did I conceive him?" »

Jesus joins them, as Mary and John have remained alone, a little behind the women disciples. James of Alphaeus is with Jesus. The others are behind in a group, as pensive and sad as the women disciples, who are ahead of them all. Last, in a group, many men from Ephraim, talking in low voices to one another.

« Goodbyes are always sad, Mother. Particularly when one does not know that an end is the beginning of something more perfect. It is the sad consequence of sin. And it will remain even after forgiveness. But men will bear it with greater courage as they will have God as their friend. »

« You are right, Jesus. But there is a sorrow that God lets us relish although He is the most fatherly Friend there can be. He is such to Me. Oh! God is good! So good. I should not like James and John, or anybody else to be scandalised by My tears. God is good. He was always good to poor Mary. I have repeated that to Myself every day since I was able to think. And now... now I say so every hour... every moment. The more grief is impending the more I say so to Myself... God is good. He gave You to Me: a loving holy Son and such, even only as a creature, as to compensate every sorrow of a woman... He gave You to Me, a poor girl elevated to Mother of His incarnate Word... And the joy of being able to call You "Son", My adored Lord, is so great that no tear should drop from My eyes, whatever the torture may be, if I were as perfect as You teach us. But I am a poor woman, Son! And You are My Creature... And... which mother can refrain from weeping when she knows that her creature is hated, and she knows?... Son, succour Your maidservant Certainly there was still pride in Me when I thought I was strong But then... the time was still remote... Now it is here... I perceive it... Succour Me, Jesus, My God! If God allows Me to suffer thus, it is certainly for a good purpose for Me. Because if He wanted, He could let Me suffer only for what happens... It was He Who formed You in My womb thus!... How... There is no comparison to explain how You made Yourself... But He wants Me to suffer... and may He be blessed for that... always. But help Me, Jesus. Help Me all of you... all of you because it is so bitter the sea in which I have to quench My thirst »

« Let us say the prayer. The four of us, who love You with all our hearts, Mother. Here, I Your Son, and John and James who love You as if You were their mother... Our Father, Who art in Heaven... » and Jesus, guiding the little chorus of the three voices that follow Him in a low tone, says all the Lord's Prayer, stressing certain sentences such as: « thy will be done »... « lead us not into temptation. » He then says: « Well. The Father will help us to do His will, even if our weakness of human beings is such that we think we are not able to do it, and He will not lead us into the temptation of thinking that He is not so good, because while we drink of the very bitter

chalice, He will send His angel to wipe our embittered lips with heavenly comfort. » Jesus is holding by the hand His Mother Who has bravely struggled with Her tears restraining them in the bottom of Her heart. The two apostles are beside them: John is near Mary and James of Alphaeus is near Jesus, and they look at them deeply moved.

The women disciples have looked back now and again hearing Mary weep and the prayer of the four. But they have refrained from joining them.

In the rear, the apostles have asked one another: « But why is Mary weeping thus?. » I said the apostles, but I mean all of them with the exception of Judas of Kerioth, who is proceeding all alone, and looks very pensive, almost gloomy, so much so that Thomas notices it and says to the others: « But what is the matter with Judas that he looks like that? He looks like one sentenced to death! »

« Who knows?! He may be afraid to go back to Judaea » replies Matthew.

« I... What did the Master tell you about the money? » asks the Zealot.

« Nothing in particular. He said to me: "We are now going back to the previous situation. Judas will be the treasurer and you the bestowers of alms. The women disciples want to help us with regard to expenses". I could not believe that it was true! I have handled so much money that I hate it. »

« And the women disciples are helping very well. These sandals are so safe... One does not feel as if one were walking on a mountain. I wonder how much they cost! » says Peter looking at his feet shod with the new sandals that protect both heels and toes and support ankles with the thin leather strips.

« Martha got them. One can see her rich provident hand. In the past we used to tie them like this as well, but the strings were a torture. We did not lose the soles, but we lost the skin of our legs... » says Andrew.

« And they hurt heels and toes... That's why he who is behind us always wore them like these! » says Peter pointing at Judas of Kerioth.

The road climbs towards the crest of the mountain. Looking back one can see Ephraim all white in the sun, and the village seems already so far below them...

Then the apostles mingle with the women disciples to help them climb up the path that is very steep on that spot, and Bartholomew, who has been left behind, says to the people from Ephraim: « You have shown us a very difficult path, my friends. »

« Yes, but beyond that wood there is a good road that will take You to Shilo in a short time. So you will be able to rest there longer than if you arrived by night along a different road » replies one.

« You are right. The harder the road, the quicker it takes you to your destination. »

« Your Master is aware of that. That is why He does not spare Himself! Ah! we shall never forget!... Above all that He has helped us these last days, although He had heard some people of our region insult Him so unfairly. He alone is good and so He helps also those who hate Him. »

« You did not hate Him. »

« No, we did not. But there are many more whom we do not hate, and yet we are hated without any reason. »

« Do what He does, without any fear, and you will see that... »

« Then, why do you not do so? It's the same thing. We are here, you are there, and a mountain between us: the one raised by common errors. Above: the common God. Then, why do neither we nor you climb the slope to meet up there, at the feet of God, close to one another? »

Bartholomew understands the just reproach, because in his undeniable virtue, he has the fixed idea of being an Israelite, and is inflexible with regard to what is not Israel. He changes the subject without giving a direct reply and says: « It is not necessary to climb. God has come down among us. It is sufficient to follow Him. »

« To follow Him, we agree. We should like to do that. But if we went to Judaea with Him, would we not damage Him? You, too, are aware of what He is accused and of what we are accused: of being Samaritans, that is, demons. »

Bartholomew sighs and parts from them saying: « They are beckoning to me to go... » and he quickens his step.

Those from Ephraim look at him go away and one whispers: « Ah! He is not like Him! How much we lose by losing Him! » and he makes a gesture of discouragement.

« Do you know, Elias, that yesterday evening He took a large sum of money to the head of the synagogue, who is to hand it to Mary of Jacob, so that she may not suffer the pangs of hunger any more? »

« No, I don't. Why did He not give it to her? »

« He did not want to be thanked by the old woman. She does not know yet. I know because the head of the synagogue told me, to ask my advice whether he ought to buy her John's property, that his brother wants to sell, or he should give her the money a little at a time. I advised him to buy John's property. It will give her enough corn, oil and wine to live without starving. Whereas the money... That... »

« So it is really a large sum?! » says a third man.

« Yes. Our head of the synagogue received quite a lot, also for other poor people in town and in the country. That "they also may keep the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, to greet the new time" the

Master said. »

« He must have said the new year. »

« No. He said: "the new time". In fact the head of the synagogue is not going to use that money before the Feast of the Unleavened Bread. »

« Oh! and what did He mean? » ask many.

« What does it mean? I don't know. Nobody knows. Not even John, His beloved apostle, nor Simon of Jonah, who is the head of the disciples. I asked them and the former became pale, the latter became engrossed in thought like one who is trying to guess. »

« And what about Judas of Kerioth? He is important among them. Perhaps more than the other two, He knows everything, so he says. He may know also that. Let us go and ask him. He likes to say what he knows. »

They hurry to join Judas who is lonely as at the beginning, all alone, by now, on the path, because the others have gone round a bend and they seem to have been swallowed up by the green thicket on the slope.

« Judas, listen to us. The Master says that He wants a great celebration for the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, to greet the new time. What does He mean? »

« I don't know. Am I perhaps in the mind of the Master? Ask Him since He loves you so much » and he quickens his step leaving them disappointed.

« He is not the Master either. There is not one who has His pity... » they say shaking their heads.

« Well, are we following them? We are following Him! And we are doing the right thing. Let us go. Perhaps, we may learn from His lips, before He goes to Judaea, what He meant to say. »

And they quicken their paces joining the others, who are resting in a wood of age-long oak-trees, facing one of the most beautiful views in Palestine.

567. At Shiloh. First Parable on Advice.

27th February 1947.

Jesus is speaking in the middle of a square planted with trees. The sun, which is just beginning to set, brightens it with a yellowgreen light, glimmering through the new leaves of gigantic plane-trees. A thin precious velarium seems to be spread over the large square filtering the sun-light without obstructing it.

Jesus says:

« Listen. Once a great king sent his beloved son to a part of his kingdom, whose justice he wanted to test and he said to him: "Go everywhere, do good to the people in my name, inform them of me, make me known and loved. I grant you full powers, and everything

you do will be well done". The king's son, after being blessed by his father, went where he had been sent and with some squires and friends he began, working untiringly, to cover that part of his father's kingdom.

Now, through a series of unhappy events, that region was morally broken up into parts opposed to one another. Each part was making a great fuss on its own account, and was sending urgent entreaties to the king to tell him that each was the best and the most loyal, and that the neighbouring ones were perfidious and deserved to be punished. So the king's son found himself in front of citizens whose humours varied according to the town to which they belonged, but were alike in two things; first: each town believed it was better than the others; secondly: each town wanted to ruin the neighbouring enemy one, making it disreputable in the opinion of the king. As the son of the king was just and wise, with much clemency he tried to instruct each part of the region in justice, to make them all friendly with his father and beloved by him. And as he was good, he was succeeding, although slowly, because, as it always happens, only the upright-hearted people of each province of the region followed his advice. Nay, it is right to say that he found more good will to listen to him and become wise in the truth, exactly where they scornfully said that there was less good will and wisdom.

Then those of the neighbouring provinces said: "Unless we take pains, the grace of the king will go entirely to those whom we despise. Let us go and overthrow those whom we hate and let us go feigning that we are converted and willing to forget our hatred in order to honour the king's son". And they went. In the guise of friends they spread among the towns of the rival province and with deceitful kindness they advised what to do to pay greater and greater honour to the son of the king and consequently to his father, the king. Because the honour paid to the son, the messenger of his father, is also honour paid to him who sent him. But they did not honour the king's son, on the contrary they hated him cordially, to the extent of wishing to make him loathsome to his subjects and to the king himself. They were so astute in their false geniality, they succeeded so well in presenting their advice as the best policy, that many people of the neighbouring region accepted as good what was wicked, and they left the right path that they had followed, and took an unjust one, and the king's son realised that his mission was a failure with regard to many.

Now tell Me: who was the greatest sinner in the eyes of the king? What was the sin of those who advised, and of those who took their advice? And I ask you another question: with whom will the good king be more severe? Do you not know the answers? I will tell you.

The greatest sinner in the eyes of the king was he who incited his neighbour to do evil out of hatred for him, as he wanted to thrust him into deeper darkness of ignorance, out of hatred for the king's son, whom he wanted to defeat in his mission by making him appear incapable in the eyes of the king and of his subjects, out of hatred for the king himself, because if the love given to the son is also love given to the father, likewise the hatred for the son is hatred also for the father. So the sin of those who gave evil advice, knowing fully well that they were giving evil advice, was a sin of hatred in addition to a sin of falsehood, a sin of premeditated hatred, and the sin of those who took the advice thinking that it was good, was only a sin of stupidity.

But you know very well that only he who is intelligent is responsible for his actions, whereas he who through disease or other reasons is foolish, is not responsible personally, but his relatives are responsible in his stead. That is why while a boy is not of age, he is considered irresponsible, and it is his father who answers for the actions of his son. So the king, who was good, was severe with the intelligent ill advisers, but he was benign with those who had been deceived by them, and he only reproached them for believing this or that subject before asking the king's son himself, in order to learn from him what was really to be done. Because only the son of the father really knows the will of his father.

That is the parable, o people of Shiloh, of Shiloh where several times in the course of ages advice of different nature was given by God, by men or by Satan, and that advice bore good fruit when it was taken as advice for good purposes or when it was rejected by people who recognised it as leading to evil, and it bore bad fruit if it was not accepted when it was holy or it was taken when it was wicked.

Because man has his wonderful free will and he can freely choose between good and evil, and he has the other magnificent gift of an intellect capable of distinguishing between right and wrong, so reward or punishment may be brought about not so much by the piece of advice itself, as by the way in which it may be taken. Because 'if no one can forbid wicked people to tempt their neighbour to ruin -him, nothing can interdict good people from rejecting the temptation and remaining faithful to good. The same piece of advice may harm ten people, and avail other ten. Because if he who follows it does harm to himself, he who does not follow it does his soul good.

So no one may say: "We were told to do so". But everybody must sincerely say: "I wanted to do it". Then you will at least receive the forgiveness that is given to sincere people. And if you are doubtful about the goodness of the advice given to you, meditate before taking it and putting it into practice. Meditate imploring the Most High Who never denies the spirits of good will His light. And if your.

conscience, enlightened by God, sees only one tiny imperceptible spot, but such that cannot exist in a deed of justice, then say: "I will not do that because it is an impure justice".

Oh! I solemnly tell you that he who makes good use of his intellect and of his free will and invokes the Lord to see the truth in things, will not be ruined by temptation, because the Father Who is in Heaven will help him to do what is good in spite of all the snares of the world and of Satan.

Remember Anna of Elkanah and Eli's sons. The bright angel of the former had advised Anna to make a vow to the Lord if He made her fecund. Eli, the priest, advised his sons to go back to a life of justice, and not to sin any further against the Lord. And yet, although it is easier for man, because of his heaviness, to understand the voice of another man than the spiritual - but imperceptible by physical senses - speech of the Lord's angel speaking to the spirit, Anna of Elkanah took the advice, because she was good and upright in the eyes of God, and she gave birth to a prophet, whereas Eli's sons, as they were wicked and far from God, did not take their father's advice and were punished by God with a violent death.

Advice has two values: that of the source from which it comes, and it is already great because it may have incalculable consequences, and that of the heart to which it is given. The value given to it by the heart to which it is proposed is not only incalculable, but also immutable. Because if the heart is good and follows a good piece of advice, it gives that advice the value of a just deed, and if it does not follow it, it deprives it of the second part of its value, as it remains just a piece of advice, but not a deed, that is, it is a merit only for the adviser. And if it is a wicked piece of advice and is rejected by a good heart, which has been tempted in vain through blandishments or terrors to put it into practice, it achieves the value of victory over Evil and of martyrdom for loyalty to Good, and thus it prepares a great treasure in the Kingdom of Heaven.

So when your hearts are tempted by other people, meditate, guided by the light of God, whether it is a good word, and if with the help of God, Who allows temptations but does not want your ruin, you see that it is not a good thing, have the courage to say to yourselves and to those tempting you: "No. I will remain loyal to my Lord and may my loyalty absolve me of my past sins and allow me to enter the gates of the Kingdom and not be left outside, near them, because the Most High sent His Son for me also, to lead me to eternal salvation".

Go. If anybody needs Me, you know where I rest during the night. May the Lord enlighten you. »

568. At Lebonah. Second Parable on Advice.

28th February 1947.

They are about to enter Lebonah, a town which I do not think is very important or beautiful, but on the other hand is very busy as there are many caravans going to Jerusalem for Passover from Galilee, Ituraea, Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Hauran and the Decapolis. I would say that Lebonah was a track for caravans, or rather a junction of such tracks coming from those regions, from the Mediterranean to the mountains on the eastern side of Palestine, and from the north of it, and that they join here on the main road that takes pilgrims to Jerusalem. People probably prefer this road because it is garrisoned by the Romans and consequently they feel safer from the danger of unpleasant meetings with highwaymen. That is what I think. But it may be preferred for other reasons, because of historical or religious memories, I do not know.

As it is the right time - judging by the sun I would say that it is about eight o'clock in the morning - the caravans are about to set off amid a great uproar of voices, shouts, brayings, harness-bells, wheels. Women call their children, men spur their animals, vendors offer their goods, Samaritans haggle over prices with those... less rigid Jews, that is, those from the Decapolis and from other regions, as they are not so intolerant, being more mingled with the heathen element, and if a wretched vendor from Samaria approaches a champion of Judaism offering his goods, he is repulsed scornfully and almost abused. They shout so much at the anathema that they seem to have been approached by the devil himself... stirring up fierce reactions from the offended Samaritans. And there would be an odd scuffle if the Roman soldiers did not keep a good watch.

Jesus proceeds through so much confusion. The apostles are around Him, the women disciples follow them, and behind, in the rear, the train of the people from Ephraim, whose number has been increased by many people from Shiloh.

A murmur precedes the Master. It spreads from those who see Him to those who are farther away and cannot as yet see Him. Another murmur, a louder one, follows Him. And many put off their departure to see what is happening.

They ask one another: « What? Is He going farther and farther away from Judaea? What? Is He preaching in Samaria now? »

A voice says in the typical singing tone of Galileans: « The holy ones have rejected Him, and He is going to those who are not holy, to sanctify them, to shame the Judaeans. »

A reply more sour than acid poison is heard: « He has found His nest and who understands His word of a demon. »

Another voice shouts: « Be quiet, you murderers of the Just One! This persecution of yours will mark you with the most ill-famed name for ages. You are three times more corrupt than us from the

Decapolis. »

Another sharp voice of an old man exclaims: « He is so just that He is running away from the Temple for the Feast of Feasts. Ha! Ha! Ha! »

A man from Ephraim, red with anger, says: « It is not true. You are lying, you old snake! He is now going to His Passover. »

A bearded scribe remarks disdainfully: « Via Gerizim. »

« No. Via the Moriah. He is coming to bless us, because He is love, then He will ascend to your hatred, you cursed people! »

« Be quiet, Samaritan! »

« You be quiet, demon! »

« Those who stir up a rebellion will be imprisoned. That is Pontius Pilate's order. Bear than in mind. Disperse now » orders a Roman non-commissioned officer getting his men to separate those who are about to come to blows in one of the many regional and religious quarrels, always ready to rise in Palestine in the days of Christ.

The crowd disperses. But no one departs any more. Donkeys are taken back to stables or to the place where Jesus is going. Women and children dismount and follow husbands or fathers, or they remain in chattering groups, if their husbands' or fathers' humour so orders « that they may not hear the demon speak. » But friendly or enemy or simply curious men rush towards the place where Jesus has gone. And while running they cast evil glances at one another or they take courage from such unexpected joy, or they ask questions, according to whether they are friends with enemies, or friends with friends or with curious people.

Jesus has stopped in a square near the inevitable fountain in the shade of trees. He is there, leaning against the damp wall of the fountain that here is covered by a small porch open only on one side. Perhaps it is more a well than a fountain. It is like the well at En Rogel.

He is speaking to a woman who is showing Him the little child she is holding in her arms. I see Jesus nod assent and lay His hand on the child's head. And immediately afterwards I see the mother raise the child and shout: « Malachi, Malachi, where are you? Our boy is no longer deformed » and the woman trills her hosanna which is joined by the shouts of the crowd, while a man makes his way to prostrate himself before the Lord.

The people make their comments. The women, mostly mothers, congratulate the woman who received the grace. Those who are farther away stretch their necks and ask: « What happened? », after shouting hosanna, to join those who are aware of what took place.

« A hunchbacked boy, so hump-backed that he could stand on his legs only with difficulty. He was that size, I tell you, just that, so bent he was. He looked like a boy three years old, but he was seven. Look at him now! He is as tall as everybody, as straight as a palmtree

and lively. See him over there how he climbs on the little wall of the fountain to be seen and to see. And how happily he laughs! »

A Galilean turns towards a man, who, judging by the large tassels on his belt I think I am right in saying is a rabbi, and asks him: « Ehi? What do you say? Is that work of the demon, too? Really, if the demon does that, removing misfortunes to make men happy and have God praised, shall we not have to say that he is God's best servant! »

« Blasphemer, be silent! »

« I am not blaspheming, rabbi. I am commenting on what I see. Why does your holiness bring us nothing but burdens, misfortunes, making us speak abuse, and mistrust the Most High, whereas the works of the Rabbi of Nazareth give us peace and the certainty that God is good? »

The rabbi does not reply, he moves aside and goes to speak in a low voice to other friends of his. And one of them leaves the group, elbows his way going in front of Jesus, Whom he asks, without greeting Him first: « What do You intend doing? »

« I intend to speak to those who ask for My word » replies Jesus staring at his eyes, without disdain, but also without fear.

« You are not allowed. The Sanhedrin forbids You. »

« That is the will of the Most High, Whose servant the Sanhedrin ought to be. »

« You have been condemned, You know. Be silent or... »

« The Word is My name. And the Word speaks. »

« To the Samaritans. If it were true that You are Who You say You are, You would not give Your word to the Samaritans. »

« I have given it and will give it to Galileans, to Judaeans, to Samaritans, because there is no difference in the eyes of Jesus. »

« Try to give it in Judaea, if You dare!... »

« I solemnly tell you that I will. Wait for Me. Are you not Eleazar ben Parta? Are you? Then you will certainly see Gamaliel before I see him. Tell him, in My name, that I will give him also, after twenty one years, the reply for which he is waiting. Have you understood? Remember this carefully: after twenty one years I will give him also the reply that he awaits. Goodbye. »

« Where? Where do You want to speak, where do You want to reply to the great Gamaliel? He has certainly already left Gamala in Judaea to go to Jerusalem. But even if he were still in Gamala You could not speak to him. »

« Where? And where do the scribes and rabbis of Israel meet? »

« In the Temple? You, in the Temple? And would You dare? But do You not know... »

« That you hate Me? I do know. It is sufficient for Me not to be hated by My Father. Before long the Temple will tremble because of My words. » And without minding His interlocutor any longer

He opens His arms to impose silence on the people who are excited and divided into opposite tendencies and are shouting at disturbers.

There is soon silence and in the silence Jesus speaks:

« At Shiloh I spoke of ill advisers and of how much good or evil a piece of advice can do. I now propose this parable not only to you, people of Lebonah, but to the people of all Palestine. We shall call it: "The parable of the ill-advised".

Listen. Once there was a very large family, so large as to form a tribe. Numerous sons had got married forming, around the first family, many more families rich in offspring, who in their turn got married and had formed more families. So that the old father had found himself, so to say, at the head of a small kingdom, of which he was the king. As it always happens in families, among the many children and children's children, there were different characters: some were good and just, some were overbearing and unjust. Some were content with their situation and some were envious, as they thought that their shares were inferior to those of brothers or relatives. And near the most wicked one there was the best one. And it was natural that this very good one should be the most tenderly loved by the father of all the large family. And, as it always happens, the wicked one and those more like him, hated the good one because he was the most loved, not considering that they could have been loved as well, if they had been as good as he was. And the good son, to whom his father confided his thoughts that he might repeat them to everybody, was followed by other good ones. So that after years and years, the large family was divided into three parts. The part of the good members of the family and that of the bad ones. And between the two there was the third part, formed by the uncertain members, who were attracted towards the good son, but were afraid of the wicked one and of those of his party. This third part was keeping in with both sides and was not able to make up its mind resolutely in favour of one or the other.

Then the old father, seeing such uncertainty, said to his beloved son: "So far you have spent your word particularly for those who love it and for those who do not love it, because the former ask you for it, so that they may love me more and more according to justice, and the latter are fools who need to be taken back to justice. But you can see that those fools not only do not accept your word, and they remain what they were, but to their first unjust attitude towards you, the messenger of my wishes, they add the unfairness of corrupting, by means of evil advice, those who are not yet firmly willing to follow the better road. So go to them and explain to them what I am, what you are, and what they must do to be with you and with me".

The son, who was always obedient, went as his father wished, and he conquered some hearts every day. So the father was able to clearly

see who were his rebellious children, and he looked at them severely but without reproaching them, because he was their father and he wanted to attract them to himself with patience, love and the example of the good sons.

But when the wicked ones realised that they were all alone they said: "It is now too obvious that we are the rebels. Previously they mistook us for those who were neither good nor bad. Look at them now over there! They are all following the beloved son. We must take action and destroy his work. Let us go, feigning that we want to mend our ways, to those who have just been converted and also to those who are the most simple souls among the best ones and let us spread the rumour that the beloved son pretends that he wants to serve his father, but in actual fact he is gathering supporters to rebel against him; or we can also say that the father wants to eliminate his son and those who follow him, because they are becoming too powerful and are outshining the glory of the father-king, and that consequently, in order to defend the beloved betrayed son, it is necessary to keep him among us, far from the paternal house where betrayal is awaiting him".

And they went and were so shrewdly subtle in suggesting advice and spreading rumours, that many were caught in the snare, particularly the recent converts, to whom the evil advisers gave the following bad piece of advice: "Do you realise how much he loved you? He preferred to be among you rather than stay with his father, or at least with his good brothers. He has been so clever that in the sight of all the world he has raised you from your abjection of persons who did not know what they wanted and were thus ridiculed by everybody. Because of his partiality for you, it is your duty to defend him, and to keep him in your fields, even by force, if your words are not sufficient to convince him. Or rise, proclaiming him your leader and king, and march against the iniquitous father and his sons who are as iniquitous as he". And when anyone hesitated and remarked: "But he wants, he wanted us to go with him to honour our father and he has obtained blessing and forgiveness for us", they replied to them: "Don't believe that! Not everything he told you is true, neither did the father show you all the truth. He has behaved like that because he realises that his father is about to betray him and he wanted to test your hearts to find out where he can find protection and shelter. But may be... he is so good! perhaps he will repent of doubting his father and may want to go back to him. Do not allow him to do that". And many promised: "We will not allow him" and they were filled with enthusiasm planning what to do to detain the beloved son, without noticing that while the evil advisers were saying: "We will help you to save the blessed man", their eyes were shining with falsehood and cruelty, and that they were winking at one another rubbing their hands and

whispering: "They are being caught in the snare! We shall win!" every time somebody gave assent to their sly words.

Then the evil advisers went away. They went away spreading the rumour in other places that the betrayal of the beloved son would soon become known, as he had left the land of his father to establish a kingdom against his father, with the help of those who hated the father or whose love was at least uncertain. In the meantime those influenced by the evil advice were conspiring to induce the beloved son to rebel against his father, a sin that would scandalise the world. Only the wisest among them, those into whom the word of the just son had penetrated more deeply and had taken root because it had fallen on soil anxious to receive it, after pondering said: "No. It is not right to do so. It is a wicked action against the father, against the son and us. We are aware of the justice and wisdom of both of them. We are aware of it although unfortunately we have not always followed it. And we must not think that the advice of those who have always been openly against the father and justice, and also against the beloved son of the father, may be more just than the advice given to us by the blessed son". And they did not follow them. On the contrary, with love and sorrow, they let the son go where he had to go, and they only accompanied him with gestures of affection as far as the boundaries of their fields, and on taking leave of him they said to him as a promise: "Go. We shall stay. But your words are in our hearts and from now on we will do what the father wants. Go and do not worry. You have raised us for good from the state in which you found us. Now that we are on the good path we will advance on it until we arrive at the house of our father so that we may be blessed by him". On the contrary some gave assent to the bad advice and they sinned tempting the beloved son to commit sin and gibing at him as being foolish because he was obstinate in fulfilling his duty.

I now ask you: "Why did the same piece of advice have different effects?". Are you not replying? I will tell you as I told those of Shiloh. Because advice achieves value or becomes void according to whether it is taken or not. Man is tempted in vain by evil advice. If he does not want to sin, he will not sin. And he will not be punished for having to hear the insinuations of wicked people. He will not be punished because God is just and He does not punish anyone for sins not committed. He will only be punished if, after having to hear the Evil tempting him, he puts it into practice, without using his intellect to meditate on the nature and source of the advice. Neither can he say as an excuse: "I thought it was a good piece of advice". What is pleasant to God is good. Can God approve of and be delighted with disobedience or with what induces to disobedience? Can God bless what is in contrast with His Law, that is, with His Word? I solemnly tell you that He cannot. And I also

solemnly tell you that one must prefer to die rather than infringe the divine Law.

At Shechem I will speak to you again to make you wise in wanting or not wanting to take the advice given to you. You may go now. »

The people go away making their comments.

« Did you hear that? He knows what they told us! And He exhorted us to want what is just » says a Samaritan.

« Yes. And did you notice how upset were the Judaeans and the scribes who were present? »

« Yes. They did not even wait until the end to go away. »

« Poisonous vipers! But... He says what He wants to do. He is wrong. He may cause Himself trouble. Those from Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim are really elated!... »

« I... I have never flattered myself. The Rabbi is the Rabbi. And that means everything. Is it possible for the Rabbi to sin by not going up to the Temple in Jerusalem? »

« He will be put to death. You will see!... And that will be the end!... »

« For whom? For Him? For us? Or... for the Judaeans? »

« For Him. If He dies! »

« You are foolish, man. I come from Ephraim. I know Him well. I have lived near Him for two full months, even longer. He always spoke to us. It will be sorrowful... But not the end. Neither for Him, nor for us. The Saint of all the saints cannot die, cannot end. Neither can that be the end for us. I... am ignorant, but I feel that the Kingdom will come when the Judaeans think it is all over... And it will be all over for them... »

« Do you think that the disciples will avenge the Master? A rebellion? A massacre? And the Romans? ... »

« Oh! There is no need of disciples, of revenge of men, of massacres. It will be the Most High Who will defeat them. He has punished us, for ages, and for much less! Do you think that He will not punish them for their sin of tormenting His Christ? »

« To see them beaten! Ah! »

« Your heart is not as the Master would like it. He prays for His enemies... »

« I... am going to follow Him tomorrow. I want to hear what He will say at Shechem. »

« I also. »

« And I, too... »

Many people of Lebonah are of the same mind and fraternising with those from Ephraim and Shiloh they go to make preparations for their departure on the following morning.

569. Arrival at Shechem.

1st March 1947.

Here is Shechem, beautiful and ornate, crowded with people of Samaria going to the Samaritan temple, and with pilgrims from all regions going to the Temple in Jerusalem. The town is all flooded with sunshine, stretched as it is on the eastern slopes of Mount Gerizim, that dominates it from its western side and is all green as the town is all white. To north-east Mount Ebal, the appearance of which is even wilder, seems to protect it against northern winds. The fertility of the land, rich in the waters that come down from the mountain watershed and form two charming little rivers, nourished by many brooks, flow towards the Jordan, is wonderful and brims over the walls of gardens and the hedges of kitchen gardens. Every house is decked with greenery, with flowers, with branches on which tiny fruits are swelling. Looking around at the environs, which are clearly visible owing to the configuration of the ground, one sees nothing but the green of olive-groves, of vineyards, or orchards and the golden hue of fields in which every day the glaucous shade of the unripe corn changes more and more into the delicate yellowness of straw, of ripe ears, that the sun and winds bend and blow, making them look almost like white gold.

The corn is really «yellowing», as Jesus says, and is really golden, after being «white» when springing up, then the green of a precious jewel, while it grew and formed ears. The sun is now preparing it to die, after preparing it to live. And it is difficult to say when it should be blessed more, whether now that it leads it to the sacrifice, or when it paternally warmed the earth to make it germinate and it painted its pale stem, which had just sprung up, with a beautiful green shade, full of vigour and promises.

Jesus, Who has spoken of that while entering the town and pointing at the place where they met the Samaritan woman and remembering that remote speech, says to His apostles, to all of them except John, who is already near Mary to comfort Her, as She is so sorrowful: «And is what I said then not being fulfilled now? We were unknown and lonely when we came in here. We sowed. Now, look! That seed has given a rich crop. And it will grow greater and you will reap it. And others will reap more than you...»

«And will you not, Lord?» asks Philip.

«I have reaped where My Precursor sowed. Then I sowed that you might reap and sow with the seed I had given you. But as John did not reap what he sowed, so I shall not harvest this crop. We are...»

«What, Lord?» asks Judas of Alphaeus worriedly.

«The victims, My brother. The sweat of one's brow is required to fertilise fields. But sacrifice is necessary to fertilise hearts. We rise, we work, we die. One, after us, replaces us, rises, works, dies... And there is who reaps what we watered with our death.»

« Oh! no! Don't say that, my Lord! » exclaims James of Zebedee.

« Are you, the disciple of John before being Mine, saying that? Do you not remember the words of your first master? "He must grow greater, I must grow smaller". He understood the beauty and justice of dying to give justice to other people. I shall not be inferior to him. »

« But, Master, You are You: God! He was a man. »

« I am the Saviour. As God I must be more perfect than man. If John, a man, was able to grow smaller to make the true Sun rise, I must not dim the light of My sun with clouds of cowardice. I must leave you a clear memory of Me, so that you may be able to proceed, and the world may grow in the Christian Idea. The Christ will go away, He will go back to the place whence He came, and He will love you from there following you in your work, preparing the place that will be your reward. But Christianity will remain. Christianity will grow through My going away... and through that of all those who, without attachment to the world and earthly life, will be able to go away, as John and Jesus, did... and die to make other people live. »

« So do You think that it is right that You should be put to death?... » asks the Iscariot almost panting.

« I do not think that it is right that they should put Me to death. I think that it is just to die because of what My sacrifice will yield. A homicide will always be a homicide with regard to him who commits it, even if it has a different value and appearance for him who is murdered. »

« What do You mean? »

« I mean that if he who is a homicide, because he has been ordered or forced, such as a soldier in battle or an executioner who must obey a magistrate, or he who defends himself against a highwayman, has not a guilty conscience, or is relatively guilty of killing a fellow man, he who without order or necessity kills an innocent or cooperates in his murder, will appear before God with the dreadful face of Cain. »

« But could we not speak of something else? The Master suffers because of all this, your eyes are like those of one who is tortured, we feel as if we were in agony, if His Mother hears, She will weep. She is already shedding so many tears under Her veil! There is so much to talk about!... Oh! Look! The notables are coming. That will make you keep quiet. Peace to you! Peace to you! » Peter, who was a little ahead and had turned round to speak, bows greeting a large group of pompous people from Shechem, who are coming towards Jesus.

« Peace to You, Master. The houses that gave You hospitality the last time are ready to receive You, and there are many more for the women disciples and those who are with You. Those whom You

helped recently and the first time, will come to see You. One woman only will be missing because she departed from here to lead a life of expiation. So she said, and I believe her, because when a woman divests herself of everything she loved and rejects sin and gives all her property to the poor, it means that she wants to follow a new life. But I could not tell You where she is. No one has seen her any more since she left Shechem. One of our people thought he had seen her dressed as a servant in a village near the Phiale. Another one swears that he recognised her, although she was dressed poorly, at Bersabea. But what they say is not certain. When she was called by her name she did not answer and they heard her being called Johanna in the former place, and Agar in the latter. »

« It is not necessary to know more except that she has been redeemed. All other knowledge is vain and every research is intrusive curiosity. Leave your fellow-citizen in her secret peace, and be pleased that she no longer causes scandal. The angels of the Lord know where she is to give her the only help she needs, the only one that cannot hurt her soul... Be so charitable as to take the women to the houses, as they are tired. I will speak to you tomorrow. I will listen to everybody today and I will receive your sick people. »

« Are You not staying with us for a long time? Are You not spending the Sabbath here? »

« No. I am spending the Sabbath elsewhere, in prayer. »

« We were hoping to have You for a long time... »

« I have just time to go back to Judaea for the feasts. I will leave the apostles and women with you, if they want to remain, until the Sabbath evening. Do not look at one another thus. You know that I must honour the Lord our God more than anybody else, because to be what I am does not exempt Me from being faithful to the Law of the Most High. »

They go towards the houses into each of which go two women disciples and one apostle: Mary of Alphaeus and Susanna with James of Alphaeus, Martha and Mary with the Zealot, Eliza and Nike with Bartholomew, Salome and Johanna with James of Zebedee. Then Thomas, Philip, Judas of Kerioth and Matthew go all together in a group into one house; Peter and Andrew into another one; and Jesus with Judas of Alphaeus and John, and Mary, His Mother, goes into the house of the man who has always spoken on behalf of the citizens. The followers and the people from Ephraim, Shiloh and Lebonah and other pilgrims who were going to Jerusalem and broke their journey to follow Jesus, scatter through the village looking for lodgings.

570. At Shechern. Third Parable on Advice.

2nd March 1947.

The main square in Shechern is incredibly crowded. I think that the whole town is there and that also the people from the country and nearby villages have gathered, too. The inhabitants of Shechern, in the afternoon of the first day, must have spread everywhere informing people and everybody has come: healthy and sick people, sinners and innocents. As the square and roof-terraces are filled up, many people have even perched on the trees shading the square.

In the first row, near the place kept clear for Jesus, facing a house built up on four steps, are the three children whom Jesus saved from the highwaymen, and their relatives. How anxious are the little ones to see their Saviour! Every shout makes them turn round looking for Him. And when the door is opened and Jesus appears at it, the three children rush forward shouting: « Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! » and they climb the steps without waiting till He comes down to embrace them. And Jesus bends and embraces them and then lifts them up - a living bunch of innocent flowers - and He kisses their little faces and is kissed by them.

A compassionate whisper runs through the crowd and some voices say: « He is the only one who knows how to kiss our innocent children. » And other people say: « See how He loves them? He saved them from the highwaymen, He gave them a home after feeding and clothing them, and He is now kissing them as if they were His own sons. »

Jesus, Who has put the children down, on the top step, close to Himself, replies to everybody by answering the last anonymous words:

« Really they are more than My own children to Me. Because I am their father with regard to their souls, which are Mine, not for the time that passes, but for the eternity that remains. I wish I could say that of every man who from Me, the Life, did draw life to come out of death!

I invited you to do that the first time I came here, and you thought that you had plenty time to make up your minds to do so. Only one woman was prompt to follow My call and go on the path of Life: the biggest sinner among you. Perhaps just because she felt that she was dead and, she saw herself dead, rotten in her sin, she was in a hurry to come out of death. You do not feel and see yourselves dead, and you are not in that hurry. But which sick man waits to die before taking the medicines of life? A dead body needs only a shroud, aromas and a sepulchre in which to lie to become dust after being putrefaction. If the putridity of Lazarus, whom you look at with eyes opened wide by fear and amazement, was restored to life by the Eternal Father for His wise purposes, that must not tempt anyone to arrive at the death of the spirit saying: "The Most

High will restore me to the life of the soul". Do not put the Lord your God to the test. You are to come to the Life. There is no more time to wait.

The grapes of the Vine are about to be gathered and pressed. Prepare your spirits for the Wine of Grace that is about to be given to you. Do you not do that when you are to take part in a great banquet? Do you not prepare your stomachs to receive the choice food and wines by wisely fasting before the banquet, as that refines your taste and invigorates your stomachs making you enjoy and relish food and drinks? And does the vine-dresser not do the same to taste the wine that has just matured? He does not spoil his palate, the day that he wants to taste the new wine. He does not do that, because he wants to taste the good qualities and faults accurately, to boast of the former and correct the latter, and sell his goods at a good price. But if a person invited to a banquet can do that to enjoy food and wines with greater pleasure, and if the vine-dresser does that to sell his wine at a good price, or to make saleable what being faulty would be refused by buyers, should man not be able to do so for his spirit, to enjoy Heaven, to gain the treasure to be able to enter Heaven?

Take My advice. Yes, take it. It is a good piece of advice. It is the just advice of the Just One Who is ill-advised in vain, and wants to save you from the consequences of evil advice given to you. Be as just as I am. And give the just value to the advice given to you. If you become just, you will give it its just value.

Listen to a parable. It closes the cycle of those I said at Shiloh and Lebonah, and deals once again with advice given and taken.

A king sent his beloved son to visit his kingdom. The kingdom of that king was divided into many provinces, as it was a very large one. Those provinces had a different knowledge of their king. Some knew him so well as to consider themselves the favourite ones and to be proud of it. According to them, they were the only perfect ones and they alone knew the king and what the monarch wanted. Some knew him but, without considering themselves wise because of that, they did their best to know him better and better. Some knew the king, but they loved him their own way, as they had adopted a special code of laws, which was not the true code of the kingdom. Of the true code they had taken what they liked and as far as they liked it, then they had adulterated also that little by means of other laws copied from other kingdoms, or which they had made themselves, and were not good. No. They were not good. Some were even less acquainted with their king, and some only knew that there was a king. Nothing else. And they thought that was only an idle story.

The king's son came to visit his father's kingdom to give all the various regions an exact knowledge of the monarch, correcting arrogance here, encouraging dejected people there, redressing wrong

ideas elsewhere, convincing people to remove the impure elements from the pure law in another region, teaching other subjects how to fill gaps, instructing people of other regions in order to give them the minimum knowledge and faith in the real king, as every man was his subject. But the king's son was of the opinion that the first lesson for everybody was the example of justice, in conformity with the code of laws, both in grave matters and in minor ones. And he was perfect. So much so that the people of good will were improving themselves by following both the deeds and the words of the king's son, as his actions corresponded to his words without the least difference.

But the people of the provinces that considered themselves perfect only because they knew the code word by word, but did not possess its spirit, realised that from the observance of what the king's son did and what he exhorted to do, it appeared too clearly that they knew the letter of the code but did not possess the spirit of the king's law, and thus their hypocrisy was unmasked. They then decided to remove what made them appear what they really were. And to do that they chose two different ways: one against the king's son, the other against his followers. For the former: evil advice and persecutions. For the latter: evil advice and threat. Many things are evil advice. It is a bad piece of advice to say: "Do not do that, as it may damage you", pretending to be favourably interested, and it is a bad piece of advice to persecute in order to convince him, whom one wants to lead astray, to fail in the fulfilment of his mission. It is a bad piece of advice to say to followers: "Defend at all costs and by any means the just man who is persecuted", or to say to followers: "If you defend him, you will provoke our anger". But I am not referring now to advice given to followers. I am referring to the advice that people gave or had it given to the king's son, with false simple-heartedness, with livid hatred, or through the words of innocent people used as instruments to do harm, while they thought they were being used to do good.

The king's son listened to that advice. He had ears, eyes, intellect and a heart. Therefore he could but hear them, see them, understand them and weigh them. But above all he had the upright spirit of a true just man, so to each piece of advice, given to him consciously or unconsciously to make him sin, setting a bad example to his father's subjects and causing infinite sorrow to his father himself, he replied: "No. I will do what my father wants. I will follow his code of laws. The fact that I am his son does not exempt me from being the most faithful of his subjects in the observance of the Law. You, who hate me and want to frighten me, should bear in mind that nothing will make me infringe the Law. You, who love me and wish to save me, should know that I bless you for your thoughts, but bear also in mind that your love for me and my love for you,

as you are more loyal to me than those who say that they are 'wise', must not make me unfair in my duty towards the greatest love, which is the love to be given to my father".

That is the parable, My children. And it is so clear that each of you can understand it. And righteous spirits can only exclaim: "He is really just because no human advice can lead Him astray" - Yes, children of Shechem. Nothing can lead Me into error. Woe to Me if I should fall into error! Woe to Me and to you. Instead of being your Saviour, I should be your traitor, and you would be right in hating Me. But I will not do that.

I do not reproach you for accepting suggestions or for thinking of measures against justice. You are not guilty since you did it out of a spirit of love. But I say to you what I said at the beginning and at the end: you are dearer to Me than if you were My own children, because you are the children of My spirit. I have led your spirits to the Life and I will do so even more. Bear in mind, in memory of Me, bear in mind that I bless you for the thoughts you had in your hearts. But grow in justice, by wanting only what gives honour to the true God for Whom you must have absolute love, such as is given to no other creature. Come to this perfect justice that I am setting as an example to you, the justice that tramples on the selfishness of one's own welfare, on the fear of enemies and of death, on everything, to do the will of God. Prepare your spirits. The dawn of Grace is rising. The banquet of Grace is being prepared. Your souls, the souls of those who want to come to the Truth, are at the eve of their wedding, of their liberation, of their redemption. Prepare yourselves in justice for the feast of Justice. »

Jesus beckons to the children's relatives, who are near them, to go into the house with Him, and He withdraws after taking the three children in His arms as He did at the beginning.

Comments are exchanged in the square. And they differ considerably.

The best people say: « He is right. We were betrayed by those false messengers. »

Those who are not so good say: « Then He should not have flattered us. He makes us more hateful. He mocked at us. He is a true Judaeon. »

« You cannot say that. Our poor people are aware of His assistance, and our sick people of His power. Our orphans experienced His goodness. We cannot expect Him to commit sin to please us. »

« He has already sinned, because He hated us by making us hated... »

« By whom? »

« By everybody. And He mocked at us. Yes, He mocked at us. » The square is full of the different opinions, which, however, do not upset the house in which Jesus is with the notables, the children

and their relatives. Once again the prophetic word is confirmed: « He will be a stone of contradiction. »

571. Leaving for Enon.

3rd March 1947.

Jesus is meditating, sitting all alone under a gigantic holm-oak, which has grown on a slope of the mountain dominating Shechem. The city, of a rosy-white shade in the early sunshine, is below, spread out on the lower slopes of the mountain. From above it looks like a handful of huge white cubes thrown by a big boy on a green sloping meadow. The two water courses near which it rises form a silvery blue semicircle round the city; then one of them enters it gurgling and glittering among the white houses, it then comes out and flows through the greenery towards the river Jordan, appearing and disappearing under olive-groves and luxuriant orchards. The other river, smaller in size, remains outside the walls, almost lapping on them, and irrigates fertile vegetable gardens; it then flows away watering flocks of white sheep grazing on meadows reddened by the capitula of clover flowers.

The view in front of Jesus is a wide one. After lower and lower undulating hills one can see the green Jordan valley foreshortened, and beyond it, the mountains of the region beyond the Jordan, ending to north-east in the typical summits of Hauran. The sun rising behind them has lit up three strange clouds resembling three light gauze ribbons placed horizontally on the turquoise veil of the firmament, and the light gauze of the three long narrow clouds has become the orange-pink hue of certain precious corals. The sky seems to be barred by this airy railing and is beautiful. Jesus stares at it, that is, He looks in that direction engrossed in thought. I wonder whether He even sees it. With His elbow pressed on His knee, His hand supporting His chin resting in the hollow of the palm of His hand, He looks, thinks, meditates. Above Him birds are making a hullabaloo chirping and flying around joyfully.

Jesus lowers His eyes looking at Shechem that is awakening more and more in the morning sunshine. The shepherds and flocks, so far the only ones animating the view, are now joined by groups of pilgrims, and the jingling of herd-bells mingles with the tinkling of the harness bells of donkeys and with the noise of voices, the shuffling of feet and the babble of words. The noise of the awakening city and of the people ending their night's rest is carried in waves as far as Jesus.

Jesus stands up. With a sigh He leaves His quiet place and goes down quickly towards the town, along a short cut. He goes in among caravans of market-gardeners and pilgrims, while the former are hurrying to unload their goods, and the latter to buy them before

setting off.

Waiting in a group in a corner of the square there are already the apostles and the women disciples, and around them there are the people from Ephraim, Shilo, Lebonah and many from Shechem.

Jesus goes towards them and greets them. He then says to those of Samaria: « And now let us part. Go back to your homes. Remember My words. Grow in justice. » He then says to Judas of Kerioth: « Have you given alms for the poor of every place, as I told you? »

« Yes, I have. With the exception of those of Ephraim, as they have already had them. »

« Go, then. Ensure that every poor person may be comforted. » « We bless You on their behalf. »

« Bless the women disciples. They gave Me the money. Go. Peace be with you. »

They go away unwillingly, sorrowfully. But they obey.

Jesus stays with the apostles and the women disciples. He says to them: « I am going to Enon. I want to visit the place of the Baptist. I shall then go down to the road in the valley. It is more comfortable for the women. »

« Would it not be better to take the road through Samaria? » asks the Iscariot.

« There is no reason why we should be afraid of highwaymen, even if our road is close to their dens. Who wants to come with Me can do so. Who does not feel like coming as far as Enon, can remain here until the day after the Sabbath. On that day I shall go to Tirzah, and whoever remains here can join Me there. »

« Actually I... should prefer to stay here. I am not very well... I am tired... » says the Iscariot.

« One can see that. You look like one who is not well. You look gloomy indeed, also with regard to your humour and complexion. I have been watching you for some time... » says Peter.

« But no one asks me whether I am unwell, however... »

« Would that have pleased you? I never know what you like. But if it pleases you, I shall ask you now, and I am willing to stay with you to look after you... » Peter replies to him patiently.

« No, no! I am only tired. You may go. I shall stay where I am. »

« I shall stay as well. I am old. I shall rest assisting you as a mother » says Eliza all of a sudden.

« Are you staying? You had said... » interrupts Salome.

« If everybody went, I would have come as well, in order not to be left here all alone. But since Judas is going to stay... »

« Then I will come, too. I do not wish to sacrifice you, woman. You will certainly go willingly to see the refuge of the Baptist... »

« I come from Bethzur and I never felt the need to go to Bethlehem to see the grotto where the Master was born' That is something I shall do when I shall no longer have the Master. So you can imagine

whether I am aflame with the desire to see where was John... I prefer to practice charity, as I am sure that it has more value than a pilgrimage. »

« You are reproaching the Master. Do you not realise that? »

« I am speaking for myself. He is going there and is doing the right thing. He is the Master. I am an old woman in whom grief has removed all curiosity and the love for the Christ has removed all desires except that of serving Him. »

« So, according to you, it is a service to spy upon me. »

« Are you doing anything blameworthy? Only those who do harmful things are watched. But I have never spied upon anybody, man. I do not belong to the snake family. Neither do I betray. »

« Neither do I. »

« God grant it for your own good. But I fail to understand why you are so against my staying here to rest... »

Jesus, Who so far has been listening in silence, in the middle of the others, amazed at the petty quarrel, raises His head that was somewhat lowered, and says: « That is enough. A woman, who is older than you, can with more reason have the same desire as you have. You will stay here until the dawn of the day after the Sabbath. You will then join Me. In the meantime, Judas, go and buy what we will need during the next days. Go and be quick. »

Judas goes away against his will to buy foodstuff.

Andrew is about to follow him, but Jesus holds him back by the arm saying: « Stay here. He can manage by himself. » Jesus is very severe.

Eliza looks at Him and then approaches Him saying: « Forgive me, Master, if I displeased You. »

« I have nothing to forgive you, woman. You, rather, should forgive that man, as if he were your son. »

« I will stay with him with that feeling... even if he thinks the very opposite... You understand me... »

« Yes, and I bless you. And I tell you that you were right in saying that pilgrimages to My places will be a necessity when I am no longer amongst you... a necessity to comfort your spirits. For the time being they only serve the desires of your Jesus. And you have understood one of My wishes, because you are sacrificing yourself to protect an imprudent spirit... »

The apostles look at one another... and also the women disciples do likewise. Mary only is completely covered with Her veil and does not raise Her head to look at anybody. And Mary of Magdala, standing upright like a queen who is judging, has never lost sight of Judas, who is going round the vendors, and her eyes blaze with anger while her closed lips express contempt. Her countenance says more than words...

Judas comes back. He gives his companions what he bought. He

tidies up his mantle that he had used to carry the goods he purchased, and makes the gesture of handing the purse to Jesus.

Jesus rejects it with His hand: « It is not necessary. Mary is still with us for alms. You are to do the necessary to be charitable here. There are many beggars who come down from all places these days and go towards Jerusalem. Give them alms without prejudice, with charity, bearing in mind that, with regard to God, we are all beggars of His mercy and of His bread... Goodbye. Goodbye, Eliza. Peace be with you. » And He turns round quickly and begins to walk fast along the road that was near Him without giving Judas time to say goodbye to Him...

They all follow Him in silence. They come out of the town turning their steps north-eastwards through the beautiful country...

572. At Enon. The Young Shepherd Benjamin.

4th March 1947.

Enon, a handful of houses, is farther to the north. The place where the Baptist stayed is here: a grotto among the luxuriant vegetation. Not far away some spring-waters gurgle forming a stream rich in waters that flow towards the Jordan. Jesus is sitting outside the grotto, where He was when He said goodbye to His cousin. He is alone. Dawn is tinging the east with a rosy hue and the woods are reawakening again with the twittering of birds. Bleatings are heard coming from the folds in Enon. A bray rends the quiet air.

Then the trampling of feet is heard on the path and a herd of goats passes by led by an adolescent who stops for a moment, doubtfully, to look at Jesus. He then goes away. But shortly afterwards he comes back because a kid has stopped there, to look at the Man Whom she was not used to seeing there and Who stretches out His long hand to offer her a stalk of marjoram and caresses her intelligent head. The young shepherd remains disconcerted. He is undecided whether he should take the animal away or let Jesus caress her smiling, as if He were pleased that she came fearlessly to squat at His feet, resting her head on His knees. The other goats also come back grazing the grass spread with little flowers.

The young shepherd asks: « Do You want some milk? I have not yet milked two reluctant goats which butt whoever presses their udders if they are not satiated. Just like their owner who beats us if he is not sated with profit. »

« Are you a servant shepherd? »

« I am an orphan. I am alone. And I am a servant. He is a relative of mine because he is the husband of my grandmother's sister. And while Rachel was alive... But she died many months ago... And I am very unhappy... Take me with You! I am accustomed to living on nothing... I will serve You... a little bread is sufficient pay for

me. Even here I do not get anything... If he paid me, I would go away. But he says: "Is this your money? But I am keeping it because I clothe and feed you". He clothes me!... See? He feeds me!... Look at me... And these are blows... This is the bread I got yesterday... » And he shows bruises on his very thin arms and shoulders.

« What had you done? »

« Nothing. Your companions, I mean the disciples, were speaking of the Kingdom of Heaven, and I was listening to them... It was the Sabbath. Even If I was not working, I was not idle because it was the Sabbath... He gave me a good thrashing, so much so... that I do not want to stay with him any longer. Take me. Or I will run away... I came here on purpose this morning. I was afraid to speak. But You are good and I am speaking. »

« And what about the herd? You are certainly not going to run away with it... »

« ... I will take it back to the fold... Before long that man will be going to the forest to cut wood... I will take the herd back and then I will run away. Oh! take me! »

« But do you know who I am? »

« You are the Christ! The King of the Kingdom of Heaven. He who follows You will be blessed in the other life. I have never had any joy here... but, do not reject me... that I may have it there... » he says weeping at Jesus' feet near the kid.

« How come you know Me so well? Have you ever heard Me speak? »

« No. As from yesterday I know that You are here, where the Baptist was. But Your disciples used to pass here now and again coming from Enon. I heard them. Their names are Matthias, John, Simeon, and they were often here because the Baptist was their master before You. And then Isaac... In Isaac I found my father and mother. Isaac wanted to take me away from my master and he gave him some money. But he!... He took the money, but did not let me go and he sneered at Your disciple. »

« You know many things. But do you know where I am going? »

« To Jerusalem. But it is not written on my face that I come from Enon. »

« I am going farther away. I shall soon be going. I cannot take you with Me. »

« Take me for the little time You can. »

« And then? »

« And then... I shall weep, but I will go with John's disciples who were the first to tell a poor boy that the joy that men do not give on the Earth, God gives it in Heaven to those who had good will. I, in order to have it, have received so many blows and suffered so much hunger asking God to give me that peace. You can see that I have had good will... But if You reject me now... I shall not be

able to hope any longer... » He weeps silently imploring Jesus more with the tears of his eyes than with his lips.

« I have no money for your ransom. Neither do I know whether your master would agree to it. »

« But my ransom has already been paid. I have witnesses. Eli, Levi and Jonah saw and reproached the man. And they are the most important people in Enon, You know? »

« If that is the case... Let us go. Stand up and come with Me. »

« Where? »

« To your master. »

« I am afraid! You go, by Yourself. He is up there, on that mountain among the trees that he is cutting. I shall wait here. »

« Be not afraid. Look, My disciples are coming here. We shall be so many against him. He will do you no harm. Stand up. We shall go to Enon to look for the three witnesses and then we shall go to your master. Give Me your hand. Afterwards I will hand you over to the disciples you know. What is your name? »

« Benjamin. »

« I have two more little friends with that name. You will be the third one. »

« Friend? Too much! I am a servant. »

« Of the Most High Lord. Of Jesus of Nazareth, you are a friend. Come. Gather the herd and let us go. »

Jesus stands up and, while the young shepherd gathers and urges the reluctant goats on the way back, Jesus beckons to the apostles, who are coming forward on the path looking towards Him, to come at once. They quicken their paces. But the herd by now is on its way, and Jesus holding the young shepherd by the hand goes towards them...

« Lord! Have You become the shepherd of kids? Samaria can really be called the goat... But You... »

« But I am the Good Shepherd and I change also kids into lambs. And boys are all lambs, and this fellow is little more than a boy. »

« Is he not by any chance the boy that that man took away yesterday in such a coarse manner? » asks Matthew looking at him.

« I think that it's him. Are you? »

« Yes, I am. »

« Oh! poor boy! Your father is certainly not fond of you! » says Peter.

« My master. I have no other father but God. »

« Yes. John's disciples taught him some doctrine and consoled his heart, and at the right moment the Father of all men made us meet. We are going to Enon to take three witnesses with us, then we are going to his master... » says Jesus.

« To ransom the boy? And where is the money? Mary has handed out the last she had... » remarks Peter.

« There is no need of money. He is not a slave and money has already been given to take him away from his master. Isaac gave it as he felt sorry for the boy. »

« And why did he not get him? »

« Because many are the mockers of God and of their neighbour. There is My Mother with the women. Go and tell them not to come any farther. »

James of Zebedee and Andrew run away as fast as gazelles. Jesus hastens towards His Mother and the women disciples, and He reaches them when they have already been informed and are watching the youth pitifully.

They go back quickly towards Enon and enter the village. Led by the boy they go to the house of Eli, who is an old man with eyes dimmed by age but still strong. When young he must have been as robust as an oak-tree of this place.

« Eli, the Rabbi of Nazareth will take me if... »

« Will take you? There is nothing better He could do. You would end up by becoming wicked if you stayed here. A heart hardens when injustice is too hard. And it is too hard. Did you find Him? So the Most High has seen your tears, even if they are of a Samaritan boy. You are happy then, as, because of your age, you are free from all chains and you can follow the Truth, without anything preventing you from doing so, not even the will of a father or a mother. So what for many years seemed to be a punishment now appears to be providential. God is good. But what do you want of me now that you have come here? My blessing? I give it to you as the Elder of the place. »

« I want your blessing, because you are good. Then I came also because you with Levi and Jonah should go, with the Rabbi, to my master, so that he may not ask for more money. »

« But where is the Rabbi? I am old and I can hardly see, and I can recognise only those I know very well. But I do not know the Rabbi. »

« He is here. In front of you. »

« Here? Eternal power! » The old man stands up and bows to Jesus saying: « Forgive the old man whose sight is darkened. I greet You because only One is just in Israel. And You are that One. Let us go. Levi is in his kitchen garden working at a tub, and Jonah is attending to his cheese. » The old man stands up once again - he is as tall as Jesus although bent with age - and he sets out, walking along the wall, avoiding the obstacles on the road with the help of his stick.

Jesus, Who has greeted him with His peace, helps him when three coarse steps make it dangerous for a half blind man to proceed. Before setting off Jesus had told the women disciples to wait for Him at that place. Benjamin in the meantime goes to his fold.

The old man says: « You are good. But Alexander is a beast. He is a wolf. I do not know whether... But I am rich enough to give You money for Benjamin, should Alexander want more. My sons do not need my money. I am almost one hundred years old and money does not serve for the other life. A kind action of humanity, yes, is of value... »

« Why did you not do it before? »

« Do not reproach me, Rabbi. I satisfied the boy's hunger and I consoled him, so that he might not become an evil-doer. Alexander is such that he could make a little dove become wild. But I could not take the boy from him, and nobody else could do it. You... You will be going far away. But we... we remain here and we are afraid of his revenge. One day a man of Enon intervened, because being drunk he was beating the boy to death, and I do not know how he did it, he succeeded in poisoning the man's flock. »

« Is that not just an evil suspicion? »

« No. He waited for months, until winter, when the sheep are in the fold, and he poisoned the water in the vat. They drank it. They swelled. They died. All of them. We are all shepherds here, and we understood... To be certain, they made a dog eat some of that meat and the dog died. And there is someone who saw Alexander steal into the fold... Oh! he is an evil-doer! We are afraid of him... He is cruel, always drunk in the evening. He was merciless towards all his relatives. Now that they are all dead, he tortures the boy. »

« Then do not come, if... »

« Oh! no. I am coming. The truth is to be told. Here we are. I can hear the hammer. That's Levi. » And he calls in a loud voice near a hedge: « Levi! Levi! »

An old man comes out, but not so old as Eli, with his tunic tucked up, with a mallet in his hand. He greets Eli and asks him: « What do you want, my friend? »

« The Rabbi of Galilee is beside me. He has come to take Benjamin. Come, because Alexander is in the wood, to witness that he has already had the money for the boy from that disciple. »

« I am coming. They always told me that the Rabbi was good. Now I believe it. Peace to You! » He puts the mallet down, he shouts to I do not whom to wait for him, and he goes away with Eli and Jesus.

They soon arrive at Jonah's fold. They call him and explain...

« I am coming. You » he says to an apprentice « carry on with the work. » He dries his hands with a piece of cloth that he then throws on a peg, and follows Jesus, after greeting Him, with Levi and Eli.

In the meantime Jesus speaks to the old man and says to him: « You are a just man. God will give you peace. »

« I hope so. Just is the Lord! It is not my fault if I was born in Samaria... »

« It is not your fault. In the other life there are no boundaries for

the just. Sin only lays a barrier between Heaven and the Abyss. »

« That is true. How I would love to see You. Your voice is gentle, and soft is Your hand in leading an old blind man. Soft and strong. It feels like that of my beloved son: Eli, like me, the son of my son Joseph. If Your aspect is like Your hand, blessed are those who can see You. »

« It is better to hear Me than see Me. It makes the spirit holier. » « That is true. I listen to those who speak of You. But they pass through only seldom... But is that not the noise of an axe striking trunks? »

« Yes, it is. »

« Then... Alexander is close at hand... Call him. »

« Yes. You stay here. If I can manage by Myself, I will not call you. Do not show yourselves, unless I call you. » He goes on and calls in a loud voice.

« Who wants me? Who are you? » says a very strong elderly man, with a very hard profile and the thorax and limbs of a wrestler. A blow from those hands must be like a stroke of a club: brutal.

« It is I. An unknown Person Who knows you. I have come to take what is Mine. »

« Yours? Ha! Ha! What is Yours in this wood of mine? »

« Nothing in the wood. In your house Benjamin is Mine. »

« You are mad! Benjamin is my servant. »

« And your relative. And you are his galley-sergeant. And one of My messengers gave you the money you asked for, to have the boy. And you took the money and refused to give the boy. My messenger, a peaceful man, did not react. But I have come in the name of justice. »

« Your messenger must have drunk the money. I did not get any. And I am keeping Benjamin. I am fond of him. »

« No. You hate him. You are fond of the pay that you do not give him. Do not lie. God punishes liars. »

« I did not receive any money. If You have spoken to my servant, You had better know that he is an astute liar. And I will give him a good thrashing for slandering me. Goodbye! » and he turns his back on Jesus and is about to go away.

« Be careful, Alexander, because God is present. Do not defy His goodness. »

« God! Has God to defend my interests? I only have to defend them and I do so. »

« Mind you! »

« But Who are You, You miserable Galilean? How dare You reproach me? I don't know You. »

« You do know Me. I am the Rabbi of Galilee and... »

« Ah! yes! And You think You can frighten me? I fear neither God nor Beelzebub. And You expect me to be afraid of You? Of a madman? »

Go, away You go! Let me work. Go, I say. Don't look at me. Do You think that Your eyes can frighten me? What is it that You want to see? »

« Not your crimes, because I know them all. All of them. Also those that no one knows. But I want to see whether you do not even understand that this is the last hour of mercy that God grants you to repent. I want to see whether remorse does not rise to split your stone heart, whether... »

The man, who has an axe in his hands, hurls it towards Jesus, Who bends quickly. The axe flies over His head and strikes a young holm-oak that is cut clean and falls with a loud rustling noise of branches and whirl of frightened birds.

The three men, who were hiding not far away, jump out shouting, fearing that Jesus might have been hit, and the one who cannot see cries: « Oh! to see! If I could only see whether He has been wounded! O Eternal God, my eyesight just for that! » And turning a deaf ear to the assurances of the others he moves forward groping, because he has lost his stick and he wants to touch Jesus to feel whether any part of His body is bleeding, and he moans: « A beam of bright light, and then darkness. But to see, to see without this veil that hardly allows me to guess where obstacles are... »

« I am all right, father, touch Me » says Jesus touching him and having Himself touched.

In the meantime the other two utter harsh words against the violent man and they throw sins and lies in his face, while he, deprived of his axe, pulls out a knife and hurls himself at them to strike them, cursing God, scoffing at the blind man, threatening the others, just like a raging wild beast. But he staggers, he stops, he drops the knife, he rubs his eyes, opens them, closes them, then utters a frightful cry: « I can't see any more! Help! My eyes... Darkness... Who will save me? »

Also the others shout, out of amazement. And they deride him saying: « God has listened to you. » In fact among other curses he also said: « May God blind me if I am lying and if I have sinned. And may I blind myself rather than worship a mad Nazarene! And with regard to you I will revenge myself and I will break Benjamin in two like that tree... » And they laugh at him saying also: « You can now revenge yourself... »

« Do not be like him. Do not hate » advises Jesus and He caresses the very old man who is worried only about the safety of Jesus, Who to reassure him says: « Raise your face! Look! »

And the miracle is accomplished. As over there, for the brutal man, darkness; so here, for the just man, light. And a different cry, a blissful one rises under the robust trees: « I can see! My eyes! The light! May You be blessed! » And the old man stares at Jesus with his eyes bright with a new life and he then prostrates himself to

kiss His feet.

« We two will go together. You will take that wretched man back to Enon. And be merciful because God has already punished him. And God is enough. Let man be kind with every misfortune. »

« Take the boy, the sheep, the wood, the house, the money. But give me back my eyesight. I cannot remain like this. »

« I cannot. I leave you every thing through which you became a sinner. I am taking the innocent boy because he has already suffered his martyrdom. In the darkness may your soul open to the Light. »

Jesus says goodbye to Levi and Jonah and goes down quickly with the old man who seems rejuvenated and who shouts his joy as soon as he arrives at the first houses... The whole of Enon is stirred up.

Jesus makes his way through the crowd, He goes to the young shepherd who is with the apostles and says: « Come! Let us go, because they are waiting for us at Tirzah. »

« Free? Free? With You? Oh! I could not believe it! I will say goodbye to Eli. And the others? » The boy is excited...

Eli kisses and blesses him and says to him: « And forgive the poor wretch. »

« Why? I will forgive him, yes. But why poor wretch? »

« Because he cursed the Lord and light died out in his eyes. None of us will have to fear him any more. He is blind and ill. How dreadful the power of God!... » The old man seems an inspired prophet, with his arms raised, looking at the sky, meditating on what he has seen.

Jesus says goodbye to him and elbows His way through the excited little crowd; He goes away followed by the apostles and women disciples; and Benjamin goes away greeted by the women who want to give tokens to the favourite of the Lord: a fruit, a bag, some bread, a garment, what they can find there and then. And happy as he is, he greets them, thanks them and says: « You are always good to me! I will remember you. I will pray for you. Send your children to the Lord. It is lovely to be with Him. He is the Life. Goodbye! Goodbye!... »

Enon is left behind. They go down towards the Jordan, towards the plain in the Jordan valley, towards new events still unknown...

But the youth does not turn round to look back. He makes no comment. He does not think. He does not sigh. He smiles. He looks at Jesus, there, ahead of them all, the true Shepherd followed by His flock, of which he also, the poor boy, is part... and all of a sudden he begins to sing, in a loud voice...

The apostles smile saying: « The boy is happy. »

The women smile saying: « The imprisoned bird has found freedom and a nest once again. »

Jesus smiles, turning round to look at him, and His smile, as usual, seems to brighten everything and He calls the boy saying:

« Come here, little lamb of God. I want to teach you a beautiful song. » And He intones, followed by the others, the psalm: « The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall lack nothing. He placed me where there are abundant pastures » and so forth. Jesus' beautiful voice spreads through the fertile country, it excels all the others, even the best ones, so powerful it is in His joy.

« Your Son is happy, Mary » says Mary of Alphaeus.

« Yes, He is happy. He still has something joyful... »

« No journey is without its fruit. He passes spreading graces and there is always someone who really meets the Saviour. Do you remember that evening at Bethlehem of Galilee? » asks Mary of Magdala.

« Yes, but I would not like to remember those lepers and this blind man... is »

« You would always forgive. You are so good! But justice also is necessary » remarks Mary Salome.

« It is necessary. But luckily for us mercy is greater » says Mary Magdalene once again.

« You can say that. But Mary... » replies Johanna.

« Mary wants nothing but forgiveness, even if She is in no need of forgiveness. Is that right, Mary? » asks Susanna.

« I should like nothing but forgiveness. Yes. Only that. To be bad must be a dreadful suffering by itself... » She sighs in saying so.

« Would You forgive everybody, really everybody? But would it be fair to do so? There are people who are obstinate in wickedness and spoil all forgiveness by deriding it as weakness » says Martha.

« I should forgive. As far as I am concerned I should forgive. Not out of stupidity. But because I see every soul as a more or less good baby. As a son... A mother always forgives... even if she says: "Justice exacts a just punishment". Oh! if a mother could die to generate a new good heart for her wicked son, do you think that she would not do that? But it is not possible. There are hearts that reject all help... And I think that pity has to forgive them as well. Because the burden on their hearts is already a very heavy one: their sins, God's severity... Oh! let us forgive guilty people... And would to God that our absolute forgiveness could be accepted to diminish their debit... »

« But why do You always weep, Mary? Even now that Your Son had an hour of, joy! » says Mary of Alphaeus moaning.

« His joy was not complete because the culprit did not repent. Jesus is completely happy when He can redeem... »

I wonder why Nike, who has never spoken, suddenly says: « We shall be with Judas of Kerioth once again before long. »

The women look at one another as if the simple sentence meant something exceptional, as if the words concealed I do not know what important matter. But no one replies.

Jesus has stopped in a beautiful olive-grove. They all stop. Jesus blesses the food, divides it and hands it out.

Benjamin looks and puts in order what they gave him: garments too long or too wide, sandals not fitting his feet, almonds still in the husks, the last walnuts, some cheese, an odd wrinkled apple, a little knife. He is happy with his treasures. He wants to offer the victuals. He folds the garments saying: « I will put on the most beautiful one at Passover. »

Mary of Alphaeus promises: « At Bethany I will sort them all for you. In the meantime leave this one out. At Tirzah there will be water to wash it and farther away there will be thread to mend it. With regard to the sandals... I do not know what to do. »

« We shall give these to the first poor person we meet and whose foot will be the right size, and we will buy a new pair at Tirzah » says Mary of Magdala calmly.

« With what money, sister? » Martha asks her.

« Ah! that is true! We have not a farthing left... But Judas has some money... Benjamin cannot go far like that. And then, poor boy! His soul has had a great joy, but also his human nature must have a smile... certain things make people happy. »

Susanna, who is young and merry, laughs saying: « You are speaking as if you knew from experience that a new pair of sandals are the joy of those who never possessed such a pair! »

« That is true. But it is because I know how pleasant is a dry garment when you are wet, and a fresh one when you have but one. I remember... » And she bends her head on the Blessed Virgin's shoulder saying: « Do You remember, Mother? » and kisses Her fondly.

Jesus gives the order to set off, to be at Tirzah before night: « Those two, who are not aware of the events, will be worrying... »

« Shall we go ahead to tell them that You are about to arrive? » asks James of Alphaeus.

« Yes. All of you, except John and James and My brother Judas. Tirzah is not far now... So you may go. Look for Judas and Eliza and prepare lodgings for us in the meantime, because it is better to stop for the night since we are so late and we have the women with us... We will follow you. Wait for us at the first houses... »

The eight apostles go away quickly, and Jesus follows them slowly.

573. Jesus Is Rejected by the Samaritans. With Judas of Kerioth.

5th March 1947.

Tirzah is so surrounded by luxuriant olive-groves, that it is necessary to be very close to the town to realise that it is there. A

belt of wonderful fertile vegetable gardens is the last screen of the houses. In the kitchen gardens chicory, salads, legumes, young plants of gourds, fruit-trees and bowers, blend and interlace their different green shades and their blossoms promising fruit or the little fruits promising delights. Vines and early olive-trees, blown by a rather strong breeze, shed their little blossoms spraying the ground with greenish-white snow.

From behind the screen of reeds and willows, which have grown near a dry canal, the bottom of which, however is still damp, appear the eight apostles who had been sent ahead, upon hearing the shuffling of the new-comers. They are openly upset and grieved and they beckon to the arrivals to stop. At the same time they rush forward. When they are sufficiently close to be heard without having to shout, they say: « Come away! Away! Let's go back, into the country. It is not possible to enter the town. They almost stoned us. Come away, to that thicket, and we shall speak... » And anxious as they are to go away without being seen, they push back Jesus, the three apostles, the boy and the women along the dry canal and they say: « We do not want to be seen here. Let's go! Let's go! »

In vain Jesus, Judas and Zebedee's two sons try to find out what has happened. In vain they ask: « But what about Judas of Simon? What about Eliza? » The eight do not listen to them. Walking in the tangle of stalks and water-plants, their feet cut by bog grass, their faces hurt by willows and reeds, slipping on the mud in the bottom, getting hold of weeds, seeking support on the edges and getting bespattered with mud, they move away, pressed from behind by the eight who proceed with their heads almost turned round to see whether anyone from Tirzah is following them. But there is no one on the road but the sun, which is beginning to set, and a lean stray dog.

At long last they are near a large clump of bushes that delimit a property. Behind the shrubs there is a field of flax the long stems of which, undulating in the wind, are beginning to show their sky-blue flowers.

« Here, in here. If we sit down, no one will see us and when it gets dark we shall go away... » says Peter wiping his perspiration...

« Where? » asks Judas of Alphaeus. « The women are with us. »

« We shall go somewhere. In any case the meadows are full on hay cut recently. It will do as a bed. We will make tents with our mantles for the women and we will keep watch. »

« Yes. It is sufficient not to be seen and then to go down to the Jordan at dawn. You were right, Master, in not wanting to take the road through Samaria. For poor people like us, highwaymen are better than Samaritans... » says Bartholomew, who is still panting.

« But what happened, in a word? Has Judas done some... » says Thaddeus.

Thomas interrupts him saying: « Judas has certainly been beaten. I am sorry for Eliza... »

« Have you seen Judas? »

« I have not. But it is easy to prophesy right. If he said that he is your apostle, he certainly got a thrashing. Master, they do not want You. »

« Yes. They have all revolted against You. »

« They are true Samaritans. »

They are all speaking at the same time.

Jesus imposes silence and says: « Let one only speak. You, Simon Zealot, as you are the calmest. »

« Lord, it is soon said. We entered the town and no one troubled us until they learned who we are, as long as they thought that we were pilgrims passing by. But when we asked - and we had to ask! - whether a young, tall, swarthy man, wearing a red mantel and a talith with white and red stripes, and an elderly thin woman, with almost white hair and dark grey clothes had entered the town and had looked for the Galilean Master and His companions, then they got angry at once... Perhaps we should not have spoken of You. We certainly made a mistake... But in the other places we had been received so well that... We do not understand what has happened!... Those who only three days ago were so respectful to You, are now like vipers!... »

Thaddeus interrupts him: « The work of Judaeans... »

« I do not think so. I do not think so because of what they said when they reproached and threatened us. I think... Nay, I am, we are sure that the fact that Jesus refused their offer of protection is the cause of the Samaritan fury. They were shouting: "Away! Go away, you and your Master! He wants to go and worship on the Moria. Well, let Him go and may He and all His followers die. There is no room among us for those who do not consider us as friends, but only as servants. We do not want further trouble unless there is profit as compensation. Stones, not bread for the Galilean. Our dogs should attack Him, instead of our homes receiving Him". That, and even more than that, they were saying. And as we insisted on learning at least what had happened to Judas, they picked up stones to hit us and they really set their dogs on us. And they were shouting to one another: "Let us station ourselves at all the entrances. If He comes we will avenge ourselves". We ran away. A woman - there is always a good soul among wicked people - pushed us into her kitchen garden and then she led us along a path through vegetable gardens to the canal, in which there was no water as they had irrigated before the Sabbath. And she hid us there. Then she promised to let us have news of Judas. But she has not come any more. But we are to wait for her here, because she said that if she does not find us in the canal, she will come here. »

There are many comments. Some continue to accuse the Judaeans. Some reproach Jesus lightly, a reproach concealed in their remarks: « You spoke too clearly at Shechem and then You went away. During the last three days they decided that there is no sense in deceiving oneself and causing damage to oneself for one who does not satisfy them... and they drive You away... » Jesus replies: « I do not regret speaking the truth and doing My duty. They do not understand at present. They will shortly understand My justice and will worship Me more than if I had had no justice or if it had been greater than My love for them. »

« There! There is the woman on the road. She is so bold as to show herself... » says Andrew.

« She will not betray us, will she? » says Bartholomew suspiciously.

« She is alone! »

« But she may be followed by people hiding in the canal... » But the woman, who is coming forward carrying a basket on her head, goes on passing the fields of flax where Jesus and the apostles are waiting, then she takes a narrow path and disappears... reappearing suddenly behind those who were waiting and who turn round almost frightened when they hear the rustling of the vegetation.

The woman speaks to the eight men she knows: « Here I am! Forgive me for keeping you waiting so long... I did not want anybody to follow me. I said that I was going to my mother's... I know... And I brought some food for you. The Master... Which is the Master? I would like to venerable Him. »

« That is the Master. »

The woman, who has laid down her basket, prostrates herself saying: « Forgive the sin of my fellow-citizens. If no one had instigated them... But many have taken advantage of Your refusal... »

« I have no grudge, woman. Stand up and speak. Have you any news of My apostle and of the woman who was with him? »

« Yes, I have. Driven out like dogs, they are out of town, on the other side, waiting for night-time. They wanted to go back, towards Enon, looking for You. They wanted to come here, as they knew that their companions were here. I told them not to do that, and to remain quiet as I will take you to them. And I will do so as soon as it gets dark. Fortunately my husband is away, so I am free to leave the house. I will take you to one of my sisters who is married down in the plain. You will sleep there, without saying who you are, not because of Merod, but because of the men who are with her. They are not Samaritans, they come from the Decapolis and are settled here. But it is always wise... »

« May God reward you. Have the two disciples been injured? »

« The man, a little. The woman, nothing. And the Most High certainly protected her because she is bold and she protected her son

with her own body when the citizens began to pick up stones. Oh! what a strong woman! She shouted: "Is that how you strike a man who has not offended you? And will you not respect me, who am defending him and am a mother? Have you no mothers, since you do not respect a mother? Were you born of wolves or are you made of mud and manure?" and she looked at the assailers holding her mantle wide open to defend the man, and at the same time she was withdrawing pushing him out of town... And even now she comforts him saying: "May the Most High grant, o my Judas, that the blood you have shed for the Master may become the balm for your heart". But it is a small wound. Perhaps the man is more frightened than hurt. But take some food now. Here is some fresh milk, for the women, and bread, cheese and fruit. I could not cook any meat. I should have been too late. And here is some wine for the men. Eat while it is getting dark. Then along safe roads we shall go to the two disciples and then to Merod's house. »

« May God reward you again » says Jesus, and He offers and divides the food, putting some aside for the two who are not present.

« No. I have seen to them, as I took them eggs and bread, which I concealed under my clothes, and some wine and oil for the wounds. This is for you. Eat now, as I will watch the road... »

They eat, but the men are devoured by indignation and the women feel listless through depression. All of them, with the exception of Mary of Magdala, as what for the others is fear or dejection affects her like a liqueur that stimulates nerves and courage. Her eyes flash with anger as she looks at the hostile town. Only the presence of Jesus, Who has already said that He has no grudge, keeps her from uttering violent words. And as she cannot speak or act, she gives vent to her anger by snapping at her innocent piece of bread in such a meaningful way that the Zealot cannot help saying to her smiling: « Luckily for those of Tirzah they cannot fall into your hands! You look like a wild beast in chains, Mary! »

« I am. You are right. And in the eyes of God, this restraining myself from going in there, as they deserve, has more value than what I have done so far to expiate. »

« Be good, Mary! God has forgiven you sins graver than theirs. » « That is true. They have offended You once, my God, and through the instigation of other people. I many times... and by my own will... and I cannot be intolerant and proud... » She lowers her eyes on her bread and two tears fall on it.

Martha lays her hand on her sister's lap saying to her in a low voice: « God has forgiven you. Don't lose heart any more... Remember what you have had: our Lazarus... »

« It is not dejection. It is gratitude. It is emotion... And it is also the ascertainment that I am still devoid of that mercy which I received so plentifully... Forgive me, Rabboni! » she says raising her

wonderful eyes to which humility has restored kindness.

« Forgiveness is never denied to humble-hearted people, Mary. »

Night is falling tinging the air with a delicate fading violet hue. Also things not far away become confused. The stalks of flax, previously visible in their beauty, have blended into a uniform dark mass. The birds among leafy branches become silent. The first star begins to shine. The first cricket chirps in the grass. It is night-time.

« We can go. Here, in the fields, we shall not be seen. Come without being afraid. I am not betraying you. And I am not doing this for retribution. I only ask Heaven to have mercy on me, for we are all in need of mercy » says the woman with a sigh.

They stand up and set out after her. They pass round Tirzah at a distance, through fields and half-dark vegetable gardens, but not so far as not to be able to see men around fires at the entrances of roads...

« They are lying in wait for us... » says Matthew.

« Cursed! » whistles Philip between his teeth.

Peter does not speak but he shakes his arms towards the sky in a silent invocation or protest.

But James and John of Zebedee, who have been speaking to each other animatedly, a little ahead of the others, come back and say: « Master, if You do not want to have recourse to punishment because of Your perfect love, shall we have it? Shall we say to the fire of heaven to descend on these sinners and devour them? You told us that we can do everything that we ask with faith and... »

Jesus, Who was walking with His head bowed, as if He were tired, suddenly straightens Himself and casts withering glances at them as His eyes flash in the moonlight. The two withdraw and become silent, frightened as they are by His glances. Jesus, His eyes fixed on them all the time, says: « You do not know what spirits are within you. The Son of man has not come to lose souls, but to save them. Do you not remember what I told you? In the parable of the wheat and the darnel I said: "For the time being let the wheat and the darnel grow together. Because if you tried to separate them now you might pull up also the wheat with the darnel. So leave them till the harvest. At harvest time I shall say to the reapers: collect the darnel now and tie it in bundles to be burnt, then gather the good wheat into my barn". »

Jesus has already moderated His anger towards the two who, out of wrath excited by their love for Him, were asking to punish those from Tirzah and who are now standing with their heads lowered in front of Him. He takes them by their elbows, one on His right, the other on His left side and He resumes walking, leading them thus and speaking to everybody, as they have all gathered round Him when He stopped. « I solemnly tell you that harvest time is close at hand. My first harvest. And for many there will not be

a second one. But - and let us praise the Most High for this - some people who were not able to become ears of good wheat in My time, after the purification of the Passover Sacrifice, will be born again with new souls. Until that day I shall not be pitiless towards anybody... Afterwards there will be justice... »

« After Passover? » asks Peter.

« No. After the time. I am not speaking of these men of the present. I am looking at future ages. Man is renewed continuously like crops in fields. And harvests follow one another. And I will leave what is necessary for future generations to become good wheat. If they do not want to do that, at the end of the world My angels will separate the darnel from the good wheat. Then it will be the eternal Day of God alone. At present in the world it is the day of God and of Satan. The Former sows Goodness, the latter throws his damned darnel, his scandals, his wickedness, his seeds that stir up wickedness and scandals, among the seeds of God. Because there will always be those who rouse people against God, as here, with these people, who are really less guilty than those who incite them to do wrong. »

« Master, every year we purify ourselves at the Passover of the Unleavened Bread, but we always remain what we were. Will it be different this year? » asks Matthew.

« Very different. »

« Why? Explain it to us. »

« Tomorrow... Tomorrow, or when we are on the way, and Judas of Simon is with us, I shall tell you. »

« Oh! yes. You will tell us and we shall become better... In the meantime forgive us, Jesus » says John.

« I really called you with the right name. But thunder does no harm. A thunderbolt, yes, can kill. But thunder often is a forewarning of thunderbolts. The same happens to those who do not remove from their spirits every disorder that is against love. Today they ask to be allowed to punish. Tomorrow they punish without asking. The day after tomorrow they punish even without any reason. It is easy to descend... That is why I tell you to divest yourselves of all harshness against your neighbour. Do as I do and you will be certain of never doing wrong. Have you ever seen Me revenge Myself on those who grieve Me? »

« No, Master. You... »

« Master! Master! We are here. Eliza and I. Oh! Master, how worried we were about You! And how afraid I was of dying... » says Judas of Kerioth coming out from behind rows of vines and running towards Jesus. His forehead is bandaged. Eliza follows him more calmly.

« Have you suffered? Were you afraid to die? Is life so dear to you? » asks Jesus freeing Himself from Judas who embraces Him weeping.

« Not life. I was afraid of God, to die without being forgiven by You... I always offend You. I offend everybody. Also this woman... And she reacted acting as a mother to me. I felt I was guilty and I was afraid of death... »

« Oh! a beneficial fear, if it can make a saint of you! But I always forgive you, you know that, provided you are willing to repent. And what about you, Eliza? Have you forgiven him? »

« He is a big unruly boy. And I can be indulgent. »

« You have been brave, Eliza. I know. »

« If she had not been there, I do not know whether I would have seen You again, Master! »

« So you can see that she remained with you out of love, not out of hatred... Have you been injured, Eliza? »

« No, Master. The stones fell around me without hurting me. But my heart was in agony thinking of You... »

« It is all over now. Let us follow the woman who wants to take us to a safe house. »

They set forth again along a lane that is white in the moonlight and takes them eastwards.

Jesus has taken the Iscariot by the arm and has gone ahead with him. He speaks to him kindly. He tries to work upon his heart upset by his recent fear of God's judgements: « You can see, Judas, how easily one can die. Death is always on the look-out around us. You can see how what seems negligible when we are full of life becomes important, fearfully important when death skims us. But why should one wish to have such frights, why should one create them to have them present at the moment of death, when with a holy life one can ignore the terror of the impending divine judgement? Do you not think that it is worth living a just life in order to have a peaceful death? Judas, My friend. The divine paternal mercy has allowed that to happen, so that it might be an appeal to your heart. You are still in time, Judas... Why do you not want to give your Master, Who is about to die, the great, the very great joy of knowing that you have come back to Good? »

« But can You still forgive me, Jesus? »

« And would I speak to you like this if I could not? How little you still know Me! I know you. I know that you are like one who is seized by a giant octopus. But if you wanted, you could still free yourself. Oh! you would certainly suffer. It would be painful to tear off those chains that torture and poison you. But later, how much joy, Judas! Are you afraid that you may not have enough strength to react against those who influence you? I can absolve you in advance of the sin of infringing the Passover rite... You are ill. Passover is not compulsory for sick people. No one is more sick than you are. You are like a leper. Lepers do not go up to Jerusalem, while they are such. You must realise, Judas, that to appear before the Lord with

an unclean spirit, such as you have, does not honour Him, but it offends Him. First it is necessary... »

« Why do You not purify and cure me, then? » asks Judas, and he already sounds hard and indocile.

« I will not cure you! When a man is ill he seeks cure by himself, unless it is a child or a fool who are devoid of will-power... »

« Treat me as such. Treat me as a fool and see to it, without my being aware of it. »

« It would not be just because you can use your will-power. You know what is good and what is evil for you. And My curing you would be of no avail without your will to remain cured. »

« Give me such will as well. »

« Give you it? So should I impose a good will on you? And your free will? What would it become? What would your ego of a man, of a free creature be? Dominated? »

« As I am dominated by Satan, I may also be dominated by God! »

« How you hurt Me, Judas! You pierce My heart! But I forgive you what you do to Me... Dominated by Satan, you said. I did not mean such a dreadful thing... »

« But You were thinking of it because You know that it is true, and because You are aware of it, if it is true that You can read the hearts of men. If it is so, You know that I am no longer free to do what I like... He has seized me and... »

« No. He approached you, tempting you, testing you, and you received him. There is no possession if at the beginning there is no assent to some satanic temptation. The snake introduces his head between the bars closely placed to defend hearts, but he would not be able to enter if man did not widen a passage to admire his alluring aspect and listen to and follow him... Only then man becomes dominated, possessed, because he wants it. God also darts the very kind lights of His paternal love from the heavens, and His lights penetrate us. Or rather: God, to Whom everything is possible, descends into the hearts of men. It is His right. Since man knows how to become a slave dominated by the Dreadful one, why does he not know how to become a servant of God, nay a son of God, and he drives away his Most Holy Father? Are you not replying to Me? Are you not telling Me why you wanted Satan and preferred him to God? And yet, you would still be in time to save yourself! You know that I am going to die. No one knows as well as you do... I do not refuse to die... I am going. I am going towards death because My death will be the Life for so many. Why do you not want to be one of them? Only for you, My friend, My poor sick friend, shall I die in vain? »

« Your death will be of no use for so many, do not delude Yourself. You had better run away and live far from here, enjoying life and teaching Your doctrine, because it is a good one, but without

sacrificing Yourself. »

« Teach My doctrine! What truth could I teach, if I did the opposite of what I teach? What Master should I be if I preached obedience to the will of God and I did not obey it, and love for men and I did not love them, to renounce flesh and the world and I loved both flesh and the honours of the world, not to give rise to scandals and I scandalised not only men, but also the angels, and so forth? Satan is speaking through you just now. As he spoke at Ephraim. As he spoke and acted many times through you, to upset Me. I have recognised all such actions of Satan, accomplished through you, and I did not hate you, I did not get tired of you, but I only felt sorry, infinitely sorry. Like a mother who watches the progress of an illness that will be the cause of her son's death, I have watched the progress of evil in you. Like a father who does not regret anything provided he can find the medicines for his sick son, I regretted nothing in order to save you, I overcame disgust, anger, bitterness, dejection... Like a desolate father and mother, disappointed in all earthly power, turn to Heaven to obtain the life of their son, so I have moaned and I still moan imploring a miracle that may save you, may save you, may save you on the brink of the abyss that is already collapsing under your feet. Judas, look at Me! Before long My Blood will be shed for the sins of men. Not one drop will be left in My veins. The clods of earth, the grass, the garments of My persecutors and Mine... the wood, the iron, the ropes, the thorns of the nabaca... and the spirits awaiting salvation will drink of it... You alone do not want to drink it? I would give all this Blood of Mine for you only. You are My friend. How willingly one dies for one's friend! To save him! One says: "I shall die. But I shall continue to live in the friend to whom I gave life". Like a father, like a mother, who continue to live in their offspring after they have passed away. Judas, I implore you! I am not asking for anything else in this eve of My death. A convict is granted a last grace by his judges and also by his enemies, and his last wish is satisfied. I ask you not to be damned. I do not ask so much Heaven as I ask you and your will... Think of your mother, Judas. What will your mother be afterwards? And the name of your family? I appeal to your pride, which is as bold as ever, to defend you from dishonour. Do not disgrace yourself, Judas. Consider: years and ages will go by, kingdoms and empires will fall, the stars will lose their brightness, the configuration of the Earth will change, and you will always be Judas, as Cain is always Cain, if you persist in your sin. Time will come to an end, and only Paradise and Hell will remain. And in Paradise and in Hell, for the men raised from the dead and received for ever with their souls and bodies where it is right for them to be, you will always be Judas, the cursed greatest culprit, if you do not mend your ways. I will descend to free the spirits from

Limbo, I will lead multitudes of them out of Purgatory, and you... I shall not be able to take you where I am... Judas, I am going to die, I am going happily, because the hour I have been awaiting for millennia has come: the hour to reconcile men to their Father. I shall not reconcile many of them. But the number of those saved, whom I shall contemplate when dying, will console Me for the torture of dying in vain for so many. But, I tell you, it will be dreadful to see you, My apostle and friend, among the latter. Do not give Me such a cruel pain!... I want to save you, Judas. Look. We are going down to the river. Tomorrow at dawn, when everybody is still sleeping, we will cross it, the two of us, and you will go to Bozrah, to Arbela, to Aera, wherever you wish. You know the houses of the disciples. At Bozrah look for Joachim and Mary, the woman I cured of leprosy. I will give you a note for them. I will say that a quiet rest in different air is necessary for your health. It is the truth, unfortunately, because your spirit is diseased and the air of Jerusalem would be lethal to you. But they will think that your body is ill. You will remain there until I come to take you away. I will see to your companions... But do not come to Jerusalem. See? I did not want the women to come, except the strongest ones among them, and those who being mothers are entitled to be near their sons. »

« Also mine? »

« No. Mary will not be in Jerusalem... »

« She is the mother of an apostle as well, and she has always honoured You. »

« Yes. And she would be entitled like the others to be near Me, Whom she loves with perfect justice. But just because of that she will not be there. Because I told her not to come, and she knows how to obey. »

« Why is she not to be there? In what is she different from the mother of Your brothers and from the mother of Zebedee's sons? »

« You. And you know why I am saying this. But if you listen to Me, if you go to Bozrah, I will send word to your mother and will have her brought to you, as being so good, she may help you to recover. Believe Me, we are the only ones to love you thus, without limit. There are three who love you in Heaven: the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Who have contemplated You and Who are awaiting your decision to make you the jewel of Redemption, the greatest prey snatched from the Abyss; and three on the Earth: your mother, My Mother and I. Make us happy, Judas! Both us in Heaven and us on the Earth, who love you with true love. »

« You have said it: only three love me; the others do not... »

« Not as we do. But they love you so much. Eliza defended you. The others were worried about you. When you are away from us, You are in everybody's heart and your name is on everybody's lips. You are not aware of all the love that surrounds you. Your oppressor

conceals it from you. Believe My word. »

« I believe You. And I will try to please You. But I want to do it by myself. I went wrong by myself, by myself I must recover from evil. »

« God only can do by Himself. Your thought is a thought of pride. In pride there is still Satan. Be humble, Judas. Grasp this hand that is offered to you in a friendly way. Take shelter in this heart that opens to protect you. Here, with Me, Satan could do you no harm. »

« I have tried to be with You... I have descended lower and lower... It is useless! »

« Do not say that! Do not say that! React against discouragement. God can do everything. Cling to God. Judas! Judas! »

« Be quiet! Lest the others should hear... »

« And you are worried about the others, but not about your spirit? Poor Judas!... »

Jesus speaks no more. But He remains beside the apostle until the woman, who was a few metres ahead of them, goes into a house that appears in a thick olive-grove. Jesus then says to His disciple: « I will not sleep tonight. I will pray and wait for you... May God speak to your heart. Listen to Him... I will remain here, where I am now, to pray. Until dawn... Remember that. »

Judas does not reply to Him. The other apostles and the women have arrived and they all stop together waiting for the Samaritan woman to come back. She comes back soon. She is with another woman, who is like her, and who greets them saying: « I have not got many rooms because the pruners are already here working at the olive-trees. But I have a large barn with plenty straw in it. I have room for the women. Come. »

« Go! I am staying here to pray. Peace to all of you » says Jesus. And while the others go away, He holds back His Mother saying to Her: « I am staying to pray for Judas, Mother. Will You help Me, too? »

« Yes, I will, Son. Is his good will reviving? »

« No, Mother. But we must act as if... Heaven can do everything, Mother! »

« Yes. And I can still delude Myself. But You cannot, Son. You know. My Holy Son! But I will always imitate You. Go peacefully, My darling! Even when You are no longer able to speak to him, because he shuns You, I will try to bring him back to You. And if the Most Holy Father will only listen to My grief... Will You let me stay with You, Jesus? We will pray together... and I shall have You for Me alone all those hours... »

« Yes, stay with Me, Mother. I will wait for You here. »

Mary goes away quickly, and She is soon back. They sit on their sacks, under the olive-trees. In the blank silence one can hear the gurgling of the river not far away and the chirping of crickets

sounds louder in the silence of the night. Then nightingales begin to sing. An owl hoots and a homed owl screeches. And the stars move slowly in the firmament, as bright as queens, now that the moon has set and no longer outshines them. Then a cock breaks the calm air with its sharp crowing. Much farther away a cock replies, hardly audible. Then the silence is broken again by the arpeggio of dew drops falling from the tiles of the next-door neighbour's house on the pavement surrounding it. Then a fresh rustling of leafy branches shaking off the dampness of the night, and the isolated cry of a bird that awakes, and at the same time a change in the sky and the awakening of light. It is dawn. But Judas has not come...

Jesus looks at His Mother, as white as a lily against the dark olivetree and He says to Her: « We have prayed, Mother. God will make use of our prayer... »

« Yes, Son. You are as white as death. Your vitality has exhaled completely during the night, pressing the gates of Heaven and the decrees of God! »

« You are pale, too, Mother. Great is Your fatigue. »

« Great is My sorrow because of Your sorrow. »

The door of the house is opened cautiously... Jesus startles. But it is the woman who led them there, who comes out noiselessly. Jesus says with a sigh: « I was hoping I might have been wrong! »

The woman comes forward with her empty basket. She sees Jesus. She greets Him and is about to go on. But He calls her. He says to her: « May the Lord reward you for everything. I should like to reward you as well, but I have nothing with Me. »

« I do not want anything, Rabbi. I do not want any reward, but although I do not want money, there is one thing I should like. And You can give me it! »

« What, woman? »

« That the heart of my husband should change. And You can do that, because You really are the Holy Man of God. »

« Go in peace. It will be done to you as you wish. Goodbye. »

The woman goes away quickly towards her house that must really be a sad one.

Mary remarks: « Another unhappy woman. That is why she is good!... »

Peter's ruffled head appears from the granary, followed by John's bright one, and then by the severe profile of Thaddeus, the brownish face of the Zealot, and the thin one of young Benjamin... They are all awake. Mary of Magdala is the first woman to come out of the house, and is followed by Nike and then by the others.

When they are all together and the woman who gave them hospitality has brought a pail of milk still frothy, the Iscariot appears. His head is no longer bandaged, but the bruise of the blow tinges half of his forehead and his eye looks even more gloomy in the violaceous

ring. Jesus looks at him. Judas looks at Jesus, then he turns his head round looking elsewhere.

Jesus says to him: « Buy of the woman whatever she can give us. We are going ahead. Join us. »

And Jesus, after greeting the woman, sets out. They all follow Him.

574. The Rich Young Man.

7th March 1947.

It is another beautiful April morning. The earth and the sky display all their springtime beauties. One breathes light, songs, scents, so sated is the air with brilliance, with voices of joy and love, with fragrance. Rain must have drizzled during the night as the roads are dark and without dust, but they are not muddy, and the stems and leaves washed by the rain are now quivering, all bright and clean, in a mild breeze blowing down from the mountains towards this fertile plain that foreshows Jericho.

People are coming up continuously from the banks of the Jordan; they have ferried from the other bank or they have followed the road that runs along the river, and have come on this one that heads straight for Jericho and Doco, as indicated on road signs. And with the many Jews who from all over are going to Jerusalem for the rite, there are mingled merchants from other places and shepherds with bleating lambs, destined for sacrifices, but unaware of their fate.

Many recognise Jesus and greet Him. They are Jews from Perea and the Decapolis and even from places farther away. There is a group from Caesarea Paneas. They are shepherds, who leading a rather nomadic life with their flocks, have knowledge of the Master, having met Him or heard of Him from disciples.

A shepherd prostrates himself and says to Him: « May I offer You a lamb? »

« Do not deprive yourself of it, man. It is your earnings. »

« Oh! it is my gratitude. You do not remember me, but I remember You. I am one who was cured by You when You cured so many. You cured the bone of my thigh that no one knew how to cure and made an invalid of me. I will give You a lamb willingly. The best one. This one. For the banquet of joy. I know that for the sacrifice You are to buy one. But for the joy! You gave me so much of it. Take it, Master. »

« Yes, take it. It is money that we shall save. Or rather, it will enable us to have a meal because with all our lavishness I have no money left » says the Iscariot.

« Lavishness? Since we left Shechem we have not spent a farthing! » says Matthew.

« Well, I have no more money. I gave the last to Merod. »

« Listen, man » says Jesus to the shepherd to put an end to the Iscariot's words. « I am not going to Jerusalem just now and I cannot take the lamb with Me. Otherwise I would accept it to show you that I welcome your gift. »

« But later You will go to the city. You will stop there for the feasts. You will certainly have a place in which to stay. Tell me where it is, and I shall hand it over to Your friends... »

« I have nothing of the kind... But I have a poor old friend at Nob. Listen to Me carefully: on the day after the Passover Sabbath you will go to Nob at dawn and you will say to John, the Elder of Nob (anyone will tell you where he lives): "Jesus of Nazareth, your friend, sends you this lamb, so that you may celebrate this day with a banquet of joy, because for the true friends of the Christ there is not a greater joy than today's". Will you do that? »

« If that is what You want, I will do it. »

« And you will make Me happy. Not before the day after the Sabbath. Make sure you remember that. And remember the words I told you. Go, now, and peace be with you. And keep your heart firm in that peace in future days. Remember that as well, and go on believing in My Truth. Goodbye. »

Some people have approached them to listen to their conversation and they disperse only when the shepherd, proceeding with his flock, compels them to scatter. Jesus follows the herd taking advantage of the open space left by it.

The people whisper: « So is He really going to Jerusalem? Does He not know that He is banned? »

« Hey! No one can prohibit a son of the Law from presenting himself to the Lord at Passover. Is He guilty of a public crime? No, He is not. Because if He were, the Proconsul would have had Him arrested, as he did with Barabbas. »

And others say: « Have you heard? He has nowhere to go nor friends in Jerusalem. Have they all abandoned Him? Even the man He raised from the dead? How grateful of him! »

« Be quiet. Those two women over there are Lazarus' sisters. I come from the countryside of Magdala and I know them well. If the sisters are with Him it means that Lazarus' family is loyal to Him. »

« Perhaps He dare not enter the town. »

« He is right. »

« God will forgive Him if He remains outside. »

« It is not His fault if He cannot go up to the Temple. »

« He is wisely prudent. If He were caught it would all come to an end before His time. »

« He is certainly not yet ready to be proclaimed our king, and He does not want to be caught. »

« They say that when it was known that He was at Ephraim, He

went everywhere, even to nomadic tribes, to prepare followers and soldiers and to seek protection. »

« Who told you? »

« The usual lies. He is the holy King and not the king of soldiers. »

« Perhaps He will celebrate the supplementary Passover, when it is easier not to be noticed. The Sanhedrin breaks up after the feasts and all the members go home for harvest time. They do not meet again until Pentecost. »

« And once the members of the Sanhedrin have gone away, who do you think will do Him any harm? They are the jackals! »

« H'm! Is it possible for Him to be so prudent? That is too human! He is more than a man and He will not be cowardly prudent. »

« Coward? Why? No one can say that he who spares himself for his mission is a coward. »

« He would always be cowardly, because every mission is inferior to God. So the cult for God must have priority over everything else. »

Those are the words going from mouth to mouth. Jesus pretends He does not hear them.

Judas of Alphaeus stops to wait for the women and when they arrive - they were with the boy, about thirty steps behind - he says to Eliza: « You have given out a lot of money at Shechem after we left! »

« Why? »

« Because Judas has not a far-thing left. Your sandals, Benjamin, are not likely to come. It was destined to be so. It was not possible to enter Tirzah, and even if we had been able to go in, as we had no money, we could not have bought anything... You will have to enter Jerusalem as you are... »

« There is Bethany before Jerusalem » says Martha with a smile.

« And before, there is Jericho and my house » says Nike, also with a smile.

« And I am before everything. I promised and I will do it. We have had interesting experiences during this journey! I have experienced what it means not to have a drachma. And now I will experience what one feels like when one has to sell something at need » says Mary of Magdala.

« And what do you want to sell, if you do not wear jewels any longer? » Martha asks her sister.

« My big silver hairpins. I have so many of them. But to keep this useless weight tidy, iron ones will be sufficient. I will sell them. Jericho is full of people who buy such things. And this is market day as well as tomorrow, and every day because of the festivities. »

« But, sister! »

« What? Are you scandalised at the thought that I may be considered so poor as to have to sell my silver hairpins? Oh! I wish I had

always given rise to such scandals in you! It was much worse when, without being in need, I sold myself to the vice of other people and mine. »

« Be quiet! There is the boy, who does not know! »

« He does not know as yet. Perhaps he does not know that I was the sinner. Tomorrow he would be told by someone who hates me because I am no longer such, and with details not pertaining to my sin, which, however, was so grave. So he had better be told by me, so that he may realise what the Lord, Who accepted him, can do: turn a sinner into a repentant soul; turn a dead person into a resurrected one; of me, dead in my spirit, of Lazarus, dead in his body, He made two living beings. Because that is what the Rabbi has done to us, Benjamin. Always bear that in mind and love Him with all your heart, because He really is the Son of God. »

An obstacle along the road has stopped Jesus and the apostles, and the women join them. Jesus says to the women: « Go ahead, towards Jericho, and enter the town, if you wish so. I am going to Doco with the apostles. At sunset I shall be with you. »

« Oh! Why are You sending us away? We are not tired » say all the women protesting.

« Because I should like you, or at least some of you, to inform the disciples that I shall be at Nike's tomorrow. »

« If that is the case, Lord, we shall go. Come Eliza, and you Johanna, and you Susanna and Martha. We shall prepare everything » says Nike.

« And the boy and I. We shall do our shopping. Bless us, Master. And come soon. Are You staying, Mother? »

« Yes, with My Son. »

They part. Only the three Maries remain with Jesus: His Mother, Her sister-in-law Mary Clopas, and Mary Salome. And Jesus leaves the Jericho road and takes a secondary one that goes to Doco.

And He has not been long on it when from a caravan coming from I do not know where - a rich caravan that certainly-comes from afar, because the women are mounted on camels, closed in swaying palanquins fastened to the humped backs, and the men are riding fiery horses or other camels - a young man departs and, making his camel kneel down, he slides from his saddle and goes towards Jesus. A servant, who has approached him, holds the animal by the reins.

The young man prostrates himself before Jesus, and after his deep salutation, he says to Him: « I am Philip of Canata, the son of true Israelites who have remained such. I was a disciple of Gamaliel until my father's death put me at the head of his business. I have heard You speak more than once. I am aware of Your deeds. I aspire to a better life to have the eternal one that You assure will be possessed by those who create Your Kingdom in themselves. So tell

me, good Master, what shall I have to do to have eternal life? »

« Why do you call Me good? God alone is good. » « You are the Son of God, as good as Your Father. Oh! tell me what I must do. »

« To enter eternal life observe the commandments. »

« Which, my Lord? The ancient ones or Yours? »

« The ancient ones already contain Mine, Mine do not alter the ancient ones. They are always the same: worship the Only true God and respect the laws of cult, do not kill, do not steal, do not commit adultery, do not bring false witness, honour your father and mother, do not injure your neighbour but love him as you love yourself. By doing so you will have eternal life. »

« Master, I have observed all those commandments since my childhood »

Jesus casts a loving glance at him and kindly asks: « And do you think they are not yet sufficient? »

« No, Master. The Kingdom of God is a great thing in us and in the other life. God Who gives Himself to us is an infinite gift. I feel that what is our duty is very little compared with the All Infinite Perfect Being Who gives Himself to us, and I think that we should obtain Him by means of things that are greater than those commanded, in order not to be damned and be agreeable to Him. »

« You are right. To be perfect you still lack one thing. If you want to be as perfect as our Father in Heaven wants, go, sell everything you have and give it to the poor, and in Heaven you will have a treasure that will make you loved by the Father Who has given His Treasure to the poor of the Earth. Then come and follow Me. »

The young man becomes sad and pensive. He then stands up and says: « I will remember Your advice... » and he goes away sadly.

Judas smiles ironically and whispers: « I am not the only one who loves money! »

Jesus turns round and looks at him... then He looks at the other eleven faces around Him and says with a sigh: « How difficult it is for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, the gate of which is narrow, and the way is steep, and those who are laden with the bulky weights of riches cannot go along it and enter! To enter up there only the immaterial treasures of virtue are required and one must be able to part with everything that is attachment to the things of the world and to vanity. » Jesus is very sad...

The apostles look stealthily at one another...

Jesus, looking at the caravan of the young rich man move away, says: « I solemnly tell you that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. »

« Who can be saved, then? Poverty often makes one sin, through envy and lack of respect for other people's property, and through lack of confidence in Providence... Riches are an obstacle to perfection...

So? Who can be saved? »

Jesus looks at them and says: « What is impossible for men, is possible for God, because everything is possible for God. It is sufficient for man to help his Lord with his good will. And it is good will to take the advice given and strive to achieve freedom from riches. To achieve complete freedom, in order to follow God. Because this is the true freedom of man: to follow the voices that God whispers to his heart, and His commandments, not to be the slave of himself, or of the world, or of respect of public opinion, and consequently not to be the slave of Satan. To make use of the wonderful free will that God gave man to wish Good only and freely, and thus attain the very bright, free and blissful eternal life. Man must not be slave even of his own life, if to gratify it he must resist God. I said to you: "He who loses his life for My sake and to serve God will save it for ever". »

« Well! We have left everything to follow You, even what was lawful. So what about us? Shall we enter Your Kingdom? » asks Peter.

« I tell you solemnly that those who have followed Me thus and those who follow Me - because there is always time to make amends for laziness and sins committed so far, there is always time while man is on the Earth and has days in front of him during which he can redress wrongs done - those will be with Me in My Kingdom. I tell you solemnly that you, who have followed Me in the regeneration, will sit on thrones to judge the tribes of the Earth with the Son of man Who will be sitting on the throne of His glory. And once again I tell you solemnly that there is no one who in My Name has left house, fields, father, mother, brothers, wife, sons and sisters to propagate the Gospel and continue My work, who will not receive one hundredfold in this present time and eternal life in the world to come. »

« But if we lose everything how can we centuplicate what we have? » asks Judas of Kerioth.

« I repeat: what is impossible for men is possible for God. And God will give one hundredfold of spiritual joy to those who from men of the world became sons of God, that is spiritual men. They will enjoy real happiness, both here and beyond the Earth. And I also say to you that not all those who seem to be the first, and ought to be the first having received more than everybody, will be such. And not all those who seem to be the last, and even less than the last, as they do not appear to be My disciples or to belong to the chosen People, will be the last. Truly, many who were first will become last, and many who were last, least, will become first... But there is Doco over there. Go ahead all of you, except Judas of Kerioth and Simon Zealot. Go and announce Me to those who may need Me. »

And Jesus with the two apostles He held back waits for the three Maries, who are following them at a few metres' distance.

575. The Third Prophecy of the Passion. The Request of Zebedee's sons.

8th March 1947.

Day is hardly breaking at dawn and it is still difficult to travel when Jesus departs from Doco, still asleep. The shuffling of feet is certainly not heard by anybody because they walk cautiously and because people are still sleeping in their houses. No one speaks until they are out of town, in the country that is awaking slowly in the dim light and is pleasantly fresh after the dew.

The Iscariot then says: « A useless journey with no rest. It was better not to have come so far. »

« The few people we met did not use us badly! They lost their night's sleep to listen to us and to bring us their sick people from the country. On the contrary, it has really been a good thing that we came here. Because those who, either through illness or for some other reason, could not hope to see the Lord in Jerusalem, have seen Him here and have been comforted recovering their health or with other graces. We know that the rest have already gone to Jerusalem... When possible, it is our custom to go there a few days before the festivity » says James of Alphaeus kindly, because he is always gentle, the very opposite of Judas of Kerioth who, even in his good moments, is always violent and overbearing.

« Just because we are going to Jerusalem as well, it was useless to come here. They would have heard and seen us there... »

« But not the women and the sick people » replies Bartholomew supporting James of Alphaeus.

Judas pretends he does not hear them and resuming the thread of his discourse he says: « At least I think that we are going to Jerusalem, although I am no longer certain after the conversation with that shepherd... »

« And where do you expect us to go if we do not go there? » asks Peter.

« Who knows! I don't. Everything we have been doing these last months is so unreal, so unforeseeable, so contrary to common sense and also to justice, that... »

« Hey! I saw you drink milk at Doco, and yet you are speaking like a drunken man! Where do you see things contrary to justice? » asks James of Zebedee with eyes promising trouble. And to make himself clearly understood he adds: « Enough of reproaches to the Just One! Have you understood that that is enough? You are not entitled to reproach Him. No one is entitled to do so, because He is perfect, and we... None of us are entitled, and you are less entitled than

anybody. »

« Yes! If you are not well, take care of yourself, but do not annoy us with your complaints. If you are moody, the Master is over there. Ask Him to cure you and stop it! » says Thomas who has lost his patience.

Jesus is in fact behind, with Judas of Alphaeus and John, and they are helping the women, who not being accustomed to walking in half-light, are proceeding with difficulty along a rough path, which is even darker than the fields, as it runs through a thick olivegrove. And Jesus is speaking animatedly to the women, estranged from what is happening ahead of Him and can also be heard by those who are with Him, because if the words arrive confusedly, their tone gives to understand that they are not kind ones, but they sound rather quarrelsome.

The two apostles, Thaddeus and John, look at each other... but they do not say anything. They look at Jesus and Mary. But Mary is so enveloped in Her mantle that Her face can hardly be seen, and Jesus does not appear to have heard. But when He finishes talking - they were speaking of Benjamin and his future, and they are speaking of Sarah, the widow of Aphek, who has settled at Capernaum and is a loving mother not only to the child of Giscala but also to the children of the woman from Capernaum who, after she married for the second time, no longer loved the children of her first marriage, and then she came to « such a bad end that people considered her death a divine punishment » says Salome - Jesus goes ahead with Judas Thaddeus to join the apostles and when leaving the group He says: « You may stay, John, if you wish so. I am going to reply to the restless one and bring about peace. »

But John, after walking a few steps with the women, seeing that the path is now wider and clearer, runs and joins Jesus Who is saying: « So, be reassured, Judas. We will do nothing, as we have done nothing, unreal. Even now we are not doing anything unforeseeable. This is the time when it is foreseeable that every true Israelite, who is not prevented by diseases or very grave reasons, will go up to the Temple. And we are going up to the Temple. »

« But not all of us. I heard that Marjiam will not be there. Is he perhaps ill? Why is he not coming? Do You think You can replace him with the Samaritan? » Judas' tone is unbearable...

Peter whispers: « O Prudence, hold my tongue fast, for I am a man! » and he presses his lips together firmly in order not to say anything else. His eyes, which are rather deep set, are deeply touching, so clear is the effort of the man to repress his indignation and distress hearing Judas speak thus.

Jesus' presence holds all tongues. He is the only one who speaks and with a really divine calm He says: « Come ahead a little, so that the women may not hear us. For a

few days I have had something to tell you. Something I promised you in the country of Tirzah. But I wanted all of you to be present to hear Me. But not the women. Let us leave them in their humble peace... What I am going to tell you will explain why Marjiam will not be with us, and the same applies to your mother, Judas of Kerieth, and to your daughters, Philip, and to the women disciples of Bethlehem in Galilee with the girl. It is not for everybody to bear certain things. I, the Master, know what is good for My disciples and what they can or cannot stand. Not even you are strong enough to endure the trial. And it would be a grace for you to be excluded. But you will have to continue Me, and you must be aware of how weak you are, so that in future you may be merciful towards the weak. So you cannot be excluded from this dreadful test that will give you the measure of what you are, of what you have remained after being with Me for three years, and of what you have become after the three years you have been with Me. You are twelve. You have all come to Me almost at the same time. It is not the few days between My meeting with James, John and Andrew and the day on which you were received among us, Judas of Kerieth, or the day on which you, My brother James and you, Matthew, came to Me, that can justify so much difference in your perfecting. You were, all of you, even you, My learned Bartholomew, and you, My brothers, very imperfect, absolutely imperfect with regard to what is perfection in My doctrine. Nay, your education, better than that of others among you in the doctrine of old Israel, was an obstacle to your perfecting in Me. And yet none of you have made so much progress as would have been sufficient to bring you all to the same point. One has reached it, others are close to it, others are farther away, others much farther behind, others... yes, I must say also this, instead of coming forwards, have gone backwards. Do not look at one another! Do not try to find out which of you is the first and which the last. He who, perhaps, thinks he is the first and is considered to be the first, has still to undergo probation. He who thinks he is the last, is about to shine in his perfection like a star in the sky. So, once again I say to you: do not judge. Facts will judge with their evidence. For the time being you cannot understand. But soon, very soon, you will remember these words of Mine and you will understand them. »

« When? You have promised to tell us, to explain to us why the Passover purification will be different this year, but You never do tell us » says Andrew complaining.

« It is just about that that I wanted to speak to you. Because both those words and these are the same, as they are rooted in one only principle. We are now going up to Jerusalem for Passover. And all the things foretold by the prophets concerning the Son of man will be fulfilled there. Truly, as the prophets foresaw, as it was already

stated in the order given to the Hebrews in Egypt, as Moses was ordered in the desert, the Lamb of God is about to be sacrificed and His Blood is about to mark the doorposts of hearts, and the angel of the Lord will pass without striking those who have upon themselves, and with love, the Blood of the sacrificed Lamb, that is about to be raised on the cross bar, like the precious metal snake, to be the sign for those wounded by the infernal snake, to be salvation for those who look at it with love. The Son of man, your Master Jesus, is about to be handed over to the chief priests, to the scribes and the elders, who will sentence Him to death and will deliver Him to the Gentiles to be sneered at. And He will be smacked, beaten, spat at, dragged along the streets like a dirty rag, and then the Gentiles, after scourging Him and crowning Him with thorns, will condemn Him to die on the cross reserved for criminals, as the Jewish people, gathered in Jerusalem wanted His death in place of that of a robber, and He will be put to death thus. But, as it is mentioned in the signs of the prophecies, after three days He will rise again. That is the trial awaiting you. The one that will show you your spiritual advancement. I solemnly tell you, who think that you are so perfect as to despise those who do not belong to Israel, and to despise even many of our own people, I tell you solemnly that you, the chosen part of My flock, once the Shepherd has been captured, will be seized with fright and you will disperse fleeing as if the wolves, which will fang Me all over, were set on you. But, I tell you, be not afraid. You will not be hurt in the least. I shall suffice to glut the wild wolves... »

The apostles, while Jesus is speaking, look like people under a shower of stones. They even bend more and more as Jesus goes on speaking. And when He ends saying: « And what I am telling you is impending. It is not like the other times, when there was time before the hour. The hour has now come. I am going, to be handed over to My enemies and sacrificed for the salvation of everybody. And the bud of this flower will have not yet lost its petals, after flowering, when I shall be already dead », some hide their faces in their hands and some moan as if they had been wounded. The Iscariot is livid, absolutely livid...

The first to collect himself is Thomas who proclaims: « That will not happen to You because we will defend you or we will die with You, and we will thus show that we had reached You in Your perfection and that we were perfect in loving You. »

Jesus looks at him without speaking.

Bartholomew after a long pensive silence says: « You said that You will be handed over... But who can hand You over to Your enemies? That is not mentioned in the prophecies. No, it is not mentioned. It would be too dreadful if one of Your friends, one of Your disciples, one of Your followers, even the last one, should hand You over

to those who hate You. No! No one who has heard You with love, even if only once, can commit that crime. They are men, not wild beasts, not demons... No, my Lord. And not even those who hate You will be able... They are afraid of the people, and all the people will be around You! »

Jesus looks also at Nathanael but does not say anything.

Peter and the Zealot are talking animatedly to each other. James of Zebedee reproaches his brother because he sees that he is not upset and John replies: « It's because I have known all that these last three months » and two tears stream down his face. The sons of Alphaeus speak to Matthew who shakes his head downheartedly.

Andrew says to the Iscariot: „Since you have so many friends in the Temple...

« John knows Annas himself » replies Judas and he concludes: « What can we do? What can the word of a man do if that is destined? »

« Do you really think so? » ask Thomas and Andrew together.

« No. I don't think anything. They are useless apprehensions. Bartholomew is right. All the people will be around Jesus. You can already see that by the behaviour of those we meet. And it will be a triumph. You will see that that is what will happen » says Judas of Kerioth.

« In that case why does He... » says Andrew pointing at Jesus Who has stopped waiting for the women.

« Why does He say that? Because He is impressed... and because He wants to test us. But nothing will happen. In any case I will go... »

« Oh! yes. Go and find out! » says Andrew imploring.

They become silent because Jesus is following them once again, walking between His Mother and Mary of Alphaeus.

Mary smiles lightly because Her sister-in-law shows Her some seeds, got I do not know where, and says to Her that she wants to sow them at Nazareth, after Passover, just at the little grotto so dear to Mary: « When You were a little girl, I always remember You with these flowers in Your little hands. You called them the flowers of Your coming. In fact when You were born Your garden was full of them, and that evening when the whole of Nazareth came to see Joachim's daughter, the clusters of these little stars looked like diamonds because of the water from the sky and of the last ray of the sun that lit them up while setting, and since Your name was "Star", everybody said looking at those tiny shining stars: "The flowers have adorned themselves to give a hearty welcome to Joachim's flower, and the stars have left the sky to come to the Star", and they all smiled, happy with the omen and with Your father's joy. And Joseph, my husband's brother, said: "Stars and drops. She is really Mary!". Who could have told him then that You were to become his star? When he came back from Jerusalem, after being chosen as Your spouse? The whole of Nazareth wanted to

celebrate the event with him, because great was the honour that had come to him from Heaven and because of his nuptials with You, the daughter of Joachim and Anne, and everybody wanted to feast with him. He kindly but firmly refused all celebrations, amazing everybody. Because which man, destined to such an honourable wedding and by such a decree of the Most High, would not celebrate the happiness of his soul, flesh and blood? But he used to say: "A severe preparation is required for a great appointment". And with sparing use of words and food, because he had always practised all other continence, he spent that time working and praying, because I believe that every hammer-stroke, every chisel-mark became a prayer, if it is possible to pray working. His face was enraptured. I used to go to tidy up the house, to bleach sheets and all other things left by Your mother and which had yellowed with age, and I used to watch him working in the kitchen garden and in the house, making them as beautiful as if they had never been neglected, and I used to speak to him, too... but he was engrossed in thought. He used to smile. Not at me or at anybody else, but at a thought of his, that was not the thought of every man about to get married. That is a smile of mischievous sensual pleasure... He... seemed to smile at the invisible angels of God, and to speak to them and to consult with them... Oh! I am sure they told him how to treat You! Because later - and this amazed everybody in Nazareth and almost irritated my Alphaeus - he put off the wedding as long as possible, and we never understood why he suddenly made up his mind before the fixed time. And also when we heard You were a mother, how surprised was Nazareth at his contained joy!... Also my James is somewhat like that. And he is becoming so more and more. Now that I watch him carefully - I don't know why, but since we came from Ephraim he seems to have changed completely - I see him thus... just like Joseph. Look at him even now, Mary, now that he turns round again to look at us. Does he not have the pensive attitude so habitual to Your spouse Joseph? He smiles, but I do not know whether his smile is a sad or vague one. He looks, but he seems to be looking far away, beyond us, as Joseph did so often. Do You remember how Alphaeus used to tease him? He used to say: "Brother, are you still looking at the pyramids?". He would shake his head without speaking, patient and engrossed in thought. He was never talkative. But when You came back from Hebron! He did not even come to the fountain by himself any longer, as he used to do and as everybody does. He was either with You or at his work. And with the exception of the Sabbaths, when he went to the synagogue, or when he went somewhere on business, no one can say that they saw Joseph loitering about during those months. Then you went away... How distressing it was to have no news of you after the slaughter! Alphaeus went as far as Bethlehem... "They went away" they said. But how could

we believe them, if they had a mortal hatred of you in town, where the innocent blood was still red and the ruins were still smoking and they blamed you for the blood that had been shed? He went to Hebron and then to the Temple, because it was Zacharias' turn. Elizabeth gave him nothing but her tears, Zacharias only words of comfort. They were both worried about John and fearing fresh cruelties, they had hidden him and trembled for him. They had no news of you and Zacharias said to Alphaeus: "If they are dead, their blood is on me, because I convinced them to remain in Bethlehem". My Mary! My Jesus so beautiful at the Passover after His birth! And to have no news of You for such a long time! But why never any news?... »

« Because it was better to be silent. Where we were, there were many Marias and Josephs, and it was wise to be considered as a normal married couple » Mary replies quietly, then with a sigh She says: « And even in their sadness they were happy days. Evil was still so far away! If as human beings we lacked so many things, our spirits were sated with the joy of having You, My Son! »

« You have Your Son even now, Mary. Joseph is no longer with You, that is true! But Jesus is here and with His full love of an adult » remarks Mary of Alphaeus.

Mary raises Her head to look at Jesus. Although Her lips smile faintly, Her eyes reveal Her torture. But She does not utter another word.

The apostles have stopped waiting for them and they all gather together, including James and John who were behind with their mother. And while they rest after their long walk and some eat a little bread, the mother of James and John approaches Jesus Who has not sat down, anxious as He is to set out again, and she prostrates herself before Him.

As her desire to ask for something is obvious, Jesus asks her: « What do you want, woman? Tell Me. »

« Grant me a grace before You go away, as You say. »

« Which? »

« Arrange for these two sons of mine, who have left everything for Your sake, to sit one at Your right hand and the other at Your left, when You will be sitting in Your glory, in Your Kingdom. »

Jesus looks at the woman and then at the two apostles and He says: « You have suggested this request to your mother, misinterpreting the promises I made yesterday. You will not receive in a kingdom on the Earth the one hundredfold of what you have left. So are you becoming greedy and foolish, too? But it is not your fault. The mephitic twilight of darkness is already advancing and the polluted air of Jerusalem is approaching and is corrupting and blinding you... I tell you that you do not know what you are asking! Can you drink of the cup that I am going to drink? »

« We can, Lord. »

« How can you say so if you have not understood the bitterness of My cup? It will not be only the bitterness that I described to you yesterday, the bitterness of the Man of all sorrows. There will be tortures that you would not be in a position to understand even if I should describe them to you... And yet, yes, although you are still like two boys who do not know the value of what they ask, as you are two just spirits who love Me, you will certainly drink of My cup. But it is not for Me to grant you to sit at My right or at My left. It is granted to those for whom it was prepared by My Father. »

The other apostles, while Jesus is still speaking, are very sharp in criticising the request of the sons of Zebedee and of their mother.

Peter says to John: « How could you?! I no longer recognise you for what you were! »

And the Iscariot with his demoniac smile says: « Truly the first are the last! Surprises and discoveries nowadays... » and he laughs on the wrong side of his mouth.

« Have we perhaps followed our Master to be honoured? » asks Philip reproachingly.

Instead of replying to the two apostles, Thomas addresses Salome saying: « Why did you have your sons mortified? You should have pondered on the matter and prevented all that, if they did not. »

« That is true. Our mother would not have done that » says Thaddeus.

Bartholomew does not speak, but his countenance evidences his disapproval.

In order to calm everybody's indignation, Simon Zealot says: « We can all make mistakes... »

Matthew, Andrew and James of Alphaeus do not say anything, but they are clearly suffering because of the incident that injures John's beautiful perfection.

Jesus makes a gesture to impose silence and says: « What? Is one error going to bring about many? You, who are reproaching with indignation, do you not realise that you are committing a sin as well? Leave these brothers of yours alone. My rebuke is sufficient. Their humiliation is evident, and their repentance is humble and sincere. You must love one another, supporting one another. Because none of you are yet perfect. You must not imitate the world and the men of the world. In the world, as you are aware, princes lord over their nations and their great men exert their power in the names of the princes. But that must not happen among you. You must not be eager to lord over men and your companions. On the contrary, anyone who wants to be great among you, must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you, must be everybody's servant. Exactly as your Master did. Did I come to lord over People and oppress them? Or to be served? Certainly not. I

came to serve. Thus, as the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many, you must do likewise, if you want to be as I am and where I am. Go now. And be at peace with one another as I am at peace with you. »

Jesus says to me:

« Make the following sentence very clear: "... you will certainly drink of My chalice". In translations you read: "My chalice". I said: "of My chalice", not "My chalice". No man could have drunk My chalice. I alone, the Redeemer, had to drink all My chalice. My disciples, My imitators and lovers, are certainly allowed to drink of that chalice from which I drank, with regard to that drop, sip or sips, that God's predilection grants them to drink. But no one will ever drink all the chalice as I did. So it is right to say "of My chalice" and not "My chalice". »

576. Meeting with the Disciples Led by Manaen and Arrival at Jericho.

11th March 1947.

The white walls of the houses of Jericho and its palm-trees are already standing out against the ceramic or enamel deep blue of the sky, when, near a thicket of ruffled tamarisks, of sensitive mimosas, of hawthorn with very long thorns, of other plants mostly thorny, which seem to have been thrown there from the rough mountain behind Jericho, Jesus meets with a large group of disciples led by Manaen. They seem to be waiting. They are, in fact, and they say so after greeting the Master, stating that some more have gone along other routes to get information, as the delay of a whole night in arriving at Jericho had worried them.

« I came here with these. And I will not leave You any more until I see You safe with Lazarus » says Manaen.

« Why? Is there any danger?... » asks Judas Thaddeus.

« You are in Judaea... You are aware of the decree. And of their hatred. So we must fear everything » replies Manaen and turning towards Jesus he says: « I brought the strongest men with me because, if they had not caught You, we presumed that You would come this way. And taking into account our worth as disciples and men, we confide in impressing the wicked and having You respected. »

In fact there are with him the ex-disciples of Gamaliel, John the priest, Nicolaus of Antioch, John of Ephesus, and other strong men in the prime of life, more gentlemanly looking than common people, whom I do not know. Manaen introduces some of them quickly, while he does not introduce others. They are men from all the regions in Palestine, and among them there are two from the court

of Herod Philip. Thus the names of the most ancient families in Israel resound on the road near the ruffled thicket, where the leaves of mimosas quiver in the wind and the hawthorns bend their new shoots.

« Let us go. Is there no one with the women, at Nike's? » asks Jesus.

« The shepherds. All of them, except Jonathan who is waiting for Johanna in the mansion in Jerusalem. But Your disciples have grown exceedingly. They were about five hundred waiting for You yesterday at Jericho. So much so that Herod's servants became upset and informed him. And he did not know whether he should tremble or be pitiless. But he is haunted by the memory of John and he dare no longer lift his hand against any prophet... »

« Good! That will do You no harm! » exclaims Peter and he rubs his hands gladly.

« But he is the one who is worth less. He is an idol that anyone can move as one likes, and those who have him in their hands know how to move him. »

« And who has him in his hands? Pilate perhaps? » asks Bartholomew.

« Pilate does not need Herod to take action. Herod is a servant. The mighty ones do not apply to servants » replies Manaen.

« Who, then? » asks Bartholomew.

« The Temple » replies resolutely one who is with Manaen.

« But Herod is anathema to the Temple. His sin... »

« Notwithstanding your learning and your age, you are very naive, Bartholomew! So do you not know that the Temple can overcome many, too many things to attain its objects? That is why it does not deserve to exist any longer » says Manaen with a gesture of utter contempt.

« You are an Israelite. You must not speak thus. The Temple is always the Temple for us » says Bartholomew in an admonishing tone.

« No. It is the corpse of what it was. And a corpse turns into an unclean carrion when it has been dead for a long time. That is why God sent the living Temple. That we may prostrate ourselves before the Lord without performing an unclean pantomime. »

« Be quiet! » whispers to Manaen another man who is with him, as he speaks too clearly. He is one of those who were not introduced and he is completely enveloped in his mantle.

« Why should I be silent, if my heart speaks thus? Do you think that my words may harm the Master? If so, I will be quiet. But for no other reason. Even if they should condemn me I will say: "That is what I think and punish no one but me. »

« Manaen is right. Enough of being silent for fear. It is time for every man to declare his opinion for or against the Master and to reveal what he has in his heart. I am of your opinion, brother in

Jesus. And if that should bring about our death, we shall die together still professing the truth » says Stephen with transport.

« Be wise! Be very wise! » says Bartholomew admonishing them. « The Temple is always the Temple. It may make mistakes, it is certainly not perfect, but it is... it is... But after God there is no greater person, no greater power than the High Priest and the Sanhedrin... They represent God; and we must see what they represent, not what they are. Am I wrong, Master? »

« You are not wrong. In every establishment one must see its origin, in this case the Eternal Father, Who constituted the Temple and the hierarchies, the rites and the authority of the men appointed to represent it. We must refer judgement to the Father. He knows when and how to intervene, and what action to take so that corruption, by spreading, may not contaminate all men and make them doubt God... And Manaen is right with regard to that, as he has seen the reason for My coming at the present hour. It is also necessary for you, Bartholomew, to moderate your ultra-conservatism by means of the innovating spirit of Manaen, so that the measure may be just and feelings perfect. Every excess is always harmful: to him who accomplices it, to him who suffers it, or to him who notices it being scandalised and, if he is not an honest soul, making use of it to inform against his brothers. But that is an action of Cain, and will not be accomplished by the children of the Light, as it is the work of Darkness. »

The man who is all so covered, that only his dark very lively eyes can be seen and who warned Manaen not to speak too much, kneels down and takes Jesus' hand saying: « You are good, Master. I have become acquainted with You too late, o Word of God! But still in time to love You as You deserve, if not to serve You as long as I would have liked, as I would like now. »

« It is never too late for the hour of God. It comes at the right moment. And it grants as much time to serve the Truth as one's will desires. »

« But who is he? » whisper the apostles to one another, and they ask the disciples, but in vain. No one knows who he is or, if they do, they do not wish to tell.

« Who is he, Master? » asks Peter when he succeeds in approaching Jesus Who is walking in the middle of the group, with the women behind Him, the disciples ahead of Him, His cousins beside Him and the apostles around Him.

« A soul, Simon. Nothing more than that. »

« But... can You trust him, if You do not know who he is? »

« I know who he is. And I know his heart. »

« Ah! I see! Just like the Veiled woman at the Clear Water... I will not ask further questions... » and Peter is happy because Jesus, moving away from James, draws him close to Himself.

They are now at Jericho. A crowd of people singing hosannas rush out of the gate and Jesus can proceed with difficulty to cross the town going to Nike's house, which is out of Jericho on the other side. People implore Him to speak. Children are lifted up as if to form a living impassable barrier, relying on Jesus' love for little ones. People shout: « You can speak. He has already fled to Jerusalem » and with those words gestures are made towards Herod's beautiful palace, which is now closed.

Manaen confirms: « It is true. He went away during the night, noiselessly. He is afraid. »

But nothing stops Jesus. He proceeds saying: « Peace! Peace! Let those who are suffering or grieved come to Nike's house. Let those who wish to hear Me come to Jerusalem. I am the Pilgrim here. Just like all of you. I will speak in the house of the Father. Peace! Peace and blessings! Peace! »

It is already a little triumph, a prelude to the entrance into Jerusalem, now so close at hand.

I am astonished at Zacchaeus' absence until I see him standing at the entrance of Nike's property among his friends with the shepherds and the women disciples. They all run towards Jesus and prostrate themselves, then they escort Him while He, blessing them, proceeds through the orchard towards the hospitable house.

577. With Some Unknown Disciples.

15th March 1947.

A large number of people have crowded on Nike's meadows, where the hay is drying in the sun. And two heavy tilted wagons are waiting near the meadows. And I realise why they are waiting when I see all the women disciples being led towards them and get on them after the Master has blessed and dismissed them. Also the Blessed Virgin goes away with the other women disciples, and also the young man from Enon joins them, while many disciples place themselves at the sides of the wagons and, when the latter move off at the slow pace of the oxen, also the disciples set out. The apostles, Zacchaeus and his friends remain on the meadows with a small group of personages, all enveloped in their mantles, as if they did not want to be recognised.

Jesus slowly retraces His steps towards the middle of the meadow and sits on a heap of half-dry hay, which will soon be taken to the hay-loft. He is engrossed in thought, and everybody respects His concentration, remaining in three different groups, a little aside from Him and from one another.

The meditation is prolonged and so is the wait. The sun becomes stronger and stronger and blazes down on the meadow that smells strongly of drying stems. Those who are waiting take shelter at the

edges of the meadow, where the last trees of the orchard cast a refreshing shade.

Jesus remains alone. Alone in the sun that is already strong, all white in His linen tunic and in the headgear of light byssus that blows lightly in the breeze. Perhaps it is the one woven by Syntyche. The slow plaintive bellowing of cows can be heard from a nearby stable, and the chirruping of nestlings from the branches of the trees in the orchard and from the threshing-floors: the chirping of fledglings and the peeping of cheeky chicks. The life that continues being renewed at each springtime. Doves are wheeling high above, before going back to their nest with steadfast flights. I do not know whether in Nike's nearby house, or in some field, a woman is singing a lullaby, and the thin voice of the child, at first shrill and trembling, like the bleating of a lamb, grows faint and then is silent...

Jesus is pensive. He is still meditating. Always. Insensible to the sun. I have often noted the exceptional resistance of our blessed Jesus to the rigours of the seasons. I have never understood whether He felt heat and cold severely and endured them without complaining, out of spirit of mortification, or whether, as He dominated unchecked elements, He also dominated excessive heat and cold. I do not know. I know that, although I have seen Him wet to the skin in downpours and wet with perspiration in dog-days, I have never noticed any gesture of discomfort in Him owing to heat or cold, neither have I seen Him take those precautionary measures that men usually take against the excesses of sun or frost.

It was pointed out to me one day that in Palestine it is not customary to go about bare-headed and that consequently I am wrong in saying that Jesus' bare fair-haired head shines in the sunshine. It may be very true that in Palestine it is not possible to go about bare-headed. I have never been there and I do not know. What I know is that Jesus usually does not wear any headgear. And if at the beginning of a journey He has any on, He soon takes it off, as if He were impatient of encumbrances, and He carries it in His hand, using it, more than anything else, to wipe the dust and perspiration from His face. When it rains, He covers His head with the edge of His mantle. In strong sunshine, particularly when He is on the way to some place, He looks for the shade of rows of trees, even if they are not close to one another, to protect Himself from sunbeams. But He hardly ever wears a light veil on His head as He is doing today. This comment may seem useless to some people, but it is also part of what I see and I mention it while Jesus is thinking...

« It will hurt Him to stay there so long! » exclaims one who belongs to a group that is neither the apostolic one nor Zacchaeus'.

« Let us go and tell His disciples... Further... I would like... I would not like to be delayed too long » replies another man.

« Eh! Yes. The Adummim mountains are not very safe by night... »

They go towards the apostles and speak to them.

« All right. I will go and tell them that you want to go away » says the Iscariot.

« No. Not thus. We would like to be at least at En-Shemesh before dark. »

Judas goes away smiling ironically. He bends over the Master and says to Him: « They say that it is because the sun may hurt You but the truth is that they may be hurt by being noticed too much - but the Jews want to be dismissed. »

« I am coming... I was thinking... They are right » and Jesus stands up.

« Everybody, except me... » grumbles the Iscariot.

Jesus looks at him and is silent. They go together towards those men whom Judas has called Jews.

« I had already dismissed all of you. I told you yesterday. I will speak only in Jerusalem... »

« That is true. But the fact is that we should like to speak to You, we who... We can speak to you privately. »

« Satisfy them. They are afraid of us, or, more exactly, of me » says Judas of Kerioth again, with his venomous smile.

« We are not afraid of anybody. If we wanted we knew how to protect our tranquillity. But they are not all cowards yet in Palestine. We are descendants of David's valiant men, and if you are not yet despised and a slave, you must pay homage to our stock, the first by the holy king's side, the first by the Maccabees' side. And the first even now, when honour and advice are to be given to the Son of David. Because He is great. But every creature, no matter how great one may be, may need a friend in the crucial hours of life » replies passionately one who is all clothed with linen garments, including his mantle and headgear, which covers almost all his severe face.

« He has us as friends. We have been such for three years, since You... »

« We did not know Him. Too often we were deceived by false Messiahs to believe every assertion readily. But the latest events have enlightened us. His deeds are the deeds of God, and we say that He is the Son of God. »

« And do you think that He is in need of you? »

« As the Son of God, no. But as the Man, yes. He has come to be the Man. And the Man always needs men, His brothers. In any case, why are you afraid? Why do you not want us to speak? Tell us. »

« Me? Speak! You may speak! People listen more to sinners than to just men. »

« Judas! I thought that such words should feel like fire on your lips! How dare you judge when your Master does not judge? It is written: "If your sins were like scarlet, they shall become as white

as snow, and if they were as red as crimson, they shall be as white as wool". »

« But You are not aware that among these... »

« Be silent! Let them speak.. »

« Lord, we know. The charge against You is ready. They accuse You of violating the Law and the Sabbaths, of loving the people of Samaria more than us, of defending publicans and prostitutes, of having recourse to Beelzebub and to other evil powers, of black magic, of hating the Temple and wanting to destroy it, of... »

« That is enough. Anybody can make charges, but it is more difficult to prove the charge. »

« But among them there are those who support it. Do You think that they are just in there? »

« I shall reply to you with the words of Job, who is a figure of the Patient Man who I am: "Far from me the thought of considering all of you just. But I will maintain my innocence until the end, I will not give up my justification which I have begun, because my conscience does not reproach me for anything in all my life". Now, all Israel can testify, because I will not justify Myself with words that also a liar can speak, all Israel can testify that I have always taught people to respect the Law, nay, even more: that I perfected obedience to the Law, and the Sabbaths have not been profaned by Me... What do you want to say? Speak up! You made a gesture and then you stopped. Speak up! »

One of the... mysterious little group says: « Lord, at the last session of the Sanhedrin they read a denunciation against You. It came from Samaria, from Ephraim, where You were, and it stated that it had been proved that You had violated the Sabbath several times and... »

« And I reply to you once again with Job: "And what is the hope of the hypocrite if he steals our of avarice, and God does not free his soul?". This wretch, who shows one face and has a different heart and wants to commit the great robbery out of envy of My welfare, is already on the road to Hell, and it will be of no use for him to have money, and hope for honours, and dream to ascend where I did not want to go, in order not to betray the holy Decree. Shall we busy ourselves with him, but to pray for him? »

« But the Sanhedrin has derided You saying: "Here is the Samaritans' love for Him! They accuse Him to ingratiate themselves with us". »

« Are you sure that it was a Samaritan hand that wrote those words? »

« No. But Samaria was severe with You during the past days... »

« Because the messengers of the Sanhedrin subverted and roused the people with false advice, exciting foolish hopes that I had to demolish. In any case it is said of Ephraim and of Judah, and it can

be said of every place, because inconstant is the heart of man who forgets favours and yields to threats: "Your goodness is like morning mist, like dew that disappears in the morning". But that does not prove that they, the Samaritans, are the accusers of the Innocent. A wrong love made them furious against Me, but it is love that is delirious. Which other proof proves the charge of preference for the Samaritans? »

« You are accused of loving them so much that You always say: "Listen, Israel", instead of saying: "Listen, Judah". And that You cannot reproach Judah... »

« Really? Is it there that the wisdom of the rabbis gets lost? Am I not the Branch of justice sprouted from David and through which, as Jeremiah says, Judah will be saved? The Prophet foresees that Judah, above all Judah, will then need salvation. And this Branch, says the Prophet again, will be called the Lord, our Just One "because, says the Lord, David shall never lack a male descendant to sit on the throne of the house of Israel". So what? Has the Prophet made a mistake? Was he drunk? With what? Certainly with penance and nothing else. Because no one can maintain that Jeremiah was a guzzler, in order to accuse Me. And yet he says that the Branch of David will save Judah and sit on the throne of Israel. So one should say that the enlightened Prophet sees that Israel rather than Judah will be elected, that the King will go to Israel, and that it will be a grace if Judah receives only salvation. So will it be called the Kingdom of Israel? No. It will be called the Kingdom of Christ. Of Him Who joins the scattered parts and rebuilds in the Lord, after having, according to the other Prophet, in a month - what am I saying in a month? - in less than one day, judged and condemned the three false shepherds and closed My soul to them because their souls remained closed to Me, and although they desired Me in figure they did not love Me in Nature. Now He Who sent Me and gave Me the two staves will break both, so that Grace may be lost for cruel people, and the Scourge may come from the world, not from Heaven. And nothing is more painful than the scourges that men use for men. It will be so. Oh! so! I shall be struck and two thirds of the sheep will be scattered. Only one third, always one third only, will be saved and will persevere until the end. And this third part will pass through the fire through which I shall be the first to pass, and it will be purified and tested like silver and gold, and it will be said to it: "You are My people" and it will say to Me: "You are my Lord". And there will be who weighs the thirty shekels, the price of the dreadful deed, the foul wages. And they will no longer be able to go back in from where they came out, because also the stones would cry with horror seeing those shekels, stained with the blood of the Innocent and with the perspiration of Him Who will be persecuted by the most violent desperation, and they will serve, as it was said,

to buy the field for foreigners from the slaves of Babylon. Oh! the field for foreigners! Do you know who they are? Those of Judah and Israel, those who soon, for ages, will have no fatherland any more. Not even the earth of their ancient soil will receive them. It will vomit them out even when they are dead, because they wanted to repel the Life. How horrible!... »

Jesus becomes silent, as if He were oppressed, with His head lowered. He then raises it, looks round, He sees those who are present: the apostles, the secret disciples, Zacchaeus and his friends. He sighs like one who awakes from a nightmare. He says: « What else were you saying? Ah! that I am accused of loving publicans and prostitutes. That is true. They are sick, they are dying. I, the Life, give Myself to them as life. Come, My redeemed flock » He says to Zacchaeus and his friends. « Come and listen to My order. To many, who were whiter than you are, I said: "Do not come to Jerusalem". To you I say: "Come". This may seem to be unfair... »

« It is in fact » says the Iscariot interrupting Him.

Jesus feigns He has not heard him. He continues to speak to Zacchaeus and his companions saying to those enveloped in their mantles: « But I say to you: come, because you are plants that need dew more than others, so that your good will may be assisted by the Mighty Father and you may now grow freely in Grace. With regard to other matters... Heaven itself will reply by means of unmistakable signs. The living Temple may really be destroyed, and rebuilt in three days, and for ever. But the dead Temple, which will only be shaken and will think that it has won, will perish never to rise again. Go! And be not afraid. Wait for My day, doing penance, and its dawn will bring you to the Light definitely. » He then says to Zacchaeus: « You may all go as well. But not now. Be in Jerusalem at the dawn of the day after the Sabbath. Beside the just I want those who have been raised again, because in the Kingdom of the Christ there are innumerable seats. As many as the men of good will. » And He sets out towards Nike's house through a thick shady orchard.

A little path is like a yellowish ribbon on the green ground and a clucking hen crosses it with her golden-hued chickens and the timorous mother, in the presence of so many strangers, crouches and spreads out her wings to defend them clucking louder, fearing danger for her little ones. And they rush and hide under the maternal feathers peeping until they feel safe, and do not seem to exist any more...

Jesus stops to contemplate her... and tears stream from His eyes.

« He is weeping! Why is He weeping? He is weeping! » they all whisper: the apostles, disciples and redeemed sinners. And Peter says to John: « Ask Him why He is weeping... » And John, in his usual attitude, lightly bent out of respect, looking up at Him, asks: « Why

are You weeping, my Lord? Perhaps because of what You were told and what You said previously? »

Jesus rouses Himself, He smiles sadly and pointing at the hen, which is still protecting her offspring with love, He says: « I also, one with My Father, saw Jerusalem, as Ezekiel said, naked and shameful. I saw her and passed close to her, and when the time came, the time of My love, I spread My mantle on her and I covered her nakedness. I wanted to make her queen after being her father, and to protect her, as that hen is protecting her little ones... But, whilst the brood are grateful for the attention of their mother and take shelter under her wings, Jerusalem refuses My mantle... But I will persevere in My plan of love... I... My Father, later, will act according to His will. » And Jesus goes on to the grass in order not to disturb the brooding-hen and He passes by, and tears stream down His pale sorrowful face once again.

They all imitate Him, following His steps and whispering until they arrive at the threshold of Nike's house. Only Jesus goes in with the apostles and the others proceed to their destinations...

578. Prophecy on Israel. Miracles Worked During the Journey from Jericho to Bethany.

17th March 1947.

It is daybreak and its whiteness is shading into the early pink hue of dawn. The fresh silence of the country is broken more and more and is adorned with the trills of the awakened birds.

Jesus is the first to come out of Nike's house, He silently sets the door ajar and turns His steps towards the green orchard resounding with the limpid notes of blackcaps and the flute-like song of blackbirds.

But before He arrives there four people come from it towards Him. Four of those who were in the unknown group yesterday and who had never uncovered their faces. They prostrate themselves to the ground, and at Jesus' order and at the question He asks them, after greeting them with His salutation of peace: « Stand up! What do you want of Me? » they stand up, throw their mantles behind their backs and push back their linen headgears, with which they had hidden their faces, as do Bedouins.

I recognise the thin pale face of Joel of Abijah, the scribe seen in the vision of Sabea. I do not know the others until they mention their names: « I, Judas of Beth-Horon, the last of the true Hasidaeans, the friends of Mattathias the Asmonaeon »; « I, Eliel, and my brother Elkanah from Bethlehem in Judah, the brothers of Johanna, Your disciple, and we have no greater title than that. We were absent when You were strong, we are present now that You are persecuted »; « I, Joel of Abijah, whose eyes have been blind

for so long, but are now open to the Light. »

« I had already dismissed you. What do you want of Me? »

« To tell You that... if we are covered up, it is not because of You, but... » says Eiel.

« Come on! Speak up! »

« But Joel, you had better speak, because you are the most informed »

« Lord What I know is so... horrible... I would not like even the clods of earth to hear, to know what I am about to say... »

« The clods will really be startled, but I shall not. Because I know what you want to say. But speak just the same... »

« If You know... do not let my lips tremble saying such a dreadful thing. It is not the case that I think that You are lying saying that You know and that You want me to speak to inform You, but just because... »

« Yes. Because it is a thing that cries to the Lord. But I will mention it to persuade everybody that I know the hearts of men. You, a member of the Sanhedrin and won over to the Truth, have found out something that you cannot bear by yourself, because it is too great. And you went to these true Judaeans whose spirits are only good, to consult with them. You did the right thing, although it will be to no avail. The last of the Hasidaeans would be ready to repeat the gesture of his ancestors in order to serve the true Liberator. And he is not the only one. Also his relative Barzillai would do so and many more with him. And Johanna's brothers for My sake and for the sake of their sister, and also of their Fatherland, would join him. But I shall not triumph by means of lances and swords. Enter the Truth completely. My triumph will be a celestial one. You - and this makes you even more pale and emaciated than usual - you know who presented the witnesses for the persecution against Me, the witnesses who, while they are false in their spirits, are truthful with regard to the material meaning of their words, because I did infringe the Sabbath when I had to flee, as My hour had not yet come, and when I saved two innocents from the highwaymen, and I could say that necessity justified the actions as necessity justified David for eating the consecrated bread. It is true that I took shelter in Samaria, although, when My hour came and the Samaritans suggested that I should remain with them as their Pontiff, I refused honours and safety to remain faithful to the Law, even if that means handing Myself to My enemies. It is true that I love sinners and prostitutes to the extent of tearing them away from sin. It is true that I preach the ruin of the Temple, even if these words of Mine are nothing but the Messiah's confirmation of the words of His prophets. He who makes these and other charges and turns also miracles into indictments, and has made use of everything on the Earth to try to induce Me to sin and be able to add further

charges to the previous ones, is one of My friends. That also was said by the king prophet, from whom I descend through My Mother: "He who shared my bread raised his heel against me". I know. I would die twice if I could, not to prevent him from committing the crime - by now... his will has surrendered to Death, and God does not do violence to man's freedom - but if at least... oh! if at least the torture of the horrible deed accomplished would make him repent at God's feet... That is why you, Judas of Beth-Horon, yesterday admonished Manaen to be quiet. Because the snake was present and he might have damaged the disciple, besides the Master. No. Only the Master will be struck. Be not afraid. It will not be because of Me that you will have sufferings and misfortunes, but because of the crime of a whole population you will all have what the prophets said. Oh! My miserable Fatherland! Miserable land that will experience the punishment of God! Miserable inhabitants and children whom I now bless and I would like to be saved, and who, although innocent, when adults, will suffer the torture of the greatest misfortune. Look at this land of yours: flourishing, beautiful, green and flowery like a wonderful carpet, as fertile as Eden... Impress its beauty on your hearts, and then... when I shall have gone back whence I came... run away. Run away while you can, before the desolation of ruin, like a hellish fury, spreads here demolishing and destroying, making everything sterile and burning more than happened at Gomorrah, more than happened at Sodom... Yes, more than there, where it was nothing but quick death. Here... Joel, do you remember Sabea? For the last time she prophesied the future of God's people who did not want the Son of God. »

The four men are dumbfounded. The fear of the future makes them dumb. Eliel at last says: « What do You advise us to do?... »

« Yes. Go. There will be nothing left here worthy of detaining the children of Abraham's people. On the other hand, you notables of the people in particular, would not be left here... The mighty ones made prisoners embellish the triumph of the victor. The new and immortal Temple will fill the Earth with itself and every man seeking Me will have Me, because I shall be wherever a heart loves Me. Go. Take your women, sons and the old ones away... You are offering Me salvation and help. I advise you to save yourselves, and I help you by means of this advice... Do not disregard it. »

« But now... what greater harm can Rome do us? We are dominated. And if her law is a hard one, it is also true that Rome has rebuilt houses and towns and... »

« Really, you had better know that not one stone will be left intact in Jerusalem. Fire, battering-rams, catapults, spears will knock down, demolish, destroy every house and the holy City will become a cavern, and will not be the only one... Our Fatherland will become a cavern. The grazing ground of onagers and jackals, as the

prophets say. And not for one or more years, or for ages, but for ever. The desert, aridity, sterility... That is the destiny of this land! The field of contentions, the place of torture, the dream of reconstruction always destroyed by an inflexible sentence, attempts at resurrection stifled at birth. The destiny of the Land that rejected the Saviour and wanted a dew that is fire on culprits. »

« So... will there never again be a Kingdom of Israel? Shall we never again be what we dreamed? » ask the three Jewish notables in panting voices. Joel, the scribe, is weeping...

« Have you ever watched an old tree whose medulla has been destroyed by disease? For years it vegetates with difficulty, with so much difficulty that it neither blossoms nor yields fruit. Only rare leaves on the worn out branches reveal that there is still a little lymph rising... Then in April it blossoms miraculously, it becomes covered with dense foliage and the owner, who for many years took care of it without receiving any fruit, rejoices thinking that it has recovered and has become luxuriant after so much decay... Oh! deception! Sudden death follows such an exuberant outburst of life. The blossoms, leaves and little fruit fall off, while they seemed to have already set on the branches promising a rich harvest, and with a sudden crash the tree, rotten at its base, falls to the ground. That is what Israel will do. After ages of sterile scattered vegetation, it will gather on its old trunk and will have an appearance of reconstruction. The dispersed People gathered together at last. Gathered and forgiven. Yes. God will wait for that hour to end the course of ages. Then time will not longer exist, but only eternity. Blessed are those who, being forgiven, will form the fleeting blossoming of the last Israel that, after so many ages, will have become of the Christ, and will die redeemed, with all the peoples of the Earth, blessed with those who, among them, have not only become acquainted with My existence, but have embraced My Law as the law of salvation and life. I can hear the voices of My disciples. Go before they come... »

« It is not out of cowardice, Lord, that we are trying to remain unknown, but to serve You, to be able to serve You. If they knew that we, I in particular, have come to You, we should be excluded from future resolutions... » says Joel.

« I understand. But bear in mind that the snake is wily. You in particular, Joel, be cautious... »

« Oh! let them kill me! I would prefer my death to Yours! So that I should not see the days You mentioned! Bless me, Lord to fortify me... »

« I bless you all in the name of God One and Trine and in the name of the Word Incarnate to be salvation for the men of good will. » He blesses them collectively with a wide gesture and then He lays His hand on each of the four heads bent at His feet.

They then stand up, they cover their faces again and they disappear among the trees of the orchard and the hedges of blackberries, that separate pear-trees from apple-trees and the latter from other trees. Just in time, because the twelve apostles come out of the house in a group looking for the Master, in order to set forth.

And Peter says: « In front of the house, towards the town, there is a large crowd of people, whom we held back with difficulty, to let You pray. They want to follow You. None of those You dismissed have left. On the contrary, many have come back and many have just arrived. We reproached them... »

« Why? Let them follow Me! I wish everybody did so! Let us go! » And Jesus, after putting on the mantle that John hands Him, places Himself at the head of His apostles, He arrives at the house, He passes by it, He takes the Bethany road and intones a psalm in a loud voice.

The people, a real crowd, the men first, then the women and children, follow Him, singing with Him... The town is left behind in its enclosure of greenery.

The road is busy with pilgrims. And on the roadside many beggars raise their plaintive voices to move the crowd to pity and thus receive abundant alms. Cripples, maimed and blind people... The usual miserable people who, in every age and in every region, are in the habit of gathering wherever a festivity assembles crowds. And if the blind people cannot see those who are passing by, the others can see them and as they know how kind the Master is to the poor, they utter their cries louder than usually, to draw Jesus' attention. But they do not ask for miracles. They only ask for alms, and Judas gives them alms.

A well-to-do looking woman stops the donkey, which she is riding, near a robust tree that shades a crossroad and she waits for Jesus. When He is close at hand, she slides down from her mount and prostrates herself, with some difficulty, because she is holding in her arms a little child, who is completely inert, She lifts it without saying a word. Her eyes and distressed face are praying. But Jesus is surrounded by people forming a hedge and He cannot see the poor mother kneeling on the roadside.

A man and a woman, who appear to be with the sorrowful mother, are speaking to her and the man shaking his head says: « There is nothing for us. » And the woman says: « Mistress, He has not seen you. Call Him with faith and He will hear your prayer. »

The mother listens to her and she shouts, in a loud voice, to overcome the noise of songs and steps: « Lord! Have mercy on me! »

Jesus, Who is a few metres ahead, stops and turns round looking for the person who has shouted, and the servant says: « Mistress, He is looking for you. So stand up and go to Him and Fabia will be cured » and she helps her to stand up and leads her towards the

Lord Who says: « Who invoked Me, should come to Me. It is the time of mercy for those who can hope in mercy.. »

The two women elbow their way through the crowd, the servant in front preparing the way for the mother who follows her, and they are about to arrive near Jesus, when a voice shouts: « My dead arm! Look! Blessed be the Son of David. Our always mighty and holy true Messiah! »

There is some excitement because many people turn round and bustle about confusedly, moving like opposite waves around Jesus. Everybody wants to know, to see... They question an old man who is waving his right arm as if it were a flag and who replies: « He stopped, I succeeded in getting hold of the hem of His mantle and in covering myself with it, and something like fire and life ran along my arm, and here it is: my right arm is like my left one, only because it was touched by His garment. »

In the meantime Jesus asks the woman: « What do you want? » The woman raises her child and says: « She also is entitled to life. She is innocent. She did not ask to be of one place or of another one, of one blood or of a different one. I am guilty. I am to be punished. Not her. »

« Do you hope that God's mercy is greater than men's? »

« I do, Lord. I believe. On my behalf and on my child's to whom I hope You will give lucidity of mind and motion. You are said to be the Life... » and she weeps.

« I am the Life and those who believe in Me will have the life of the spirit and of their bodies. I want it! »

Jesus has shouted those words in a loud voice, and He now lays His hand on the inert child who thrills, smiles and says one word: « Mummy! »

« She moves! She smiles! She has spoken! Fabius! Mistress! » The two women have followed the phases of the miracle and have proclaimed them loud. And they have called the father who pushes through the crowd and arrives near the women when they are already at Jesus' feet weeping, and when the servant says: « I told you that He has mercy on everybody! », and the mother says: « And now forgive me also my sin. »

« Does Heaven not show you, through the grace granted to you, that your error has been forgiven? Rise and walk. On the new way, with your daughter and the man you have chosen. Go. Peace be with you. And with you, little girl. And with you, faithful Israelite. Great peace to you, for your loyalty to God and to the daughter of the family you served and you kept close to the Law with your heart. And peace also to you, man, who have been more respectful to the Son of man, than many in Israel. »

He takes His leave of them while the crowd, after leaving the old man, takes an interest in the new miracle for the paralysed dullwitted

girl, perhaps the consequence of meningitis, and who is now skipping happily, saying the only words she knows, probably the ones she knew when she was taken ill and which now she finds intact again in her revived mind: « Father, mummy, Eliza. The beautiful sun! The flowers!... »

Jesus is about to go away, but from the cross-road that has now been overtaken, two more plaintive cries are heard in the typical Jewish accent, coming from the place where the donkeys have been left by the people who received the miracle: « Jesus, Lord! Son of David, have mercy on me! » And once again, in a louder voice, to overcome the shouts of the crowd who say: « Be quiet. Let the Master go on. The way is a long one, and the sun is becoming stronger and stronger. Let Him reach the hills before it gets hot », they shout: « Jesus, Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me. »

Jesus stops again saying: « Go and get those who are shouting and bring them here to Me. »

Some volunteers go. They reach the two blind men and say: « Come. He has mercy on you. Stand up because He wants to satisfy you. He sent us to call you in His name » and they try to guide the two blind men through the crowd.

But if one lets them guide him, the other, who is younger and probably has more faith, precedes the intentions of the volunteers and moves forward by himself, with his stick pointed forward and the typical smile and attitude of blind people in raising their faces seeking light... and he proceeds so fast and sure of himself that he seems to be led by his angel. If his eyes were not white, he would not seem to be blind.

He is the first to arrive before Jesus Who stops him asking: « What do you want Me to do for you? »

« That I may see, Master. O Lord, let my eyes and those of my companion open. » The other blind man has arrived and they make him kneel near his companion.

Jesus lays His hands on their raised faces and says: « Let it be done as you wish. Go! Your faith has saved you! »

He removes His hands and two cries come from their lips: « I can see, Uriel! »; « I can see, Bartimaeus! » and then together: « Blessed He Who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed He Who sent Him! Glory be to God! Hosanna to the Son of David » and prostrating themselves with their faces on the ground they kiss Jesus' feet. They then stand up and the one named Uriel says: « Lord, I am going to let my relatives see me, then I will come back and follow You. » Bartimaeus instead says: « I am not going to leave You. I will send word to them. It will always be a great joy. But I am not going to part from You. You have given me my eyesight. I consecrate my life to You. Have Pity on the wish of the least of Your servants. »

« Come and follow Me. Good will makes all statuses equal, and

he only is great who knows how to serve the Lord in a better way. »

And Jesus takes to the road again amid the hosannas of the crowd, and Bartimaeus mingles with the people and while going he sings hosannas saying: « I came for a piece of bread and I found the Lord. I was poor, now I am a minister of the holy King. Glory to the Lord and to His Messiah »...

579. Arrival at Bethany.

18th March 1947.

They must have stopped half-way between Jericho and Bethany because, when they arrive at the first houses in Bethany, the last drops of dew are evaporating on leaves and stems in meadows and the sun is still rising in the vault of heaven.

The farmers of the area drop their tools and rush round Jesus, Who is passing blessing men and plants, as insistently requested by the peasants. And some women and children come towards Him with the first almonds still enveloped in the light silver-green plush of the husks, and with the last blossoms of the late fruit-trees. I notice, however, that here, in the area of Jerusalem, probably because of the altitude, or because of the winds blowing from the highest mountain tops in Judaea, or I do not know for which other reason, perhaps also because the trees are different, there are many trees still blossoming and they look like light white-rosy clouds hanging over the green meadows. The tender vine leaves quiver under the high tree-trunks like large butterflies of a precious emerald hue, tied to the rough vine-shoots.

While Jesus stops at the fountain, which is situated where the country ends and the village begins, and He is respectfully greeted by almost the whole population of Bethany, Lazarus arrives with his sisters and they prostrate themselves before their Lord. Although little more than two days have gone by since Mary left her Master, she seems not to have seen Him for ages, so untiring she is in kissing His dusty feet in His sandals.

« Come, my Lord. Our home is awaiting You to rejoice at Your presence » says Lazarus standing beside Jesus, while they proceed slowly, as the crowds allow them to do. The people in fact throng round Him and the children cling to Jesus' garments and walk in front of Him, with their heads raised looking at Him, so that they stumble and make Him stumble, so much so that Jesus first and then Lazarus and the apostles pick up the smaller ones in their arms, to be able to walk faster.

At a junction with a lane leading to Simon Zealot's house, there is Mary with Her sister-in-law, Salome and Susanna. Jesus stops to greet His Mother, and then He goes on as far as the large wide open gate where Maximinus, Sarah and Marcella are, and behind

them all the many servants of the house, beginning with those employed in the house and ending with those working in the fields. They are all in order, very happy and excited in their joy that bursts into hosannas, while they wave their headgears and veils and they throw flowers and leaves of myrtle and laurel, of roses and jasmins, which shine in the sun with their splendid corollas or spread like white stars on the dark ground. The scent of plucked flowers and trodden aromatic leaves rises from the ground warmed by the sun. Jesus passes on the sweet-smelling carpet.

Mary of Magdala, who follows Him looking at the ground, stoops, step by step, looking like a gleaner who follows the man tying the sheaves, to pick up the leaves and corollas and also the plucked petals that have been pressed by Jesus' feet.

Maximinus, in order to be able to close the gate and give peace to the guests, orders the servants to give cakes, that have already been prepared, to the children. A practical way to distract the children's attention from the Lord and thus send them away without rousing a chorus of complaints. And the servants carry out the order taking out into the street baskets full of small cakes decorated with white-brown almonds.

And while the little ones crowd there, other servants push back the adults, among whom there is still Zacchaeus and his four friends - Joel, Judas, Eliel and Elkanah - and others whom I do not know, because they are all covered with veils, to protect themselves from the dust raised by a rather heavy wind and from the sun, which is already strong.

But Jesus, Who is already far ahead, turns round and says: « Wait! I have something to tell some of you. »

And He goes towards Johanna's brothers and He takes them aside saying: « Please go to Johanna and tell her to come to Me with all the women who are with her and with Annaleah, the disciple from Ophel. Tell her to come tomorrow, because the Sabbath begins at sunset tomorrow and I want to spend it with My friends of Bethany. In peace. »

« We will tell her, Lord. And she will come. »

Jesus dismisses them and He goes to Joel: « You will tell Joseph and Nicodemus that I have come and that on the day after the Sabbath I will enter the town. »

« Oh! Be careful, Lord! » says the good scribe anxiously.

« Go. And be strong. He who follows justice and believes in My truth must not be afraid. But he must rejoice because the accomplishment of the ancient Promise is about to take place. »

« Ah! I will run away from Jerusalem, Lord. I am a man of a delicate constitution, as You can see and You know, and I am laughed at because of that. I could not stand any... »

« Your angel will guide you. Go in peace. »

« Shall I... see You again, Lord? »

« Of course you will see Me again. But until you see Me again consider that your love has given Me so much joy in the hours of sorrow. »

Joel takes the hand that Jesus had laid on his shoulder and presses it against his lips; through the thin veil of his headgear kisses and tears descend upon Jesus' hand.

He then goes away and Jesus goes to Zacchaeus: « Where are your friends? »

« They remained at the fountain, Lord. I told them to stay there. »

« Join them and go with them to Bethphage where My earliest and most faithful disciples are. Tell Isaac, their chief, to spread through the town and inform all the groups of disciples that the morning after the Sabbath, about the third hour, I will pass through Bethphage and enter Jerusalem and I will go up to the Temple in a solemn way. Tell Isaac that this information is for the disciples only. He will understand what I mean. »

« I understand as well, Master. You want to surprise the Judaeans so that they may not be able to hinder Your entrance. »

« Exactly. So do as I told you. Remember that I am entrusting you with a confidential task. I am making use of you and not of Lazarus. »

« And that tells me how Your kindness to me is incommensurable. I thank You, Lord. » He kisses the Master's hand and goes away.

Jesus is about to go back to His hosts. But from the gate from which the last people are coming out, pushed by the servants, a young man departs and runs towards Jesus, throwing himself at His feet and shouting: « A blessing, Master! Do You recognise me? » raising his head, which is not veiled.

« Yes. You are Joseph named Barnabas, the disciple of Gamaliel, and you came to meet Me near Giscala. »

« And I have been following You for many days. I was at Shiloh, on my way from Giscala where I had gone with the rabbi while You were absent, and where I remained studying the rolls until the month of Nisan. I was at Shiloh when You spoke, and I followed You to Lebonah and to Shechem, and I waited for You at Jericho, because I had heard that You... » He suddenly stops as if he realised that he was about to say what he was not to mention.

Jesus smiles kindly and says: « The truth bursts out impetuously from sincere lips, and it often flows over the dams that prudence places before people's mouths. But I will complete your thought... "because you had heard from Judas of Kerioth, who remained at Shechem, that I was going to Jericho to join My disciples and give them My instructions". And you went there to wait for Me without worrying about being seen, about wasting your time and being away from your master Gamaliel. »

« He will not reproach me when he learns that I delayed in order to follow You. I will take him Your words as a gift... »

« Oh! Rabbi Gamaliel does not need words. He is the wise rabbi of Israel! »

« Yes. No other rabbi can teach him anything of what is ancient, nothing, because he knows everything that is ancient. But You can. You have new words, full of the fresh life of what is new. Your word is like the sap of springtime. That is what rabbi Gamaliel says, and he adds that the wisdom by now covered with the dust of ages, and thus dry and dull, becomes lively and bright when Your word explains it. Oh! I will take him Your words. »

« And My greetings. Tell him to open his heart, his intellect, his sight, his hearing; and his more than twenty-year-old question will be answered. Go. God be with you. »

The youth stoops again to kiss the Master's feet and goes away.

The servants can at last close the gate and Jesus can join His friends.

« I took the liberty of inviting the women disciples here for tomorrow » says Jesus standing beside Lazarus on whose shoulder He lays His arm.

« You did the right thing, Lord. My house is Yours, as You know. Your Mother preferred to stay in Simon's house. And I respected Her desire. But I hope that You will stay under my roof. »

« Yes, I will. Although... also the other house is your roof. One of your first generous actions on My friends' behalf and Mine. How many of them you have done, My dear friend! »

« And I hope I shall be able to go on doing them for a long time. Although that is the wrong word, wise Master. I am not being generous to You. You are being generous to me. I am the debtor. And if before the treasures You have given me, I lay a farthing for You, what is my miserable gift as compared with Your treasures? "Give and it will be given to you" You said. "A shaken and pressed measure will be poured on your lap and you will receive one hundredfold of what you have given" You say. I received one hundredfold of a hundredfold even when I had not given You anything. Oh! I remember our first meeting! You, the Lord and God, Whom seraphim are not worthy to approach, came to me, when I was all alone and distressed... closed in here, in my sadness, You came to Lazarus, the man shunned by everybody, except Joseph and Nicodemus and my faithful friend Simon, who from his sepulchre of a living being did not cease to love me... You did not want my joy in seeing You to be perturbed by the corrosive splashes of the world's contempt... Our first meeting! I could repeat all the words You spoke then... What had I given You then, if I had ever seen You, that I should receive from You, at once, one hundredfold of one hundredfold? »

« Your prayers to our Most High Father. Ours, Lazarus. Mine.

Yours. Mine as the Word and as Man. Yours as man. When you prayed then with so much faith, were you not already giving Me your whole self? So you can see that, as it is fair, I gave you one hundredfold of what you were giving Me. »

« Your goodness is infinite, Master and Lord. You reward in advance, and with divine generosity, those whom Your thought acknowledges as Your servants even before they realise to be such. »

« My friends, not My servants. Because, really, those who do the will of My Father and follow the Truth that He has sent, are My friends, not My servants. Even more: My brothers, as I am the first to do the will of the Father. So whoever does what I do is My friend, because only a friend does spontaneously what his friend does. »

« May it be so for ever between You and me, Lord. When are You going to town? »

« The morning after the Sabbath. »

« I will come as well. »

« No. You will not come with Me. I will tell you why. I have other things to ask of you... »

« As You wish, Master. I have to speak to You as well... »

« We shall speak. »

« Do You prefer to spend the Sabbath among ourselves, or can I invite our mutual friends? »

« Please do not invite anybody. I am anxious to spend these hours in prudent peaceful friendship with you alone, without any constraint of thought or formality, in the kind freedom of one who is among such dear friends as to feel at home. »

« As You wish, Lord. In actual fact... that is what I wanted. But I thought I was being selfish towards my friends. They are all inferior in friendship to You, my only Friend, but still so dear. But if that is what You wish... Perhaps You are tired, Lord. Or pensive... » Lazarus questions his Friend and Master more with his eyes than with his words, and Jesus replies to him only with His rather sad and somewhat absorbed eyes and with a faint smile of His lips.

They are now alone near the fountain, whose jet of water sounds like a song... All the others have gone into the house and one can hear voices and the noise of kitchenware...

Mary of Magdala twice or three times puts her fair-haired head out of the door protected by a heavy curtain waving lightly in the wind that is getting stronger, while the sky is overcast with clouds that are becoming more and more ruffled and dark.

Lazarus raises his head scanning the sky. « I think we are going to have a storm » he says. And he adds: « It will help the obstinate buds to open, as they have much difficulty in doing so this year... Perhaps the late severity of the weather has delayed the shoots. Also my almond-trees have suffered and much fruit has been lost. Joseph was telling me that one of his kitchen gardens outside the Judicial

Gate appears to be completely unfruitful this year. The trees are restraining the buds, as if they had been laid under a spell. So much so that he is undecided whether he should leave them or sell them as firewood. Nothing. Not one blossom. They are now exactly as they were in the month of Tebeth. Tiny heads of buds, so hard and closed that never swell. It is true that the northern wind is very strong there and it blew continuously during winter. Also the fruits of my kitchen garden beyond the Kidron were damaged. But what is happening in Joseph's kitchen garden is so strange that many people go to see that place that refuses to awake in springtime. »

Jesus smiles...

« Are You smiling? Why? »

« Because of the childishness of men, the eternal children. They are charmed by everything that appears to be strange... But the orchard will blossom. At the right time. »

« The right time is already past, Lord. When have many trees in one place not blossomed in the month of Nisan? How long has that place still to wait for the right moment? »

« When it is time to give glory to God with their blossoming. »

« Ah! I see! You will go there to bless that place, for Joseph's sake, and it will blossom giving new glory to God and to His Messiah by means of a new miracle! It is so! You are going there. Can I tell Joseph if I see him? »

« If you think that you should tell him... Yes. I shall be going there... »

« When, Lord? I should like to be there as well. »

« Are you an eternal child, too? » Jesus smiles more heartily shaking His head good-naturedly at the curiosity of His friend who exclaims: « Oh! I am happy that I have cheered You up, Lord. I once again see Your face bright with a smile, as I had not seen for a long time! So... shall I come? »

« No, Lazarus. I shall need you here on Preparation Day. »

« Oh! But on Preparation Day we attend only to Passover! You... Master, why do You want to do something for which You will be rebuked? Go there some other day... »

« I shall be compelled to go in there just on Preparation Day. But I shall not be the only one to do something which is not in preparation for the old Passover. Also the most severe people in Israel, such as Helkai, Doras, Simon, Sadoc, Ishmael and even Caiaphas and Annas will do entirely new things... »

« So is Israel going mad?! »

« You have said it. »

« But You... Oh! here is the rain. Let us go into the house, Master... » I... am worried... Will You not explain to me...

« Yes. Before leaving you I will tell you... There is your sister coming with a heavy cloth, as she is afraid we might get wet... Oh!

Martha! You are always provident and active. But it is not a heavy rain. »

« My dear sister! Nay, my sisters. They are now both like two tender girls unaware of malice, both Mary and this one. And when Mary came from Jericho the day before yesterday, she really looked like a young girl, with her plaits hanging down her body, as she had sold her hairpins to buy sandals for a boy, and the thin iron hairpins were not strong enough to support her hair. She laughed and coming off the wagon she said to me: "My dear brother, I have experienced what it means having to sell in order to buy, and I have learned how even the most simple things are difficult for the poor, such as having to keep your hair tidy by means of hairpins, twenty of which are worth a didrachma. I shall remember that to be even more merciful to poor people in future". How much You have changed her, Lord! »

The woman of whom they are speaking while setting foot in the house is already there with amphorae and basins to serve her Lord. She will not surrender the honour of serving Him to anybody, and she is not satisfied until she has restored the limbs and appetite of her Master and she sees Him go, wearing fresh sandals, towards the room allotted to Him and where His Mother is waiting for Him with a fresh linen garment still smelling of sunshine...

580. The Friday before the Entry into Jerusalem. Judas of Kerioth Impenitent.

19th March 1947.

« If you wish so, you may go, wherever you like. I am staying here today with Judas and James. The women disciples are to come » says Jesus to the apostles who are gathered around Him under the porch of the house. And He adds: « But make sure that you are all back here before sunset. And be prudent. Try to be unnoticed to avoid retaliations against you. »

« Oh! I am going to stay here. What have I to do in Jerusalem? » says Peter.

« Instead I will go. My father is certainly expecting me. He wants to offer the wine. And old promise, but always kept,, because my father is an honest man. What a wonderful wine you will taste at the Passover banquet! My father's vineyards at Ramah! They are famous in the area » says Thomas.

« Also these wines of Lazarus are very good. I will never forget the banquet for the feast of the Dedication... » says Matthew, in an unintentional tone of gluttony.

« In that case your memory will be refreshed more than ever, because I think that Lazarus is giving a great banquet tomorrow. I have seen such preparations... » says James of Zebedee.

« Is that so? Are other people coming? » asks Andrew.

« No. I asked Maximinus. He said no. »

« Ah! Otherwise I would have put on the new tunic that my wife sent me » says Philip.

« That is what I am going to do. I wanted to put it on at Passover. But I will wear it tomorrow. We are going to have more peace here tomorrow, than in a few days' time... » says Bartholomew and he stops pensively.

« I am going to adorn myself with new clothes to go to town. And what about You, Master? » asks John.

« So am I. I will put on purple robes. »

« You will look like a king! » exclaims the favourite apostle full of admiration, as he already imagines Him in the splendid robes...

« But if I had not seen to it! I have had that purple for years... » says the Iscariot boastfully.

« Really? Oh! no one had thought about it... The Master is always so humble... »

« Too humble. The time has now come when He must be King. We have waited long enough! If He is not a king on a throne, at least, to safeguard His dignity, He must have clothes suiting His rank. I see to everything. »

« You are right, Judas. You are aware of the ways of the world. We... are poor fishermen... » say humbly the men who have come from the lake... And as it always happens in the light of the world in the false twilight of the world - Judas' base metal alloy seems nobler than the unrefined, but pure, sincere, honest gold of the Galilean hearts...

Jesus, Who was speaking to the Zealot and to Alphaeus' sons, turns round and looks at the Iscariot and at those honest men, so humble and mortified at being so... deficient as compared with Judas... and He shakes His head without saying anything. But when He sees the Iscariot tie the laces of his sandals and sort his mantle as if he were on the point of setting off, He asks him: « Where are you going? »

« To town. »

« I told you that I am keeping you here with James... »

« Ah! I thought that You were referring to Your brother Judas... So... I... am like a prisoner... Ah! Ah! » He sneers.

« I don't think that Bethany has chains or bars. It has only the desire of your Master. And I would love to be the prisoner of it » remarks the Zealot.

« Oh! of course! I was joking... The fact is... I would like to have news of my mother. Pilgrims from Kerioth have certainly arrived in Jerusalem and... »

« No. In two days' time we shall all be in Jerusalem. You are staying here now » says Jesus authoritatively.

Judas does not insist. He takes off his mantle saying: « So? Who is going to town? We ought to know what the humours are... What the disciples are doing... I wanted to go to hear also from friends... I had promised Peter... »

« It does not matter. You are staying. Nothing of what you said is necessary. It is not strictly necessary... »

« But if Thomas is going... »

« Master, I should like to go as well. I also promised it. I have friends in Annas' house and... »

« And would you go there, son? And if they catch you? » asks Salome who has approached them.

« If they catch me? What wrong have I done? None. So I must not fear the Lord. And even if they catch me, I will not tremble. »

« Oh! the bold young lion! Will you not tremble? Are you not aware of how much they hate us? It's death, you know, if they catch us » says the Iscariot to frighten him.

« Then why do you want to go? Are you perhaps privileged with immunity? What have you done to be so? Tell me, and I will do it. »

Judas suddenly looks as if he were frightened and angry, but John's face is so clear that the traitor is reassured. He realises that there is no snare, no suspicion in those words, and he says: « I have not done anything. But I have some good friends near the Proconsul, so... »

« Well! Who wants to come, let him come, as it is not raining any longer. We are wasting time here and by midday it may rain again. Whoever wants to come should hurry up » says Thomas urging them.

« Shall I go, Master? » asks John.

« Yes, go. »

« There you are! It is always the same! He can, the others can. I cannot. It's always "no" for me! »

« I will try to find out about your mother » says John to calm him.

« And I will try as well. I am coming with you and Thomas » says the Zealot and he adds: « My old age will check the young ones, Master. And I know those of Kerioth very well. If I see any, I will approach them. I will bring you news of your mother, Judas. Be good! Be quiet! It is Passover, Judas. We all feel the peace of this festivity, the joy of this solemnity. Why do you alone want to be so upset, so sullen, so discontented, enjoying no peace? Passover is the passage of God... Passover, for us Hebrews, is the feast of our liberation from a hard yoke. The Most High God delivered us. Now, as the ancient event cannot be repeated, its symbol remains, individual... Passover: liberation of hearts, purification, baptism, if you wish, with the blood of the lamb, so that enemy powers may no longer injure those who are marked with it. It is so beautiful to begin the new year with this feast of purification, of liberation, of adoration of God our Saviour... Oh! excuse me, Master! I have

spoken when I should have kept quiet, because You are here to correct our hearts... »

« Just what I was thinking, too, Simon. The very same thing: that I have two masters now instead of one, and they seemed too many » says the Iscariot angrily.

Peter... oh! Peter this time cannot control himself and he flies into a rage saying: « And if you don't stop this at once you will have a third one and that will be me. And I swear to you that my arguments will be more persuasive than words. »

« Would you beat a companion? After so many efforts to keep the old Galilean to the bottom, your true nature is surfacing again, is that so? »

« It is not surfacing. It has always been on the surface, and very clearly I use no duplicity. The trouble is that with wild jackasses such as you are, there is only one argument to break them in: a good flogging. You ought to be ashamed of trespassing on His kindness and our patience! Come, Simon! Come, John! Come, Thomas! Goodbye, Master. I am going away as well, because if I stay... no, thank God, I will no longer be able to check myself » and Peter grasps his mantle, that was on a seat, and puts it on in a hurry, and he is so angry that he does not realise he has put it on upside-down, so that John has to tell him of his mistake and help him to put it on right. And he goes away headlong, stamping his feet on the ground, to discharge some of his wrath thus. He looks like a furious young bull.

The others... oh! the others are like open books in which one can read what is written. Bartholomew raises his thin face of an old man towards the sky still cloudy, and he seems to be studying the winds, in order not to have to study faces: Jesus' is in fact too sorrowful, the Iscariot's too perfidious. Matthew and Philip look at Thaddeus whose eyes, so similar to Jesus', are flashing with wrath, and both have the same thought: they take him between them and push him away, towards the inner lane leading to Simon's house, saying: « Your mother wanted us to do that job. You had better come, too, James of Zebedee » and they drag away also Salome's son. Andrew looks at James of Alphaeus and James looks at him: two faces reflecting the same contained sufferings, and as they do not know what to say, they take each other's hand like two boys and move away sadly. Salome is the only woman disciple there and she dare not move or speak, neither can she make up her mind to go away, as if she wished to check other words of the worthless apostle with her presence. Fortunately none of Lazarus' family are Present. The Blessed Virgin is also absent.

Judas sees that he is alone with Jesus and Salome. As he does 'not want to be with them, he turns his back on them and goes away towards the jasmin bower.

Jesus looks at him go away. He watches him. He notices that, after

pretending to sit down in the bower, Judas slips away on the quiet from the rear side and disappears among the hedges of roses, laurels and boxes, that separate the true garden from the beds of spices, where the beehives are. It is possible to go out there through one of the secondary gates open in the walls of the large garden, a real park, two sides of which border on very tall hedges, as wide as an avenue, with openings facing gates here and there to give access to the meadows, fields, orchards and olive-groves, as well as Simon's house, that link the garden to the farms, uniting and separating them at the same time, while on the other two sides there are powerful massive walls opening on to two roads, a secondary one and a main one, that form a crossroad and the former, cutting through Bethany, runs towards Bethlehem.

Jesus straightens Himself up as much as possible and changes position as much as is necessary, to see what the Iscariot is doing, and His eyes are blazing.

Mary Salome sees them and she understands, although she cannot see, not being very tall, she realises what is happening towards the end of the park and she whispers: « Lord, have mercy on us! »

Jesus hears her whisper and He turns round for a moment to look at His good simple disciple. She may have had a thought of motherly pride when she asked for a place of honour for her sons, but at least she was in a position to do so as they are good apostles and she humbly accepted the reproof of the Master and she did not feel offended by it, neither did she go away from Him, on the contrary she became more humble and more obliging towards the Master, Whom she follows like His shadow, whenever she can, and Whose least expressions she studies in order to be able, whenever possible, to forestall His wishes and give Him joy. And even now the good and humble Salome tries to comfort the Master and to appease the suspicion that makes Him suffer, saying: « See? He is not going far. He left his mantle there and he has not picked it up. He may go for a walk in the meadows to give vent to his humour... Judas would never go to town unless he were properly dressed... »

« He would go there even if he were naked, if he wanted. In fact... » « Look! Come here! »

« Oh!! He is trying to open the gate! But it is locked! He is calling one of the servants of the beehives! » Jesus shouts in a loud voice: « Judas! Wait for Me! I must speak to you » and He is about to set out.

« For pity's sake, Lord!! I am going to call Lazarus... Your Mother... » « Don't go by Yourself! »

Although Jesus is walking fast, He turns round a little and says: « I order you not to do so. On the contrary, be quiet. With every body. If they ask you about Me: I have gone out with Judas for a short walk. If the women disciples come, let them wait. I shall soon be

back. »

Salome does not react, neither does the Iscariot. The former near the house, the latter near the wall, they both remain where Jesus has stopped them and they look at Him: Salome sees Him move away, Judas sees Him come towards him.

« Open the door, Jonah. I am going out for a moment with My disciple. And if you are going to stay here, you need not close it behind us. I shall soon be back » He kindly says to the peasant servant who had remained dumbfounded with the big key in his hand.

The heavy iron door squeaks in being opened, as the key screeches in working the lock.

« A door that is seldom opened » says the servant smiling. « Eh! You have got rusty! When one is idle one gets spoiled... Rust, dust... urchins... The same happens to us... if we do not always work on our souls! »

« Well said, Jonah! Your thought is a wise one. Many rabbis would envy you it. »

« Oh! it's my bees that suggest them to me... and Your words. It is really Your words. Then the bees also make me understand them. Because everything has a voice, if one can understand it. And I say: if the bees obey the order of Him Who created them, and they are little insects which I do not know where they may have brains and hearts, and I, who have heart, brains and soul, and I hear the Master, shall I not be able to do what they do, working all the time to do what the Master says we must do, and thus make my soul beautiful and bright, without any rust, dust, mud and straw, and stones and other snares placed in the device by hellish enemies? »

« You are quite right. Imitate your bees, and your soul will become a rich beehive full of precious virtues, and God will come to enjoy it. Goodbye, Jonah. Peace be with you. »

He lays His hand on the grey-haired head of the servant, who has stooped in front of Him, and He goes out on the road towards meadows of red clover as beautiful as thick deep-red and crimson carpets. Bees are flying on them from flower to flower sparkling and humming.

When they are far enough from the wall so that no one in Lazarus' garden might hear them, Jesus says: « Did you hear that servant? He is a peasant. It is already a great thing if he can read a few words... And yet... His words could have been uttered by My lips and My speech would not have seemed to be foolish. He feels that one must watch to ensure that the enemies of the spirit do not spoil the spirit... I... am keeping you near Me because of such enemies, and that is why you hate Me! I want to defend you from yourself and from them, and you hate Me. I am handing you the means to save yourself, and you can still do it, and you hate Me. I will tell You once again: go away, Judas. Go far away. Do not go to Jerusalem.

You are not well. It is not a lie to say that you are so ill that you cannot take part in the celebration of Passover. You will keep the supplementary one. The Law allows people to keep the supplementary Passover, when diseases or other grave reasons prevent them from keeping the solemn one. I will ask Lazarus - he is a prudent friend and will not ask any questions - to take you beyond the Jordan today. »

« No. I told You many times to reject me. You did not want to. Now I do not want it. »

« You do not want? You do not want to be saved? You take no pity on yourself? On your mother? »

« You should say to me: "Have you no mercy on Me?". You would be more sincere. »

« Judas, My unhappy friend, I am not begging you on My behalf. I am begging you for your own sake. Look! We are alone. You and I alone. You know who I am, I know who you are. It is the last moment of grace still granted to us to prevent your ruin... Oh! do not sneer so satanically, My friend. Do not laugh at Me as if I were mad because I say: "your ruin" and not Mine. Mine is not a ruin. Yours is... We are alone, you and I, and above us there is God... God Who does not hate you yet, God Who is witness to this supreme struggle between Good and Evil competing for your soul. Above us there is the Empyrean watching us. The Empyrean that will soon be filled with saints. They are already exulting, in their place of expectation, because they feel that joy is coming... Judas, your father is among them... »

« He was a sinner. He is not there. »

« He was a sinner, but not a damned soul. So joy is approaching him as well. Why do you want to grieve him in his joy? »

« He is past grief. He is dead. »

« No. He is not past the grief of seeing you guilty, you... oh! do not make Me say that word!... »

« Yes, say it! I have been saying it to myself for months! I am damned. I know. Nothing can be changed. »

« Everything Judas, I am weeping. The last tears of the Man... do you want to have them shed?... Judas, I beg you. Consider, My friend: Heaven is assenting to My prayers, and you, and you... Will you let Me pray in vain? Consider who is praying in front of you: the Messiah of Israel, the Son of the Father... Judas, listen to Me... Stop, while you can!... »

« No! »

Jesus covers His face with His hands and drops to the ground at the border of the meadow. He weeps noiselessly, but bitterly. His shoulders are shaken by His deep sobbing...

Judas looks at Him, there, at his feet, heart-broken, weeping, and out of the desire to save him... and he is moved for a moment. Laying

aside the hard tone of a real demon he had previously, he says: « I cannot go away... I have given my word... »

Jesus raises His distressed face and interrupts him saying: « To whom? To whom? To some poor men! And you are worried about them, about being considered dishonourable by them? And had you not given yourself to Me for three years? And you are concerned about the comments of a handful of evil-doers and not about God's judgement? Oh! But what must I do, Father, to revive in him the will not to sin? » And He lowers His head again, oppressed with sorrow, distressed... He already looks like the Jesus suffering in the agony of Gethsemane.

Judas feels sorry for Him and says: « I will stay. Do not suffer thus! I will stay... Help me to stay! Defend me! »

« Always! Always, if you only wish so. Come. There is no sin that I do not excuse and forgive. Say: "I want". And I shall have redeemed you... » Jesus, standing up, has taken him in His arms.

But if the tears of Jesus-God fall on Judas' head, Judas' lips remain closed. He does not say the requested word. He does not even say « forgive me » when Jesus whispers through his hair: « You can perceive whether I love you! I should have reproached you! I kiss you. I should be entitled to say to you: "Ask your God to forgive you" and I only ask you to have the will to be forgiven. You are so ill! You cannot ask much of a person who is very ill. Of all the sinners who came to Me I asked absolute repentance in order to be able to forgive them. I am asking you, My friend, only the will to repent and then... I will act. »

Judas is silent...

Jesus lets him go saying: « Stay here at least until the day after the Sabbath. »

« I will stay... Let us go back to the house. They will notice our absence. The women are perhaps waiting for You. They are better than I am and You must not neglect them because of me. »

« Do you not remember the parable of the lost sheep? You are the lost sheep... They, the women disciples, are the good sheep closed in the fold. They are in no danger, even if I should have to search all day for your soul to take it back to the fold... »

« Of course! Of course! All right! I will go back to the fold! I will shut myself up in Lazarus library and read there. I don't want to be disturbed. I don't want to see anybody or hear anything. So... You will not suspect me all the time. And if the Sanhedrin is informed of anything that takes place, You will have to look for the snakes among Your favourite ones. Goodbye! I am going in through the main gate. Don't be afraid. I will not run away. You can come and check whenever You wish » and turning his back on Him he strides away.

Jesus, a tall white figure in His linen tunic at the edge of the

green-red meadow, lifts up His arms towards the clear sky and raises His very sad face and soul to His Father moaning: « Oh! Father! Will You accuse Me of omitting anything that may save him? You know that I am struggling to prevent his crime for the sake of his soul, not for My life... Father! Oh! Father! I beg You! Hasten the hour of darkness, the hour of the Sacrifice, because it is too cruel for Me to live near the friend who does not want to be redeemed... The greatest grief! » and Jesus sits down on the thick, tall, beautiful clover. He bends His head on His raised knees clasped in His arms and He weeps...

Oh! I cannot look at those tears! In distress, in solitude, in... the conviction that Heaven will do nothing to comfort Him, and that He must suffer that grief, they are already too similar to those of Gethsemane. And that grieves me too much...

Jesus weeps for a long time in the solitary silent place. Witnesses of His tears the golden-hued bees, the scented clover that waves slowly in a stormy wind, and the clouds that early in the morning were like a thin net in the blue sky and are now thick, dark, piled up threatening more rain.

Jesus stops weeping. He raises His head listening... The noise of wheels and harness-bells comes from the main road. Then the noise of the wheels stops, whilst that of the harness-bells continues.

Jesus says: « Let us go! The women disciples... They are faithful... Father, let it be done as You wish! I offer You the sacrifice of this desire of Mine as Saviour and Friend. It is written! He wanted it. That is true. However, Father, let Me continue My work on his behalf until it is all over. And even from this moment I say to You: Father, when I pray for sinners, a victim having no power to take direct action, Father, take My sufferings and force Judas' soul with them. I am aware that I am asking what Justice cannot grant. But Mercy and Love have come from You, and You love what comes from You and is One Thing only with You, God One and Trine, Holy and Blessed. I will give Myself to My beloved ones as food and drink. So, Father, are My Blood and My Flesh to become condemnation for one of them? Father, help Me! A germ of repentance in that heart!... Father, why are You going away? Are You already moving away from Your Word Who is praying? Father, the hour has come. I know. May Your blessed will be done! But leave Your Son, Your Christ, in Whom, by Your inscrutable decree the certain clairvoyance of the future is diminishing in this hour - and I do not say to You that this is cruelty, but it is Your compassion for Me - leave Me the hope that I may still save him. Oh! Father! I know. I have known since I am. I have known since, not only as Word, but as Man, I came here to the Earth. I have known since I met the man in the Temple... I have always been aware of it... But now... Oh! it seems to Me - through Your great pity, Most Holy

Father! - it seems to Me but a dreadful dream, brought about by his behaviour, but not something ineluctable... and that I may still hope, always, because infinite is My suffering and infinite will be the Sacrifice, and may it be of some benefit also for him... Ah! I am raving! It is the Man Who wants to hope so! The God Who is in the Man, the God made Man cannot delude Himself! The mist that for a moment was concealing the abyss from Me is dissipating... the abyss already open to swallow the man who preferred Darkness to the Light... It was Your pity that concealed it! It is Your pity that shows Me it now that You have recomforted Me. Yes, Father, also that! Everything! And I will be Mercy until the end, because such is My Essence. »

He is still praying, silently, His arms stretched out crosswise, and His distressed face calms down more and more assuming the appearance of solemn peace. It becomes almost bright with the light of interior joy, although there is no smile on His closed lips. It is the joy of His spirit, in communion with His Father, a joy that leaks out from the veils of the flesh and cancels the marks that grief had impressed and painted on the Master's face, which had become the more emaciated and spiritualised, the more He advanced towards sorrow and sacrifice. In these last mortal days the face of Christ is no longer a face of the Earth, and no artist will ever be able to give us that face of Man God carved into supernatural beauty by perfect total love and sorrow, even if the Redeemer should show Himself to the artist.

Jesus is once again at the gate of the enclosure, He locks it and proceeds towards the house. The servant met previously sees Him and runs to take the big key that Jesus is holding in His hand.

He goes on. He meets Lazarus who says: « Master, the women have come. I took them into the white hall because in the library there is Judas, who is reading and is not well. »

« I know. Thank you for the women. Are there many? »

« Johanna, Nike, Eliza and Valeria with Plautina and another friend or freedwoman, I do not know, whose name is Marcella, and an old woman who says she knows You: Anne of Meron, then Annaleah and there is another young girl with her, named Sarah. They are with the women disciples, Your Mother and my sisters. »

« And these voices of children? »

« Anne has brought her grandchildren, Johanna has her children and Valeria her daughter. I took them into the inner court-yard... »

581. The Friday before the Entry into Jerusalem. Farewell to the Women Disciples and the Encounter with an Unhappy Child.

22nd March 1947.

The beautiful hall - one of those used for banquets, with its white walls and ceiling, its heavy white curtains, the white tapestry covering seats and the sheets of mica or alabaster as window panes and skylights - is full of the chatter of the women. Some fifteen women talking to one another is no bagatelle. But as soon as Jesus appears at the door, moving the heavy curtain aside, there is dead silence while they all stand up and bow with the utmost respect.

« Peace to all of you » says Jesus with a kind smile... Of the storm of grief that has just subsided there is no trace on His face, which is clear, bright, peaceful, as if nothing grievous had happened or were about to happen with His full knowledge.

« Peace to You, Master. We have come. You sent word: "with as many women as there are with Johanna-, and I obeyed You. Eliza was staying with me. I have kept her with me these days. And also this woman, who says is Your follower, was with me. She had come looking for You, because it is well known that I am Your happy disciple. And Valeria also is with me in my house since I came to my mansion. With Valeria there was Plautina, who had come to visit her. And this woman was with them. Valeria will speak to You about her. Annaleah came later, when she heard of Your wish, with this young girl, who I think is a relative of hers. We arranged to come and we did not forget Nike. It is so beautiful to feel that we are all sisters in one faith only in You... And to hope that also those who are still only at a natural love for the Master may rise higher, as Valeria did » says Johanna looking stealthily at Plautina who... has remained at the natural love...

« Diamonds form slowly, Johanna. Ages of hidden fire are required... One must not be in a hurry, never... And one must never lose heart, Johanna... »

« And when a diamond becomes... ashes again? »

« It is an indication that it was not yet a perfect diamond. Patience and fire are still required. One has to start all over again, hoping in the Lord. What appears to be a failure the first time often becomes a triumph the second time. »

« Or the third or the fourth time, and even more. I was a failure many times, but at last You triumphed, Rabboni! » says Mary of Magdala in her harmonious voice from the end of the hall.

« Mary is happy every time she can humble herself by remembering her past... » says with a sigh Martha, who would like that remembrance cancelled in every heart.

« Truly, sister, it is so! I am happy remembering my past. But not

to humble myself, as you say, but to rise higher, urged by the memory of the evil done and by gratitude to Him Who saved me. And also so that whoever hesitates for himself or for some person dear to him may pluck up courage and arrive at that faith that my Master says would be able to shift mountains. »

« And you have it! You blessed woman! You do not know what fear is... » says with a sigh Johanna who is so meek and timid, and she appears to be even more so if one compares her with the Magdalene.

« No, I do not know what fear is. It has never been in my human nature. Now that I belong to my Saviour, I am not even aware of it in my spiritual nature. Everything has served to increase my faith. Can one who was revived as I was and who saw one's brother rise from the dead, be in doubt about anything? Nothing will ever make me doubt again. »

« As long as God is with you, that is, the Rabbi is with you... But He says that He will soon leave us. What will our faith then be? That is, your faith, because I have not yet gone beyond human frontiers... » says Plautina.

« His material presence or absence will not impair my faith. I will not be afraid. I am not being proud. I know myself. If the threats of the Sanhedrin should come true... I will not be afraid... »

« You will not be afraid of what? That the Just One is just? I shall not be afraid of that either. We believe that of many wise people whose wisdom we enjoy, I should say that we nourish ourselves with the life of their thought, ages after their death. But if you... » says Plautina insistently.

« I will not even fear for His death. Life cannot die. Lazarus, who was a poor man, rose from the dead... »

« He did not rise by himself, but because the Master evoked his spirit from the beyond. A deed that only the Master can accomplish. But who will evoke the Master's spirit, if the Master is killed? »

« Who? He. That is, God. God made Himself by Himself, God can raise Himself by Himself. »

« God... yes... according to your faith God made Himself by Himself. It is already difficult for us to admit that, as we know that one god descends from another through divine love. »

« Through obscene unreal love affairs, you should say » says Mary of Magdala rashly" interrupting her.

« As you wish... » says Plautina in a conciliatory tone, and is about to end her sentence, but Mary of Magdala precedes her once again and says: « But the Man, you mean, cannot raise Himself by Himself. But as He made himself Man by Himself, because nothing is impossible to the Saint of Saints, so He will by Himself order Himself to rise from the dead. You cannot understand. You do not know the figures of our history of Israel. He and His wonders are in them.

And everything will take place as it was stated. I believe in advance, Lord. I believe everything. That You are the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin, that You are the Lamb of salvation, that You are the Most Holy Messiah, that You are the universal Redeemer and King, that Your Kingdom will have no end or boundary, and finally that death will not prevail over You, because life and death were created by God and are subject to Him like all other things. I believe. And if deep will be my sorrow at seeing You disregarded and despised, greater will be my faith in Your eternal Being. I believe. I believe in everything that has been said about You. I believe in everything You say. I believed also with regard to Lazarus, I was the only one who obeyed and believed, the only one who reacted against those men and those situations that wanted to persuade me not to believe. Only at the end, towards the end of the trial, I became confused... But the trial had lasted so long... and I thought that not even You, blessed Master, could approach the goal after so many days from his death... Now... I would not doubt any more even if, instead of days, a sepulchre were to be opened to give back its prey after it had been in its belly for months. Oh! my Lord! I know who You are! Filth has recognised the Star! » Mary has squatted at His feet, on the marble floor, no longer vehement, but meek, with an expression of adoration on her face raised towards Jesus.

« Who am I? »

« He Who is. That is what You are. The other part, the human person, is the garment, the necessary garment that has been put on Your brightness and Your holiness, so that it might come among us to save us. But You are God, my God. » And she throws herself on the floor kissing Jesus' feet, and she seems to be unable to remove her lips from the toes protruding from the long linen tunic.

« Stand up, Mary. Always hold on fast to your faith. And raise it like a star in stormy hours so that hearts may stare at it and may hope, at least that... ».

He then turns round to all the women disciples and says:

« I sent for you because during the next days we shall not be able to be together very often and in peace. The world will be around us. And the secrets of hearts are more modest than the secrets of bodies. Today I am not the Master. I am the Friend. Not all of you have hopes or fears to tell Me. But you all liked to see Me once again in peace. And I sent for you, you cream of Israel and of the new Kingdom, and you, cream of the Gentiles, who are leaving the place of darkness to enter Life. Keep this in your hearts for the following days: that the honour given by you to the persecuted King of Israel, to the accused Innocent, to the Master Who is not listened to, mitigates My sorrow.

I ask you to be closely united, you of Israel, you who have come to Israel, you who are coming towards Israel. Assist one another.

Let those whose spirits are stronger help the weaker ones. And let the wiser ones succour those who know little or nothing at all, and are only craving for fresh wisdom, so that their human desire may evolve into a supernatural desire of Truth, through the care of their more advanced sisters. Be merciful to one another. Let those, whom ages of divine law have formed in justice, be indulgent to those whom Gentilism has brought up... differently. Moral habits cannot be changed between today and tomorrow but in exceptional cases, when a divine power intervenes to work the change in order to favour a very good will. Do not be surprised if in the disciples coming from other religions you notice stoppages in progressing and returns to the old ways. Bear in mind Israel herself in her behaviour towards Me, and do not expect from the Gentile ladies the docility and virtue that Israel was not able to have and did not want to have towards the Master. Consider yourselves sisters, sisters that destiny has gathered round Me, in this last period of My mortal life... Do not weep! And it has gathered you taking you from different places, thus with different languages and habits, which make it rather difficult to understand one another from a human point of view. But, really, love has one language only, which is this: to do what the beloved one teaches and do it to give him honour and joy. Thus you can all understand one another and let those who understand more help the others to understand.

Then... in future, in a more or less remote future and under different circumstances, you will be separated again through the regions of the Earth, and some will go back to their native countries, and some will go into an exile that will not be hard to bear, because those who will undergo the trial will already have reached that perfection of truth, that will make them understand that the exile from the true Fatherland does not consist in being led here or there. Because Heaven is the true Fatherland. Because those who are in the truth are in God and have God within themselves. They are already in the Kingdom of God, and the Kingdom of God knows no frontiers and those who from Jerusalem are taken, for instance, to Iberia, or to Pannonia, or to Gaul, or to Illyria, do not leave that Kingdom. You will always be in the Kingdom if you always remain in Jesus, or if you come to Jesus. I have come to gather all the sheep. Those of the paternal flock, those belonging to other people, and also those without any shepherd, the wild ones, the ones that are more lost than wild, sunken into such obscure darkness as not to allow them to see not even a jota, not only of divine law but also of moral law. Unknown people who are expecting to become known in the hour destined by God for that, and who will then be part of the flock of Christ. When? Oh! years and ages are alike when compared with the Eternal!

But you will anticipate those who will go with future Shepherds

to gather wild sheep and lambs in Christian love in order to lead them to divine pastures. And let these places be your first proving ground. The young swallow that raises its wings to fly does not throw itself into great adventures all at once. It tries to fly first from the eaves gutter to the vine shading the terrace. Then it goes back to its nest and it dashes once again to the terrace beyond its own, and goes back. And then again farther away... until it feels the nerves of its wings become strong and its bearings safe, then it plays with wind and space and it goes and comes twittering, chasing insects, skimming waters, rising towards the sun, until at the right time it safely opens its wings for the long flight towards warmer zones rich in new food. And although it is so small, it is not afraid to fly across seas, a spot of burnished steel lost between the two blue immensities of sea and sky, a spot moving on fearlessly, whereas previously it was afraid of the short flight from the eaves gutter to the leafy vine-shoot, a nervous perfect body that cleaves the air like an arrow and it is not known whether it is the air that lovingly carries this little king of the air, or it is the little king of the air that lovingly furrows its domains. Seeing its safe flying that exploits winds and atmospheric density to go faster, who would think of its first clumsy fluttering frightened flight? The same will become of you. Let it become so of you. Of you and of all the souls that will imitate you. One does not become skilful all of a sudden. One must not feel disheartened because of the first defeats, or proud because of the first victories. The first defeats serve to do better the next time. The first victories serve as spur to do even better in future and to convince one that God helps good wills.

Be always subject to the Shepherds with regard to what is obedience to their advice and orders. Be always like sisters to them with regard to what is help in their mission and support in their work. Tell also those who are not here today. Tell those who will come in future.

And now and always be like daughters to My Mother. She will guide you in everything. She can guide girls as well as widows, wives as well as mothers, as She has become aware of all the consequences of every condition through Her own experience as well as through supernatural wisdom. Love one another and love Me in Mary. You will never fail because She is the Tree of Life, the living Ark of God, the form of God in Whom Wisdom made Its Seat and Grace became Flesh.

And now that I have spoken to you in general, now that I have seen you all, I wish to listen to My women disciples and to those who are the hope of future women disciples. Go. I am staying here. Let those who wish to speak to Me come to Me. Because never again shall we have a moment of inner peace as the present one. »

The women consult with one another. Eliza goes out with Mary

and Mary Clopas. Mary of Lazarus listens to Plautina who wishes to convince her of something, but Mary does not seem to agree, as she shakes her head resolutely in denial and then goes away leaving her interlocutress, and when passing by she takes her sister and Susanna with her saying: « We shall have time to speak to Him. Let us leave these disciples with Him, as they have to go away. »

« Come, Sarah. We shall come last » says Annaleah.

They all go out slowly with the exception of Mary Salome who remains undecided at the door.

« Come here, Mary. Close the door and come here. What are you afraid of? » Jesus says to her.

« The fact is... that I am always with You. Did You hear Mary of Lazarus? »

« I did. But come here. You are the mother of My first disciples. What do you want to tell Me? »

The woman approaches Him with the slowness of a person that has something great to ask and does not know whether he can do it.

Jesus encourages her with a smile and saying: « What? Are you going to ask Me for a third place for Zebedee? But he is wise. He certainly did not send you to tell me that! So speak up... »

« Ah! Lord! It is just of that place that I wanted to speak to You. You... speak in a way... As if You were about to leave us. And before doing that I would like You to tell me that You have really forgiven me. I have no peace thinking that I disgusted You. »

« Are you still thinking of that? Do you not think that I love you as much as before and more than before. »

« Oh! yes, Lord. But do tell me the word of forgiveness, that I may tell my husband how good You have been to me. »

« But there is no need for you, woman, to tell a fault that has been forgiven. »

« Of course I will tell him! Because, see? Zebedee, seeing how much You love his sons, may fall into the same sin as mine and... if You leave us, who would absolve him? I would like all of us to enter Your Kingdom. Also my man. And I do not think that I am being unjust by wishing this. I am a poor woman and I know nothing about books. But when Your Mother reads or tells us women passages of the Scriptures, She often speaks of the chosen women of Israel or of passages that refer to us. And in the Proverbs, that I like so much, it is stated that the heart of the husband has confidence in his strong wife. I think that it is right that a woman should give such confidence to her husband, also with regard to celestial matters. If I procure a safe place for him in Heaven, preventing him from sinning, I think I do a good thing. »

« Of course, Salome. You have really opened your mouth to words Of wisdom and there is the law of goodness on your tongue. Go in Peace. You have more than My forgiveness. Your sons, according

to the book that you like so much, will proclaim you blessed, and your husband will sing your praises in the Fatherland of the just. Go tranquilly. Go in peace. Be happy. » He blesses and dismisses her.

Salome goes away joyfully.

Old Anne of the house near Merom goes in holding by the hands two little boys and with a shy pale little girl following her with lowered head, and already acting as a little mother guiding a little boy who can hardly walk.

« Oh! Anne! So you also wish to speak to Me? And your husband? »

« He is ill, Lord. Ill. Very ill. I am afraid I shall not see him alive again... » Tears stream down her senile wrinkled face.

« And you are here? »

« Yes, I am here. He said: "I cannot go. You may go for Passover and see our sons..." » Her weeping increases and prevents her from speaking.

« Why are you weeping thus, woman? Your husband was right in saying: "Ensure that our sons are not against the Christ for their eternal peace". Judas is a just man. He worries more about the welfare of his sons than about his own life and the comfort it would receive from your care. In the hours preceding the death of the just, the veils are lifted and the eyes of the spirit see the Truth. But your sons do not listen to you, woman. And what can I do if they reject Me? »

« Do not hate them, Lord! »

« Why should I? I will pray for them. And I will impose My hands on these children, who are innocent, to keep away from them the hatred that kills. Come to Me. What is your name? »

« Judas, like my father's father » says the biggest boy, and the smallest one, who is held by the hand by his sister, hops and shouts: « I, I, Judas! »

« Yes, they have honoured their father when giving names to their children. But not in other matters... » says the old woman.

« His virtues will revive in these children. Little girl, come here as well. Be as good and wise as the woman who brought you here. »

« Oh! Mary is good. As I do not want to be alone, I will take her to Galilee with me. »

Jesus blesses the children resting His hand for some time on the head of the little girl who is good. He then asks: « Are you not asking anything for yourself, Anne? »

« That I may find my Judas alive and that I may have the strength to tell a lie saying that his sons... »

« No. Do not lie. Never. Not even to let a dying man die in peace. You will say to Judas: "The Master says that He blesses you and with you He blesses your blood". Also these innocent children are his blood and I have blessed them. »

« But if he asks whether our sons... »

« You will say: "The Master has prayed for them". Judas will rest in the certainty that My prayer is powerful, and the truth will be spoken without disheartening who is dying. Because I will pray also for your sons. You may go in peace, too, Anne. When are you leaving the town? »

« The day after the Sabbath, so as not to be stopped on the road because of the Sabbath. »

« All right. I am glad that you will be here after the Sabbath. Remain closely united to Eliza and Nike. Go. And be strong and faithful. »

The woman is almost at the door when Jesus calls her again saying: « Listen. Your little ones are with you for a long time, are they not? »

« They are always with me, while I am in town. »

« During these days... leave them at home, if you go out to follow Me. »

« Why, Lord? Are You afraid of a persecution? »

« Yes. And it is better if innocents do not hear and see... »

« But... what do You think will happen? »

« Go, Anne. Go. »

« Lord if... if they should do to You what is rumoured, my sons certainly... and then the house will be worse than the street... »

« Do not weep. God will provide. Peace be with you. »

The old woman goes away weeping.

For a short time no one goes in; then Johanna and Valeria go in together. They are panting. Johanna in particular. The other woman is pale and she sighs, but she is stronger.

« Master, Anne has frightened us. You told her... Oh! but it is not true! Chuza may be undecided, he may be... shrewd. But he is not a liar! He assured me that Herod has no intention of harming You... I do not know about Pontius... » and she looks at Valeria who is silent. She then resumes: « I was hoping to understand something from Plautina, but I did not understand much... »

« Nothing, you should say, except that she has not advanced by one step from the limit where she was. She did not speak to me either. But, if I am not wrong, the Roman indifference, which is always so strong when an event can have no repercussion on their Fatherland or on their egos, has badly benumbed those who once seemed so willing to rouse themselves. Their indifference, the indolence of their spirits, so... different by now from mine, separates us, as a cleft separates two clods previously united, more than the fact that I have approached the synagogue. They are happy. They are happy their way... And human happiness does not help to keep one's mind sharp. »

« And to awake the spirit, Valeria » says Jesus.

« It is so, Master. I... there is another matter... Did You see that

woman who was with us? She belongs to my family. She is a widow and lonely, and she was sent by my relatives to convince me to go back to Italy. Oh! with many promises of future joys! They are joys that I no longer appreciate and thus they no longer seem to me to be such, and I despise them. I will not go to Italy. Here I have You, I have my little daughter whom You saved for me, and whom You taught me to love for her soul. I will not leave these places... Marcella... I brought her with me so that she would see You and understand that I am not staying here for a dishonourable love for a Hebrew - it is dishonourable for us - but because in You I found comfort in my grief of a repudiated wife. Marcella is not ill-natured. She has suffered and she understands. But she is still unable to understand my new religion. And she reproaches me a little, because she thinks that my religion is a chimera... It does not matter. If she wants, she will come where I already am. If not, I will stay here with Tusnilde. I am free. I am rich. I can do what I like. And not doing wrong, I will do what I want. »

« And when the Master will not be here? »

« His disciples will remain. Plautina, Lydia and even Claudia, who, after me, is the one who follows Your doctrine and honours You more, have not yet understood that I am no longer the woman that they knew and they still think they know. But I am sure that I know myself by now. So much so that I say that, if I lose much by losing the Master, I shall not lose everything, because faith will remain. And I shall remain where it was born. I do not want to take Fausta where nothing speaks of You. Here... Everything speaks of You, and You will certainly not leave us without a guide, as we have decided to follow You. Why should I, the Gentile, have such thoughts, while many of you, and you, too, look as if you were dismayed thinking of the day when the Master will not be among us? »

« Because, Valeria, they have become accustomed to ages of immobilism. They think that the Most High is there, in His House, above the invisible altar, that only the High Priest can see in solemn occasions. That has helped them to come to Me. They also could at last approach the Lord. But now they tremble at the thought of no longer having either the Most High in His glory, or the Word of the Father among them. It is necessary to be indulgent... And to raise one's spirit, Johanna. And I shall be in you. Remember that. I shall go away. But I will not leave you orphans. I will leave you a house of Mine: My Church. My word: the Gospel. My love will dwell in your hearts. And finally I will leave you a greater gift that will nourish you through Me and will make Me be among you and in you, not only spiritually. I will do that to give you comfort and strength. But now... Anne is very depressed because of the children... »

« She spoke to us about them distressingly... »

« Yes. I told her to keep them away from crowds. I say the same to you, Johanna, and to you, Valeria. »

« I will send Fausta with Tusnilde to Bether before the fixed time. They were to go after the Feast. »

« I will not part from the children. I will keep them at home. But I will tell Anne to let her children go there. That woman has wicked sons, but they will be honoured by my invitation and they will not contradict their mother. And I... »

« I would like... »

« What, Master? »

« I would like you to be much united these days. I will keep My Mother's sister with Me, Salome and Susanna and Lazarus' sisters. But I would like you to be united, much united. »

« But can we not come where You are? »

« During these days I shall be like lightning that flashes brightly and disappears. I will go up to the Temple in the morning and then I will go out of town. You could meet Me only every morning at the Temple. »

« Last year You stayed with me... »

« This year I will not stay in any house. I shall be like lightning that passes... »

« But Passover... »

« I wish to consume it with My apostles, Johanna. If your Master wants that, He certainly wants it for a just reason. »

« That is true... So I shall be alone... Because my brothers told me that they want to be free during these days, and Chuza... »

« Master, I am going away. It is pouring. I am going to the children as I hear them gathered under the porch » says Valeria and she prudently withdraws.

« There is a heavy rainfall also in your heart, Johanna. »

« That is true, Master. Chuza is so... strange. I no longer understand him. A continual contradiction. Perhaps he has friends who are influencing his mind... or he has been threatened... or he is afraid for his future. »

« He is not the only one. Nay, I can say that few, lonely and scattered here and there are those who, like Me, are not afraid for their future and they will be fewer and fewer. Be very kind and patient with him. He is only a man... »

« But he has received so much from God, from You, that he ought to... »

« He ought to! Yes. But who has not received from Me in Israel? I have helped friends and enemies, I have forgiven, cured, comforted, taught... You can see, and you will see more clearly how God only is immutable, how different are the reactions of men, and how often he who has received more is most willing to strike his benefactor. One will truly be able to say that he who shared My bread with

Me raised his foot against Me. »

« I will not do that, Master. »

« You will not. But many will. »

« Is my husband perhaps one of them? If it were so, I would not go back to my house this evening. »

« No. He is not among them, this evening. But even if he were, your place is there. Because if he sins, you must not sin. If he wavers, you must support him. If he tramples on you, you must forgive him. »

« Oh! Trample on me, no! He loves me. But I would like him to be more resolute. He can influence Herod so much. I would like him to wring a promise from the Tetrarch in Your favour. As Claudia is trying to wring it from Pilate. But Chuza has only been able to bring me vague words of Herod... and to assure me that Herod only wishes to see You work some miracles and that he will not persecute You... He thus hopes to silence his remorse for John. Chuza says: "My king always says: 'Even if Heaven ordered me, I would not lift my hand. I am too frightened!'" »

« He speaks the truth. He will not lift his hand against Me. Many in Israel will not do that, because many are afraid to condemn Me materially. But they will ask other people to do so. As if in the eyes of God there were a difference between him who strikes, urged by the will of the people, and him who makes one strike. »

« Oh! but the people love You! Great celebrations are being prepared for You. And Pilate does not want tumults. He has reinforced the troops these days. I hope so much that... I do not know what I hope, Lord. I hope and I despair. My thoughts are inconstant like the weather these days, with alternating sunshine and showers... »

« Pray, Johanna, and be at peace. Always bear in mind that you have never grieved your Master and that He remembers that. Go. »

Johanna, who has become pale and thin these last few days, goes out pensively.

And Annaleah's gentle face appears.

« Come in. Where is your companion? »

« In there, Lord. She wishes to go away, they are about to leave. Martha has understood my wish and she will keep me here until sunset tomorrow evening. Sarah is going home, to say that I am staying here. She would like Your blessing because... But I will tell You later. »

« Let her come. I will bless her. »

The young woman goes out and comes back with her companion, who prostrates herself before Jesus.

« Peace be with you and may the grace of the Lord lead you onto the road where He has led this girl who preceded you. Be affectionate to her mother and bless Heaven that spared you ties and sorrows in order to have you completely for Itself. One day, more than now, you will bless the Lord for being sterile through your own will.

Go. »

The young woman goes away deeply moved.

« You have told her what she hoped to hear. Those words were her dream. Sarah always said: "I like your destiny, although it is so unknown in Israel. I want it, too. As I no longer have my father, and as my mother is as sweet as a dove, I am not afraid of not being able to follow it. But in order to be able to accomplish it and that it may be holy for me, as it is for you, I would like to hear it from His lips". Now You have told her. And I have peace, too. Because at times I was afraid that I might have elated a heart... »

« Since when has she been with you? »

« Since... When the order of the Sanhedrin came I said to myself: "The Master's hour has come, and I must prepare myself to die". Because I asked You, Lord... Today I am reminding You... If You are going to the Sacrifice, I, victim, with You. »

« Are you still firmly wanting the same thing? »

« Yes, Master. I could not live in a world where You were not... and I could not survive Your torture. I am so afraid for You! Many among us delude themselves... I don't! I feel that the hour has come. The hatred is too strong... And I hope that You will accept my offer. I have but my life to give You, because I am poor, as You know. My life and my purity. That is why I convinced my mother to send for her sister. That she may not remain alone... Sarah will be a daughter to her in my stead, and Sarah's mother will comfort her. Do not disappoint my heart, Lord! The world has no attraction for me. It is like a jail, in which many things disgust me terribly. It is perhaps because one who has been on the threshold of death has understood that what represents joy for many people is nothing but emptiness that does not satisfy. It is certain that I wish nothing but sacrifice... and to precede You... that I may not see the hatred of the world cast on my Lord like a weapon of torture, and to resemble You in sorrow... »

« Then we will lay the cut lily on the Altar where the Lamb is sacrificed. And it will become red with the Blood of redemption. And only the angels will be aware that Love was the sacrificer of a completely white ewe-lamb, and they will mark the name of the first victim of Love, of the first continuator of the Christ. »

« When, Lord? »

« Keep your lamp ready and put on your wedding dress. The Bridegroom is at the door. You will see His triumph, but not his death, but you will triumph with Him entering His Kingdom. »

« Ah! I am the happiest woman in Israel! I am a queen crowned with Your garland! May I, as such, ask a grace of You? »

« Which? »

« I loved a man, as You know. I no longer loved him as my spouse, because a greater love took possession of me, and he no longer loved

me because... But I do not want to remember his past. I ask You to redeem that heart. May I? It is not a sin to remember, while I am on the threshold of Life, him whom I loved, to give him eternal Life, is it? »

« It is not a sin. It is to take love to the holy end of the sacrifice for the welfare of the beloved. »

« Bless me, then, Master. Absolve me of all my sins. Make me ready for the wedding and for Your coming. Because it is You Who is coming, my God, to take Your poor servant and make her Your bride. »

The girl, beaming with joy and health, stoops to kiss the Master's feet while He blesses her, praying over her. And the hall, as white as if it were all decorated with lilies, is really the worthy surroundings for this rite, and harmonises beautifully with its protagonists, who are young, lovely, clad in white, shining with angelical and divine love.

Jesus leaves the girl there, absorbed in her joy, and goes out quietly to go and bless the children, who with shouts of joy are rushing towards the wagon and they get into it happily, with the women who are going away. Eliza and Nike remain to take Annaleah back to town the following day. It has stopped raining and the sky, once the clouds are scattered, shows its clear blue, and the sunbeams descend to make the raindrops glitter. A splendid rainbow bends from Bethany over Jerusalem. The wagon goes away squeaking and goes out through the gate. It disappears.

Lazarus, who is near Jesus, at the end of the porch, asks: « Have the women disciples given You joy? » and he looks at the Master.

« No, Lazarus, they have not. All of them, with the exception of one, have given Me their sorrows and also some disappointments, if I could delude Myself. »

« The Roman ladies, You mean, have disappointed You? Have they spoken to You of Pilate? »

« No, they have not. »

« Then I must do so. I was hoping that they would speak to You about him. That is why I waited. Let us go into this solitary room. The women have gone with Martha to do their work. Mary, instead, is with Your Mother, in the other house. Your Mother has been so long with Judas, and now She has taken him with Her... Sit down, Master... I have been to see the Proconsul... I had promised and I did so. But Simon of Jonas would not be very satisfied with my mission!... Fortunately, Simon thinks no more about it. The Proconsul listened to me and he replied saying: -I? I should attend to Him? I have not even the most remote and slightest intention of doing that! I only say this: that not because of the Man - You, Master but because of all the trouble that I get through Him, I have firmly decided not to have anything further to do with Him, for good or

for evil. I wash my hands of it. I will reinforce the guard because I do not want disturbances. I will thus satisfy Caesar, my wife and myself. That is, the only ones of whom I take sacred care. And with regard to the rest I will not lift a finger. The quarrels of these people who are eternally dissatisfied. They create them, they enjoy them. With regard to the Man, I ignore Him as an evil-doer, I ignore Him as a virtuous man, and I ignore Him as a wise man. And I want to ignore Him. And to continue to ignore Him. Unfortunately, although I want to ignore Him, I find it difficult to do so, because the leaders of Israel speak to Me about Him with their complaints, Claudia with her praises, the followers of the Galilean with their accusations against the Sanhedrin. If it were not for Claudia, I would have Him arrested and I would hand Him over to them so that they might settle the matter and we should not hear any more of it. The Man is the most peaceful subject in the whole Empire. But in spite of all that, He has given me so much trouble that I would like a solution... With such humour, Master... »

« You mean that we cannot be safe. With men one is never safe... »

« But I am told that the Sanhedrin is calmer. They have not recalled the band, the disciples have not been annoyed. Those who went to town will soon be back and we shall hear... They will always contradict You. Will they take action?... The crowds love You too much to challenge them imprudently. »

« Shall we go along the road, towards those who are coming back? » suggests Jesus.

« Let us go. »

They go out into the garden and they are half way when Lazarus asks: « But when have You had something to eat? And where? »

« At the first hour. »

« But it is almost sunset. Let us go back. »

« No. I do not feel it is necessary. I prefer to go. I can see a poor child over there, clinging to the gate. Perhaps he is hungry. His clothes are worn-out and he is wan. I have been watching him for some time. He was already there when the wagon left, and he ran away not to be seen and probably driven away. Then he came back and has been looking insistently towards us and the house. »

« If he is hungry I had better go and get some food. Go on, Master. I will join You at once » and Lazarus runs back while Jesus quickens His pace towards the gate.

The boy, a sickly-looking irregular face, in which only the eyes shine beautiful and lively, looks at Him.

Jesus smiles at him and while opening the lock of the gate He says to him kindly: « Whom are you looking for, child? »

« Are You the Lord Jesus? »

« I am. »

« I am looking for You. »

« Who has sent you? »

« No one. But I want to speak to You. So many people come to speak to You. I have come, too. You satisfy so many people. Me, too. »

Jesus has lifted the latch and He asks the boy to remove his thin hands from the bars, so that He may open the gate. The boy steps aside and in doing so, as his discoloured garment moves on his distorted body, one can see that he is a poor rickety child, with his head sunken into his shoulders owing to the commencement of a hump, and his unsteady legs wide apart. A true little poor wretch. He is perhaps older than one might think considering his height, which is of a boy about six years old, whilst his face is already that of a man, somewhat flabby, with a protruding chin, almost the face of an old man.

Jesus bends to caress him and says: « So tell Me what you want. I am your friend. I am the friend of all children. » With how much loving kindness Jesus takes the emaciated face in His hands and kisses his forehead!

« I know. That is why I came. See how I am? I would like to die not to suffer any more. And not to belong any more to anybody... Since You cure so many people and raise the dead, let me die, as no one loves me and I shall never be able to work. »

« Have you no relatives? Are you an orphan? »

« I have a father. But he does not love me, because I am like this. He rejected my mother, he gave her the libel of divorce, and he drove me out with her, and my mother died. It was my fault, because I am so deformed. »

« But who are you living with? »

« When my mother died the servants took me back to my father. But he got married again and has lovely children, and he expelled me. He handed me over to some of his peasants. But they do what their master does, to find favour in his eyes... and they make me suffer. »

« Do they beat you? »

« No. But they take more care of animals than of me, and they sneer at me, and as I am often ill, they get bored with me. I am becoming more and more deformed, and their sons gibe at me and they make me fall. No one loves me. And last winter, when I had a bad cough and I needed medicines, my father would not spend any money and said that the only good thing I could do was to die. Since then I have been waiting for You to say to You: "Let me die". »

Jesus takes him in His arms, turning a deaf ear to the words of the boy who says: « My feet are muddy and so is my tunic, because I sat on the road. I will dirty Your clothes. »

« Have you come from far? »

« From near the town, because the person who keeps me lives

there. I saw Your apostles pass by. I know it was them, because the peasants said: "Here are the disciples of the Galilean Rabbi. But He is not with them". And I came. »

« You are wet, My child. Poor boy! You will be taken ill again. »

« If You do not listen to me, I hope the disease at least will make me die! Where are You taking me? »

« Into the house. You cannot remain thus. »

Jesus goes back into the garden with the deformed boy in His arms and He shouts to Lazarus, who is coming: « Close the gate, please. I am carrying this little fellow, who is wet through, in My arms. »

« But who is he, Master? »

« I do not know. I do not even know his name. »

« Neither will I tell You. I don't want to be known. I want what I told You. My mother used to say to me: "Son, my poor son, I am dying, but I wish you died with me, because in the next world you would no longer be so deformed as to suffer in your bones and in your heart. Those who are born poor wretches have no sneering names there. Because God is good to innocent and unhappy people". Will You send me to God? »

« The boy wants to die. It is a sad story... »

Lazarus, who is staring at the little boy, suddenly says: « But are you not the son of Nahum's son? Are you not the boy who always sits in the sun near the sycamore that is at the end of Nahum's olivetrees, and whom your father entrusted to his peasant Josiah? »

« Yes, I am. But why did you tell? »

« Poor boy! Not to scoff at you. Believe me, Master, the fate of a dog in Israel is not so sad as the fate of this boy. If he did not go back to the house from which he came, no one would look for him. The servants are like their masters. Heartless men. Joseph knows the story well. It caused a stir. But at the time I was so worried about Mary... But when the unhappy wife died and this boy came to Josiah's, I used to see him when I passed by... He was forsaken on the threshing-floor in the sun or the wind, because he began to walk very late... and always very little. I do not know how he was able to come so far today. I wonder how long he has been on the way! »

« Since Peter passed there. »

« And now? What shall we do? »

« I am not going back home. I want to die, to go away. Grace and mercy on me, Lord! »

They have gone into the house and Lazarus calls a servant and tells him to bring a blanket and to send Naomi to take care of the boy, who is blue with cold in his wet clothes.

« The son of one of Your fiercest enemies! One of the most wicked in Israel. How old are you, child? »

« Ten years. »

« Ten! Ten years of sorrow! »

« And they are enough! » says Jesus in a loud voice putting down the boy.

He is really misshapen! His right shoulder is higher than his left one, his chest protrudes excessively, his thin neck is sunken between his raised collar-bones, his bow-legs!...

Jesus looks at him pitifully while Naomi undresses him and dries him before enveloping him in a warm blanket. Lazarus also looks at him piteously.

« I will put him in my bed, Lord, after I have given him some warm milk » says Naomi.

« But are You not going to let me die? Have mercy on me! Why let me live to be like this and suffer so much? » and he concludes: « I was hoping in You, Lord. » There is reproach and disappointment in his voice.

« Be good. Be obedient, and Heaven will comfort you » says Jesus and He bends to caress him once again, gently rubbing his poor deformed body with His hand.

« Take him to bed and watch over him. Then... we will see. »

The boy is taken away while he weeps.

« And they are the ones who think they are holy! » exclaims Lazarus thinking of Nahum...

Peter is heard calling his Master...

« Oh! Master! Are You here? All is well. No trouble. Oh! on the contrary much calm. No one disturbed us at the Temple. John received good news. The disciples have been left in peace. People are waiting for You joyfully. I am glad. And what have You done, Master? »

They go away together speaking, while Lazarus goes where Maximinus calls him.

582. The Sabbath before the Entry into Jerusalem. Parable of the Two Lamps and the Parable Applied to the Miracle on Shalem.

26th March 1947.

The weather has cleared up after the past wet days and a bright sun is shining in a very clear sky. The earth, cleaned by the rains, is as clear as the atmosphere. It is so fresh and clean that it seems to have been created only a few hours ago. Everything is bright and everything sings in the clear morning.

Jesus is walking slowly along the farthest paths in the garden. Only an odd gardener watches the solitary walk in the early morning hours. But no one disturbs the Master. On the contrary they withdraw silently to leave Him alone. Moreover it is the Sabbath, the day of rest, and the gardeners are not at work. But through a

habit as long as their lives, they are out watching plants, beehives, flowers, for which there is no Sabbath, and which smell, rustle and buzz in the sunshine and in the April breeze.

Then the garden slowly becomes busy. The first to appear are the servants employed in the house, then the maidservants, then the apostles and the women disciples, and Lazarus is the last one. Jesus joins them greeting them with His usual salutation.

« How long have You been here, Master? » asks Lazarus, shaking some dew-drops off Jesus' hair.

« Since dawn. Your birds called Me to praise God. And I came out here. To contemplate God in the beauty of Creation is to honour Him and to pray with a moved spirit. And the Earth is beautiful. And in these early hours of the day, on a day like this one, it appears to us as fresh as it was in the first days of its existence. »

« Real Passover weather. And it has improved. It will last because it cleared up during the first phase of the moon with a favourable wind » states Peter.

« I am glad to hear that. Passover with rain is sad. »

« Even worse, it is detrimental to crops. The corn needs sunshine, now that harvest time is approaching » says Bartholomew.

« I am happy to be here at peace. This is the Sabbath and nobody will come. There will be no strangers among us » says Andrew.

« You are wrong. There is a guest, a young guest. He is still sleeping, Master. A soft bed and a full stomach are letting him have a long sleep. I went in to see him. Naomi is watching over him » says Lazarus.

« But who is he? When did he come? Who brought him? Because you are speaking as if it were a boy » ask both men and women.

« It is a boy. A poor boy. His grief brought him here. He was over there, clinging to the bars of the gate and looking at the house. And the Master brought him in. »

« We knew nothing about it... Why? »

« Because the child was in need of peace » replies Jesus, and His countenance is absorbed in deep thought as He concludes: « And in Lazarus' house they know how to be silent. »

A servant comes to tell Martha something and then withdraws, but comes back soon with other servants carrying trays with jugs of milk, cups, and bread with butter and honey. They all help themselves sitting on the seats scattered here and there.

Then they wish to gather once again round the Master and they ask Him to tell them a parable, « a beautiful parable » they say « as serene as this day of Nisan. »

« I will not tell you one, but two. Listen.

A man one day decided to light two lamps to honour the Lord on a feast day. So he took two vases of the same size, he put in each the same quantity and quality of oil, identical wicks, and he lit them

at the same hour, so that they might pray while he worked, as he was allowed. After some time he went back and he saw that one lamp was burning brightly, whereas the other had only a very tiny flame, that hardly gave any light in the corner where the two lamps were burning. The man thought that the wick was perhaps faulty. He examined it. No, it was all right. But it would not burn so merrily as the other lamp, the flame of which fluttered like a tongue and seemed to whisper words, so merry it was, and it blazed so excitedly that it even had a light murmur. "This lamp is really singing the praises of the Most High Lord!" he said to himself. "Whereas this one! Look at it, soul of mine! It seems to find it burdensome to have to honour the Lord, as it does it with so little zeal!" and he went back to his work.

He went back again after some time. One flame had grown even taller, and the other had become even smaller and was burning the more quietly and still, the more the other vibrated shining. He went back a second time. The same situation. A third time, the same thing. But when he came the fourth time, he saw the room full of black evil-smelling smoke, and only one little flame shining through the veils of thick smoke. He went to the shelf where the lamps were, and he noticed that the one that was blazing so brightly previously was completely burnt out and black, and it had also soiled the white wall with its flame. The other one, instead, continued to honour the Lord with its constant light. He was about to remedy the defect when a voice sounded close to him: "Leave things as they are. But meditate on them, for they are a symbol. I am the Lord". The man prostrated himself on the floor adoring and with great fear he dared to say: "I am foolish. Explain to me, o Wisdom, the symbol of the lamps, of which the one that seemed more active in honouring You has caused damage, whilst the other is persevering in giving light".

"Yes, I will. The hearts of men are like those two lamps. There are those who at the beginning blaze, are bright and are admired by men, because their flames seem so perfect and constant. And there are those whose light is mild, does not attract anybody's attention and they seem to be tepid in honouring the Lord. But after the first or the second blaze, or the third one, between the third and the fourth one they cause damage and then they go out, still with injury, because their light was not reliable. They wanted to shine more for the sake of men than for the Lord's, and their pride consumed them in a very short time, amid a dark thick smoke that obscured also the air. The others had only one constant will: to honour God only; and without minding whether men praised them, they consumed themselves through a long clear flame, devoid of smoke and stench. Do imitate the constant light, for it is the only one pleasing to the Lord".

The man raised his head... The air had been purified of the smoke

and the star of the faithful lamp was now shining all alone, pure, steady, to honour God, making the metal of the lamp gleam as if it were pure gold. And he watched it shine, always unvaryingly, for hours and hours, until gently, without smoke or stench, without soiling itself, the flame went out in a flash and it seemed to ascend towards the sky to settle among the stars, having worthily honoured the Lord to the very last moment of its life.

I solemnly tell you that many are those who blaze at the beginning and attract the admiration of the world that can only see the surface of human actions, and then they perish being carbonised and staining with their pungent smoke. And I solemnly tell you that their blazing is not watched by God, because He sees it bum proudly for human purposes. Blessed are those who know how to imitate the second lamp and not to get carbonised, but to ascend to Heaven with the last throb of their constant love. »

« What a strange parable! But true! Lovely! I like it! I should like to know whether we are the lamps that rise to Heaven. » The apostles exchange their feelings.

Judas finds the opportunity to bite. And his biting words are addressed to Mary of Magdala and John of Zebedee: « Be careful, Mary, and you, John. You are the blazing lamps among us... Let no evil befall you! »

Mary of Magdala is about to reply to him but she bites her lips not to utter the words that had come up from her heart. She looks at Judas. She only looks at him. But her glare is such that Judas stops laughing and staring at her.

John, whose heart is meek but burning with love, kindly replies: « And that might happen, considering how incapable I am. But I confide in the help of the Lord, and I hope I shall be able to bum till the last drop and till the last moment to honour the Lord our God. »

« And the other parable? You promised two » says James of Alphaeus.

« Here is My second parable. It is about to come... » and He points at the door of the house, where the curtain covering it is swaying slowly in the breeze, and then is drawn by the hand of a servant to let old Naomi enter. She rushes to Jesus' feet saying: « But the boy is cured! He is no longer deformed! You cured him during the night. He had waked up and I was preparing the bath to wash him before putting on him the tunic and the garment I had sewn during the night using a tunic cast off by Lazarus. But when I said to him: "Come, child" and I removed the blankets, I saw that his little body, so misshapen yesterday, was no longer so. And I shouted. Sarah and Marcella rushed in, but they did not even know that the boy was sleeping in my bed and I left them there, and I ran here to tell You... »

Everybody's curiosity is roused. Questions, anxiety to see. Jesus calms the whispering with a gesture. He says to Naomi: « Go back

to the boy. Wash him, dress him and bring him here to Me. »

He then addresses His disciples:

« Here is the second parable, and it could be entitled: "True justice takes no vengeance and makes no distinction". A man, nay, the Man, the Son of man, has friends and enemies. Few friends, many enemies. And He is aware of the hatred of His enemies, and knows their thoughts and wills, that will not hesitate in front of any action, no matter how horrible it may be. And in that respect they are stronger than His friends, in whom dismay or disappointment, or excess of confidence, act as battering-rams that shatter their fortress to pieces. This Son of man with many enemies and Who is reproached for many things that are not true, yesterday met a poor boy, the most desolate of all children, the son of one of His enemies. And the boy was deformed and crippled and asked for a strange grace: to die. Everybody asks honours and joy, health and life, of the Son of man. This poor boy asked to die in order not to suffer any longer. He has already experienced all the sorrows of the flesh and of the heart, because the man who procreated him, and who hates Me without any reason, also hates the unhappy innocent wretch whom he generated. And I cured him so that he may no longer suffer, and in addition to physical health he may achieve spiritual salvation. Also his young soul is diseased. The hatred of his father and the mockery of men have injured it and deprived it of love. He is left with faith only in Heaven and in the Son of man and he asks them to let him die. Here he is. Now you will hear him speak. »

The boy, tidy and clean in the new white woollen tunic that Naomi made for him quickly during the night, comes forward held by the hand by the old nurse. He is small, although, not being any longer bent and lame, he looks taller than he did yesterday. His face is irregular and somewhat flabby, typical of a child whom sorrow has made prematurely adult. But he is no longer deformed. His bare feet walk steadily on the floor with a step that no longer has the halting of lame people, and his shoulders, although very thin, are straight. His slender neck overhangs them and looks long as compared with yesterday, when it was sunken between his asymmetric clavicles.

« But... but this is the son of Annas of Nahum! What a wasted miracle! Do You think that by doing so You will make friends with his father and Nahum? You will make them more resentful! Because they were only looking forward to the death of this boy, the offspring of an unfortunate marriage » exclaims Judas of Kerioth.

« I do not work miracles to make friends, but out of pity for people and to honour My Father. I never make differences or calculations when I bend pitifully over human miseries. I do not revenge Myself on those who persecute Me... »

« Nahum will consider Your action a revenge. »

« I knew nothing about this boy. I do not even know his name. »

« They call him Mathusala or Mathusalem out of contempt. »

« My mother called me Shalem. She loved me. She was not bad I like you and like those who hate me » says the boy, his eyes shining with the light of impotent wrath that men and animals have when they have been tormented too long.

« Come here, Shalem. Here with Me. Are you happy that you are cured? »

« Yes... but I preferred to die. I shall not be loved just the same. It would have been beautiful if my mother still lived. But thus!... I shall always be unhappy. »

« He is right. We met this boy yesterday. He asked us whether You were at Bethany, at Lazarus'. We wanted to give him some alms, because we thought that he was a beggar. But he did not want any. He was at the edge of a field... » says the Zealot.

« Did you not know him either? That is strange » says Judas of Kerioth.

« It is even more strange that you know such things so well. Are you forgetting that I was among persecuted people and then among lepers, until I came with the Master? »

« And are you forgetting that I am a friend of Nahum's, who is Annas's trustee? I never hid that from you. »

« Well! Well! That does not matter. What matters is to know what we are now going to do with this child. His father does not love him, that is true. But he always has rights over him. We cannot take his son away from him, thus, without telling him. We must be careful and not upset them, since they seem to be more favourably disposed towards us » says Nathanael.

Judas breaks into a sarcastic laugh, but gives no explanation of his laughing.

Jesus, Who has taken the boy between His knees, says slowly: « I will face Nahum... I shall not be hated more because of this. His hatred cannot increase. It is not possible. It is already complete. »

Annaleah, who has never spoken, all engrossed in thoughts that make her happy, says: « If I had stayed here, I would have liked to have him with me. I am young, but I have the heart of a mother... »

« Are you going away? When? » ask the women.

« Soon. »

« For good? And where are you going? Out of Judaea? »

« Yes. Far. Very far. For good. And I am so happy. »

« Other women will be able to do what You cannot do, if his father hands him over to us. »

« I will tell Nahum, if you wish so. He is the one who matters. More than the boy's father. I will tell him tomorrow » promises Judas of Kerioth.

« If it were not the Sabbath... I would have gone to that Josiah to whom the boy was entrusted » says Andrew.

« To see whether they are distressed having lost him? » asks Matthew.

« I think they would be more upset if one of their bees got lost... » mumbles between his teeth Maximinus, who has approached them for some time.

The boy does not speak. He clings to Jesus, studying the faces around him with the sharp eyes often noticeable in sickly people and in those who have lived a miserable life. He seems to be scanning souls rather than faces, and when Peter asks him: « What do you think of us? » the boy replies by putting his hand into Peter's saying: « You are good », he then rectifies: « You are all good. But... I wish I had not been recognised. I am afraid... » and he looks at Judas of Kerieth.

« You are afraid of me, are you not? That I may speak to your father? I will certainly have to do so, if I have to ask him to leave you with us. But he will not take you away! »

« I know. But it is a different matter... I would like to be far, very far, where that woman is going... In my mother's country. There is a blue sea surrounded by completely green mountains. One can see it down at the bottom, with so many white sails flying on it and beautiful towns around it. And in the mountains there are so many grottoes where wild bees make very sweet honey. I have not had any honey since my mother died and I was entrusted to Josiah. Philip, Joseph, Eliza and the other children did get it. But I did not. If they had kept the vase of honey within reach I would have stolen it, as I was dying for some. But they kept it on the upper shelves, and I could not climb on the tables, as Philip did. I am longing so much for some honey! »

« Oh! poor child! I will go and bring you as much as you want! » says Martha, deeply moved, and she runs away.

« But where did his mother come from? » asks Peter.

« She had houses and land near Saphet. The only daughter, orphan and heiress, already old, ugly and somewhat lame. But very rich. Through the assistance of old Sadoc, who acted as go-between, the son of beloved Annas obtained her in marriage... A contract that was a truly base bargain, all calculation, no love. After selling the property of his wife, saying that it was too far from here, with the exception of a little house that previously belonged to the bailiff, who had received it as a gift from the old owner for himself and his heirs down to the fourth generation, he squandered all the money in unlucky speculations. But... I do not believe that. Because I know that he owns beautiful lands near the shore... and previously he did not have them... Then, after some years of married life, when the woman was already on the threshold of her decline, this son was

born... and it was the pretence to expel the woman and take another one from the plain of Sharon, young, beautiful and rich... The divorced woman took refuge at the old bailiff's house and died there. I do not know why they did not keep this child. His father reckoned that he was dead » explains the Iscariot.

« Because John and Mary were dead, and their children went to work elsewhere as servants. And who was to keep me, if I was not their son and I was not fit to work? But Michael and Isaac were good, and also Esther and Judith were good. And they are good. When they come for feasts, they bring me gifts, but Josiah takes them off me to give them to his sons. »

« But they do not want you » replies Judas.

« Now that I am straight and strong they will want me. They are servants! As I said, they could not say to their master: "Take on this diseased cripple". But now they can. »

« But if you have run away from Josiah, how can they find you? » says Bartholomew to make him ponder.

The boy is struck by the just remark and becomes pensive, because his illness has made his mind prematurely thoughtful, just as his face is precociously adult, and he says downheartedly: « That is true! I had not thought of that. »

« Go back there. They will be coming during the next days... »

« There? No. I am not going back there. I don't want to go back there. I would rather kill myself! » He is shaken by a wild fury, then he throws himself on Jesus' knees weeping and says: « Why did You not let me die? »

Martha, who is just coming back with a vase of honey, is surprised at so much desolation, and Bartholomew is distressed at having brought it about and he apologises: « I thought I was giving a good piece of advice. Good for everybody. For the boy, for You, Master, for Lazarus... None of you, and none of us, are in need of fresh hatred... »

« That is true! A real problem! » exclaims Peter, and meditating on the case, he draws his personal conclusions, ending them with his characteristic soft whistling, which expresses his frame of mind in face of difficult grave problems to be solved.

Some make this, some that proposal. To go to Nahum. To go to Josiah and tell him to send Michael and Isaac to Lazarus, or elsewhere, wherever the boy will be, because it is wise not to have Lazarus hated, more than he already is hated because of his friendship with Jesus. Not to mention anything to anybody and make the boy disappear by entrusting him to some reliable disciple.

Judas of Kerioth does not speak. Nay, he does not seem to be interested in the discussion. He toys with the tassels of his tunic, combing and ruffling them with his fingers.

Jesus does not speak either. He calms and caresses the boy and

He raises his head putting the vase of honey in his hands.

Shalem is a boy, a poor ten-year old boy who has always suffered, but he is always a boy, even if sorrow has matured him, and upon seeing such a treasure of honey, his last tears change into ecstatic astonishment. Raising his eyes, his only beauty, so brown, large and intelligent as they are, and looking alternately at Jesus and Martha, he asks: « How much may I take? One of these spoons or two? » and he points at the round silver spoon that he slowly dips into the blond honey.

« As much as you want, my boy. As much as you like. You will take the rest later, tomorrow. It's all yours! » says Martha caressing him.

« All mine!!! Oh! I have never had so much honey! All mine! Oh! » And he gratefully presses the vase to his chest, as if it were a treasure.

But he then realises that rather than the vase, it is the love with which it is offered that is precious, and he lays the little vase on Jesus' knees and he lifts his arms as he wants to embrace the neck of Martha, who is bent over him, and kiss her. It is all that his gratitude, all that he can give, a helpless wretch, who has nothing to give.

The others stop making plans to watch the scene. And Peter says: « This child is even more unhappy than Marjiam, who at least had the love of his grandfather and of the other peasants! It is true that there are always sorrows greater than the ones we have considered very great! »

« Yes. The abyss of human sorrow has not yet been fathomed. I wonder how many secrets it still conceals... And how many will it still conceal in future ages? » says Bartholomew pensively.

« Then you have no faith in the Gospel! Do you not think that it will change the world? It is stated by the prophets. And the Master repeats it. You are sceptical, Bartholomew » says the Iscariot with a slight touch of irony.

The Zealot replies to him: « I do not see in what Bartholomew's incredulity consists. The Master's doctrine will give solace to all misfortunes, it will even modify the cruelty of customs and habits, but it will not eliminate sorrow. It will make it bearable through the divine promises of future joys. In order to abolish sorrow, or at least great part of sorrow, because diseases, deaths and natural cataclysms would still remain, it would be necessary for all men to have the heart that the Christ has, but... »

The Iscariot interrupts him saying: « That in fact must happen. Otherwise to what avail would the Messiah have come to the Earth? »

« Let us say that that should happen. But, tell me, Judas, has that happened among us? We are twelve, and for three years we have lived with Him, we have taken in His doctrine like the air we

breathe. So? Are we twelve all saints? What do we do that is different from what Lazarus does, from what Stephen, Nicolaus, Isaac, Manaen, Joseph and Nicodemus, the women and children do? I am speaking of the just people of our Fatherland. All of them, whether they are wise and rich, or poor and ignorant, do what we do: a little good, a little bad, but without renewing themselves completely. Nay, I tell you that many surpass us. Yes. Many followers surpass us, the apostles... And would you expect the whole world to assume hearts like the Christ's, if we, His apostles, have not done so? We have more or less improved ourselves... at least let us hope so, because it is only with difficulty that man knows himself or the brother who lives beside him. The veil of the flesh is too opaque and thick, and the thought of man too carefully avoids being penetrated, for man to understand man. Whether we examine ourselves or other people, we always remain at the surface, both when we examine ourselves, because we do not want to hurt our pride or suffer feeling that we must change, and when we examine other people, because our pride of examiners makes us unjust judges and the pride of the person we scrutinise closes him, as an oyster closes its valves, with regard to what is inside him » says the Zealot.

« You are quite right! Simon, you have really spoken words of wisdom! » says Judas Thaddeus approving. And the others in chorus agree.

« Then why did He come, if nothing is to be changed? » replies the Iscariot.

Jesus begins to speak: « Much will be changed. Not everything. Because also in future there will be against My doctrine what is already active: the hatred of those who do not love the Light. Because against the strength of My followers there will be the power of Satan's followers. How many! In how many appearances! How many new heretical doctrines will always be opposed to My doctrine, which is immutable, because it is perfect! How much sorrow will germinate from them! You do not know the future. You consider great the sorrow now existing in the world... But He Who knows, sees horrors that would not be understood even if I explained them to you... What a tragedy if I had not come! If I had not come to give future generations a code that checks instincts in the better people and contains a promise of future peace! How dreadful it would be if man did not have, through My coming, spiritual elements capable of keeping him "alive" in the life of the spirit and assuring him of a reward!... If I had not come, in the long run, the Earth would have become a huge earthly hell, and the human race would have torn itself to pieces and would have perished cursing the Creator... »

« The Most High has promised never to send universal punishments again, like the Deluge. A promise of God never fails » says Judas.

« Yes, Judas of Simon. That is true. And never again will the Most High send universal calamities like the Deluge. But men themselves will create scourges that will be more and more dreadful, in comparison with which the deluge and the rain of fire that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah are still merciful punishments. Oh!... »

Jesus stands up with a gesture full of anguish and pity for future peoples.

« All right! You know... But in the meantime what are we going to do for him? » asks the Iscariot pointing at the boy who is enjoying his honey in small quantities and is happy.

« Each day has enough trouble of its own. Tomorrow will tell, It is vain to worry about tomorrow, if we do not even know who will be alive tomorrow. »

« I am not of Your opinion. And I say that we ought to know where we shall go to stay, where we shall consume the Supper. So many things. If we go on waiting, the town will be full up. And where shall we go? Not to Gethsemane. Not to Joseph of Sephoris. Not to Johanna's. Not to Nike's. Not to Lazarus'. Where then? »

« Where the Father will prepare a shelter for His Word. »

« Do You think that I want to know in order to report it? »

« You say so. I have not said anything. Come, Shalem. My Mother knows about you, but She has not yet seen you. Come, and I will take you to Her. »

« But is Your Mother not well? » asks Thomas.

« No. She is praying. She is in great need of prayer. »

« Yes. She is suffering bitterly. She weeps very much. And Mary has nothing but prayer to console Her. I have always seen Her pray very much. In the moments of -deepest grief She lives on prayer, I could say... » explains Mary of Alphaeus, while Jesus goes away holding the boy by the hand and having on the other side Annaleah, whom He has invited to go with Him to Mary.

583. The Sabbath before the Entry into Jerusalem. Pilgrims and Judaeans at Bethany.

27th March 1947.

Love and hatred urge many pilgrims who have gathered in Jerusalem, as well as many inhabitants of Jerusalem, to come to Bethany without awaiting that sunset is over. On the contrary, the sun has just begun to set when the first visitors arrive at Lazarus' house. And as Lazarus, when called by the servants, is surprised at such transgression of the Sabbath, because the first to arrive are the best-known among the strictest Judaeans, they give him this truly pharisaic answer: « From the Sheep Gate we could no longer see the sun's disc, so we set off, thinking that we would certainly not exceed the prescribed distance before the sun had set behind

the Temple domes. »

An ironical smile appears on Lazarus' thin face, because he is healthy and handsome, but he is certainly not fat. And he replies to them kindly, but lightly sarcastically: « And what do you want to see? The Master respects His Sabbath. And He is resting. And in order to consider that the rest has ended, He is not satisfied with just not seeing the sun's disc, but He waits until the last sunbeam disappears to say: "The Sabbath is over". »

« We know that He is perfect! We know! But if we have made a mistake, that is another reason for seeing Him. Only for a moment, so that He may absolve us. »

« I am sorry, but I cannot. The Master is tired and is resting. I will not disturb Him. »

But more people come, they are pilgrims from everywhere, who beg and insist on seeing Jesus'. Hebrews are mingled with Gentiles, and proselytes with the latter. They watch and scan Lazarus, as if he were something unreal. And Lazarus puts up with the annoyance of such unsought celebrity replying patiently to those who ask him questions. But he does not order the servants to open the gate.

« Are you the man raised from the dead? » asks one who, by his appearance, is certainly of mixed race because he has only the typical rather big hooked nose of the Jews, whereas his accent and the style of his garments indicate that he is a foreigner.

« I am, to give glory to God Who raised me from the dead to make me a servant of His Messiah. »

« But was it true death? » ask other people.

« Ask those Jewish notables. They came to my funeral and many were present at my resurrection. »

« But what did you feel? Where were you? What do you remember? When you became alive again, what happened to you? How did He raise you?... Is it not possible to see the sepulchre where you were? What did you die of? Are you really well now? Have you no longer the marks of the sores? »

Lazarus tries to reply to everybody patiently. But if it is easy for him to say that he is really well and that also the marks of the sores have disappeared by now, in the months that have elapsed since he was raised from the dead, he cannot say what he felt and how he was raised. And he replies: « I do not know. I found myself alive in my garden, among my servants and sisters. When I was freed of the shroud I saw the sun, the light, I was hungry, I had some food, I enjoyed life and the great love the Rabbi had for me. Those who were present know the rest better than I do. There are three over there who are talking. And two there who are just arriving. » (The latter are John and Eleazar, the members of the Sanhedrin, whereas the three talking to one another are two scribes and a Pharisee whom I have in fact seen at Lazarus' resurrection, but whose names

I do not remember.)

« They will not speak to us, because we are Gentiles! As you are Judaeans, you can go and ask them... And you... show us the sepulchre where you were. » They could not be more insistent.

Lazarus makes up his mind. He says something to the servants, then he addresses the crowd: « Go along that road that runs between this house and that other one of mine. I will come and meet you to take you to the sepulchre, although there is nothing to be seen except an opening in the layer of rock. »

« It does not matter! Let us go! »

« Lazarus! Stop! Can we come as well? Or are we forbidden what strangers are allowed? » asks a scribe.

« No. Archelaus. You may come, if you do not think that you will be contaminated by approaching a sepulchre. »

« It will not contaminate us because there is no dead body in it. »

« But there was one for four days. One is considered unclean for much less in Israel! You say that one is unclean when one's garment just grazes someone who has touched a corpse. And my sepulchre still puffs whiffs of death, although it has been open for such a long time. »

« It does not matter. We will purify ourselves. »

Lazarus looks at John and Eleazar, the two Pharisees, and says to them: « Are you coming as well? »

« Yes, we are. »

Lazarus goes quickly towards the side delimited by hedges as tall and thick as walls, and he opens a gate enclosed in one of them, and he looks along the road leading to Simon's house, beckoning those who are waiting to come forward. He leads them towards the sepulchre. Rose-bushes in bloom are arched over the entrance, but are not sufficient to suppress the horror emanating from an open tomb. On the slanting rock under the flowery arch one can read the words: « Lazarus, come out! »

The evil-minded visitors see them at once and ask immediately: « Why did you have those words carved there? You should not have done that! »

« Why? In my house I do what I like, and no one can accuse me of sin if I decided to have fixed on the rock, so that they are indelible, the words of the divine cry that gave life back to me. When I shall be in there, and I shall no longer be able to celebrate the merciful power of the Rabbi, I want the sun to read them still there on the rock, and the plants to learn them from the winds, birds and flowers to caress them, continuing thus on my behalf to bless the cry of the Christ Who raised me from the dead. »

« You are a heathen! You are an impious person! You are cursing our God. You are singing the praises of the witchcraft of Beelzebub's son. Be careful, Lazarus! »

« I remind you that I am in my house and that you are in my house, and that you have come, without being invited, and for worthless purposes. You are worse than these people, who are heathens, but they recognise a God in the reviver. »

« Anathema! Like Master, like disciple. How horrible! Let us go away from this impure cloaca. Corrupter of Israel, the Sanhedrin will remember your words. »

« And Rome your conspiracies. Get out! » Lazarus, who is always mild, remembers that he is the son of Theophilus, and he drives them away like a pack of dogs.

The pilgrims who have come from every country remain and they ask, and look, and implore to see the Christ.

« You will see Him in town. Not now. I cannot. »

« Ah! but is He coming to town? Really? Are you not lying? Is He coming even if they hate Him so much? »

« He is coming. Go now and do not worry. See how peaceful is the house? Not a person to be seen, not a voice to be heard. You have seen what you wanted to see: the man risen again and the place of his burial. Go now. But do not allow your curiosity to be unfruitful. May the fact that you have seen me, the living evidence of the power of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God and Most Holy Messiah, lead you all on His way. Because of this hope I am glad that I was raised from the dead, because I hope that the miracle may rouse the doubtful and convert the heathen, convincing them all that one only is the true God and one only is the true Messiah: Jesus of Nazareth, the holy Master. »

The crowds disperse reluctantly, and if one goes away, ten more come, because new people arrive continuously. But with the help of some servants Lazarus succeeds in pushing everybody out and closing the gates.

He is about to withdraw saying: « Make sure they do not force the gates or climb over them. It will soon be dark and they will go to their sojourns », when he sees Eleazar and John come out from behind a myrtle-bush. « What? I had not seen you and I thought... »

« Do not send us away. We hid behind thick bushes not to be seen. We must speak to the Master. We came as we are not so suspected as Joseph and Nicodemus are. But we would not like to be seen by anybody, except you and the Master... Are your servants trustworthy? »

« In Lazarus' house the custom is to see and hear only what is pleasing to the landlord, and to know nothing for strangers. But Come along this path between two hedges of vegetation darker than a wall. » And he leads them along the path running between the double impenetrable barrier of boxes and laurels. « Wait here. I will bring Jesus. »

« Let no one know!... »

« Be not afraid. »

The wait is a short one. Jesus, all white in His linen tunic, soon appears on the path darkened by the intertwined branches, and Lazarus stops at the end of the path, as if he were on guard, or out of prudence. But Eleazar says to him, or rather beckons to him: « Come here. » Lazarus approaches them while Jesus greets the two who pay their deep respect to Him.

« Master, and you, Lazarus, listen. As soon as the news spread that You had come and were here, the Sanhedrin met in Caiaphas' house. Everything they do is abusive... And they have decided... Do not entertain illusions, Master! Be wary, Lazarus! Do not let the feigned peace or the apparent somnolence of the Sanhedrin deceive you. It is all pretence, Master. A simulation to attract You and capture You without the crowds getting excited and preparing to defend You. Your fate has been decided and the decree will not be changed. Whether tomorrow or in a year's time it will be accomplished. The Sanhedrin never forgets its revenges. They wait, they know how to wait for the favourable opportunity, then!... And you, too, Lazarus. They want to get rid of you, capture you and suppress you, because through your fault too many are leaving them to follow the Master. As you said with the right word, you are the evidence of His power. And they want to destroy it. The crowds soon forget, and they are aware of that. Once you and the Rabbi disappear, many passions will die down. »

« No, Eleazar! They will blaze up! » says Jesus.

« Oh! Master! But what will happen if You are dead? To what avail will faith in You blaze up, even if that were to happen, if You are dead? I was hoping to be able to tell You only one happy thing and invite You: my wife will soon give birth to the son who is thriving through Your justice, as You brought peace again to two stormy hearts. He will be born by Pentecost. I would like to ask You to come and bless him. If You enter under my roof, no misfortune will ever be in it » says John the Pharisee.

« I give you My blessing now... »

« Ah! You do not want to come to me! You do not believe that I am loyal! I am, Master! God sees me! »

« I know. The fact is... that I shall no longer be with you at Pentecost. »

« But the boy will be born in the country-house... »

« I know. But I shall not be there. And yet you, your wife, the unborn child, the children you already have, are blessed by Me. Thank you for coming. Go now. Take them along the path beyond Simon's house. So that they may not be seen... I am going back to the house. Peace to you... »

584. The Sabbath before the Entry into Jerusalem. The Supper at Bethany.

28th March 1947.

Supper has been prepared in the completely white hall where Jesus spoke to the women disciples. The whole white hall is bright and silvery with a nuance not so snow-white and cold, cast by bundles of branches of apple or pear-trees, or other fruit-trees, as white as snow, but with such a light shade of pink that makes one think of snow lightly touched by the kiss of a remote dawn. They protrude from pot-bellied vases or from slender silver amphorae, on the shelves, chests and dressers placed along the walls of the hall. The flowers shed the typical scent of blossoms of fruit-trees through the hall, the fresh bitterish scent of pure springtime...

Lazarus enters the hall walking beside Jesus. Behind them, in twos or larger groups, the apostles. Last are Lazarus' two sisters with Maximinus. I do not see the women disciples. Not even Mary. Perhaps they preferred to remain in Simon's house with the distressed Mother.

The day is turning to twilight. But the last sunbeams are still shining on the rustling leaves of some palm-trees in a group a few metres away from the hall, and on the top of a gigantic laurel on which sparrows are squabbling before going to rest. Beyond the palm-trees and the laurel, beyond the hedges of roses and jasmines and the beds of lilies of the valley, of other flowers and sweet-smelling plants, there is a white spot sprayed with the light green of the early leaves of a group of late pear or apple-trees in the orchard. It looks like a cloud entangled among the branches.

Jesus passing near an amphora full of branches remarks: « They already had the first little fruits. Look! On the tops there are blossoms, whereas farther down the blossoms have fallen off and the ovaries are swelling. »

« Mary wanted to pick them. She took bundles of them also to Your Mother. She got up at dawn, I think, lest another day of sunshine might spoil the delicate corollas. I heard of this destruction only a short while ago. But I was not so angry about it as the peasant servants. Nay, I thought that it was just to offer all the beauties of creation to You, the King of all things. »

Jesus sits down smiling in His place and looks at Mary, who with her sister is getting ready to serve as if she were a maid, bringing the cups of purification and the towels, then pouring wine into chalices and laying the trays of food on the table, as the servants bring them from the kitchen or hand them over after carving them on the sideboards.

Naturally, if the sisters serve all guests courteously, their attention is particularly directed to the two who are dearest to them: Jesus and Lazarus.

At a certain moment Peter, who is eating with relish, says: « Look! I am just noticing this! All the dishes are like the ones served in Galilee. I think... Of course! I seem to be at a wedding breakfast. But there is no shortage of wine here as there was at Cana. »

Mary smiles filling the apostle's chalice again with clear ambercoloured wine. But she does not speak.

And Lazarus explains: « And that is in fact what the sisters, and Mary in particular, wanted: to serve a supper that gave the Master the impression of being in His Galilee, a supper that, although imperfect, was to be better, much better than what is customary here... »

« But to make Him feel that, Mary should have been at this table. She was at Cana. The miracle took place through Her » remarks James of Alphaeus.

« That must have been a grand wine! »

« Wine is the symbol of mirth and ought to be the symbol also of fertility, as wine is the juice of the fertile vine. But I do not think that it fecundated very much. Susanna has no son » says the Iscariot.

« Oh! what a wine it was! It fecundated our spirits... » says John, somewhat dreamy, as he always is when he innerly contemplates the miracles worked by God. And he concludes: « It was worked on behalf of a virgin... and the influence of purity descended upon those who relished it. »

« But do you think that Susanna is a virgin? » asks the Iscariot laughing.

« I did not say that. Virgin is the Mother of the Lord. Virginité emanates from everything accomplished on Her behalf. I always consider how virginal everything is when performed for Mary... » and he dreams again smiling at I wonder which vision.

« Blessed boy! I think that he does not even remember the world any more, now. Look at him » says Peter pointing at John who, lying on his little bed, and lost in thought, is toying with little bits of bread forgetting to eat.

Jesus also bends a little to look at John who is at one of the comers of the U-shaped table, thus a little behind the back of the Lord, Who is at the middle of the central side, with His cousin James on His left and Lazarus on His right; after Lazarus there is the Zealot and Maximinus, and after James there is the other James and then Peter. John, instead, is between Andrew and Bartholomew, then there is Thomas, with in front of him Judas, Philip, Matthew and Thaddeus, who is at the corner, at the beginning of the long central table.

Mary of Lazarus leaves the hall while Martha is putting on the table trays full of early green figs, green fennel stalks, fresh shelled almonds, strawberries or raspberries, I do not know, that look even redder among the pale emerald green of the fennels and of the figs

and the white of the almonds, of the little melons or other fruit of the kind... I think they look like the green melons of southern Italy, and golden oranges.

« These fruits already? I have not seen any ripe ones anywhere » says Peter opening his eyes wide and pointing at the strawberries and the melons.

« Some of them came from the shores beyond Gaza where I have a market garden of these products, and some from the sunny terraces on the house, the nursery for the more delicate plants that need to be protected from frost. A Roman friend taught me how to grow them... The only good thing he taught me... » Lazarus becomes gloomy. Martha sighs... But Lazarus becomes at once the perfect host who does not sadden his guests. « It is a wide spread custom in the villas at Baia and Syracuse and along the Sybaris gulf to cultivate such delights with that method to have them prematurely. Eat them: the last fruits are the oranges from Libya, the earliest the melons of Egypt grown in the solaria and these Latin fruits and the white almonds of our fatherland, the tender broad beans, the digestive stalks tasting of anise... Martha, have you seen to the boy? »

« Yes, I have seen to everybody. Mary was deeply moved remembering Egypt... »

« We had some plants in our poor kitchen garden. In dog days it was a great joy to dip the melons into the well of our neighbour, as it was deep and cool, and eat them in the evening... I remember... I had a little greedy goat and we had to watch her because she was fond of tender plants and fruits... » Jesus, Who was speaking with His head somewhat lowered, raises it and looks at the palm-trees rustling in the breeze of the evening that is falling and says: « When I see those palm-trees... Every time I see palm-trees I see Egypt again, its yellow sandy soil blown so easily by the wind, and far away the pyramids trembled in the rarefied air... and the tall trunks of the palm-trees... and the house where... But it is no use speaking of them. Each period has its anxiety... And its joy with its anxiety... Lazarus, would you give me some of those fruits? I should like to take them to Mary and Matthias. I do not think that Johanna has any. »

« She has not. She said so yesterday and she intends to plant some at Bether and have solaria built. But I shall not give them to You now. I picked as many as I had and for some days there will be no ripe ones. I will send them to You or send for them by Thursday. We will prepare a lovely basket of them for those children. Is that right, Martha? »

« Yes, brother. And we will add some little lilies of the valley that Johanna likes so much. »

Mary Magdalene comes back in. She is holding in her hands a thin-necked amphora, ending in a little bill, as pretty as the neck

of a bird. The alabaster is of a precious rosy yellow hue, like the complexion of some blondes. The apostles look at her thinking, perhaps, that she is bringing some rare delicacy. But Mary does not go to the centre, inside the U of the table, where her sister is. She goes behind the seat-beds and stops between that of Jesus and Lazarus and that of the two Jameses.

She uncorks the alabaster vase and places her hand under the little bill to receive a few drops of a viscous liquid that flows slowly from the open amphora. A strong smell of tuberose and other essences, a very intense pleasant scent spreads in the hall. But Mary is not satisfied with the little quantity of perfume that flows. She stoops and with a sharp blow she breaks the neck of the amphora against the corner of Jesus' little bed. The thin neck falls on the floor shedding scented drops on the marble pavement. The amphora now has a wide aperture through which plenty unguent flows in thick gushes.

Mary places herself behind Jesus and spreads the thick oil on her Jesus' hair, she sprinkles all His locks with it, she stretches them and then puts them in order with the comb taken from her own hair, tidying them on the adored head. Jesus' fair-red hair shines now like dark gold and is very bright after the unction. The light of the chandelier, lit by the servants, is reflected on Jesus' fair hair like a beautiful copper-coloured bronze helmet. The scent is exhilarating. Through the nostrils it rises to the head and, spread as it is without restraint, it is so intense that it is almost as exciting as sternutatory powder.

Lazarus, with his head turned round, smiles watching how carefully Mary anoints and arranges Jesus' locks so that His hair may look tidy after the scented massage, while she does not worry about her plaits, which, no longer supported by the wide comb that helps the hairpins to hold them in place, are falling lower and lower on her neck, and are about to loosen completely on her shoulders. Martha also looks at her smiling. The others are talking to one another in low voices with different expressions on their faces.

But Mary is not yet satisfied. There is still plenty ointment in the broken vase, and Jesus' hair, although thick, is already saturated with it. Mary then repeats the loving gesture of an evening of long ago. She kneels down at the foot of the bed, she unties the buckles of Jesus' sandals and takes them off, and dipping the long fingers of her beautiful hand into the vase, she takes as much ointment as she can and spreads it on His bare feet, toe by toe, then on the soles and heels, then up, on the malleoli, which she uncovers by throwing back His linen tunic, and lastly on the insteps, she delays on the metatarsi, which will be pierced by the dreadful nails, she insists until she finds no more balm in the hollow vase. Then she shatters it on the floor and with her hands now free she removes her

big hairpins, she quickly looses her heavy plaits and with that golden, bright, soft, flowing bundle of hair she removes the excess of ointment from Jesus' feet that are dripping balm.

Judas, who so far has been silent watching with lewd envious eyes the beautiful woman and the Master Whose head and feet she was anointing, raises his voice, the only voice of open reproach; some of the others, not all of them, had murmured something or had made gestures of surprised but also calm disapproval. But Judas, who has stood up to have a better view of the ointment spread on Jesus' feet, says with ill grace: « What a useless heathen waste! Why do that? And then we expect the Chiefs of the Sanhedrin not to speak of sin! Those are deeds of a lustful courtesan and they do not become the new life you are leading, woman. They are too strong a recollection of your past! »

The insult is such that everybody is dumbfounded. It is such that everybody stirs, some sit up on the beds, some jump to their feet, everyone looks at Judas, as if he had suddenly become insane.

Martha flares up. Lazarus springs to his feet striking the table with his fist and says: « In my house... », then he looks at Jesus and controls himself.

« Yes. Are you all looking at me? You have all murmured in your hearts. But now that I echoed your words and I openly said what you thought, you are all ready to say that I am wrong. I will repeat what I said. I do not mean that Mary is the Master's lover. But I say that certain actions do not become Him or her. It is an imprudent action. And an unjust one. Yes. Why such waste? If she wanted to destroy the memories of her past, she could have given that vase and ointment to me. It was at least a pound of pure nard! And of high value. I could have sold it for at least three hundred denarii, as that is the price for nard of that quality. And I could have sold the vase, which was beautiful and precious. I would have given the money to the poor who crowd round us. We never have enough. And those asking for alms tomorrow in Jerusalem will be numberless. »

« That is true » say the others assenting. « You could have used a little for the Master and the rest... »

Mary of Magdala seems to be deaf. She continues wiping Jesus' feet with her loose hair that now, at its end, is also heavy with the ointment and darker than on the top of her head. Jesus' feet are smooth and soft in their shade of old ivory, as if they were covered with fresh skin. And Mary puts the sandals on the Christ's feet again, kissing each foot before and after putting the sandal on, deaf to everything that is not her love for Jesus.

Jesus defends her laying His hand on her head bent in the last kiss and saying: « Leave her alone. Why are you annoying and upsetting her? You do not realise what she has done. Mary has accomplished an action that is rightful and good with regard to Me. The

poor will always be among you. I am about to go away. You will always have them, but you will soon not have Me any longer. You will always be able to give alms to the poor. Shortly to Me, to the Son of man among men, it will no longer be possible to give any honour, through the will of men, and because the hour has come. Love is light to her. She feels that I am about to die and she wanted to anticipate the burial anointing for My body. I tell you solemnly that wherever the Good News is proclaimed, this prophetic action of love of hers will be remembered. All over the world. Throughout ages. I wish God would turn every human being into another Mary who does not value things, who entertains no attachment for anything, who does not cherish the least memory of the past, but destroys and treads on everything that is flesh and world, and breaks and spreads herself, as she did with the nard and the alabaster, on her Lord and out of love for Him. Do not weep, Mary. In this hour I repeat to you the words I spoke to Simon the Pharisee and to your sister Martha: "You are forgiven everything, because you have loved completely". You have chosen the better part. And it will not be taken away from you. Go in peace, My kind little sheep found again. Go in peace. The pastures of love shall be your food for ever. Stand up. Kiss also My hands that have absolved and blessed you... How many people these hands of Mine have absolved, blessed, cured, assisted! And yet I tell you that the people whom I have assisted are preparing torture for these hands... »

There is deathlike silence in the air sultry with the intense scent. Mary, her loose hair clothing her shoulders and veiling her face, kisses the right hand that Jesus offers her and cannot detach her lips from it...

Martha, deeply moved, approaches her and gathers her loose hair, which she braids caressing her, and then she wipes the tears on her cheeks endeavouring to dry them...

No one feels like eating any more... Christ's words make them pensive.

Judas of Alphaeus is the first to get up. He asks leave to withdraw. His brother James imitates him and Andrew and John follow suit. The others remain, but they are already standing, intent on purifying their hands in silver basins handed to them by the servants. Mary and Martha do the same with the Master and Lazarus.

A servant comes in and he bends to speak to Maximinus, who, after listening to him, says: « Master, there are some people who would like to see You. They say that they come from afar. What shall we do? »

Jesus calls Philip, James of Zebedee and Thomas and says to them: « Go, evangelize, cure, act in My name. Tell them that I shall be going up to the Temple tomorrow. »

« Is it wise to tell them that, Lord? » asks Simon Zealot.

« There is no sense in being silent about it, because it is already mentioned in the Holy City, more by enemies than by friends. Go! »

« H'm! As long as friends know... we know. But they do not betray. I do not know how the others can be informed. »

« Among the many friends there are always some enemies, Simon of Jonas. Now the friends are... too many and they are accepted as such too easily. When I think how long I had to wait and pray!... But those were the early days and one was cautious. Then the triumphs dazzled us and we were not longer wary. And that was wrong. But it happens to all winners. Victories prevent one from seeing clearly and enfeeble one's prudence in acting. I am speaking of us disciples, of course, not of the Master. He is perfect. If we had remained only twelve, we should not have to tremble for fear of betrayals! » says Judas of Kerioth lying shamelessly.

It is impossible to describe the glance Christ casts at the perfidious apostle. A glance of warning and infinite sorrow. But Judas pays no attention to it. He passes by the table to go out... Jesus follows him with His eyes and when He sees him go out, He asks him: « Where are you going? »

« Out... » replies Judas evasively.

« Out of this room, or out of the house? »

« Out... So... For a little walk. »

« Do not go, Judas. Stay with Me, with us... »

« Your brothers have gone away with John and Andrew. Why must I not go? »

« You are not going to have a rest as they did... »

Judas does not reply, but he goes out obstinately. Not a word is uttered in the hall. Lazarus and his sisters and the four apostles who have stayed: Peter, Simon, Matthew and Bartholomew, look at one another.

Jesus looks outside. He has got up and has gone to a window to follow Judas' movements and when He sees him go out of the house wearing his mantle and set out towards the gate, which cannot be seen from here, He calls him in a loud voice: « Judas! Wait for Me. I have something to tell you » and He gently frees Himself from Lazarus who, realising that the Master was grieved, had passed his arm round His waist embracing Him, and He leaves the hall, joining Judas, who had continued walking although more slowly.

He reaches him at about one third of the distance between the house and the garden wall, near a thicket of plants with thick leaves that look like green baked clay sprayed with clusters of little flowers, and each flower is a small cross with heavy petals as if they were made of light yellow wax, with a strong scent. I do not know their name. He draws him behind the thicket and holding his forearm tight with His hand, He asks him again: « Where are you going, Judas? Please, stay here! »

« Since You know everything, why do You ask me? What need is there for You to ask, since You can read the hearts of men? You know that I am going to my friends. You do not allow me to go there. They press me to go. And I am going. »

« Your friends! You should say your ruin! That is where you are going. You are going to your true murderers. Don't go, Judas! Don't go! You are going to commit a crime... You... »

« Ah! You are afraid?! Are You afraid at last?! You realise at last that You are a man! You are a man! Nothing more than a man! Because man only is afraid of death. God knows that He cannot die. If You felt that You were God, You would know that You could not die and You would not be afraid. Because now that You feel death close at hand, You are afraid like all men and You are trying with every possible means to avert it and You see danger everywhere and in everything. Where is Your lovely boldness? Where are Your confident protestations that You were happy and thirsting for accomplishing the Sacrifice? There is not even an echo of them left in Your heart! You thought that this hour would never come, so You feigned power, generosity and You spoke solemn sentences. Go away! You are as bad as those whom You reproach as being hypocrites! You have enticed us and betrayed us. And we had left everything for Your sake! And because of You we are hated! You have brought about our ruin... »

« That is enough. Go! Go away! Not many hours have gone by since you said to Me: "Help me to stay. Defend me!". I have done that. To what avail? Tell Me one thing more, and think about it before telling Me. Is this your sincere will? To go to your friends, to prefer them to Me? »

« Yes. It is. I do not have to think about it, because for a long time I have wanted nothing but that. »

« Then go. God does not do violence to man's will » and Jesus turns His back on him and goes slowly back to the house.

When He is close to it He raises His head, attracted by the eyes of Lazarus, who standing where he was before, is looking fixedly at Him. It is a very pale face that endeavours to smile at the faithful friend.

He goes back into the hall where the four apostles are speaking to Maximinus, while Martha and Mary are directing the work of the servants, who are tidying up the hall removing the dishes and table-linen used at the banquet.

Lazarus has gone to the door and once again he has embraced Jesus' waist with his arm, and passing near a servant he says to him: « Bring me the roll that is on the table in my workroom. »

He takes Jesus to one of the wide seats placed in the cavities of the windows, so that He may sit down. But Jesus remains standing, striving to pay attention to what Lazarus is saying to Him...

but it is evident that His mind is elsewhere and His heart is grieved, although when He realises that the apostles are watching Him, He smiles to dispel the suspicions of those who have approached Him surrounding Him and are whispering to one another, winking and pointing at the Master.

The servant comes back with the roll and Peter, seeing that the parchments contain things that are higher than what his head can understand, withdraws saying: « Fish do not bite certain baits. It is better to speak with Maximinus of plants and cultivations. »

Martha continues with her work. "Maria, although silent, takes part in the conversation of Lazarus, who points out certain passages of the parchments to the Master, saying: « Has this heathen not got a rare foresight? More than many of us. Perhaps... if he had been here, while You are our Master, he would have been one of Your disciples, and one of the best. And he would have understood You as many of us have not been able to understand You. And what a poem would have been inspired to his genius by his admiration for You! Your words gathered and preserved by a spirit that is bright although it belongs to a heathen! Your life described by this open and limpid intellect! We no longer have writers and poets. You were born late. When the selfishness of life and religious-social corruption have extinguished poetry and genius among us. What our wise men and prophets have written about You, without knowing You, has not found an echo in the living voice of one of Your followers. Your favourites, Your faithful followers are mostly people without education. And the others... No. We no longer have any Qohelet to hand down to the crowds Your wisdom and Your figure. We no longer have them because the spirit and will are lacking more than the ability to do so. The humanly more chosen part of Israel is as deaf as a broken trumpet, and it can no longer sing the glories and wonders of God. My worry is that everything may be lost or adulterated, partly through inability, partly through ill-will... »

« That will not happen. When the Spirit of the Lord is settled in hearts, it will repeat My words and explain their meaning. It is the Spirit of God Who speaks through the lips of the Christ. Then... Then It will speak to the spirits directly and will recall My words. »

« Oh! I wish that would happen soon! Soon, because they listen so little to Your words and understand them even less. I think that the roaring of the Spirit of God will be as violent as blazing fire to engrave with violence in the minds of men what they would not accept because it was kind and mild. I think that the flaming Spirit will burn the tepid or torpid consciences with Its fire, writing Your words on them. The world will have to love You! It is the will of the Most High! But when will it happen? »

« When I shall be consumed in the Sacrifice of love. Then Love will come. It will be like the beautiful flame rising from the sacrificed

Victim. And that flame will never go out, because the Sacrifice will never end. Once it is accomplished, it will last throughout the time of the Earth. »

« But then... You would really have to be sacrificed so that that may happen? »

« It is so » Jesus makes His usual gesture of adherence to His own destiny. He stretches out His arms with His hands pointed outwards and lowers His head. He then raises it to smile at distressed Lazarus and says: « But the immaterial voice of the Spirit of love will not be so violent as a roar, but it will be as sweet as love, which is as mild as a Nisan breeze and yet is as strong as death. The ineffable ministry of Love! The complement, the completion of My ministry. The perfection of My ministry as Master... I am not afraid, as you are, that anything of what I have given may be lost. On the contrary, I solemnly tell you that beams of light will be cast on My words and you will see their spirit. I am going away serenely because I am entrusting My doctrine to the Holy Spirit and My spirit to My Father. »

He lowers His head pensively, then, after laying the roll, which gave rise to the conversation, on a kind of tall dresser or chest of ebony, or other dark wood, all inlaid with yellowish ivory, that has been brought by four servants from the next room, and in which Martha is arranging the more valuable tableware, He says: « Lazarus, come outside. I want to speak to you! »

« At once, Lord » and Lazarus gets up from the seat on which he was sitting and follows Jesus into the garden, where it is beginning to get dark, as the last daylight is fading away in the sky, and the early moonlight, which is just beginning to appear, is still too faint.

Jesus says: « You will put here the vision dated 2nd March 1945: "Farewell to Lazarus", starting from the point: "Jesus walks turning His steps beyond the garden where is the sepulchre in which Lazarus was buried". »

585. Farewell to Lazarus.

2nd March 1945.

Jesus is at Bethany, It is evening. A peaceful April evening. From the wide windows of the dining room one can see Lazarus' garden all in bloom, and beyond it, the orchard that looks like a cloud of light petals. The scent of fresh vegetation, the sweet-sour smell of fruit-tree blossoms, of roses and other flowers, carried into the house by the light evening breeze that makes the door curtains flutter and the lights of the central chandelier flicker, mingles with a strong scent of tuberose, lilies of the valley and jasmines, mixed in a rare essence, left over from the balm with which Mary of Magdala

scented her Jesus, Whose hair still looks dark after the unction. Simon, Peter, Matthew and Benjamin are still in the room. The others are absent and have probably gone out on errands.

Jesus has left the table and is looking at a roll of parchment that Lazarus has shown Him. Mary of Magdala is going round the room... she looks like a butterfly attracted by light. She can do nothing but move round her Jesus. Martha is watching the servants who are removing the wonderful precious dishes lying on the table.

Jesus lays the roll on a tall sideboard of polished black wood inlaid with ivory, and says: « Lazarus, come outside. I must speak to you. »

« At once, Lord » and Lazarus gets up from his chair near the window and follows Jesus into the garden, where the last light of the day is mixing with the first very clear moonlight.

Jesus walks turning His steps beyond the garden, where is the sepulchre in which Lazarus was buried and which now displays a large frame of roses, all in bloom, at its empty mouth. Above it, on the slightly inclined rock, is carved: « Lazarus, come out! » Jesus stops there. The house can no longer be seen, concealed as it is by trees and hedges. There is dead silence and absolute solitude.

« Lazarus, My friend » asks Jesus standing facing His friend and looking at him with a faint smile on His face, which is very thin and paler than usual. « Lazarus, My friend, do you know who I am? »

« You? You are Jesus of Nazareth, my gentle Jesus, my holy Jesus, my powerful Jesus! »

« That with regard to you. But with regard to the world, who am I? »

« You are the Messiah of Israel. »

« And then? »

« You are the Promised One, the Expected One... But why are You asking me that? Do You doubt my faith? »

« No, Lazarus. But I want to confide a truth to you. Nobody, except My Mother and one of My apostles, is aware of it. My Mother, because She knows everything. An apostle, because he participates in this matter. During these three years I told the others, who are with Me, many times. But their love acted as nepenthes and thwarted the truth I had announced. They could not understand... And it is a good thing that they did not understand, otherwise, to prevent a crime, they would have committed another one. A useless one, because what is to happen would take place just the same, notwithstanding any killing. But I want to tell you. »

« Do You doubt that I do not love You as much as they do? Of what crime are You speaking? What crime is to take place? In the name of God, speak! » Lazarus is excited.

« Yes, I will speak. I do not doubt your love. So much so that I entrust and confide My will to you... »

« Oh! my Jesus! Who is about to die does that! I did it when I realised that You were not coming and that I had to die. »

« And I must die. »

« No! » Lazarus utters another deep groan.

« Do not shout. Let no one hear us. I must speak to you alone. Lazarus, My friend, do you know what is happening this very moment that you are with Me, in the loyal friendship you granted Me from the first moment, and was never upset for any reason? A man, with other men' is negotiating the price of the Lamb. Do you know the name of that Lamb? Its name is Jesus of Nazareth. »

« No! There are enemies, that is true. But no one can sell You! Who? Who is it? »

« One of My apostles. It could but be one of those whom I have disappointed more bitterly and who, tired of waiting, wants to get rid of Him Who by now is nothing but a personal danger. In his way of thinking, he feels that he can gain a good reputation again with the great ones of the world. He will instead be despised both by all good people and by all criminals. He has become tired of Me, of awaiting what he has tried to achieve by every means: human grandeur, which he pursued first in the Temple, then he believed he would attain with the King of Israel, and he is now seeking once again in the Temple and by approaching the Romans... He hopes... But Rome, if she knows how to reward her loyal servants... knows also how to crush informers with contempt. He is tired of Me, of waiting, of the burden of being good.. For those who are wicked, to be, to have to feign to be good, is an overwhelming burden. It can be borne for some time... then... it can no longer be endured... and one gets rid of it to become free. Free? That is what the wicked ones think. That is what he thinks. But it is not freedom. To belong to God is freedom. To be against God is to be in prison with fetters and chains, with loads and lashes, as no galley-slave, as no slave working at constructions ever suffered under the whip of the torturer. »

« Who is it? Tell me. Who is it? »

« It is of no use. »

« Yes, it is... Ah!... It can be but he: the man who has always been a stain in Your group, the man who also a short time ago offended my sister. It is Judas of Kerioth! »

« No. It is Satan. God took flesh in Me: Jesus. Satan has taken flesh in him: Judas of Kerioth. One day... a very remote day... here, in this garden of yours, I comforted the tears and I excused a spirit that had fallen very low. I said that possession is the contagion of Satan who inoculates the human being with his juices and perverts its nature. I said that it is the marriage of a spirit with Satan and animality. But possession is still a trifle as compared with incarnation. I shall be possessed by My saints and they will be possessed

by Me. But only in Jesus Christ is God as He is in Heaven, because I am the God Who became Flesh. One only is the divine Incarnation. Likewise Satan, Lucifer, will be in one only, as he is in his kingdom, because Satan is incarnate only in the killer of the Son of God. While I am speaking to you here, he is before the Sanhedrin and is negotiating and is pledging himself to have Me killed. But it is not he, it is Satan. Listen now, Lazarus, My loyal friend. I am going to ask you for some favours. You have never denied Me anything. Your love has been so great that, without going beyond respect, it has always been active beside Me, with countless aids, with so much provident assistance and wise advice that I have always accepted, because I could see in your heart a true desire for My welfare. »

« Oh! My Lord! But it was my joy to devote myself to You! What shall I do now, if I do not have to devote myself to my Master and Lord? You have allowed me to do too little, far too little! My debt to You, Who have restored Mary to my love and honour, and me to life, is such that... Oh! why did You call me back from death to make me live this hour? By now I had overcome all the horror of death and all the anguish of the spirit, frightened by Satan with temptation at the moment of presenting itself to the Eternal Judge, and there was darkness!... What is the matter with You, Jesus? Why are You trembling and growing wanner than You are usually? Your face is paler than this white rose which is languishing in the moonlight. Oh! Master! Your blood and life seem to be forsaking You... »

« I, in fact, look like a man who is dying with his veins cut. The whole of Jerusalem, and I mean "all My enemies among the mighty ones in Israel" have laid their greedy mouths on Me and are sucking My life and My blood. They want to silence the Voice that for three years, while loving them, has tortured them;... because every word of Mine, even if it were a word of love, was a shock inviting their souls to wake up, and they did not want to hear their souls, as they had tied them with their treble sensuality. And not only the great ones... But the whole of Jerusalem is about to rage at the Innocent and ask for His death... and with Jerusalem also Judaea... and with Judaea also Perea, Idumaea, the Decapolis, Galilee, Syrophaenicia... the whole of Israel gathered in Zion for the "Passing" of the Christ from life to death... Lazarus, since you died and rose again, tell Me: what is dying? What did you feel? What do you remember? »

« Dying?... I do not remember exactly what it was. My bitter suffering was followed by a great languor... I did not seem to suffer any more and I was only very sleepy... Light and noises were becoming dimmer and dimmer and fainter and fainter and more and more remote... My sisters and Maximinus say that I was showing signs of sharp suffering... But I do not remember... »

« Of course. The pity of the Father numbs the intellectual senses of dying people, so that only their flesh suffers, as it is to be purified by the pre-purgatory that is agony. But I... And what do you remember of death? »

« Nothing, Master. It is a dark space in my spirit. An empty area. There is an interruption in the course of my life and I do not know how to fill it. I remember nothing. If I looked at the bottom of that black hole that kept me for four days, although it were night and I were a shadow in it, if I could not see, I would feel the humid chill rise from its bowels and blow on my face. It is, after all, a sensation. But if I think of those four days, I have nothing. Nothing. That is the word. »

« Of course. Those who come back cannot tell... The mystery is revealed every time to him who goes in. But I, Lazarus, I know what I shall suffer. I know that I shall suffer in full consciousness. There will be no soothing drink or languor to make My agony less dreadful. I shall feel that I am dying. I already feel it... I am already dying, Lazarus. Like one suffering from an incurable disease, I have continued to die during these thirty-three years. And death has quickened its pace more and more as time brought Me closer to this hour. At first it was only the death of knowing that I was born to be the Redeemer. Later it was the death of him who sees himself opposed, accused, derided, persecuted, hindered... How tiring! Then... the death of having beside Me, closer and closer, till he was grasping Me as a giant octopus grasps a shipwrecked person, him who is My Traitor. How nauseating! And now I am dying in the torture of having to say "goodbye" to My dearest friends and to My Mother... »

« Oh! Master! You are weeping?! I know that You wept also in front of my sepulchre, because You loved me. But now... You are weeping again. You are frozen. Your hands are already as cold as those of a corpse. You are suffering... You are suffering too much!... »

« I am the Man, Lazarus. I am not only the God. I have the sensitiveness and affections of men. And My soul is distressed thinking of My Mother... And yet, I tell you, My torture of enduring to have My Traitor close to Me has become so monstrous, as well as having to bear the satanic hatred of a whole world, and the deafness of those who, if they do not hate, cannot love actively either, because to love actively is to succeed in being what the loved person wants and teaches, whereas here!... Yes, many love Me. But they have remained "what they were". They did not assume another ego for My sake. Do you know who was able, among My most intimate ones, to change nature in order to become of Christ, as Christ wants? One only: your sister Mary. She started from complete perverted animality to arrive at an angelical spirituality. And she achieved that only through the power of love. »

« You redeemed her. »

« I redeemed them all with My word. But she alone changed completely through active love. But I was saying: and My suffering all these things is so monstrous, that I long for nothing but to see everything accomplished. My strength is failing Me... The cross will not be so heavy as this torture of the spirit and of feelings... »

« The cross?! No! Oh! no! It is too atrocious! It is too disgraceful! No! » Lazarus, who for some time has been holding Jesus' cold hands in his own, standing in front of his Master, releases them and collapses on the nearby stone seat and he covers his face with his hands weeping desolately.

Jesus approaches him, lays a hand on the shoulders shaken by sobs, and says: « What? Am I, Who am about to die, to comfort you, who are alive? My friend, I am in need of strength and help. And I am asking them of you. I have but you who can give Me them. It is better if the others do riot know. Because if they knew... Blood would be shed. And I do not want lambs to become wolves, not even for the sake of the Innocent. My Mother... oh! how heart-rending it is to speak of Her!... Mother is already so distressed! She also is dying exhausted... She also has been dying for thirty-three years, and She is now one big sore, like the victim of an atrocious torture. I swear to you that there has been a struggle between My mind and My heart, between love and reason, to decide whether it was just to send Her away, to send Her back to Her house, where She always dreams of the Love that made Her Mother, where She enjoys the savour of Love's kiss of fire, She starts in the ecstasy of that remembrance, and with the eyes of Her soul She always sees the air breathe gently, stirred by an angelical flash. The news of My Death will reach Galilee almost at the moment in which I will be able to say to Her: "Mother, I am the Conqueror!". But I cannot, no, I cannot do that. Poor Jesus, laden with the sins of the world, needs consolation. And Mother will give Me it. And the even poorer world needs two Victims. Because man sinned with woman; and the Woman must redeem, as the Man redeems. But until the hour is struck, I will smile at My Mother reassuringly... She trembles... I know. She perceives that the Torture is approaching. I know. And She repels it through natural disgust and holy love, as I repel Death because I am a "living being" who must die. But it would be dreadful if She knew that in five days' time... She would die before that hour, and I want Her to be alive to get strength from Her lips, as I received life from Her womb. And God wants Her to be on My Calvary to mix the water of Her virginal tears with the wine of My divine Blood and celebrate the first Mass. Do you know what Mass will be? You do not know. You cannot know. It will be My death applied for ever to the living or suffering mankind. Do not weep, Lazarus. She is strong. She does not weep. She has wept throughout

Her life of a Mother. She no longer weeps now. She has crucified Her smile on Her face... Have you noticed what Her face has become like these last days? She crucified Her smile on Her face to comfort Me. I ask you to imitate My Mother. I could no longer keep My secret all to Myself. I looked around seeking a sincere reliable friend. I met your loyal eyes. I said: "I will confide it to Lazarus". When you had a heavy burden in your heart, I respected your secret and I defended it even against the natural curiosity of hearts. I ask you to have the same respect for Mine. Later... after My death, you will make it known. You will mention this conversation. That people may know that Jesus went to His death fully aware of the situation, and to His known tortures He added also this one, that He knew everything, both with regard to people and to His destiny. That it may be known that while He could still have saved Himself, He did not want to, because His infinite love for men desired nothing but to consume the sacrifice for them. »

« Oh! save Yourself, Master! Save Yourself! I can let You escape. This very night. Once You did fly to Egypt! Run away now as well. Come, let us go. Let us take Mary and my sisters with us, and let us go. None of my riches attract me, as You know. You are my wealth and Mary's and Martha's. Let us go. »

« Lazarus, I ran away then, because it was not My hour. Now it is the hour. And I am staying. »

« In that case I am coming with You. I will not leave You. »

« No. You will stay here. Since he who is within the distance of a Sabbath walk is allowed to consume the lamb in his house, you will consume your lamb here, as you have always done. But let your sisters come... For My Mother... Oh! what the roses of divine love concealed from You, o Martyr! The abyss! The abyss! And from it are now rising the flames of Hatred and rushing to gnaw at You, heart! The sisters, yes. They are strong and active... and Mother will be agonizing, bent over My dead body. John is not sufficient. John is love. But he is still immature. Oh! He will mature and become a man in the torture of the oncoming days. But the Woman need, women for Her dreadful wounds. Will you let Me have them? »

« I will give You everything, I have always given You everything with joy, and I only regretted that You wanted so little!... »

« As you can see, I have not accepted from anybody else what I consented to have from My friends in Bethany. That is one of the charges made against Me by the unjust man more than once. But here, among you, I found enough to comfort the Man of all His bitterness as a man. At Nazareth it was the God Who found solace near the Unique Delight of God. Here it was the Man. And before going up to My death I thank you, My faithful, loving, kind, thoughtful, reserved, learned, discreet, generous friend. I thank you for everything. And My Father, later, will reward you... »

« I have already had everything through Your love and Mary's redemption. »

« Oh! no. You are to receive much more. And you will have it. Listen. Do not be so dejected. Pay attention to Me that I may tell you what I want to ask you to do. You will remain here waiting... »

« No, not that. Why Mary and Martha, and not I? »

« Because I do not want you to be corrupted as all men will be corrupted. Jerusalem in the next days will be as corrupt as the air around a putrid carrion that has suddenly been burst by the foot of a heedless passer-by. Infected and infecting. Even people who are not so cruel, even My disciples will be driven mad by its miasmata. They will run away. And where will they go in their bewilderment? They will come to Lazarus. How many times, in these three years, have they come looking for bread, a bed, protection, shelter, and for their Master!... They will come back now. Like sheep dispersed by a wolf that has abducted the shepherd, they will rush to a fold. Gather them. Encourage them. Tell them that I forgive them. I entrust you with the task of forgiving them on My behalf. They will not be able to set their minds at rest for running away. Tell them not to fall into a greater sin by despairing of My forgiveness. »

« Will they all run away? »

« All of them except John. »

« Master. You will not ask me to receive Judas? Let me die tortured, but do not ask me that. Several times my hand, anxious as it was to kill the shame of the family, trembled touching my sword. But I never did it, because I am not a violent man. I was only tempted to do it. But I swear to You that if I see Judas again, I will cut his throat, like a scapegoat. »

« You will never see him again. I swear it to you ».

« Will he run away? It does not matter. I said: "If I see him again". Now I say: "I will get him, even if he were at the world's end, and I will kill him". »

« You must not wish that. »

« I will do it. »

« You will not do it, because you will not be able to go where he is. »

« In the bosom of the Sanhedrin? In the Holy of Holies? I will get him even there and I will kill him. »

« He will not be there. »

« At Herod's? They will kill me, but I will kill him first. »

« He will be with Satan. And you will never be with Satan. Give up that murderous intent at once, otherwise I will leave you. »

« Oh! oh!... But... Yes, for You... Oh! Master! Master! Master! »

« Yes. Your Master... You will receive the disciples, you will comfort them. You will lead them once again towards peace. I am the Peace. And also later... Later you will help them. Bethany will always

be Bethany, until Hatred rummages in this home of love, thinking that it will put out its flames, whereas it will spread them throughout the world to set it all ablaze. I bless you, Lazarus, for everything you have done and for what you will do... »

« Nothing, nothing. You brought me back from death, and You do not allow me to defend You. So what have I done? »

« You gave Me your houses. See? It was our destiny. The first flat in Zion in a ground belonging to you. And the last one also in one of them. It was My destiny that I should be your Guest. But you could not defend me from death. At the beginning of this conversation I asked you: "Do you know who I am?" Now I reply: "I am the Redeemer". The Redeemer must consume the sacrifice to the final immolation. In any case, believe Me. He Who will be raised on the cross and will be exposed to the eyes and the mockery of the world will not be alive, but dead. I am already dead, killed before and more by lack of love than by torture. And one more thing, My friend. Tomorrow at dawn I am going to Jerusalem. And you will hear people say that Zion applauded her meek King as a triumpher, as He entered the town riding a little donkey. Do not let that triumph deceive you and do not let it make you think that the Wisdom now speaking to you was not wise this peaceful evening. Popular favour will vanish faster than a star that furrows the sky and disappears into unknown spaces, and in five days' time, in the evening at this time, My torture will begin with a deceitful kiss that will open the mouths, singing hosannas tomorrow, into a chorus of dreadful curses and cruel condemning voices.

Yes, at last, o town of Zion, o people of Israel, you will have the Passover Lamb! You will have it in the rite now close-at-hand. Here it is. It is the Victim that has been prepared for ages. Love procreated it, having prepared an immaculate womb as its nuptial room. And Love consumes it. Here it is. It is the conscious Victim. Not like the lamb that being unaware goes on grazing in the meadow or with its pink snout presses its mother's round dug, while the butcher is sharpening a knife to slaughter it. But I am the Lamb that consciously says: "Goodbye!" to life, to His Mother, to His friends, and goes to the sacrificer and says: "Here I am!". I am the Food of man. Satan has made men starve and their hunger has never been satisfied. And it cannot be satisfied. One food only can sate it, because it removes their hunger. And here is that food. Here is your bread, man. Here is your wine. Consume your Passover, o Mankind! Cross your sea, reddened by satanic flames. Tinged with My Blood you will cross it, o race of man, preserved from the fire of hell. You can cross it. Heaven, pressed by My desire, is already half-opening the eternal gates. Look, o souls of the dead! Look, of living men! Look, o souls, that will be incorporated in future bodies! Look, o angels of Paradise! Look, o demons of Hell! Look, o Father;

look, o Paraclete! The Victim smiles. It no longer weeps...

Everything has been said. Goodbye, My friend. I shall not see you either, before I die. Let us kiss each other goodbye. And do not be doubtful. People will say to you: "He was a madman! He was a demon! A liar! He died while He was saying that He was the Life". Reply to them and particularly to yourself: "He was and is the Truth and the Life. He is the Vanquisher of death. I know. And He cannot be the eternal Dead One. I am waiting for Him. And all the oil in the lamp, that his friend is keeping ready to make light for the world, invited to the wedding of the Triumpner, will not be burnt, before He, the Bridegroom, comes back. And this time it will never be possible to put the light out". Believe that, Lazarus. Obey My wish. Can you hear how this nightingale is singing after being silent because of the outburst of your tears? Do the same. After the inevitable tears shed on the Victim, let your soul sing the unerring song of your faith. May you be blessed by the Father, by the Son, by the Holy Spirit. »

How much I suffered! The whole night, from 11 o'clock p.m. on Thursday 1st March to 5 o'clock Friday morning. I saw Jesus in a state of anguish only a little inferior to that at Gethsemane, particularly when He speaks of His Mother, of the traitor, and shows His repugnance to death. I obeyed Jesus' order to write this on a separate notebook to have a more detailed Passion. You saw my face this morning... a weak image of what I suffered... and I am not saying anything else, because there are insurmountable aspects of modesty.

586. Judas Goes to the Leaders of the Sanhedrin.

29th March 1947.

Judas arrives at Caiaphas' country house at night. But the moon acts as an accomplice of the murderer, illuminating the road for him. He must be certain that he will find there, in that house outside the walls, those he is looking for, otherwise I think he would have tried to enter the town and he would have gone to the Temple. Instead he is climbing among the olive-trees of the little hill without a moment's hesitation. This time he is more certain than the previous time, because it is night-time and the darkness and the late hour protect from every possible surprise. The country roads are now deserted, after being busy all day with the crowds of pilgrims going to Jerusalem for Passover. Even poor lepers are now in their eaves and are sleeping the sleep of unhappy people, forgetting their fate for a few hours.

Judas is now at the door of the house, which is all white in the moonlight. He knocks: three times, once, three times again, twice...

Even the conventional signal is familiar to him! And it must be a sure signal, because the door is half-opened without any check by the door-keeper through the peep-hole in the door.

Judas steals in and he asks the servant porter, who greets him: « Have the members assembled? »

« Yes, Judas of Kerioth, they have. A full assembly, I might say. »

« Take me there. I have to speak of an important matter. Quick! »

The man locks the door with all the bolts and precedes him along a semi-dark vestibule, stopping in front of a heavy door, at which he knocks. The murmur of the voices in the closed room stops and is replaced by the noise of the lock and the squeaking of the door, which is opened and a cone of bright light is projected on the dark corridor.

« It's you? Come in! » says the person who opened the door and who is unknown to me. And Judas goes into the hall, while the man who opened the door locks it again.

There are signs of surprise or at least of excitement, when they see Judas enter the room. But they greet him all together: « Peace to you, Judas of Simon. »

« Peace to you, members of the holy Sanhedrin » greets Judas.

« Come forward. What do you want? » they ask him.

« I want to speak to you... of the Christ. It is not possible to go on like this. I can no longer be of any assistance to you, unless you make up your minds to take drastic measures. The man is suspicious by now. »

« Have you given yourself away, you fool? » they exclaim interrupting him.

« No. But you are the fools, as you have made the wrong move by hurrying things in a stupid way. You knew very well that I would serve you! But you did not trust me. »

« You have a weak memory, Judas of Simon! Don't you remember how you parted from us the last time? Who could think that you were loyal to us, when you proclaimed in that way that you could not betray Him? » says Helkai ironically, and he sounds more venomous than ever.

« And do you think that it is easy to get to deceive a friend, the Only One Who really loves me, the Innocent? Do you think it is easy to go so far as to commit a crime? » Judas is excited.

They try to calm him down. And they coax him. And they allure him, or at least they try to do so, pointing out that he will not commit a crime « but a holy deed for his Fatherland, whom he will spare reprisals from the rulers, who are already giving signs of intolerance because of the continual public commotions and divisions of parties and crowds in a Roman province, and for Mankind, if He is really convinced of the divine nature of the Messiah and of His spiritual mission. »

« If what He says is true - far be it from us to believe it - are you not the collaborator of Redemption? Your name will be associated to His for ever, and your Fatherland will number you with her valiant men and will honour you with the highest dignities. A seat among us is ready for you. You will rise, Judas. You will lay down laws for Israel. Oh! We shall not forget what you have done for the welfare of the holy Temple, of the holy Priesthood, for the protection of the most holy Law, for the welfare of the whole Nation! All you have to do is to help us, then we swear to you, I swear to you in the name of my powerful father and of Caiaphas, who is now wearing the ephod, you will be the greatest man in Israel. Greater than the tetrarchs, greater than my father, now a High Priest put out of office. Like a king, like a prophet you will be served and listened to. And if Jesus of Nazareth should be but a false Messiah, even if He really should not be liable to death because His deeds are not those of a robber, but of a madman, we remind you of the inspired words of the pontiff Caiaphas - you know that he who wears the ephod and the rational speaks through divine suggestion and prophesies what is good and what is to be done for it - Caiaphas, do you remember? Caiaphas said: "It is better for one man to die for the people, than for the whole Nation to be destroyed". It was a prophetic word. »

« It was really a prophecy. The Most High spoke through the lips of the High Priest. Let him be obeyed! » say all together those dirty puppets, the members of the great council of the Sanhedrin, who already sound theatrical and look like automata who are to make certain gestures.

Judas is influenced, allured... but there is still a little common sense, if not goodness, in him, and this restrains him from uttering the fatal words.

Surrounding him with respect and feigned affection, they urge him saying: « Don't you believe us? Look: we are the heads of the twenty-four priestly families, the Elders of the people, the scribes, the greatest Pharisees in Israel, the wise rabbis, the magistrates of the Temple. The cream of Israel is here, around you, ready to acclaim you, and by one consent we say to you: "Do it, because it is a holy deed". »

« And where is Gamaliel? And Joseph and Nicodemus, where are they? And where is Eleazar, Joseph's friend, and where is John of Gaash? I don't see them. »

« Gamaliel has secluded himself to do severe penance, John is with his pregnant wife who is poorly this evening, Eleazar... we do not know why he has not come. But anybody can be seized by a sudden illness, don't you think so? With regard to Joseph and Nicodemus, we have not informed them of this secret meeting for your sake and for the sake of your honour... so that, if our plan should unluckily

fail, your name would not be reported to the Master... We are protecting your name. We love you, Judas, the new Maccabee saviour of our Fatherland. »

« The Maccabee fought a good battle. I... am betraying. »

« Do not consider the details of the action, but the justice of the purpose. Will you please speak, Sadoc, the golden scribe. Precious words flow from your lips. If Gamaliel is learned, you are wise, because the wisdom of God is on your lips. Speak to this man who still hesitates. »

That crook Sadoc comes forward followed by a decrepit Hananiah, an emaciated dying fox beside a shrewd strong cruel jackal.

« Listen, o man of God! » begins Sadoc pompously assuming an inspired oratorical attitude, his right arm stretched forward in Ciceronian style, his left one engaged in holding up the heap of folds forming his scribe garment. He then raises also his left arm, allowing his monumental garment to spread out untidily, and thus, his face and arms raised towards the ceiling of the room, he says in a thundering voice: « I say unto you! I say unto you in the Most High Presence of God! »

« Maran Atha! » they all exclaim, stooping as if a supreme inspiration bent them, then rising with their arms crossed on their chests.

« I say unto you. It is written in the pages of our history and of our fate! It is written in the signs and figures left by ages! It is written in the rite celebrated uninterruptedly since the night fatal to the Egyptians! It is written in the figure of Isaac! It is written in the figure of Abel! And let what is written come true. »

« Maran Atha! » say the others in a low mournful striking chorus, repeating the previous gestures, their faces oddly illuminated by the light of two chandeliers of pale-violet mica, shedding a phantasmagoric light at the ends of the hall. The assembly of men, almost all dressed in white, with the pale or olive complexions of their race, made even more pale and olive by the diffused light really looks like a gathering of ghosts.

« The word of God has descended upon the lips of the prophets to approve this decree. He must die! It is stated! »

« It is stated! Maran Atha! »

« He must die, His destiny is marked! »

« He must die. Maran Atha! »

« His fatal destiny is described to the last detail, and fatality cannot be infringed! »

« Maran Atha! »

« Even the symbolic price to be paid to him who becomes the instrument of God for the fulfilment of the promise is indicated! »

« It is indicated! Maran Atha! »

« As Redeemer, or as false prophet, He must die! »

« He must die! Maran Atha! »

« The hour has come! Jehovah wants it! I can hear His voice! It is shouting: "Let it be accomplished"! »

« The Most High has spoken! Let it be accomplished! Let it be accomplished! Maran Atha! »

« Let Heaven fortify you as it fortified Jael and Judith, who were women and behaved like heroes; as it fortified Jephthah, who, a father, sacrificed his daughter to his Fatherland; as it fortified David against Goliath, and do the deed that will make peoples remember Israel for ever! »

« May Heaven fortify you. Maran Atha! »

« Be the winner! »

« Be the winner! Maran Atha! »

The clucking senile voice of Hananiah is heard: « He who hesitates over a sacred order is condemned to dishonour and death! »

« Is condemned. Maran Atha! »

« If you do not listen to the voice of the Lord your God, and you do not carry out His order and what He orders you through our words, may all maledictions fall upon you! »

« All the maledictions! Maran Atha! »

« May the Lord strike you with all the Mosaic curses and may He scatter you among the nations. »

« May He strike and scatter you! Maran Atha! »

Dead silence follows this impressive scene... Everything becomes motionless in frightening stillness.

At last Judas' voice is heard and it is so changed that I recognise it with difficulty: « Yes. I will do it. I must do it. And I will do it. The last part of the Mosaic curses is already my share, and I must get rid of it because I have already delayed too long. And I am becoming mad because I have no peace or respite, my heart is frightened, I look bewildered and my soul is consumed by sadness. I tremble at the idea of being found out and crushed by Him for my double-crossing - because I do not know how much He is aware of my thoughts - I see my life hanging by a thread, and morning and evening I implore to get over with this hour because of the terror that frightens my heart. Because of the horrible task I must perform. Oh! bring this hour forward! Release me from my anguish! Let everything be done. At once! Now! That I may be freed! Let us go! »

Judas' voice has become firmer and stronger as he speaks. His gestures, previously automatic and insecure, like those of a sleepwalker, have become free and voluntary. He stands up in all his height, diabolically handsome, and shouts: « Let the ties of a foolish error fall! I am free from fearful subjection, Christ! I am no longer afraid of You and I am handing You to Your enemies! Let us go! » - A cry of a victorious demon, and he boldly goes towards the

door.

But they stop him: « Wait! Tell us: where is Jesus of Nazareth? »

« In Lazarus' house. At Bethany. »

« We cannot enter that house, as it is well provided with faithful servants. It's the house of a favourite of Rome. We should certainly come up against much trouble. »

« We are coming to town at dawn. Place guards on the Bethphage road, stir up a turmoil and capture Him. »

« How do you know that He will come along that road? He may take the other one... »

« No. He told His followers that He will go into town that way, by the Ephraim gate, and to wait for Him near En Rogel. If you capture Him before... »

« We cannot. We would have to go into town with Him among the guards, and all the roads leading to the gates, and all the streets in town are crowded with people from dawn till night. There would be a riot. And that must not happen. »

« He will go up to the Temple. Ask Him to come into one of the halls to question Him. Tell Him to come in the name of the High Priest. He will come, because He has more respect for you than for His own life. Once He is alone with you... you will have the opportunity to take Him to a safe place and to condemn Him at the right moment. »

« There would be a riot just the same. You must have noticed that the crowds are completely won over by Him. And not only the crowds, but also the great ones and the hopes of Israel. Gamaliel is losing his disciples, and so is Jonathan ben Uziel and others among us, and they are all leaving us, seduced by Him. Even the Gentiles venerate Him, or they fear Him, which is also veneration, and they are ready to rebel against us if we ill-treat Him. Among other things, some of the brigands we had hired to act as false disciples and stir up brawls, have been arrested and they have spoken hoping for mercifulness in return for their information, and the Praetor knows... The whole world follows Him, whilst we are concluding nothing. But it is necessary to act subtly, so that the crowds may not become aware of anything. »

« Yes. That is how it must be done. Even Annas recommends that. He says: "It must not happen during the festivities and there must be no disturbance among the fanatic people". That is what he ordered, and he gave orders that He should be treated with respect in the Temple and elsewhere and that He should not be disturbed, in order to deceive Him. »

« So, what do you want to do? I was quite willing tonight, but you are hesitating... » says Judas.

« Well, you should take us to Him when He is all alone. You are aware of His habits. You wrote to us that He wants you to be closer

to Him than anybody else. So you must know what He wants to do. We shall always be ready. When you think that it is the right place and the right moment, come, and we will follow you. »

« Agreed. And what retribution shall I receive? » Judas is now speaking coldly, as if he were dealing with common business.

« What is mentioned by the prophets, so that we may be faithful to the inspired word: thirty silver pieces... »

« Thirty silver pieces to kill a man, and that Man? The price of a common lamb during these festivities?! You are mad! It is not that I need money. I have plenty. So do not think that you can convince me for greed of money. But it is too little to compensate for my grief in betraying Him Who has always loved me. »

« But we have told you what we will do for you. Glory, honours! What you were hoping to have from Him and you did not get. We will cure your disappointment. But the price has been fixed by the prophets! Oh! it is a formality! A symbol and nothing else. The rest will follow later... »

« And the money when? »

« The moment you say to us: "Come". Not before. Non one pays before taking possession of the goods. Don't you think it is fair? »

« It is fair. But at least treble the amount... »

« No. That is what the prophets said. And that is what has to be done. Oh! we will obey the prophets! We will not omit an iota of what they wrote of Him. Ha! Ha! Ha! We are loyal to the inspired word! Ha! Ha! Ha! » laughs that revolting skeleton of Hananiah. And many join him with mournful, vulgar, false laughter, a true cachinnation of demons who can but sneer. Because laughter is typical of serene loving spirits, and sneer is peculiar to upset hearts sated with wrath.

« Everything has been said. You may go. We will await dawn to go back to town by different roads. Goodbye. Peace be with you, lost sheep, who are returning to Abraham's flock. Peace to you! Peace to you! And the gratitude of the whole of Israel! Rely on us! A desire of yours is a law to us. May God be with you, as He was with all His more faithful servants! All the blessings on you! »

They take him to the door with embraces and protestations of love... they watch him go away along the half-dark corridor... they listen to the noise of the locks of the door that is opened and closed...

They go back to the hall exulting.

Only two or three voices can be heard, those of the less demoniac ones: « And now? How shall we behave with Judas of Simon? We know very well that we cannot give him what we promised, except those miserable thirty silver pieces!... What will he say when he realises that he has been betrayed by us? Shall we not have caused a greater damage? Will he not go around telling the people what we have done? We know that he is a man who changes his mind. »

« You are quite simple and foolish having such thoughts and worrying thus! It has already been decided what we will do to Judas. It was decided the last time. Don't you remember? And we will not change our minds. After everything is finished with the Christ, Judas shall die. That is settled. »

« But if he should speak before? »

« To whom? To the disciples and to the people, to be stoned? He will not speak. The horror of his deed will gag him... »

« But he may repent in future, he may feel remorse, he may even become mad... Because his remorse, if it should awaken, could but drive him mad... »

« He will not have time. We will see to that before. Everything at the right moment. The Nazarene first, then the man who betrayed Him » says Helkai slowly, in a dreadful tone.

« Yes. And mind! Not a word to those who are absent. They already know too much of our thoughts. I don't trust Joseph and Nicodemus. And I don't rely much on the others. »

« Do you doubt Gamaliel? »

« He has stood aloof from us for many months. He will not take part in our meetings without a personal order from the pontiff. He says that he is writing his work with the assistance of his son. But I am speaking of Eleazar and John. »

« Oh! They have never contradicted us » says at once a member of the Sanhedrin, whom I have seen sometimes with Joseph of Arimathea, but whose name I do not remember.

« Nay! They have not contradicted us enough. Ha! Ha! Ha! And we shall have to watch them! Many snakes have built their nests in the Sanhedrin, I think... Ha! Ha! Ha! But they will be dislodged... Ha! Ha! Ha! » says Hananiah, as he goes, shaking and trembling, leaning on his stick, looking for a comfortable place on one of the low wide seats covered with thick carpets, placed against the walls of the hall, and he lies down happily, and soon falls asleep, with his mouth open, looking ugly in his wicked old age.

They watch him. And Doras, the son of Doras, says: « He has the satisfaction of seeing this day. My father dreamt of it but did not have it. I will carry his spirit in my heart, so that he may be present on the day of the revenge upon the Nazarene, and he may rejoice... »

« Remember that we must be constantly in the Temple, in turns, and many of us in each turn. »

« We will do that. »

« We will have to give instructions to take Judas of Simon to the High Priest at any time. »

« We will arrange that. »

« And now let us prepare our hearts for the final task. »

« They are already prepared! They are ready! »

« Cunningly. »

« Cunningly. »

« Subtly. »

« Subtly. »

« To avoid all suspicion. »

« To allure every heart. »

« Whatever He may say or do, we shall not react. We will revenge ourselves for everything at one go. »

« We will do that. And it will be a cruel vengeance. »

« A thorough one! »

« And dreadful! »

And they sit down trying to rest while waiting for dawn.

587. From Bethany to Jerusalem.

3rd March 1945.

Jesus is walking through orchards and olive-groves all in blossom. Even the silvery leaves of the olive-trees look like flowers, pearled as they are with dew, which shimmers in the first light of dawn as the leaves quiver in a gentle scented breeze. Each leafy branch seems the work of a goldsmith and one looks at them admiring their beauty. The almond-trees, which are all already covered with their green foliage, stand out from the white-rosy masses of the other fruit-trees, and under them the vines show their first tender indented leaves, so shiny and silky that they look like very thin scales of emerald or bits of precious silk. High above, the sky is like deep turquoise, clear, placid, solemn. Songs of birds and scents of flowers everywhere. The fresh air restores and makes people happy. The delight of April is really smiling everywhere.

Jesus is in the middle of His twelve apostles. And He speaks.

« I sent the women ahead because I want to speak to you alone. During the first days that I was with you I said to you, to those who were with Me: "Do not upset My Mother informing Her of the evil deeds against Her Son". Those deeds seemed so grave... Now, you three witnesses of those deeds that were the beginning of the chain by which the Son of man was to be lead to death - you, John, you, Simon, and you, Judas of Kerioth - can clearly see that they were comparable with a grain of sand that falls from above, in comparison with the boulder, the boulders, as such are the present deeds. But then, you, My Mother and I were unprepared for human wickedness. In Good as in Evil man does not become supreme all of a sudden. But he rises or sinks by degrees. The same happens in sorrow. Now, you who are good, have risen in Good and you can realise, without being scandalised as you would have been then, to what point of perversion man can lower himself, when he becomes a demon, just as My Mother and I can bear all the grief coming from man, without dying because of it. We have strengthened our souls.

All of us. In Good, in Evil or in Sorrow. And we have not yet reached the summit. We have not yet reached the summit... Oh! if you knew what and how high is the summit of Good, of Evil, of Sorrow! But I repeat to you the words that I spoke then. Do not repeat to My Mother what the Son of man is about to tell you. She would be grieved too deeply. He who is about to be killed drinks the pitiful mixture that stuns him, enabling him to await the hour of torture, without having to tremble every moment. Your silence will be like the pitiful drink for Her, the Mother of the Redeemer! Now I want to explain the meaning of the prophecies to you, so that nothing may still be obscure to you. And I ask you to be very, very close to Me. During the day I shall belong to everybody. I beg you to be with Me at night, because I want to be with you. I need to feel that I am not alone... »

Jesus is very sad. The apostles notice it and are worried. They gather round Him. Judas also presses against the Master, as if he were the most affectionate of the disciples.

Jesus caresses them and continues: « In this hour that is still granted to Me, I want to complete the knowledge of the Christ in you. At the beginning I made John, Simon and Judas acquainted with the truth of the prophecies concerning My birth. The prophecies have depicted Me better than the greatest painter could possibly do, from the dawn of My life to its end. Nay, that dawn and end are just the two periods most clearly elucidated by the prophets. Now the Christ Who descended from Heaven, the Just One Whom the clouds rained on the Earth, the sublime Shoot, is about to be killed. Crushed like a citron-tree struck by a thunderbolt. So let us speak of His death. Do not sigh, do not shake your heads. Do not grumble in your hearts, do not curse men. It would serve no purpose.

We are going up to Jerusalem. Passover is now close at hand. "This month will be for you the first month of the year". This month will be for the world the beginning of a new era. It will never end. In vain now and again man will try to fix new ones. Those who want to establish a new era bearing their idolatrous names, will be struck by lightning. There is but one God in Heaven and one Messiah on the Earth: the Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth. As He gives His whole Self, He can desire everything, and He puts His royal seal not on what is flesh and filth, but on what is time and spirit.

"On the tenth day of this month each man must take a lamb, one for each family, one for each household. And if the number of people in the household is not sufficient to consume the whole lamb, a man must join his neighbour's family, so that they may be able to consume the whole lamb". Because the sacrifice and the victim must be complete and consumed. Not even a tiny bit of it must be left over. None will be left. Too many are those who are about to feed on the lamb. A countless number, for a banquet with no time limit,

and no more fire is required to consume the remains, because there are no remains. Those parts that are offered and rejected by hatred will be consumed by the very fire of the Victim, by His love. I love you, men. You, My twelve friends, whom I chose personally, you in whom are the twelve tribes of Israel and the thirteen veins of Mankind. I have gathered everything in you and I see everything gathered in you... Everything. »

« But in the veins of Adam's body there is also the vein of Cain. None of us has lifted his hand against his companion. So where is Abel? » asks the Iscariot.

« What you said is true. In the veins of Adam's body there is also the vein of Cain. And I am the Abel, the meek Abel, the shepherd of flocks, pleasant to the Lord because he offered his early fruits and what was faultless, and himself before all his offerings. I love you, men. Even if you do not love Me, I love you. Love hastens and completes the work of the sacrificers.

"It must be a lamb without blemish, a male one year old". There is no time for the Lamb of God. He is. The same on the last day as He was on the first day of this Earth. He Who is like His Father does not know ageing in His divine nature. And His person knows only one old age and only one tiredness: the disappointment of having come in vain for too many. When you learn how I was killed - and the eyes that will see their Lord changed into a leper covered with sores are now shining with tears beside Me, and they can no longer see this pleasant hill because tears blind them with their liquid veil - you may say: "He did not die of that. He died because He had been unknown to His dearest ones and He had been rejected by too many men". But if the Son of God has no time-limit, and thus differs from the lamb of the rite, He is equal to it because He is without blemish and a male sacred to the Lord. Yes. In vain the executioners, those who will kill Me with weapons, or with their will or their betrayal, will endeavour to excuse themselves saying:

"He was guilty". No one who is sincere can accuse Me of sin. Can you do so?

We are facing death. I am. Others also are. Who? Do you want to know who, Peter? Everybody. Death advances hour by hour and snatches those who less expect it. But also those who still have a long life to live, are in front of death every moment, because time is a flash compared with eternity, and because at the hour of death even the longest life is reduced to nothing, and actions dozens and dozens of years old, even those of one's early childhood, come back in crowds saying: "Well, you were doing this yesterday". Yesterday! It is always yesterday when one is dying! And honours and gold for which men long so much are always dust! And the fruit after which one was mad loses all flavour! Women? Money? Power? Science? What is left? Nothing! Only one's conscience and the judgement

of God, before Whom goes the conscience, poor and stripped of human protection and wealth, and laden only with its actions.

Some of the blood must be taken and put on the doorposts and lintel, and the Angel passing over will not strike the houses marked with the blood". Take My blood. Do not put it on dead stones, but on dead hearts. It is the new circumcision. And I circumcise Myself on behalf of the whole world. I do not sacrifice the useless part, but I break off My magnificent, wholesome, pure virility, I sacrifice it completely, and I take My blood from My mutilated limbs and from the opened veins and I draw rings of salvation on Mankind, rings of eternal nuptials with God Who is in Heaven, with the Father Who is waiting, and I say: "See. Now You can no longer reject them, because You would reject Your blood".

"And Moses said: '... and then dip a spray of hyssop in the blood and sprinkle the doorposts' ". So is the blood not sufficient? It is not. Your repentance is to be joined to My blood. Without bitter beneficial repentance, I shall have died for you in vain.

That is the first word in the Book about the Redeeming Lamb. But the Book is strewn with it. As at each new sunrise the blossoms become thicker and thicker on these branches, so, as a new year follows an old one and the time of Redemption draws near, then blossoming becomes more and more luxuriant.

And now with Zechariah I say to you, to you in Jerusalem: "Here is the King Who comes full of meekness riding on a donkey and colt. He is poor". But He will disperse the mighty ones who oppress men. He is meek, and yet His arm raised to bless will defeat the demon and death. "He will announce peace, because He is the King of peace". Although crucified, He will stretch His domination from sea to sea. "He Who does not shout, Who does not break, Who does not put out those who are not light but smoke, those who are not strength but weakness, those who deserve all reproach, He will do justice according to truth". Your Messiah, o city of Zion, your Messiah, o people of the Lord, your Messiah, o people of the Earth.

"Without being sad or turbulent", and you can see how there is not in Me the resentful sadness of the defeated, or the rancorous sorrow of the perverted, but only the seriousness of one who sees to what extent the possession of Satan in men can go, and you see how for three years I have incessantly stretched out My hands inviting everybody to love, and My hands will be stretched out again and they will be wounded, although I could reduce My enemies to ashes and disperse them with a simple act of My will! "Without being sad or turbulent I will be successful in establishing My Kingdom". That Kingdom of Christ in which is the salvation of the world.

The Eternal Lord My Father says to Me: "I have called You, I have taken You by the hand, I have appointed You alliance between peoples

and God, I have made You the light of the nations". And I have been light. Light to open the eyes of the blind, word to give speech to the deaf, key to open the underground prisons of those who were in the darkness of error.

And now, I Who am all that, am going to My death. I will enter the darkness of death. Death, do you understand?... The first things announced, are now being fulfilled, I also say with the prophet. I will tell you the rest before the Demon separates us.

There is Zion over there. Go and get the donkey and the colt. Say to the man: "Rabbi Jesus needs them". And tell My Mother that I am about to arrive. She is up there, on that slope, with the Maries. She is waiting for Me. It is My human triumph... Let it be Her triumph. Always joined together. Oh! joined!... »

And who is the heart of a hyena that with his claw tears the heart of a mother's heart: Me, Her Son? A man? No. Every man is born of a woman. And by instinct and moral consideration he cannot be pitiless towards a mother, because he thinks of "his own". So it is not a man. Who, then? A demon. But can a demon offend the Victress? He must touch Her to offend Her. And Satan cannot bear the virginal light of the Rose of God. So? Whom do you say it is? Are you not speaking? Then I will tell you. The most cunning demon has blended with the most corrupt man, and like the poison enclosed in the teeth of an asp, the demon is closed in him who can approach the Woman and thus bite Her treacherously. Cursed be the hybrid monster that is Satan and is man! Shall I curse it? No. It is not the word of a Redeemer. Then I say to the soul of this hybrid monster what I said to Jerusalem, the monstrous city of God and of Satan: "Oh, if in this hour still granted to you, you could come to the Saviour!"

There is no love greater than Mine! Neither is there a greater power. Also My Father agrees if I say: "I want", and I can speak but compassionate words for those who have fallen and stretch their arms towards Me from their abyss. O soul of the greatest sinner, your Saviour on the threshold of death bends over your abyss and invites you to take His hand. My death will not be avoided... But you... but you... would be saved, you whom I still love, and the soul of your Friend would not be horrified at the thought that He is aware of the horror of death and of such death through the deed of his friend...

Jesus is silent... exhausted...

The apostles whisper to one another and they ask: « But who is He speaking of? Who is it? »

And Judas, lying shamelessly, says: « It is certainly one of the false Pharisees... I think it must be Joseph or Nicodemus, or Chuza and Manaen... Every man is anxious to save his life and his property... I know that Herod... And I know that the Sanhedrin. He trusted

them too much! You know that even yesterday they were not present?! They haven't the courage to face Him... »

Jesus does not hear him. He has gone ahead and has joined His Mother, Who is with the Maries and with Martha and Susanna. Only Johanna of Chuza is absent from the group of the pious women.

588. Jesus Enters into Jerusalem.

30th March 1947 (Palm Sunday).

Jesus says: « You will put here the vision: "From Bethany to Jerusalem" (dated 3rd March 1945). And now: look! »

Jesus embraces with His arm the shoulders of His Mother, Who has stood up when John and James of Alphaeus have reached Her to say to Her: « Your Son is coming », and then they have come back to join their companions who are proceeding slowly, talking, while Thomas and Andrew have rushed towards Bethphage to look for the donkey and the colt and take them to Jesus.

In the meantime Jesus is speaking to the women. « Here we are near the city. I advise you to go. And go without being afraid. Enter the town before I do. All the shepherds and the most faithful disciples are near En Rogel. They have been told to escort and protect you. »

« The fact is that... We have spoken to Aser of Nazareth and Abel of Bethlehem in Galilee and also to Solomon. They had come as far as here to watch for Your arrival. The crowd is preparing a great celebration. And we wanted to see... See how the tops of the olivetrees are shaken? It is not the wind that is shaking them thus. But it is the people who are gathering branches to spread them on the road and to protect You from the sun. And over there?! Look over there, they are stripping the palm-trees of their fan-shaped leaves. They look like clusters and they are men who have climbed up the trunks to gather more and more... And, on the slopes, You can see children bending to pick flowers. And the women certainly strip gardens of corollas and scented herbs to strew Your way with flowers. We wanted to see... and imitate the gesture of Mary of Lazarus, who picked up all the flowers pressed by Your feet when You went into Lazarus' gardens » says imploringly Mary of Clopas on behalf of them all.

Jesus caresses the cheek of His old relative, who looks like a little girl anxious to see a show, and He says to her: « You would not be able to see anything among the large crowd. Go on, to Lazarus I house, the one whose keeper is Matthias. I shall be passing there and you will see Me from on high. »

« Son... and are You going all alone? Can I not be near You? » asks Mary, raising Her very sad face and staring with Her sky-blue eyes

at Her meek Son.

« I would beg You to remain hidden. Like a dove in the cleft of a rock. Rather than Your presence, My beloved Mother, I need Your prayer! »

« If so, Son, we will all pray for You. »

« Yes. And after you have seen Him pass by, you will come with me to my mansion in Zion. And I will send servants to the Temple, with instructions to follow the Master all the time, so that they may bring us His orders and His news », says Mary of Lazarus resolutely, always quick in realising what is the best thing to do and to do it without delay.

« You are right, sister. Although it grieves me not to follow Him, I understand that it is a just order. In any case Lazarus told us not to contradict the Master in anything, and to obey Him even in the least matters. And we will do that. »

« Go, then. See? The roads are getting busy. The apostles are about to join Me. Go. Peace be with you. I will make you come when I think it is a suitable moment. Goodbye, Mother. Peace to you. God is with us. » He kisses Her and dismisses Her. And the obedient women disciples go away quickly.

The ten apostles join Jesus. « Have You sent them ahead? »

« Yes, I have. They will see My entry from a house. »

« From which house? » asks Judas of Kerioth.

« Eh! the friendly houses are so many now! » says Philip.

« Not from Annaleah's? » says the Iscariot insisting.

Jesus replies in the negative and He sets out towards Bethphage, which is not far.

He is near the village when the two apostles, who had been sent to get the donkey and the colt, come back. They shout: « We found what You told us and we would have brought the animals. But the owner wanted to curry them and adorn them with the best trappings to honour You. And the disciples, with those who have spent the night in the streets of Bethany to honour You, wish to have the honour of bringing them to You, and we agreed. We thought that their love deserved a reward. »

« You did the right thing. Let us go on in the meantime. »

« Are there many disciples? » asks Bartholomew.

« Oh! a great crowd. It is impossible to pass along the streets in Bethphage. That is why I told Isaac to take the donkey to Cleanthes, the cheese-monger » replies Thomas.

« You acted rightly. Let us go as far as that rising of the hill, and we shall wait a little in the shade of those trees. »

They go to the place pointed out by Jesus.

« But we are going farther away! You are going beyond Bethphage passing round the back! » exclaims the Iscariot.

« And if I want to do so, who can forbid Me? Am I perhaps already

a prisoner and not allowed to go where I want? Or is it urgent that I should be so, and is anybody afraid that I may avoid being captured? And if I should decide to go away along safer routes, is there anybody who could prevent Me from doing so? » Jesus darts a glance at the Traitor, who dare no longer open his mouth and shrugs his shoulders, as if to say: « Do as You like. »

They go, in fact, round the back of the little village, I should say a suburb of the town, as its western side is really not far from the town, being part of the slopes of the Mount of Olives, which surrounds the eastern side of Jerusalem. Farther down, between the slopes and the town, the Kidron is shining in the April sunshine.

Jesus sits down in the green silent place and concentrates on His thoughts. He then stands up and goes towards the rising, stopping just at its edge.

Jesus says: « You will put here the vision of 31st July 1944: "Jesus weeps over Jerusalem", from the sentence that I gave you as the beginning of the vision. » He then resumes showing me the phases of His triumphal entry.

30th July 1944.

I do not know how I shall manage to write because I am suffering so much from heart trouble that I can hardly sit up. But it cannot be helped. I must write what I see.

The Gospel of today, the ninth Sunday after Pentecost, is illustrated to me.

From a hill near Jerusalem Jesus looks at the town stretched at His feet. It is not a very high hill. At most it is like the large square of S. Miniato on the mountain, at Florence; but it is sufficient for the eye to dominate the extent of houses and streets, that go up and down the small ground elevations forming Jerusalem. If one refers to the lowest level of the town, this hill is certainly much higher than Calvary, but it is closer to the walls than the latter. It really begins just outside the walls and rises steeply on their side, whereas on the other side it descends gently towards a very green country that stretches eastwards. At least I think it is eastwards, if I am judging rightly according to sunlight.

Jesus and His apostles are sitting under a group of trees, in the shade. They are resting after a long walk. Then Jesus stands up, He leaves the clearing where they were sitting and He goes towards the hillock and stops just at its edge. His tall person stands out clearly in the empty space around Him. He looks even taller as He stands upright, all alone. His arms are folded across His chest, on His blue mantle, and He looks around very seriously.

The apostles watch Him. But they leave Him alone, they neither move nor speak. They must think that He has moved aside to pray.

But Jesus is not praying. After looking for a long time at the town, at each district, at each hillock, at each detail, at times letting His eyes dwell upon this or that point, at times watching less insistently, Jesus begins to weep without sobbing or making any noise. Tears fill His eyes, then gush forth and stream down His cheeks and fall... Silent very sad tears. The tears of a man who knows that he must weep, all alone, without hoping to be consoled or understood by anybody. Tears brought about by grief that cannot be cancelled and must be suffered absolutely.

Because of his position John's brother is the first to notice those tears and he tells the others, who look at one another and are seized with astonishment.

« None of us has done anything wrong » says one, and another: « The crowds did not insult us either. Among them nobody was hostile to Him ». « Why is He weeping, then? » asks the oldest of them all.

Peter and John stand up together and they approach the Master. They think that the only thing to be done is to make Him feel that they love Him and ask Him what the matter is with Him. « Master, are You weeping? » asks John laying his fair-haired head on the shoulder of Jesus, Who is taller than he is by a neck and a head. And Peter, laying his hand round Jesus' waist, almost embracing Him to draw Him to himself, says to Him: « What is grieving You, Jesus? Tell us who love You. »

Jesus rests His cheek on John's fair-haired head and opening out His arms, He passes His arm round Peter's shoulder. The three of them are thus embraced to one another in such a loving posture. But tears continue to drop.

John feels them run down through his hair and he asks once again: « Why are You weeping, Master? Are we perhaps the cause of Your sorrow? »

The other apostles have gathered round the loving group and are anxiously awaiting a reply.

« No » says Jesus. « You are not. You are My friends and friendship, when it is sincere, is a balm and a smile, never tears. I would like you to remain My friends for ever. Even now that we shall enter into the corruption, that ferments and contaminates those who are not resolutely willing to remain honest. »

« Where are we going, Master? Are we not going to Jerusalem? The crowds have already greeted You joyfully. Do You want to disappoint them? Are we going to Samaria to work some miracle? Just now that Passover is close at hand? » The questions are asked by several of the apostles at the same time.

Jesus raises His hands imposing silence and then with His right one He points to the town. A wide gesture like that of a man sowing seeds ahead of himself. And He says: « That is the Corruption. We are going into Jerusalem. We are going there. And only the Most

High knows how I would like to sanctify the town taking there the Holiness that comes from Heaven. I would like to resanctify it, as it should be the Holy City. But I shall not be able to do anything for it. It is corrupt, and will remain corrupt. And the streams of holiness that gush from the living Temple, and will gush even more in the next few days to the extent of leaving it lifeless, will not be sufficient to redeem it. Samaria and the heathen world will come to the Holy One. The temples of the true God will be erected on the false temples. The hearts of the Gentiles will worship the Christ. But this people, this town will always be hostile to Him, and their hatred will lead them to the greatest sin. That must happen. But woe to those who will be the instruments of that crime. Woe!... » Jesus stares at Judas, who is almost in front of Him.

« That will never happen to us. We are Your apostles and we believe in You, and we are ready to die for You. » Judas lies shamelessly and meets Jesus' eye without embarrassment. The others join in protesting.

Jesus replies to all of them, avoiding to reply to Judas directly.

« Would to Heaven that you may be so. But you are still very weak, and temptation may make you like those who hate Me. Pray fervently and watch diligently over yourselves. Satan is aware that he is about to be defeated and he wants to avenge himself by tearing you away from Me. Satan is around us all. He is around Me to prevent Me from doing the will of My Father and from fulfilling My mission. And he is around you to make you his servants. Be vigilant. Within those walls Satan will take those who are not strong. He will take him whose curse will be the fact that he was elected, because he made use of his election for a human purpose. I chose you for the Kingdom of Heaven, not for that of the world. Bear that in mind. And you, o city, that want your ruin and over which I am shedding tears, be aware that your Christ is praying for your redemption. Oh! if at least in this hour still left to you, you came to Him Who would be your peace! If in this hour you understood the Love passing through you and you divested yourself of the hatred that makes you blind and insane, and cruel against yourself and your welfare! But the day will come when you will remember this hour! But it will be too late to weep and repent! The Love will have passed and disappeared from your streets, and the Hatred that you preferred will remain. And Hatred will be on you and on your children. Because one has what one wanted, and hatred is paid with hatred. And then it will not be the hatred of the strong against the defenceless, but it will be hatred against hatred, thus war and death. Surrounded by trenches and armed men, you will languish before being destroyed, and you will see your children killed by weapons and famine, and the survivors taken prisoners and derided, and you will ask for mercy, but will never find it, because

you refused to acknowledge your Salvation. I am weeping, My friends, because I have the heart of a man, and the ruin of My fatherland makes Me shed tears. But it is just that this takes place because within those walls corruption exceeds all limits and draws the punishment of God. Woe betide the citizens who bring about the ruin of their fatherland! Woe betide the leaders who are the main cause of it! Woe betide those who should be saints to guide the others to be honest and instead they desecrate the House of their ministry and themselves! Come. My action will be of no avail. But let us make the Light shine once again in the Darkness! »

And Jesus goes down followed by His apostles. He walks fast along the road with a serious countenance, I would say, almost looking sullen. He speaks no more. He goes into a little house at the foot of the hill, and I see nothing else.

[30th March 1947]

Jesus has hardly had time to enter into the house blessing its inhabitants, when the joyful sound of harness-bells and jubilant voices are heard. And immediately afterwards the lean wan face of Isaac appears in the opening of the door, and the faithful shepherd enters and prostrates himself before his Lord Jesus.

Many faces are crowding in the frame of the wide-open door, and many more can be seen behind them... They push and throng, wishing to come forward... Some women shout, some of the children cry, caught as they are in the crowd, while the others shout greetings and joyful exclamations: « This is a happy day which brings You back to us! Peace to You, Lord! We welcome You, Master, as You have come back to reward our loyalty. »

Jesus stands up and makes a gesture meaning that He is going to speak. Everybody becomes silent and Jesus' voice is heard clearly. « Peace to you! Do not press together. We shall now go up to the Temple. I have come to stay with you. Peace! Peace! Do not hurt yourselves. Make way, My beloved friends! Let Me come out and follow Me, because we shall enter into the Holy City together. »

Willy-nilly the people obey, and they open out a little so that Jesus can come out and mount the little donkey. In fact Jesus points to the little colt, which had never been ridden before, as His mount, and then some rich pilgrims, who elbow their way through the crowd, lay their sumptuous mantles on its back, and one man kneels down with one knee on the ground and the other placed as a step for the Lord, Who sits on the back of the colt. And the journey begins with Peter walking on one side of the Master and Isaac on the other, holding the reins of the unbroken animal, which proceeds calmly, as if it were accustomed to that task, without becoming restive or being frightened by the flowers that, thrown as they are towards Jesus, often strike the eyes or the soft muzzle of the little

colt, that is not even scared by the branches of olive-trees and palm leaves shaken in front of and around it, or are thrown on the ground to form a carpet with the flowers. It is not even frightened by the shouts of « Hosanna, Son of David! », that are becoming louder and louder as the crowd becomes larger and larger with the arrival of newcomers.

It is not easy to pass through Bethphage, along its narrow twisted streets, and mothers are compelled to take their children in their arms, and men have to protect their women from being pushed too violently, and some fathers carry their little sons astride their shoulders, so that they are above the crowd, while the shrill voices of the children sound like the bleatings of lambs or the screeching of swallows, while with their little hands they throw the flowers and leaves of olive-trees, offered to them by their mothers, as well as kisses, to mild Jesus...

After leaving the narrow passage of the little suburb, the procession stretches out in an orderly manner, and many volunteers go ahead leading the way and keeping it clear, and others follow them strewing the ground with branches. And when a man throws his mantle on the road as a carpet, hundreds of people imitate him. Thus the central part of the road is a multicoloured strip of garments spread on the ground and once Jesus passes by, they are picked up and carried ahead with many more, while flowers, branches and palm-leaves are waved and thrown, and louder cries are uttered around and in honour of the King of Israel, of the Son of David and His Kingdom!

The soldiers on duty at the gate come out to see what is happening. But it is not a sedition and they move to one side, leaning on their lances, and looking amazed or ironical they watch the strange procession of this King Who is riding the colt of a donkey, and is as handsome as a god, as humble as the poorest of men, meek, blessing... surrounded by women and children and by disarmed men shouting: « Peace! Peace! », of this King Who, before entering the town, stops for a moment near the sepulchres of the lepers at Hinnom and Siloam (I think I am mentioning the correct names of these places, where I have seen lepers being cured miraculously on other occasions) and pressing on the only stirrup in which His foot is resting, as He is sitting side-saddle on the donkey, but not astride it, He stands up, stretches out His arms, shouting in the direction of those dreadful slopes (where frightened faces and bodies appear, looking towards Jesus, and they utter the plaintive cry of lepers: « We are infected! ») to send away some imprudent people who, in order to see Jesus better, would climb even the contaminated and infected terraces: « Let those who have faith in Me invoke My Name and receive health from it! » and setting out again He blesses them and He says to Judas: « You will buy food for the lepers and take

it to them with Simon before it gets dark. »

When the procession enters under the vault of the Siloam Gate and then, like a torrent, pours into the town through the Ophel suburb - where every terrace has become a little airy square crowded with people singing hosannas, throwing flowers and pouring perfumes in the street, trying to throw them on the Master, and the air is filled with the scent of flowers crushed under the feet of the crowds and with essences that spread in the air before falling among the dust of the street - the cheers of the crowd seem -to increase and become louder, as if each person shouted in a bugle-horn, because the many archivolts, of which Jerusalem is full, amplify them with continuous echoes.

I can hear them shout, and I think they mean what the Evangelists say: « Shalem, Shalem melchil! » (or malchit: I am trying to give the sound of the words, but it is difficult, because they have aspirations which we do not have). A continuous howl, like the roar of a stormy sea, in which the loud noise of a billow pounding on beaches and cliffs has not yet dropped, when another breaker collects it and raises it with a fresh roar, without ever stopping. I am deafened by it!

Perfumes, scents, shouts, waving of branches and garments, colours, cries... It is a bewildering scene.

I see the people in the crowd getting mixed up continuously, and known faces appear and disappear: all the disciples from all the places in Palestine, all the followers... I see Jairus for a moment, and Jaia, the youth from Pella (I think), who was blind like his mother and was cured by Jesus, I see Joachim from Bozrah and the peasant from the plain of Sharon with his brothers, I see lonely old Matthias from a place near the Jordan, on the eastern bank, where Jesus took shelter when the place was all flooded, I see Zacchaeus with his converted friends, I see old John from Nob with almost all the citizens, I see the husband of Sarah from Juttah... But who can cope with faces and names, if it is a kaleidoscope of known and unknown faces, seen several times or only once?... Now there is the face of the little shepherd brought from Enon. And, near him, is the disciple from Korazim who did not bury his father to follow Jesus; and close to him, for a moment, the father and mother of Benjamin from Capernaum with their son, who almost falls under the hooves of the little donkey when he throws himself forward to receive a caress from Jesus.

And - unfortunately - there are faces of Pharisees and scribes, livid with rage because of this triumph, and they overbearingly elbow their way through the circle of love that is pressing round Jesus and they shout to Him: « Make these mad people keep quiet! Make them reason! Hosannas are to be sung to God only. Tell them to be quiet! »

And Jesus replies to them kindly: « Even if I told them to be silent and they obeyed Me, the stones would extol the wonders of the Word of God. »

In fact the people - in addition to shouting: « Hosanna, hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna to Him and to His Kingdom! God is with us! The Immanuel has come. The Kingdom of the Christ of the Lord has come! Hosanna! Hosanna from the Earth to the highest Heaven! Peace! Peace, my King! Peace and blessings to You, holy King! Peace and glory in Heaven and on the Earth! Glory to God for His Christ! Peace to the men who know how to welcome Him. Peace on Earth to men of good will and glory in the highest Heaven, because the hour of the Lord has come » (and this last cry is uttered by the whole group of the shepherds who are repeating the Christmas song) - in addition to these uninterrupted cries, the people of Palestine inform the pilgrims from the Diaspora of the miracles they have seen, and to those who do not know what is happening, because they are strangers passing by chance through the town and ask: « But who is He? What is happening? » they reply: « He is Jesus! Jesus, the Master from Nazareth in Galilee! The Prophet! The Messiah of the Lord! The Promised, the Holy Messiah! »

From a house, which has just been left behind as in so much confusion the procession is moving very slowly, comes out a group of strong young men carrying above their heads copper braziers full of charcoal and incense, which burn spreading clouds of scented smoke. Their gesture is well liked, and many run ahead or return to their houses, to get fire and scented resins to burn and thus pay homage to the Christ.

Annaleah's house appears. The terrace is decked with vines the new leaves of which are quivering in the mild April wind, and along the street side there is a full row of girls dressed in white and wearing white veils, in the middle of them there is Annaleah, with baskets of plucked petals of roses and lilies of the valley, that are already flying about in the air.

« The virgins of Israel are greeting You, Lord! » says John, who has pushed through the crowd and is now beside Jesus, drawing His attention to the garland of purity, which is leaning out of the parapet smiling and strewing the street with petals as red as blood and with lilies of the valley as white as pearls.

Jesus draws rein for a moment and stops the colt. He looks up and raises His hand to bless that virginity in love with Him to the extent of forgoing all other earthly love.

And Annaleah leaning forward shouts: « I have seen Your triumph, my Lord! Take my life for Your universal glorification! » and with a very loud cry, as Jesus passes close to her house and proceeds, she greets Him: « Jesus! »

And another but different cry exceeds the clamour of the crowds. But although the people hear it, they do not stop. It is a torrent of enthusiasm, a torrent of delirious people that cannot stop. And while the last waves of this torrent are still outside the gate, the first ones are already beginning to climb the slopes leading to the Temple.

« Your Mother! » shouts Peter, pointing at a house almost at the corner of a street that leads up to the Moriah and along which the procession begins to pass. And Jesus looks up to smile at His Mother, Who is up there among the faithful women.

The obstacle of a large caravan stops the procession a few metres after it has passed the house. And while Jesus stops with the others, caressing the children that mothers hold up to Him, a man rushes towards Him, elbowing his way through the crowd and shouting: « Let me pass! A woman has just died. A young girl. All of a sudden. Her mother is invoking the Master. Let me pass! He already saved her once! »

The people make room and the man runs towards Jesus and says: « Master, Eliza's daughter is dead. She greeted You with that cry, then she bent backwards saying: "I am happy" and she breathed her last. Her heart was overwhelmed by the great joy in seeing Your triumph. Her mother saw me on the terrace of the house next to hers and she sent for me. Come, Master! »

« Dead! Annaleah dead! Was she not healthy, blooming and happy up to yesterday? » The apostles and the shepherds throng together excitedly. Everybody saw her yesterday in perfect good health. Only a little while ago they saw her rosy and smiling... They cannot understand such a misfortune... They ask questions, they inquire about details...

« I don't know. You have all heard her words. She spoke in a loud voice, sure of herself. Then I saw her lean backwards, and she was whiter than her dress and I heard her mother shout... I know nothing else. »

« Do not be excited. She is not dead. A flower fell and the angels of God picked it up to take it to Abraham's bosom. The lily of the Earth will soon open happily in Paradise, ignoring the horror of the world for ever. Man, tell Eliza not to weep over the lot of her daughter. Tell her that she was granted a great grace by God, and that in six days' time she will understand what grace God granted her daughter. Do not weep. Let no one weep. Her triumph is even greater than Mine, because the angels are escorting the virgin to lead her to the peace of the just. And it is an eternal triumph that will increase in degree without ever knowing failure. I solemnly tell you that you have reason to weep over yourselves, not over Annaleah. Let us go. » And He repeats to the apostles and to those around Him: « A flower has fallen. It lay down in peace and the angels

picked it up. Blessed is the girl pure in flesh and heart, because she will soon see God. »

« But how did it happen, what did she die of, Lord? » asks Peter who cannot believe it.

« Of love. Of ecstasy. Of infinite joy. A happy death! »

Those who are far ahead are unaware, those who are far behind are also unaware. So the hosannas continue even if here, around Jesus, people have become pensively silent.

It is John who breaks the silence saying: « Oh! I should like to have the same lot before the future hours! »

« I, too » says Isaac. « I should like to see the face of the girl who died of love for You... »

« I beg you to sacrifice your wishes to Me. I need you near Me... »

« We will not leave You, Lord. But is there no consolation for that mother? » asks Nathanael.

« I will see to that... »

They are at the gates of the enclosure of the Temple. Jesus dismounts from the little donkey that is taken into custody by a man from Bethphage.

It is necessary to bear in mind that Jesus did not stop at the first gate of the Temple, but He went round the enclosure, and He stopped only at the northern side, near the Antonia. That is where He dismounted and went into the Temple, as if He wished to let people see that He was not hiding from the ruling powers, feeling that He had always behaved in an innocent way.

The first court of the Temple shows the usual uproar of moneychangers and vendors of doves, sparrows and lambs, with the only difference that the vendors have been left alone, because everybody has gone to see Jesus. And Jesus enters, solemn in His purple garment, and He looks around at the market and at a group of Pharisees and scribes, who are watching Him from a porch.

His eyes are flashing with anger. He rushes to the centre of the court. An unexpected leap that looks like a flight. The flight of a flame, because His garment is as bright as a flame in the sunshine flooding the court. And in His voice as powerful as thunder He says: « Away from the house of My Father! This is no place for usury or markets. It is written: "My house will be called the house of prayer". So why have you turned into a robbers' den this house, in which the Name of the Lord is invoked? Go away! Leave My House clean. That it may not happen to you, that instead of using ropes, I may strike you with the thunderbolts of heavenly wrath. Go away! Get out, you thieves, swindlers, lewd people, murderers, impious persons, idolaters of the worst idolatry, that of one's proud ego, corrupters and liars. Out! Get out! Or the Most High God, I warn you, will sweep away this place for good and will take vengeance upon all the people. » He does not repeat the lashing of the last time, but

seeing that the merchants and money-changers are slow in obeying, He goes to the nearest bench and turns it over spreading scales and money on the ground.

The vendors and money-changers make haste and carry out Jesus' order, after witnessing the first example. And Jesus shouts after them: « And how many times shall I have to say that this must not be a place of filth, but a place of prayer? » And He looks at those of the Temple who, obeying the orders of the Pontiff, do not make any gesture of reprisal.

After cleansing the court, Jesus goes towards the porches where blind, paralytic, mute, crippled and other sick people are gathered and are invoking Him at the top of their voices.

« What do you want Me to do for you? »

« My sight, Lord! My limbs! That my son may speak! That my wife may recover her health. We believe in You, Son of God! »

« May God hear you. Rise and sing hosannas to the Lord! »

He does not cure the many sick people one by one. But He makes a wide gesture with His hand, and grace and health descend from it upon the poor wretches, who stand up completely cured with cries of joy that mingle with those of the many children, who are pressing against Him repeating: « Glory, glory to the Son of David! Hosanna to Jesus of Nazareth, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords! »

Some Pharisees, with feigned deference, shout to Him: « Master, do You hear them? These children are saying what is not to be said. Reproach them! That they may keep quiet! »

« Why? The king prophet, the king of My stock, did he not say: "You made the perfect praise flow from the mouths of children and sucklings to confuse Your enemies"? Have you not read these words of the psalmist? Let children sing My praises. They are prompted to sing them by their angels, who see My Father incessantly and are aware of His secrets, which they suggest to these innocents. And now let Me go and pray the Lord » and, passing in front of the people, He goes into the court of Israel to pray...

Later, coming out through another gate, going along the Sheep Pool, He leaves the town and goes back to the hills of the Mount of Olives.

The apostles are full of enthusiasm... The triumph has given them confidence, they have completely forgotten all the terror that the words of the Master had aroused in them... They are speaking of everything... They are dying to have news of Annaleah. With difficulty Jesus prevents them from going, assuring them that He will provide and He knows how to do so... They turn a deaf ear to every divine advice... They are truly men, and a cry of hosanna makes them forget everything...

Jesus speaks to Mary of Magdala's servants, who had joined Him at the Temple, and then He dismisses them...

« And where are we going now? » asks Philip.

« To Mark of Jonas' house? » says John.

« No. To the field of the Galileans. Perhaps My brothers have come and I should like to greet them » says Jesus.

« You will be able to do that tomorrow » Thaddeus points out to Him.

« It is better to do things while they can be done. Let us go to the Galileans. They will be pleased to see us. You will have news of your families. I shall see the children... »

« And what about this evening? Where shall we sleep? In town? Where? Where Your Mother is? Or at Johanna's? » asks Judas Iscariot.

« I do not know. Certainly not in town. Perhaps under some Galilean tent again... »

« But why? »

« Because I am the Galilean and I love My Fatherland. Let us go. »

They set out again, going up towards the field of the Galileans, which is on the Mount of Olives towards Bethany, and is all covered with white tents shining in the pleasant April sun.

[30th July 1944]

Jesus says:

« The scene described by Luke seems incoherent, almost illogical. I feel sorry for the misfortunes of a guilty town, but I do not feel sorry for the habits of that town. No. I am not able, I cannot feel sorry for them, because it is just those habits that bring about their misfortunes; and seeing them makes My sorrow deeper. My anger with the desecrators of the Temple is the logical consequence of My meditation on the forthcoming misfortunes of Jerusalem.

It is always the profanation of the cult of God, of the Law of God that provokes the punishments of Heaven. By turning the House of God into a robbers' den, those worthless priests and those worthless believers (only such by name) were drawing malediction and death on all the people. It is useless to give this or that name to the misfortunes that make a people suffer. Look for the right name in this: "Punishment for living like brutes". God withdraws and Evil advances. That is the result of a national way of living undeserving to be named Christian.

As in the past, also now, in the short period of this century, I have not ceased shaking and warning people by means of prodigies. But as in the past, I did nothing but draw mockery, indifference and hatred upon Myself and My means. But individuals and nations ought to bear in mind that they weep in vain, when beforehand they did not want to acknowledge their salvation. In vain they invoke Me when, while I was with them, they drove Me away with a sacrilegious war that starting from individual consciences, devoted to

Evil, spread throughout the Nation. Fatherlands are not so much saved with weapons as they are by means of a form of life that may attract protection from Heaven.

Rest, little John. And make sure you are always faithful to your election. Go in peace. »

How tired I am! I am really exhausted...

[30th March 1947]

Jesus says: « My patient secretary, put here the vision: "The evening of Palm Sunday" (4th March 1945), and may My peace be with you. »

589. The Evening of Palm Sunday.

4th March 1945.

Jesus is with His apostles in the peace of the Garden of the Mount of Olives. It is evening. A tepid evening with a full moon. They are sitting on the natural seats that are the terraces of the olive-grove, on the first ones, which face the glade situated at the beginning of Gethsemane. The Kidron is gurgling among its stones and seems to be talking to itself. One can hear only the song of an odd nightingale or feel the breath of the breeze. Nothing else.

Jesus is speaking.

« After the triumph of this morning your spirits are quite different. What shall I say? That your minds are relieved? Oh! yes! From a human point of view they are relieved. You entered the town trembling because of My words. Each of you seemed to fear that hired ruffians on the other side of the walls were ready to attack him and take him prisoner.

In every man there is another man who reveals himself in the most dangerous hours. There is the hero, who in the hours of greater danger emerges from the meek type of man that the world had always known him to be and had considered unimportant, the hero who faces a struggle saying: "Here I am", who says to the enemy, to an overbearing opponent: "Compete with me". And there is the saint who, while the others run away, struck with terror before wild people looking for victims, says: "Take me as a hostage and for your sacrifice. I will pay on behalf of everybody". And there is the cynic who avails himself of the general misfortune and laughs over the bodies of the victims. There is the traitor, who has a courage of his own, that of evil. The traitor who is the amalgamation of the cynic with the coward, and that is also a category that reveals itself in dangerous hours. Because they cynically take advantage of a misfortune and in a cowardly way they join the stronger party, daring to face the scorn of enemies and the curses of the forlorn, provided they make a profit. Lastly there is the most widespread type, the

coward who in the dangerous hour can but repent of having made known that he belonged to a party and to a man, now struck with anathema, and runs away... Such a coward is not so criminal as the cynic or so revolting as the traitor. But he always shows the imperfection of his spiritual structure. You... are such. Do not say that you are not. I can read consciences.

This morning you were thinking among yourselves: "What will happen to us? Are we going to our death as well?" And your lower part was moaning: "When ever!... " Yes. But have I ever deceived you? With My first words I spoke to you of persecutions and death. And when one of you, through excess of admiration, wanted to see Me and introduce Me as a king, as one of the poor kings of the Earth, always a poor king even if the king and restorer of the kingdom of Israel, I immediately corrected the error and I said: "I am king of the spirit. I offer hardships, sacrifices, sorrows. I have nothing else. I have nothing else here on the Earth. But after My death and your death in My faith, I will give you an eternal Kingdom, the Kingdom of Heaven". Did I perhaps say something different to you? No. You say I did not.

And then you also said: "This is all we want: we want to be with You, and to be treated, to suffer like You, for You". Yes. That is what you said. And you were sincere. Because you were reasoning like children, like thoughtless children. You thought that it was easy for you to follow Me, and you were so full of the treble sensuality that you could not admit that what I was mentioning to you was true. You thought: "He is the Son of God. He is saying that to test our love. No man will be able to strike Him. Since He works miracles, He will be able to work a great one for Himself!" And each of you would add: "I cannot believe that He may be betrayed, captured, killed". Your human faith in My power was so strong that you went to the extent of not having faith in My words, the true, spiritual, holy and sanctifying Faith.

"He Who works miracles will certainly work one in His own favour!" you were saying. I will work not one, but many more. And two of them will be such as no mind of man can possibly imagine. They will be such as only the believers in the Lord can acknowledge. All other people, to the end of time, will say: "Impossible!" And even after My death I shall be the object of contradiction for many.

On a mild spring morning from a mountain I announced the various beatitudes. There is still another one: "Blessed are those who can believe without seeing". Going through Palestine I have already said: "Blessed are those who listen to the word of God and keep it", and also: "Blessed are those who do the will of God" and I said many more, because in the house of My Father many are the joys awaiting saints. But there is also this one. Oh! Blessed are those who will believe without seeing with the eyes of their bodies! They

will be so holy that, although on the Earth, they already see God, the God hidden in the Mystery of love.

But after being with Me for three years, you have not yet arrived at that faith. And you believe only what you see. So, as from this morning, after the triumph, you are saying: "It is just what we said. He is triumphing. And we with Him". And, like birds that are fledging again after their feathers have been torn off by some cruel person, you are flying off, beside yourselves with joy, sure of yourselves, free from the constraints that My words had put in your hearts. Are you more relieved also in your spirits? No, your spirits are even less relieved. Because you are even less prepared for the impending hour. You have drunk the hosannas like a strong agreeable wine. And you are inebriated with it. Is an inebriated man ever strong? The little hand of a child is sufficient to make him stagger and fall. That is what you are like. And the sight of hired ruffians will be enough to make you run away like timid gazelles, which see the sharp muzzle of a jackal appear near the rock of a mountain and, as fast as the wind, they scatter through the solitude of the desert.

Oh! make sure you do not die of dreadful thirst in that burning arena, which is the world without God! My dear friends, do not say what Isaiah says referring to this false and dangerous state of your spirits. Do not say: "He speaks of nothing but conspiracies. But there is nothing to fear, nothing to be afraid of. We must not be afraid of what He prophesies to us. Israel loves Him. And we have seen that". How often the delicate bare foot of a little boy treads on the grass of a flowery meadow, picking flowers to take them to his mother, and he thinks that he will find only stems and flowers, and instead he lays his heel on the head of a snake, and is bitten by it and dies! The flowers were concealing the snake. Also this morning... that happened also this morning! I am the Condemned man crowned with roses. Roses! ... How long do roses last? What is left of them once their corollas shed their snow-white scented petals? Thorns.

I - Isaiah said so - shall be for you, and with you I say that I shall be the sanctuary for the world, but also the stumbling-stone, the chief culprit, the snare and ruin for Israel and the Earth. I will sanctify those who have good will and I will overthrow and crush those who have an evil will. The angels do not speak false words or words that last a short time. They come from God, Who is Truth and is Eternal, and what they say is the truth and their words are immutable. They said: "Peace to men of good will". Then, o Earth, Your Saviour was born. Now your Redeemer is going to His death. But to have peace from God, that is, sanctification and glory, it is necessary to have "good will". Useless is My birth, useless My death for those who do not have that good will. My crying and My deathrattle,

My first step and the last one, the wound of My circumcision and that of My consummation, will have been of no avail if in you, if in men, there is not the good will to redeem and sanctify yourselves. And I say to you: "A very large number of people will stumble against Me, whilst I am placed as a supporting pillar, and not as a snare for man, and they will fall because, being inebriated with pride, lust and avarice, they will be entrapped in the net of their own sins, caught and handed over to Satan. Keep these words in your hearts and seal them for future disciples.

Let us go. The Stone is rising. Another step forward. Upon the mountain. It must shine on the summit because He is the Sun, the Light, the East. And the Sun shines on summits. It must be on the mountain, because the true Temple is to be seen from all over the world. And I am building it by Myself with the living Stone of My sacrificed Body. I will cement its parts with the lime made with sweat and blood. And I shall be on My throne clothed in bright purple, wearing a new crown, and those who are far away will come to Me, they will work in My Temple, around it. I am the base and the summit. But all around, the abode will expand wider and wider. And I will shape My stones and form My handicraftsman Myself, As I was worked on with a chisel by My Father, by Love, by man and by Hatred, so I will work on them. After the wickedness of the Earth has been removed in only one day, the seven eyes will come to the stone of the eternal Priest to see God, and the seven fountains will flow to defeat Satan's fire.

Satan... Judas, let us go. And remember that time is running short and the Lamb is to be handed over by Thursday evening. »

590. The Monday before Passover. The Cursed Fig-Tree and the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen.

31st March 1947.

Jesus comes out early from the tent of a Galilean, on the tableland on the Mount of Olives, where many Galileans gather on the occasion of solemn festivities. The Field is all asleep, lit up by the moon that is setting slowly, enveloping tents, trees and slopes, and the town asleep down there at the bottom, in a white-silvery light...

Jesus passes resolutely and noiselessly among the tents, and once He is out of the Field, He goes down fast along the steep slopes towards Gethsemane, He passes through it, comes out of it, He crosses the little bridge over the Kidron, a silver ribbon singing to the moon, He arrives at the Gate watched over by legionaries. This night watch at the closed Gates is probably a precautionary measure of the Proconsul. The soldiers, four in all, are speaking sitting on large stones placed as seats against the massive wall, and they

are warming themselves at a little fire of dry twigs that casts a reddish light on the shining loricas and stern helmets, under which appear faces so different, in their Italic features, from those of the Hebrews.

« Who is there! » asks the first one who sees Jesus' tall figure appear from behind the corner of a little house near the Gate, and he grasps a sharp-pointed spear that was leaning against the nearby wall, and he stands in the prescribed attitude, imitated by the others. And without giving Jesus time to reply he says: « No one is allowed to come in. Don't You know that this is the end of the second watch? »

« I am Jesus of Nazareth. My Mother is in town. I am going to Her. »

« Oh! the Man Who brought back from the dead the man of Bethany! By Jove! I shall see Him at last! » And he approaches Him looking at Him curiously, walking around Him, as if he wished to make sure that it is not something unreal, something strange, but a man like everybody else. And he says so: « Oh! my goodness! He is as handsome as Apollo, but He is made exactly like us! And He has neither baton, nor cap, nor any sign of His power! » He is perplexed. Jesus looks at him patiently, smiling gently.

The others, who are not so curious - they have probably already seen Jesus on other occasions - say: « It would have been a good thing if He had been here half way through the first watch, when the beautiful girl, who died this morning, was taken to her sepulchre. We would have seen her rise... »

Jesus kindly repeats: « May I go to My Mother? »

The four soldiers rouse up. The senior says: « Actually, according to instructions, we should not let anybody pass. But You would pass just the same. He Who forces the doors of Hades, can easily force the gates of a closed town. And You are not a man who will provoke rebellions. So the prohibition does not apply to You. Try not to be seen by the patrol in the town. Open the gate, Marcus Gratus. And You, go in noiselessly. We are soldiers and we must obey... »

« Be not afraid. Your kindness will not become a punishment for you. »

One of the legionaries cautiously opens the wicket-door within the huge main door and says: « Be quick. The second watch ends shortly and we shall be replaced by other guards. »

« Peace be with you. »

« We are warriors... »

« The peace I give lasts also in wartime, because it is the peace of the soul. »

And Jesus enters the dark arch opened in the thick wall. He passes silently before the guard-room, through the door of which comes the flickering light of an oil lamp, a common lamp, hanging from a hook of the low ceiling, and which allows one to see the bodies

of soldiers sleeping on mats laid on the floor, all wrapped in their mantles, with their weapons beside them.

Jesus is in town by now... and I lose sight of Him, while I watch two of the previous soldiers go back in, after watching to see whether Jesus had gone away, before waking the sleeping soldiers for the change.

« He can no longer be seen... I wonder what He meant by those words. I should have liked to know » says the younger one.

« You should have asked Him. He does not despise us. He is the only Jew Who does not look down on us and does not annoy us in any way » replies the other one, who is in full manhood.

« I did not dare. How could I, a peasant from Benevento, speak to a man Who is said to be God? »

« A god riding a donkey? Ha! Ha! If He were as drunk as Bacchus, He might do that. But He is not drunk. I don't think He even drinks honeyed wine. Don't you see how wan and lean He is? »

« And yet the Hebrews... »

« They do drink, although they pretend they don't! And inebriated with the strong wines of this land and with their strong drinks, they have seen god in a man. Believe me. The gods are idle stories. Olympus is empty and the Earth has none. »

« If they heard you!... »

« Are you still childish to the extent of not being a candidate and not knowing that Caesar himself does not believe in the gods, neither do the pontifices, the augurs, the haruspices, the Arval brethren, the vestal virgins, or anybody else? »

« Why then... »

« Why the rites? Because people like them, they are useful to the priests and Caesar avails himself of them to be obeyed, as if he were an earthly god held by the hand by the Olympian gods. But the first not to believe are those whom we venerate as ministers of the gods. I am a Pyrrhonian. I have travelled round the world. I have had many experiences. My hair has become grey at my temples and my way of thinking has matured. My personal code consists of three sentences. To love Rome, the only goddess and the only certainty, to the extent of sacrificing my life for her. To believe nothing, because everything around us is an illusion, with the exception of our sacred immortal Fatherland. We must doubt even ourselves, because it is not certain whether we live. Senses and reason are not sufficient to make us know for certain that we have succeeded in knowing the Truth and to live and to die are of the same value, because we do not know what is to live and what is to die » he says, affecting the philosophic scepticism of a superior mind...

The other one looks at him doubtfully. He then says: « I, instead, believe. And I should like to know... To learn from that man who has just gone by. He certainly knows the Truth. Something strange

emanates from Him. It is like a light that penetrates you! »

« May Aesculapius save you! You are ill! You came up to town from the valley only a short time ago, and those who make that journey and are not acclimatised to these surroundings become easily feverish. Your mind is wandering. Come. Only warm wine with spices can make you sweat the poison of Jordan fever... » and he pushes him towards the guard-room.

But the other one frees himself saying: « I am not ill. I don't want any warm spiced wine. I want to watch over there, beyond the walls (he points at the inner side of the walls) and wait for the man who said He is Jesus. »

« If you don't mind waiting... I am going to wake up the men for the change. Goodbye... »

And he goes into the guard-room noisily, awaking his companions and shouting: « Your time is up. Come on, you lazy idlers! I am tired!... » He yawns noisily and curses, because they have let the fire go out and they have drunk all the warm wine « so necessary to dry the Palestinian dew... »

The other one, the young legionary, leaning against the wall, illuminated lightly by the moon from the west, is waiting for Jesus to retrace His steps. The stars are watching over his hope...

In the meantime Jesus has arrived at Lazarus' house on the hill of Zion and knocks at the door. Levi opens it to Him.

« You, Master?! The ladies are sleeping. Why did You not send a servant, if You needed something? »

« They would not have let him pass. »

« Ah! that is true! But how did You pass? »

« I am Jesus of Nazareth. And the legionaries let Me pass. But it is not to be divulged, Levi. »

« I will not mention it... They are better than many of us! »

« Take Me where My Mother is sleeping and do not wake anybody else in the house. »

« As You wish, Lord. Lazarus has ordered all the managers of his houses to obey You in everything without any discussion or delay. It was just after dawn when a servant, many servants took his order to all the houses. Obey and be quiet. We will do that. You gave our master back to us... »

The man trots ahead of Jesus along the corridors, as wide as galleries, of Lazarus' wonderful mansion on the hill of Zion, and the light he is carrying in his hands illuminates in a fantastic manner the furniture and tapestry adorning the wide corridors. The man stops at a closed door saying: « Your Mother is in there. »

« You may go. »

« And what about the light? Do You not want it? I can go back without it. I know the house very well. I was born here. »

« Leave it. And do not take the key out of the door. I am going

out at once. »

« You know where to find me. I will lock it as a precaution. But I shall be ready to open the door for You as soon as You come. »

Jesus remains alone. He knocks lightly, such a light knock that only one wide awake can hear it.

There is a noise in the room, as of a chair being moved, and a light shuffling of feet, and a low subdued voice asks: « Who is knocking? »

« It is I, Mother. Open the door. »

The door is opened at once. Only the moonlight illuminates the quiet room and spreads its rays on an untouched bed. A chair is near the window wide open on the mystery of the night.

« Were You not sleeping yet? It is late! »

« I was praying... Come, Son. Sit here where I was » and She points at the chair near the window.

« I cannot stop. I have come to get You and go to Eliza at Ophel. Annaleah is dead. Did You not know? »

« No. Nobody... When, Jesus? »

« After I passed. »

« After You passed! So You were the liberating Angel for her?! The Earth was such a prison for her! Happy girl! I wish I were in her place! Did she die... of a natural death? I mean: not by a misfortune? »

« She died of the joy of loving. I was told when I was already on the slope of the Temple. Come with Me, Mother. We are not afraid of profaning ourselves to comfort a mother who held in her arms her daughter who died of supernatural joy... Our first virgin! The one who came to You at Nazareth, to see Me and ask Me to give her this joy... Remote peaceful days. »

« The other day she was singing like a blackcap in love and she kissed Me saying: "I am happy!", and she was eager to hear everything about You. How God formed You. How He chose Me. And My first throbs of a consecrated virgin... Now I understand... I am ready, Son. »

Mary, while speaking, has put up Her plaits that were hanging down Her shoulders, making Her look like a young girl, and She has put on Her veil and mantle.

They go out making the least possible noise. Levi is already near the main door. He explains why saying: « I preferred so... Because of my wife... Women are curious. She would have asked me dozens of questions. Instead she does not know... »

He opens the door and is about to close it. Jesus says: « I will bring My Mother back during this watch. »

« I shall be watching here. Do not be afraid. »

« Peace to you. »

They go along the silent empty streets, from which the moonlight is slowly withdrawing, while it still shines on the tops of the tall houses on the hill of Zion. It is brighter in the suburb of Ophel

where the modest houses are lower.

Here is Annaleah's house. Closed, dark, silent. Some withered flowers are still lying on the two steps of the house. Perhaps they were thrown by the virgin before she died, or they fell off her coffin... Jesus knocks at the door. He knocks again...

The noise of a window opened on the upper part of the building. A dejected voice asks: « Who is knocking? »

« Mary and Jesus of Nazareth » replies Mary.

« Oh! I am coming!... »

A short wait, then the noise of the sliding bars. The door is opened showing the worn-out face of Eliza, who is holding on with difficulty to the door-post, and when Mary going in stretches Her arms towards her, she collapses on Her breast, sobbing faintly like one who has wept so much as to have no tears or voice left.

Jesus closes the door patiently waiting for His Mother to soothe so much grief. There is a room close to the door. They go into it and Jesus takes the lamp that Eliza had laid on the floor of the entrance before opening the door. The tears of the mother seem to be endless. She speaks to Mary sobbing hoarsely. A mother is speaking to the Mother... Jesus, standing against a wall, is silent...

Eliza cannot resign herself to that death, that happened so... And in her grief she blames Samuel, the perjurious fiance, for it: « That cursed man broke her heart! She never said anything. But I wonder for how long she had been suffering! And in her joy, in shouting, her heart broke. May he be cursed for ever. »

« No, My dear. No. Do not curse. It is not so. God loved her so much that He wanted her in His peace. But even if she had died because of Samuel - it is not so, but let us suppose so for a moment - consider what a joyful death she had, and say that the wicked deed brought about a happy death for her. »

« I no longer have her! She is dead! She is dead! You do not know what it is to lose a daughter! Twice I have tasted that sorrow. Because I was already weeping over her, as she was as good as dead, when Your Son cured her. But now... But now... He did not come back! He did not have mercy... I have lost her! Lost! My child is already in her grave! Do You know what it means to see a son in the throes of death? To know that he must die? To see him dead, when one thought he had recovered and was strong? You do not know. You cannot say anything... She was as beautiful as a rose that had just opened in the early sunshine, when she was adorning herself this morning. She had wanted to adorn herself with the dress I had made for her wedding. She was also intending to crown herself as a bride. Then she preferred to undo the garland, that was ready, and pluck the flowers to throw them to Your Son, and she sang! She sang! Her voice filled the house. She was as graceful as springtime. Joy made her eyes shine like stars, and her parted lips showing her

white teeth were a delicate pomegranate red, and her cheeks were as rosy and fresh as spring roses adorned with dew. And she became as white as a lily that had just opened. And she bent on my breast like a broken stem... Not another word! Not a sigh! No longer colourful. Not a glance. As placid and beautiful as an angel of God, but lifeless. As You are rejoicing in the triumph of Your Son, and He is healthy and strong, You do not know what my grief is like! Why did He not come back? In what had she displeased Him, and I with her, that He did not hear my prayer? »

« Eliza! Eliza! Do not say... Grief is making you blind and deaf... Eliza, you are not aware of My suffering. And you do not know what a deep sea My suffering will become. You saw she was placid and beautiful when she relaxed in peace. In your arms. I... I have been contemplating My Child for over thirty years and, beyond the smooth clean body that I contemplate and caress, I see the wounds of the Man of sorrows that My Son will be. You who say that I do not know what it is to see a son go to his death twice, and to die once and remain thus in peace, do you know what it means to a mother to see such a vision for so many years? My Son! Here He is. He is already dressed in red, as if He were coming out of a bath of blood. And soon, before long, the face of your daughter will not yet have become dark in her grave, and I shall see Him dressed in the purple of His innocent Blood. Of the Blood that I gave Him. And while you received your daughter on your heart, do you know what My sorrow will be like, seeing My Son die like a criminal on a cross of wood? Look at Him, the Saviour of everybody! In their spirits and in their flesh. Because the flesh of those saved by Him will be incorrupt and blessed in His Kingdom. And look at Me! Look at this Mother Who continually accompanies and takes Her Son to the Sacrifice! Oh! I would not hold Him back one step! I can understand you, poor mother. But try and understand My heart! Do not hate My Son. Annaleah would not have been able to put up with the agony of her Lord. And her Lord made her blessed in an hour of jubilation. »

Eliza has stopped weeping upon hearing this revelation. She stares at Mary, Whose pale face of a martyr is wet with silent tears, she looks at Jesus, Who is looking at her pitifully... and she kneels at Jesus' feet moaning: « But she is dead! She is dead, Lord! Like a lily, a broken lily. The poets say that You take delight in lilies! Oh! really, You, born of the lily-Mary, often come down among flowery flower-beds, and You turn purple roses into snow-white lilies, and You pick them removing them from the world. Why? Why, Lord? Is it not fair that a mother should enjoy the rose born of her? Why extinguish its purple in the cold whiteness of death of a lily? »

« Lilies! They will be the symbol of those women who love Me as My Mother loved God. The snow-white flower-bed of the Divine

King. »

« But we mothers shall weep. We mothers have a right to our children. Why deprive them of life? »

« I do not mean that, woman. The daughters will remain, but consecrated to the King, like the virgins in the palaces of Solomon. Remember the Song... And they will be spouses, the beloved, on the Earth and in Heaven. »

« But my daughter is dead! She is dead! » And she resumes weeping in a heart-rending manner.

« I am the Resurrection and Life. Who believes in Me, even if he dies, will live, and I solemnly tell you that he will never die. Your daughter is living. She will live for ever because she believed in Life. My Death will be complete Life for her. She was aware of the joy of living in Me before being aware of the grief of seeing Me torn away from life. Your sorrow makes you blind and deaf, as My Mother rightly says. You will soon be repeating the word I sent you this morning: "Her death was really a grace of God". Believe Me, woman. Horror is hanging over this place. And the day will come when mothers who have been struck like you, will say: "Praised be God Who spared our children these days". And the mothers who have not been struck will cry to Heaven: "Why, o God, did You not kill our children before this hour?" Believe Me, woman. Believe My words. Do not raise between Annaleah and yourself the real barrier that separates people, that of the difference of faith. See? I could have refrained from coming. You know how much I am hated. Do not let the triumph of one hour deceive you!... Every comer may conceal a trap for Me. And I have come alone, at night, to console you and speak these words to you. I pity the sorrow of a mother. But I have come to say these words to you for the peace of your soul. Peace be with you! Peace! »

« Give me it, Lord! I cannot! In my grief I cannot set my mind at rest. But You, Who give life back to the dead and health to the dying, give peace to the heart of a mother torn by grief. »

« Let it be so, woman. Peace to you. » He imposes His hands on her, blessing her and praying silently over her. Mary has also knelt down beside Eliza, embracing her with Her arm.

« Goodbye, Eliza, I am going... »

« Shall we not meet again, Lord? I shall not leave my house for many days, and You will be going away after the Passover festivities. You are still part of my daughter somehow... because Annaleah... because Annaleah lived in You and for You. » She weeps. More calmly, but how much she weeps!

Jesus looks at her... He caresses her grey-haired head and He says to her: « You will see Me again. »

« When? »

« In eight nights' time as from tonight. »

« And will You comfort me again? Will You bless me to give me strength? »

« My heart will bless you with all the fullness of My love for those who love Me. Come, Mother. »

« Son, if You will allow Me, I should like to remain a little longer with this mother. Sorrow is a billow that comes back again, after He Who gives peace has gone away... I will come back at the first hour. I am not afraid to come by Myself. You know that. And You know that I would pass through a whole enemy army to console a brother of Mine in God. »

« As You wish. I am going. God be with you. »

He goes out noiselessly, closing the door of the room and that of the house.

He goes back to the walls, to the Gate of Ephraim, or the Stercoral or Dung Gate, because I have heard several times these two Gates, which are close to each other, mentioned with these three names, perhaps because one opens on the Jericho road, which is at the bottom, a road that takes one to Ephraim, and the other is close to the Hinnom valley, where the rubbish of the town is burnt, and they are so alike that I confuse them.

It is just beginning to dawn on the eastern side of the sky, which, however, is still crowded with stars. The streets are enveloped in a dim light that is more tedious than the darkness of the night, that was moderated by the white light of the moon. But the Roman soldier has good sight, and as soon as he sees Jesus advancing towards the Gate, he goes to meet Him.

« Hail. I have been waiting for You... » He stops hesitating.

« Speak up without any fear. What do you want of Me? »

« To know. You said: "The peace that I give lasts also in wartime, because it is the peace of the soul". I should like to know what peace it is, and what is the soul. How can a man, who is at war, be at peace? The temple of Peace is closed when Janus' is opened. The two things cannot be together in the world. » He is speaking leaning against the low greenish wall of a kitchen garden, in a lane as narrow as a path running through fields, among poor houses, a damp, gloomy, dark lane. Apart from a glimmer showing the burnished helmet, nothing else can be noticed of the two who are speaking. The shadow envelopes their faces and bodies in complete darkness.

Jesus' voice sounds mild and bright because of His joy in throwing a seed of light into the heathen. « It is true, peace and war cannot be together in the world. One excludes the other. But in a warrior there can be peace even if he is ordered to fight in a war. My peace can be in him. Because My peace comes from Heaven and it is not upset by the rumble of war or the ferocity of massacres. A divine thing, it invades the divine thing that man has within himself, and is named soul. »

« Divine? In me? Caesar is divine. I am the son of peasants. Now I am a private soldier. If I am valiant, I may become a centurion. But not divine. »

« There is a divine part in you. It is the soul. It comes from God. From the true God. So it is divine, a living gem in man, and it nourishes itself and lives with divine things: faith, peace, truth. War does not upset it. Persecutions do not injure it. Death does not kill it. Evil only, doing what is ugly, wounds or kills it, and also deprives it of the peace that I grant. Because evil separates man from God. »

« And what is evil? »

« To be in heathenism and worship idols when the goodness of the true God has made one know that there is the true God. Not to love one's father, mother, brothers and one's neighbour. To steal, to kill, to be rebellious, to be lustful, to be false. That is evil. »

« Ah! then I cannot have Your peace! I am a soldier and I am ordered to kill. So there is no salvation for us?! »

« Be as just in wartime as you are in peace-time. Do your duty without cruelty and without avidity. While fighting and conquering, consider that your enemy is like you, and that every town has mothers and girls like your mother and your sisters, and be brave without being a brute. You will not move away from justice and peace, and My peace will remain in you. »

« And then? »

« And then? What do you mean? »

« After my death? What will happen to the good I have done and to the soul, that You say does not die if one does not do evil things? »

« It lives. It lives adorned with the good it has done, in a joyful peace, greater than the one any man enjoys on the Earth. »

« So in Palestine only one person had done good! I see. »

« Who? »

« Lazarus of Bethany. His soul did not die! »

« Truly, he is a just man. But many are like him, and they die without being raised from the dead, but their souls live in the true God. Because the soul has another abode, in the Kingdom of God. And those who believe in Me will enter into that Kingdom. »

« Even I, a Roman? »

« You as well, if you believe in the Truth. »

« What is the Truth? »

« I am the Truth and the Way to go to the Truth, and I am the Life and I give the Life, because those who accept the Truth accept the Life. »

The young soldier is pensive... silent... Then he raises his face. The still pure face of a young man, and he smiles, a limpid, serene smile. He says: « I will try to remember all this and to learn even more. I like it... »

« What is your name? »

« Vital. From Benevento. From the countryside of that town. »

« I will remember your name. Make your spirit really vital by nourishing it with the Truth. Goodbye. The Gate is being opened. I am leaving the town. »

« Hail! »

Jesus goes quickly to the Gate and hastens along the road leading to the Kidron and to Gethsemane and thence to the Field of the Galileans.

Among the olive-trees of the mountain He meets with Judas of Kerioth, who is also going up fast towards the Field, which is awaking. Judas makes a gesture as if he were frightened finding himself in front of Jesus. Jesus looks at him fixedly, without speaking.

« I went to take food to the lepers. But... I found two at Hinnom, five at Siloam. The others, cured. They are still there, but they are cured so well that they asked me to inform the priest. I had gone down at daybreak, to be free later. It will cause a stir. Such a large number of lepers cured at the same time after You blessed them in the presence of so many people! »

Jesus does not speak. He lets him speak... He does not say: « You did the right thing », or anything else concerning Judas' action and the miracle, but stopping suddenly and staring at the apostle He asks him: « Well? The fact that I left you freedom and money, what change has it made? »

« What do You mean? »

« This: I am asking you whether you have sanctified yourself since I gave you back freedom and money. And you understand Me... Ah! Judas! Bear it in mind! Always bear it in mind: you are the one whom I loved more than anybody else, receiving from you less love than all the others have given Me. Nay, I received hatred greater, because it is the hatred of one whom I treated as a friend, than the fiercest hatred of the fiercest Pharisee. And remember also this: that not even now I hate you, but as far as the Son of man is concerned, I forgive you. Go, now. Nothing more is to be said between you and Me. Everything has already been done... »

Judas would like to say something, but Jesus with an authoritative gesture beckons to him to go on... And Judas, his head lowered like a defeated man, goes on...

At the boundary of the Field of the Galileans, the apostles and Lazarus' two servants are ready.

« Where have You been, Master? And you, Judas? Were you together? »

Jesus prevents Judas' reply saying: « I had something to say to some hearts. Judas went to the lepers... But they are all cured, except seven. »

« Oh! why did you go? I wanted to come, too! » says the Zealot.

« To be free now to come with us. Let us go. We shall enter into

town by the Sheep Gate. Let us make haste » says Jesus again.

He is the first to set out, passing through the olive-groves that take one from the Field, situated almost half-way between Bethany and Jerusalem, to the other little bridge that spans the Kidron near the Sheep Gate.

Some houses of peasants are scattered along the slopes, and almost at the bottom, near the water of the torrent, a ruffled figtree dangles over the stream. Jesus turns His steps towards it and He searches among the large thick leaves to see whether there are any ripe figs. But the fig-tree is nothing but leaves, many useless leaves, but there is not one fruit on its branches.

« You are like many hearts in Israel. You are neither kind nor pitiful to the Son of man. May you never bear fruit again and may no one ever eat of your fruit in future » says Jesus.

The apostles look at one another. They are surprised at Jesus' anger at the barren tree, which is probably a wild one. But they do not say anything. Only later, after crossing the Kidron, Peter asks Him: « Where did You eat? »

« Nowhere. »

« Oh! Then You are hungry! There is a shepherd over there pasturing some goats. I will go and ask for some milk for You. I will not be long » and he strides away and comes back cautiously with an old bowl full of milk.

Jesus drinks it and with a caress He hands the bowl back to the young shepherd who had come with Peter...

They enter into the town and go up to the Temple and, after worshipping the Lord, Jesus goes back to the court where the rabbis teach.

People crowd round Him, and a mother, who has come from Cintium, shows Him her little boy whom a disease, I think, has made blind. His eyes are white, as if he had a large cataract over his pupil or a leucoma. Jesus cures him touching his eyes lightly with His fingers. And He immediately begins to speak:

« A man bought a piece of ground and planted a vineyard in it, he built a house for the husbandman, a tower for the caretakers, wine-cellars and places where to press the grapes, and he leased it to tenants whom he trusted. Then he went abroad. When the time came that the vineyard could bear fruit, as the vines had grown to the extent of being fruit-bearing, the owner of the vineyard sent his servants to the tenants to collect the profit of the harvest. But the tenants surrounded the servants and they beat some, they stoned some with heavy stones wounding them seriously, and they killed some of them. Those who had survived and had gone back to the landowner, told him what had happened to them. The owner cured and comforted them and sent more servants, this time a larger number. And the tenants dealt with them as they had done with the

previous ones. Then the owner of the vineyard said: "I will send my son to them. They will certainly respect my heir". But the tenants, when they saw him come and they realised that he was the heir, said to one another: "Come. Let us gather together in a large number. Let us take him out, to a remote place, and kill him. His inheritance will be left to us". And, receiving him with hypocritical honours, they gathered round him as if they wished to give him a hearty welcome, then, after kissing him, they tied him, they gave him a good thrashing, and with endless mocking words they took him to the place of torture and killed him. Now tell Me. That father and owner, who one day will realise that his son and heir to his property is not coming back, and he finds out that his servant tenants, to whom he had given his land to cultivate in his name, enjoying a fair share of it and giving what was fair to their master, are the murderers of his son, what will he do? » and Jesus' sapphire eyes, as bright as if they were lit by the sun, flash on the people present, and particularly on the groups of the more influential Judeans, Pharisees and scribes, scattered among the crowd.

No one speaks.

« So, speak up! At least you, rabbis of Israel. Speak the word of justice to convince the people to be just. I might speak a word that is not good, according to your minds. So I ask you to speak, so that the people may not be led into error. »

The scribes are compelled to reply and they say: « He will punish the wicked men with a cruel death and will give the vineyard to other tenants, so that they may cultivate it in an honest manner giving him the fruit of the land entrusted to them. »

« What you said is correct. In the Scriptures it is written: "The stone rejected by the builders has become the keystone. This is the work of the Lord and it is wonderful to see". Therefore, as it is written thus, and you know, and you rightly judge that those tenants who killed the son and heir of the owner of the vineyard should be punished in a cruel manner and the vineyard should be given to other tenants to be cultivated in an honest way, well, that is why I say to you: "The Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and will be given to people to make it yield fruit. And he who falls against this stone will break in pieces, and he upon whom the stone falls, will be crushed". »

The chief priests, the Pharisees and scribes, with a really... heroic attitude, do not react. So powerful is the eagerness to reach one's aim! On past occasions they at least opposed Him, whereas today, when the Lord Jesus openly tells them that their power will be taken away from them, they do not abuse Him, they do not react violently against Him, they do not threaten Him, behaving like false patient lambs, that under the hypocritical appearance of meekness conceal the unchangeable hearts of wolves.

They just approach Him, as He has resumes walking backwards and forwards, listening to this one and that one of the many pilgrims who have gathered in the wide court, many of whom ask Him for advice for cases concerning their souls or family or social situations, and they wait to be able to say something to Him after hearing Him give His opinion to a man on a complicated matter of inheritance, which has brought about discord and ill-feeling among several heirs, because of a son their father had to a maidservant of the household and whom he adopted. The legitimate sons do not want the illegitimate one to stay with them, neither do they wish to have him joint heir in the sharing of houses and fields, as they do not want to have anything further to do with him. But they do not know how to settle the matter, because their father before dying made them swear that, as he had always divided the bread among the illegitimate son and the legitimate ones in equal parts, so they had to share out the inheritance in equal measure with him.

Jesus says to the man who is consulting Him on behalf of his three brothers: « Each of you should give up a piece of ground and sell it, in order to put together the money equivalent to one fifth of the total patrimony, and give it to the illegitimate son saying: "Here is your share. You are not being cheated out of what belongs to you, neither have we wronged our father's will. Go and God be with you". And give plentifully, even more than the exact value of his share. Do so in the presence of just witnesses, and no one on the Earth or beyond the Earth will be able to utter a word of reproach or give rise to a scandal. And there will be peace among you and in you, as you will not feel remorse for disobeying your father, and you will not have with you him who, although really innocent, upsets you more than if he were a highwayman placed among you. »

The man says: « The illegitimate son really upset the peace of our family, he ruined the health of my mother who died of grief, and he usurped a place that did not belong to him. »

« Man, he is not guilty, but he who procreated him is to be blamed. He did not ask to be born and bear the mark of illegitimacy. It was the covetousness of your father who begot him to hand him over to sorrow and to grieve you. Be therefore just towards the innocent man who is already painfully expiating a sin that is not his. Do not let the spirit of your father be anathema to you. God has judged him. Your curses are not required. Always honour your father, even if he is guilty, not for himself, but because he represented your God on the Earth, as he created you by God's decree and because he is the lord of your house. Parents come immediately after God. Remember the Decalogue. And do not sin. Go in peace. »

The priests and scribes approach Him then to question Him: « We heard You. What You said is right. Not even Solomon could have given a wiser piece of advice. But since You work wonders

and You give advice such as only the wise king could give, tell us, what authority have You to do such things? Whence does such Power come to You? »

Jesus stares at them. He is neither aggressive nor contemptuous, but He is very imposing. He says: « I also have a question to ask you, and if you reply to Me, I will tell you by which authority I, a Poor man without authority of offices - because that is what you mean - do these things. Tell Me: where did John's baptism come from? From Heaven or from the man who administered it? Reply to Me. By which authority did John administer it as a purifying rite to prepare you for the coming of the Messiah, if John was even poorer and less learned than I am, and he had no office whatsoever, as he lived in the desert since his childhood? »

The scribes and priests consult with one another. The people press round them, with wide-open eyes and pricked up ears, ready to protest if the scribes disqualify the Baptist and offend the Master, and to acclaim if they are defeated by the question of the divinely wise Rabbi of Nazareth. The dead silence of this crowd awaiting the reply is striking. It is so profound that the breathing and whispering of the priests and scribes can be heard, as they speak to one another almost without uttering words, and in the meantime they cast glances at the people, whose feelings they realise are ready to explode. At last they make up their minds and they reply. They turn towards the Christ Who, leaning against a column, His arms folded across His chest, scans their faces without ever losing sight of them, and they say: « Master, we do not know by which authority John did that or where his baptism came from. No one ever thought of asking the Baptist while he was alive, and he never mentioned it of his own accord. »

« And neither will I tell you by which authority I do such things. » And He turns His back to them calling the Twelve, and pushing His way through the cheering crowd, He leaves the Temple.

When they are already out, beyond the Probatika, as they came out on that side, Bartholomew says to Him: « Your enemies have become very prudent. Perhaps they are converting to the Lord Who sent You and will recognise You as the holy Messiah. »

« That is true. They did not discuss Your question or Your reply... » says Matthew.

« Let it be so. It is beautiful that Jerusalem should turn to the Lord her God » says Bartholomew again.

« Do not delude yourselves! That part of Jerusalem will never be converted. They did not reply in a different manner because they were afraid of the crowd. I read their thoughts even if I could not hear their subdued words. »

« And what were they saying? » asks Peter.

« They were saying this. I want you to be acquainted with what

they said, that you may know them thoroughly and you may give future disciples and exact description of the hearts of men in My days. They did not reply because they are turning to the Lord. But because they said to one another: "If we reply: 'The baptism of John came from Heaven', the Rabbi will say to us: 'Then why did you not believe what came from Heaven and was meant as a preparation for the Messianic time?'; and if we say: 'From man', then the crowds will turn against us saying: 'Then why do you not believe what our prophet John said of Jesus of Nazareth?'. So it is better to say: 'We do not know'". That is what they were saying. Not because they were being converted to God, but out of mean calculation and because they did not want to have to admit with their own lips that I am the Christ and I do what I do because I am the Lamb of God of Whom the Precursor spoke. And neither did I wish to say by what authority I do the things I do. I have already said it many times within those walls and all over Palestine and My miracles speak even more than My words. Now I will no longer say it with My words. I will let the prophets and My Father and the signs of Heaven speak. Because the time has come when all the signs will be given. Those mentioned by the prophets and indicated by the symbols of our history, and those which I announced: the sign of Jonah; do you remember that day at Kedesh? It is the sign that Gamaliel is awaiting. You, Stephen, and you, Hermas, and you, Barnabas, who have left your companions to follow Me today, have certainly heard the rabbi speak of that sign several times. Well, the sign will soon be given. »

He goes away up through the olive-groves on the mountain, followed by His apostles and by many of His seventy-two disciples, beside others who, like Joseph Barnabas, follow Him to hear Him speak again.

Jesus says: « You will put here the second part of the Monday, that is, the speeches delivered to My apostles during the night (vision of 6th March 1945. »

591. Monday Night before Passover. Teachings to the Apostles at Gethsemane.

6th March 1945.

In the evening, Jesus is still in the olive-grove. And He is with His apostles. And He speaks again.

« And another day has gone by. Now it is night-time and then tomorrow, and then the day after tomorrow, and then the Passover supper. »

« Where are we having it, my Lord? The women also will be there this year » asks Philip.

« And we have not made any arrangement yet, and the town is full beyond measure. The whole of Israel, including even the remotest proselyte, seems to have come to the rite » says Bartholomew.

Jesus looks at him and, as if He were reciting a psalm, He says: « Gather together, make haste, come from everywhere to my victim whom I am immolating for you, to the great Victim immolated on the mountains of Israel, to eat its Flesh, to drink its Blood. »

« But which victim? Which? You look like one suffering from a fixed mad idea. You speak of nothing but death... and You grieve us » says Bartholomew passionately.

Jesus looks at him again, diverting His attention from Simon, who bends over James of Alphaeus and Peter chatting with them, and He says:

« What? Are you asking Me? You are not one of these little ones, who to be learned must receive the septiform light. You were already expert in the Scriptures before I called you by means of Philip, that mild spring morning. My springtime. And yet, you ask Me which is the victim immolated on the mountains, the one to which everybody will come to feed on? And you say that I am mad with a fixed idea because I speak of death? Oh! Bart! Like the cry of the watchmen, in your darkness that never opened to light, I uttered the announcing cry once, twice, three times. But you never wanted to understand. You suffered at the moment because of it, then... like children you soon forgot the words of death and you joyfully went back to your work, sure of yourselves and full of hope that your words and Mine would convince the world more and more to follow and love its Redeemer.

No . Only after the Earth has sinned against Me - and bear in mind that these are words of the Lord to His prophet - only afterwards, the people, and not only this one in particular, but the great people of Adam, will begin to moan saying: "Let us go to the Lord. He Who hurt us, will cure us". And the world of the Redeemed will say: "After two days, that is, two periods of eternity, during which he will have left us at the mercy of the Enemy, who will have struck and killed us with all kinds of weapons, as we struck the Holy One and killed Him - and we strike and kill Him, because there will always be the race of Cains who with blasphemy and evil deeds will kill the Son of God, the Redeemer, shooting mortal arrows not at His eternal glorified Person, but at their souls ransomed by Him, killing them, and therefore killing Him through their souls - only after these two periods the third day will come, and we shall rise from the dead in His presence in the Kingdom of Christ on the Earth and we shall live before Him in the triumph of the spirit. We shall know Him, we shall learn to know the Lord to be ready, by means of this true knowledge of God, to fight the last battle that Lucifer will join with man before the blast of the angel of the seventh trumpet,

that will open the blissful chorus of the saints of God, with the number perfected for ever - it will never be possible to add either the youngest baby or the oldest man to the number - the chorus that will sing: 'The poor kingdom of the Earth is over. The world with all its inhabitants has been passed in review before the conquering Judge. And the elect are now in the hands of our Lord and of His Christ, and He is our King for ever. Praised be the Almighty Lord God Who is, Who was and Who will be, because He has taken His great power and has entered into possession of His Kingdom'".

Oh! who among you will be able to remember the words of this prophecy, already resounding in the words of Daniel, in a muted tone, and now roared by the voice of the Wise One before the astounded world and before you, who are more astounded than the world?! "The coming of the King - the world will continue, moaning in its wounds and enclosed in its sepulchre, evil in life and wicked in death, closed by its sevenfold vice and by its infinite heresies, the agonising spirit of the world closed with its last efforts within the organism, having died of leprosy because of all its errors - the coming of the King is prepared like that of dawn and will come to us like the rain in springtime and in autumn". Dawn is preceded and prepared by night. This is the night. The present one.

And what must I do for you, Ephraim? What must I do for you, Judah?... Simon, Bart, Judas, and you, My cousins, you who are more experienced in the Book, do you recognise these words? They do not come from a mad spirit, but from one who possesses Wisdom and Science. Like a king who calmly opens his coffers, because he knows where a certain gem is, which he is looking for, as he put it in there himself, I quote the prophets. I am the Word. For ages I spoke through human lips. And for ages I will speak through human lips. But all the supernatural that has been spoken is My word. Even the most learned and holy man would not be able to rise, with the soul of an eagle, beyond the limits of the blind world, to snatch and utter the eternal mysteries.

The future is "present" only in the Divine Mind. Foolish are those who claim to make prophecies and revelations, without being supported by Our Will. And God soon gives them the lie and strikes them, because only One can say: "I am", and say: "I see", and say: "I know". But when a Will that is not to be measured, that is not to be judged, that is to be accepted with bowed head, without discussion, saying: "Here I am", when such Will says: "Come, rise, hear, see, repeat", then the soul, immersed in the eternal present of its God, called by the Lord to be "voice", sees and trembles, sees and weeps, sees and rejoices; then the soul, called by the Lord to be "word", hears and, thrown into ecstasy or into the perspiration Of agony, says the tremendous words of the Eternal God. Because every word of God is tremendous, as it comes from Him Whose verdict

is immutable and Whose Justice is inexorable and is addressed to men, too few of whom deserve love and blessings instead of anathema and conviction. Now this word, that is spoken and despised, is it not the cause of dreadful sin and punishment for those who reject it, after hearing it? It is.

And what else must I do for you, o Ephraim, o Judah, o world, that I have not done for you? I came loving you, o My Earth, and My word became a sword for you and it kills you because you loathed it. Oh! World, who kill your Saviour thinking that You are doing a just thing, you are so possessed by Satan that you do not understand any more which is the sacrifice that God exacts, the sacrifice of one's sin and not of an animal immolated and consumed with a foul soul! But what have I told you these last three years' What did I preach? I said: "Know God in His laws and in His nature". And I dried out, like a vase of porous clay exposed to the sun, spreading the vital knowledge of the Law and of God among you. And you have continued to offer holocausts, without ever offering the only necessary one: the immolation of your evil will to the true God!

Now the eternal God says to you, city of sin, faithless people and in the hour of the Judgement you will be lashed with a whip that will not be used for Rome and Athens, dull-witted towns that know neither language nor science, but which, when from eternal infants badly looked after by their nurses and being beastlike in their capabilities, will pass into the holy arms of My Church, My only sublime Spouse, by whom numberless children will be borne to Me worthy of the Christ, they will become adult and capable, and will give Me palaces and armies, temples and saints to people Heaven as if they were stars - now the eternal God says to you: "I no longer like you and I will not accept any gift from your hands. It is like dung to Me and I will throw it back on your faces and it will stick to them. I loathe your solemnities which are nothing but outward appearances. I will abolish My covenant with the stock of Aaron and I will give it to the sons of Levi because, here, this is My Levi, and with him I made a covenant of life and peace to last for ever, and He was faithful to Me to the end of time, to the point of sacrifice. He had the holy fear of the Father and He trembled with wrath, feeling offended at the mere sound of My offended Name. He spoke the law of truth, and there was no iniquity on His lips, He walked with Me in peace and equity and He deterred many from sin. The time has come when the pure immaculate Host, pleasing to the Lord, will be sacrificed and offered to My Name everywhere, and no longer on the sole altar of Zion, because you do not deserve to offer it".

Do you recognise the eternal words? »

« We recognise them, o Lord. And, believe us, we are depressed

as if we had been struck. Is it not possible to deviate from our destiny? »

« Do you call it destiny, Bart? »

« I do not know what other name... »

« Atonement. That is the name. You do not offend the Lord, without making amends for the offence. And God the Creator was offended by the First man created. Since then the offence has increased more and more. And neither the water of the Deluge, nor the fire that rained on Sodom and Gomorrah helped to make man holy. Neither the water nor the fire. The Earth is a boundless Sodom in which Lucifer walks freely and as a king. So let a trinity come to wash it: the fire of love, the water of sorrow, the blood of the Victim. That is, o Earth, My gift. I have come to give you it. And, should I now evade its accomplishment? It is Passover. It is not possible to evade it. »

« Why do You not go to Lazarus'? You would not be fleeing. But You would not be touched there. »

« Simon is right. I beg You, Lord, do that! » shouts Judas Iscariot, throwing himself at Jesus' feet.

At his gesture John begins to shed bitter tears and also His cousins and James and Andrew weep, although they are more composed in their grief.

« Do you believe that I am the "Lord"? Look at Me! » and Jesus pierces with His eyes the Iscariot's anguished face. Because he is really distressed, he is not feigning. Perhaps it is the last struggle of his soul with Satan, and he does not succeed in winning. Jesus studies him and follows his struggle as a man of science might study the crisis of a sick person. Then He springs to His feet and so vehemently that Judas, who was leaning on His knees, is pushed back and falls sitting on the ground. Jesus even draws back, looking upset, and He says: « To have Lazarus arrested as well? So, a double prey and double joy. No. Lazarus is kept for the future Christ, for the triumphant Christ. Only one will be cast beyond life and will not come back. I will come back. But he will not. But Lazarus is staying. You, who know so many things, know also that. But those who hope to have double profit capturing the eagle and the eaglet, their nest and without difficulty, can be sure that the eagle has eyes for everybody, and that out of love for her little one she will go far from the nest, to be captured alone, thus saving it. I am killed by hatred and yet I continue to love. Go. I am staying here to Pray. Never, as in this hour that I am living, have I felt the need to raise My soul to Heaven. »

« Let me stay with You, Lord » implores John.

« No. You all need a rest. Go. »

« Are You remaining all alone? And if they should harm You? You seem to be suffering, too... I am staying » says Peter.

« You will go with the others. Allow Me to forget men for one hour! Let Me be in touch with the angels of My Father! They will replace My Mother, Who is wasting away with tears and prayer and Whom I cannot overburden with My desolate grief. Go. »

« Are You not going to wish us peace? » asks His cousin Judas.

« You are right. May the peace of the Lord rest upon those who are not disgraceful in His eyes. Goodbye » and climbing a terrace He enters among the densely growing olive-trees.

« And yet... what He says is really in the Scripture! And when one hears it from Him, one understands why and for whom it is said » whispers Bartholomew.

« I told Peter in the autumn of the first year... » says Simon.

« That is true... But... No! While I live, I will not let Him be captured. Tomorrow... » says Peter.

« What are you going to do tomorrow? » asks the Iscariot.

« What am I going to do? I am speaking to myself. These are days of conspiracies. Not even to the air will I confide my thoughts. And you, who are powerful, you have said so many times, why do you not seek protection for Jesus? »

« I will, Peter. I will. But do not be surprised if now and again I am absent. I am working for Him. But don't tell Him. »

« Be sure of that. And may you be blessed. At times I have distrusted you, but I apologise to you. I see that at the right moment you are better than we are. You act... I can only speak empty words » says Peter humbly and sincerely. And Judas laughs, being pleased with the praise.

They depart from Gethsemane going towards the road that leads to Jerusalem.

592. The Tuesday Morning before Passover. The Questions of the Tribute to Caesar and of the Resurrection of the Dead.

1st April 1947.

They are about to go back into town, always along the same remote path taken the previous morning, as if Jesus did not want to be surrounded by people waiting for Him, before arriving at the Temple, which is soon reached entering the town by the Sheep Gate, which is near the Probatika. But today many of the seventy-two disciples are already waiting for Him beyond the Kidron, before the bridge, and as soon as they see Him appear among the grey-green olive-trees, in His purple garment, they go to meet Him. They gather together and proceed towards the town.

Peter, who is looking ahead, down the slope, always suspecting to see some evil-minded person appear, among the fresh vegetation of the last slopes sees a mass of withered hanging leaves dangling over the water of the Kidron. The wrinkled dying leaves, already

rust-stained here and there, are like those of a plant parched by fire. The breeze blows one off now and again and buries it in the water of the torrent.

« That is the fig-tree of yesterday! The fig-tree that You cursed! » shouts Peter, one hand stretched forward pointing at the withered tree, his head turned back to speak to the Master.

They all rush there, except Jesus, Who comes forward at His usual pace. The apostles inform the disciples of the precedent of what they are looking at, and they all make comments looking at Jesus utterly amazed. They have seen thousands of miracles on men and elements, but this one strikes them more than many others.

Jesus, Who has arrived, smiles watching those amazed timid faces, and He says: « What? Are you so surprised that My word withered a fig-tree? Have you not seen Me raise people from the dead, cure lepers, give sight to blind people, multiply loaves, calm storms, put out fires? And you are surprised that a fig-tree withers? »

« It is not because of the fig-tree. The fact is that yesterday when You cursed it, it was thriving, and now it is withered. Look! As crumbly as dry clay. There is no more sap in its branches. Look. They crumble into dust » and Bartholomew pulverises with his fingers some branches that he has broken off without any effort.

« They have no more sap. You are right. And it is death when there is no more sap, both in a plant and in a nation as well as in a religion, but there is only hard bark and useless foliage: ferocity and hypocritical outward appearance. The white internal sap, full of lymph, corresponds to holiness, to spirituality. The hard bark and useless foliage correspond to mankind devoid of just spiritual life. Woe to those religions that become human because their priests and believers no longer have a vital spirit. Woe to those nations whose leaders are nothing but fierceness and resounding clamour devoid of fruit-bearing ideas! Woe to men who lack the life of the spirit! »

« But, if You said that to the great ones in Israel, although what You say is right, You would not be wise. Do not entertain illusions because they have allowed You to speak so far. You said Yourself that it is not because they are being converted, but that it is done out of calculation. So You had better estimate the value and consequences of Your words as well. Because there is also the wisdom of the world, beside the wisdom of the spirit. And it is necessary to know how to make use of it to our advantage. Because, after all, for the time being we are still in the world, and not in the Kingdom of God » says the Iscariot, without acrimony but in a doctoral tone.

« He is truly wise who can see things without them being altered by his sensuality and by selfish considerations. I will always speak the truth of what I see. »

« In conclusion did this fig-tree die because You cursed it, or it

happened... by chance... or is it a sign... I don't know? » asks Philip.

« It is everything you said. But what I did, you can do as well, if you succeed in having perfect faith. Have it in the Most High Lord. And when you have it, I solemnly tell you that you will be able to do that and even more. I solemnly tell you that, if one is successful in having perfect trust in the power of prayer and in the goodness of the Lord, one will be able to say to this mountain: "Move away from here and throw yourself into the sea" and if saying so one will not hesitate in one's heart, but will believe that what one orders can take place, what one has said will take place. »

« And we shall look like magicians and we shall be stoned, as is prescribed for those who practise magic. It would be a really foolish miracle, and to our detriment! » says the Iscariot, shaking his head.

« You are foolish, as you do not understand the parable! » retorts the other Judas.

Jesus does not speak to Judas. He speaks to everybody: « And I say to you, and it is an old lesson that I am repeating in this hour: whatever you ask for in your prayer, have faith to obtain it and you will. But if before praying you have a resentment against anybody, first forgive and make peace to have as a friend your Father Who is in Heaven, and Who forgives and assists you so much, from morning till evening and from sunset to dawn. »

They go into the Temple. The soldiers of the Antonia watch them pass by. They go to worship the Lord, then they go back to the court where the rabbis teach.

Before people gather and crowd round Jesus, some saphorim, doctors of Israel and Herodians approach Him, and with false homage, after greeting Him, they say: « Master, we know that You are wise and truthful, and You teach the ways of God without taking into consideration any person or thing, except truth and justice, and You do not mind what people think of You, and You only take care to lead men to Goodness. So tell us: is it lawful to pay the tribute to Caesar, or is it not lawful to do so? What do You think? »

Jesus casts one of His glances of piercing and solemn shrewdness at them, and replies: « Why are you tempting Me hypocritically? And yet some of you know that I am not deceived by hypocritical honours! But show Me a coin, one of those used for the tribute. »

They show Him a coin. He looks at the obverse and reverse of it and, holding it in the palm of His left hand, He strikes it with the forefinger of His right hand saying: « Whose image is this, and what does this inscription say? »

« The image is Caesar's, and the inscription bears his name. The name of Caius Tiberius Caesar, who is now the emperor of Rome. »

« Then give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and give to God what belongs to God » and He turns His back on them after returning

the coin to him who had given Him it.

He listens to this one and that one of the many pilgrims who ask Him questions, He comforts, absolves and cures them. Hours go by.

He comes out of the Temple to go perhaps out of town, to get the food that Lazarus' servants, entrusted with this task, bring Him.

He goes back to the Temple in the afternoon. He is indefatigable. Grace and wisdom flow from His hands laid on sick people, and from His lips as He gives personal advice to the many people who approach Him. He seems to be anxious to comfort and cure everybody, before it is no longer possible for Him to do so.

It is almost sunset and the tired apostles are sitting on the floor under the porch, astonished at the continuous movement of crowds in the courts when Passover is close at hand. Then some rich people approach the untiring Master, they are certainly rich, judging by their pompous garments.

Matthew, who is dozing with one eye open, stands up, rousing the others. He says: « Some Sadducees are going towards the Master. Let us not leave Him all alone, that they may not offend Him or try to harm Him and sneer at Him again. »

They all get up and join the Master gathering round Him. I seem to realise that there have been reprisals when they went to the Temple or when they returned there at the sixth hour.

The Sadducees, who pay their respects to Jesus bowing even exaggeratedly, say to Him: « Master, You replied so wisely to the Herodians, that we also wish to have a ray of Your light. Listen: Moses said: "If a man dies childless, his brother must marry the widow, giving offspring to his brother". Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married a virgin, he died without issue, so he left his wife to his brother. Also the second one died without issue, and also the third one who married the widow of the two who had preceded him, and so on down to the seventh. Finally, after being married to all the seven brothers, the woman died. Tell us: at the resurrection of bodies, if it is really true that men resurrect and that our souls outlive us and join our bodies on the last day, forming the living again, which of the seven brothers will have the woman, since all seven of them had her on the Earth? »

« You are wrong. You understand neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. The other life will be quite different from this one, and in the eternal Kingdom there will be no necessities of the flesh as there are here. Because, truly, after the last Judgement bodies will rise-from the dead and will be joined to their immortal souls, forming whole beings, as alive, nay, more alive than your person and Mine are now, but no longer subject to the laws and above all to the incentives and abuses that exist now. At the resurrection, men and women will not get married, but will be like the angels of God in Heaven, who do not get married, and yet they live in perfect love,

which is divine and spiritual. And with regard to the resurrection of the dead, have you not read how God spoke to Moses from the bush? What did the Most High say then? "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob". He did not say: "I was", making him understand that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had been, but no longer were. He said: "I am". Because Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are. Immortal. Like all men in their immortal part, while ages last, and later, also in their bodies raised for eternity. They exist, as Moses, the prophets, the just exist, as, unfortunately, Cain exists, and those of the Deluge, and the sodomites, and all those who died in mortal sin. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. »

« Will You also die and then will you live? » they ask tempting Him. They are already tired of being meek. Their hatred is such that they cannot control themselves.

« I am the Living Being, and My Flesh will not know corruption. The ark was taken away from us, and the present one will also be taken away as a symbol. The Tabernacle was taken away from us, and it will be destroyed. But it will not be possible to take away the true Temple of God and destroy it. When its adversaries think that they have done so, that is the hour when it will be established in the true Jerusalem, in all its glory. Goodbye. »

And He hastens towards the Court of Israel, because the silver tubae are calling to the evening sacrifice.

Jesus says to me:

« As I made you write the words "of My chalice" in the vision of John and James' mother who asked for a place for her sons, so I tell you to point out the passage of yesterday's vision: "he who falls against this stone will break in pieces". In translations they always use "on". I said against and not on. And it is a prophecy against the enemies of My Church. Those who oppose It, hurling themselves against It, because It is the Headstone, are crushed. For the last twenty centuries the history of the Earth has confirmed what I said. The persecutors of the Church are crushed as they hurl themselves against the Headstone. But it is also true, and those who think that they are secure from divine punishments, because they belong to the Church, should bear this in mind, he on whom falls the weight of the condemnation of the Head and Bridegroom of this Bride of Mine, of My mystical Body, will be crushed.

And forestalling an objection of the ever alive scribes and Sadducees, ill disposed to My servants, I say: if in these last visions there are sentences that are not in the Gospels, such as those at the end of today's vision, and of the passage in which I speak of the barren fig-tree, and others as well, those critics ought to remember that the evangelists always belonged to that race and they lived in times when every exaggerated clash might have had violent and

harmful repercussions for neophytes.

Let them read the acts of the apostles again and they will see that the fusion of so many different thoughts was not peaceful, and that while they admired one another, acknowledging one another's merits, they did not lack differences of opinion, because the thoughts of men are various and always imperfect. And to avoid deeper ruptures between one thought and another, the evangelists, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, in their writings deliberately omitted some sentences that might have hurt the excessive susceptibility of the Hebrews and scandalised the Gentiles, who needed to believe that the Hebrews were perfect, as they were the nucleus from which the Church came, in order not to go away saying: "They are like us". It was just to make known the persecutions of Christ, but not the spiritual diseases of the people of Israel, by now corrupt, particularly in the higher classes. And they veiled them as much as possible.

They should observe how the Gospels become the more and more explicit, up to the limpid Gospel of My John, the later they were written after My Ascension to My Father. Only John fully relates even the most painful flaws of the very apostolic group, openly calling Judas a "thief", and he integrally reports the base actions of the Jews (Chapter 6 - feigned will to make Me king, the debates at the Temple, the abandonment by many after the sermon on the Bread of Heaven, Thomas' incredulity). The last survivor, who lived long enough to see the Church already strong, he lifts the veils that the others had not dared to lift.

But now the Spirit of God wants also these words to be known. And the Lord should be blessed for that, because they are so many lights and guides for people with righteous hearts. »

« You will put here the second part of Tuesday, that is, the teachings to the Twelve at night at Gethsemane. »

593. The Tuesday Night before Passover. Other Teachings to the Apostles.

7th March 1945.

« Today you have heard Gentiles and Judaeans speak. And you have seen how the former bowed to Me and the latter nearly hit Me. You, Peter, almost came to blows, when you saw lambs, rams and bull-calves driven on purpose against Me to make Me fall on the ground among excrement. You, Simon, although you are so wise, opened your mouth to insult the most rancorous members of the Sanhedrin, who rudely bumped into Me saying: "Move aside, You demon, while the messengers of God pass". You, Judas, My cousin, and you, John, My favourite, shouted and protected Me quickly,

one from being run over by getting hold of the bridle of the horse, the other by standing in front of Me and receiving the impact of the shaft directed at Me when, with a sneer, Sadoc drove his heavy cart against Me, deliberately, at great speed. I thank you for your love that makes you rise against the offenders of the Defenceless One. But you will see much worse offences and more cruel actions. When this moon is once more smiling in the sky for the second time after this evening, offences, at present verbal, or just outlined if material, will become concrete, thicker than the blossoms which are now on fruit-trees and which are becoming more and more numerous in their haste to blossom. You have seen - and you were surprised - a barren fig-tree and a whole apple-orchard without blossoms. The fig-tree, like Israel, refused to restore the Son of man and it died in its sin. The apple-orchard, like the Gentiles, is awaiting the hour I mentioned today, to blossom and cancel the last remembrance of human ferocity with the kindness of flowers scattered on the head and under the feet of the Conqueror. »

« Which hour, Master? » asks Matthew. « You have spoken so much and of so many things today! I cannot remember exactly. And I should like to remember everything. Perhaps the hour of Christ's return? Here as well You spoke of branches that become tender and put forth leaves. »

« No! » exclaims Thomas. « The Master is speaking as if this conspiracy awaiting Him is imminent. So, how can everything, that He says will precede His return, happen in a short time? Wars, destructions, slavery, persecutions, the Gospel preached all over the world, desolation of abomination in the house of God, and then earthquakes, plagues, false prophets, signs in the sun and stars... Eh! It will take ages to do all that! The owner of that apple-orchard would be in a nice mess, if his orchard had to wait all that time to blossom! »

« Then he would not eat his apples any more, because I say that it would be the end of the world » comments Bartholomew.

« To bring about the end of the world, only, one thought of God would be necessary, and everything would turn into nothingness. So even that apple-orchard might not have to wait long. But, as I said, it will happen. And therefore there will be ages between this one and that one. That is the final triumph and the return of the Christ » explains Jesus.

« So? Which hour? »

« Oh! I know which hour! » says John weeping. « I know the hour. And it will be after Your death and resurrection!... » and John embraces Jesus tightly in his arms.

« And are you weeping, if He is going to rise again? » says Judas Iscariot mockingly.

« I am weeping because He must die first. Don't mock at me, you

demon. I know. And I cannot think of that hour. »

« Master, he called me a demon. He has sinned against his companion. »

« Judas, are you sure you do not deserve it? Then do not take offence at his fault. I also have been called a "demon" and I shall be called so again. »

« But You said that he who insults his brother is guil... »

« Silence. In the presence of death let these hateful accusations, discussions and lies finish at long last. Do not upset who is dying. »

« Forgive me, Jesus » whispers John. « I felt something turn in me at the sound of his laughter... and I could not refrain myself. » Jesus and John are embraced, chest to chest, and John weeps on His heart.

« Do not weep. I understand you. Let Me speak. »

But John does not detach himself from Jesus, not even when He sits down on a large protruding root. He remains with one arm behind His back and one round His chest and his head on His shoulder, and he weeps noiselessly. Only his tears shine in the moon-beam as they fall on Jesus' purple garment and they look like rubies, drops of pale blood struck by light.

« Today you have heard Judaeans and Gentiles speak. So you must not be surprised if I say: "Word of justice has always come from My mouth. And it shall not be revoked". If I say, always with Isaiah, speaking of the Gentiles who will come to Me after I have been raised from the ground: "Before Me every knee shall bend, by Me and in Me every tongue shall swear". And you will not doubt either, after seeing the ways of the Hebrews, that it is easy to say, without fear of being wrong, that all those who rage against Me shall be led to Me, ashamed.

My Father did not make Me His servant only to revive the tribes of Jacob, to convert what is left of Israel: the remnants, but He gave Me as light of the Nations, that I may be the "Saviour" for all the Earth. That is why, in these thirty-three years of exile from Heaven and from My Father's bosom, I have continued to grow in Grace and Wisdom with God and with men, reaching the perfect age, and in these last three years, after burning My soul and My mind with the fire of love and tempering them with the ice of penance, I made "My mouth a sharp sword".

The Holy Father, Who is yours and Mine, has so far protected Me in the shade of His hand, because it was not yet the hour of the Expiation, Now He will let Me go. The chosen arrow, the arrow of His divine quiver, after wounding in order to cure, after wounding men to open a breach in their hearts for the Word and the Light of God, is now going fast and unfailingly to wound the Second Person, the Expiator, the Obedient One for all the disobedient Adam... And like a warrior who has been hit, I shall fall, saying with regard to too many people: "In vain have I fatigued for no reason, without

achieving anything. I have worn out My strength for nothing".

No! No, for the Eternal Lord Who never does anything without a purpose! Be off, Satan, who want Me to give way to dejection and try to make Me disobedient! You came at the beginning of My ministry and you have come at its end. Well, here, I am rising (and He really stands up) ready to fight. I will compete with you. And, I swear it to Myself, I will defeat you. It is not pride to say so. It is the truth. The Son of man will be defeated in His flesh by man, the miserable worm that bites and poisons from his putrid filth. But the Son of God, the Second Person of the inexpressible Trinity will not be defeated by Satan. You are Hatred. And you are powerful in your hating and in your tempting. But there will be with Me a strength that escapes you, because you cannot reach it, neither can you block it. The Love is with Me!

I am aware of the unknown torture awaiting Me. Not the one that I will mention to you tomorrow, so that you may know that nothing of what was done or stirred up for Me or around Me, nothing of what was forming in your hearts, was unknown to Me. But the other torture... The one that is given to the Son of Man not by means of lances and clubs, or by means of derision and blows, but by God Himself, and only few people will know how cruel it will be, and even fewer will accept it as possible. But in that torture, in which two will be the main torturers: God with His absence and you, demon, with your presence, the Victim will have the Love with Him. The Love living in the Victim, the main strength of His resistance to the trial, and the Love in the spiritual consoler, who is already flapping his golden wings, full of anxiety to descend and wipe My perspiration, and gathers all the tears of the angels in the heavenly chalice and melts in it the honey of the names of My redeemed and of those who love Me, to mitigate with that potion the great thirst of the Tortured One and His immeasurable bitterness.

And you, demon, shall be defeated. One day, coming out of a possessed man, you said to Me: "I will wait to defeat You when You are a rag of bleeding flesh". But I reply to you: "You shall not have Me. I will win. My fatigue was a holy one, My case is in the hands of My Father. He defends the work of His Son and will not allow My spirit to deflect".

Father, I say to You, I say to You now, for that dreadful hour: "Into Your hands I commit My spirit".

John, do not leave Me... You, all of you, go. May the peace of the Lord be where Satan is not a guest. Goodbye. »

It all ends.

594. The Wednesday before Passover. From the Discussions with Scribes and Pharisees to the Eschatological Discourse. The Widow's Mite.

2nd April 1947.

Jesus enters into the Temple that is more crowded than on the previous days. He is all dressed in white in His linen garments. It is a sultry day.

He goes to the Court of Israel to worship, followed by a train of people, while other people have already taken the best places under the porches, and the majority are Gentiles who, not being allowed to go beyond the first court, that is the Court of the Gentiles, have taken advantage of the fact that the Hebrews have followed the Christ, to take favourable positions.

But a large group of Pharisees upsets them: they are always arrogant in their behaviour, and they push through the crowd overbearingly to approach Jesus, Who is bent over a sick man. They wait until He has cured him, then they send a scribe to question Him.

Actually they had a short discussion first, because Joel named Alamothe wanted to go to question the Master. But a Pharisee objected and the others supported him saying: « No, we know that you side with the Rabbi, although you do so secretly. Let Uriah go... »

« Not Uriah » says another young scribe, whom I do not know. « Uriah is too harsh in speaking. He would provoke the crowd. I will go. »

And without listening any more to the protests of the others, he approaches the Master, just when Jesus is dismissing the sick man saying to him: « Have faith. You are cured. Your fever and pain will not come back any more. »

« Master, which is the greatest commandment of the Law? »

Jesus, behind Whose back the scribe is standing, turns round and looks at him. A faint luminous smile brightens His face, He then raises His head, as He had bent it because the scribe is short of stature, and further he had bowed to pay his respects to Him. Jesus looks round at the crowd, He stares at the group of Pharisees and doctors and He notices the pale face of Joel, who is half hidden behind a big sumptuously dressed Pharisee. His smile brightens. It is like a light that caresses the honest scribe. He then lowers His head looking at his interlocutor and replies to him: « The first of all the commandments is: "Listen, Israel: the Lord our God is the only Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength". That is the first and greatest commandment. The second resembles it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself". There are no greater commandments than these two. They comprise all the Law and the prophets. »

« Master, You have replied wisely and truthfully. It is so. There is only one God and there is no other god except Him. To love Him

with all our hearts, with all our intelligence, with all our souls and all our strength, and to love our neighbour as ourselves is worth much more than any holocaust and sacrifice. I seriously think so when I meditate on David's words: "Holocausts give You no pleasure; a contrite heart is the sacrifice pleasing to God". »

« You are not far from the Kingdom of God, because you have understood which holocaust is pleasing to God. »

« But which is the most perfect holocaust? » asks the scribe in a low voice, as if he were speaking of a secret.

Jesus beams with love letting this pearl drop into the heart of this man who is opening to His doctrine, to the doctrine of the Kingdom of God, and bending over him He says: « The perfect holocaust is to love, as ourselves, those who persecute us and not bear any grudge. Who does that will possess peace. It is said: the lowly shall possess the Earth and shall enjoy the abundance of peace. I solemnly tell you that he who can love his enemies reaches perfection and possesses God. »

The scribe greets Him respectfully and goes back to his group, who reproach him in low voices for praising the Master, and they angrily say to him: « What did you ask Him secretly? Have you been seduced by Him as well? »

« I heard the Spirit of God speak from His lips. »

« You are silly. Do you perhaps think that He is the Christ? »

« Yes, I do. »

« Truly, before long we shall see the schools of our scribes empty, while they go roving after that Man! But how can you see the Christ in Him? »

« I do not know how. I know that I feel that it is He. »

« You're mad! » And they turn their backs on him worriedly.

Jesus has heard their conversation, and when He sees the Pharisees pass in front of Him in a close group and go away worriedly, He calls them saying: « Listen to Me. I want to ask you something. According to you, what do you think of the Christ? Whose son is He? »

« He will be the son of David » they reply, stressing the words "will be", because they want to make Him understand that, as far as they are concerned, He is not the Christ.

« How, then, does David, inspired by God, call Him "Lord" saying: "The Lord said to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for You... ? So if David calls the Christ "Lord", how can the Christ be his son? »

As they do not know what to reply to Him, they go away ruminating their poison.

Jesus moves away from the place where He was and which is now flooded with sunshine, to go farther on, where the mouths of the Treasury are, near the hall of the Treasury. This side, still in

the shade, is occupied by rabbis, who are haranguing with wide gestures addressing their Hebrew audience, which is increasing more and more, as the people pouring in the Temple are increasing continuously, as time passes.

The rabbis are striving to demolish with their speeches the teachings imparted by the Christ during the previous days or that same morning. And the more they see the crowd of believers grow bigger, the more they raise their voices. In fact the place, although very large, is crowded with people coming and going in all directions...

Jesus says to me: « Insert here the vision of the widow's mite (19th June 1944) corrected as I will point out to you » (as I have already corrected it in the typewritten sheets that I have sent back). Then the vision continues.

19th June 1944.

Only today, and insistently, I see the following vision appear.

At the beginning I see nothing but courts and porches, which I recognise belong to the Temple, and Jesus, Who looks like an Emperor, so solemn He is in His bright red tunic and darker red mantle, leaning on a huge square pillar supporting an arch of the porch. He looks fixedly at me. I am fully absorbed in looking at Him, delighting in contemplating Him Whom I had not seen and heard for two days.

The vision thus lasts for a long time. And while it lasts so, I am not writing it, because it is my joy. But now that I see the scene become animated, I understand that there is something else and I write.

The place is getting full of people coming and going in all directions. There are priests and believers, men, women and children. Some are walking, some are standing listening to the doctors, some are dragging little lambs or carrying doves going to other places, perhaps to sacrifice them.

Jesus is leaning on His column and is watching. He does not speak. Twice His apostles ask Him questions, but He shakes His head in denial and does not speak. He is watching very carefully. And according to His countenance, He seems to be judging those He is looking at. His eyes and face remind me of His looks when I saw Him in the vision of Paradise, judging souls in the particular judgement. Now, of course, He is Jesus, Man; up there He was Jesus Triumphant, so even more imposing. But the changeability of His countenance, that watches fixedly, is the same. He is serious, inquisitive, but if at times He is so severe as to make also the most insolent people tremble, at times He is so kind, and His smiling sadness is such that He seems to be caressing one with His eyes.

He does not seem to be hearing anything. But He must be listening

to everything because, when from a group several metres away, gathered round a doctor, a nasal voice is heard proclaiming: « More than any other commandment this one is valid: what is for the Temple must go to the Temple. The Temple is above one's father and mother and if one wants to give what is superfluous to the glory of the Lord, one can do so and will be blessed for it, because there is no blood or love superior to the Temple » Jesus slowly turns His head round in that direction and looks in a way... that I would not like it to be meant for me.

He seems to be looking at everything in general. But when an old trembling man is on the point of climbing the five steps of a kind of terrace, which is close to Jesus, and which seems to lead to another inner court, and he presses his stick on the floor and almost falls when his foot is caught in his tunic, Jesus stretches out His long arm, grasps him and supports him, and does not leave him until He sees that he is safe. The old man raises his wrinkled face, looks at his tall saviour and whispers a word of blessing, while Jesus smiles at him and caresses his bald head. He then goes back to His column, and departs from it once again to lift a little boy who slips from his mother's hand and falls, weeping, against the first step, just at His feet. He lifts him up, caresses him and comforts him. The boy's embarrassed mother thanks Him. Jesus smiles at her as well, handing the child back to her.

But He does not smile when a conceited Pharisee passes by, or when a group of scribes and others whom I do not know pass near Him. The latter group greet Him gesticulating and bowing. Jesus looks at them so fixedly that He seems to pierce them, He replies to their greetings but without effusion. He is severe. He looks at some length also at a priest who passes by and must be an important person, because the crowd makes room for him and greets him as he struts along. Jesus looks at him in such a way that he, although very proud, lowers his head. He does not greet, but he cannot withstand Jesus' glance.

Jesus stops looking at him to watch a poor woman, dressed in dark brown, who is bashfully climbing the steps and goes towards a wall, where there is something like heads of lions or similar animals with open mouths. Many people are going there. But Jesus does not seem to pay attention to them. Now instead He looks where the woman is going. His eyes look at her compassionately and they shine with kindness when He sees her stretch out a hand and throw something into the stone mouth of one of those lions. And when the woman withdraws passing near Him, He is the first to say: « Peace to you, woman. »

She raises her head, utterly astonished, and remains dumbfounded. « Peace to you » repeats Jesus. « Go, because the Most High blesses you. » The poor soul is enraptured, then she whispers a greeting

and goes away.

« She is happy in her unhappiness » says Jesus breaking His silence. « She is now happy because God's blessing is with her. Listen, My friends, and those who are around Me. Do you see that woman? She only gave two small coins, not enough to buy food for one meal for a sparrow kept in a cage, and yet she has given more than all those who have given their offerings to the Treasury of the Temple, since it was opened this morning at dawn. Listen. I have seen large numbers of rich people put in those mouths sums which would feed that woman for a year and clothe her poverty, which, is decent only because it is clean. I have seen rich people, who with evident satisfaction have put in there sums that could have fed the poor people of the Holy City for one or more days, and thus make them bless the Lord. But I solemnly tell you that nobody has given more than she did. Her offering is charity. The others are not. Hers is generosity. The others are not. Hers is sacrifice. The others are not. Today that woman will not eat anything, because she has nothing left. She will have to work first to earn some money, to be able to get some bread to appease her hunger. She has no money laid aside, neither has she relatives who can earn money on her behalf. She is all alone. God has taken her relatives, her husband and children, He has taken the little wealth they had left her, and rather than God, men have taken it, those men who with large gestures, see?, are continuing to throw in there their surplus, much of which is extorted through usury from the poor hands of poor and hungry people. They say that there is no blood or love superior to the Temple, and they thus teach people not to love their neighbour. I tell you that above the Temple there is love. The law of God is love and he, who does not take pity on his neighbour, does not love. Superfluous money, money soiled with usury, with hatred, with hardness, with hypocrisy, sings no praise to God and does not attract heavenly blessings on the donor. God rejects it. It enriches these coffers. But it is not gold for the incense: it is filth that overwhelms you, o ministers, who do not serve God, but your interests; it is a string that strangles you, o doctors, who teach a doctrine that is yours; it is poison that corrodes the remains you still have of your souls, o Pharisees. God does not want remains. Be not Cains. God does not want what is the fruit of hardness. God does not want what, raising a weeping voice, says: "I had to appease the hunger of a starving man. But I was prevented from doing so because I had to display my pomp in here. I was to help an old father and a decrepit mother, but I was forbidden, because such help would not have been known to the world, and I must blow my trumpet so that the world may see the donor". No, rabbi, who teach that what is superfluous is to be given to God and that it is lawful to refuse assistance to fathers and mothers to give it to God. The first commandment is: "Love God

with all your heart, with your soul, with your intelligence, with your strength". So not what is superfluous, but what is our blood is to be given to Him, by loving to suffer for Him. To suffer. Not to make people suffer. And if it costs to give a lot, because it is unpleasant to deprive oneself of one's riches and the treasure is the heart of man, who is vicious by nature, it is just because it costs, that one must give. Out of justice: because everything one has, one has it through God's goodness. Out of love: because it is a proof of love to love sacrifice in order to give joy to those whom one loves. To suffer for the sake of suffering. But to suffer. I repeat: not to make others suffer. Because the second commandment says: "Love your neighbour as yourself". And the law specifies that, after God, one's parents are the neighbour to whom one is bound to give honour and assistance. So I solemnly tell you that that poor woman has understood the law better than wise men and she is justified more than anybody else and blessed, because in her poverty she gave God everything, whereas you give what is superfluous and you give it to grow in the esteem of men. I know that you hate Me because I speak so. But as long as these lips can speak, they will speak so. You join your hatred for Me to the contempt for the poor woman I am praising. But do not think that with these two stones you will make a double pedestal for your pride. They will be the millstone that will crush you. Let us go. Let the vipers bite one another increasing their poison. Let those who are pure, good, humble, contrite, and who wish to know the true face of God, follow Me. »

Jesus says:

« And you who are left with nothing, as you have given Me everything, give Me these last two small coins. As compared with the much that you have given, they seem nothing to strangers. But to you, who have but these, they are everything. Put them in the hand of your Lord. And do not weep. Or, at least, do not weep alone. Weep with Me, Who am the only One who can understand you and I understand you without any human fog, which is always an interested veil for the truth. »

2nd April 1947.

The apostles, disciples and crowd follow Him in a compact group, while He goes back again to the place at the first town walls, a spot almost sheltered by the wall of the Temple enclosure, where it is not so warm, in this very sultry day. As the ground has been roughened by the hooves of animals and is strewn with the stones used by merchants and money-changers to fasten their enclosures and tents, there are no rabbis of Israel there, who did not mind allowing a market to be held in the Temple, but are disgusted at walking in their sandals where the footprints of quadrupeds, which were

cleared out from there a few days previously, have been badly cancelled...

Jesus is not disgusted and He takes shelter there, surrounded by a large crowd of listeners. But before speaking, He calls the apostles to come close to Him and says to them:

« Come and listen carefully. Yesterday you wanted to know many of the things that I will tell you today and that I mentioned vaguely yesterday, when we were resting in Joseph's kitchen garden. So pay attention, because they are important lessons for everybody, and for you in particular, as you are My ministers and continuators.

Listen. Scribes and Pharisees sat on Moses' chair at the right moment. They were sad days for our Fatherland. Once the exile in Babylonia was over and the nation had been restored through Cyrus' magnanimity, the leaders of the people felt it necessary to restore also the cult and the knowledge of the Law. Because woe to that people that does not possess them for its defence, guide and support, against the most powerful enemies of a nation, which are the immorality of the citizens, rebellion against leaders, disunion among classes and parties, the sins against God and one's neighbours, irreligiosity, which are all disgregating elements in themselves and because of the punishments they provoke from Heaven!

So scribes or doctors of the Law arose to teach the people who spoke the Chaldean language, the heritage of the sore and weary exile, and thus could no longer understand the Scriptures written in pure Hebrew. They arose to help the priests, insufficient in number to fulfil the task of teaching the crowds. Such laity, learned and devoted to honouring the Lord, by taking the knowledge of God to men and leading men to God, had its reason for existence and it did also some good. Because, all of you must bear this in mind, also those things that, through human weakness, later degenerate, as it happened to this one that became corrupt in the course of time, always have something good and at least an initial reason for existence, whereby the Most High allows them to arise and last until, the measure of degeneration being full, the Most High disperses them.

Then the other sect of the Pharisees arose from the transformation of that of the Hasidaeans, formed to support the Law of Moses and the spirit of independence of our people by means of the most rigid morals and the strictest obedience, when the Hellenistic party - that had risen because of the pressure and seductions that had begun in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes and that soon changed into persecutions against those who did not yield to the pressure of the shrewd king, who more than on his arms relied on the breaking up of the faith in hearts, in order to rule over our Fatherland - was trying to make us slaves.

Remember also this: be more afraid of easy alliances and of the

blandishments of a foreigner than of his legions. Because, while if you are faithful to the laws of God and of your Fatherland you will win, even if you are surrounded by mighty armies, if instead you are corrupted by the subtle poison, given as an inebriating honey by the stranger who has made his plans concerning you, God will abandon you because of your sins, and you will be defeated and subjected, even if your false ally does not wage a bloody battle with you. Woe to him who is not as vigilant as a sentry and does not repel the subtle snare of a false shrewd neighbour, or ally, or conqueror, who begins his domination over individuals, weakening their hearts and corrupting them with usages and habits that are not ours and are not holy, and consequently make us unpleasant to the Lord! Woe! You must remember the consequences brought about to our Fatherland by the fact that some of her children adopted usages and habits of a foreigner to ingratiate themselves with him and enjoy favours. It is a good thing to be charitable with everybody, also with peoples who are not of our faith, who have not our usages and who have harmed us throughout ages. But our love for these people, who are always our neighbour, must never make us disown the Law of God and of our Fatherland, for some premeditated benefit extorted from our neighbours. No. Foreigners despise those who are so servile as to disown the holiest things of their Fatherland. It is not by denying one's Father and Mother - God and the Fatherland - that one achieves respect and freedom.

So it was a good thing that at the right moment the Pharisees should arise to erect a barrier against the filthy overflowing of foreign usages and customs. I repeat: everything that begins and lasts has its reason for existence. And it is to be respected for what it did, if not for what it does. Because, if it is guilty by now, it is not for men to insult it, and even less to strike it. There is who knows how to do it: God and He Whom He sent, and Whose right and duty is to open His mouth and to open your eyes, so that you and they may know the thought of the Most High, and you may act according to justice. I and no one else. I, because I speak by divine mandate. I, because I can speak as I have none of the sins that shock you when you see them committed by scribes and Pharisees, but which you also commit, if you can. »

Jesus, Who had begun His speech in a low voice, has gradually raised it, and when uttering these last words, it is as powerful as the blare of a trumpet. Hebrews and Gentiles are fully engrossed in listening to Him. And if the former applaud when Jesus mentions their Fatherland and clearly calls by name those foreigners who subjected them and made them suffer, the latter admire the oratorical form of His speech and they are happy to be present at this oration really worthy of a great orator, as they say to one another. Jesus lowers His voice again when He resumes speaking:

« What I told you is to remind you of the reasons why scribes and Pharisees exist, and how and why they have sat on Moses' chair, and how and why they speak and their words are not vain ones. So do what they say. But do not imitate their actions. Because they say that things are to be done in a certain manner, but they do not do what is to be done. In fact they teach the humane laws of the Pentateuch, then they burden other people with huge, unbearable, inhuman weights, whereas they themselves do not stir a finger even to touch those weights, let alone carry them.

The rule of their life is to be seen, noticed and applauded for their deeds, which they perform in a manner suitable to be seen and thus praised. And they infringe the law of love, because they like to define themselves the distinguished ones and they despise those who do not belong to their sect, and they demand the title of teachers and from their disciples they exact such a cult as they do not give to God. They consider themselves gods because of their wisdom and power, and in the hearts of their disciples they want to be superior to fathers and mothers, and they claim that their doctrine is superior to God's and they insist on its being practised literally, even if it is a manipulation of the true Law, inferior to the same even more than this mountain is to the Great Hermon that dominates the whole of Palestine; and they are heretics, since some believe, as heathens do, in metempsychosis and fatality, while others deny what the previous ones admit and, in actual fact if not in effect, what God Himself has given as a principle of faith, when He defined Himself the only God to Whom cult is to be given, and when He said that fathers and mothers are second only to God, and as such they are entitled to be obeyed more than a teacher who is not divine. Because if now I say to you: "Those who love their fathers and mothers more than they love Me are not suitable for the Kingdom of God", I do not say so to instil indifference towards your relatives into your minds, as you must respect and help them, neither is it lawful to deprive them of assistance saying: "It is money for the Temple", or deny them hospitality saying: "My office forbids me", or to take their lives saying: "I kill you because you love the Master", but I say so that you may love your relatives with just love, that is with love that is patient and strong in its meekness - without hating a relative who sins and gives sorrow, because he does not follow you on the way of Life, that is, on My way - with love that knows how to choose between My law and family selfishness and violence. Love your relatives, obey them in everything that is holy. But be ready to die, not to kill, but I say to die, if they want to persuade you to betray the vocation given you by God, to be citizens of the Kingdom of God, that I have come to establish.

Do not imitate scribes and Pharisees, who are divided among themselves, although they feign to be united. You, disciples of the

Christ, be really united, each one for all the others, the leaders being kind to the subjects, the subjects being kind to their leaders, all one in love and in the purpose of your union: to conquer My Kingdom and be at My right hand at the eternal Judgement. Remember that a kingdom that is divided is no longer a kingdom and cannot exist. Be therefore united to one another in your love for Me and for My doctrine. Let love and union, equality in garments worn, community of property, brotherliness of hearts be the uniform of the Christian, because that will be the name of My subjects. Everybody for one, one for everybody. Let those who own wealth give humbly. Let those who do not own accept humbly, and let them humbly set forth their needs to their brothers, knowing that they are such; and let brothers kindly listen to the needs of their brothers, feeling that they are such to them. Remember that your Master was often hungry and cold and He had other numberless necessities and troubles and He, the Word of God, humbly set them forth to men. Remember that a reward is given to those who are merciful by giving even just a sip of water. Remember that it is better to give than to receive. In these three recollections let the poor find strength to ask without feeling humiliated, remembering that I did so before them, and let them forgive, if they are refused, remembering that many a time the Son of man was denied the place and the food that are given to sheep-dogs. And let the rich be generous in giving their riches, considering that the base money, that Satan instigates men to crave for, and is nine tenths of the disasters of the world, if it is given out of love, changes into a heavenly immortal gem.

Be clothed in your virtues. Let them be manifold but known only to God. Do not behave as the Pharisees who wear the broadest phylacteries and the longest fringes and want the front seats in synagogues and love to be greeted obsequiously in market squares, and want to be called "Rabbis" by the people. One alone is your Master: the Christ. You who in future will be the new doctors, I am referring to you, My apostles and disciples, remember that I alone am your Teacher. And I will be your only Teacher also when I am no longer among you. Because Wisdom alone teaches. So do not allow yourselves to be called teachers, because you are disciples yourselves. Do not pretend to be called fathers and do not call father anyone on the Earth, because only one is the Father of all men: your Father Who is in Heaven. May this truth make you wise by really feeling all like brothers to one another, both those who guide and those who are guided, and so love one another like good brothers. And none of those who guide must allow themselves to be called guides, because only one is your guide: the Christ.

Let the greatest among you be your servant. He who is the servant of the servants of God does not humiliate himself, but he imitates Me, as I was kind and humble, always willing to love those

who were My brothers in the flesh of Adam, and to assist them by means of the power that I have as God. Neither by serving men did I humiliate what is divine in Me. Because he is a true king who knows how to dominate not so much men, as the passions of men, first of all foolish pride. Remember: he who humbles himself will be exalted, and he who exalts himself will be humbled.

The Woman of Whom the Lord has spoken in the second chapter of Genesis, the Virgin mentioned by Isaiah, the Virgin Mother of the Immanuel, prophesied this truth of the new times, when She sang: "He has pulled down princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly". The Wisdom of God spoke through the lips of Her Who was the Mother of Grace and the Throne of Wisdom. And I repeat the inspired words that praised Me joined to the Father and to the Holy Spirit, in Our wonderful works, when, without offence to the Virgin, I, the Man, was being formed in Her womb without ceasing being God. Let them be a guide for those who want to bear the Christ in their hearts and come to the Kingdom of Christ. There will be no Jesus: the Saviour; no Christ: the Lord; and there will be no Kingdom of Heaven for those who are proud, fornicators, idolaters, who worship themselves and their will.

Therefore woe to you, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, who think you can close by means of your unfeasible maxims - if they were confirmed by God, they would really be an unbreakable bolt for most men - who think you can close the Kingdom of Heaven in the face of those men who raise their spirits towards it to find strength in their painful earthly day! Woe to you who do not enter it, who do not want to enter it, because you do not accept the Law of the heavenly Kingdom, and you do not allow other people to enter, while they are in front of that door, which you, intolerant as you are, reinforce with bolts that God did not put there.

Woe to you, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, who swallow the property of widows under the pretext of saying long prayers. Because of that you will receive a severe sentence!

Woe to you, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, who travel over sea and land, using up riches that do not belong to you, to make a single proselyte, and when you have him, you make him twice as fit for hell as you are!

Woe to you, blind guides, who say: "If a man swears by the Temple, it has no force, but if he swears by the gold of the Temple, then he is bound by his oath". You are foolish and blind! Which is of greater worth? The gold or the Temple that makes the gold sacred? And you say: "If a man swears by the altar, it has no force, but if he swears by the offering on the altar, then his oath is valid and he is bound by it". You blind men! What is greater? The offering, or the altar that makes the offering sacred? Therefore, he who swears by the altar, is swearing by it and by everything on it, and

he who swears by the Temple, is swearing by it and by Him Who dwells in it, and he who swears by Heaven, is swearing by the Throne of God and by Him Who is seated on it.

Woe to you, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, who pay the tithes of mint and rue, of anise and cummin, and then you neglect the weightier matters of the Law: justice, mercy and faith. These are the virtues you should have practised, without neglecting the other minor matters!

You blind guides, you filter your drinks, lest you may become contaminated by swallowing a drowned gnat, but you swallow a camel, without feeling unclean by doing so. Woe to you, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, who wash the outside of cups and dishes, but interiorly you are full of extortion and filth. O blind Pharisee, wash the inside of your cup and dish first, so that also the outside may be clean.

Woe to you, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, who fly in darkness like noctules for your sinful deeds, and at night reach agreements with heathens, robbers and traitors, and then, in the morning, after deleting the signs of your concealed dealings, you go up to the Temple in fine garments.

Woe to you, who teach the laws of charity and justice contained in Leviticus, while you are greedy, thieves, false, slanderers, oppressors, unjust, avengers, haters, and you even overthrow those who annoy you, even if they are of your own blood, and you repudiate the virgin who has become your wife, and you disown the children that you begot of her, because they are invalids, and because you do not like your wife any more, you accuse her of adultery or of an unclean disease, to get rid of her, while you are unclean in your lustful hearts, even if you do not appear to be such in the eyes of the people, 'who are not aware of your deeds. You are like whitewashed sepulchres that look handsome on the outside, but inside are full of dead men's bones and corruption. The same applies to you. Yes. The same! From the outside you look like honest men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Woe to you, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, who build magnificent sepulchres for the prophets and decorate the tombs of holy men saying: "Had we lived in our fathers' days, we would never have joined those who shed the blood of the prophets". And so you give evidence against yourselves that you are the sons of those who murdered your prophets. And you, moreover, are finishing the work of your fathers... Serpents, brood of vipers, how can you escape being condemned to Gehenna?

So I, the Word of God, say to you: I, God, will send you new prophets and wise men and scribes. Some you will slaughter, some you will crucify, some you will scourge in your law-courts, in your synagogues, outside the walls of your towns, and some you will hunt

from town to town, until you draw on yourselves the blood of the just men, that has been shed on the Earth, from the blood of the just Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachian, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar, because for your own sake he had reminded you of your sin, that you might repent and go back to the Lord. It is so. You hate those who want your welfare and lovingly call you back to the paths of God.

I solemnly tell you that all that is about to happen, both the crime and its consequences. I solemnly tell you that all this will be accomplished on this generation.

Oh! Jerusalem! Jerusalem! Jerusalem, you that stone those who have been sent to you and kill your prophets! How often have I longed to gather your children, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you refused! Now listen, Jerusalem! Now listen, you who hate Me and hate everything that comes from God. Now listen, you who love Me and who will be carried away by the punishment laid aside for the persecutors of the Messengers of God. And you also listen to Me, you who do not belong to this people, but who listen to Me just the same, listen and learn Who He is Who is speaking to you and foretells without having to study the flight, the warbling of birds, or celestial phenomena, or the viscera of sacrificed animals, or the fire and smoke of holocausts, because all the future is the present for Him Who is speaking to you. "This House of yours will be left desolate to you. And I say to you, says the Lord, that you shall not see Me any more until you also say: 'Blessings on Him Who comes in the name of the Lord'". »

Jesus is clearly tired and hot, both because of the long thundering speech, and of the sultriness of the windless day. Pressed against the wall by a multitude of people, avidly gazed upon by thousands of people, feeling all the hatred of those who are listening to Him under the porches of the court of the Gentiles, and all the love or at least the admiration surrounding Him, indifferent to the sun blazing down on backs and reddened perspiring faces, He really looks exhausted. He needs solace and He seeks it saying to His apostles and to the seventy-two disciples, who like wedges have opened a passage through the crowd and who are now in the front line, forming a faithful loving barrier around Him: « Let us leave the Temple and go out into the open, among trees. I am in need of shade, silence and fresh air. This place really seems to be already burning with the fire of celestial wrath. »

They elbow their way with difficulty and are thus able to go out through the nearest gate, where Jesus in vain strives to dismiss many people. They want to follow Him at all costs.

In the meantime the disciples are watching the cube of the Temple shining in the sun, as it is almost midday, and John of Ephesus Points out the powerful construction to the Master saying: « Look

at the size of the stones and of the construction! »

« And yet not a single stone here will be left on another » replies Jesus.

« No? When? How? » ask many.

But Jesus does not say anything. He goes down the Moriah and quickly leaves the town, passing through Ophel and the Gate of Ephraim or Dung Gate and taking shelter at first in the thick of the King's Gardens, that is until those who, apart from apostles and disciples, have insisted in following Him, go away slowly when Manaen, who has had the heavy gates opened, comes forward imposingly and says to everybody: « Go away. No one can come in here except those whom I allow. »

Shade, silence, scents of flowers, the smell of camphor and cloves, cinnamon, lavender and countless other scented herbs, the gurgling of streams nourished by nearby fountains and cisterns, under galleries of leaves, the warbling of birds make the spot a place of paradisiac rest. The town seems to be miles and miles away, with its narrow streets, dark because of the many archivolts or sunny to the point of dazzling, with its smells and stench of sewers, which are not always clean, and of streets along which too many quadrupeds pass to be clean, particularly the less important ones.

The guardian of the Gardens must know Jesus very well, because he greets Him with respect and familiarity at the same time, and Jesus asks after his wife and children.

The man would like to give Jesus hospitality in his house, but the Master prefers the fresh restful peace of the large King's Garden, a real park of delight. And before the two untiring and very loyal servants of Lazarus go away to get the basket of foodstuffs, Jesus says to them: « Tell your mistresses to come. We shall stay here for a few hours with My Mother and the faithful women disciples. And it will be so pleasant... »

« You are very tired, Master! One can tell from Your face » remarks Manaen.

« Yes. So much so that I did not have enough strength to go farther. »

« But I offered You these gardens several times during the past days. You know how pleased I am to be able to offer You peace and solace! »

« I know, Manaen. »

« And yesterday You wanted to go to that sad place! Its neighbourhood is so arid and it is so strangely bare of vegetation this year! And it is so close to that sad gate! »

« I wanted to satisfy My apostles. They are like little boys, after all. Grown up boys. See how happily they are refreshing themselves!... They have immediately forgotten what is being plotted against Me beyond those walls... »

« And they have forgotten that You are so depressed... But I do not think there is any sound reason to be frightened. The place seemed more dangerous on other occasions. »

Jesus looks at him and is silent. How often in these last days have I seen Jesus look and be silent thus!

Then Jesus becomes intent in watching the apostles and disciples, who have taken off their headgear, mantles and sandals, cooling their faces and limbs in the fresh rivulets, imitated by many of the seventy-two disciples, who, actually, I think are now many more, and who, all united in the fraternity of ideals, are lying down, resting here and there, a little aside, to let Jesus rest peacefully.

Manaen also withdraws leaving Him alone. Everybody respects the rest of the Master, Who is very tired and has taken shelter under a very thick pergola of a jasmine in bloom, shaped like a bower and isolated by a ring of water that flows gurgling in a little canal over which grass and flowers hang. A real peaceful refuge that is reached by means of a little bridge two palms wide and four long, the railings of which are all covered with a garland of jasmine corollas.

The servants come back and they have increased in number, because Martha wanted to provide for all the servants of the Lord, and they say that the women will be coming shortly.

Jesus sends for Peter and says to him: « With My brother James bless, offer and hand out the food as I do. »

« I will hand it out, but I will not bless it. It is for You to offer and bless it, not for me. »

« When you were the head of your companions and were far away from Me, did you not do it? »

« Yes, I did. But then I was compelled to do it. Now You are with us, and it is for You to bless it. I think that everything tastes better when You offer it for us and hand it out... » and the faithful Simon embraces his Jesus, Who is sitting looking very tired in the shade, and he bends his head over His shoulder, happy to be able to clasp and kiss Him thus...

Jesus stands up and pleases him. He goes towards the disciples, He offers, blesses, hands out the food, He watches them eat gladly and says to them: « Afterwards you may sleep, rest while there is time, so that later you may keep awake and pray when you need to do so, and fatigue and tiredness may not overburden your eyes and spirit with sleepiness, when it will be necessary for you to be ready and wide-awake. »

« Are You not staying with us? Are You not eating? »

« Let Me rest. That is all I need. Eat, eat! » He caresses the ones whom He finds on His way and goes back to His place...

Kind and gentle is the arrival of the Mother near Her Son. Mary comes forward without hesitating, because Manaen, who being

less tired than the others, has been watching at the gate, points out to Her the place where is Jesus. The other women disciples, all the Hebrew ones are there, and of the Romans only Valeria is present, stop for a little while and are silent in order not to awake the disciples who are sleeping in the shade of the leafy trees, like sheep lying on the grass at midday.

Mary goes under the jasmine pergola without making the little wooden bridge or the gravel on the ground creak, and even more cautiously She approaches Her Son, Who, overcome by weariness, has fallen asleep with His head on the stone table placed there, His left arm used as a cushion under His face covered by His hair. Mary sits patiently near Her exhausted Son. And She contemplates Him... so intently... and a sorrowful loving smile appears on Her lips, while tears noiselessly fall on Her lap; but if Her lips are closed and silent, Her heart is praying with all the strength She possesses, and the power of that prayer and of its inspiration are revealed by the attitude of Her hands joined on Her lap, held tight with fingers interlaced in order not to tremble, and yet are shaken by a light tremor. Hands that are disjoined only to drive away a fly that insistently wants to alight on Her sleeping Son and might awake Him.

It is the Mother Who is watching Her Son. The last sleep of Her Son She can watch. And if the face of the Mother, on this Wednesday before Passover, is different from that of the Mother at the Birth of the Lord, because grief makes it pale and disfigures its features, the mild loving purity of Her glance, the anxious care is the same as She had when, bending over the manger in Bethlehem, with Her love She protected the first uncomfortable sleep of Her Child.

Jesus moves, and Mary quickly wipes Her eyes, so that Her Son may not see Her tears. But Jesus has not wakened. He has only changed the position of His face, turning it round to the other side, and Mary resumes Her immobility and Her watching.

But something breaks Mary's heart: She hears Her Jesus weep in His sleep and whisper the name of Judas, with an indistinct murmur, as He speaks with His mouth pressed against His arm and garment...

Mary stands up, She approaches Her Son and bends over Him, She follows His vague whispering, with Her hands pressed against Her heart. Jesus' speech, although broken but not to the extent that one cannot follow it, makes Her understand that He is dreaming, and is dreaming once again the present, the past and then also the future, until He awakes with a jerk, as if He wanted to escape something horrible. But He finds the breast of His Mother, the arms of His Mother, the smile of His Mother, the gentle voice of his Mother, Her kiss, Her caress, the light touch of Her veil, with which She had wiped Her face to dry tears and perspiration, while She says to Him: « You were in an uncomfortable position, and You were

dreaming... You are wet with perspiration and tired, Son. » And She tidies His ruffled hair, She dries His face and kisses Him, embracing Him with Her arm, holding Him to Her heart as She can no longer take Him in Her lap, as when He was a baby.

Jesus smiles at Her saying: « You are always the Mother. The one who comforts. The one who rewards for everything. My Mother! »

He makes Her sit close to Him laying His hand on Her knees, and Mary takes His long hand, so gentle and yet so strong, the hand of a handicraftsman, in Her small ones, She caresses its fingers and the back of it, smoothing the veins which had swollen while hanging His sleep. And She tries to distract His attention...

« We have come. We are all here. Also Valeria. The others are at the Antonia. Claudia wanted them, "as she is very sad" said her freedwoman. She says, I do not know why, that she has a presentiment of much weeping. Superstitions!... God only knows what will happen... »

« Where are the women disciples? »

« Over there, at the entrance of the Gardens. Martha wanted to prepare refreshing and nourishing food and drinks, considering how exhausted You are. But I, look, You always liked this, and I brought it to You. My share. It has a nicer taste because it was made by Your Mother. » She shows Him some honey and a bun on which She spreads it handing it to Her Son and saying: « As we used to do at Nazareth, when You rested during the hottest hours, and then You awoke feeling hot, and I used to come from the cool grotto with this refreshment... » She stops because Her voice trembles.

Her Son looks at Her and then says: « And when there was Joseph, You brought refreshments for two and the cool water of the porous jar that You kept in running water to make it cooler and it was made even more so by the stems of wild mint that You put in it. How much mint there was there, under the olive-trees! And how many bees on the mint flowers! Our honey always tasted a little of that scent... » He is pensive... He remembers...

« We have seen Alphaeus, You know? Joseph was delayed because one of his sons was not too well. But he will certainly be here tomorrow with Simon. Salome of Simon is looking after our house and Mary's. »

« Mother, when You are all alone, who will You stay with? »

« With whomsoever You will tell Me, Son. I obeyed You, Son, before having You. I will continue doing so after You have left Me. » Her voice trembles, but a heroic smile is on Her lips.

« You know how to obey. How restful it is to be with You! Because, see, Mother? The world cannot understand, but I find complete rest with obedient people... Yes. God rests with the obedient. God would not have had to suffer, to toil, if disobedience had not come to the world. Everything happened because man did not obey. That is why

there is sorrow in the world... That is the reason for Our grief. »

« And also for Our peace, Jesus. Because we know that our obedience comforts the Eternal Father. Oh! for Me in particular, what that thought is! I, a creature, have been granted to console My Creator! »

« Oh! Joy of God! You do not know, o joy of Ours, what Your word means to us! It exceeds the harmony of the Celestial Choruses!... Blessed! Blessed You are, as You teach Me the last obedience, and by this thought of Yours You make it pleasant for Me to accomplish it! »

« You do not need to be taught by Me, My Jesus. I have learned everything from You. »

« Jesus of Mary of Nazareth, the Man, has learned everything from You. »

« It was Your light that emanated from Me. The Light that You are and that came from the Eternal Light, annihilated in human appearance... Johanna's brothers informed Me of the speech You delivered. They were enraptured with admiration. You uttered bitter words against the Pharisees... »

« It is the hour of supreme truths, Mother. They remain dead truths to them. But they will be living truths for the others. And with love and severity I must fight the last battle to snatch them from Evil. »

« That is true. They told Me that Gamaliel, who was with other people in one of the halls in the porches, said at the end, while many were upset: "When one does not want to be reproached, one acts righteously" and he went away after that remark. »

« I am glad that the rabbi heard Me. Who told You? »

« Lazarus did. And he was told by Eleazar, who was in the hall with other people. Lazarus came at midday. He greeted us and went away again without listening to his sisters who wanted to keep him until sunset. He told them to send John, or somebody else, to get those fruits and flowers, which are just perfect. »

« I will send John tomorrow. »

« Lazarus comes every day. But Mary gets angry because she says that he seems an apparition. He goes up to the Temple, he comes, gives orders and leaves again. »

« Lazarus also knows how to obey. I told him to behave so, because they are lying in wait for him as well. But don't tell his sisters. Nothing will happen to him. And now let us go to the women disciples. »

« Do not move. I will call them. The disciples are all asleep... »

« And we will let them sleep. They do not sleep much at night, because I teach them in the peace of Gethsemane. »

Mary goes out and comes back with the women, who seem to have got rid of their weight, so light are their steps. They greet Him with deep respect. Only Mary of Clopas is well known.

And from a large bag Martha takes out a small porous amphora,

while from another vase, which is also porous, Mary takes fresh fruit that came from Bethany, and lays it on the table beside what her sister has prepared, that is a crisp appetising grilled dove, and she begs Jesus to accept it saying: « Eat it. It is nourishing. I prepared it myself. »

Johanna instead has brought some rose-vinegar. She explains: « It is so refreshing in these first warm days. My husband also makes use of it when he is tired after long rides. »

« We have nothing » say Mary Salome, Mary Clopas, Susanna and Eliza apologising. And Nike and Valeria in turn say: « Neither have we. We did not know that we had to come. »

« You have given Me all your hearts. That is enough for Me. And you will still give Me... »

He takes some food, but above all He drinks the cool honied water that Martha pours out for Him from the porous amphora and He eats the fresh fruit, a real refreshment for the Tired One.

The women disciples do not speak much. They look at Him while He takes some refreshments. In their eyes there is love and anxiety. And all of a sudden Eliza begins to weep, and she apologises saying: « I do not know. My heart is burdened with sadness... »

« All our hearts are. Even Claudia in her palace... » says Valeria.

« I wish it were already Pentecost » whispers Salome.

« I, instead, would like to stop the time at this hour » says Mary of Magdala.

« You would be selfish, Mary » replies Jesus.

« Why, Rabboni? »

« Because you would like the joy of your redemption exclusively for yourself. There are millions of people who are awaiting this hour, or who will be redeemed because of this hour. »

« That is true. I was not thinking of that... » she lowers her head, biting her lips to conceal the tears in her eyes and the trembling of her lips. But she is always the brave struggler, and she says: « If You come tomorrow, You will be able to put on the tunic You sent me. It is fresh and clean, worthy of the Passover supper. »

« I will come... Have you nothing to tell Me? You are silent and distressed. Am I no longer Jesus?... » He smiles at the women encouragingly.

« Oh! You are! But You are so great these days that I can no longer see You as the little boy I used to carry in my arms! » exclaims Mary of Alphaeus.

« Neither can I see You as the simple rabbi who used to come into my kitchen looking for John and James » says Salome.

« And I have always known You so: the King of my soul! » Proclaims Mary of Magdala.

And Johanna meekly and gently says: « And I, too: divine, since the dream in which You appeared to me, when I was dying, to call

me to the Life. »

« Lord, You have given us everything. Everything! » says with a sigh Eliza, who has collected herself.

« And you have given Me everything. » « Too little! » they all reply.

« The possibility of giving will not come to an end after this hour. It will cease only when you are with Me in My Kingdom. My faithful women disciples. You will not sit at My side, on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel, but you will sing hosannas with the angels, forming a chorus of honour for My Mother, and then, as now, the heart of the Christ will find its joy in contemplating you. »

« I am young! Long will be the time to ascend to Your Kingdom. Happy Annaleah! » says Susanna.

« I am old, and happy to be so. I hope my death is near » says Eliza.

« I have my sons... I would like to serve these servants of God! » says Mary of Clopas with a sigh.

« Do not forget us, Lord! » says the Magdalene with restrained anxiety, I would say with a cry of her soul, so much does her voice quiver, even more than a cry, although it is kept low in order not to awake those who are sleeping.

« I will not forget you. I will come. You, Johanna, know that I can come even if I am far away... The others must believe that. And I will leave something to you... a mystery that will keep Me in you and you in Me, until we are united again, you and I, in the Kingdom of God. Go now. You may say that I have not told you much, that it was almost useless to make you come for so little. But I wanted to have around Me hearts that have loved Me without selfishness. For My sake: for Jesus. Not for the future King of Israel people have dreamt of. Go. And may you be blessed once more. Also the other women disciples, who are not here, but think of Me with love: Anne, Myrtha, Anastasica, Naomi, and the far away Syntyche, and Photinai, and Aglae and Sarah, Marcella, Philip's daughters, Mirjiam of Jairus, the virgins, the redeemed women, the wives, the mothers who have come to Me, who have been sisters and mothers to Me, better, oh! much better than the best men!... All of them! I bless them all. Grace begins already to descend, grace and forgiveness, on woman, through this blessing of Mine. Go... »

He dismisses them holding back His Mother, to whom He says: « Before evening I shall be at Lazarus' mansion. I need to see You again. John will be with Me. But I only want You, Mother, and the other Maries, Martha and Susanna. I am so tired... »

« We shall be the only ones. Goodbye, Son... »

They kiss each other and part... Mary goes away slowly. She turns round before going out. She turns round before leaving the little bridge. She turns again, as long as She can see Jesus... She seems

unable to depart from Him...

Jesus is alone once again. He gets up and goes out. He goes and calls John, who is sleeping lying on his face among the flowers, like a little boy, and He hands him the small amphora with the rosevinegar that Johanna brought Him, saying to him: « We shall go to My Mother this evening. But only the two of us. » « I understand. Did they come? »

« Yes, they did. I preferred not to awake you... »

« You did the right thing. Your joy must have been greater. They know how to love you better than we do... » says John disconsolately.

« Come with Me. » John follows Him. « What is the matter with you? » Jesus asks him, when they are once again in the green dim light of the pergola, where there are still some remains of food.

« Master, we are very bad. All of us. There is no obedience in us... and no desire to be with You. Also Peter and Simon have gone away. I don't know where. And so Judas found the opportunity to be quarrelsome. »

« Has Judas also gone away? »

« No, Lord. He has not. He says he has no need to go away, that he has no accomplices in our intrigues to try and get protection for You. But if I went to Annas, if others have gone to the Galileans residing here, it was not for an evil purpose!... And I do not think that Simon of Jonas and Simon Zealot are men capable of underhand intrigues... »

« Never mind. In fact Judas does not need to go while you are resting. He knows when and where to go to accomplish what he has to do. »

« Then why does he speak so? It is not nice, in the presence of the disciples! »

« It is not nice. But it is so. Cheer up, My lamb. »

« I, Your lamb? There is no other Lamb but You! »

« Yes. You. I, the Lamb of God, and you, the lamb of the Lamb of God. »

« Oh!!! You already told me this word on another occasion, it was the first days I was with you. There were only the two of us, as now, among the green vegetation, as now, and in the fine season. » John rejoices at the recollection. And he whispers: « I am always, I am still the lamb of the Lamb of God... »

Jesus caresses him. And He offers him some of the grilled dove, left on the table on a sheet of parchment that had enveloped it. He then opens some juicy figs for him and offers them to him, happy to see him eat them. Jesus has sat sideways on the edge of the table and looks at John so intensely that the latter asks: « Why are You looking at me thus? Because I am eating like a glutton? »

« No. Because you are like a child... Oh! My beloved! How much

I love you because of your heart! » and Jesus bends to kiss the fairhaired head of the apostle and says to him: « Remain thus, always thus, with your heart without pride and malice. Thus, also in the hours of unchecked ferocity. Do not imitate those who sin, My child. »

John is seized with his worry again and he says: « But I cannot believe that Simon and Peter... »

« You would really make a mistake if you thought they were sinners. Drink this. It is a good fresh drink. Martha prepared it... Now you are feeling better. I am sure that you had not finished your meal... »

« That is true. I had begun to weep. Because, as long as the world hates us, one can understand. But that one of us should insinuate... »

« Forget about it. You and I know that Simon and the Zealot are two honest men. And that is enough. And, unfortunately, you know that Judas is a sinner. But keep silent about it. But when many lustra have gone by and it is just to reveal how deep My grief was, then you will tell also what I suffered because of the deeds of that man, in addition to those of that apostle. Let us go. It is time to leave this place and go towards the Field of the Galileans and... »

« Are we staying there also tonight? And are we going to Gethsemane first? Judas wanted to know. He says he is tired of being out in the dew, with little and uncomfortable rest. »

« It will soon be over. But I will not tell Judas what I intend doing... »

« You are not obliged. It is You Who have to guide us, and not we who have to guide You. » John is so far from betraying that he does not even understand the reason of prudence why Jesus for some days has never mentioned what He intends doing.

They are now among the sleeping disciples. They call them. They awake. Manaen, who has accomplished his task, apologises to the Master for not being able to stay, and not being able to be with Him at the Temple the following day, as he has to remain at the palace. And in saying so he stares at Peter and Simon, who have in the meantime come back, and Peter nods quickly, as if to say: « I have understood. »

They come out of the Gardens. It is still warm and the sun is still shining. But the evening breeze already mitigates the heat and blows some little clouds in the clear sky.

They go up towards Siloam, avoiding the places of the lepers, but Simon goes to them to take the remains of their meal to the few who are still left there and who did not believe in Jesus.

Matthias, the former shepherd, approaches Jesus and asks: « My Lord and Master, my companions and I have pondered a lot on Your words, until we were overcome by tiredness, and we fell asleep before solving the problem we had set to ourselves. And now we are

more stupid than before. If we have correctly understood Your speeches of these last days, You have foretold that many things will be changed although the Law remains unchanged, and that a New Temple will have to be erected, with new prophets, wise men and scribes, that they will give battle to it, and that it will not die, whereas this one, always if we have understood correctly, is destined to perish. »

« It is destined to perish. Remember Daniel's prophecy... »

« But how shall we, poor and few as we are, be able to rebuild it, if the kings found it difficult to build this one? Where shall we erect it? Not here, because You say that this place will remain deserted until they bless You as the messenger sent by God. »

« It is so. »

« Not in Your Kingdom. We are convinced that Your Kingdom is spiritual. So, how and where shall we establish it? Yesterday You said that the true Temple - and is that one not the true Temple? - that the true Temple, when they think that they have destroyed it, will then ascend triumphantly to the true Jerusalem. Where is it? We are very confused. »

« It is so. Let the enemies destroy the true Temple. In three days I will raise it up and it will experience no more ambushes as it will ascend where man can no longer harm.

With regard to the Kingdom of God, it is in you and wherever there are men who believe in Me. Scattered at present, it will spread all over the Earth in the course of ages. Then eternal, united, perfect in Heaven. The new Temple will be built there, in the Kingdom of God, that is, where there are spirits who accept My doctrine, the doctrine of the Kingdom of God, and put its precepts into practice.

How will it be erected if you are poor and few? Oh! No money or power is really required to erect the building of the new abode of God. Neither for the individual nor for the collective one. The Kingdom of God is in you. And the union of all those who have the Kingdom of God in themselves, of all those who have God in themselves - God: Grace; God: Life; God: Light; God: Charity - will form the great Kingdom of God on the Earth, the new Jerusalem that will spread all over the world and, complete and perfect, without faults, without shadows, will live for ever in Heaven.

How will you manage to build Temple and town? Oh! not you, but God will build these new places. You have only to give Him your good will. Good will is to remain in Me. Good will is to live My doctrine. Good will is to be united. So united to Me as to form only one body that is nourished by only one humour in all its parts, even in the smallest ones. Only one edifice that rests only on one base and is held together by a mystic cohesion. But as without the help of the Father, Whom I taught you to pray and Whom I will pray

for you before I die, you would not be able to be in Charity, in Truth, in Life, that is still in Me and with Me in God the Father and in God Love, because we are only one Divinity, because of that I tell you to have God in you in order to be able to be the Temple that will know no end. You would not be able to do it by yourselves. If God does not build, and He cannot build where He cannot dwell, in vain men busy themselves in building and rebuilding.

The new Temple, My Church, will rise only when your hearts give hospitality to God, and He with you, living stones, will build His Church. »

« But did You not say that Simon of Jonas is its Head, the Stone on which Your Church will be built? And have You not made us also understand that You are its corner-stone? So who is its head? Does this Church exist or not? » says the Iscariot interrupting.

« I am the mystical Head. Peter is the visible head. Because I am going back to the Father leaving you Life, Light, Grace by means of My Word, of My suffering, of the Paraclete, Who will be the friend of those who are faithful to Me.

I am one thing with My Church, My spiritual body, of which I am the head. The head contains the brain or mind. The mind is the seat of knowledge, the brain directs the movements of the limbs with its immaterial orders, which are more efficient than any other incentive in making the limbs move. Look at a dead man, whose brain is dead. Is there any movement in his limbs? Look at one who is completely stupid. Is he not perhaps so inert that he is not capable of having those rudimentary instinctive emotions that the lowest animal, the worm we tread on when walking, has? Observe a man whose limbs, one or more of them, have lost contact with the brain by paralysis. Can he move the part that no longer has any vital link with his head? But if the mind directs with its immaterial orders, it is the other organs - eyes, ears, tongue, nose, skin - that transmit sensations to the mind, and it is the other parts of the body that perform and have performed what the mind, informed by the organs, which are as material and visible as the intellect is invisible, orders. Could I get you to sit on the slope of this mountain without saying to you: "Sit down"? Even if I think that I want you to sit down, you do not know until I express My thought in words and I utter them using My tongue and lips. I could sit down Myself, if I only thought of it because I feel that My legs are tired, but if they refused to bend and sit Me down?

The mind needs organs and limbs to accomplish and have accomplished the operations that the thought thinks of. So in the spiritual body that is My Church, I shall be the Intellect, that is, the head, the seat of the intellect; Peter and his collaborators will be those who watch the reactions and perceive the sensations and transmit them to the mind, so that I may illuminate and direct what is to

be done for the welfare of the whole body and then, as they are enlightened and guided by My order, they may speak and guide the other parts of the body. The hand that wards off an object that can damage the body and drives away what, being corrupt, may corrupt; the foot that steps over an obstacle, without knocking against it and falling and being hurt, have received an order to do so from the part that directs. The, boy, or also the man, who is saved from a danger, or makes any kind of gain - education, good business, marriage, good alliance through a good piece of advice he received, for a word spoken - it is through that piece of advice and that word that he is not hurt or he makes a profit. It will be the same in the Church. The head, and the heads, led by the Divine Thought and enlightened by the Divine Light and instructed by the Eternal Word, give orders and advice, and the members will act, receiving spiritual health and gain.

My Church already exists, because it has its supernatural Head and its divine Head and it has its members: the disciples. Still small a germ being formed - perfect only in the Head directing it, imperfect in the rest, which needs the touch of God to be perfect and some time to grow. But I solemnly tell you that it already exists, and that it is holy on account of Him Who is its Head and of the good will of the just members composing it. It is holy and invincible. Hell, consisting of demons and men-demons, will hurl itself against it thousands of times and will fight it in thousands of ways, but it will not prevail. The edifice will be unshakeable.

But the building is not made with only one stone. Look at the Temple, over there, large, beautiful in the setting sun. Is it made with only one stone? It is a complex of stones forming a harmonious whole. We say: the Temple. That is, one unit. But this unit is made with the many stones that have composed and formed it. It would have been useless to lay the foundations, if they were not to support the walls and the roof, if no walls were to be raised on them. And it would have been impossible to raise walls and support the roof, if first they had not laid solid foundations, proportioned to such a huge mass. So with this interdependence of parts, also the new Temple will rise. In the course of ages, you will build it, laying it on the foundations that I have given it, and which are perfect, for its massive size. You will build it under the direction of God, with the good things used to raise it: the spirits in which God dwells.

With God in your hearts, to make them polished flawless stones for the new Temple. With His Kingdom established with its laws in your spirits. Otherwise you would be badly-baked bricks, worm-eaten wood, chipped cracked stones that do not last, and are rejected by the builder, if he is wary, or they do not hold out, they cave in, making a part collapse if the builder, the builders appointed by the

Father to the construction of the Temple, are idolatrous builders, who are proud in their hearts but do not watch over or work hard on the building that is rising, and neglect the materials used to make it. Idolatrous builders, idolatrous guardians, idolatrous keepers, thieves! Robbers of the trust in God, of the esteem of men, robbers full of pride, who are pleased to have the possibility of making a profit and of having large stocks of materials, but they do not watch whether they are good or of inferior quality, the cause of ruin.

You, new priests and scribes of the new Temple, listen. Woe to you and to those who after you will become idolatrous and will not watch and look after themselves and the other believers, to examine and test the good quality of the stones and timber, without trusting appearances, and will bring about ruin by allowing inferior quality, or even harmful materials to be used for the Temple, scandalising and causing disaster. Woe to you if you will allow unsafe, curved walls to be erected, full of large fissures and that will collapse easily, as they are not balanced on solid perfect foundations. The disaster would not come from God, the Founder of the Church, but from you, and you would be responsible for it before God and men. Care, attention, insight, prudence! The stone, the brick, the weak beam, which would be ruinous in a main wall, can serve for parts of minor importance, and serve well. That is how you must be able to choose. With charity in order not to disgust the weak parts, with firmness not to disgust God and ruin His Edifice. And if you become aware that a stone, already laid to support a main corner, is not good or is not balanced, be brave, bold, and remove it from that place, mortify it by squaring it with the chisel of holy zeal. If it howls with pain, it does not matter. It will bless you later, in the course of ages, because you saved it. Move it, appoint it to another office. Do not be afraid to send it away altogether, if you see that it is the cause of scandal and ruin and rebels against your work. Few stones are better than much rubbish. Do not be in a hurry. God is never in a hurry, but what He creates is eternal, because well thought over before being carried out. If it is not eternal, it will last to the end of time. Look at the Universe. For ages, for thousands of centuries it is as God made it through subsequent operations. Imitate the Lord. Be as perfect as your Father. Keep His Law and His Kingdom in you and you will not be unsuccessful.

But if you were not so, the building would collapse, you would have toiled in vain to erect it. It would collapse and only the cornerstone and the foundations would be left... That is what will happen to that one!... I solemnly tell you that that is what will happen to it. And that will be the fate of yours, if you put in it what is in this one: parts diseased with pride, avidity, sin, lust. As that pavilion of clouds, so gracefully beautiful, was blown away and dispersed by a breath of wind, while it seemed to be settling on the

top of that mountain, likewise, at a gust of a wind of supernatural and human punishment, will tumble the buildings that are holy by name... »

Jesus is silent and pensive. He resumes speaking only to say: « Let us sit down here and rest a little. »

They sit down on a slope of the Mount of Olives, in front of the Temple kissed by the setting sun. Jesus looks fixedly at that place and sorrowfully. The others are proud of its beauty, but a veil of worry, left by the words of the Master, is spread on their pride. And if that beauty should really perish?...

Peter and John speak to each other and then they whisper something to James of Alphaeus and Andrew, who nod assent. Then Peter addresses the Master saying: « Let us go aside and explain to us when Your prophecy on the destruction of the Temple will take place. Daniel mentions it, but if things were as he says and as You say, the Temple would have but a few more hours. But we do not see any armies or preparations for war. So when will it happen? Which will be the sign of it? You have come. You say that You are about to go away. And yet it is known that it will only happen when You are among men. So, will You come back? When will You come back? Tell us, so that we may know... »

« It is not necessary to go aside. See? The most faithful disciples have remained, those who will be of great help to you twelve. They may hear the words that I will speak to you. Come near Me, all of you. » He shouts the last words to gather them all.

The disciples scattered on the slope come near the others, they form a compact group around the main one of Jesus and the apostles and they listen.

« Take care that no one deceives you in future. I am the Christ and there will be no other Christs. So, when many will come and say to you: "I am the Christ" and they will deceive many, do not believe those words, even if they are accompanied by wonders. Satan, the father of falsehood and the protector of liars, assists his servants and followers with false wonders, which, however, can be recognised as not being good ones, because they are always joined to fear, perturbation and falsehood. You know the wonders of God: they give holy peace, joy, health, faith, and they lead to holy desires and deeds. The others do not. So ponder on the forms and consequences of the wonders you may see in future, performed by the false Christs and by all those who will clothe themselves in the garments of saviours of peoples, whereas they are wild beasts who ruin them.

You will hear also, and you will see people speak of wars and rumours of wars and they will say to you: "These are the signs of the end". Do not be upset. It will not be the end. All this must happen before the end, but it is not the end yet. People will rise against

people, kingdom against kingdom, nation against nation, continent against continent, and plagues, famines and earthquakes will follow in many places. But this is only the beginning of the birthpangs. Then they will bring affliction upon you and will kill you, accusing you of being guilty of their suffering, and hoping to get out of it by persecuting and destroying My servants. Men will always accuse the innocent of being the cause of the evil that they, sinners, procure for themselves. They accuse God Himself, Perfect Innocence and Supreme Goodness, of being the cause of their suffering, and they will do the same with you, and you will be hated on account of My Name. It is Satan who instigates them. And many will be scandalised and they will betray and hate one another. It is still Satan who instigates them. And many false prophets will arise, who will deceive many. And Satan is still the true author of so much evil. And with the increase of lawlessness, love in many men will grow cold. But those who stand firm to the end will be saved. And first this Good News of the Kingdom of God is to be preached all over the world, as a witness to all the nations. Then the end will come. The return to the Christ of Israel who will accept Him and the preaching of My Doctrine to all the world.

And then another sign. A sign for the end of the Temple and for the end of the World. When you see the abomination of the desolation prophesied by Daniel - let those who are listening to Me understand properly and let those who read the Prophet read between the lines - then those who are in Judaea must escape to the mountains, those who are on the terrace must not come down to collect what is in their houses, and those who are in the fields must not come back home to fetch their cloaks, but they must flee without turning back, otherwise it may happen that they will no longer be able to do so, and while running away they must not even turn round to look, in order not to keep the horrible sight in their hearts, and thus go mad. Woe to those with child and to those giving suck in those days! And woe if you have to escape on a Sabbath! The flight would not be sufficient to save you without sinning. So pray that it may not happen in winter or on a Sabbath, because then the tribulation will be so great as it has never been from the beginning of the world until now, nor will ever be alike again, because it will be the end. And if those days were not shortened for the sake of those who are chosen, no one would be saved, because the satan-men will enter into an alliance with hell to torture men.

And even then, in order to corrupt and mislead those who have remained faithful to the Lord, some people will arise and say: "The Christ is there, the Christ is here. He is in that place. There He is" Do not believe them. Let no one believe them, for false Christs and false prophets will arise and produce great signs and portents, enough to deceive even the chosen, if it were possible, and they will

-speak doctrines that are apparently so comforting and good as to deceive even the best ones, if the Spirit of God were not with them enlightening them on the truth and the satanic origin of such portents and doctrines. I am telling you. I am foretelling it, so that you may know how to behave. But do not be afraid of falling. If you remain in the Lord, you will not be led into temptation and ruin. Remember what I told you: "I have given you the power to walk on snakes and scorpions, and of all the power of the Enemy nothing will harm you, because everything will be subjected to you". But I also remind you that, in order to achieve this, you must have God within you, and you must rejoice, not because you control the powers of Evil and poisonous things, but because your names are written in Heaven.

Remain in God and in His truth. I am the Truth and I teach the truth. So I repeat to you once again: whatever they may say about Me, do not believe it. I alone have spoken the truth. I alone tell you that the Christ will come, but when it is the end. So, if they say to you: "He is in the desert", do not go. If they say to you: "He is in that house", do not listen to them. Because in His second coming the Son of man will be like lightning striking in the east and flashing as far as the west, in a shorter time than a blink. And He will glide over the great Body, suddenly turned into a Corpse, followed by His shining angels, and He will judge. Wherever the corpse is, there will the eagles gather. And immediately after the distress of those last days, as you have been told - I am speaking of the end of time and of the world and of the resurrection of the bones, of which the prophets speak - the sun will be darkened, and the moon will shed no more light, and the stars will fall from the sky like grapes from a bunch that is too ripe and is shaken by a gale, and the powers of Heaven will be shaken. And then in the darkened vault of heaven the dazzling sign of the Son of Man will appear, and all the nations of the Earth will weep, and men will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with great power and glory. And He will order His angels to reap the corn and gather the grapes, and to separate the darnel from the corn, and to throw the grapes into the vat, because the time of the great harvest of Adam's seed has come, and there will be no more need to keep small bunches or seeds, because the human race will never be perpetuated again on the dead Earth. And He will order His angels to gather the chosen with loud trumpets from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to another, so that they may be beside the Divine Judge to judge with Him the last living men and those who have been raised from the dead.

Learn the similitude from the fig-tree: when you see its twigs grow supple and put forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So, when you see all these things, know that the Christ is about to

come. I solemnly tell you: this generation that did not want Me will not pass away, before all this takes place. My word does not pass. What I have said will take place. The hearts and minds of men may change, but My word does not change. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

But as for the day and the exact hour, nobody knows them, not even the angels of the Lord, only the Father knows them. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be when the Son of man comes. In the days before the Flood, men were eating, drinking, taking wives, taking husbands, without worrying about the sign, right up to the day Noah went into the ark and the cataracts of heaven were opened and the Flood swept all living beings and things away. It will be like this also for the coming of the Son of man. Then two men will be close to each other in the field, and one will be taken and the other will be left, and two women will be at the millstone grinding, and one will be taken and one left by the enemies in the Fatherland, and even more by the angels who will be separating the good seed from the darnel, and they will have no time to prepare for the judgement of the Christ.

So be awake because you do not know at what time your Lord will come. Consider this: if the head of a family knew at what time a burglar would come, he would stay awake and would not let his house be robbed. So be vigilant and pray, being always prepared for the coming, without letting your hearts become sluggish through all kinds of abuse and intemperance, and your spirits be dull and distracted from the things of Heaven by excessive care for the things of the Earth, so that death may not take you all of a sudden, when you are not prepared. Because, bear this in mind, each one of you must die. All men, once they are born, must die, and this death and subsequent judgement is a particular coming of the Christ and its universal repetition will take place at the solemn coming of the Son of man.

What will happen to that faithful and prudent servant, appointed by his master to give food to the servants in his absence? His lot will be a happy one if his master comes back suddenly and finds him doing his duty with diligence, justice and love. I tell you solemnly that he will say to him: "Come, good faithful servant. You have deserved my reward. Here, administer all my property". But if he seemed good and faithful, but was not, and if interiorly he was as bad as he was hypocritical exteriorly, and once the master has left, he says to himself: "The master will come back late! Let us have a good time", and he begins to beat and ill-treat his fellow servants, cutting down their food and everything else to have more money to spend with revellers and drunkards, what will happen? The master will come back all of a sudden, when the servant does not expect him, and his wrong-doing will be found out, his position and

money will be taken off him, and he will be led where justice wants. And there he will remain.

And the same will happen to the unrepentant sinner, who does not think that death can be close at hand, as his judgement can be near, and he enjoys himself and abuses saying: "Later I will repent". I tell you solemnly that he will not have time to do so, and he will be condemned to be for ever where there is dreadful horror, where there is only blasphemy and weeping and torture, and he will come out only for the final Judgement, when he will be re clothed with the flesh raised from the dead, to present himself entire at the final Judgement, as he was entire when he sinned in the time of his earthly life, and in body and soul he will present himself to Jesus Judge, Whom he did not want as his Saviour.

They will all be gathered there before the Son of man. An infinite multitude of bodies, given back by the land and by the sea and recomposed after being ashes for such a long time. And the souls in their bodies. To each flesh returned to the skeletons will correspond its own soul that once animated it. And they will stand before the Son of man, splendid in His divine Majesty, sitting on His throne of glory supported by His angels.

And He will separate men from men, placing the good on one side and the bad on the other, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the kids, and He will place the sheep on His right, and the goats on His left. And in a gentle voice and with a benign appearance he will say to those who look at Him with all the love of their hearts, and are peaceful and beautiful, shining with the glorious beauty of their holy bodies: "Come, you who have been blessed by My Father, take possession of the Kingdom prepared for you since the origin of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink, I was a pilgrim and you gave Me hospitality, I was naked and you clothed Me, sick and you visited Me, in prison and you came to comfort Me". And the just will ask Him: "Lord, when did we see You hungry and we fed You, thirsty and we gave You drink? When did we see You a pilgrim and we welcomed You, naked and we clothed You? When did we see You sick and in prison and we came to visit You?" And the King of kings will say to them: "I tell you solemnly: when you did one of these things to one of the least of My brothers, you did it to Me".

He will then address those who are on His left hand and will say to them, looking very severe, and His eyes will be like flashes of lightning striking the reprobates, and in His voice the wrath of God will thunder: "Go away from here! Away from Me, with your curse upon you! Go to the eternal fire prepared by the fury of God for the devil and the angels of darkness and for those who have listened to their voices of treble obscene lechery. I was hungry and you did not give Me any food, I was thirsty and you did not quench My

thirst, I was naked and you did not clothe Me, I was a pilgrim and you rejected Me, I was sick and in prison and you did not visit Me. Because you had but one law: the pleasure of your own egos". And they will say to Him: "When did we see You hungry, thirsty, naked, pilgrim, sick, in prison? Really, we never met You. We did not exist, when You were on the Earth". And He will reply to them: "That is true. You never met Me. Because you did not exist when I was on the Earth. But you were acquainted with My word and you had among you people who were hungry, thirsty, naked, ill, in prison. Why did you not do to them what you would have perhaps done to Me? Because no one says that those, who had Me among them, were merciful to the Son of man. Do you not know that I am in My brothers, and that where one of them suffers, I am there, and that what you have not done to one of the least of My brothers, you have refused it to Me, the First-Born of men? Go and bum in your own selfishness. Go and be enveloped in darkness and ice, because you were darkness and ice yourselves, though you knew where the Light and the Fire of Love were". And they will go to the eternal torture, whereas the just will enter eternal life.

Those are the future things... Go now. And do not part from one another. I am going with John, and I shall be with you half through the first watch, for supper, and then we shall go to our teaching. »

« Also this evening? Shall we be doing that every evening? I am aching all over because of the dew. Would it not be better to go to some hospitable house now? Always under tents! Always watching at night, when it is cold and damp... » says Judas complaining.

« It is the last night. Tomorrow... it will be different. »

« Ah! I thought You wanted to go to Gethsemane every night. But if it is the last one... »

« I did not say that, Judas. I said that it will be the last night to spend all together at the Field of the Galileans. Tomorrow we will prepare for Passover and will consume the lamb, then I will go by Myself to Gethsemane to pray. And you can do what you like. »

« But shall we not come with You, Lord! When have we ever wanted to leave You? » asks Peter.

« You should be quiet, because you are culpable. You and the Zealot do nothing but flutter here and there as soon as the Master does not see you. I have been keeping an eye on you. At the Temple... on the day... in the tents up there... » says the Iscariot, happy to denounce them.

« That is enough! If they do that, they are doing the right thing. But do not leave Me alone... I beg you... »

« Lord, we are not doing anything wrong. Believe me. Our deeds are known to God, and His eyes do not turn away from them in disgust » says the Zealot.

« I know. But it is useless. And what is useless may always become

harmful. Be together as much as possible. » He then says to Matthew: « My good reporter, you will repeat to them the parable of the ten wise virgins and the ten foolish ones, and that of the master who gives some talents to his three servants to make them bear interests, and two earn twice as much and the sluggard hides it in the ground. Do you remember? »

« Yes, my Lord, very well. »

« Repeat them, then, because not everybody knows them. And also those who know them will be pleased to hear them again. You can while away the time so, in wise conversation, until I come back. Stay awake! Be vigilant! Keep your spirits awake. Those parables are also appropriate to what I have said. Goodbye. Peace be with you. »

He takes John by the hand and goes away with him towards the town... The others set out towards the Fields of the Galileans.

Jesus says: « You will put here the second part of the very toilsome Wednesday before Passover. Night (1945). Remember to mark in red the passages that I told you. Those little words throw light. A lot of light for those who can see it. »

595. The Night of the Wednesday before Passover. Last Teachings to the Apostles.

8th March 1945.

« I said to you: "Be careful, be awake and pray that your eyes may not become heavy with sleep". But I see that your tired eyes are trying to close and your bodies, even against your will, are anxious to find positions to rest. You are right, My poor friends! Your Master has exacted quite a lot of you these last few days, and you are so tired. But in a few hours, by now only few, you will be happy that you have not lost even one moment of My attention for you. You will be glad that you have not refused anything to your Jesus. In any case, this is the last time that I speak to you of sad things. Tomorrow I will speak to you of love and I will work a miracle of total love for you. Prepare yourselves through a great purification to receive it. Oh! how much more it agrees with My Ego to speak of love than to speak of punishment! How pleasant it is for Me to say: "I love you. Do come. Throughout My life I have dreamt of this hour!" But it is love to speak also of death. It is love because death, for those who love you, is the supreme proof of love. It is love, because preparing dear friends for a misfortune is providence of affection that wants them ready and not dismayed at that hour. It is love, because confiding a secret is proof of holding in high esteem those to whom it is confided. I know that you have harassed John with questions to learn what I said to him when I remained alone

with him. And you did not believe that no word was spoken. But it is so. It was enough for Me to have someone near Me... »

« Then, why he and not somebody else? » asks the Iscariot, and he does so in an arrogant indignant tone. Also Peter, and with him Thomas and Philip say: « Yes. Why he and not the others? »

Jesus replies to the Iscariot:

« Would you have liked to be the one? Can you pretend it? »

It was a fresh clear morning in the month of Adar... I was an unknown wayfarer on the road near the river... Tired, covered with dust, pale with fasting, with an unkempt beard and broken sandals, I looked like a beggar on the roads of the world... He saw Me... and he recognised Me as the one on whom the Dove of the eternal fire had alighted. In that first transfiguration of Mine, an atom of My divine brightness must have revealed itself. The eyes of the Baptist, opened by Penance, and those preserved angelic by Purity, saw what the others did not see. And the pure eyes took that vision into the tabernacle of the heart, and closed it in there, like a pearl in a coffer... When almost after two months those eyes looked up at the worn-out wayfarer, his soul recognised Me... I was his love. His first and only love. The first and only love is never forgotten. The soul feels it coming, even if it had gone away, it feels it coming from remote distances, and leaps for joy, and awakes the mind, which arouses the flesh, so that they all may take part in the banquet of joy in meeting again and loving each other. And his trembling lips said to Me: "I greet You, Lamb of God". Oh! faith of the pure, how great you are! How you overcome all obstacles! He did not know My Name. Who was I? Where was I coming from? What was I doing? Was I rich? Was I poor? Was I wise? Was I ignorant? Of what avail to faith is it to know all that? Does it increase or diminish through knowledge? He believed what the Precursor had told him. Like a star that by order of the Creator transmigrates from one sky to another, he had parted from his sky, the Baptist, from his constellation, and had come towards his new sky, the Christ, in the constellation of the Lamb. And he is not the biggest star but he is the purest and the most beautiful one in the constellation of love. Three years have gone by since then. Large and small stars joined My constellation and then they departed from it. Some fell and died. Others have become smoky because of heavy vapours. But he has remained fixed with his pure light near the Pole-star.

Let Me look at his light. Two will be the lights in the darkness of the Christ: Mary and John. But it will be almost impossible for Me to see them, so deep will be My sorrow. Let Me impress in My eyes these four irises that are strips of sky between fair eyelashes, to take with Me, where no one will be able to come, a remembrance of purity. All the sins! Everything on the shoulders of the Man! Oh! Oh! this drop of purity!... My Mother! John! And I!... The three shipwrecked

persons emerging from the shipwreck of mankind in the sea of Sin!

It will be the hour in which I, the offspring of David's stock, will say, moaning with David's ancient sigh: "My God, turn to look at Me. Why have You deserted Me? The shouts of the crimes that I have taken upon Myself on behalf of everybody are driving Me away from You... I am a worm, no longer a man, the dishonour of mankind, the refuse of the populace". And listen to Isaiah: "I abandoned My body to those who struck Me, My cheeks to those who tore at My beard, I did not remove My face from those who insulted Me and covered Me with spittle". Listen to David again: "Many bullcalves have surrounded Me, many bulls have assailed Me. Their jaws are agape to tear Me to pieces, like lions tearing and roaring. I am like water that is draining away". And Isaiah completes: "I dyed My garments Myself". Oh! I am dyeing My garments Myself, not with My anger, but with My sorrow and My love for you. Like the two flat stones of the press, they squeeze Me and My Blood. I am like the pressed bunch of grapes, that was beautiful when it entered the press, and afterwards it is pulp squashed without juice and beauty. And I say with David, My heart "is like wax and melts within My chest". Oh! perfect Heart of the Son of man, what are you becoming now? You are like the heart that a long life of revelry has exhausted and enervated. All My vigour has withered. My tongue is sticking to My palate because of fever, heat and agony. And death is advancing in its suffocating blinding ashes. And there is no mercy either! "A pack of hounds surrounds Me and bites Me. They bite Me where I am wounded and blows strike Me where I have been bitten. No part of My body is without pain. My bones creak as they are dislocated through beastly stretching. I do not know where to lay My body. The dreadful crown is a ring of iron that penetrates My head. I am hanging from My pierced hands and feet. Raised up as I am, I show My body to the world and everybody can count My bones"... »

« Be quiet! Be quiet! » says John sobbing.

« Say no more! You make us suffer the throes of death! » say His cousins imploringly.

Andrew does not speak, but with his head between his knees he is weeping noiselessly. Simon is livid. Peter and James of Zebedee seem to be tortured. Philip, Thomas and Bartholomew look like three stone statues representing anguish.

Judas Iscariot is a gruesome demoniac masque. He looks like a damned person who at last realises what he has done. With his mouth open to utter a cry that howls inside him but is stifled in his throat, his eyes wide open and frightened like those of a madman, his cheeks sallow under the brownish veil of his shaven beard, his hair unkempt as he ruffles it now and again with his hand, wet

with perspiration and cold, he seems to be on the point of fainting.

Matthew, raising his eyes, so far lowered, to seek some assistance in his torture, sees him and says:
« Judas! Are you not well?... Master, Judas is suffering! »

« And I, too » says Christ. « But I am suffering with peace. Become spirits to be able to bear this hour. Anyone who is "flesh" cannot live it without becoming mad... »

Once again speaks David, who sees the tortures of his Christ: "They are not yet satisfied and they look at Me, they laugh Scornfully at Me and they divide My garments among them and cast lots for My tunic. I am the Evil-doer. It is their right".

Oh! Earth, look at your Christ! Recognise Him, although He is so consumed. Listen, remember the words of Isaiah and understand why, the great why, He became so, and man was able to kill the Word of the Father, reducing Him to such a state. "He is without beauty and splendour. We saw Him. He was not handsome. And we did not love Him. Despised like the last of men, He, the Man of sorrows and accustomed to suffering, had His face concealed. He was despised and we took no account of Him". This masque of one who is tortured was His beauty as Redeemer. But you, foolish Earth, preferred His serene face! "He really took our sufferings upon Himself, He bore our sorrows. And we looked at Him as if He were a leper, as one cursed by God and despised. He, instead, was injured because of our wickedness. The punishment reserved for us, the punishment that gives us back peace with God, has fallen upon Him. Through His wounds we are healed. We had all gone astray like sheep. Each had deviated from the straight path and the Lord burdened Him with the sins of all of us".

Those who think that they have done good to themselves and to Israel should undeceive themselves. And likewise those who think they have been stronger than God. And also those who think that they do not have to expiate this sin, only because I voluntarily allow them to kill Me. I am fulfilling My holy task, My perfect obedience to the Father. But that does not exclude their obedience to Satan and their wicked task. Yes, o Earth, your Redeemer has been sacrificed because He wanted it. "He never opened His mouth to utter a word of prayer and thus be spared or a word to curse His murderers. Like a sheep He let Himself be led to the slaughter-house to be killed, like a lamb that is dumb before its shearers". "After being captured and condemned He was raised. He will have no offspring. Like a tree He was cut off from the land of the living. God has struck Him for the sins of His people. Will no one of His generation on His Earth pity Him? Will the man cut off from the Earth have no children?"

Oh! I am replying to you, o prophet of your Christ. If my people will have no pity on the innocent Man killed, the angels of the

heavenly people will pity Him. If His virility will have no children in a human way, because His Nature could not find union with a mortal body, He will indeed have children, and many of them, according to a procreation that will bring life not from animal flesh and blood, but from divine love and Blood, a procreation of the spirit whereby eternal will be its offspring. And I will also explain to you, o world, that do not understand the prophet, who are the wicked placed at His grave, and the rich man at His death. Consider, o world, whether even one of His murderers had peace and a long life! He, the Living One, will soon leave death. But, like leaves that the autumn wind lays one by one in the hollow of a furrow after detaching them with repeated gusts, they will soon be laid one by one in the ignoble tomb that had been decreed for Him; and one who lived for gold, if it were lawful to put and unclean man where the Holy One was, could be laid where there will still be the dampness brought about by the numberless wounds of the Victim sacrificed on the mountain.

As He was accused although He was innocent, God avenges Him, because there was never perjury in His mouth, or iniquity in His heart. He was consumed by pain. But once consumption has taken place and His life has been taken for the sacrifice of expiation, His glory will begin with future generations. All the desires and the Holy wills of God on His behalf will be accomplished. Because of all the anxiety of His soul, He will see the glory of the true people of God and will be happy. His heavenly doctrine, which He will seal with His Blood, will be the justification of many of the best ones, and He will take upon Himself the wickedness of sinners. And that is why this unknown King, Whom the wicked mocked at and the best ones did not understand, will have a large multitude, o Earth. And with His followers He will divide the spoils of the defeated. He will divide the spoils of strong men, the only Judge of the three kingdoms and of the Kingdom. He has deserved everything, because He gave everything. Everything will be delivered to Him, because He delivered Himself to death and was numbered with criminals, He Who was without sin. Without any other sin except perfect love and infinite goodness. Two sins that the world does not forgive, such a love and goodness that urged Him to take upon Himself the sins of many, of the whole world, and to pray for sinners. For all sinners. Also for those through whom He was put to death.

I have finished. I have nothing else to say. Everything has been said of what I wanted to tell you of the Messianic prophecies. I have explained them all to you, from My birth to My death, so that you may know Me and have no doubts, and may have no excuses for Your sin.

And now let us pray together. This is the last evening we can pray

thus, all united like grapes to the bunch supporting them. Come. Let us pray. "Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on Earth as it is done in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen".

"Hallowed be Thy Name". Father, I have hallowed it. Have mercy on Your Son.

"Thy Kingdom come". I am dying in order to establish it. Have mercy on Me.

"Thy will be done". Support My weakness, You Who created the flesh of man and clothed Your Word with it, that I may obey You down here as I have always obeyed You in Heaven. Have mercy on the Son of man.

"Give us our Bread"... A bread for the soul. A bread not of this Earth. I do not ask it for Myself. I need only Your spiritual comfort. But I, the Beggar, stretch out My hand for them. Before long it will be pierced and nailed, and it will no longer be able to make a gesture of love. But it can still do it now. Father, grant Me to give them the Bread that daily fortifies the weakness of the poor children of Adam. They are weak, Father, they are inferior, because they do not have the Bread that is strength, the angelical Bread that spiritualises man and leads him to be deified in Us.

« Forgive us our trespasses"... »

Jesus Who has spoken standing and has prayed with His arms stretched out, now kneels down and raises His arms and face to Heaven. A face made wan by the effort of the supplication and by the kiss of the moon, furrowed by silent tears.

« Forgive Your Son, o Father, if I wronged You in any way. I may also seem imperfect to Your Perfection, I, Your Christ, burdened by flesh. To men... no. My conscious intellect assures Me that I have done everything for them. But forgive Your Jesus... I also forgive. I forgive, that You may forgive Me. How much I have to forgive! How much!... And yet I forgive. Those who are present here, the disciples who are absent, those whose hearts are deaf, My enemies, mockers, traitors, killers, deicides... Here. I have forgiven the whole of Mankind. With regard to Me, o Father, consider remitted all debts of man to the Man. I am dying in order to give Your Kingdom to everybody, and I do not want the sin against the Love incarnate to be imputed to them as condemnation. No? Are You saying no? It is My grief. This "no" is pouring the first sip of the bitter chalice into My heart. But Father, Whom I have always obeyed, I say to You: "Thy will be done".

"Lead us not into temptation". Oh! if You want, You can drive the demon away from us! He is the temptation that incites flesh, minds, hearts. He is the Seducer. Turn him away, Father! Your archangel

in our favour! To put to flight him who lays snares for us from our birth to our death!... Oh! Holy Father, have mercy on Your children!

"Deliver us, deliver us from evil!" You can. We are weeping here... Heaven is so beautiful and we are afraid of losing it. You say: "My Blood cannot lose it". But I want You to see the Man in Me, the Firstborn of men. I am their brother. I pray for them and with them. Father, mercy! Oh! mercy!... »

Jesus bends with His face on the ground. He then stands up. « Let us go. Let us say goodbye to one another this evening. It will no longer be possible tomorrow evening. We shall be too upset. And there is no love where there is perturbation. Let us kiss one another with the kiss of peace. Tomorrow... tomorrow each of you will belong to himself... This evening we can still be one for all and all for one. »

And He kisses them, one by one, beginning from Peter, then Matthew, Simon, Thomas, Philip, Bartholomew, the Iscariot, His two cousins, James of Zebedee, Andrew and last John, on whom He leans while leaving Gethsemane.

596. The Thursday before Passover. Preparation for the Supper and Announcement of the Glorification through Death.

3rd April 1947.

It is morning again. So serene! So joyful! Even the rare clouds that yesterday were wandering slowly in the cobalt-blue sky are no longer there. Neither is there the heavy sultriness that was so oppressive yesterday. A light breeze blows gently on people's faces. And it carries the scent of flowers, of hay, of pure air. And it gently moves the leaves of the olive-trees. It seems anxious to let people admire the silver shade of the small lanceolate leaves, to shed tiny white scented flowers on the steps of Christ, on His fair-haired head, to kiss Him, to refresh Him - because each tiny calyx has its very small dew-drop - to kiss Him, to refresh Him, then die before seeing the impending horror. And the grass on the hillocks bows shaking the bell-flowers, the corollas, the little palms of thousands of flowers. The large wild ox-eye daisies, stars with golden hearts, are standing high up on their stems as if to kiss the hand that will soon be pierced, and the small daisies and the wild camomile kiss His generous feet, which will stop walking for the good of men only when they are nailed to give an even greater good, and the brierroses smell sweetly, and the hawthorn, which no longer has any flowers, moves its indented leaves. It seems to be saying: « No, no » to those who will use it to torture the Redeemer. And « no » say the reeds of the Kidron. They do not want to strike either, and their

will of little things does not want to harm the Lord. And perhaps also the stones on the slopes are happy to be out of town, in the olivegrove, because being there, they will not hurt the Martyr. And the thin rosy convolvuli, which Jesus loved so much, are weeping, as well as the corymbs of the snow-white acacias, similar to clusters of butterflies pressing against one stem, perhaps they are thinking: « We shall never see Him again. » And the myosotes, so slender and pure, drop their corollas when touched by the purple mantle that Jesus is wearing again. It must be beautiful to die being struck by something that belongs to Jesus. All the flowers, also a lost lily of the valley, which perhaps fell there by accident and came up among the protruding roots of an olive-tree, is happy to be seen and picked by Thomas and offered to the Lord... And happy are the thousand birds among the branches to greet Him with joyful songs. Oh! the birds that He always loved do not curse Him! Even a small herd of sheep seem to be wishing to greet Him, although they are sad, having been deprived of their little ones that have been sold for the Passover sacrifice. It is the lament of mothers resounding in the air, as they bleat calling their little ones that will never come back, and they come to rub against Jesus, looking at Him with their meek eyes.

The sight of the sheep reminds the apostles of the rite and when they are almost at Gethsemane, they ask Jesus: « Where shall we go to consume the Passover? Which place are You choosing? Tell us and we will go and prepare everything. »

And Judas of Kerioth says: « Give me Your orders and I will go. »

« Peter. John. Listen to Me. »

The two, who were a little ahead, approach Jesus Who has called them.

« Go ahead and enter the town by the Dung Gate. As soon as you go in, you will meet a man who is coming back from En Rogel with a pitcher of that good water. Follow him until he goes into a house. You will say to him who is in it: "The Master says: "Where is the room where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?". He will show you a large supper-room, which is ready. Prepare everything there. Go quickly and then join us at the Temple. »

The two go away in a hurry. Jesus instead proceeds slowly. The morning is still cool, and only the first pilgrims appear on the roads leading into town. They cross the little Kidron bridge that is before Gethsemane and enter the town. The gates are no longer watched by legionaries, probably because of a counter-order by Pilate, who has been reassured by the lack of disputes concerning Jesus. There is in fact absolute tranquillity everywhere.

Oh! no one can deny that the Judaeans have been able to control themselves! No one has molested the Master or His disciples. Behaving respectfully if not affectionately, and as well-mannered people,

they have always greeted Him, even the most rancorous members of the Sanhedrin. Also yesterday's reproof was borne with incomparable patience. And as Caiaphas' country house is close to that gate, just now a large group of Pharisees and scribes passes by coming from it, and among them there is the son of Annas with Helkai, Doras and Sadoc. And bending their backs covered with wide mantles they pay their respects among the fluttering of garments, fringes and bulky headgear. Jesus greets them and passes by, regal in His red woollen tunic and His mantle of a darker shade, the headgear of Syntyche in His hand, while the sun turns His coppered hair into a golden wreath and a shining veil reaching down to His shoulders. After He has passed the backs straighten up and the faces appear: those of furious hyenas.

Judas of Kerioth, who was always looking around with his treacherous face, moves to the roadside under the pretext of tying his sandal and, I can see him very well, beckons to those men to wait for him... He lets the group of Jesus and His disciples go ahead, always busy at the buckle of his sandal to strike an attitude; he then passes quickly close to the scribes and Pharisees and whispers: « At the Beautiful Gate. About the sixth hour. One of you » and he darts away quickly, joining his companions. Frank, impudently frank!...

They go up to the Temple. Only few Jews as yet. But many Gentiles. Jesus goes to worship the Lord. He then comes back and He tells Simon and Bartholomew to buy the lamb getting the money from Judas of Kerioth.

« I could have done it! » says Judas.

« You will have other things to do. You know that. There is that widow to whom the offering of Mary of Lazarus is to be taken, informing her that after the festivities she should go to Bethany, to Lazarus. Do you know where she lives? Have you understood? »

« Yes, I know! Zacharias, who knows her well, showed me the place. » And he adds: « I am very glad to go. Not so much because of the journey, as because of the lamb. When have I to go? »

« Later. I shall not stop long here. I will rest today, as I want to be fit for this evening and for My night prayer. »

« All right. »

Well, I wonder: Jesus, Who in the past days has said nothing about His intentions in order not to let Judas have any details, why does He now say, why does He repeat what He will do during the night? Has His Passion already begun with the blindness of foresight, or has this foresight increased so much that He can read in the books of Heaven that that is « the night » and that therefore it is necessary to make it known to him who is waiting to know, so that he may hand Him over to His enemies, or has He always known that His immolation is to begin that night? I cannot give any answer. Jesus does not give me any reply. And I remain with my queries, while

I watch Jesus Who is curing the last sick people. The last ones... Tomorrow, in a few hours, He will no longer be able... The Earth will be bereft of its powerful Healer of bodies. But the Victim, from His scaffold, will begin the series, uninterrupted for twenty centuries, of His spiritual healings.

Today I am contemplating rather than describing. My Lord makes me project my spiritual sight from what I see happening in the last day of Christ's freedom, to what it will be throughout ages... Today I am contemplating the feelings, the thoughts of the Master rather than what is happening around Him. I am already in the distressing understanding of His torture at Gethsemane...

As usual Jesus is overwhelmed by the crowd that has increased and consists now mainly of Hebrews, who forget to hasten to the place where lambs are sacrificed, anxious as they are to approach Jesus, the Lamb of God, Who is about to be immolated. And the people go on asking questions and they want further explanations.

Many are Hebrews who have come from the Diaspora, and having heard people speak of the reputation of the Christ, of the Galilean Prophet, of the Rabbi of Nazareth, they are curious to hear Him speak and are anxious to get rid of every possible doubt. And they push through the crowd and they implore those from Palestine saying: « You always have Him with you. You know who He is. You can hear His words whenever you wish. We have come from afar and we shall be departing immediately after satisfying the precept. Let us go to Him! » The crowd gives way with difficulty to make room for them. And they approach Jesus and watch Him with curiosity. They talk in low voices to one another, group by group.

Jesus observes them, even if at the same time He listens to a group of people who have come from Perea. Then, after dismissing the latter group of people, who have given him money for the poor, as many people do, and He has handed it to Judas as usual, He begins to speak.

« You are all of the same religion, but of different places of origin, and many of those who are present here are wondering: "Who is this man who is called the Nazarene?", and their hopes clash with their doubts. Listen:

It is said of Me: "A shoot will spring from the stock of Jesse, a flower will come from this root and the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon Him. He will not judge by what appears to the eyes, He will give no verdict on hearsay, but He will judge the wretched with integrity, He will take up the cudgels for the lowly. The shoot of the root of Jesse, placed as a signal among nations, will be implored by peoples and His sepulchre will be glorious. After hoisting a flag for the nations, He will gather together the refugees of Israel, He will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four corners of the Earth".

It is said of Me: "Here is the Lord God coming with power, His arm will triumph. He carries with Him His prize, His work is before His eyes. Like a shepherd he will pasture his flock".

It is said of Me: "Here is My Servant with Whom I will stay, in Whom My soul delights. I have endowed Him with My spirit. He will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout, He will not break the crushed reed, He will not put out the smoky wick, He will do justice according to truth. Without being sad or turbulent, He will succeed in establishing justice on the Earth, and the islands will await His law".

It is said of Me: "I, the Lord, have called You in justice, I have taken You by the hand, I have preserved You, I have appointed You as covenant of the people and light of the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to free captives from prison and those who lie in darkness from the dungeon".

It is said of Me: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to announce the Good News to the meek, to cure those whose hearts are broken, to preach liberty to slaves, freedom to prisoners, to preach the year of grace of the Lord".

It is said of Me: "He is the Strong one, He will feed His flock with the power of the Lord, with the majesty of the name of the Lord His God. They will be converted to Him, because as from now He will be glorified to the utmost limits of the world".

It is said of Me: "I will go and look for My sheep Myself. I will look for the lost ones, I will bring back those that have been driven away, I will bind those with fractures, I will nourish the weak ones, I will watch over the ones that are fat and strong, I will pasture them with justice".

It is said: "He is the Prince of peace and will be the peace".

It is said: "Here comes your King, the Just One, the Saviour. He is poor, He is riding a little donkey. He will announce peace to the nations. His dominion will be from sea to sea, to the utmost limits of the Earth".

It is said: "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people, for your holy city, so that prevarication may be removed, sin may come to an end, wickedness may be cancelled, eternal justice may come, visions and prophecies may be fulfilled, and the Holy of Holies may be anointed. After seven plus sixty-two the Christ will come. After sixty-two He will be killed. After one week He will confirm the will, but in the middle of the week victims and sacrifices will stop, and the abomination of desolation will be in the Temple, and it will last until the end of time".

So will there be a shortage of victims in these days? Will the altar have no victim? It will have the great Victim. Here, the prophet sees it: "Who is this coming with garments stained with crimson? He is handsome in His garment and He marches in the fullness of

His strength".

And He Who is poor, how did He dye His garment with purple? Here, the prophet explains it: "I abandoned My body to those who struck Me, My cheeks to those who tore at My beard, I did not turn My face away from those who insulted Me. My handsomeness and My splendour were lost, and men no longer loved Me. Men have despised Me and considered Me the last one! The man of sorrows, My face will be veiled and scorned and they will regard Me as a leper, whereas on behalf of everybody I shall be covered with sores and put to death. Here is the Victim. Be not afraid, Israel! Be not afraid. The Passover Lamb is not unavailable! Be not afraid, o Earth! Be not afraid. Here is the Saviour. Like a sheep He will be led to the slaughter-house, because He wanted that, and He did not open His mouth to curse those who are killing Him. After being condemned He will be raised and consumed in pain, with His limbs dislocated, His bones uncovered, His feet and hands pierced. But after the anguish through which He will justify many, He will possess multitudes because, after delivering His life to death for the salvation of the world, He will rise from the dead and will rule the Earth, He will nourish peoples with the waters seen by Ezekiel, flowing out of the true Temple that, even if it is knocked down, will rise again through its own strength, and with the wine by which also the snow-white garment of the spotless Lamb has been dyed purple, and with the Bread descended from Heaven".

You who are thirsty, come to the waters! You who are hungry, take your nourishment! You who are worn out and you, sick people, drink My wine! Come, you who have no money, you who are in bad health, come! And you who are in Darkness! And you who are dead, come! I am Riches and Health. I am Light and Life. Come, you who are looking for the Way! Come, you who are seeking the Truth! I am Way and Truth! Do not be afraid of not being able to consume the Lamb because there are no really holy victims in this desecrated Temple. You will all be able to eat of the Lamb of God, Who has come to take away the sins of the world, as the last of the prophets of My people said of Me. Of that people whom I ask: My people, what have I done to you? In what have I grieved you? What else could I have given you more than what I gave you? I taught your minds, I cured your sick people, I helped your poor people, I satisfied the hunger of your crowds, I loved you in your children, I forgave and prayed for you. I loved you to the extent of Sacrifice. And what are you preparing for your Lord? One hour, the last one, is given to you, My people, My regal and holy town. Come back in this hour to the Lord your God! »

« He has spoken true words! »

« That is what is said! And He really does what is said! »

« Like a shepherd He has taken care of everybody! »

« As if we were stray sheep, sick, in darkness, He has come to lead us to the right way, to cure our souls and bodies, to enlighten us. »

« All the peoples really go to Him. Look over there, at those Gentiles, how admired they are! »

« He has preached peace. »

« He has given love. »

« I do not understand what He says about the sacrifice. He speaks as if He had to be killed. »

« It is so, if He is the Man seen by the prophets, the Saviour. »

« And He speaks as if all the people had to ill-treat Him. That will never happen. The people, we, love Him. »

« He is our friend. We will defend Him. »

« He is a Galilean, and we Galileans will give our lives for Him. »

« He is of David's stock, and we men of Judaea will raise our hands to defend Him. »

« And we, whom He loved as He loved you, we from Hauran, from Perea, from the Decapolis, shall we ever forget Him? We will all defend Him. »

These are the voices of the crowd, which by now is very numerous. How transient are human intentions! Judging by the position of the sun I think it must be about nine o'clock a.m. our time. Twenty-four hours later these people will have been round the Martyr for many hours, to torture Him with their hatred and blows, and shouting they will request His death. Few, very few, too few among the thousands of people who are crowding from every part of Palestine and farther away, and who have received light, health, wisdom, forgiveness from Christ, will be those who not only will not try to tear Him away from His enemies, because their small number compared with the multitude of the strikers prevents them, but will not even be able to comfort Him giving Him a proof of their love by following Him with a friendly attitude. The praises, assents and admired comments spread through the large court, like waves that from the open sea go far to die on the beach.

Some scribes, Judaeans and Pharisees try to counteract the enthusiasm of the people as well as the ferment of the people against the enemies of the Christ saying: « He is raving. His tiredness is so great and makes Him delirious. He mistakes honours for persecutions. His words have torrents of His usual wisdom, but mixed with delirious sentences. No one wants to hurt Him. We have understood. We have understood who He is... »

But the people are doubtful about such a great change of humour and some rebel against them saying: « He cured my insane son. I know what madness is. One who is mad does not speak like that! »

And another one says: « Let them say. They are vipers who are afraid that the club of the people may break their backs. They sing the sweet song of the nightingale in order to deceive us, but, if you

listen carefully, there is the hiss of the snake in it. »

And also another one: « Sentries of the people of Christ, look out! When the enemy caresses, he has a dagger concealed in his sleeve, and he stretches out his hand to strike. Keep your eyes open and your hearts ready! Jackals cannot become meek lambs. »

« You are right: the owl lures and enchants simple little birds with the immobility of its body and with the false joy of its greeting. It laughs and invites with its cry, but it is ready to devour. »

And so forth, from group to group.

But there are also some Gentiles, who have been constant and more and more numerous in listening to the Master during the days of the festivity. They are always at the edge of the crowd, because the Hebrew-Palestinian exclusivism is strong and repels them pretending the places closest to the Master, so they wish to approach Him and speak to Him.

A large group of them casts glances at Philip, who has been pushed into a corner by the crowd. They approach him saying: « Sir, we wish to see Jesus, your Master, at close quarters, and speak to Him at least once. »

Philip stands on the tips of his toes to see whether there is any apostle closer to the Lord. He sees Andrew and after calling him, he shouts: « There are some Gentiles here who would like to greet the Master. Ask Him whether He will receive them. »

Andrew, a few metres away from Jesus, squeezed in the crowd, pushes his way through the crowd, working generously with his elbows without regard and shouting: « Make way! Make way, I say. I must go to the Master. » He reaches Him and informs Him of the wish of the Gentiles.

« Take them to that corner. I will come to them. »

And while Jesus tries to pass through the crowd, John, who has just come back with Peter, struggles to make way for Him and is assisted in doing so by Peter, Judas Thaddeus, James of Zebedee and Thomas, who leaves the group of his relatives that he met in the crowd in order to help his companions.

Jesus is where the Gentiles already are and they greet Him. « Peace be with you. What do you want of Me? »

« To see You and speak to You. Your words have upset us. We have always been wanting to speak to You to tell You that Your word affects us. But we were waiting for a suitable moment to do so. Today... You are speaking of death... We are afraid that we shall not be able to speak to You any more, if we do not take advantage of this hour. But is it possible that the Hebrews may kill their best son? We are Gentiles, and we have received no favour from Your hand. Your word was unknown to us. We have heard people speak of You vaguely. But we had never seen You or approached You. And yet, as You can see, we pay homage to You. It is the whole

world that honours You with us. »

« Yes, the hour has come when the Son of man is to be glorified by men and by spirits. »

Now the crowd is round Jesus once again but with the difference that the Gentiles are in the first row and the others behind.

« But if it is the hour of Your glorification, You will not die, as You say, or as we have understood. Because it is not a glorification to die in that way. How will You be able to gather the world under Your sceptre, if You die before doing so? If Your arm is immobilised by death, how will it be able to triumph and gather peoples together? »

« By dying, I give life. By dying, I build. By dying, I create the new People. It is through sacrifice that one gains victory. I solemnly tell you that if the wheat grain that has fallen on the ground does not die, it remains unfruitful. If instead it dies, then it yields a rich harvest. He who loves his life will lose it. He who hates his life in this world, will save it for the eternal life. It is My duty to die to give this eternal life to all those who follow Me to serve the Truth. Let those who want to serve Me come: the places in My kingdom are not limited to this or that people. Let whoever wants to serve Me come and follow Me, and where I am, My servant will be there as well. And he who serves Me will be honoured by My Father, the Only, True God, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, the Creator of everything that exists, the Thought, Word, Love, Life, Way, Truth; Father, Son, Holy Spirit, One being Trine, Trine being One, Only, True God. But now My soul is upset. And what shall I say? Shall I perhaps say: "Father save Me from this hour"? No. Because I have come for this: to arrive at this hour. So I will say: "Father, glorify Your Name!" »

Jesus stretches out His arms crosswise, a purple cross against the white marbles of the porch and He raises His head, offering Himself, praying, ascending with His soul to the Father.

And a voice, louder than thunder, immaterial inasmuch it is not like any human voice, but very sensible to all ears, fills the clear sky of the beautiful April day and vibrates, more powerful than the chord of a gigantic organ, in a very beautiful tonality, and proclaims: « I have glorified Him and I will glorify Him again. »

The people have been frightened. That voice, so powerful that the soil and what is on it vibrated because of it, that mysterious voice, different from any other, coming from an unknown source, that voice that fills everything, from north to south, from east to west, terrorises the Hebrews and amazes the heathens. The former, when possible, throw themselves on the ground, murmuring in their fear: « We shall die now! We have heard the voice of Heaven. An angel has spoken to Him! » and they beat their breasts awaiting death. The latter shout: « A peal of thunder! A rumbling roar! Let us run away!

The Earth has roared! It has quaked! » But it is impossible to run away in the throng that increases with those who from outside the walls of the Temple rush inside shouting: « Have mercy on us! Let us run! This is a holy place. The mountain where the altar of God rises will not split! » So they all remain where they were, where the crowd and fear block them.

Priests, scribes, Pharisees, Levites, magistrates, who were scattered in the meanders of the Temple, rush to its terraces. They are excited and dumbfounded. But of all of them only Gamaliel with his son comes down among the people in the courts. Jesus sees him passing by, all white in his linen garment, which is so white that it gleams even in the strong sun shining on it.

Jesus, looking at Gamaliel, but as if He were speaking to everybody, raises His voice saying: « Not for Me, but for you, has this voice come from Heaven. »

Gamaliel stops, turns round, and with the glances of his very deep dark eyes - which the habit of being a master worshipped like a demigod has involuntarily made as hard as those of predators he pierces through the sapphire, limpid, majestically mild eyes of Jesus...

And Jesus resumes: « The judgement of this world takes place now. Now the Prince of Darkness is about to be driven out. And when I have been lifted up, I will draw everybody to Myself, because that is how the Son of man will save. »

« We have learnt from the books of the Law that the Christ lives for ever. And You say that You are the Christ and You say that You must die. And You also say that You are the Son of man and that You will save, being lifted up. So who are You? The Son of man or the Christ? And who is the Son of man? » ask the crowds, who are taking heart again.

« They are only one person. Open your eyes to the Light. Only for a short time the Light will still be with you. Walk towards the Truth while you have the Light among you, that you may not be overtaken by darkness. Those who walk in darkness do not know where they will end up. While you have the Light among you, believe in It, to be the children of the Light. » He becomes silent.

The crowd is perplexed and divided. Some go away shaking their heads. Some watch the attitude of the main dignitaries: Pharisees, chiefs of the priests, scribes... and particularly of Gamaliel, and they regulate their conduct on that attitude. And others nod assent and bow to Jesus clearly meaning: « We believe! We honour You for what You are. » But they dare not side openly with Him. They are afraid of the vigilant eyes of Christ's enemies, of the mighty ones, who are watching them from the high terraces dominating the splendid porches surrounding the courts of the Temple.

Also Gamaliel, after remaining pensive for some minutes, and

he seems to be questioning the marbles of the pavement for answers to his inward questions, sets out again towards the exit, after shaking his head and shoulders, as if to express disappointment or scorn... and he passes straight in front of Jesus, without looking at Him any more.

Jesus, instead, looks at him compassionately... and he raises His voice again, very loudly - it sounds like the blare of a trumpet to overcome every noise and be heard by the great scribe who is going away disappointed. He seems to be speaking to everybody, but it is clear that He is speaking for him alone. He says in a very loud voice:

« He who believes in Me, does not really believe in Me, but in Him Who sent Me, and he who sees Me, sees Him Who sent Me. And He is indeed the God of Israel! Because there is no other God but He. That is why I say: if you cannot believe in Me as the man who is said to be the son of Joseph of David and the son of Mary, of the stock of David, of the Virgin seen by the Prophet, born at Bethlehem, as is announced by the prophecies, preceded by the Baptist, as also has been said for ages, believe at least the voice of your God Who has spoken to you from Heaven. Believe in Me as the Son of this God of Israel. Because if you do not believe in Him Who has spoken to you from Heaven, you do not offend Me, but your God Whose Son I am.

Do not remain in darkness! I have come as Light to the world, so that he who believes in Me may not remain in darkness. Do not create remorse for yourselves, as you might not be able to appease your minds when I have gone back whence I came, and they would be a severe punishment of God for your stubbornness. I am willing to forgive, while I am among you, until judgement is passed, and as far as I am concerned, I wish to forgive. But the mind of the Father is different from Mine. Because I am Mercy and He is Justice.

I solemnly tell you that if a man listens to My words and does not comply with them. I will not judge him. I did not come to the world to judge it, but to save it. But if I do not judge, I solemnly tell you that there is who will judge you by your actions. My Father, Who sent Me, will judge those who reject His Word. Yes, he who despises Me and does not acknowledge the Word of God, and does not receive the words of the Word, well, he has who will judge him: the very word that I have announced will judge him on the last day. It is said: God is not to be scoffed at. And the God scoffed at will be terrible with those who considered Him mad and mendacious.

Bear in mind, all of you, that the words you heard Me utter, come from God. Because I have not spoken on My own account, but the Father Who sent Me, prescribed what I must say and of what I have to speak. And I obey His order, because I know that His commandment is just. Each command of God is eternal life. And I, your

Master, set for you the example of obedience to all commands of God. You may rest assured that the things I told you and I am telling you, I said them and I am saying them as My Father told Me to say them to you. And My Father is the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob; the God of Moses, of the patriarchs and of the prophets, the God of Israel, your God. »

Words of light that fall into the darkness that is already growing darker in hearts!

Gamaliel, who had stopped once again, his head bowed, resumes walking... Others follow him shaking their heads or sneering...

Jesus also goes away... But first He says to Judas: « Go where you have to go », and to the others: « Each of you is free to go where you have or you wish to go. Let the shepherd disciples remain with Me. »

« Oh! take me also with You, Lord! » says Stephen.

« Come... » They part.

I do not know where Jesus goes. But I know where Judas of Kerioth goes. He goes to the Beautiful Gate climbing the several steps that from the Court of the Gentiles lead to that of the women, and after going across it, climbing more steps at the end of it, he casts a glance at the Court of the Hebrews, and stamps his feet angrily, as he does not find the person he is looking for.

He goes back. He sees one of the Temple guards. He calls him. With his usual haughtiness he says to him: « Go to Eleazar ben Annas. Tell him to come to the Beautiful Gate immediately. Judas of Simon is waiting for him for grave matters. »

He leans against a column and waits. Shortly afterwards Eleazar, the son of Annas, Helkai, Simon, Doras, Cornelius, Sadoc, Nahum and others arrive with much fluttering of garments.

Judas speaks in a low but excited voice: « This evening! After supper. At Gethsemane. Come there and get Him. Give me the money. »

« No. We will give you it when you call for us this evening. We do not trust you! We want you to stay with us. You never know! » says Elkai with a sneer. The others nod assent in chorus.

Judas flares up in a temper at the insinuation. He swears: « I swear by Jehovah that I am telling the truth! »

Sadoc replies to him: « All right. But it is better to do it this way. Come when it is time, take those who are charged to capture Him and go with them, lest the stupid guards may arrest Lazarus by chance and may bring about a lot of trouble. By means of a signal you will point out the man to them You must understand! By night there will not be much light the guards will be tired, sleepy But if you guide them! ... Well! What do you say? » The perfidious Sadoc addresses his companions saying: « As a signal I would suggest a kiss. A kiss! The best signal to point out the betrayed friend. Ha! Ha! » They all laugh. A chorus of sneering demons.

Judas is furious. But he does not withdraw. He will not withdraw any more. He suffers because they sneer at him, not because of what he is about to do. So much so that he says: « But remember that I want the money counted in the purse before going out from here with the guards. »

« You will have it! You will have it! We will give you also the purse, so that you may keep those coins as a relic of your love. Ha! Ha! Ha! Goodbye, snake! »

Judas is livid. He is already livid. Never again will he lose that colour and that expression of desperate terror. On the contrary, it will grow more and more hourly, until it becomes unsustainable when he is hanging from the tree... He runs away...

Jesus has taken shelter in the garden of a friendly house. A quiet garden of the first houses in Zion. It is surrounded by high ancient walls. It is noiseless and cool, covered as it is with the quivering leaves of old trees. Not far away the voice of a woman is singing a sweet lullaby.

Some hours must have gone by, because Lazarus' servants, who have come back after going I do not know where, say: « Your disciples are already in the house where the supper is being prepared, and John, after coming with us to take the fruit to Johanna of Chuza's children, has gone to get the women and take them to Joseph of Alphaeus, who arrived only today, when his mother no longer hoped to see him, and then, from there to the house of the supper, because night is falling. »

« We shall go as well. It is supper time... » Jesus stands up and puts on His mantle.

« Master, there are some people out there. Wealthy people. They would like to speak to You without being seen by the Pharisees » says a servant.

« Let them come in. Esther will not object. Is that right, woman? » says Jesus, addressing a woman of ripe age who is coming to greet Him.

« No, Master. My house is Yours, as You know. You have made use of it for too short a time! »

« Sufficiently long as to say to My heart: it was a friendly house. » He says to the servant: « Bring in those who are waiting. »

About thirty dignified looking people come in. They greet Him. One of them speaks on behalf of everybody: « Master, Your words have shaken us. We have heard the voice of God in You. But they say that we are foolish, because we believe in You. So what shall we do? »

« He who believes Me does not believe in Me, but believes in Him Who sent Me, and Whose most holy voice you have heard today. He who sees Me does not see Me, but sees Him Who sent Me, because

I am one thing with My Father. That is why I say to you that you must believe in order not to offend God, Who is your Father and Mine, and loves you to the extent of sacrificing His Only-Begotten for you. Because, if hearts doubt whether I am the Christ, there is no doubt that God is in Heaven. And the voice of God, Whom I called Father today in the Temple, asking Him to glorify His Name, has replied to Him Who was calling Him Father, without saying that He is a "liar or blasphemer" as many say. God has confirmed who I am. I am His Light. I am the Light that has come to the world. I have come as Light to the world, so that he who believes in Me may not remain in Darkness. If a man listens to My words, and then does not comply with them, I will not judge him. I have not come to judge the world, but to save the world. He who despises Me and does not accept My words, has who will judge him. It is the word announced by Me that will judge him on the last day. Because it was wise, perfect, kind, simple, as God is. Because that Word is God. It is not I, Jesus of Nazareth, called the son of Joseph, a carpenter of the stock of David, and the son of Mary, a Hebrew girl, a virgin of the stock of David, married to Joseph, it is not I Who has spoken. No, I have not spoken on My own account. But it is My Father, He Who is in Heaven and His name is Jehovah, Who spoke today, He Who sent Me, and He told Me what I must say and of what I must speak. And I know that in His commandment there is eternal life. So the things I say, I say them as the Father said them to Me, and there is Life in them. That is why I say to you: listen to them. Put them into practice and you will have Life. Because My word is Life. And he who accepts it, accepts at the same time with Me, also the Father of Heaven Who sent Me to give you the Life. And he who has God in himself, has the Life in himself. Go. May peace come to you and remain with you. »

He blesses and dismisses them. He blesses also the disciples. He keeps only Isaac and Stephen. He kisses and dismisses the others. And when they have gone, He is the last to go out, with the two and He goes with them, along the most solitary and already dark lanes, to the house of the Last Supper. And when He arrives there, He embraces and blesses Isaac and Stephen with particular fondness, He kisses them, He blesses them once again, He watches them go away, then He knocks at the door and goes in...

Jesus says: « You will put here the visions of the farewell to My Mother, of the Supper-room and of the Supper. And now let the two of us, you and I, make the true Passover commemoration. Come... »

597. The Thursday Evening before Passover. Arrival at the Supper-Room and Farewell to the Mother.

17th February 1944.

I see the supper-room where the Passover is to be consumed, I can see it distinctly. I could enumerate all the rough spots on the walls and the cracks in the floor.

It is a large room that is not perfectly square, but it is somewhat rectangular. The difference between the longer side and the shorter one is, at most, a metre or a little more. The ceiling is low. Perhaps it appears to be so, because the height of the room does not correspond to its size. It is slightly vaulted, that is, the two shorter walls do not form a right angle with the ceiling, but it is roundish.

In the two shorter walls there are two large low windows, facing each other. I cannot see what they look onto, a court-yard or a street, because the shutters are closed. I said: shutters. I do not know Whether it is the right word. They are window coverings made of boards and they are firmly closed by iron bars across them.

The floor is made of large square bricks of baked clay discoloured by age. From the centre of the ceiling hangs a multi-arm oil lamp.

In one of the two longer walls there is no opening, in the other, instead, there is a small door in one corner and it is reached by means of a small staircase of six steps with no bannisters, ending on a landing of one square metre. On the landing and against the wall there is another step, at whose level the door opens. I do not know whether I have made myself clear.

The walls are just whitewashed without decorations or borders. In the centre of the room there is a long rectangular table, very long as compared to its width, it is placed parallel to the long walls and is made of very plain wood. Along the long walls there are some seats. Against the short walls, under the window, on one side there is a kind of chest with some basins and amphorae on it, and under the other window there is a long low sideboard, on top of which there is nothing at present.

And that is the description of the room in which Passover will be consumed. I have seen it distinctly all day long, in fact I have been able to count the steps and observe all the details. And now that it is getting dark, my Jesus is taking me to the rest of the contemplation.

I see that the large room leads, by means of the six-step staircase, to a dark vestibule on the left side of which, with respect to me, there is a door that opens onto the street; the door is wide, low and very solid, reinforced with metal studs and bars. Facing the little door that leads from the supper-room into the vestibule, there is another door that opens onto another room, which is not so large. I would say that the supper-room has been obtained from the difference in level between the ground and the rest of the house and the

street, it is like a basement, a sort of cellar that has been cleaned up or adapted, but is still sunken for a good metre in the ground, probably to heighten it and proportion it to its vastness.

In the room that I see now, there is Mary with other women, I recognise the Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, Judas and Simon. They seem to have just arrived, led by John, as they take off their mantles and lay them folded on the stools scattered about the room, while they greet the apostle, who goes away, and a woman and a man, who have rushed there upon their arrival, and I am under the impression that they are the owners of the house and disciples or sympathisers of the Nazarene, because they are full of attention for and of respectful familiarity with Mary. She is wearing a deep blue dress, a deep indigo blue. On Her head She has a white veil that appears when She takes Her mantle off, as it covers also Her head. She looks worn out and aged. She is very sad, although She smiles kindly. She is very pale. Also Her movements are tired and hesitating, like those of a person engrossed in thought.

Through the door left ajar I can see the landlord coming and going in the vestibule and in the upper-room, which he illuminates completely lighting the remaining flames of the large oil lamp. He then goes to the main door and opens it and Jesus comes in with the apostles. I can see that it is getting dark, because the shadows of the night are already descending in the street closed between high houses.

He is with all the apostles. He greets the landlord with His usual salutation: « Peace to this house », and then, while the apostles go down into the supper-room, He enters the room where Mary is. The pious women greet Him with deep respect and then go away, closing the door and leaving Mother and Son free.

Jesus embraces His Mother and kisses Her forehead. Mary first kisses the hand of Her Son and then His right cheek. Jesus makes Mary sit down and sits beside Her, they are sitting on two stools close to each other. He makes Her sit down, taking Her to the stools, holding Her by the hand, and He continues to hold Her hand also when She has sat down.

Jesus also is engrossed in thought and sad, notwithstanding that He strives to smile. Mary studies His expression anxiously, Poor Mother, Who through grace and love realises what this hour means! Painful spasms appear across Mary's face and Her eyes dilate at an interior vision of deep grief. But She does not make a scene. She is as solemn as Her Son.

He speaks to Her. He greets Her and implores Her to pray for Him.

« Mother, I have come to get strength and comfort from You. I am like a little baby, Mother, who needs the heart of his mother for his grief, and his mother's breast for his strength. In this hour I have

become Your little Jesus of a long time ago. I am not the Master, Mother. I am only Your Son, as in Nazareth when I was a little boy, as in Nazareth before departing from My private life. I have but You. Men, at the present moment, are not friendly with and loyal to Your Jesus. They are not even brave in doing good. Only the wicked are constant and strong in doing evil. But You are faithful to Me and You are My strength, Mother, in this hour. Support Me with Your love and Your prayers. Among those who more or less love Me, You are the only one who knows how to pray in this hour. You know how to pray and to understand. The others are concerned with the festivity, they are engrossed in joyful thoughts, or in criminal thoughts, while I am suffering from so many things. Many things will die after this hour, and among them their humanity, and they will be able to be worthy of Me, all of them, except him who got lost and whom no power can bring back at least to repentance. But for the time being they are unconscious men who do not perceive that I am dying, while they are rejoicing thinking that My triumph is more than ever close at hand. The hosannas of a few days ago have intoxicated them. Mother, I have come for this hour and from a supernatural point of view it is a joy to see it arrive. But My Ego is also afraid of it, because this chalice bears the name of betrayal, abjuration, ferocity, blasphemy, abandonment. Support Me, Mother. As when with Your prayers You drew the Spirit of God upon Yourself, and through it You gave the world the One Expected by peoples, draw now upon Your Son the strength that may help Me to accomplish the deed for which I came. Mother, goodbye. Bless Me, Mother; also on behalf of the Father. And forgive everybody. Let us forgive together, as from this moment, let us forgive those who torture us. »

While speaking, Jesus has slid down on His knees at the feet of His Mother and He looks at Her embracing Her by the waist.

Mary weeps silently, Her face slightly raised for an internal prayer to God. Tears stream down Her pale cheeks and fall on Her lap and on the head of Jesus, Who then rests it on Her heart. Then Mary lays Her hand on Jesus' head, as if She wished to bless Him, She then bends, kisses His hair and caresses it, She caresses His shoulders and arms, She takes His face in Her hands and turns it towards Herself, She presses it to Her heart. She kisses Him again, shedding tears, on His forehead, His cheeks, His sorrowful eyes, She cuddles that poor tired head, as if He were a baby, as I saw Her lull the divine New-born in the Grotto. But She does not sing, now. She only says: « Son! Jesus! My Jesus! » but in such a voice that breaks my heart.

Then Jesus stands up. He adjusts His mantle, remains standing in front of His Mother, Who is still weeping, and He blesses Her in His turn. Then He turns His steps towards the door. Before going

out He says to Her: « Mother, I will come again before consuming My Passover. Pray while waiting for Me. » And He goes out.

598. The Passover Supper.

9th March 1945.

The suffering of Maundy Thursday is beginning.

The apostles, there are ten of them, are bustling about preparing the Supper-room.

Judas, who has climbed on the table, is watching whether there is oil in all the lamps of the big chandelier that looks like the corolla of a double fuchsia, because its stem is surrounded by five lamps in small vessels similar to petals, and under them, there is another circle or crown of small flames, and finally, there are three thin lamps hanging from tiny chains resembling the pistils of the bright flower. He then jumps down on the floor and helps Andrew to lay the tableware in an artistic style on the table, on which a very fine table-cloth has been spread.

I hear Andrew say: « What a wonderful linen tablecloth! » And the Iscariot says: « One of Lazarus' best ones. Martha insisted in bringing it. »

« And what about these chalices and these amphorae? » remarks Thomas, who has poured some wine into the precious amphorae and is admiring them, looking at himself in their slim bellies, and he caresses the chiselled handles with the eye of a connoisseur.

« Phew! I wonder how much they are worth! » exclaims Judas Iscariot.

« It is worked by hammer. My father would go mad for it. Silver and gold-foils are shaped easily when heated. But done with such craft... Everything can be spoiled in a moment. One wrong blow is enough. It takes strength and a light hand at the same time. See the handles? They have been shaped out of the block. They are not soldered. Things for rich people... Just consider that all the filings and cast-off parts are lost. I don't know whether you understand me. »

« Phew! I understand you very well. In short, it is like sculpture. »

« Exactly. »

They all admire and then go back to their work. Some arrange the seats, some prepare the sideboards.

Peter and Simon come in together.

« Oh! You have come at last! Where have you been again? After you came with the Master and us, you ran away again » says the Iscariot.

« We had another errand before supper-time » replies Simon briefly.

« Are you suffering from depression? »

« I think there is every reason to be so, considering what we have heard these past days, and from those lips that we have never found to be false. »

« And with that stench of... Well, be quiet, Peter » grumbles Peter between his teeth.

« And you as well!... You seem to have gone mad for some time. Your face is like that of a wild rabbit that realises it is being chased by a jackal » replies Judas Iscariot.

« And your face is like the snout of a weasel. You have not been very handsome either, these last few days. You look in such a way... You are even cross-eyed... What do you expect or do you hope to see? You seem to be self-confident, you want to appear so, but you look like one who is afraid » retorts Peter.

« Oh! With regard to being afraid!... You are not a hero either! »

« None of us is, Judas. You have the name of the Maccabee, but you are not such. I, with my name, say "God grants graces", but I swear to you that I tremble like a man who knows that he brings mischance and above all that he has lost God's favour. Simon of Jonah, renamed "the stone", is now as soft as wax near a fire. He no longer gets the weather-gauge of his own free-will. And yet I have never seen him frightened in the most violent storms! Matthew, Bart and Philip look like sleep-walkers. My brother and Andrew do nothing but sigh. The two cousins, who are grieved because of their family ties and of their love for the Master, look at them. They already look like old men. Thomas has lost his cheerfulness. And Simon seems to have become again the exhausted leper of three years ago, so much is he worn out by grief, I would say that he is worn away, deathly pale, dejected » John replies to him.

« Yes. He has influenced us all with His melancholy » remarks the Iscariot.

« My cousin Jesus, my Master and Lord and yours, is and is not melancholy. If you mean, by that word, that He is sad because He is being excessively grieved by the whole of Israel, as we are aware, and because of the other hidden sorrow that He alone sees, I say to you: "You are right". But if you use that word to say that He is mad, I forbid you to do so » says James of Alphaeus.

« And is a fixed melancholy idea not madness? I have studied also profane matters and I know. He has given too much of Himself. Now He is mentally tired. »

« Which means insane. Is that right? » asks the other cousin Judas, who is apparently calm.

« Exactly! How right was your father, a man of blessed memory, whom you resemble so much in justice and wisdom! Jesus, the sad destiny of an illustrious family now too old and struck by psychic senility, has always had a disposition to this illness. Mild at first, then more and more aggressive. You have seen how He attacked

Pharisees and scribes, Sadducees and Herodians. He has made His life impossible, like a road strewn with quartz splinters. And He spread them Himself. We... we have loved Him so much that our love veiled our eyes. But those who did not love Him in an idolatrous manner - your father, your brother Joseph and at first also Simon - saw right... When we heard their words we should have opened our eyes. Instead we were all enticed by His meek charm of a sick person. And now... Who knows! »

Judas Thaddeus, who is as tall as the Iscariot, and is standing just in front of him and seems to be listening to him peacefully, has an outburst of rage and, with a mighty backhanded blow, knocks Judas down with his back on one of the seats, and with anger repressed in his voice, bending over the face of the coward who does not react, as he is probably afraid that Thaddeus may be aware of his crime, he whispers: « This is for His insanity, you reptile! And only because He is in the other room, and this is Passover evening, I will not strangle you. But remember this, and remember it carefully! If any evil befalls Him, and He is not there to check my strength, no one will save you. The halter is as good as round your neck, and these strong honest hands of mine, the hands of a Galilean artisan and of a descendant of Goliath's slinger, will do the job for you. Get up, you spineless debauchee! And watch how you behave. »

Judas stands up, he is livid, but does not react in the least. And, what amazes me, no one reacts to the new gesture of Thaddeus. On the contrary!... It is obvious that they all approve of it.

The room has just become calm again when Jesus come in. He appears on the threshold of the little door, through which His tall person can just pass, He sets foot on the small landing, and with His meek sad smile He says, opening His arms: « Peace be with You. » His voice is tired, like that of one who is languishing physically and morally.

He comes down. He caresses the fair-haired head of John, who has rushed towards Him. He smiles at His cousin Judas, as if He did not know anything, and He says to His other cousin: « Your mother asks you to be kind to Joseph. He asked the women after you and Me a little while ago. I am sorry I have not greeted him. »

« You will do it tomorrow. »

« Tomorrow?... I shall always have time to see him... Oh! Peter! We shall be together for a little while at last! Since yesterday you seem a will-o'-the-wisp. I see you, then I no longer see you. Today I can almost say that I lost you. And you, too, Simon. »

« Our hair, which is more white than dark, can assure You that we were not absent craving for flesh » says Simon gravely.

« Although... at all ages it is possible to suffer from that hunger... The old! Worse than the young... » says the Iscariot offensively.

Simon looks at him and is about to reply. But Jesus also looks

at him and says: « Have you a toothache? Your right cheek is swollen and red. »

« Yes, it is aching. But it is not worth worrying about. »

The others do not say anything, and the matter dies away.

« Have you done everything that was to be done? You, Matthew? And you, Andrew? And you, Judas, have you seen to the offer for the Temple? »

Both the first two and the Iscariot say: « Everything You said was to be done today, has been done. Do not worry. »

« I took the early fruits of Lazarus to Johanna of Chuza. For the children. They said to me: "Those apples were better!" They had the savour of hunger, those ones! And they were Your apples » says John smiling and dreaming.

Jesus also smiles at the recollection...

« I have seen Nicodemus and Joseph » says Thomas.

« You have seen them? Did you speak to them? » asks the Iscariot with excessive interest.

« Yes, I did. What's strange about it? Joseph is a good customer of my father. »

« You never mentioned it before... That is why I was amazed!... » Judas tries to make up for the impression, he had given previously, of his worry about Thomas' meeting with Joseph and Nicodemus.

« It seems strange to me that they have not come to venerate You. They did not, neither did Chuza, nor Manaen... None of... »

But the Iscariot laughs sneeringly, interrupting Bartholomew, and he says: « The crocodile hides itself at the right moment. »

« What do you mean? What are you insinuating? » asks Simon aggressively as never before.

« Peace, peace! What is the matter with you? It is Passover evening! We have never had such a worthy display for the consumption of the lamb. So let us consume the supper in the spirit of peace. I see that I have upset you considerably with My instructions of these last evenings. But, see? I have finished! Now I will not upset you any more. Not everything has been said of what refers to Me, but only the essential part. The rest... you will understand later. You will be told... Yes. There will come Who will tell you! John, go with Judas and somebody else to get the basins for the purification. And then let us sit at the table. » Jesus is heart-rendingly kind.

John with Andrew, Judas Thaddeus with James, bring the large basin, they pour water into it and offer the towel to Jesus and to their companions, who do the same for them. The basin (which is a metal wash-hand-basin) is placed in a corner.

« And now to your seats. I here, and here (at His right side) John, and on the other side My faithful James. The first two disciples. After John My strong Stone, and after James he who is like the air. He is never noticed, but is always present and comforting: Andrew.

Beside him, My cousin James. You are not sorry, My kind brother, if I give the first place to the first ones? You are the nephew of the Just One, whose spirit palpitates and quivers over Me this evening, more than ever. Have peace, father of My childish weakness, oak-tree in whose shadow the Mother and Son had solace! Have peace!... Beside Peter, Simon... Simon, come here a moment. I want to fix My eyes on your loyal face. Later I shall not see you well, because others will cover your honest face. Thank you Simon, for everything » and He kisses him.

Simon, when he is left free, goes to his seat, covering his face with his hands for a moment, with a gesture of distress.

« Facing Simon, My Bart. Two honest wise men reflecting each other. They match very well. And beside him, you, Judas, My brother. So I can see you... and I seem to be at Nazareth... when some festivity gathered us all together round one table... Also at Cana... Do you remember? We were together. A party... a wedding party... the first miracle... water changed into wine... Also today a festivity... and also today there will be a miracle... the wine will change its nature and will be... »

Jesus becomes engrossed in His thoughts, His head lowered and isolated in His secret world. The others look at Him and do not speak.

He raises His head again and stares at Judas Iscariot, to whom He says: « You will sit in front of Me. »

« So much You love me? More than Simon, since You always want me in front of You? »

« So much. As you said. »

« Why, Master? »

« Because you are the one who has done more than everybody for this hour. »

Judas casts an ever-changing glance at the Master and at his companions. At Jesus with ironical commiseration, at the others with an air of triumph.

« And near you, on one side Matthew, on the other Thomas. »

« So, Matthew on My left and Thomas on My right side. »

« As you wish, as you like » says Matthew. « It is enough for me to have my Saviour in front of me. »

« Last, Philip. Now, see? Who is not beside Me in the place of honour, has the honour of being in front of Me. »

Jesus, standing in His place, pours wine into the large chalice placed in front of Him (they all have tall chalices, but He has a much larger one, in addition to one like those of the others. It must be the ritual chalice). He pours wine into it, He raises it, He offers it and lays it on the table.

Then all together they ask in the tone of a psalm: « Why this ceremony? » A formal question, obviously, a ritual one.

To which Jesus, as head of the family, replies: « This day reminds us of our liberation from Egypt. Blessed be Jehovah Who created the fruit of the vineyard. »

He takes a sip of the wine He has offered and passes the chalice to the others. He then offers the bread, He breaks it into morsels and hands it round with the herbs dipped in the reddish sauce contained in four sauce-boats.

When this part of the meal is over, they sing some psalms, all together.

The large tray with the roasted lamb is brought from the sideboard to the table and placed in front of Jesus.

Peter, who acts as... first voice of the chorus, if you wish so, asks: « Why this lamb, as it is? »

« In remembrance of the time when Israel was saved through the sacrificial lamb. No first-born died where the blood shone on doorposts and lintels. And afterwards, while the whole of Egypt, from the royal palace to hovels, was mourning the dead first-born males, the Hebrews, led by Moses, moved towards the land of liberation and of the promise. With their sides girded, their feet shod, the pilgrim's staffs in their hands, the people of Abraham started off promptly, singing hymns of joy. »

They all stand up and intone: « When Israel came out of Egypt and the house of Jacob from a barbarous people, Judah became his sanctuary » etc. (if I have found the right one, it is psalm 113).

Jesus now cuts the lamb, He pours wine into the chalice again, and He passes it round after drinking of it. Then they sing also: « Children, praise the Lord, blessed be the Name of the Eternal now and for ever throughout ages. From east to west it is to be praised » etc. (but I cannot find it).

Jesus hands out the portions, ensuring that everybody is well served, just like a father of a family among his children who are all dear to him. He is solemn, somewhat sad, when He says: « I have longed to eat this Passover with you. It has been the desire of My desires since, from eternity, I was "the Saviour". I knew that this hour precedes that one. And the joy of giving Myself, brought this relief, in advance, to My suffering... I have longed to eat this Passover with you, because never again shall I taste the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God has come. Then I will sit again with the elect at the Banquet of the Lamb, for the wedding of the Living Ones with the Living One. But only those who have been lowly and pure in heart, as I am, will come to it. »

« Master, a short while ago You said that he who has not the honour of the seat, has that of being in front of You. So, how can we know who is the first among us? » asks Bartholomew.

(1) These words are addressed to Maria Valtorta's spiritual father.

« Everybody and nobody. Once... we were coming back and we were tired and... nauseated at the bitter hatred of the Pharisees. But you were not so tired as to be prevented from discussing among yourselves who was the greatest... A little boy ran up to Me... a little friend of Mine... And his innocence mitigated My disgust for so many things. Your obstinate humanity not being the last. Where are you now, little Benjamin gifted with the wise reply, that came to you from Heaven because, as you were an angel, the Spirit spoke to you? Then I said to you: "If anyone wants to be the first, he must be the last and the servant of everybody". And I gave you the wise boy as an example. Now I say to you: "The kings of nations dominate them. And although the peoples oppressed hate them, they acclaim them and kings are called 'Benefactors', 'Fathers of the Fatherland'. But hatred smoulders under the false homage". But do not let it be so with you. The greatest must be like the smallest, the head like him who serves. Who is in fact greater? He who sits at the table, or he who serves? It is he who sits at the table. And yet I serve you. And before long I will serve you even more. You are the ones who have been with Me in My trials. And I will arrange a place for you in My kingdom, in the same manner as I shall be King in it according to the will of the Father, that you may eat and drink at My eternal table and you may sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. You have remained with Me in My trials... This is the only thing that makes you great in the eyes of the Father. »

« And what about those who will come? Will they have no place in the Kingdom? We alone? »

« Oh! How many princes in My House! All those who have been faithful to the Christ in the trials of life, will be princes in My Kingdom. Because those who have persevered to the end in the martyrdom of life will be like you, who have remained with Me in My trials. I identify Myself with those who believe in Me. The Sorrow that I embrace for you and for all men, I give it as insignia to those who are particularly chosen. He who is faithful to Me in Sorrow will be one of My souls in bliss, My beloved. »

« We have persevered until the end. »

« Do you think so, Peter? And I tell you that the hour of trial is still to come. Simon, Simon of Jonas, Satan has asked to sift you all like wheat. I have prayed for you, that your faith may not vacillate. When you have recovered, strengthen your brothers. »

« I know that I am a sinner. But I will be faithful to You until death. I do not have that sin and I will never have it. »

« Do not be proud, My Peter. This hour will change an infinite number of things, which previously were so and will now be different. How many!... They bring and impose new necessities. You are aware of that. I have always said to you, even when we were going

along remote places infested by highwaymen: "Be not afraid. No evil will befall us, because the angels of the Lord are with us. Do not worry about anything". Do you remember when I used to say to you: "Do not worry about what you must eat and about your clothes. The Father knows what we need"? I also used to say to you: "Man is much more than a sparrow and a flower that today is grass and tomorrow is hay. And yet the Father takes care both of the flower and of the little bird. So can you doubt that He will not take care of you?" I also used to say: "Give to anyone who asks, and if anyone offends you, offer him the other cheek as well". I also used to say: "Take no bag or stick". Because I taught love and trust. But now... Now the times have changed. Now I say to you: "Have you ever been short of anything so far? Have you ever been offended?". »

« Nothing, Master. You alone were offended. »

« So you can see that My word was true. But now the angels have all been recalled by their Lord. It is the hour of demons... With their golden wings the angels of the Lord are covering their eyes and enveloping themselves and they regret that the colour of their wings is not a gloomy one, because it is time of mourning, of cruel sacrilegious mourning... There are no angels on the Earth this evening. They are near the throne of God, to drown the blasphemies of the deicide world and the weeping of the Innocent. And we are alone... You and I: alone. And the demons are the masters of the hour. So we shall now take the appearances and the measures of poor men who do not trust and do not love. Now, he who has a purse should take also a haversack, he who has no sword should sell his cloak and buy one. Because this also is said of Me in the Scriptures and must be fulfilled: "He has been counted among the wicked". Truly everything that concerns Me has its purpose. »

Simon, who has got up and gone to the chest where he put his rich mantle - because this evening they are all wearing their best clothes, and so on their sumptuous belts they are carrying daggers, damaskened but very short ones, more like knives than daggers - takes two swords, two real, long, slightly bent swords and returning to Jesus with them he says: « Peter and I have armed ourselves this evening. We have these, but the others have only short daggers. »

Jesus takes the swords, examines them, He unsheathes one of them and tests its edge on His nail. It is a strange sight, and even more strangely impressive to see that cruel weapon in Jesus' hands.

« Who gave them to you? » asks the Iscariot, while Jesus is examining them and is silent. And Judas seem to be on tenter-hooks...

« Who? I remind you that my father was a noble and mighty man. »

« But Peter... »

« So? Since when have I to give an account of the presents that I want to give my friends? »

Jesus raises His head after sheathing the sword again. He hands

it back to the Zealot.

« All right. They are enough. You did well in taking them. "But now, before drinking the third chalice, wait a moment. I told you that the greatest is the same as the smallest and that I am acting as a servant at this table, and I will serve you even more. So far I have given you food. A service for your bodies. Now I want to give you food for your spirits. It is not a dish of the ancient rite. It belongs to the new rite. I wanted to be baptised before being the "Master". That baptism was sufficient to spread the Word. Now His Blood will be shed. Another ablution is required for you, although you have been purified by the Baptist, in his days, and also today in the Temple. But it is not yet sufficient. Come, that I may purify you. Interrupt your meal. There is something more elevated and necessary than the food given to the stomach to fill it, even if it is holy food as the present one of the Passover rite. And it is a pure spirit, ready to receive the gift of Heaven, which is already descending to make its throne in you and give you the Life. To give the Life to those who are pure. »

Jesus stands up, He makes John stand up to come out of His place more easily, He goes to the chest and takes off His red tunic and folds it placing it on His mantle, which is there already folded, He girds Himself with a large towel and He goes towards another basin, which is empty and clean. He pours some water into it, He takes it to the middle of the room, near the table, and puts it on a stool. The apostles look at Him dumbfounded.

« Are you not asking Me what I am doing? »

« We do not know. I tell You that we are already purified » replies Peter.

« And I repeat to you that it does not matter. My purification will serve him, who is already pure, to become purer. »

He kneels down. He unties the Iscariot's sandals and washes his feet, one at a time. It is easy to do so, because the couches are made in such a way that the feet are in the outer side. Judas is astonished and does not say anything. Only when Jesus, before putting the sandal on the left foot and getting up, makes the gesture of kissing his right foot, that has already been shod, Judas withdraws his foot violently and with the sole strikes the divine mouth. He does so unintentionally. It is not a strong blow. But it grieves me so much. Jesus smiles, and to the apostle who asks Him: « Did I hurt You? I did not intend to... Forgive me », He says: « No, My friend. You did it without malice and it does not hurt. » Judas looks at Him... A worried elusive look...

Jesus passes on to Thomas, then to Philip... He goes round the narrow side of the table and arrives at His cousin James. He washes his feet and when getting up He kisses him on his forehead. He passes on to Andrew, who blushes with shame and makes efforts

not to weep, He washes his feet and kisses him like a baby. Then there is James of Zebedee, who goes on grumbling: « Oh! Master! Master! Master! You are lowering Yourself, my sublime Master! » John has already untied his sandals and while Jesus is bent drying his feet, he kisses His head.

But Peter!... It is not easy to convince him to submit to the rite! « You want to wash my feet? Do not even think about it! As long as I live, I will never allow You to do that. I am a worm, You are God. Each to his own place. »

« You cannot understand now what I am doing. Later you will understand. Let Me do it. »

« You can do anything You like, Master. Do You want to cut my neck? Do so. But You will never wash my feet. »

« Oh! My Simon! Do you not know that if I do not wash you, you will take no part in My Kingdom? Simon, Simon! You are in need of this water for your soul and for the long journey you have to take. Do you not want to come with Me? If I do not wash you, you will not come to My Kingdom. »

« Oh! my blessed Lord! Then, wash all my body! Feet, hands and head! »

« Anyone who, like you, has had a bath, needs only to have his feet washed, as he is completely pure. The feet... Man walks with his feet on filth. And it would not be much either, because, as I told you, it is not what enters and comes out with food that dirties, and it is not what settles on his feet on the roads that contaminates man. But it is what smoulders and matures in his heart and comes out from it, which contaminates his actions and limbs. And the feet of a man with an impure spirit go to orgies, to lust, to illicit business, to crimes... Therefore, among the various parts of the body they are the ones that have much to be purified... with the eyes and mouth... Oh! man! man! A perfect being for one day: the first one! And then so corrupted by the Seducer! And there was no malice in you, man, no sin!... And now? You are all malice and sin, and there is no part in you that does not sin! »

Jesus has washed Peter's feet, He kisses them, and Peter weeps and takes Jesus' two hands in his own big ones and he rubs them against his eyes and then kisses them.

Simon also has taken off his sandals, and without one word he lets Jesus wash his feet. Then, when Jesus is about to pass on to Bartholomew, Simon kneels down and kisses His feet saying: « Cleanse me from the leprosy of sin, as You cleansed me from the leprosy of my body, that I may not be confused in the hour of judgement, my Saviour! »

« Be not afraid, Simon. You will come to the heavenly City as white as mountain snow. »

« And what about me, Lord? What are You going to say to Your

old Bart? You saw me in the shade of the fig-tree and You read my heart. And now what do You see, and where do You see me? Reassure a poor old man, who is afraid he may not have strength arid time to become what You want him to be. » Bartholomew is deeply moved.

« You must not be afraid either. I then said: "Here is a true Israelite in whom there is no deceit". Now I say: "Here is a true Christian worthy of the Christ". Where do I see you? On an eternal throne, dressed in purple. I shall always be with you. »

It is Judas Thaddeus' turn. When he sees Jesus at his feet, he cannot control himself, he rests his head on his arm laid on the table and weeps.

« Do not weep, My sweet brother. You are now like one who must endure the extirpation of a nerve and you think that you will not be able to stand it. But it will be a short pain. Then... oh! you will be happy, because you love Me. Your name is Judas. And you are like our great Judas: like a giant. You are the one who protects. Your actions are those of a lion and of a young roaring lion. You will rouse the impious who will withdraw when you face them, and the wicked will be terrified. I know. Be brave. An eternal union will strengthen and make perfect our kinship in Heaven. » He kisses his forehead as well, as He did for His other cousin.

« I am a sinner, Master. Not me... »

« You were a sinner, Matthew. You are now the Apostle. You are one of My "voices". I bless you. How far have these feet walked to come more and more forward, towards God... Your soul urged them and they left every way that was not My way. Proceed. Do you know where the path ends? On the bosom of your Father and Mine. »

Jesus has finished. He takes the towel off and washes His hands in clean water, He puts His clothes on, goes back to His seat, and while sitting down He says: « You are now pure, but not all of you. Only those who wanted to be so. »

He stares at Judas of Kerioth, who feigns he does not hear Him, intent as he is on explaining to his companion Matthew how his father decided to send him to Jerusalem. A useless conversation, the only purpose of which is to give an attitude to Judas, who, however bold, must feel ill at ease.

Jesus pours wine into the common chalice for the third time. He drinks and makes the others drink. He then intones, and the others sing in chorus: « I love because the Lord hears the voice of my prayer, because He turns His ear towards me. I will invoke Him throughout my life. The throes of death had surrounded me » etc. (Psalm 114, I think).

A moment's pause. He then resumes singing: « I had faith, that is why I spoke. But I was deeply humiliated. And in my dismay

I said: "Every man is untruthful". » He looks fixedly at Judas.

My Jesus' voice, which is tired this evening, regains vigour when He exclaims: « The death of holy people is precious in the eyes of God » and « You have broken my chains. I will sacrifice a victim of praise to You invoking the name of the Lord » etc. (Psalm 115).

Another short pause and He then resumes: « Praise the Lord, all nations, praise Him, all peoples. Because His mercy has been asserted upon us and the truth of the Lord lasts for ever. »

Another short pause and then a long hymn: « Sing praises to the Lord because He is good, because His mercy lasts for ever... »

Judas of Kerioth sings so much out of tune, that twice Thomas brings him back into tune with his powerful loud baritone voice and stares at him. The others also look at him, because he is generally in tune, and I have had the impression that he is proud of his voice as he is of everything else. But this evening! Certain sentences upset him so much that he sings false notes, and certain glances of Jesus underlining those sentences have the same effect. One of them is: « It is better to confide in the Lord than to confide in man. » Another one is: « When I was pushed, I staggered and was about to fall. But the Lord supported me. » Another is: « I shall not die, I shall live and narrate the deeds of the Lord. » And finally, these two, that I am going to relate now, strangle the Traitor's voice in his throat: The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone and « Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord! »

When the psalm is over, while Jesus is cutting and handing the lamb round again, Matthew asks Judas of Kerioth: « Are you not feeling well? »

« No. Leave me alone. Don't worry about me. »

Matthew shrugs his shoulders.

John, who has heard, says: « The Master is not well either. What is the matter with You, my Jesus? Your voice is weak, like the voice of a sick person or of one who has wept much » and he embraces Him, resting his head on Jesus' chest.

« He has only spoken a lot, as I have only walked a lot and got cold » says Judas nervously.

And Jesus, without replying to him, says to John: « You know Me by now... and you know what makes Me tired... »

The lamb is almost consumed. Jesus, Who has eaten very little, and has only had a sip of wine at each chalice, but to compensate for that, has drunk a lot of water, as if He were feverish, resumes speaking: « I want you to understand My gesture of a short while ago. I told you that the first is like the last, and that I am going to give you a food that is not corporeal. I have given you a nourishment of humility, for your spirits. You call Me: Master and Lord. You are right, because so I am. So if I have washed your feet you should wash each other's feet. I have given you an example, so that

you may do what I have done. I tell you solemnly: no servant is greater than his master, no apostle is greater than He Who appointed him. Try to understand these things. Then, if you understand them and put them into practice, you will be blessed. But not all of you will be blessed. I know you. I know whom I chose. I am not speaking of everybody in the same way. But I say what is true. On the other hand, what has been written concerning Me, is to be fulfilled: "He who eats the bread with Me, rebels against Me". I am telling you everything before it happens, that you may have no doubts about Me. When everything has been accomplished, you will believe even more that I am I. He who receives Me, receives Him Who sent Me: the Holy Father Who is in Heaven; and he who receives those whom I send, will receive Me. Because I am with the Father and you are with Me... But now let us finish the rite. »

He pours more wine into the common chalice and before drinking of it and letting the others drink, He stands up, and everybody stands up with Him, and He sings one of the previous psalms again: « I had faith and that is why I spoke... » and then He sings a psalm that never comes to an end. Beautiful... but eternal! I think I have found it, by its beginning and its length, as psalm 118. They sing it as follows. They sing one part in chorus. Then, in turns, one recites a couplet, and the others in chorus sing another part, and so forth till the end. No wonder they are thirsty at the end!

Jesus sits down. He does not lie down. He sits as we do. And He says: « Now that the old rite has been accomplished, I will celebrate the new one. I have promised you a miracle of love. It is time to work it. That is why I have longed for this Passover. From now on this is the Victim that will be consumed in a perpetual rite of love. My beloved friends, I have loved you throughout the whole life of the Earth. I have loved you for the whole eternity, My children. And I want to love you till the end. There is nothing greater than this. Bear that in mind. I am going away. But we shall remain for ever united through the miracle that I will now work. »

Jesus takes a loaf still entire and places it on the chalice that has been filled. He blesses and offers both, He then breaks the bread and takes thirteen morsels of it, and gives one to each apostle saying: « Take this and eat it. This is My Body. Do this in remembrance of Me, Who am going away. » He gives the chalice and says: « Take this and drink it. This is My Blood. This is the chalice of the new alliance in My Blood and through My Blood, that will be shed for you, to remit your sins and give you the Life. Do this in remembrance of Me. »

Jesus is very sad. There is no smile, no trace of light, no colour on His face. It is already an agonizing face. The apostles look at Him utterly anguished.

Jesus stands up saying: « Do not move. I shall be back at once. »

lie takes the thirteenth morsel of bread and the chalice, and He goes out of the Supper-room.

« He is going to His Mother » whispers John.

And Judas Thaddeus says with a sigh: « Poor woman! »

Peter asks in a very low voice: « Do you think She knows? »

« She knows everything. She has always been aware of everything. »

They all speak in very low voices, as if they were in front of a corpse.

« But do you think that really... » asks Thomas, who does not want to believe yet.

« And do you doubt it? It is His hour » replies James of Zebedee.

« May God grant us strength to be faithful » says the Zealot.

« Oh! I... » says Peter who is about to speak. But John, who is on the look-out, says: « Silence! He is here. »

Jesus comes back in. He has the empty chalice in His hands. Only at its bottom there is a trace of wine, and in the light of the chandelier it looks just like blood.

Judas Iscariot, in front of whom is the chalice, looks at it as if he were enchanted, then he averts his eyes. Jesus watches him and shudders, and John, leaning as he is on His chest, feels it. « Why not say so! You are shivering... » he exclaims.

« No. I am not shivering because I am feverish... I have told you everything, and I have given you everything. I could not have given you anything else. I have given you Myself. »

He makes His usual kind gesture with His hands, which, previously joined, now separate and stretch out, while He bows His head as if He wished to say: « Excuse Me if I cannot give you more. It is so. »

« I have told you everything and I have given you everything. And I repeat. The new rite has been accomplished. Do this in remembrance of Me. I have washed your feet to teach you to be humble and pure like your Master. Because I solemnly tell you that disciples must be like their Master. Remember that, bear it in mind. Also when you are in high offices, remember that. There is no disciple greater than his Master. As I washed you, do the same to one another. That is, love one another like brothers, helping and respecting one another, setting an example to one another. And be pure, to be worthy of eating the living Bread that descended from Heaven, and have the strength, in yourselves and through It, to be My disciples in the hostile world that will hate you because of My Name. But one of you is not pure. One of you will betray Me. My Spirit is deeply perturbed by that... The hand of him who will betray Me is here with Me on this table, and neither My love, nor My Body and Blood, nor My word make him mend his ways and repent. I would forgive him going to My death also on his behalf. »

The disciples cast terrified glances at one another. They scrutinise one another suspiciously. Peter stares at the Iscariot in a revival of all his doubts. Judas Thaddeus in his turn jumps to his feet to look at the Iscariot above Matthew's body.

But the Iscariot is so sure of himself! In his turn he looks at Matthew, as if he suspected him. He then looks fixedly at Jesus and smiling he asks: « Is it I perhaps? » He seems to be the one who is most certain of his honesty and to say so, not to let the conversation drop.

Jesus repeats His gesture saying: « You are saying so, Judas of Simon, not I. You are saying so. I have not mentioned your name. Why are you accusing yourself? - Ask your internal warner, your conscience of a man, the conscience that God the Father gave you that you might behave as a man, and listen whether it accuses you. You will be the first to know. But if it reassures you, why do you utter a word and speak of a deed that is anathema even to mention or to think of as a joke? »

Jesus is speaking calmly. He seems to be supporting a proposed thesis as a learned man may do with his pupils. The confusion is great, but Jesus' calm appeases it.

But Peter, who is the most suspicious of Judas - perhaps Thaddeus also is so, but he does not look so, disarmed as he is by the Iscariot's easy manners - plucks John's sleeve, and when John, who has pressed against Jesus upon hearing Him speak of betrayal, turns round, he whispers to him: « Ask Him who it is. »

John takes his previous position again, he only raises his head slightly, as if he wanted to kiss Jesus, and in the meantime he whispers in His ear: « Master, who is it? »

And Jesus in a very low voice, kissing him, in His turn, on his head, says: « It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread dipped in the dish. »

And taking another entire loaf, not the remains of the one used for the Eucharist, He detaches a large morsel, He dips it into the lamb's sauce left in the tray, and says: « Take it, Judas. You like this. »

« Thank You, Master. I do like it » and unaware of what that morsel is, he eats it, while John, horrified, closes even his eyes not to see the horrid smile of the Iscariot, as he bites the accusing bread with his strong teeth.

« Well. Now that I have made you happy, go » says Jesus to Judas. « Everything has been accomplished, here (He lays much stress on the word). What is still left to be done elsewhere, do it quickly, Judas of Simon. »

« I will obey You at once, Master. Then I will join You at Gethsemane. You are going there, are You not? As usual? »

« Yes... I am going there... as usual. »

« What has he got to do? » asks Peter. « Is he going by himself? »

« I am not a baby » says Judas scoffingly, as he puts on his mantle.

« Let him go. He and I know what must be done » says Jesus.

« Yes, Master. » Peter is silent. Perhaps he thinks he has committed a sin suspecting his companion. Resting his forehead on the palm of his hand, he becomes pensive.

Jesus presses John to His heart and whispers again through his hair: « Say nothing to Peter for the time being. It would be a useless scandal. »

« Goodbye, Master. Goodbye, friends » says Judas greeting them.

« Goodbye » replies Jesus.

And Peter says: « Goodbye, boy. »

John, his head almost on Jesus' lap, whispers: « Satan! » Jesus alone hears him and sighs.

Everything comes to an end here, but Jesus says: « I am interrupting the vision out of pity for you. I will give you the end of the Supper later. »

(the Supper continues)

There are a few moments of dead silence. Jesus has lowered His head, caressing John's fair hair mechanically.

Then He rouses Himself. He raises His head, He looks around, and He smiles in such a way that encourages the disciples. He says: « Let us leave the table and sit all close to one another, like many children round their father. »

They take the couches that were behind the table (those of Jesus, John, James, Peter, Simon, Andrew and His cousin James) and they put them on the other side.

Jesus sits on His own, still between James and John. But when He sees that Andrew is about to sit in the place left by the Iscariot, He shouts: « No, not there. » An impulsive shout, that His great prudence does not succeed in preventing. He then modifies His expression saying: « We do not need so much room. If we sit down, we can stay only on these. They are enough. I want you to be very close to Me. »

Now, with respect to the table, they are placed in a U shaped disposition, with Jesus in the centre and the table, on which there are no victuals now, and Judas' place in front of Him.

James of Zebedee calls Peter saying: « Sit here. I will sit on this little stool, at Jesus' feet. »

« May God bless you, James! I wanted it so much! » says Peter and he presses against his Master, Who is now squeezed by John and Peter, with James at His feet.

Jesus smiles and says: « I see that the word spoken earlier is beginning to work. Good brothers love one another. James, I also say to you: "May God bless you". Also this action of yours will not be

forgotten by the Eternal, and you will find it up there.

I can obtain everything I ask for. You have seen that. A desire of Mine was sufficient for the Father to allow His Son to give Himself in Food to man. The Son of man has been glorified by what has happened now, because the miracle that is possible only to God's friends is a witness of power. The greater the miracle, the surer and deeper is this divine friendship. This is a miracle that, because of its form, duration and nature, and of the extremes and limits it attains, is so great that a greater one cannot possibly exist. I tell you: it is so powerful, supernatural, inconceivable by proud men, that only very few will understand it as it is to be understood, and many will deny it. So what shall I say? Condemn them? No. I will say: have mercy on them!

But the greater the miracle, the greater the glory of its author. It is God Himself Who says: "See, My beloved wanted it, had it, and I granted it, because great is His grace in My eyes". And here He says: "His grace has no limits, as infinite is the miracle performed by Him". The glory that from God comes to the author of the miracle is the same as the glory that from the author returns to the Father. Because every supernatural glory, as it comes from God, returns to its source. And the glory of God, although it is already infinite, increases and shines more and more through the glory of His saints. So I say: as the Son of man has been glorified by God, so God has been glorified by the Son of man. I have glorified God in Myself. In His turn, God will glorify His Son in Himself. He will glorify Him shortly.

Exult, o spiritual Essence of the Second Person, Who are going back to Your See! Exult, o Body Who are going to ascend again after such a long exile in degradation. And not Adam's Paradise, but the sublime Paradise of the Father is about to be given to You as Your abode. If it has been said that the amazing order of God, given through the lips of a man, stopped the sun, what will happen among the stars when they see the wonder of the Body of the Man ascend and sit at the right hand of the Father in the Perfection of His glorified being?

My little children, I will remain with you for a short time. And afterwards you will be looking for Me as orphans look for their dead parent. And weeping, you will go about speaking of Him and in vain you will knock at His silent tomb, and you will also knock at the blue gates of Heaven, with your souls elevated in suppliant search for love, saying: "Where is our Jesus? We want Him. Without Him there is no more light in the world, no joy, no love. Either give Him back to us, or let us come in. We want to be where He is". But for the time being you cannot come where I am going. To the Judaeans also I said: "Later you will look for Me, but you cannot come where I am going". I say the same to you.

Think of My Mother... Neither can She come where I am going. And yet, I left the Father to come to Her and become Jesus in Her immaculate womb. And yet, I came from the Inviolable Woman in the bright ecstasy of My Birthday. And I was nourished with Her love, that became milk. I am made of purity and love, because Mary nourished Me with Her virginity fecundated by the perfect Love Who lives in Heaven. And yet, I have grown up through Her, costing Her fatigue and tears... And yet, I ask of Her such heroism as no one has ever accomplished, and in comparison with which the heroism of Judith and that of Jael are the heroisms of poor women quarrelling with the rival at the village fountain. And yet, no one loves Me as She does. And, notwithstanding all that, I will leave Her and go where She will come only after a long time. The commandment I give you: "Sanctify yourselves year by year, month by month, day by day, hour by hour, to be able to come to Me when it is your hour" does not apply to Her. She is full of grace and holiness. She is the creature who has had everything and has given everything. There is nothing to be added or to be taken away. She is the most holy witness of what God can do.

But in order to be sure that you are able to join Me and to forget the grief in mourning the separation from your Jesus, I give you a new commandment. And it is: love one another. As I have loved you, you must love one another. By this love it will be known that you are My disciples. When a father has many sons, how does one know that they are such? Not so much by their physical appearance - because there are men who are in everything like another man, with whom there is no blood-tie and they are not even of the same country - as by their common love for the family, for their father and for one another. And even when the father dies, a good family does not break up, because one is their blood and it is the same they had from the seed of their father, and it ties in knots that not even death loosens, because love is stronger than death. Now, if you love one another after I have left you, everybody will acknowledge you as My children, and therefore as My disciples, and as brothers to one another, having had only one father. »

« Lord, but where are You going? » asks Peter.

« I am going where at present you cannot follow Me. But you will follow Me later. »

« And why not now? I have always followed You since You said to me: "Follow Me". I left everything without regret... Now, to go away without Your poor Simon, leaving me without You, Who are everything to me, after that for Your sake I left the little property I had previously, is not fair or nice of You. Are You going to Your death? All right. I will come as well. We shall go to the next world together. But I will have defended You before that. I am ready to give my life for You. »

« You will give your life for Me? Now? Not now. I solemnly - oh! I do solemnly tell you - before the cock crows, you will have disowned Me three times. This is the first watch. Then the second will come... and then the third. Before the cock crows loudly, you will have disowned your Lord three times. »

« Impossible, Master! I believe everything You say, but not that. I am sure of myself. »

« Now, at present you are sure. Because you still have Me. You have God with you. Before long, the Incarnate God will be caught, and you will no longer have Him. And Satan, after making you heavy - your very certainty is a trick of Satan, ballast to weigh you down - will frighten you. He will insinuate to you: "God does not exist. I do". And as you will still be able to reason, although made dull by fear, you will understand that, when Satan is the master of the hour, Good is dead and Evil is active, the spirit is dejected and the human is triumphant. You will then be like warriors without a leader, chased by the enemy, and in the dismay of being defeated you will bow your necks to the conqueror, and in order not to be killed you will disown the fallen hero. But, please do not let your hearts be upset. Believe in God. And believe also in Me. Believe in Me, against all appearances. Let him who remains and him who runs away believe in My mercy and in the Father's. Both he who is silent and he who moves his lips to say: "I do not know Him". And likewise believe in My forgiveness. And believe that, whatever your actions may be in future, in Good and in My Doctrine, consequently in My Church, they will give you equal places in Heaven. In the house of My Father there are many abodes. If it were not so, I would have told you. Because I am going ahead, to prepare a place for you. Do good fathers not do likewise when they have to take their little children elsewhere? They go ahead, they prepare the house, the furnishings, the provisions. They then go back to get their dearest ones. They do so out of love, so that the little ones may lack nothing and may not be uncomfortable in the new place. I do the same and for the same reason. I am going now. And when I have prepared a place for each of you in the celestial Jerusalem, I will come again and take you with Me so that you may be where I am, where there is no death or mourning, no tears, no shouting, no hunger, no pain, no darkness, no parching thirst, but only light, peace, happiness and singing. Oh! song of the Highest Heavens when the twelve chosen ones will sit on thrones with the twelve patriarchs of the tribes of Israel and in the ardour of the fire of spiritual love, standing upright over the sea of beatitude, they will sing the eternal song accompanied by the arpeggio of the eternal alleluia of the angelical host... I want you to be where I shall be. And you know where I am going and you know the way. »

« But, Lord! We know nothing. You are not telling us where You

are going. How can we know the way to be taken to come towards you and curtail the wait? » asks Thomas.

« I am the Way, the Truth, the Life. You have heard Me say so and explain it several times, and really some people, who did not even know that there is a God, have walked ahead, along My way, and they are already ahead of you. Oh! where are you, lost sheep of God, brought back to the fold by Me? And where are you, whose soul has been raised? »

« Who? Of whom are you speaking? Of Mary of Lazarus? She is in the other room, with Your Mother. Do You want her? Or do You want Johanna? She is certainly in her mansion, but if You wish so, we will go and call her for You... »

« No. Not them... I am thinking of the one who will be revealed only in Heaven... and of Photinai... They found Me. And they have never left My way again. To one I pointed out the Father as the true God and the Spirit as a Levite in this individual adoration. To the other, who did not even know she had a soul, I said: "My name is Saviour, I save whoever has the good will to be saved. I am the One Who looks for those who are lost, I give Life, Truth and Purity. Those who look for Me, will find Me". And they both found God... I bless you, weak Eves who have become stronger than Judith... I am coming, I am coming where you are... You comfort Me... May you be blessed!... »

« Show us the Father, Lord, and we shall be equal to them » says Philip.

« I have been with all of you for such a long time, and you, Philip, still do not know Me? He who sees Me, sees the Father. So, how can you say: "Let us see the Father"? Can you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you, I do not say them by Myself. It is the Father, living in Me, Who accomplishes all My work. And do you, all of you, not believe that I am in the Father and He is in Me? What must I say to make you believe? If you do not believe My words, believe at least in My deeds. And I say to you and I truly say to you: he who believes in Me will perform the deeds that I do, and will perform even greater ones, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask of the Father in My name, I will do it, so that the Father may be glorified in His Son. And I will do anything you ask in behalf of My Name. My Name is known for what it really is, only to Me and to the Father Who generated Me and to the Spirit Who proceeds from our love. And everything is possible to that Name. He who thinks of My Name with love, loves Me and obtains. But it is not sufficient to love Me. It is necessary to keep My commandments in order to have true love. Feelings are testified by deeds. And because of your love I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, so that He may remain with you for ever, One against Whom Satan

and the World cannot act cruelly, the Spirit of Truth, Whom the world cannot receive or strike, because it cannot see Him and does not know Him. The world will deride Him, but He is so sublime that derision will not be able to offend Him, while being so merciful as to exceed all limits, He will always be with those who love Him, even if they are poor and weak. You will know Him, because He already dwells with you and will soon be in you. I will not leave you orphans. I have already told you that I will come back to you. But I will come before it is time to come to take You and go to My Kingdom. I will come to you. Before long the world will no longer see Me. But you see Me and will see Me. Because I live and you live. Because I will live and you will live. On that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you are in Me and I in you. Because he, who accepts My precepts and observes them, loves Me, and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father and will possess God, because God is love, and he who loves has God in himself. And I will love Him, because I shall see God in him, and I will show Myself to him, making him acquainted with the secrets of My love, of My wisdom, of My Incarnate Divinity. They will be My returns among the children of man, whom I love notwithstanding that they are weak and even hostile. But these will be only weak. And I will fortify them; I will say to them: "Rise!", I will say: "Come out!", I will say: "Follow Me", I will say: "Listen", I will say: "Write"... and you are among them. »

« Why, Lord, are You showing Yourself to us and not to the world? » asks Judas Thaddeus.

« Because you love Me and you keep My words. He who does that will be loved by My Father, and we shall come to him and make our home with him, in him. Whereas he who does not love Me, does not keep My words and acts according to the flesh and the world. Now remember that what I said to you is not the word of Jesus of Nazareth, but it is the word of the Father, because I am the Word of the Father Who sent Me. I told you these things, speaking to you thus, because I want to prepare you Myself for the complete possession of the Truth and Wisdom. But you cannot yet understand or remember. But when the Comforter, the Holy Spirit Whom the Father will send to you in My name, comes to you, then you will be able to understand, and He will teach you everything, and He will remind you of what I told you.

I leave you My peace. I give you My peace. I give it to you not as the world gives it. And not even as I have given it to you so far: the blessed greeting of the Blessed One to the blessed ones. The peace I am giving you now is more profound. In this farewell I communicate Myself, My Spirit of peace to you, as I communicated My Body and My Blood to you, so that you may have strength for the imminent battle. Satan and the world are stirring up a war against

your Jesus. It is their hour. Have Peace within you, My Spirit, which is spirit of peace, because I am the King of peace. Have it so that you may not be too forlorn. He who suffers with the peace of God within himself, suffers, but does not blaspheme and does not despair.

Do not weep. You have also heard Me say: "I am going to the Father and then I will come back". If you loved Me beyond the flesh, you would rejoice, because I am going to the Father after such a long exile... I am going to Him Who is greater than I am and Who loves Me. I have told you now, before it takes place, as I informed you of all the sufferings of the Redeemer, before going to them, so that, when everything is fulfilled, you may believe more and more in Me. Do not be so upset! Do not be frightened. Your hearts are in need of balance...

I have not much more time to speak to you... but I have so much to say! Now that I have come to the end of My evangelization, I feel that I have not said anything yet, and that there is still so much to be done. Your mood increases My feeling. So, what shall I say? That I failed in My task? Or that you are so hard-hearted that My work has been of no avail? Shall I be in doubt about you? No. I rely on God and I entrust you, My beloved ones, to Him. He will complete the work of His Word. I am not like a father who dies without having any other light but the human one. I hope in God. And, although within Myself I feel the urgency of all the advice, of which I see you are in need, and I realise that time flies, I am going towards My destiny with a quiet mind. I know that the dew is about to descend on the seeds sown in you and it will make all of them spring up, then the sun of the Paraclete will come and they will become mighty trees. The prince of this world, with whom I have nothing to do, is about to come. And if it were not for the purpose of redemption, he would not have had any power over Me. But that is happening so that the world may know that I love My Father and I love Him so much that I will obey Him even to death, and I will, therefore, do what He ordered Me to do.

It is time to go. Stand up. And listen to My last words. I am the true Vine. The Father is the Vinedresser. Every branch that bears no fruit He cuts, and the one that does bear fruit He prunes, to make it bear even more. You are already purified by My word. Remain in Me and I will remain in you to continue to be so. The branch cut off from the vine cannot bear fruit. The same applies to you, if you do not remain in Me. I am the Vine and you are the branches. Whoever remains united to Me bears fruit in plenty. But if one is cut off, one becomes a dry branch and is thrown on the fire and burns there. Because, if you are not united to Me, you can do nothing. So remain in Me and let My words remain in you, then ask for whatever you want, and it will be done to you. My Father will always be the more glorified, the more you bear fruit and are My disciples.

As the Father has loved Me, so I have loved you. Remain in My love that saves. By loving Me you will be obedient, and obedience increases mutual love. Do not say that I am repeating Myself. I am aware of your weakness. And I want you to be saved. I have told you this so that the joy I wanted to give you may be in you and may be complete. Love one another, love one another! This is My new commandment. Love one another more than each of you loves himself. There is no greater love than that of a man who lays down his life for his friends. You are My friends and I will lay down my life for you. Do what I teach and order you to do. I will no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know what his master does, whereas you know what I do. You know everything about Me. I have made known to you not only Myself, but also the Father and the Paraclete, and everything I heard from God. You did not choose yourselves. But I chose you and I elected you, so that you may go among peoples and you may bear fruit in yourselves and in the hearts of those who are evangelized, and your fruit may remain, and the Father may give you everything you will ask of Him in My name.

Do not say: "So, if You chose us, why did You choose a betrayer. If You know everything, why did You do that?" Do not even ask who he is. He is not a man. He is Satan. I said so to My faithful friend and I let My beloved son say so. He is Satan. If Satan, the eternal mimic of God, had not become incarnate in human flesh, this possessed man could not have escaped My power of Jesus. I said: "possessed". No. He is much more: he is annihilated in Satan. »

« Since You have driven demons away, why did you not free him? » asks James of Alphaeus.

« Are you asking that for your own sake, fearing that you are the one? Be not afraid of that. »

« I, then? »

« I? »

« I? »

« Be quiet. I am not mentioning that name. I am being merciful, do likewise. »

« But why did You not defeat him? Could You not do that? »

« I could. But in order to prevent Satan from taking bodily form to kill Me, I should have had to exterminate the human race before Redemption. So what would I have redeemed? »

« Tell me, Lord, tell me! » Peter has fallen on his knees and he shakes Jesus phrenetically as if he were a prey to frenzy. « Is it I? Is it I? Shall I examine my own conscience? I do not think so. But You... You said that I will disown You... And I am quivering... Oh' how horrible if it is I!... »

« No, Simon of Jonah. It is not you. »

« Why are You depriving me of my name "Peter"? So am I Simon again? See? You are saying so!... It is I! But how could I? Tell me tell me, all of you When was it that I became a traitor?... Simon?... John"... Tell me! »

« Peter, Peter, Peter! I am calling you Simon because I am thinking of our first meeting, when you were Simon. And I am thinking how you have always been loyal since the first moment. It is not you, I, the Truth, am telling you. »

« Who, then? »

« It is Judas of Kerioth! Have you not yet understood that? » shouts Thaddeus, who can no longer restrain himself.

« Why did you not tell me before? Why? » shouts Peter as well.

« Silence. It is Satan. He has no other name. Where are you going, Peter? »

« To look for him. »

« Leave that mantle and that weapon at once. Or shall I drive you away and curse you? »

« No, no! Oh! my Lord! But I... but I... Have I become delirious, have I? Oh! Oh! » Peter has thrown himself on the ground and is weeping at Jesus' feet.

« I give you My commandment: love and forgive one another. Have you understood? Even if in the world there is hatred, let only love be in you. For everybody. How many traitors you will find on your way! But you must not hate them and return evil for evil. Otherwise the Father will hate you. I have been hated and betrayed, long before you. And yet, as you can see, I do not hate. The world cannot love what is different from it. Therefore it will not love you. If you belonged to it, it would love you; but you are not of the world, as I took you away from the world. And that is why you are hated.

I said to you: a servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted Me, they will persecute you as well. If they have listened to Me, they will listen to you, too. But they will do everything because of My Name, since they do not know, they do not want to know Him Who sent Me. If I had not come and I had not spoken, they would not be guilty. But now their sin has no excuse. They have seen My deeds, they have heard My words, and yet they have hated Me, and the Father with Me. Because the Father and I are one Unit only with the Love. But it was written: "You hated me for no reason". But when the Comforter comes, the Spirit of truth Who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me, and you also will witness for Me, because you have been with Me since the beginning.

I am telling you this so that, when the hour comes, you may not be depressed and scandalised. The time is about to come when they will expel you from synagogues, and those who kill you will think that they are doing a holy duty for God. They have not known either the Father or Me. That is their excuse. I have not told you these

things so extensively, before this hour, because you were just like new-born babies. But the mother is now leaving you. I am going away. You must become accustomed to other food. I want you to know.

Not one of you has asked Me again: "Where are You going?". Sadness is making you dumb. And yet My going away is a good thing also for you. Otherwise the Comforter will not come. I will send Him to you. And when He has come, through the wisdom and the words, the deeds and the heroism that He will infuse into You, He will convince the world of its deicide sin, and of justice with regard to My holiness. And a clear cut will divide the world into reprobates, enemies of God, and believers. The latter will be more or less holy, according to their will. But judgement will be passed on the prince of the world and his servants. I cannot tell you more, because you are not yet able to understand. But He, the Paraclete, will give you the whole Truth, because He will not speak as from Himself. But He will tell you everything He heard from the Mind of God and will announce the future to you. He will take what comes from Me, that is, what is still of the Father, and will tell you.

There is still a short time to see one another. Then you will no longer see Me. And then a short time later you will see Me.

You are grumbling among yourselves and in your hearts. Listen to a parable. The last one of your Master.

When a woman has conceived and the hour of delivery comes, she is in great distress, because she suffers and groans. But when her little child is born and she presses it to her heart, all her pain comes to an end and her sorrow changes into joy, because a man has come into the world.

The same applies to you. You will weep and the world will laugh at you. But later your sorrow will change into joy. A joy that the world will never know. You are sad now. But when you see Me again, your hearts will be filled with a joy of which no one will ever be able to deprive you. Such a full joy, that it will obliterate every need of yours to ask for anything for your minds, hearts and bodies. You will feed on seeing Me again, and you will forget everything else. And just from that moment you will be able to ask for anything in My name, and it will be given to you by the Father, so that your joy may be greater and greater. Ask, do ask. And you will receive.

The time is coming when I shall be able to speak to you of the Father in plain words. That will happen because you will have been faithful in the trial and everything will have been overcome. So your love will be perfect, as it will have given you strength in the trial. And what you are short of, I will add it for you, taking it from My immense treasure and saying: "Father, as You can see, they have loved Me believing that I came from You". Having descended into

the world, now I leave it and I am going to the Father, and I will pray for you. »

« Oh! now You are explaining things clearly. Now we know what You mean and that You know everything and that You give answers without being questioned by anybody. You really come from God! »

« Do you believe now? At the last hour? I have spoken to You for three years! But the Bread that is God and the Wine that is Blood that did not come from man is already working in you, and is giving you the first thrill of deification. You will become gods if you persevere in My love and in My possession. Not as Satan said to Adam and Eve, but as I say to you. It is the true fruit of the tree of Good and of Life. Evil is defeated in him who feeds on it, and Death is dead. He who eats of it will live for ever and will become "god" in the Kingdom of God. You will be gods if you remain in Me. And yet now... although you have this Bread and this Blood in yourselves, as the hour is coming in which you will be scattered, you will go away on your own account and will leave Me all alone... But I am not alone. I have the Father with Me. Father, Father! Do not abandon Me! I have told you everything... To give you peace. My peace. You will still have trouble. But have faith. I have conquered the world. »

Jesus stands up, He opens His arms out crosswise and with His face shining brightly He says the sublime prayer to the Father. John quotes it integrally.

The apostles are shedding tears more or less openly and noisily. As a last thing, they sing a hymn.

Jesus blesses them. He then says to them: « Let us put on our mans now. And let us go. Andrew, tell the owner of the house to leave everything as it is, as I want that. Tomorrow... you will be pleased see this place again. » Jesus looks at it. He seems to be blessing walls, furniture, everything. He then puts on His mantle and Ls out, followed by the disciples. Beside Him there is John on whom He leans.

« Are you not saying goodbye to Your Mother? » Zebedee's son asks Him.

« No. Everything has already been done. Furthermore, make no noise. »

Simon, who has lit a torch at the chandelier, illuminates the wide corridor that leads to the door. Peter opens the main door cautiously and they all go out into the street, and then, working a gadget, they close the door from outside. And they start off.

17th February 1944.

Jesus says:

« In addition to the consideration on the love of a God Who becomes

Food for men, four main teachings stand out from the episode of the Supper.

The First: the necessity for all the children of God to obey the Law.

The Law prescribed that a lamb was to be consumed at Passover according to the ritual given to Moses by the Most High, and I, the true Son of the true God, did not consider Myself exempted, because of My divine quality, from the Law. I was on the Earth: Man among men and the Master of men. I had, therefore, to do My duty towards God as and better than anybody else. Divine favours do not dispense from being obedient and from making an effort towards a greater and greater holiness. If you compare the most sublime holiness with divine perfection, you will always find it full of defects, and consequently it is obliged to strive to eliminate them and achieve a degree of perfection as similar as possible to God's.

The second: the power of Mary's prayer.

I was God Who had become Flesh. A Flesh, that being without stain, had the spiritual strength of dominating the flesh. And I do not refuse, on the contrary I implore the help of the Full of Grace, Who in that hour of expiation would have also found Heaven closed over Her head, that is true, but not to the extent that She should not succeed in detaching and angel from it, since She is the Queen of angels, to console Her Son. Oh! Not for Herself, poor Mother! She also has tasted the bitter abandonment by the Father, but by means of that suffering offered for Redemption, She obtained and made it possible for Me to overcome the anguish of the Garden of Olives and to bring the Passion to completion in all its multiform bitterness, each of which aimed at cleansing a form and a means of sin.

The third: self-control and endurance of offences, the sublime charitable attitude towards all offences, as can be possessed only by those who make the Law of Charity the life of their lives, as I had proclaimed. And I had not only proclaimed it, but I had really practised it.

You cannot imagine what it was for Me to have the Traitor at My table, to have to give Myself to him, and humiliate Myself before him, to have to share with him the ritual chalice, and put My lips where he had put his, and make My Mother do the same. Your doctors have discussed and still discuss the rapidity of My end and they say it originated in a heart lesion brought about by the blows of the scourging. Yes, My heart was injured also by those blows. But it had already been damaged at the Supper. I was heart-broken by the effort of having to endure the Traitor at My side. It was at the Supper that I began to die physically. What followed was only an increase of an already existing agony. What I was able to do, I did it because I was all one with the Love. Also when the God-Love withdrew from Me, I was able to be love, because I had lived of love during my thirty-three years. It is not possible to reach perfection,

as is required to forgive and put up with our offender, if one has not acquired the habit of love. I had acquired it, and I was able to forgive and bear that masterpiece of an Offender, which was Judas.

The fourth: the more one is worthy of receiving a Sacrament, the greater is its effect. That is: if one has become worthy of it through persevering good will, that subdues the flesh and makes the spirit sovereign, mastering concupiscences, directing one's being towards virtues, bending it like a bow towards the perfection and above all of Love.

Because, when you love, you are inclined to make the person you love happy. John, who loved Me as nobody else did, and who was pure, received the utmost transformation from the Sacrament. He began as from that moment to be the eagle, that is accustomed to soaring easily in the High Heaven of God and staring at the eternal Sun. But woe to him who receives the Sacrament without being worthy of it, and who, on the contrary, has increased his human unworthiness with mortal sins. Then instead of being the germ preservation and life, it becomes the germ of corruption and death. Death of the spirit and decomposition of the flesh, whereby it "bursts", as Peter says with regard to Judas. It does not shed blood, the vital liquid always beautiful in its purple hue, but its entrails burst out, blackened by lechery, rottenness pouring out of the decomposed body, as out of the carrion of an unclean animal, a disgusting sight for passersby.

The death of the profaner of the Sacrament is always the death of a desperate person who, therefore, does not know the placid passing away peculiar to those who are in grace, or the heroic death of the victim who suffers intensely but looks fixedly at Heaven and feels certain peace in the soul. The death of one in despair is marked dreadful contortions and terror, it is a horrible convulsion of the soul already gripped by the hand of Satan, who chokes it to detach from the body and suffocates it with his nauseating breath. That "the difference between those who pass away after being nourished with love, faith, hope and every other virtue and heavenly doctrine and with the angelical Bread that accompanies them with its fruit better still if with its real presence - in the last journey, and those who pass away, after the life of a brute, with the death of a brute that Grace and the Sacrament cannot comfort. The former is the serene end of a saint, to whom death opens the eternal Kingdom. The latter is the frightful fall of a damned soul, that feels it is falling into eternal death and in a moment knows what it wanted to lose and for which it can no longer find any remedy. Acquisition and joy for the former; despoilment and terror for the latter.

This is what you give yourselves, according to whether you believe and love, or you do not believe and you deride My gift. And it is the lesson of this contemplation. »

THE PASSION

599. The Agony and the Arrest at Gethsemane.

10th February 1944.

Jesus says:

« And now come. Although this evening you are like one who is about to breathe his last, come, so that I may lead you towards My sufferings. Long is the way that we shall have to cover together, because I was not spared any sorrow: neither the pain of the flesh, nor the grief of the mind, of the heart, of the spirit. I tasted all of them, I fed on all of them, I quenched My thirst with all of them, to the extent that I died of them.

If you laid your lips on Mine, you would taste the bitterness that they still retain of so much sorrow. If you could see My Human nature in its appearance, which is now refulgent, you would see that that refulgence emanates from the countless wounds that like a garment of living purple covered My limbs, lacerated, exsanguinated, beaten, pierced for your sake. My Human nature is now refulgent. But one day it was like that of a leper, so fiercely it had been struck and humiliated. The Man-God, Who had in Himself the perfection of physical handsomeness, being the Son of God and of the immaculate Woman, to those who cast loving, curious, or scornful, or evil glances at Him, seemed a "worn", as David says, the scorn of mankind, the jest of people.

My love for My Father and for My Father's children led Me to abandon My body to those who struck Me, to offer My face to those who slapped Me and spat at Me, to those who thought they were doing a meritorious deed by tearing My hair and My beard, piercing My head with thorns, making the earth and its fruits accomplices of the tortures inflicted on their Saviour, dislocating My limbs, laying bare My bones, tearing off My garments, thus offending My purity in the most cruel manner, nailing Me to a piece of wood and lifting Me up like a slaughtered lamb on to the hooks of a butcher, and barking around Me, while I was in agony, like a pack of ravenous wolves made even wilder by the smell of blood.

I was accused, condemned, killed, betrayed, disowned, sold. I was abandoned even by God, because I was burdened with the crimes I had taken upon Myself. They made Me poorer than a beggar spoiled by highwaymen, because they did not even leave Me My tunic to cover My livid nakedness of a martyr. Even after My death I was not spared the insult of a wound and the slander of enemies. I was overwhelmed by all the dirt of your sins, I was hurled down as far as the bottom of the darkness of sorrow, deprived of the light of Heaven that might reply to My dying eyes, and of the divine voice that might answer My last invocation.

Isaiah explains the reason for so much grief: "He has really taken our evils upon Himself and ours are the sorrows He has carried".

Our sorrows! Yes, I carried them on your behalf! To relieve yours, to mitigate them, to cancel them, had you been faithful to Me. But you did not want to be so. And what did I gain by it? You "looked at Me as if I were a leper, one struck by God". Yes, the leprosy of your infinite sins was upon Me, it was on Me like a garment of penance, like a cilice; but how did you not see God shine forth, in His infinite love, from that garment worn on His holiness on your behalf?

"He was wounded through our wickedness, and pierced through our crimes" says Isaiah, who with his prophetic eyes saw that the Son of man had become one huge sore to heal those of men. If they had only bruised My body!

But what you most wounded, was My feelings and spirit. You made a laughing stock and butt of both; and you struck Me in the friendship that I had given you, through Judas; in the loyalty that I hoped to receive from you, through Peter who disowned Me; in the gratitude for My favours, through those who shouted at Me: "death to Him!", after I had cured them from so many diseases; through love, because of the torture inflicted on My Mother; through religion, calling Me a blasphemer of God, whereas out of zeal for the cause of God I had put Myself in the hands of man by becoming incarnate, suffering throughout My life and surrendering to human ferocity without uttering a word or complaining.

A glance would have been sufficient to incinerate accusers, judges and executioners. But I had come spontaneously to accomplish the sacrifice, and like a lamb, because I was the Lamb of God and I shall be so for ever, I allowed men to take Me to be stripped and killed, so that I might make a Life for you of My Flesh.

When I was lifted up, I was already consumed by sufferings with no name, with all the names. I began to die at Bethlehem, seeing the light of the Earth, so distressingly different for Me Who was the Living Being in Heaven. I continued to die in poverty, in exile, in flight, in work, in incomprehension, in fatigue, in betrayal, in torn affections, in torture, in falsehood, in blasphemy. I had come to re-unite man to God, and that is what man gave Me!

Mary, look at your Saviour. He is not dressed in white, and His hair is not fair. His eyes are not the sapphire hue that you know. His garment is stained with blood, it is worn out and covered with dirt and spittle. His face is tumefied and twisted, His eyes are veiled with blood and tears, and He looks at you through the crust formed by them and by the dust that makes His eyelids heavy. My hands - can you see them? - are one big sore and are awaiting the last Wounds.

Look at Me, little John, as your brother John looked at Me. My footprints are stained with blood. Perspiration washes away the blood that drops from the wounds made by the scourges, and that is still left after the agony in the Garden. Words come out of My parched bruised lips in the painful panting of My heart that is already dying through all kinds of torture.

From now on you will often see Me like this. I am the King of sorrows and I will come in My regal dress to speak to you of My sorrow. Although you are in agony, follow Me. As I am the Merciful One, I shall be able to put also the scented honey of more serene contemplations before your lips, poisoned by My sorrow. But you must still prefer these ones, smeared with blood, because it is through them that you have the Life, and you will be able to take the Life to other people. Kiss My bleeding hand and be vigilant when meditating on Me, the Redeemer. »

I see Jesus as He describes Himself. This evening I have really been in agony as from 1900 hours (it is 1. 15 a.m. of the 11th, by now).

Jesus says to me this morning, the 11th February, at 7.30:

« Yesterday evening I wanted to speak to you only of Myself, a prey to suffering, because I have begun the description and visions of My sorrows. Yesterday evening it was the introduction. And you were so exhausted, My friend! But before the agony comes back again, I must reproach you gently.

Yesterday morning you were selfish. You said to your spiritual Father: "Let us hope that I shall be able to hold out, because my fatigue is greater". No. His is greater, because it is hard and is not compensated by the bliss of seeing visions and of having Jesus present, as you have Him, also in His holy Human nature. Never be selfish, not even in the least things. A woman disciple, a little John, must be very humble and charitable, like her Jesus.

And now come and stay with Me. "The flowers have appeared... the pruning time has come... the voice of the little turtle-dove has been heard in the country..." And they are the flowers that have come up in the pools of Blood of your Christ. And He Who will be cut off like a pruned branch is the Redeemer. And the voice of the turtle-dove, calling the bride to a sorrowful holy wedding banquet, is Mine, for I love you.

Rise and come, as today's Mass says. Come to contemplate and suffer. It is the gift that I grant My beloved one. »

16th March 1945.

There is dead silence in the street. In so much silence there is only the noise of a little fountain, the water of which falls into a stone basin. On the eastern side, along the walls of the houses it is still dark, whereas on the other side the tops of houses are beginning

to grow white in the moonlight, and where the street widens out into a little square, the milky silvery moon-beams shine on it, embellishing the stones and the earth of the street. But under the many archivolts linking one house to another, like drawbridges or buttresses supporting the old houses with very few openings on the streets, and which are now all locked and dark as if they had been abandoned, there is complete darkness and the reddish light of the torch held by Simon becomes particularly bright and even more useful.

In the red mobile light faces stand out in neat relief and each shows a different mood. The most solemn and calm is Jesus', although tiredness makes it look older, furrowing it with wrinkles that usually are not there and already show the future image of His face recomposed in death. John, who is beside Him, looks around at everything he can see with a surprised sorrowful countenance. He looks like a child who has been terrorised by a story he has heard or by a frightening promise and implores help from someone who is more experienced than he is. But who can help him? Simon, who is on Jesus' other side, looks reserved, gloomy like a man who is turning over dreadful thoughts in his mind. And he is the only one who, after Jesus, looks dignified.

The others, in two groups that continuously change in formation, are all in a ferment. And now and again the hoarse voice of Peter and the baritone one of Thomas are raised resounding strangely. They are then lowered, as if they were afraid of what they say. They are discussing what is to be done, and some suggest one thing, some another. But all proposals are dropped, because "the hour of darkness" is really about to begin, and the opinions of men are obscure and confused.

« I should have been told earlier » says Peter worriedly.

« But no one has spoken. Not even the Master... »

« Never! He would never have told you. Brother! You do not seem to know Him!... »

« I felt there was some trouble. And I said: "Let us go and die with Him". Do you remember? But, by our Most Holy God, if I had known that it was Judas of Simon... » shouts Thomas in a thunderous threatening voice.

« And what did you want to do? » asks Bartholomew.

« Me? I would do it even now, if you helped me! »

« What? Would you go and kill him? Where? »

« No. I would take the Master away. It is easier! »

« He would not come! »

« I would not ask Him whether He wants to come. I would abduct Him as one abducts a woman. »

« It would not be a wicked idea! » says Peter. And he goes back impulsively, he joins the group of Alphaeus' two sons, who with

Matthew and James are whispering to one another like conspirators.

« Listen, Thomas says that we should take Jesus away. All together. We could... from Get-Samni through Bethphage to Bethany and from there... to some other place. Shall we do that? Once He is in a safe place, we will come back and wipe out Judas. »

« It is useless. The whole of Israel is a trap » says James of Alphaeus.

« And now it is about to go off. It was understandable. Too much hatred! »

« Matthew! You make me angry! You had more courage when you were a sinner! Philip, tell us what you think? »

Philip, who is coming all alone and seems to be talking to himself, looks up and stops. Peter joins him and they whisper to each other. They then arrive at the previous group and Philip says: « I would say that the Temple is the best place. »

« Are you mad? » shout the cousins, Matthew and James. « But it is in there that they want Him dead! »

« Hush! How much clamour! I know what I am saying. They will look for Him everywhere. But not there. You and John have good friends among Annas' servants. A handsome present... and it is all settled. Believe me! The best place to hide one who is wanted is the jailors' house. »

« I will not do it » says James of Zebedee. « But listen also to what the others say. John, first of all. And if they should arrest Him? I don't want anybody to say that I am the traitor... »

« I had not thought of that. So? » Peter is at a loss.

« Well, I would say that it is compassionate to do one thing. The only thing we can do. Take away His Mother... » says Judas of Alphaeus.

« Of course!... But... Who will go? What shall we tell Her? You should go, as you are a relative of Hers. »

« I am staying with Jesus. It is my right. You can go. »

« I?! I have armed myself with a sword to die like Eleazar of Saura. I will pass through legions to defend my Jesus, and I will strike without restraint. If I get killed by a more numerous force, it does not matter. I will have defended Him » proclaims Peter.

« But are you really sure that it is the Iscariot? » Philip asks Thaddeus.

« I am certain. None of us has the heart of a snake. He only... Matthew, go to Mary and tell Her... »

« I? Deceive Her? See Her beside me while She is unaware, and then?... Ah! no. I am ready to die, but not to betray that dove... »

Their voices mingle in a whisper.

« Do You hear? Master, we love You » says Simon.

« I know. I am not in need of those words to know. And if they

give peace to the Christ's heart, they wound His soul. »

« Why, my Lord? They are words of love. »

« Of an entirely human love. Truly, in these three years I have done nothing, because you are even more human than at the first hour. This evening, all the filthiest ferments are rising in you. But it is not your fault... »

« Save Yourself, Jesus! » says John moaning.

« I am saving Myself. »

« Are You? Oh! My God, thank You! » John looks like a flower that had withered through excessive heat and becomes fresh again standing straight on its stem. « I will tell the others. Where are we going? »

« I am going to My death. You to Faith. »

« But did You not say just now that you were going to save Yourself? » The beloved apostle loses heart again.

« Yes, I am in fact saving Myself. If I did not obey My Father, I would lose Myself. I obey Him. So I save Myself. But do not weep so! You are not so brave as the disciples of that Greek philosopher, of whom I spoke to you one day. They remained with their teacher, who was dying having taken a potion of hemlock, and they comforted him with their manly sorrow. You... you look like a little boy who has lost his father. »

« And is it not so? What I am losing is more than the loss of a father! I am losing You... »

« You are not losing Me, because you will continue to love Me. He is lost who is separated from us by oblivion on the Earth and from God's Judgement in the hereafter. But we shall never be separated. Neither by this one or by that one. »

But John will not listen to reason.

Simon comes closer to Jesus and in a low voice confides to Him: « Master... Simon Peter and... I were hoping to do a good thing... But... Since You know everything, tell me: within how many hours do You think You will be arrested? »

« As soon as the moon is at the summit of her arc. »

Simon makes a gesture of grief and impatience, not to say of anger. « Then it was all useless... Master, I will now tell You. You almost reproached Simon Peter and me for leaving You so alone these last days... But we were away on Your behalf... For Your sake. Peter, frightened by Your words, came to me on Monday night while I was sleeping and he said to me: "You and I, I can trust you, must do something for Jesus. Judas also said that he wants to attend to it". Oh! why did we not understand then? Why did You not say anything to us? But, tell me, did You not tell anybody? Really? Perhaps You became aware of it only a few hours ago? »

« I have always known about it. Even before he became a disciple. And I tried in every way to send him away from Me so that his crime might not be perfect, both from the divine and human

points of view. Those who want My death are the executioners of God. This disciple and friend of Mine is also the Traitor, the executioner of man. My first executioner, because he has already killed Me through the effort of having him beside Me, at the table, and having to protect him by Myself against you. »

« And does no one know? »

« John does. I told him at the end of the Supper. But what have you done? »

« And what about Lazarus? Does Lazarus really not know anything? We went to him today, because he came early in the morning, he offered his sacrifice and went back without even stopping at his mansion or going to the Praetorium. Because he always goes there, following a habit of his father. And, as You are aware, Pilate is in town these days... »

« Yes. They are all here. There is Rome: the new Zion, with Pilate. There is Israel with Caiaphas and Herod. There is the whole of Israel, because Passover has gathered the children of this people at the foot of the altar of God... Have you seen Gamaliel? »

« Yes, I have. Why are You asking me? I have to see him again tomorrow... »

« Gamaliel is at Bethphage this evening. I know. When we arrive at Gethsemane, you will go to Gamaliel and say to him: "You will shortly have the sign that you have been awaiting for twenty-one years". Nothing else. Then you will come back to your companions. »

« But how do You know? Oh! my Master, my poor Master, Who has not even the comfort of not being aware of deeds of other people! »

« You are right! The comfort of not knowing! Poor Master! Because evil deeds are more numerous than good ones. But I see also the good ones and I rejoice at them. »

« Then You know that... »

« Simon, it is the hour of My passion. To make it more complete, the Father is withdrawing His light from Me, as it gets nearer. Before long I shall have but darkness and the contemplation of what is darkness: that is, all the sins of men. You cannot, none of you can understand. Nobody, except who will be called by God for this special mission, will understand this passion in the great Passion, and as man is material even in loving and meditating, there will be who will weep and suffer because of the scourging and the torture of the Redeemer, but this spiritual torture that, believe Me you who are listening to Me, is the most atrocious one, will not be measured... So speak, Simon. Guide Me along the paths where your friendship went for My sake, because I am a poor man who is becoming blind and sees ghosts, not real things... »

John embraces Him and asks: « What? Can You no longer see Your John? »

« I can see you. But the ghosts rise from the fogs of Satan. Visions of nightmares and sorrows. This evening we are all enveloped in this hellish miasma. It is striving to create cowardice, disobedience and sorrow in Me. It will create disappointment and fear in you in other people, who are neither fearful nor criminal, it will bring about delinquency and fear. In others, who already belong to Satan, it will give rise to supernatural perversion. I am saying so because their perfection in evil will be such as to exceed human possibilities and achieve the perfection which is always in the supernatural. Speak up, Simon. »

« Yes. As from Tuesday we have done nothing but go around to find out, to prevent, to look for help. »

« And what have you been able to do? »

« Nothing. Or very little. »

« And that little will be "nothing" when fear paralyses your hearts. »

« I became irritated also with Lazarus... It is the first time that it happens to me... I was irritated because he seems to be slothful... He could take action. He is a friend of the Governor. He is always Theophilus' son! But Lazarus rejected every proposal of Mine. I left him shouting at him: "I think that you are the friend of whom the Master speaks. You fill me with horror!" and I did not want to go back to him any more... But this morning he sent for me and he said: "Can you still believe that I am the traitor?" I had already seen Gamaliel and Joseph and Chuza, Nicodemus and Manaen, and finally Your brother Joseph... and I could no longer believe that. I said to him: "Forgive me, Lazarus. But I feel that my mind is more deranged now than when I was condemned myself" And it is so, Master... I am no longer myself... But why are You smiling? »

« Because that confirms what I said just now. The fog of Satan envelops and upsets you. What did Lazarus say in reply? »

« He said: "I understand you. Come today, with Nicodemus. I must see you". And I went, while Peter went to the Galileans. Because Your brother, who is so far away, is more informed than we are. He says that he was informed by chance, speaking to an old friend of Alphaeus and Joseph, a Galilean who lives near the market. »

« Oh!... yes... A great friend of the family... »

« He is there with Simon and the women. There is also the family from Cana. »

« I have seen Simon. »

« Well, Joseph was told by this friend of his, who is also a friend of one of the Temple, who has become his relative on women's side, that they have decided to arrest You, and he said to Peter: "I have always opposed Him. But I did it out of love and while He was still Strong. But now that He has become like a child and is a prey to His enemies, I, a relative who has always loved Him, am with Him.

It's my duty by blood and by love". »

Jesus smiles, showing for a moment the serene face of joyful hours.

« And Joseph said to Peter: "The Pharisees of Galilee are wicked like all the Pharisees. But Galilee is not all Pharisees. And many Galileans are here who love Him. Let us go and tell them to gather together to defend Him. We have nothing but knives. But also clubs are weapons when they are handled properly. And if the Roman troops do not come, we will soon get the better of those cowardly cads of the Temple guards". And Peter went with him. In the meantime I went to Lazarus with Nicodemus. We had decided to convince Lazarus to come with us and to open his house to be with You. He said to us: "I must obey Jesus and remain here. To suffer twice as much..." Is it true? »

« It is true. I gave him that order. »

« But he gave me the swords. They belong to him. One for me, the other for Peter. Chuza also wanted to give me some swords. But... What is the use of two bits of steel against the whole world? Chuza cannot believe that what You say is true. He swears that he knows nothing and that at the court they think of nothing but enjoying the feast... A revelry as usual. So much so that he told Johanna to retire to one of their houses in Judaea. But Johanna wants to remain here, closed in her mansion, as if she were not there. But she will not go away. Plautina, Anne, Nike, and two Roman ladies of Claudia's household are staying with her. They weep, pray and make innocents pray. But it is no time for prayers. It is time for blood. I feel the "zealot" becoming alive in me and I am eager to kill in revenge!... »

« Simon! If I had wanted you to die as a damned soul, I would not have freed you from your desolation!... » Jesus is very severe.

« Oh! forgive me, Master... forgive me. I am like an inebriated raving man. »

« And what does Manaen say? »

« Manaen says that it cannot be true, and if it were, that he would follow You to the scaffold. »

« How you all rely on yourselves!... How much pride there is in man! And what about Nicodemus and Joseph? What do they know? »

« Nothing more than I do. Some time ago in a meeting Joseph was angry with the Sanhedrin, because he called them killers as they wanted to kill an innocent, and he said: "Everything is illegal in here. He is right when He says that there is abomination in the house of the Lord. This altar is to be destroyed because it has been profaned". They did not stone him, because he is Joseph. But since then they have kept him in the dark about everything. Only Gamaliel and Nicodemus have remained friendly with him. But the former does not speak. And the latter... Neither he nor Joseph have

been summoned any more to the Sanhedrin for the really important decisions. It meets illegally here and there, at different hours, for fear of them and of Rome. Ah! I was forgetting!... The shepherds. They are with the Galileans as well. But we are few! If Lazarus had only listened to us and had come to the Praetor! But he would not listen to us... That is what we have done... Much... and nothing... and I feel so depressed that I should like to go around the country howling like a jackal, becoming brutal in an orgy, killing like a highwayman, if only to get rid of this idea that "everything is useless", as Lazarus said, as Joseph and Chuza and Manaen and Gamaliel said... » The Zealot no longer seems himself...

« What did the rabbi say? »

« He said: "I do not exactly know what Caiaphas' purpose is. But I tell you that what you say is prophesied only for the Christ. And as I do not recognise the Christ in this prophet, I see no reason to be excited. A good man, a friend of God will be killed. But of how many like him has Zion drunk the blood?!" And as we insisted on Your divine Nature, he stubbornly repeated: "When I see the sign, I will believe". And he promised to abstain from voting for Your death and, on the contrary, if possible he will try to convince the others not to condemn You. That, and nothing else. He does not believe! He will not believe! If only nothing happened till tomorrow... But You say it is not so. "Oh! what shall we do?!" »

« You will go to Lazarus and you will try to take as many as possible with you. Not only the apostles. But also the disciples that you will find wandering about the roads in the country. See if you can find the shepherds and order them to do so. The house in Bethany is more than ever the home in Bethany, the house of kind hospitality. Those who do not have the courage to face the hatred of a whole population, ought to take shelter there. And wait... »

« We will not leave You. »

« Do not part... Divided, you would be nothing. United, you will still be a power. Simon, promise Me that. You are calm, loyal, you can speak to and influence even Peter. And you have a great obligation towards Me. I am reminding you of it for the first time, to make you obedient. Look, we are at the Kidron. From there you, a leper, climbed up towards Me and you departed cleansed. Give Me that, for what I gave you. Give the Man what I gave man. I am the leper now.. »

« No! Do not say that! » say the two disciples moaning.

« It is so! Peter and My brothers will be the most depressed. My honest Peter will feel like a criminal and will have no peace. And My brothers... They will not have the courage to look at their mother and at Mine... I recommend them to you... »

« And what about me, Lord, to whom shall I belong? Are You not thinking of me? »

« O My child! You are entrusted to your love. It is so strong that it will guide you as a mother. I give you neither order nor guide. I leave you on the waters of love. They are such a calm and deep river in you, that they raise no doubt in Me about your future. Simon, have you understood? Promise Me, do promise Me! » It is painful to see Jesus so distressed... He resumes: « Before the others come! Oh! thank you! May you be blessed! »

They all gather together again in a group.

« Let us part now. I am going farther up, to pray. I want Peter, John and James with Me. You, remain here. And if you should be overwhelmed, call us. And be not afraid. Not a single hair of your heads will be hurt. Pray for Me. Lay aside hatred and fear. It will only be a moment... and then it will be full joy. Smile. That I may have your smiles in My heart. And once again, thank you for everything, My friends. Goodbye. May the Lord not abandon you... »

Jesus parts from the apostles and goes ahead, while Peter makes Simon give him the torch after the latter has lit with it some resinous dry twigs, that bum crackling on the edge of the olivegrove, spreading a smell of juniper. It grieves me to see Thaddeus cast such an intense and sorrowful glance at Jesus, that the Latter turns round to see who has been looking at Him. But Thaddeus hides behind Bartholomew biting his lips to control himself.

With His hand Jesus makes a gesture, which is of blessing and farewell at the same time, and goes on His way. The moon, now very high, with her light encircles His tall figure and seems to make it even taller, spiritualising it, making His red garment brighter and His golden hair paler. Behind Him Peter holding the torch and Zebedee's two son hasten their steps.

They go on until they reach the edge of the first escarpment of the rustic amphitheatre of the olivegrove, the entrance to which is a small irregular plain, and the tiers the several escarpments that rise up the mountain in groups of olive-trees. Jesus then says: « Stop, wait for Me here, while I pray. But do not fall asleep. I may need you. And, I ask you this out of charity, pray! Your Master is very depressed. »

He is in fact already in a state of deep depression. He already seems overburdened by a weight. Where is now the virile Jesus Who spoke to the crowds, handsome, strong, with eyes of a ruler, a calm smile, a beautiful resonant voice? He already seems breathless. He is like one who has run or has wept. His voice is tired and exhausted. Sad, sad, sad...

Peter replies on behalf of everybody: « Do not worry, Master. We will keep awake and pray. All You have to do is to call us, and we will come. »

And Jesus leaves them, while the three stoop to gather leaves and twigs and light a little fire to keep them awake, and as a remedy

against the dew that is beginning to fall plentifully.

Turning His back to them He walks eastwards, so that the moon shines on His face. I see that a deep sorrow dilates His eyes even more, perhaps it is the dark rings of tiredness that enlarge them, or it is the shadow of the eyebrows. I do not know. I know that His eyes are more open and deeper set. He climbs with His head lowered, only now and again He raises it with a sigh, as if He had difficulty in doing so and were panting, and then He casts His eyes, that are so sad, around the peaceful olive-grove. He climbs up a few metres, He then goes round an escarpment that thus remains between Him and the three apostles left farther down.

The escarpment, a few centimetres high at the beginning, rises continuously and is soon more than two metres high, so that it protects Jesus completely from being noticed by more or less discreet or friendly eyes. Jesus goes on as far as a huge rock, that at a certain point blocks the path and has probably been put there to support the slope, that on one side descends more steeply and bare as far as a desolate heap of ruins preceding the walls beyond which is Jerusalem, and on the other rises with more escarpments and olive-trees. An olive-tree, all knots and twisted, dangles right above the huge rock. It looks like a bizarre question mark, placed there by nature to ask some questions. The leafy branches on the top of it answer the questions of the trunk, at times saying yes by bending towards the ground, at times no, swinging from left to right, in a light breeze, which blows through the branches, and at times carries the smell of the earth, at times the bitterish scent of olivetrees, at times the mixed perfume of roses and lilies of the valley, that one wonders where it comes from. Beyond the little path and beneath it, there are more olive-trees and one of them, just under the rock, that has survived although split by lightning, or cleft by some other agent unknown to me, of the original trunk has made two trunks that have come up like the two strokes of a huge blockletter V, with the foliage of one appearing on one side of the rock and that of the other on the other side, as if they wished to see or veil it at the same time, or form a peaceful silvery grey base for the rock.

Jesus stops there. He does not look at the town that is visible down there, all white in the moonlight. On the contrary, He turns His back to it and prays with His arms stretched out crosswise, His face towards the sky. I cannot see His face because it is in the shade, as the moon is almost perpendicular over His head, that is true, but there is also the thick foliage of the olive-tree between Him and the moon, that with difficulty filters through the eaves with tiny rings and needles of light in perpetual movement. A long fervent prayer. Now and again He sighs and utters a word more clearly. It is neither a psalm nor the Our Father. It is a prayer rising from His love and

His need. A true conversation with His Father. I understand it through the few words I grasp: « You know... I am Your Son... Everything, but help Me... The hour has come... I no longer belong to the Earth. Stop all need of help for Your Word... Make the Man satisfy You as the Redeemer, as the Word was obedient to You... As You wish... I ask You to have mercy on them... Will I save them? That is what I ask of You. This I want: that they be saved from the world, from the flesh, from the demon... May I make further requests? It is a fair question, Father. Not for Myself. For man, who was created by You, and who wanted to soil also his soul. I will throw that dirt into My sorrow and into My Blood, so that the incorruptible essence of the spirit, which is pleasing to You, may be reinstated... And it is everywhere. He is the king this evening. In the royal palace and in houses. Among soldiers and in the Temple... The town is full of it, and it will be hell tomorrow... »

Jesus turns round, He leans with His back against the rock and folds His arms. He looks at Jerusalem. Jesus' face becomes sadder and sadder. He whispers: « She looks like snow... and she is all sin. And how many I cured in her! How much I spoke!... Where are those who seemed loyal to Me? »

Jesus lowers His head and looks fixedly at the ground covered with short grass shining with dew. But although His head is lowered, I understand that He is weeping, because some tears shine when falling from His face on the ground. He then raises His head, He unfolds His arms, He joins them holding them above His head, shaking them while they are so united.

He then sets out. He goes back towards the three apostles, who are sitting round the little fire of twigs. And He finds them half asleep. Peter is leaning with his back against a tree trunk, and, with his arms crossed on his chest, he nods in the first drowsiness of a profound sleep. James is sitting, with his brother, on a large root that emerges from the ground and on which they have spread their mantles in order not to feel its ruggedness so much, but although they are not so comfortable as Peter, they are also dozing. James has rested his head on the shoulder of John, who has inclined his on the head of his brother, as if doziness had immobilised them in that posture.

« Are you sleeping? Have you not been able to keep awake for one hour only? And I need your comfort and your prayers so much! »

The three wake up with a start and are utterly confused. They rub their eyes. They murmur an excuse, blaming their poor digestion as the cause of their drowsiness: « It's the wine... the food... But it will soon be over. It was only a moment. We did not feel like speaking, and that made us fall asleep. But we will now pray in loud voices and it will not happen again. »

« Yes. Pray and be on the alert. For your own sake as well. »

« Yes, Master. We will obey You. »

Jesus goes away again. The moon, now shining on His face so brightly in her silvery light, that it makes His red garment seem paler and paler, as if she were spreading it with a veil of white shiny dust, shows me His depressed, sorrowful, aged face. His eyes are still dilated, but they seem clouded. His mouth is twisted with tiredness.

He goes back to His rock more slowly and stooping more. He kneels resting His arms on the rock, which is not smooth, but at half its height it has a kind of protrusion, as if it had been placed there deliberately, and a little plant has grown on it. I think it is a plant of those little flowers, like lilies, that I have seen also in Italy, with small pulpy leaves, round but with indented edges and tiny little flowers on very thin stems. They look like small snowflakes spraying the grey rock and the little dark green leaves. Jesus lays His hands near them, and the little flowers tickle His cheek, because He rests His head on His joined hands and prays. Shortly afterwards He feels the coolness of the little corollas and raises His head. He looks at them. He caresses them. He speaks to them: « You are here as well!... You comfort Me! These little flowers were also in My Mother's little grotto... and She loved them because She used to say: "When I was a little girl, My father used to say: 'You are a little lily like these and you are completely full of heavenly dew'"... My Mother! Oh! My Mother! » He bursts into tears. His head on His joined hands, a little reclined on His heels, I see and hear Him weep, while His hands squeeze His fingers tormenting them. I hear Him say: « Also at Bethlehem... and I brought them to You, Mother. But these ones, who will bring them to You now?... »

He then resumes praying and meditating. His meditation must be really sad, full of anguish rather than sadness, because, to divert His attention, He stands up, He goes backwards and forwards, whispering words that I do not grasp, raising His face, then lowering it, gesticulating, rubbing His eyes and His cheeks with mechanical agitated movements of His hands, running His fingers through His hair, as is typical of one who is in great anguish. To mention it is nothing. To describe it is impossible. To see it is to share His anguish. He makes gestures towards Jerusalem. Then He begins to raise His arms again towards the sky, as if He wanted to invoke help.

He takes off His mantle, as if He were warm. He looks at it... But what does He see? His eyes see nothing but His torture, and everything serves to increase that torture. Even the mantle woven by His Mother. He kisses it and says: « Forgive Me, Mother! Forgive Me! » He seems to be asking it of the cloth spun and woven by motherly love... He puts it on again. He is a prey to torment. He wants to pray to get out of His state. But recollections, concern, doubts,

regrets come back to Him with His prayer... It is an avalanche Of names... towns... people... events... I cannot follow Him because He is fast and desultory. It is His evangelic life that passes in front of Him... and brings Judas, the traitor, back to Him.

His anguish is such that, in order to overcome it, He shouts the names of Peter and John. And He says: « They will come now. They are really loyal! » But "they" do not come. He calls them again. He seems to be terrorised, as if He saw I wonder what.

He runs fast towards the place where Peter and the two brothers are. And He finds them comfortably fast asleep round a few embers, which are now dying out and show only some red zigzags among the grey ashes. « Peter! I have called you three times! What are you doing? Are you still sleeping? Do you not realise how much I am suffering? Pray. That the flesh may not win, that it may not overwhelm you. None of you. If the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. Help Me... »

The three wake up more slowly, but at last they are successful, and with dull eyes they apologise. They get up, sitting up at first and then standing.

« Just fancy! » murmurs Peter. « It had never happened to us! It must have been that wine. It was strong. And also this cold air. We covered ourselves not to feel it (in fact they had covered also their heads with their mantles), we did not see the fire any more, we were no longer cold, and so we fell asleep. Did You say that You called us? And yet I did not seem to be so fast asleep... Come on, John, let us get some twigs, let us get a move on. We shall soon be wide-awake. Do not worry, Master, because now!... We will stand up... » and he throws a handful of dry leaves on the embers, and he blows until the flame revives, and he tends the fire with the shrubs brought by John, while James brings a big branch of juniper, or of a similar plant, that he cut off a bush not far away, and he adds it to the rest.

The fire blazes gaily, lighting up the poor face of Jesus. A face that is really so sad that one cannot look at it without weeping. All the brightness of that face is cancelled by a deadly tiredness. He says: « I feel an anguish that is killing Me! Oh! yes! My soul is sad even unto death. My friends!... My friends! » But even if He did not say so, His aspect would make one understand that He is really like a man about to breathe his last, and in the most distressing and desolate abandonment. Every word sounds like a sob...

But the three are too heavy with sleep. They almost seem to be drunk, so much they stagger about with their eyes half closed... Jesus looks at them... He does not humiliate them by reproaching them. He shakes His head, sighs and goes away to the place where He was previously.

He prays once again standing, with His arms stretched out

crosswise. Then on His knees, as before, His face bent on the little flowers. He is pensive. Silent... Then He begins to moan and sob loudly, almost prostrated, so much has He relaxed on His heels. He calls His Father, more and more anxiously...

« Oh! » He says. « This cup is too bitter! I cannot! I cannot! It is above My power. I have been able to bear everything! But not this... Father, take it away from Your Son! Have mercy on Me!... What have I done to deserve it? » He then collects Himself and says: « But, Father, do not listen to My voice, if what I ask is against Your will. Do not remember that I am Your Son, but only Your servant. Let Your will be done, not Mine. »

He remains thus for some time. Then He utters a stifled cry and raises His face, looking very upset. Only for a moment, then He drops on the ground, with His face really on the earth, and remains thus. A worn-out man overburdened by all the sins of the world, struck by all the Justice of the Father, oppressed by the darkness, the ashes, the bitterness, by that tremendous, terrible, most dreadful thing that is the abandonment by God, while Satan torments us... It is the asphyxia of the soul, it is to be buried alive in this prison that is the world, when we can no longer feel any tie between us and God, it is to be chained, gagged, stoned by our very prayers, which fall back on us bristling with sharp points and spread with fire, it is to butt against a closed Heaven, which neither the voice nor the appearance of our anguish can penetrate, it is to be the "orphans of God", it is madness, agony, the doubt of having been deceived so far, it is the persuasion of being rejected by God, of being damned. It is hell!...

Oh! I know! and I cannot, I really cannot bear the sight of the cruel suffering of my Christ, knowing that it is a million times more dreadful than the pain that consumed me last year and that still upsets me, when I think of it...

Jesus moans, having the death-rattle in His throat and sobbing like one in agony: « Nothing!... Nothing!... Away!... The will of My Father! His will! Only His will!... Your will, Father. Yours, not Mine... In vain. I have but one Lord: the Most Holy God. One Law: obedience. One love: redemption... No. I no longer have a Mother. I have no life any more. I have no divinity any longer. I no longer have a mission. In vain you tempt Me, devil, through My Mother, My life, My divinity and My mission. Mankind is My Mother and I love it to the extent of dying for it. I am giving My life back to Him Who gave Me it and Who is now asking Me for it, the Supreme Master of all living beings. I assert My Divinity, as it is capable of this expiation. I am fulfilling My mission through My death. I have nothing else, except to do the will of the Lord My God. Be off, Satan! I said so the first and the second time. I repeat it for the third time: "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass Me by. But let Your

will be done, not Mine". Be off, Satan. I belong to God. »

Then He speaks no more except to say, panting: « God! God! God! », He calls Him at each heart-beat, and at each beat blood seems to flow out of Him. The cloth on His shoulders gets soaked through in it and becomes dark, notwithstanding that the clear moonlight illuminates it completely.

A brighter light appears above His head, hanging about a metre above Him, it is so bright that even the Prostrate Master can see it filter through His wavy hair, already weighed down by blood, and notwithstanding the veil of blood covering His eyes. He raises His head... The moon shines on His poor face, and more brightly shines the angelic light, which is like the white-blue diamond of the star Venus. And all the dreadful agony appears in the blood transuding from His pores. His eyelashes, hair, moustaches, beard are sprinkled and covered with blood. Blood trickles from His temples, blood spouts from the veins of His neck, His hands drip blood, and when He stretches His hands towards the angelic light and His wide sleeves slide back towards His elbows, Christ's forearms can be seen sweating blood. Only His tears draw two neat lines in the red mask of His face.

He takes off His mantle again and wipes His hands, face, neck and forearms. But His sweat continues. He presses the cloth against His face several times, holding it pressed with His hands, and every time He changes its position, clear impressions appear on the dark-red cloth, and as they are damp, they seem to be black. The grass on the ground is red with blood.

Jesus seems on the point of fainting. He unties the neck of His tunic, as if He felt that He was suffocating. He takes His hand to His heart and then to His head and He waves it in front of His face, as if He wanted to fan Himself, with His mouth half open. He drags Himself towards the rock, but closer to the edge of the escarpment, and He leans with His back against it, His arms hanging along His body, as if He were already dead, His head bent on His chest. He moves no more.

The angelic light slowly fades away. Later it seems-to vanish in the clear moonlight. Jesus reopens His eyes. He raises His head with difficulty. He looks around. He is alone. But He is less anguished. He stretches out one hand. He draws to Himself the mantle that He had left on the grass and wipes His face, hands, neck, beard and hair again. He takes a large leaf, which had grown on the edge of the escarpment, and is all wet with dew, and He continues to clean Himself with it, wetting His face and hands and then drying Himself again. And He does the same several times with other leaves, until He wipes out the traces of His dreadful sweat. Only His tunic is stained, particularly on the shoulders and at the folds of the elbows, at the neck, waist and knees. He looks at it and shakes His

head. He looks also at His mantle. But He sees that it is too stained. He folds it and lays it on the rock, where it forms a cradle near the little flowers.

With difficulty, owing to weakness, He turns round and kneels down. He prays resting His head on His mantle, on which He had already laid His hands. Then leaning on the rock He stands up, and still staggering a little, He goes to the disciples. His face is very pale. But it is no longer upset. It is a face full of divine beauty, although it is deadly pale and much sadder than usually.

The three are sleeping soundly, all enveloped in their mantles, lying down near the fire, which is out. They can be heard to breathe deeply as they begin to snore loudly.

Jesus calls them in vain. He has to bend and shake Peter vigorously.

« What is it? Who is arresting me? » the apostle asks as he emerges from his dark green mantle looking bewildered and frightened.

« Nobody. It is I calling you. »

« Is it morning? »

« No. It is almost the end of the second watch. »

Peter is completely benumbed.

Jesus shakes John, who utters a cry of terror when he sees the face of a ghost - it is as white as marble - bending over him. « Oh!... You looked like dead to me! » He shakes James, who, thinking that his brother is calling him, says: « Have they arrested the Master? »

« Not yet, James » replies Jesus. « But get up, now, and let us go. He who is going to betray Me is close at hand. »

The three, still drowsy, get up. They look around... Olive-trees, the moon, nightingales, a light breeze, peace... Nothing else. But they follow Jesus without speaking.

Also the other eight are more or less asleep around a fire that has gone out. « Get up! » orders Jesus in a thunderous voice. « As Satan is arriving, show him, who never sleeps, and his children, that the children of God are not asleep! »

« Yes, Master. »

« Where is he, Master? »

« Jesus, I... »

« But what happened? »

And amid muddled questions and answers they put on their mantles again...

Just in time to appear in order to the guards headed by Judas, as they burst into the little square lighting it up sinisterly with many torches. It is a horde of bandits disguised as soldiers, who look like jail-birds and grin like devils. There is also an odd champion of the Temple.

All the apostles jump to one corner. Peter in front, the others behind him in a group. Jesus remains where He was.

Judas approaches Jesus, enduring the glance of His eyes, which have become the flashing eyes of His best days. And he does not lower his face either. On the contrary, he approaches the Master with the smile of a hyena and kisses His right cheek.

« My friend, what have you come for? Are you betraying Me with a kiss? »

Judas bends his head for a moment, then raises it... insensible to reproach as to every invitation to repent.

Jesus, after the first words uttered with the majesty of a Master, speaks in the sorrowful tone of one who resigns oneself to a misfortune.

The guards, shouting, come forward with ropes and clubs and try to get hold not only of Christ, but also of the apostles, with the exception of Judas Iscariot, of course.

« Who are you looking for? » asks Jesus calmly and solemnly.

« Jesus the Nazarene. »

« I am He. » His voice is thunderous. Before the murderous world and the innocent one, before nature and the stars, Jesus bears this clear, loyal, certain witness to Himself, I should say that He is happy to be able to bear it.

But, if He had thrown a thunderbolt, He could not have done more. They all fall to the ground like mown sheaves of corn. No one remains standing except Judas, Jesus and the apostles, who take fresh heart again at the sight of the overthrown soldiers, so much so that they approach Jesus, threatening Judas so explicitly that the latter makes a leap just in time to avoid a masterly stroke of Simon's sword. In vain pursued by the stones and sticks thrown at him by the apostles not armed with swords, he escapes beyond the Kidron and disappears in a dark lane.

« Stand up. Who are you looking for? I ask you once again. »

« Jesus the Nazarene. »

« I have told you that I am He » says Jesus kindly. Yes, kindly. « So, let these others go. I will come. Put away swords and clubs. I am not a brigand. I have always been among you. Why did you not arrest Me then? But this is Satan's hour and yours... »

But, while He is speaking, Peter approaches the man who is holding out the ropes to tie Jesus and gives a clumsy blow with his sword. If he had struck him with the point, he would have slaughtered him like a ram. Whereas all he does is to cut off part of his ear that remains hanging down shedding much blood. The man shouts that he is dead. There is chaos because some want to come forward, while some are afraid seeing swords and daggers shine. « Put those weapons away. I order you to do that. If I wanted, I could have the angels of My Father to defend Me. And you, be cured. In your soul first of all, if you can. » And before stretching out His hands to be roped, He touches the ear and cures it.

The apostles shout very unbecomingly Yes. I am sorry having to say so, but it is the truth. Some say one thing, some another. Some shout: « You have betrayed us! », and some: « He is mad! », and some say: « And who can believe You? » And those who do not shout run away And Jesus is left all alone He and the guards And His way begins

15th February 1944.

Jesus says:

« You contemplated the sufferings of My spiritual agony on Thursday evening. You saw your Jesus collapse like a man struck mortally, who feels his life flee through the wounds bleeding him, or like a person overwhelmed by a psychic trauma exceeding his strength. You saw the growing phases of the trauma culminate in the shedding of blood brought about by the circulatory unbalance that had been provoked by the effort of controlling Myself and withstanding the burden that had fallen upon Me.

I was, I am, the Son of the Most High God. But I was also the Son of man. I want this double nature of Mine, equally complete and perfect, to emanate very clearly from these pages.

My word, which has accents that only a God can have, bears witness to My Divinity. My necessities and passions, and the sufferings that I show you and I suffered in My flesh of a true Man, and that I propose to you as an example for your humanity, as I teach your spirits with My doctrine of true God, bear witness to My Humanity.

Both My most holy Divinity and My most perfect Humanity, in the course of ages, through the breaking up action of "your" imperfect humanity, have resulted disparaged and distorted in their explanation. You have made My Humanity appear unreal, inhumane, as you have made My divine figure look small, denying so many parts of it, because it was not convenient for you to recognise them or that you could no longer recognise with your spirits impaired by the tabes of vice and atheism, of humanism, of rationalism.

I am coming, in this tragic hour, a prodrome of universal misfortunes, to call My double figure of God and of Man back to your minds, so that you may know it for what it is, you may recognise it after so much obscurantism, with which you have concealed it from your spirits, and you may love it and go back to it and save yourselves by means of It. It is the figure of your Saviour and he, who knows it and loves it, will be saved.

In these past days I have made you acquainted with My physical sufferings. They tortured My Humanity. I have made you acquainted with My moral sufferings, as connected, interlaced,

blended with My Mother's, as are the inextricable lianas of the equatorial forests, which cannot be parted in order to cut only one, but it is necessary to break them with a single stroke of a hatchet to force one's way through, killing them all together; just like the veins of a body, one alone of which cannot be deprived of blood, because only one liquid fills them all; better still, as it is not possible to prevent the creature that is forming in its mother's womb from dying, if its mother dies, because it is the life, the warmth, the nourishment, the blood of the mother that, with a rhythm responding to the movement of the mother's heart, penetrates through the internal membranes, as far as the baby-to-be, making it a complete living being.

She, oh! She, My pure Mother, bore Me not only for the nine months during which every woman bears the fruit of man, but for all Her life. Our hearts were united by spiritual fibres and they always beat together, and no motherly tear ever fell without leaving a trace of its salt on My heart, and there has never been any internal moaning of Mine that did not resound in Her, awakening Her grief.

You feel sorry for the mother of a son destined to death by an incurable disease, for the mother of a man condemned to death by the rigour of human justice. But think of My Mother Who, from the moment She conceived Me, trembled considering that I was the Condemned One, think of this Mother Who, when She gave Me Her first kiss on the delicate rosy flesh of Her new-born baby, felt the future wounds of Her Child, think of this Mother Who would have given Her life ten, a hundred, a thousand times to prevent Me from becoming a Man and arriving at the moment of the Sacrifice, think of this Mother Who was aware of and had to desire that dreadful hour to accept the will of the Lord, for the glory of the Lord, out of kindness towards Mankind. No, there has been no agony that lasted longer and ended in a greater grief than My Mother's.

And there has been no greater and more complete sorrow than Mine. I was One with the Father. He had loved Me from eternity as God alone can love. He had taken delight in Me and had found His divine joy in Me. And I had loved Him as a God alone can love, and in My union with Him I had found My divine joy. The ineffable relationship that ab aeterno ties the Father to the Son cannot be explained to you even by My Word, because while it is perfect, your intelligence is not, and you cannot understand and know what God is until you are with Him in Heaven. Well, like water that rises and presses against a dam, I felt the rigour of the Father grow hourly towards Me.

As evidence against brute-men, who did not want to understand who I was, during the time of My public life, He had opened Heaven three times at the Jordan, at the Tabor and in Jerusalem on the eve

of My Passion. But He had done that for men, not to give relief to Me. I was already the Expiator.

Many times, Mary, God makes men become acquainted with one of His servants, so that through him they may be roused and dragged to Him, but that happens also through the suffering of that servant. It is he who, by eating the bitter bread of God's rigour, pays personally for the comfort and salvation of his brothers. Is it not so? The victims of expiation know the rigour of God. Then comes the glory. But after Justice has been appeased. It is not the same as happens with My Love, that kisses His victims. I am Jesus, I am the Redeemer, He Who has suffered and knows, by personal experience, how painful it is to be looked at by God with severity and be abandoned by Him, and I am never severe, and I never abandon anyone. I consume just the same, but through the fire of love.

The more the hour of expiation approached, the more I felt the Father move away. The more I was separated from the Father, the less My Humanity felt it was supported by the Divinity of God. And because of that I suffered in every possible way. The separation from God brings fear, attachment to life, languor, tiredness, boredom. The deeper it is, the stronger are its consequences. When it is total, it leads to despair. And the more he who, by God's decree, experiences it, without having deserved it, the more he suffers, because the living spirit feels the excision from God, as live flesh feels the excision of a limb. It is a sorrowful prostrating stupor that one, who has not experienced it, cannot understand.

I experienced it. I had to know everything in order to be able to plead with the Father for everything in your favour. Even for your despair. Oh, I experienced what it means to say: "I am alone. Everybody has betrayed and abandoned Me. Even the Father, even God no longer assists Me". And that is why I work mysterious wonders of grace in poor hearts overwhelmed by despair, and I ask My beloved ones to drink the cup of so bitter an experience, so that they, those who are shipwrecked in the sea of despair, may not decline to accept the cross that I offer as anchor and salvation, but they may grasp at it and I may take them to the blessed shore where only peace reigns.

On Thursday evening, I alone know whether I needed My Father! I was a spirit already in agony because of the effort of having to overcome the two greatest sorrows of a man: to say goodbye to a beloved mother, to have an unfaithful friend close by. They were two sores that scorched My heart: the former with Her tears, the latter with his hatred.

I had to share My bread with My Cain. I had to speak to him in a friendly manner in order not to denounce him to the others, as I was afraid they might react violently, and in order to avoid a crime, which in any case would have been useless, as everything

was already written in the great book of life: both My holy Death and Judas' suicide. Any other death was useless and disapproved of by God. No other blood but Mine was to be shed, and was not shed. The halter strangled that life, shutting up his impure blood, which had been sold to Satan, in the filthy sack of the traitor's body, blood that was not to be mixed, falling on the Earth, with the most pure blood of the Innocent.

Those two sores would have been sufficient to make Me suffer agony in My Ego. But I was the Expiator, the Victim, the Lamb. A lamb, before being sacrificed, experiences the red-hot brand, it suffers blows, it endures being shorn and sold to a butcher. And finally it feels the cold of the knife that cuts its throat, bleeds it and kills it. First it must leave everything: the pasture where it was brought up, its mother at whose breast it was nourished and warmed, the companions with which it lived. Everything. I, the Lamb of God, experienced everything.

That is why Satan came, when the Father was retiring in Heaven. He had already come at the beginning of My mission, to tempt Me in order to divert Me from it. He was now coming back again. It was his hour. The hour of the satanic sabbath.

Crowds and crowds of devils were on the Earth that night, to accomplish the seduction of hearts and make them willing to request the killing of the Christ the following day. Each member of the Sanhedrin had his own, Herod had his, so had Pilate, and every single Judaeen who would invoke My Blood upon himself. Also beside the apostles there were their tempters, who made them drowsy while I was languishing, and who prepared them to be cowardly. Take notice of the power of purity. John, the pure disciple, was the first among all of them to free himself from the demoniac claws, and he came at once near his Jesus and understood His unexpressed desire, and brought Mary to Me.

But Judas had Lucifer, and I had Lucifer. Judas in his heart, I beside Me. We were the two main characters of the tragedy, and Satan was attending personally to both of us. After leading Judas to the point from which he could not withdraw, he turned towards Me.

With perfect artifice he showed Me the torments of the flesh with unsurpassable realism. Also in the desert he had started from the flesh. I defeated him by praying. The spirit dominated the fear of the flesh.

He then showed Me the uselessness of My death, and the usefulness of living for My own sake, without worrying Myself about ungrateful men, leading a rich happy life full of love. Living for My Mother, ensuring that She did not suffer. Living so that by means of a long apostolate I could take back to God many men, who, if I had died, would forget Me, whereas, if I had been their Master not for three years, but for many many years, would end up by becoming

one with My doctrine. His angels would help Me to seduce men. Could I not see that the angels of God were not intervening to assist Me? Later, God would forgive Me seeing the crowds of believers that I would lead back to Him. Also in the desert he had tried to convince Me to tempt God through imprudence. I defeated him by praying. The spirit dominated moral temptation.

He showed Me My abandonment by God. He, the Father, no longer loved Me. I was laden with the sins of the world. I disgusted Him. He was absent and was leaving Me to Myself. He was surrendering Me to the mockery of a cruel crowd. And He would not even grant Me His divine comfort. I was alone, all alone. In that hour there was but Satan near the Christ. God and men were absent, because they did not love Me. They hated Me or were uninterested. I prayed to cover the satanic words with My prayers. But My prayer no longer ascended to God. It fell back on Me, like stones of lapidation and crushed Me under its rubble. My prayer, that had always been for Me like a caress given to the Father, a voice that ascended and was answered by a fatherly caress and word, was now dead, heavy, uttered in vain to a closed Heaven.

I then tasted the bitterness of the bottom of the cup. The flavour of despair. It was what Satan wanted: to lead Me to despair, to make Me a slave of his. I overcame despair and I overcame it only with My power, because I wanted to defeat it. Only with My strength of a Man. I was nothing but the Man. And I was nothing but a man no longer helped by God. When God helps you, it is easy to lift even the world and hold it up like a child's toy. But when God does not help us any more, even the weight of a flower is a burden to us.

I defeated despair and Satan, its creator, in order to serve God and you, by giving you the Life. But I became acquainted with Death. Not with the physical death of crucifixion - that was not so dreadful - but with the total conscious Death of the fighter who falls after triumphing, with a broken heart and blood pouring out of him in the trauma of an effort exceeding all endurance. And I sweated blood. I sweated blood to be faithful to God's will.

That is why the angel of My sorrow showed Me the hopes of all those who have been saved through My sacrifice, as a medicine for My dying.

Your names! Each name was a drop of medicine instilled into My veins to invigorate them and make them function, each of them was for Me life coming back, light coming back, strength coming back. During the cruel tortures, to avoid shouting My grief of Man, and in order not to despair of God and say that He was too severe and unjust to His Victim, I repeated your names to Myself, I saw you. Since then I blessed you. Since then I have carried you in My heart. And when the time came for you to be on the Earth, I leaned out of Heaven to accompany your coming, rejoicing at the thought that

a fresh flower of love was born in the world and would have lived for Me.

Oh! My blessed ones! The comfort of the dying Christ! My Mother, the Disciple, the pious Women were present at My death, and you were there as well. My dying eyes saw, with the tormented face of My Mother, also your loving ones, and they closed thus, happy to be closed because they had saved you, who deserve the Sacrifice of a God. »

600. The Various Trials.

16th February 1944.

Jesus says:

« You have by now become acquainted with all the sorrows that preceded the Passion proper. I will now let you know the sorrows of My actual Passion. Those sorrows that affect your minds more when you meditate on them.

But you meditate very little on them. Too little. You do not consider how much you have cost Me and what torture your salvation involved. You complain of a scratch, of knocking against a corner, of a headache, but you do not consider that My body was one big sore, that those sores were envenomed with many things, that things themselves served to torture their Creator, because they tortured the already tormented God-Son, without any respect for Him Who, Father of Creation, had formed them.

But things were not guilty. The guilty one was still and always man. Guilty since the day he listened to Satan in the earthly Paradise. The things of Creation, up to that moment, had no thorns, no poison, no cruelty for man, the chosen creature. God had made that man king, He made him in His own image and likeness, and in His fatherly love He did not want things to be insidious to man. Satan laid the snare. In the heart of man first of all, then, with the punishment of sin, it brought spines and thorns.

So I, the Man had also to suffer things and be grieved not only by people but also by things. The former insulted and tortured Me; the latter served as their weapons.

The hand that God had made for man to distinguish him from brutes, the hand that God had taught man how to use, the hand that God had coordinated with man's mind making it the executor of the commands of the mind, this part, which is so perfect in you and which should have had nothing but caresses for the Son of God, by Whom it had only been caressed and cured, if it was diseased, turned against the Son of God and struck Him with slaps and blows, it armed itself with scourges, it became pincers to tear hair and beard and hammer to drive nails.

Man's feet, which should have run nimbly only to worship the

Son of God, were swift to come to arrest Me, to push and drag Me along the streets towards My executioners, and kick Me in such a way as would be unfair even with a restive mule.

Man's mouth, which should have used words, the endowment given only to man among all animals created, to praise and bless the Son of God, filled with curses and lies and hurled them with its slaver at My person.

Man's mind, the proof of his celestial origin, exhausted itself devising tortures of refined rigour.

Man, the whole man made use of himself, in his individual parts, to torture the Son of God. And he called the earth, with its forms, to assist him in torturing. Of the stones of torrents he made projectiles to wound Me; of the branches of trees, clubs to strike Me; of twisted hemp, ropes to drag Me, cutting into My flesh; of thorns, crown of stinging fire for My tired head; of minerals, an exasperating scourge; of a cane, an instrument of torture; of the stones in streets, a snare for the unsteady foot of Him Who was going uphill, dying, to die crucified.

And things of the sky combined with the things of the earth. The cold at dawn for My body already exhausted by the agony in the garden, the wind that irritates wounds, the sun that increases parching thirst and one's temperature and brings flies and dust, that dazzles tired eyes, which fastened hands cannot protect.

And the fibres granted to man to cover his nakedness combine With the things of the sky: with leather, that becomes a scourge, with the wool of a garment that sticks to the sores made by the scourges and causes a rubbing and lacerating torture at each movement.

Everything served to torture the Son of God. He, for Whom all things had been created, in the hour in which He was the Victim offered to God, had everything against Him in a hostile manner. Your Jesus, Mary, had no comfort from anything. Everything that exists turned against Me, like fierce vipers, to bite at My flesh and increase My suffering.

This is what you ought to think of when you suffer, and comparing your imperfection with My perfection and My sorrows with yours, you ought to admit that the Father loves you as He did not love Me in that hour, and therefore, you should love Him with your whole selves, as I loved Him notwithstanding His rigour. »

22nd - 25th March 1945.

The painful journey begins along the stony lane leading from the clearing, where Jesus was arrested, to the Kidron, and thence, along another lane, to town. And gibes and torture begin at once.

Jesus, His wrists and even His waist tied as if He were a dangerous madman, the ends of the ropes entrusted to energumens intoxicated

with hatred, is tugged here and there like a rag abandoned to the rage of a pack of puppies. But, if those who behave thus were dogs, they could still be excused. But they are men, although they only have the appearance of men. And it is to give Him greater pain, that they have thought of tying Him with two opposed ropes, one of which serves only to fasten His wrists and it scratches and cuts into them with its coarse friction, and the other, the one round His waist, compresses His elbows against His thorax, and cuts into and oppresses His upper abdomen, torturing His liver and kidneys, where there is a huge knot and where, now and again, those holding the ends of the ropes, lash Him with them saying: « Gee-up! Away! Trot, donkey! », and they kick Him at the same time, striking the back of the knees of the Tortured One, Who vacillates and does not fall on the ground only because the ropes hold Him up. But that does not prevent Him from knocking against low walls and tree trunks, while He is tugged to the right by the man holding the rope fastening His wrists, and to the left by him holding the rope round His waist, and He falls heavily against the parapet, as a result of a more violent jerk when crossing the little bridge on the Kidron. His bruised mouth is bleeding. Jesus raises His tied hands to wipe away the blood soiling His beard, but does not say anything. He is really the lamb that does not bite its torturer.

Some people in the meantime have gone down to the gravel-bed to get pebbles and stones and from below a shower of stones strikes the easy target. As progress is slow on the narrow insecure little bridge, on which people crowd hindering one another, the stones hit Jesus' head and shoulders. They hit not only Jesus but also His torturers, who react throwing back sticks and the same stones. And it all serves to knock Jesus again on the head and neck. But they are soon on the other side of the bridge and the narrow lane casts shadows on the fray, because the moon, which is beginning to set, does not illuminate the twisted lane and many torches have gone out in the turmoil. But hatred acts as light to see the poor Martyr, Who is exposed to torture also because of His high stature. He is the tallest among all of them, so it is easy to strike Him, to seize Him by the hair compelling Him to throw back His head violently and to fling on it handfuls of filthy stuff, which by force goes into His mouth and eyes, causing nausea and pain.

They begin to go through the suburb of Ophel, in which He dispensed so much good and so many caresses. The shouts of the crowd awake people who rush to their doors, and while women utter cries of sorrow and run away struck with terror seeing what is happening, men, who have also been cured and assisted and have received friendly words from Him, men either lower their heads remaining indifferent, simulating carelessness to say the least, or they pass from curiosity to hatred, to sneering, to threatening gestures or they

follow the procession to join in torturing Him. Satan is already at work...

A man, a husband who wants to follow Him to insult Him, is grasped by his howling wife, who shouts at him: « Coward! You owe Him your life, you filthy man full of rottenness. Remember that! » But the woman is overwhelmed by the man, who beats her in a beastly manner throwing her on the ground and then runs to join the Martyr, Whose head he strikes with a stone.

Another woman, an old one, tries to obstruct the path of her son who is rushing looking like a hyena and holding a stick to strike Him, and she shouts at him: « As long as I live, you shall not be the killer of your Saviour! » But the poor wretch is struck by her son with a brutal kick at the groin and she collapses on the ground shouting: « Deicide and matricide! May you be cursed for rending my womb for the second time and for injuring the Messiah! »

The scene becomes more and more violent the closer they get to town.

Before arriving at the walls - the Gates are already open, and the Roman soldiers, fully armed, are observing where and how the tumult is evolving, ready to interfere should the prestige of Rome be injured - there is John with Peter. I think they have arrived there by a short cut, which they have taken crossing the Kidron upstream of the bridge, and rushing ahead of the crowd, which is proceeding slowly, so much people are hindering one another. They are in the half-light of an entrance-hall, near a little square before the walls. They have covered their heads with their mantles to conceal their faces. But when Jesus arrives, John drops his mantle and shows his wan upset face in the clear moonlight that still shines there, before the moon sets behind the hill, which is beyond the walls and which I hear is named Tophet by the hired ruffians who arrested Jesus. Peter dares not show his face. But he comes forward to be seen.

Jesus looks at them... and He smiles with infinite kindness. Peter turns round and goes back to his dark comer, covering his eyes with his hands, stooping, aged, already in very poor spirits. John remains bravely where he is, and only when the howling crowd has gone by, he joins Peter, he takes him by the elbow and he guides him as if he were a boy leading his blind father, and they both enter into the town behind the clamouring crowd.

I can hear the stupid, derisory sorrowful exclamations of the Roman soldiers. Some of them curse as they had to get out of their beds because of that « stupid blockhead »; some mock the Jews as being able « to arrest a poor little woman »; some pity the Victim Whom « they have always known to be kind »; and some say: « I would have preferred to die a violent death rather than see Him in those hands. He is a great man. I have two objects of veneration in this

world: Him and Rome. »

« By Jove! » exclaims the one of highest rank. « I don't want trouble. I'll go to the ensign. Let him inform who is to be informed. I don't want to be sent to fight against the Germans. These Jews stink and they are snakes and trouble. But life is safe here. And I am about to finish my military service, and near Pompeii I have a girl!... »

I Miss the rest as I follow Jesus, Who proceeds along the street that forms a bend uphill to go to the Temple. But I see and realise that Annas' house, where they want to take Him, is and is not in the labyrinthic aggregation which is the Temple, and covers the whole of the Zion hill. The house is at its extremities, near a series of massive walls, which seem to be the boundaries of the town here, and from this place they stretch along the side of the mountain with porches and yards, until they reach the enclosure of the Temple proper, that is, where the Israelites go for their several celebrations of cult.

A tall iron door opens in the massive wall. Some voluntary hyenas rush towards it and knock loudly. And as soon as the door is slightly opened, they burst inside, almost knocking down and trampling on the maid-servant who had come to open it, and they open it wide, so that the bawling crowd, with the Prisoner in the middle of them, may go in. And as soon as they are in, they close and bolt the door, probably because they are afraid of Rome or of the followers of the Nazarene. His followers! Where are they?...

They go along the entrance hall and then they pass through a wide yard, a corridor, another porch and another yard, and they drag Jesus up three steps, compelling Him almost to run along a porch built onto the yard, in order to arrive sooner at a richly furnished hall, where there is an elderly man wearing the robes of a priest.

« May God comfort you, Annas » says he who seems to be the officer, if the rascal who has been in charge of those brigands can be called so. « Here is the culprit. I entrust Him to your holiness, so that Israel may be cleansed of the sin. »

« May God bless you for your sagacity and your faith. »

Fine sagacity! Jesus' voice had been enough to make them drop to the ground at Gethsemane.

« Who are You? »

« Jesus of Nazareth, the Rabbi, the Christ. And you know Me. I have not acted in darkness. »

« No, not in darkness. But You have led the crowds astray with obscure doctrines. And it is the Temple's right and duty to protect the souls of the children of Abraham. »

« The souls! Priest of Israel, can you say that you have suffered for the soul of the least or greatest person of this people? »

« And what about You? What have You done that may be called suffering? »

« What have I done? Why do you ask Me? The whole of Israel speaks about Me. From the holy city to the poorest village, even stones speak to say what I have done. I have given sight to blind people: the sight of their eyes and of their hearts. I have opened the ears of deaf people: to the voices of the Earth and of Heaven. I have made cripples and paralytics walk, so that they might begin marching from the flesh towards God and then proceed with their spirits. I have cleansed lepers of the leprosy pointed out by the Mosaic Law and of that which makes man polluted in the eyes of God: sin. I have raised the dead, but I do not say that it is a great deed to call a body back to life, but it is a great thing to redeem a sinner, and I have done that. I have helped the poor, teaching greedy and rich Hebrews the holy precept of love for our neighbour and, remaining poor, notwithstanding that a stream of gold passed through My hands, I have wiped more tears by Myself than all of you, who possess riches. And, finally, I have given a wealth that has no name: the knowledge of the Law, the knowledge of God, the certainty that we are all equal and that in the holy eyes of the Father tears and crimes are the same, whether they are shed or committed by the Tetrarch and by the Pontiff, or by the beggar and the leper who dies on a cart-road. That is what I have done. Nothing else. »

« Do You realise that You are accusing Yourself? You say: the leprosy that makes one polluted in the eyes of God and is not pointed out by Moses. You are insulting Moses and are insinuating that there are some lacunae in his Law... »

« Not his: God's. It is so. More than leprosy, which is a misfortune of the flesh and comes to an end, I declare grave, and it is so, sin, which is an eternal misfortune of the spirit. »

« Do You dare say that You can remit sins? How can You do it? »

« If with a little lustral water and the sacrifice of a ram it is lawful and credible to cancel a sin, expiate it and be cleansed of it, why will My tears, My Blood and My will not be able to do so? »

« But You are not dead. So where is the Blood? »

« I am not yet dead. But I shall be, because it is written. In Heaven before Zion existed, before Moses existed, before Jacob existed, before Abraham existed, since the king of Evil gnawed at the heart of man and poisoned it in him and in his children. It is written on the Earth in the Book that contains the voices of the prophets. It is written in hearts. In yours, in Caiaphas', in the hearts of the members of the Sanhedrin who do not, no, those hearts do not forgive Me for being good. I have absolved anticipating through My Blood. I will now accomplish absolution with a purifying bath in it. »

« You say that we are greedy and we ignore the precept of love... »

« Is it perhaps not true? Why are you killing Me? Because you are afraid that I may dethrone you. Oh! be not afraid. My Kingdom is not of this world. I leave you the masters of all power. The Eternal

knows when to utter the "Enough" that will make You drop thunder-struck... »

« Like Doras, eh? »

« He died of a fit of anger. Not because he was struck by heavenly lightning. God was waiting on the other side to strike him. »

« And You are repeating that to me? A relative of his? How dare You? »

« I am the Truth. And the Truth is never cowardly. »

« Proud and foolish! »

« No: sincere. You accuse Me of offending you. But do you all not hate? You hate one another. And now your hatred for Me unites you. But tomorrow, when you have killed Me, you will hate one another once again, and more fiercely, and will live with this hyena behind your backs and this snake in your hearts. I have taught love. For the world's sake. I taught people not to be greedy, to have mercy. Of what do you accuse Me? »

« Of preaching a new doctrine. »

« O priest! Israel is swarming with new doctrines: the Essenes have theirs, the Sadochites and the Pharisees have theirs; everybody has his secret one, which for one is named pleasure, for another one gold, for another one power; and everybody has his idol. Not I. I have resumed the down-trodden Law of My Father, of the Eternal God, and I have gone back to repeating the ten commandments of the Decalogue in a simple way, talking Myself hoarse to make them enter the hearts that no longer knew them. »

« Horror! Blasphemy! How dare You say this to me, a priest? Has Israel no Temple? Are we like the exiles in Babylon? Reply to me. »

« That is what you are, and even more. There is a Temple. Yes. A building. But God is not in it. He has fled before the abomination that is in His house. But why ask Me so many questions, since My death has already been decided? »

« We are not murderers. We kill if we have the right to do so for an evident fault. "But I want to save You. Tell me, and I will save You. Where are Your disciples? If You hand them over to me, I will let You go free. The names of all of them, and the secret ones more than the known ones. Tell me: is Nicodemus one of Yours? And Joseph? And Gamaliel? And Eleazar? And... But with regard to this one, I already know... It is not necessary. Speak. Speak up. You know that I can kill You and save You. I am powerful. »

« You are filth. I leave to filth the business of the informer. I am Light. »

A bravo lands a blow in His face.

« I am Light. Light and Truth. I have spoken openly to the world, I have taught in synagogues and in the Temple, where the Judaeans meet, and I have said nothing secretly. I repeat it. Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard what I have said. They know. »

Another bravo gives Him a slap in the face shouting: « Is that how you reply to the High Priest? »

« I am speaking to Annas. Caiaphas is the Pontiff. And I am speaking with the respect due to the old man. But if you think that I have said something wrong, prove it to Me. If not, why do you strike Me? »

« Leave Him alone. I am going to Caiaphas. Keep Him here until I tell you otherwise. And make sure He does not speak to anybody. » Annas goes out.

Jesus does not speak. Not even to John, who dares to stay at the door defying the crowd of hired ruffians. But Jesus, without saying a word, must have given him an order, because John, after a sorrowful glance, goes away and I lose sight of him.

Jesus remains with the torturers. Blows with ropes, spittle, insults, kicks, the tearing of His hair, is what is left for Him, until a servant comes to say that the Prisoner is to be taken to Caiaphas' house.

And Jesus, still tied and ill-treated, goes out again under the porch, walks along it as far as a lobby, and then passes through a yard in which many people are warming themselves near a fire, because the night has turned cold and windy in the early hours of the Friday. Peter and John are also there, mingled among the hostile crowd. And they must be really brave to stay there... Jesus looks at them and a faint smile appears on His lips already swollen because of the blows received.

A long walk across porches, halls, yards and corridors. But what kind of houses did these people of the Temple have?

But the crowd does not go into the enclosure of the pontiff's house. It is pushed back into Anna's entrance-hall. Jesus proceeds alone, among bravoes and priests. He goes into a large hall that seems to lose its rectangular shape because of the many seats placed in horse-shoe shape along three sides, leaving an empty space in the middle, beyond which there are two or three seats placed on platforms.

When Jesus is on the point of going in, rabbi Gamaliel arrives at the same time, and the guards give the Prisoner a strong pull, so that He may give way to the rabbi of Israel. But the latter, as stiff as a statue, with a stately attitude slackens his pace and, hardly moving his lips, without looking at anyone, he asks: « Who are You? Tell me. » And Jesus kindly replies: « Read the prophets and you will have the answer. They contain the first sign. The other one will come. »

Gamaliel gathers his mantle and goes in. Jesus enters behind him. While Gamaliel goes to one of the seats, Jesus is dragged to the middle of the hall, in front of the Pontiff: the true figure of a criminal. And they wait until all the members of the Sanhedrin arrive.

Then the session begins. But Caiaphas notices that two or three

seats are vacant and he asks: « Where is Eleazar? And where is John? »

A young man, a scribe I think, stands up, he bows and says: « They refused to come. Here is their letter. »

« Keep it and make a note of it. They will answer for that. What have the holy members of this Council to say with regard to this man? »

« I will tell you. He infringed the Sabbath in my house. God bears witness that I am not lying. Ishmael ben Fabi never lies. »

« Is it true, defendant? »

Jesus is silent.

« I have seen him live with well-known prostitutes. Feigning He was a prophet, He turned His haunt into a brothel, and with heathen women of all people. Sadoc, Callasebona and Nahum Annas' trustee, were with me. Am I telling the truth, Sadoc and Callasebona? Give me the lie, if I deserve it. »

« It is true. Quite true. »

« What do You say? »

Jesus is silent.

« He missed no opportunity to deride us and have us ridiculed, Common people no longer love us through His fault. »

« Do You hear them? You have profaned the holy members. »

Jesus is silent.

« This man is possessed. After He returned from Egypt He has practised black magic. » « How can you prove it? »

« On my faith and on the tables of the Law. »

« A grave charge. Prove Your innocence. »

Jesus is silent.

« Your ministry is illegal, You know that. And liable to death. Speak up. »

« This session of ours is illegal. Stand up, Simeon, and let us go » says Gamaliel.

« Rabbi, have you gone mad? »

« I respect formulae. It is not lawful to proceed as we are doing. And I will make a public charge against it. » And rabbi Gamaliel goes out, as stiff as a statue, followed by a man about thirty-five years old, who looks like him.

There is a little turmoil and Nicodemus and Joseph take advantage of it to speak in favour of the Martyr.

« Gamaliel is right. The time and the place are illicit, and the charges are not consistent. Can anybody accuse Him of having notoriously despised the Law? I am a friend of His and I swear that I have always found Him to be respectful of the Law » says Nicodemus.

« And I, too. And in order not to assent to a crime, I cover my head,

not for Him, but for us, and I go out. » And Joseph is about to come down from his seat and go out.

But Caiaphas shouts: « Ah! Is that what you say? Then let the sworn witnesses come. And listen to them. Then you will go away. »

Then two jail-bird figures come in. Elusive looks, cruel sneers, sly ways.

« Speak up. »

« It is not lawful to listen to both at the same time » shouts Joseph.

« I am the High Priest. I give orders. Be silent! »

Joseph strikes the table with his fist and says: « May the fire of Heaven fall upon you! As from this moment be aware that Joseph the Elder is an enemy of the Sanhedrin and a friend of the Christ. And I am going at once to inform the Praetor that a man is being sentenced to death here without the approval of Rome » and he rushes out giving a violent push to a young thin scribe who would like to hold him back.

Nicodemus goes out more calmly without saying a word. And when going out he passes in front of Jesus and looks at Him...

Another turmoil. They are afraid of Rome. And Jesus is always the expiating victim.

« See, all this is happening through Your fault, You corrupter of the best Judaeans. You have prostituted them. »

Jesus is silent.

« Let the witnesses speak » shouts Caiaphas.

« Yes, He was making use of the... the... We knew... What is the name of that thing? »

« The tetragram, perhaps? »

« That's it! You have said it! He evoked the dead. He taught people to rebel against the Sabbath and to desecrate the altar. We swear it. He said that He wanted to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days with the assistance of demons. »

« No. He said: it will not be built by man. »

Caiaphas comes down from his seat and approaches Jesus. Small, excessively fat, ugly, he looks like a huge toad close to a flower. Because Jesus, although wounded, bruised, dirty and unkempt, is still so handsome and solemn. « Are You not replying? What horrible charges they are bringing against You! Speak, to clear Yourself of such shame. »

But Jesus is silent. He looks at him but does not speak.

« Reply to me, then. I am Your Pontiff. I adjure You by the living God. Tell me: are You the Christ, the Son of God? »

« You have said it. I am. And you will see the Son of man, sitting on the right hand of the power of the Father, come on the clouds of the sky. Moreover, why do you ask Me? I have spoken in public for three years. I have not said anything secretly. Ask those who have heard Me. They will tell you what I have said and what I have

done. »

One of the soldiers who is holding Him, strikes His mouth, making it bleed once again, and he shouts:
« Is that how you reply, O satan, to the High Pontiff? »

And Jesus replies meekly to this one as He had replied to the previous one: « If I have spoken the truth, why do you strike Me? If I have said something wrong, why do you not tell Me where I am wrong? I tell you once again: I am the Christ, the Son of God. I cannot lie. I am the High Priest, the Eternal Priest. And I alone wear the true Rational, on which it is written: Doctrine and Truth. And I am faithful to both, even to death, ignominious in the eyes of the world, holy in the eyes of God, and until the blissful Resurrection. I am the Anointed One. Pontiff and King I am. And I am about to take My sceptre and with it, as with a winnowing-fan, I will clear the threshing-floor. This Temple will be destroyed and it will rise again, new and holy. Because this one is corrupt and God has abandoned it to its destiny. »

« Blasphemer! » they all shout in chorus.

« Will You do that in three days, You silly possessed man? »

« Not this one. But Mine will rise again, the Temple of the true, living, holy, three times holy God. »

« Anathema! » they howl again in chorus.

Caiaphas raises his clucking voice, he tears his linen garments with affected horror, and he says:
« What else have we to hear from witnesses? He has blasphemed. So what shall we do? »

And all in chorus: « He deserves to die. » And with disdainful scandalised gestures they go out of the hall, leaving Jesus to the mercy of the bravoos and of the mob of false witnesses, who with slaps, blows, spitting, blinding His eyes with a rag and then pulling His hair violently, drive Him here and there with His hands tied, so that He knocks against tables, chairs and walls, while they ask Him: « Who hit You? Guess. » And several times they trip Him and make Him fall flat on His face, and they split their sides with laughter seeing how hardly able He is to stand up again, His hands being tied.

Some hours go by so and the tired torturers decide to have a little rest. They take Jesus to a closet, making Him go through many yards among the insults of the mob already numerous in the enclosure of the Pontiff's house.

Jesus arrives in the courtyard where there is Peter near a fire. And He looks at him. But Peter escapes His notice. John is no longer there. I cannot see him. I think he has gone away with Nicodemus...

Dawn is breaking and the sky looks greenish. An order is given: the Prisoner is to be taken back to the Council Hall for a more legal trial. It is just the moment in which Peter for the third time denies that he knows the Christ, when the latter is passing by, already marked by sufferings. And, in the greenish dawn light, His bruises

look even more dreadful on His wan face, and His eyes more sunken and glassy: a Jesus made dull by the sorrow of the world...

A derisory sarcastic mischievous cock-crowing rends the air just beginning to stir at dawn. And at this moment of deep silence brought about by the appearance of the Christ, only Peter's harsh voice is heard to say: « I swear it, woman, I do not know Him »: a resolute decided statement, to which replies at once, like a sneer, the cheeky crowing of the cockerel.

Peter gives a start. He turns round to run away and he finds himself facing Jesus, Who looks at him with infinite compassion, with such sad deep sorrow that breaks my heart, as if after that I should see my Jesus vanish for ever. Peter sobs and he goes out staggering as if he were drunk. He runs away behind two servants, who go out into the street, and he disappears down the semi-dark street.

Jesus is taken back into the hall. In chorus they repeat the captious question: « In the name of the true God, tell us: are You the Christ? » And when they receive the same reply as the previous one, they sentence Him to death and they give orders to take Jesus to Pilate.

Jesus, escorted by all His enemies, except Annas and Caiaphas, goes out, passing once again through those courts of the Temple, in which so many times He had spoken, helped and cured people, and through the embattled enclosure He goes into the streets of the town, and more dragged than led, He descends towards the town, which is turning pinkish in the first announcement of dawn.

I think that for the only purpose of torturing Him longer, they make Him take a long tedious walk round Jerusalem, passing on purpose by the markets, the stabling, the hostels full of people at Passover. And both the waste vegetables in market places, and the excrement of animals in stabling, become projectiles for the Innocent, Whose face shows larger and larger bruises and small bleeding cuts, and is veiled by the various dirty things spread over it. His hair, already weighed down and slightly stretched by blood sweat, looks duller and hangs uncombed, strewn with bits of straw and dirt, falling over His eyes, because they ruffle it to veil His face.

The people at market places, buyers and vendors, leave everything to follow the Poor Wretch, but not out of love. Grooms and inn-servants come out in groups, deaf to the calling and orders of their mistresses, who, to tell the truth, like almost all the other women, are, if not all against the insults, at least indifferent to the tumult, and they withdraw grumbling at being left alone with so many people to serve.

So the howling train grows bigger every moment and minds and features seem to change nature, through a sudden epidemic, as the former become the minds of criminals, and the latter masks of ferocity in faces green with hatred or red with anger; hands become

claws and mouths take the shape and howling of wolves, and eyes look sinister, red, squinted like those of madmen. Jesus only is always the same, although by now He is covered with dirt spread all over His body, and His features are disfigured by bruises and swellings.

At an archivolt that narrows the street like a ring, while everything becomes obstructed and slows down, a cry rends the air: « Jesus! » It is Elias, the shepherd, who tries to make his way by swinging a heavy club. Old, powerful, menacing and strong, he almost succeeds in approaching the Master. But the crowd, defeated by the first assault, closes its ranks and separates, drives back and overwhelms the solitary disciple who struggles against a whole crowd. « Master! » he shouts, while the vortex of the crowd absorbs and rejects him.

« Go!... My Mother... I bless you... »

And the procession passes through the narrow spot. And like water that finds an open space after a dam, it pours uproariously into a wide avenue, built above the hollow between two hills, with wonderful buildings of wealthy people at its ends.

I see the Temple once again on the top of its hill, and I realise that the vicious circle they made the Convict go round, to expose Him to the ridicule of the whole town and allow everybody to insult Him, while the insulters increase at each step, is coming to its end by going back to where it started.

A horse-man comes out of a building at a gallop. The purple caparison on the white Arab horse and the magnificence of its appearance, his sword brandished naked and landed with its flat or edge on backs and heads that begin to bleed, make him look like an archangel. When in a caracole, in a prance of the horse that curvets, using its hooves as a weapon to defend itself and its master, and as the best means to make its way through the crowd, it makes the rider's purple and gold veil fall from his head, where it was held tight by a gold strip, I recognise Manaen.

« Back! » he shouts. « How dare you disturb the Tetrarch's rest? » But that is only an excuse to justify his intervention and attempt to reach Jesus. « This man... let me see Him... Stand aside, or I will call the guards... »

The people, because of the hail of blows with the flat of the sword, of the kicks of the horse and of the threats of the horse-man, open out and Manaen can reach the group of Jesus and of the Temple guards who are holding Him.

« Go away! The Tetrarch is more important than you are, you filthy servants. Back. I want to speak to Him » and he is successful by charging the most ruthless jailor with his sword.

« Master!... »

« Thank you. But go away! And may God comfort you! » And, as

best He can with His tied hands, He makes a gesture of blessing.

The crowds hiss from afar and, as soon as they see Manaen withdraw, they take vengeance for being driven back by throwing a hail of stones and rubbish on the Convict.

Along the avenue, which is uphill and already warm in the sunshine, they go towards the Antonia Tower, the mass of which is already visible in the distance.

The shrill cry of a woman rends the air: « Oh! my Saviour! My life for His, o Eternal! »

Jesus turns His head round and on the high flowery loggia surrounding a beautiful house He sees Johanna of Chuza, among maids and servants and with little Mary and Matthias around her, raise her arms towards the sky. But Heaven does not listen to prayers today! Jesus raises His arms and makes a gesture of farewell blessing.

« Death! Death to the blasphemer, the corrupter, the devil! Death to His friends » and hisses and stones are slung towards the high terrace. I do not know whether anybody is injured. I hear a very shrill cry and then I see the group break up and disappear.

And on, on, going up... Jerusalem displays her houses in the sunshine, empty, emptied by the hatred that drives the whole town, with its real inhabitants and the temporary ones who have come here for the Passover, against a defenceless man.

Some Roman soldiers, a whole maniple, run out from the Antonia with their lances pointed at the mob, who disperse shouting. In the middle of the street there is Jesus left with the guards, the chief of the priests, of the scribes and of the elders of the people.

« This man? This sedition? You will answer to Rome for this » says a centurion haughtily.

« He is liable to death according to our law. »

« And since when has the "jus gladii et sanguinis" been given back to you? » asks once again the senior centurion, a real Roman, with a severe face and a cheek marked by a deep scar. And he speaks with the contempt and disgust with which he would speak to lousy galley-slaves.

« We are aware that we do not have that right. We are loyal subjects of Rome... »

« Ha! Ha! Ha! Listen to them, Longinus. Loyal! Subjects! Rotters! I would reward you with the arrows of my archers. »

« Too noble a death! The backs of mules want nothing but the lash!... » replies Longinus with ironic coolness.

The chief priests, scribes and elders are foaming with poison. But they want to attain their object and are silent, they swallow the insult without showing that they have understood it, and bowing to the two officers, they ask that Jesus be led to Pontius Pilate so that « he may judge and condemn with the well-known honest justice

of Rome. »

« Ha! Ha! Listen to them! We have become wiser than Minerva... Here! Give Him to us! And march ahead of us! One never knows. You are stinking jackals. It is dangerous to have you behind our backs. Go on! »

« We cannot. »

« Why not? When one accuses one must be before the judge with the defendant. That is the rule of Rome. »

« The house of a heathen is unclean in our eyes, and we are already purified for Passover. »

« Oh! poor little things! they become contaminated by coming in!... And the murder of the only Hebrew Who is a man, and not a jackal and a reptile like you, does that not pollute you? All right. Then remain where you are. Not one step forward or you will be pierced by the spears. Let a decury stand round the Defendant. The others against this rabble that smells of badly washed billy-goat. »

Jesus enters into the Praetorium in the middle of the ten soldiers who are armed with lances and form a square of halberds around His person. The two centurions go on. While Jesus stops in a large entrance-hall, beyond which there is a court-yard that can be seen indistinctly behind a curtain moved by the wind, they disappear behind a door.

They come back in with the Governor, who is wearing a snowwhite toga with a scarlet mantle on top of it. Perhaps that is how they dressed when representing Rome officially. He comes in lazily, with a sceptical smile on his shaven face, he rubs some leaves of lemon-scented verbena and smells them voluptuously. He goes to a sun-dial and comes back after looking at it. He throws some grains of incense into the brazier placed at the feet of a deity. He has citron water brought to him and he gargles his throat. He gazes at his hair completely wavy in a mirror of highly polished metal. He seems to have forgotten the Convict, Who is awaiting his approval to be killed. He would make even stones fly into a rage.

Since the front of the hall is completely open and is raised by three high steps with respect to the lobby, which opens onto the street and is three more steps higher than it, the Jews can see everything very well and they are fretting and fuming. But they dare not rebel as they fear the lances and javelins.

At last, after going round and round the large hall, Pilate goes straight towards Jesus, he looks at Him and asks the two centurions: « This one? »

« Yes, this man. »

« Let His accusers come » and he goes and sits on the chair placed on the platform. Above his head the insignia of Rome interlace with the golden eagles and their powerful initials.

« They cannot come. They become contaminated. »

« Phew! Better so. We shall save streams of essences to remove their goatish smell from this place. Make them come nearer, at least. Down here. And make sure they do not come in, as they do not wish to do so. This man could be a pretext for a sedition. »

A soldier departs to take the order of the Roman Procurator. The others draw up in front of the entrance-hall at regular distances, as handsome as nine statues of heroes.

The chief priests, scribes and elders come forward and they bow servilely and stop in the little square which is before the Praetorium, beyond the three steps of the lobby.

« Speak up and be quick. You are already at fault for disturbing the peace of the night and having the Gates opened with violence. But I will have that verified. And principals and mandataries will answer for disobeying the ordinance. » Pilate has gone towards them, remaining in the hall.

« We have come to submit our verdict on this man to Rome, whose divine emperor you represent. »

« What charges do you bring against Him? He seems innocent to me... »

« If He were not an evil-doer, we would not have brought Him to you. » And in their eagerness to accuse Him they come forward.

« Repel this populace. Six steps beyond the three steps in the square. The two centuries to arms! »

The soldiers obey promptly, one hundred draw up on the top outer step with their backs to the entrance-hall, and one hundred in the little square, onto which the main door of Pilate's abode opens. I said main door, I should say huge portal or triumphal arch, because it is a very wide opening delimited by a gate, now wide open, which admits into the hall through the long corridor of the lobby at least six metres wide, so that what takes place in the raised hall is clearly visible. Beyond the wide lobby one can see the beastly faces of the Jews look threateningly and diabolically towards the inside, beyond the armed barrier that, side by side, presents two hundred sharp-pointed spears to the chicken-hearted killers.

« I ask you once again, which charge are you bringing against this man? »

« He has committed crimes against the Law of our forefathers. »

« And have you come to bother me about that? Take him and judge Him according to your laws. »

« We cannot sentence anybody to death. We are not learned. Jewish jurisprudence is a mentally deficient child as compared with the perfect Law of Rome. As ignorant people and subjects of Rome, the mistress, we are in need... »

« Since when have you become honey and butter?... But you have spoken the truth, o masters of falsehood! You are in need of Rome! Yes. To get rid of this man Who causes trouble to you. I see. »
And

Pilate laughs, looking at the clear sky that is framed like a rectangular sheet of dark turquoise among the marble snow-white walls of the hall. « Tell me: which crimes has He committed against your laws? »

« We have found out that He was causing disturbances in our country and was preventing people from paying the tribute to Caesar, saying that He is the Christ, the king of the Jews. »

Pilate goes back to Jesus, Who is in the middle of the hall, left there by the soldiers, tied but without escort, so obvious is His meekness. And he asks Him: « Are You the king of the Jews? »

« Are you asking this of your own accord, or through the insinuation of other people? »

« And what do You expect me to care for Your kingdom? Am I a Jew? Your country and its leaders have handed You over to me, that I may judge You. What have You done? I know that You are loyal. Speak. Is it true that You aspire at reigning? »

« My Kingdom does not come from this world. If it were a kingdom of this world, My ministers and my soldiers would have fought to prevent the Jews from arresting Me. But My Kingdom is not of the Earth. And you know that I do not seek power. »

« That is true. I know. I have been told. But You do not deny that You are a king? »

« You assert it. I am a King. That is why I came into the world: to bear witness to the Truth. Those who are on the side of the Truth listen to My voice. »

« What is the Truth? Are You a philosopher? It does not serve when facing death. Socrates died just the same. »

« But it served him in his lifetime, to live honestly. And also to die well. And to enter into the other life without being called a traitor of civic virtues. »

« By Jove! » Pilate looks at Him for some moments full of admiration. Then he resumes his sceptical sarcasm. He makes a gesture of boredom, turns his back on Him and goes towards the Judaeans. « I find no fault in Him. »

The crowd riots, seized with the panic fear of losing the prey and the spectacle of the capital punishment. And they shout: « He is a rebel! », « A blasphemer », « He encourages libertinism », « He instigates people to rebel », « He refuses respect for Caesar », « He feigns that He is a prophet », « He practises magic », « He is a devil », « He stirs up the people teaching all over in Judaea, where He came from Galilee teaching », « Death to Him! », « Death to Him! »

« Is He a Galilean? Are You a Galilean? » Pilate goes back to Jesus: « Do You hear how they accuse You? Prove Your innocence. » But Jesus is silent.

Pilate is pensive... And he decides: « Let a century take Him to Herod to be judged. He is Herod's subject. I acknowledge the right

of the Tetrarch and I assent to his verdict in advance. Tell him. Go. »

And Jesus, surrounded like a rascal by one hundred soldiers, passes through the town again and once more He meets Judas Iscariot, whom He had already met near a market. I forgot to mention this before, disgusted- as I was with the brawl of the populace. The same merciful glance at the traitor...

It is now more difficult to strike Him with kicks and clubs, but there is no shortage of stones and rubbish and, if the stones hit the Roman helmets and armour resounding without injuries, they do leave marks when they hit Jesus, Who is proceeding with only His tunic on, as He left His mantle at Gethsemane.

When entering Herod's sumptuous palace, He sees Chuza... who cannot look at Him and runs away not to see Him in that state, covering his head with his mantle.

He is now in the hall, in front of Herod. And behind Him, there are the scribes and Pharisees, who feel at their ease here, and who come in to make their false charges. Only the centurion and four soldiers escort Him towards the Tetrarch.

Herod descends from his seat and walks round Jesus, while listening to the accusations of His enemies. And he smiles and flouts.

He then feigns compassion and respect, which do not upset the Martyr, as his raillery did not perturb Him. « You are great. I know. I enquired about You and I was pleased that Chuza was Your friend and Manaen Your disciple. I... the worries of the State... But how anxious I was to say that You are great... to ask You to forgive me... John's eyes... his voice accuse me and are always before me. You are the saint who cancels the sins of the world. Absolve me, o Christ. »

Jesus is silent.

« I heard that they accuse You of rebelling against Rome. Are You not the promised rod to strike Assur? »

Jesus is silent.

« They told me that You predict the end of the Temple and of Jerusalem. But is the Temple not eternal as a spirit, since it was wanted by God Who is eternal? »

Jesus is silent.

« Are You mad? Have You lost Your power? Is Satan preventing You from speaking? Has he abandoned You? » Herod is laughing now.

He then gives an order. And some servants rush in carrying a greyhound, which has a broken leg and is yelping sorrowfully, and a stable-man, who is dull-witted, with a big empty head, a slavering mouth, an abortion, the laughing stock of the servants. The scribes and priests run away, shouting at the sacrilege, when they see the stretcher of the dog.

Herod, false and mocking, explains: « It's Herodias pet. A gift of

Rome. It broke its leg yesterday and she is weeping. Order it to be cured. Work a miracle. »

Jesus looks at him severely and is silent.

« Have I offended You? This one, then. He is a man, although he is little more than a wild beast. Give him intelligence, since You are the Intelligence of the Father... Is that not what You say? » And he laughs offensively.

Another more severe glance of Jesus, Who is still silent.

« This man is too abstinent and is now stunned by scorn. Bring wine and women here. And untie Him. »

They untie His hands. And while a large number of servants bring amphorae and cups, some dancers come in... covered with nothing: a many-coloured linen fringe is the only garment girding their thin waists and hips. Nothing else. As they are Africans they are of bronze complexion and are as agile as young gazelles, and they begin a silent lascivious dance.

Jesus refuses the cups and closes His eyes without speaking. Herod's courtiers laugh at His disdain.

« Take the woman You wish. Live! Learn how to live!... » suggests Herod.

Jesus seems a statue. With folded arms, closed eyes, He does not stir even when the lewd dancers touch Him lightly with their nude bodies.

« Enough. I treated You as God, and You did not act as God. I treated You as a man, and you have not acted as a man. You are mad. A white garment. Clothe Him with it so that Pontius Pilate may know that the Tetrarch took his subject to be mad. Centurion, please tell the Proconsul that Herod humbly presents his respect to him and venerates Rome. Go. »

And Jesus, tied once again, goes out, with a linen tunic reaching down to His knees, on top of His red woollen garment.

And they go back to Pilate.

Now, when the century with difficulty squeeze through the crowd, which did not get tired waiting in front of the proconsular building - and it is strange to see so many people in that place and its neighbourhood, while the rest of the town seems to be empty Jesus sees the shepherds in a group and they are all there, that is, Isaac, Jonathan, Levi, Joseph, Elias, Matthias, John, Simeon, Benjamin and Daniel, together with a small group of Galileans, among whom I recognise Alphaeus and Joseph of Alphaeus with two more whom I do not know, but judging by their hair-style, I should say they are Judaeans. And farther away, He sees John, who has slipped into the hall, half-hidden behind a column, with a Roman, who I think is a servant. He smiles at this one and at those... His friends... But what are these few people and Johanna, and Manaen, and Chuza, in the middle of an ocean boiling with hatred?

...

The centurion salutes Pontius Pilate and reports.

« Here again?! Phew! Cursed be this race! Make the mob come forward and bring the Accused here. Oh! what a nuisance! »

He goes towards the crowd, stopping again in the middle of the hall.

« Jews, listen. You have brought me this man as an instigator of the people. I have examined Him in your presence and I have not found in Him any of the crimes of which you accuse Him. Herod did not find more than I did. And he has sent Him back to us. He does not deserve death. Rome has spoken. But, in order not to displease you, depriving you of the amusement, I will give you Barabbas. And I will order Him to be given forty lashes. That is enough. »

« No, no! Not Barabbas! Not Barabbas! Death to Jesus! And a dreadful death! Release Barabbas and condemn the Nazarene to death. »

« But listen! I said I will have Him lashed. Is that not enough? I will have Him scourged, then! It is terrible, you know? He may die through it. What wrong has He done? I can find no fault in Him. And I will set Him free. »

« Crucify Him! Crucify Him! Death to Him! You are the protector of criminals! Heathen! You are Satan, too! »

The crowd advances and the first formation of soldiers wavers, as they cannot make use of their lances. But the second line, descending one step, swing their lances and free their companions.

« Let Him be scourged » Pilate orders a centurion.

« How many blows? »

« As many as you like... In any case the matter is over. And I am bored. Go. »

Jesus is led by four soldiers to the court-yard beyond the hall. In the middle of that court-yard, which is all paved with coloured marbles, there is a high column like the one in the porch. At about three metres from the floor it has an iron bar protruding at least a metre and ending with a ring, to which Jesus is tied, with His hands joined above His head, after He has been undressed. He has on only short linen drawers and sandals. His hands tied at His wrists are raised up as far as the ring, so that, although tall, He rests only the tips of His toes on the floor... And even that position is a torture.

I have read, I do not know where, that the column was low and that Jesus was bent over it. That may be. I say what I see.

Behind Him stands one who looks like an executioner, with a clear Jewish profile; in front of Him, another man, looking like the previous one. They are armed with scourges, made of seven leather strips tied to a handle and ending with small lead hammers. They begin to strike Him rhythmically, as if they were practising. One in front and one behind, so that Jesus' trunk is in a whirl of lashes and

scourges. The four soldiers, to whom He has been handed, are indifferent and are playing dice with other three soldiers who have just arrived. And the voices of the players follow the rhythm of the sound of the scourges, which hiss like snakes and then resound like stones striking the stretched skin of a drum. They beat the pool, body, which is so slender and as white as old ivory, and then becomes covered with stripes that at first are a brighter and brighter pink shade, then violet, then it displays blue swellings full of blood, then the skin breaks letting blood flow from all sides. They redouble their cruelty on His thorax and abdomen, but there is no shortage of blows given to His legs, arms and even to His head, so that no fragment of His skin may be left without pain.

And not a moan... If He were not held up by the rope, He would fall. But He does not fall and does not groan. Only His head hangs over His chest, after so many blows, as if He had fainted.

« Hey! Stop! He must be alive when He is killed » shouts a soldier scoffingly.

The two executioners stop and wipe their perspiration.

« We are exhausted » they say. « Give us our pay, so that we may have a refreshing drink... »

« I would give you the gallows! But here you are... » and a decurion throws a large coin to each executioner.

« You have done a good job. He looks like a mosaic. Titus, do you mean that this man was really Alexander's love? We must let him know, so that he may mourn over His death. Let us untie Him. »

They untie Him, and Jesus falls on the floor like a dead body. They leave Him there, pushing Him now and again with their feet shod with caligae, to see whether He moans. But He is silent.

« Is He dead? Is it possible? He is a young man and a handicraftsman, so I am told... and He looks like a delicate lady. »

« I will take care of Him » says a soldier. And he sits Him with His back against the column. Clots of blood appear where He was... He then goes towards a fountain gurgling under the porch, he fills a tub with water and pours it on Jesus' head and body. « That's it! Water is good for flowers. »

Jesus draws a deep sigh and tries to stand up, but His eyes are still closed.

« Oh! good. Come on, darling! Your dame is waiting for You!... »

But Jesus in vain presses His hands against the floor trying to stand up.

« Come on! Quick! Are You weak? Here is some refreshment » says another soldier sneeringly. And with the shaft of his halberd he delivers a blow to Jesus' face striking it between the right cheekbone and the nose, that begins to bleed.

Jesus opens His eyes and looks round. His eyes are veiled... He stares at the soldier who struck Him, wipes the blood with His hand,

and then, with much effort, He stands up.

« Get dressed. It is immodest to stay like that. You lewd man! » They all laugh standing around Him.

And He obeys without speaking. But when He bends - and He alone knows how much He suffers when stooping to the ground, contused as He is, as His wounds open even more when the skin is stretched, and more are formed as the blisters burst - a soldier gives a kick to His garments and scatters them, and every time Jesus reaches them, staggering to where they lie, a soldier pushes them away or throws them in a different direction. And Jesus, suffering bitterly, goes after them without uttering a word, while the soldiers deride Him obscenely.

He can dress Himself again at last. And He can put on also the white tunic, which was left in a corner and is still clean. He seems to wish to conceal His poor red garment, which only yesterday was so beautiful and now is filthy with rubbish and stained with the blood sweated at Gethsemane. Furthermore, before putting on His short vest, He dries His wet face with it, cleaning it of dust and spittles. And the poor holy face looks clean, marked only by bruises and small cuts. And He tidies His hair which is hanging ruffled, and His beard, out of an inborn need to be personally tidy.

Then He squats in the sunshine. Because my Jesus is shivering... Fever begins to torture Him with its cold shivers. And He feels weak because of the blood He has lost, of fasting and walking so much.

They tie His hands once again. And the rope begins to cut into His wrists, where the excoriated skin has left a mark like a red bracelet.

« And now? What shall we do with Him? I am bored! »

« Wait. The Jews want a king. Now we will give them one. Him... » says a soldier.

And he runs out to a court that is in the back, from which he comes back with a bunch of branches of wild hawthorn, still flexible, because springtime keeps the branches relatively tender, whilst the long sharp thorns are hard. With a dagger they remove leaves and buds, they bend the branches forming a circle and they place them on His poor head. But the cruel crown falls down on His neck.

« It does not fit. Make it narrower. Take it off. »

They take it off and scratch His cheeks, risking to blind Him, and they tear off His hair in doing so. They make it smaller. Now it is too small, and although they press it down, driving the thorns into His head, it threatens to fall. They take it off once again, tearing more of His hair. They adjust it again. It now fits. At the front there are three thorny cords. At the back, where the ends of the three branches interweave, there is a real knot of thorns that penetrate into the nape of His neck.

« Do You see how well You look? Natural bronze and real rubies. Look at Yourself, o king, in my cuirass » says the inventor of the torture scoffingly.

« A crown is not sufficient to make a king. Purple and sceptre are required. In the stable there is a cane and in the sewer there is a red chlamys. Get them, Cornelius. »

And once they have them, they put the dirty red rag on Jesus, shoulders, and before putting the cane in His hands, they beat His head with it, bowing and greeting: « Hail, king of the Jews » and they roar with laughter.

Jesus does not react. He lets them sit Him on the « throne »: a tub turned upside-down, certainly used to water horses, He lets them strike and scoff at Him, without ever uttering a word. He only looks at them, casting glances of such kindness and such atrocious sorrow that I cannot bear them without feeling heart-broken.

The soldiers stop sneering at Him only when the harsh voice of a superior orders them to take the guilty prisoner to Pilate. Guilty! Of what?

Jesus is taken back again to the entrance-hall, which is now covered with a precious velarium because of the sun. He still has the crown, the chlamys and the cane.

« Come forward, that I may show You to the people. »

Jesus, although exhausted, straightens Himself up with dignity. Oh! He really is a king!

« Listen, Jews. Here is the man. I have punished Him. But now let Him go. »

« No, no! We want to see Him. Out! That we may see the blasphemer! »

« Bring Him out. And make sure they do not take Him. »

And as Jesus goes out into the lobby and is visible in the square formed by the soldiers, Pontius Pilate points to Him with his hand saying: « Here is the Man. Your King. Is that still not sufficient? »

The sun in a sultry day is shining almost perpendicular, because it is between the third and the sixth hour and it lights up and makes eyes and faces conspicuous: are those people human beings? No: they are rabid hyenas. They shout, they shake their fists, they want His death...

Jesus is holding Himself upright. And I assure you that He never had such a noble bearing as now. Not even when He performed the most wonderful miracles. Nobility of sorrow, but so divine as to suffice to mark Him with the name of God. But, in order to say that Name, it is necessary to be at least men. And Jerusalem has no men today. But only demons.

Jesus looks around at the crowd and in the sea of rancorous faces he looks for and finds some friendly faces. How many? Less than twenty friends among thousands of enemies... And He lowers His

head, struck by such abandonment. A tear falls... and another... and another... The sight of His tears does not engender compassion, but gives rise to fiercer hatred.

He is taken back to the hall.

« So? Let Him go. It is justice. »

« No. Death to Him. Crucify Him. »

« I will give you Barabbas. »

« No. The Christ! »

« In that case, take Him yourselves. And crucify Him by yourselves, because I find no fault in Him to do that. »

« He said that He is the Son of God. Our Law inflicts death on whoever is guilty of such blasphemy. »

Pilate becomes pensive. He goes back in and sits on his little throne. He rests his forehead in his hand and his elbow on his knee and scrutinises Jesus. « Come near me » he says.

Jesus goes to the foot of the platform.

« Is it true? Tell me. »

Jesus is silent.

« Where do You come from? Who is God? »

« He is the All. »

« And then? What does the All mean? What is the All for one who is dying? You are mad... God does not exist. I do. »

Jesus is silent. He has let the great word drop and then He envelops Himself in silence.

« Pontius, Claudia Procula's freedwoman asks permission to come in. She has a note for you. »

« Domine! Women also now! Let her come in. »

A Roman woman comes in and kneels down handing a waxed tablet. It must be the one with which Procula begs her husband not to condemn Jesus. The woman withdraws backwards, while Pilate reads.

« I am advised to avoid Your being put to death. Is it true that You are more than a haruspex? You frighten me. »

Jesus is silent.

« Do You not know that I have the power to free You or to crucify You? »

« You would have no power, if it were not given to you from Above. Therefore, he who handed Me over to you is more guilty than you are. »

« Who is it? Your God? I fear... » Jesus is silent.

Pilate is on tenterhooks. He would like and he would not like to... He is afraid of God's punishment, he is afraid of Rome, he fears Judaeans' revenges. For a moment he overcomes the fear of God. He goes to the front of the hall and in a thundering voice he shouts: « He is not guilty. »

« If you say so, you are no friend of Caesar's. He who proclaims himself king, is his enemy. You want to free the Nazarene. We will inform Caesar of that. »

Pilate is seized with the fear of man.

« So, you want Him dead? Let it be so. But the blood of this just man is not to stain my hands » and having a basin brought to him, he washes his hands in the presence of the people who appear to be seized with frenzy while they shout: « His blood on us. His blood be on us and on our children. We are not afraid of Him. Crucify Him! Crucify Him! »

Pontius Pilate goes back to his little throne and he calls the centurion Longinus and a slave. He orders the slave to bring him a board on which he places a notice and has the words written on it: « Jesus Nazarene, King of the Jews ». And he shows it to the people.

« No. Not so. Not king of the Jews. But that He said that He is king of the Jews. » Many of them shout so.

« What I have written, I have written » says Pilate severely, and standing upright, he stretches his hand forward with its palm turned down, and he orders: « Let Him go to the cross. Soldier, go. Prepare the cross. » And he descends from his throne without even looking towards the uproarious crowd or at the wan Condemned Man. He leaves the hall...

Jesus is left in the middle of it, guarded by the soldiers, awaiting the cross.

Friday, 10th March, 1944.

Jesus says:

« I want you to meditate on the point concerning My meetings with Pilate.

John, who is the most accurate witness and narrator, as he was almost always present, or at least very close, relates how I was taken to the Praetorium when I left Caiaphas' house. And he specifies "early in the morning". In fact you saw that it was daybreak. He also specifies: "they (the Jews) did not enter in order not to be contaminated and thus be able to eat the Passover". Being hypocritical as usual, they thought that it was dangerous to trample on the dust of a Gentile's house, as they might be contaminated, but they did not consider it a sin to kill an Innocent, and with their spirits satisfied with the crime they had accomplished, they were able to enjoy their Passover even more.

They have many followers even nowadays. All those, who do wrong internally, but externally profess respect for religion and love for God, are like them. Formulae, formulae, but not true religion! I regard them with disgust and disdain.

As the Jews would not go into Pilate's house, Pilate came out to

hear what the bawling crowd wanted and, experienced as he was in governing and judging, at a glance he realised that not I, but that population intoxicated with hatred was guilty. By looking at each other, we read each other's heart. I judged the man what he was. He judged Me for what I was. I felt pity for him, because he was weak. And he felt pity for Me, because I was innocent. He tried to save Me from the very beginning. And as the right to administer justice with regard to criminals was remitted and reserved to Rome, he tried to save Me by saying: "Judge Him according to your Law".

Hypocrites for the second time, the Jews refused to condemn Me. It is true that Rome had the right of justice, but when, for instance, Stephen was stoned, Rome still ruled over Jerusalem and notwithstanding all that, they passed sentence and had the capital sentence executed disregarding Rome. With regard to Me, Whom they hated and feared and did not love - they would not believe ".hat I was the Messiah, but did not want to kill Me materially, in case I were - they acted in a different way and accused Me of being an instigator against the power of Rome (you would say a "rebel") in order to get Rome to judge Me. In their ill-famed court of justice, and several times in the three years of My ministry, they had accused Me of being a blasphemer and false prophet, and as such I should have been stoned or killed in any way. But now, to avoid committing the crime materially, as by instinct they felt they would be punished for it, they made Rome do it, accusing Me of being a criminal and a rebel.

When the crowds are perverted and the leaders have become devils, there is nothing easier than accusing an innocent to give vent to their thirst for ferocity and usurpation, and to get rid of those who are an obstacle and a judgement. We have gone back to those days. The world, after an incubation of perverted ideas, explodes now and again in such displays of perversion. Like a huge pregnant woman, the crowd, after nourishing its monster in its womb with doctrines of wild beasts, gives birth to it so that it may devour. So that it may devour the best people first, and then itself.

Pilate goes back into the Praetorium and calls Me near him. And he questions Me. He had already heard people speak of Me. Among his centurions there were some who repeated My Name with grateful love, with tears in their eyes and smiles in their hearts, and who spoke of Me as of a benefactor. In their reports to the Praetor, when they were questioned about this Prophet, Who attracted the crowds to Himself and preached a new doctrine which mentioned a strange kingdom, inconceivable to a heathen mind, they had always replied that I was a meek kind man who did not seek the honours of the Earth, and that I inculcated and practised respect and obedience to those who are the authorities. More sincere than the Israelities, they saw and witnessed the truth. The previous

Sunday, when his attention was attracted by the shouts of the crowd, he had leaned out of the window and he had seen a disarmed man pass by riding a little donkey and blessing, surrounded by children and women. He had realised that that man could certainly not be a danger to Rome.

So he wants to know whether I am a king. In his ironic pagan scepticism he wanted to have a little laugh at that royalty that rides a donkey, that has bare-footed children, smiling women and common men as courtiers, at that royalty that for three years has preached that it has no interest in riches and power and that speaks of no conquests but those of the spirit and the soul. What is the soul for a heathen? Not even his gods have souls. And can man have it? Also now this king with no crown, with no palace, with no court, with no soldiers, repeats to him that His kingdom is not of this world. So much so that no minister and no army rises to defend their king and free Him from His enemies.

Pilate, sitting on his seat, scrutinises Me, because I am an enigma to him. If he cleared his soul of human cares, of the pride of his office, of the error of heathenism, he would understand at once Who I am. But how can light enter where too many things obstruct the openings preventing light from entering? It is always like that, My children. Even now. How can God and His light enter where there is no more room for them, and doors and windows are closed and defended by pride, by humanity, by vice, by usury, by so many guards at the service of Satan against God? Pilate cannot understand what My kingdom is. And what is more painful, he does not ask Me to explain it to him. To My invitation to know the Truth, he, the untameable heathen, replies: "What is the truth?" and with a shrug of his shoulders he lets the matter drop.

Oh! My children! Oh! My Pilates of the present times! You also, like Pontius Pilate, let the most vital matters drop with a shrug of your shoulders. You consider them useless old-fashioned things. What is the Truth? Money? No. Women? No. Power? No. Physical health? No. Human glory? No. Then forget about it. It is not worth running after a chimera. Money, women, power, good health, comforts, honours are the real useful things that one must love and attain at all costs. That is how you reason. And, worse than Esau, you barter eternal goods for coarse food that is harmful both to your physical health and to your eternal salvation. Why do you not persist in asking: "What is the Truth"? It, the Truth, asks for nothing but to be known in order to teach what it is. It is before you as it was for Pilate, and looks at you with eyes full of suppliant love, imploring you: "Question me. I will teach you". Did you notice how I looked at Pilate? I look at all of you in the same way. And if I look with serene love at those who love Me and ask for My words, I cast glances of sorrowful love at those who do not love Me, do not

seek Me, do not listen to Me. But it is always love, because Love is My nature.

Pilate leaves Me where I am, without asking more questions, and he goes towards the wicked people who speak in coarser voices and impose themselves through their violence. And he, a real wretch, listens to them, whilst he did not listen to Me and shrugging his shoulders he declined My invitation to become acquainted with the Truth. He listens to Falsehood. Idolatry, whatever its form may be, is always inclined to venerate and accept Falsehood, whatever it may be. And Falsehood, when accepted by the weak, leads the weak to crime. And yet Pilate, on the threshold of crime, still wants to save Me and he tries twice. It is at this point that he sends me to Herod. He knows very well that the shrewd king, who keeps in with both Rome and his people, will act in such a way as not to damage Rome and not irritate the Jewish people. But, like all weak people, he puts off for a little while the decision that he does not feel like taking, hoping that the plebeian rising will abate.

I said: "When you speak say 'Yes' if you mean yes, 'No' if you mean no". But he did not hear that, and if somebody repeated it to him, he shrugged his shoulders as usual. In order to succeed in the world, to have honours and profits, it is necessary to be able to make a no of a yes and a yes of a no, according to what common sense (read: human sense) advises. How many Pilates there are in the twentieth century! Where are the Christian heroes who said yes, constantly yes, to the Truth and for the sake of the Truth, and no, constantly no, to Falsehood? Where are the heroes who are able to face danger and events with brave strength and tranquil quickness and do not postpone, because Good is to be accomplished at once and evil shunned at once, without "buts" and "ifs"?

On My return from Herod, there is Pilate's fresh compromise: scourging. And what did he expect? Did he not know that the crowd is a wild beast that becomes merciless when it begins to see blood? But I had to be crushed to expiate your sins of the flesh. And I am crushed. There is not a shred of My body that has not been struck. I am the Man of Whom Isaiah speaks. And to the torture that had been ordered, there is added another that was not ordered, but was created by human cruelty: that of the thorns.

Men, do you see your Saviour, your King, crowned with sorrow to free your heads of so many sins fermenting in them? Do you not consider the pain that My innocent head suffered to expiate, on your behalf, your sinful thoughts that are more and more dreadful and are transformed into deeds? You, who feel offended even when there is no reason for feeling so, look at your offended King, and He is God, with His ironic mantle of torn purple, with a cane as His sceptre and the crown of thorns. He is already dying, and they slap His face with their hands and with mockery. And you are not moved

to pity. Like the Jews, you continue to show Me your fists, shouting: "Away, we have not other God but Caesar", o idolaters, who do not worship God, but yourselves and those who are more overbearing among you. You do not want the Son of God. He gives you no help for your crimes. Satan is more obliging. So you want Satan. You are afraid of the Son of God. Like Pilate. And when you feel Him impend over you with His power, and stir within you with the voices of your consciences that reproach you in His name, like Pilate, you ask: "Who are You?".

You know Who I am. Also those who deny Me, know what and Who I am. Do not lie. There are twenty centuries around Me and they illustrate who I am and they make you acquainted with My miracles. Pilate is more excusable. You are not, as you have a heritage of twenty centuries of Christianity to support your faith or to inculcate it in you, but you will not hear of it. And yet I was more severe with Pilate than with you. I did not reply. I do speak to you. And even so, I do not succeed in persuading you that it is I and that you owe Me adoration and obedience. Even now you accuse Me of being My own ruin in you, because I do not listen to you. You say that you lose your faith because of that. Oh! liars! Where is your faith? Where is your love? When do you pray to Me and live with love and faith? Are you great people? Remember that you are such because I allow it. Are you anonyms in the crowd? Remember that there is no other God but I. No one is greater than I am and no one is ahead of Me. So give Me that cult of love that is due to Me and I will listen to you, because you will no longer be illegitimate children, but the sons of God.

And here is the last attempt of Pilate to save My life, if it were possible to save it after the cruel endless flagellation. He shows Me to the crowd: "Here is the Man!" I arouse human pity in him. He hopes in collective pity. But before the resisting harshness and the advancing threats, he is not capable of accomplishing a supernaturally just deed, and therefore a good one, saying: "I am setting Him free because He is innocent. You are guilty people, and if you do not disperse, you will become acquainted with the severity of Rome". That is what he should have said, had he been a just man, without taking into account the future detriment that would befall him.

Pilate is a false good man. Longinus is good, because although he was less powerful than the Praetor and less defended, in the middle of the street and surrounded by few soldiers and a hostile multitude, he dares to defend Me, help Me, grant Me a rest, to be consoled by the pious women, be assisted by the man from Cyrene and finally to have My Mother at the foot of the Cross. He was a hero of justice and so he became a hero of Christ.

Be aware, o men who worry only about your material welfare,

that God intervenes also in its favour, when He sees you behave faithfully towards justice, which is emanation of God. I always reward those who act righteously. I defend those who defend Me. I love them and succour them. I am always the One Who said: "He who gives a glass of water in My name will be rewarded". To those who give Me love, the water that quenches the thirst of My lips of the divine Martyr, I give Myself, that is protection and blessings. »

601. Death of Judas of Kerioth. The Behaviour of Mary towards Judas Cancels Eve's Bearing towards Cain.

31st March 1944. Friday in Passion Week, 2 a.m.

Here is my very painful vision in these early hours of Passion Friday, as it appeared to me while I was saying the prayers of the Hour of Our Lady of Sorrows; in fact I had thought that spending the night before my Profession in the company of the Virgin of Seven Sorrows was the best preparation for the Profession.

I see Judas. He is alone. He is dressed in light yellow with a red cord round his waist. My internal warner informs me that Jesus has been captured a short time ago and that Judas, who had run away after the arrest, is a prey to contrasting ideas. In fact the Iscariot looks like a furious wild beast hunted down by a pack of mastiffs. Every breath of wind rustling among leaves, any noise in the streets, the gurgling of a fountain make him start and turn round suspiciously and with terror, as if an executioner had caught up with him. He looks round with his head lowered, his neck twisted, rolling his eyes like one who wants to see but is afraid of seeing, and if a play of moonlight forms a shadow with a human appearance, he opens his eyes wide, jumps back, he becomes more livid than he normally is, he stops for a moment and then runs away headlong, retracing his steps, slipping away along other narrow streets, until another noise, another play of light makes him stop or run away in a different direction.

In his crazy running he goes towards the centre of the town. But the clamour of people makes him realise that he is near Caiaphas' house, and then, pressing his head with his hands and stooping as if those shouts were stones lapidating him, he runs away. And in doing so he runs along a lane that takes him straight towards the house where the Supper was consumed. He becomes aware of that when he is in front of it, because there is a little fountain that trickles just there. The drops of water that fall into the small stone basin and the light whistle of the wind, that blowing along the narrow lane produces a kind of repressed groan, must sound to him like the tears and the moaning of the betrayed tortured Master. He covers his ears with his hands in order not to hear and runs away with his eyes closed in order not to see that door, which he had entered

with the Master a few hours earlier, and from which he had come out to go and get the armed guards to arrest Him.

While running so blindly, he bumps against a stray dog, the first dog I have seen since I had visions, a big grey hairy dog that moves to one side snarling, ready to hurl itself upon the disturber. Judas opens his eyes and meets the two phosphorescent ones staring at him, and he sees the white uncovered fangs that seem to be laughing in a diabolic manner. He gives a shriek of terror. The dog, that perhaps takes it for a cry of menace, rushes upon him and they both roll in the dust: Judas underneath, paralysed by fear, the dog on top of him. When the animal leaves the prey, perhaps considered unworthy of a struggle, Judas is bleeding because of two of three bites, and his mantle is badly torn.

One bite has injured Judas' cheek, exactly where he kissed Jesus. His cheek is bleeding and the blood stains the neck of Judas' yellowish garment. It forms a sort of collar of blood soaking the red cord that fastens the garment round the neck, making it even redder. Judas, touching his cheek with his hand and looking at the dog that is going away, but he looks at it from the opening of a door, whispers: « Beelzebub! », and with a fresh shriek he runs away chased by the dog for some time. He runs as far as the little bridge near Gethsemane. Here, either because it was tired of chasing him or because it was rabid and the water turns it away, the dog abandons the prey and goes back snarling. Judas, who had rushed into the torrent to get stones to throw at the dog, when he sees it go away, looks around and realises that the water reaches half-way up his calves. Without bothering about his garments, which are getting wetter and wetter, he bends down as far as the water and drinks, as if he were parched by fever, and he washes his cheek that is bleeding and must be painful.

In the light of daybreak he climbs out of the gravel-bed, on the other side, as if he were still afraid of the dog and did not dare to go back towards the town. He walks a few metres and finds himself at the entrance to the Garden of the Mount of Olives. He shouts: « No! No! » when he recognises the place. Then, I do not know through which irresistible force or through which satanic criminal sadism, he proceeds in that place. He looks for the place where Jesus was arrested. The earth of the path trampled on by many feet, the grass ruffled at a certain point and some blood on the ground, perhaps Malchus', make him understand that there he pointed out the Innocent to the executioners.

He looks and looks... and then he utters a hoarse cry and jumps backwards. He shouts: « That blood, that blood!... » and he points it out... to whom? with his hand stretched out and his forefinger pointed to it. In the increasing light his face is ashen and ghastly. He looks like a madman. His eyes are wide open and shiny as if he

were delirious, his hair, ruffled by his running and his terror, looks shaggy on his head, his cheek, which is swelling, twists his mouth in a grin. His tunic, torn, covered with blood, wet, muddy, because the dust that had stuck to the wet cloth has become mud, makes him look like a beggar. His mantle, which is also torn and muddy, hangs down from one shoulder like a rag, and he gets caught in it when, continuing to shout: « That blood, that blood! » he steps back, as if that blood had become a sea that rises and submerges.

Judas falls back and hurts the back of his head against a stone. He moans with pain and fear. « Who is it? » he shouts. He must have thought that somebody had made him fall to strike him. He turns round terrified. There is no one! He stands up. Blood is now dripping also at the back of his neck. The red circle widens on his garment. It does not fall to the ground, because there is not much of it. His garment absorbs it. The red halter now seems to be already round his neck.

He walks. He finds the traces of the little fire lit by Peter at the foot of an olive-tree. But he does not know that it is Peter's work and he must think that Jesus was there. He shouts: « Away! Away! » and with both hands stretched out in front of him, he seems to be driving back a ghost that torments him. He runs away, and ends up just against the rock of the Agony.

By now daybreak is clear and one can see well and immediately. Judas sees Jesus' mantle left folded on the rock. He recognises it. He wants to touch it. He is afraid. He stretches out his hand and withdraws it. He wants and does not want. But that mantle fascinates him. He moans: « No. No. » He then says: « Yes, by Satan! Yes. I want to touch it. I am not afraid! I am not afraid! »

He says that he is not afraid, but his teeth are chattering with terror, and the noise made above his head by a branch of an olivetree, that is blown by the wind against the nearby trunk, makes him shout once again. And yet he makes an effort and gets hold of the mantle. And he laughs. The laughter of a madman, of a demon. A hysterical, broken, lugubrious, never ending laughter, because he has overcome his fear. And he says so: « You do not frighten me, Christ. I am no longer afraid. I was so much afraid of You, because I thought that You were a God and a strong man. Now You no longer frighten me, because You are not God. You are a poor madman, a weakling. You did not know how to defend Yourself. You did not reduce me to ashes, neither did You read betrayal in my heart. My fears! ... What a fool! When You spoke, even yesterday evening, I thought You knew. But You knew nothing. It was my fear that gave the tone of prophecy to Your common words. You are nothing. You have allowed Yourself to be sold, pointed out, caught like a mouse in its hole. Your power! Your origin! Ha! Ha! Ha! Buffoon! Satan is the strong one! Stronger than You. He defeated You! Ha! Ha! Ha!

The Prophet! The Messiah! The King of Israel! And You subjugated me for three years! With fear always in my heart! And I had lie to deceive You subtly when I wanted to enjoy life! But even if I had stolen and fornicated without all the cunning I used to employ, You would not have done me anything. Faint-hearted! Fool! Coward! Take this! Take this! Take this! I was wrong in not doing to You what I am now doing to Your mantle to revenge myself for the time You kept me the slave of fear. Fear of a rabbit!... Take this! Here! Take this! »

At each « take this! » Judas bites the cloth of the mantle and tries to tear it. He rumples it with his hands. But in doing so, he unfolds it and the stains wetting it appear. Judas stops in his fury. He stares at those stains. He touches them. He smells them. It is blood... He spreads out the whole mantle. The impression left by the two hands stained with blood, when Jesus pressed the cloth against His face, is clearly visible.

« Ah!... Blood! Blood! His... No! » Judas drops the mantle and looks around. Also on the rock, where Jesus leaned with His back when the angel comforted Him, there is a dark mark of blood that is clotting. « There!... There!... Blood! Blood!... » He lowers his eyes in order not to see, and he sees the grass all stained with the blood that has dropped on it. As it has been diluted by the dew, it looks as if it had just dripped. It is red and shines in the early sunshine. « No! No! No! I don't want to see it! I cannot look at that blood! Help! » and he holds his throat with his hands and gropes about, as if he were drowning in a sea of blood. « Back! Back! Leave me! Leave me! Cursed! But this blood is a sea! It covers the Earth! The Earth! The Earth! And on the Earth there is no room for me, because I cannot look at that blood that covers it. I am the Cain of the Innocent! » I think that the idea of suicide entered his heart at this moment. Judas' face is frightening.

He jumps from the terrace and runs away through the olivegrove without going back the way he came. He looks like one chased by wild beasts. He goes back to town. He envelops himself in his mantle as best he can and he tries to cover his wound and his face as much as possible. He turns his steps towards the Temple.

But while going there, at a crossroad he finds himself in front of the rabble who are dragging Jesus to Pilate. He cannot withdraw, because other people press him from behind, as they flock to see. And, tall as he is, he dominates forcibly and sees. And he meets Jesus' eyes... They exchange glances for a moment. Then Jesus, tied and beaten, passes by. And Judas falls on his back, as if he had fainted. The crowds trample on him pitilessly, and he does not react. He obviously prefers to be trodden on by the whole world, rather than meet those eyes.

When the decide pack has gone by with the Martyr, and the

street is empty, he stands up again and runs to the Temple. He bumps against and almost overthrows a guard on duty at the gate of the enclosure. Other guards run to prevent the frantic man from entering. But like a furious bull, he routs them all. One of them, who clings to him to prevent him from going into the hall of the Sanhedrin, where they are all still gathered discussing, is seized by the throat, strangled and thrown down the three steps, if not dead, certainly at the point of death.

« I don't want your money, may you be damned » he shouts, standing in the middle of the hall, just where Jesus was previously. He looks like a demon who has come out of hell. Bleeding, unkempt, in a state of delirious fury, slavering, his hands like claws, he shouts and seems to be barking, so shrill and hoarse is his howling voice. « I don't want your money, you cursed ones. You have ruined me. You have made me commit the gravest sin. I am cursed like you! I have betrayed innocent Blood. May that Blood and my death fall upon you. Upon you... No! Ha!... » Judas sees the floor stained with blood. « Even here, is there blood even here? Everywhere! His blood is everywhere! But how much blood has the Lamb of God, to cover the whole Earth like this without dying? And I have shed it! Through your instigation. Cursed! May you be cursed for ever! Cursed be these walls! Cursed be this profaned Temple! Cursed be the deicide Pontiff! Cursed be the unworthy priests, the false doctors, the hypocritical Pharisees, the cruel Judaeans, the sly scribes! May I be accursed! Curse me! Keep your money and may it strangle your souls in your throats, as the halter strangles me » and he throws the purse in Caiaphas' teeth and goes away howling, while the coins tinkle spreading out on the floor after striking Caiaphas' mouth and making it bleed. No one dare stop him.

He goes out. He runs along the streets. And he fatally meets with Jesus twice again, as He goes and comes back from Herod.

He departs from the town centre, taking the poorest lanes at random and he ends up again at the house of the Supper. It is all closed as if it were abandoned. He stops. He looks at it. « The Mother! » he whispers. « The Mother!... » He is undecided... « I have a mother as well! And I have killed a son of a mother!... And yet... I want to go in... To see that room again. There is no blood in there... » He knocks at the door.

He knocks again... and again... The mistress of the house comes to open and half-opens the door. Ajar... And seeing the man so agitated and altered beyond recognition, she utters a cry and tries to close the door again. But Judas opens it wide with a push of his shoulder and, knocking down the terrified woman, he goes in.

He runs towards the little door that lets into the Supper Room. He opens it and goes in. A beautiful sunshine enters through the wide-open windows. Judas breathes a sigh of relief. He proceeds.

Everything is calm and silent here. The dishes are still as they were left. One understands that nobody has taken care of them. One might think that they are about to sit at the table.

Judas goes towards the table. He looks whether there is any wine in the amphorae. There is. He drinks greedily out of the amphora itself, lifting it with both hands. Then he sits down and rests his head on his arms folded on the table. He does not notice that he has sat just where Jesus was seated and that in front of him there is the chalice used for the Eucharist. He remains still for some time, until his panting after so much running calms down. He then looks up and sees the chalice. And he realises where he has sat down.

He stands up as if he were possessed. But the chalice enchants him. A little red wine is still in the bottom of it and the sun, shining on the metal (it looks like silver) inflames the liquid. « Blood! Blood! Blood also here! His Blood! His Blood! "Do this in memory of Me!... Take this and drink it. This is My Blood... The Blood of the new testament that will be shed for you... Ha! I am cursed! It can no longer be shed for me to remit my sin. I do not ask to be forgiven, because He cannot forgive me. Away, away! There is no place where the Cain of God may find peace. Death! Death to me!... »

He goes out. He finds himself in front of Mary, Who is standing at the door of the room where Jesus left Her. Hearing a noise, She has looked out, hoping perhaps to see John, who has been away such a long time. She looks as pale as if She had lost all Her blood. Grief has made Her eyes resemble even more those of Her Son. Judas meets those eyes that look at him with the same sorrowful conscious knowledge with which Jesus looked at him in the street, and uttering a frightened « Oh! » he leans against the wall.

« Judas! » says Mary, « Judas, why have you come? » The same words as Jesus'. And they are spoken with sad love. Judas remembers them and shouts.

« Judas » repeats Mary « what have you done? To so much love have you replied by betraying? » Mary's voice is a trembling caress.

Judas is about to run away. Mary calls him with a voice that should have converted a demon. « Judas! Judas! Stop! Stop! Listen! I am telling you in His name: repent, Judas. He forgives... » Judas has run away. Mary's voice, Her appearance, have been the coup de grace, or rather of disgrace, because he resists Her.

He goes away precipitately. He meets John who is going towards the house to get Mary. The sentence has been passed. Jesus is about to go to Calvary. It is time to take Mary to Her Son. John recognises Judas, although there is little left of the handsome Judas of not long ago. « You here? » John says to him with obvious disgust. « You here? May you be cursed, you killer of the Son of God! The Master has been condemned. Rejoice, if you can. But get out of the way. I am going to get the Mother. Do not let Her, the other Victim

of yours, meet you, you reptile. »

Judas runs away. He has enveloped his head in the tatters of his mantle, leaving only a small opening for his eyes. People, the few people who are not near the Praetorium, avoid him, as if they saw a madman. And that is what he looks like.

He wanders about the country. Now and again the wind carries an echo of the clamour made by the crowds who follow Jesus cursing Him. Every time such echo reaches Judas, he howls like a jackal.

I think that he has really gone mad, because he continuously knocks his head against the low stone walls. Or he has become hydrophobic because every time he sees a liquid - water, milk carried in a vessel by a child, oil dripping from a goatskin - he howls and shouts: « Blood! Blood! His Blood! » He would like to drink at streams and fountains. But he cannot, because water seems blood to him, and he says so: « It's blood! It's blood! It is drowning me! It is burning me! I am on fire! He gave me His Blood yesterday, and it has become fire in me! May I be accursed, and You, too! »

He goes up and down the hills around Jerusalem. And his eyes are irresistibly attracted towards Golgotha. And twice from afar he sees the procession wind uphill. He looks and howls.

It is now on the top. Judas also is on top of a little hill covered with olive-trees. He has gone in by opening a rustic paling, as if he were the owner or at least well acquainted with the place. I am under the impression that Judas did not have much consideration for other people's property. Standing upright under an olive-tree on the edge of a terrace, he looks towards Golgotha. He sees the crosses being erected and he realises that Jesus has been crucified. He cannot bear to see or hear. But his mental derangement or an act of witchcraft by Satan make him see and hear as if he were on the top of Calvary.

He looks and looks like one bewitched. He struggles: « No! No! Don't look at me. Don't speak to me. I cannot bear it. Die, die, You cursed one! Let death close those eyes that frighten me, that mouth that curses me. But I also curse You. Because You did not save me. »

His face is so troubled that one cannot look at it. Two fine streams of slaver run down from his howling mouth. The cheek that was bitten is livid and swollen, and so his face looks twisted. His sticky hair, his very dark beard that has grown on his cheeks during these hours, make his face look dismal. And his eyes!... They roll, are squint and phosphorescent. The eyes of a real demon.

He tears away from his waist the cord of thick red wool that encircles it three times. He tests its solidity by winding it round an olive-tree and pulling it with all his strength. It resists. It is solid.

He chooses a suitable olive-tree. Here it is. This one, protruding beyond the terrace with its ruffled foliage, is all right. He climbs on the tree. He fastens a noose solidly to the strongest branch hanging

out over the empty space. He has already tied a slip-knot. He looks at Golgotha for the last time. He then puts his head into the slip-knot. He now seems to have two red necklaces round the bottom part of his neck. He sits on the terrace. Then with a jerk he lets himself slip into the empty space.

The knot squeezes his throat. He struggles for some moments. He rolls his eyes strangely, he becomes black with suffocation, he opens his mouth, the veins of his neck swell and become black. He kicks the air four or five times in his last convulsions. Then his mouth opens and his dark slobbery tongue hangs out, his eye-balls remain uncovered, protruding, showing the whitish globes stained with blood. The irides disappear in the upper part. He is dead.

The strong wind, that has risen with the impending storm, makes the macabre pendulum swing and whirl like a horrible spider hanging from the thread of a cobweb.

The vision ends thus. And I hope I shall soon forget all this, because I can assure you that it is a dreadful vision.

Jesus says:

« Dreadful, but not useless. Too many people think that Judas did something of little importance. Some even go to the extent of saying that he is well deserving, because Redemption would not have taken place without him, and that he is therefore justified in the eyes of God.

I solemnly tell you that, if Hell did not already exist and was not perfect in its torments, it would have been created even more dreadful and eternal for Judas, because of all sinners and damned souls, he is the most damned and the biggest sinner, and throughout eternity there will be no mitigation of his sentence.

Remorse could have also saved him, if he had turned remorse into repentance. But he would not repent and, to the first crime of betrayal, still compatible because of the great mercy that is My loving weakness, he added blasphemy, resistance to the voices of Grace, that still wanted to speak to him through recollections, through terrors, through My Blood and My mantle, through My glances, through the traces of the institution of the Eucharist, through the words of My Mother. He resisted everything. He wanted to resist. As he had wanted to betray. As he wanted to curse. As he wanted to commit suicide.

It is one's will that matters in things. Both in good and in evil. When one falls without the will to follow, I forgive.

Consider Peter. He denied Me. Why? Not even he knew why. Was Peter a coward? No. My Peter was not cowardly. Facing the cohort and the guards of the Temple he had dared to wound Malcus to defend Me, risking his own life thereby. He then ran away, without the will to do so. Then he denied Me, without the will to do it. Later

he did remain and proceed on the bloody way of the Cross, on My Way, until he reached death on a cross. And then he bore witness to Me very efficiently, to the point of being killed because of his fearless faith. I defend My Peter. His bewilderment was the last one of his human nature. But his spiritual will was not present at that moment. Dulled by the weight of his humanity, it was asleep. When it awoke, it did not want to remain in sin, but it wanted to be perfect. I forgave him at once.

Judas did not want. You say that he seemed mad and hydrophobic. He was so through satanic fury. His terror in seeing the dog, a rare animal particularly in Jerusalem, was a consequence of the fact that, from time immemorial, that form was attributed to Satan to appear to men. In books of magic it is stated that one of the forms preferred by Satan to appear to men is that of a mysterious dog or cat or billy-goat. Judas, already a prey to terror brought about by his crime, being convinced that he belonged to Satan because of his crime, saw Satan in that stray animal.

He who is guilty, sees shadows of fear in everything. It is his conscience that creates them. Then Satan instigates such shadows, which might still bring a heart to repent, and turns them into horrible ghosts that lead to despair. And despair leads to the last crime: suicide. What is the use of throwing away the price of the betrayal, when such deprivation is only the fruit of wrath and is not corroborated by a righteous will of repentance? Only in such case the act of divesting oneself of the fruits of evil deeds becomes meritorious. But he did not do that. A useless sacrifice.

My Mother, and She was Grace that was speaking and My Treasurer that was granting forgiveness in My name, said to him: "Repent, Judas. He forgives..." Oh! I would have forgiven him! If he had only thrown himself at the feet of My Mother saying: "Mercy", She, the Merciful Mother, would have picked him up as a wounded man, and on his satanic wounds, through which the Enemy had imbued him with the Crime, She would have shed Her tears that save and She would have brought him to Me, to the foot of the Cross, holding him by the hand, so that Satan might not snatch him and the disciples might not strike him She would have brought him so that My Blood might fall first of all on him, the greatest of all sinners. And She would have been the admirable Priestess on Her altar, between Purity and Guilt, because She is the Mother of virgins and saints, but She is also the Mother of sinners.

But he did not want. Meditate on the power of free will, of which you are the absolute arbiters. Through it you can have Heaven or Hell. Meditate on what persisting in sin means.

The Crucified, He Who is holding His arms stretched out and nailed, to tell you that He loves you, and that He does not want and cannot strike you, because He loves you, and prefers to deprive

Himself of the possibility of embracing you, His only sorrow in His being nailed to the cross, rather than have the freedom to punish you, Christ Crucified, the object of divine hope for those who repent and want to abandon sin becomes for the unrepentant the object of such horror that makes them curse and be violent against themselves. They become the murderers of their spirits and bodies through their persistence in sin. And the sight of the Meek Saviour, Who allowed Himself to be sacrificed in the hope of saving them, takes the appearance of a horrifying ghost.

Mary, you complained of this vision. But, My dear daughter, this is the Friday of Passion Week. You must suffer. To the sufferings you endure because of Mary's sufferings and Mine, you must add your own, caused by the bitterness in seeing sinners remain sinners. That was our suffering. It must be yours. Mary suffered, and still suffers, because of that, as She suffered because of My tortures. So you must suffer that. Rest now. In three hours' time you will be completely Mine and Mary's. I bless you, sweet little violet of My passion and passion-flower of Mary. »

2nd April, 1944. Palm-Sunday.

Jesus says:

« The couple Jesus-Mary is the antithesis of the couple Adam-Eve. It is the one destined to cancel all the behaviour of Adam and Eve and take Humanity back to the point in which it was when it was created: rich in grace and in all the gifts granted to it by the Creator. Humanity has undergone a complete regeneration through the deeds of the couple Jesus-Mary, Who have thus become the new Founders of the Human Family. All the previous time has been cancelled. The time and story of man are reckoned as from this moment in which the new Eve, through a complete change and inversion of creation, and through the deed of the Lord, from Her immaculate womb generates the new Adam.

But in order to cancel the behaviour of the two First Parents, the cause of deadly illness, of perpetual mutilation, of impoverishment, even more: of spiritual indigence - because after their sin Adam and Eve found themselves completely despoiled of everything, and it was infinite wealth, the Holy Father had given them - these two Second Ones had to act in everything in a manner completely opposed to the way of dealing of the two First Parents. So they had to carry their obedience as far as the perfection that lowers itself and sacrifices itself in its flesh, feelings, thoughts and will, in order to accept everything that God wants. So they had to carry their purity to the degree of absolute chastity, whereby the flesh... what was the flesh to Us two pure ones? A veil of water on the triumphant spirit, the caress of the wind on the sovereign spirit, a crystal that isolates the spirit-lord and does not corrupt it, an impulse

that elevates and not a weight that oppresses. That is what the flesh was to Us. Less heavy and sensitive than a linen garment, a light substance placed between the world and the brightness of the ego that had become superhuman, the means to work what God wanted. Nothing else.

Did we possess love? We certainly did. We possessed the "perfect love". Men, the hunger for sensuality that urges you to eagerly glut yourselves with the flesh, is not love. It is lust. Nothing else. So much so that by loving one another thus - you think it is love - you are unable to bear with each other, to help and forgive each other. So what is your love? It is hatred. It is nothing but paranoiac frenzy that drives you to prefer the flavour of putrid meals to the wholesome corroborating food of chosen sentiments. We possessed the "perfect love", We, the perfect chaste ones. This love embraced God in Heaven and, being united to Him, as branches are to the tree trunk nourishing them, it spread and descended lavishing rest, shelter, nourishment, comfort on the Earth and its inhabitants. No one was excluded from this love: neither our fellowcreatures, nor the inferior beings, nor the vegetable nature, nor the waters and stars. Not even the wicked were excluded from this love. Because they also, although dead limbs, were still limbs of the great body of Creation, and therefore we saw in them the holy image, although disfigured and soiled by their wickedness, of the Lord, Who had formed them in His image and likeness.

Rejoicing with good people; weeping over people who were not good; praying (active love that expresses itself by impetrating and attaining protection for those whom one loves) praying for good people that they might become even better in order to be even more able to approach the perfection of the Good Lord, Who loves us from Heaven; praying for those wavering between goodness and wickedness, so that they might be fortified and thus be able to persevere on the holy path; praying for the wicked, that Goodness might speak to their spirits, and might even strike them with the thunderbolt of His power, but might convert them to the Lord their God, We loved. As nobody else loved. We carried love to the summits of perfection, so that with our ocean of love we might fill the abyss excavated by the lack of love of the First Parents, who loved themselves more than they loved God, as they wished to have what it was not lawful to have, in order to become superior to God.

So to the purity, obedience, charity, detachment from all the riches of the Earth (sensuality, power, riches: the trinomial of Satan, opposed to the trinomial of God: faith, hope, charity); so to hatred, lust, wrath, pride (the four perverted passions, antitheses of the four holy virtues: fortitude, temperance, justice, prudence), We had to add a constant practice of everything that was the opposite to the way of acting of the couple Adam-Eve. And if it was easy

for us to do quite a lot, through our good limitless wills, only the Eternal knows how heroic it was to fulfil that practice in certain moments and in certain occasions.

I want to speak of one only now. Of My Mother, not of Myself. Of the new Eve, Who since Her most tender years had rejected the blandishments used by Satan to induce Her to bite the fruit and taste its flavour that had made Adam's companion insane; of the new Eve, Who had not confined Herself to rejecting Satan, but had defeated him by crushing him under such a vast will of obedience, love, chastity, that he, the Cursed one, was overwhelmed and subjugated. No! Satan will not rise from under the heel of My Virgin Mother! He slavers and foams, he roars and curses. But his slaver dribbles downwards, and his howling does not touch the atmosphere that surrounds My Holy Mother, Who does not smell the demoniac stench or hear the hellish cachinnation, and does not see, does not even see the revolting slaver of the eternal Reptile, because celestial harmonies and scents dance lovingly around Her beautiful holy person, and because Her eyes, which are purer than lilies and more loving than those of a cooing dove, look fixedly only at Her Eternal Lord, Whose Daughter She is, as well as Mother and Spouse.

When Cain killed Abel, the mouth of their mother uttered curses, that were suggested by her spirit, separated from God, against her closest neighbour: the son of her womb, profaned by Satan and soiled by an indecent desire. And that curse was the stain in the kingdom of human morals, as Cain's crime was the stain in the kingdom of human animals. Blood on the Earth, shed by a brotherly hand. The first blood that like an age-old magnet attracts all the blood shed by man's hand, drawing it from man's veins. Curse on the Earth, uttered by man's mouth. As if the Earth were not sufficiently cursed because of man's rebellion against his God and if it had not had to become acquainted with spines and thorns and the hardness of the soil, with drought, hail, frost, dog-days, whilst it had been created perfect and equipped with perfect elements in order to be a comfortable beautiful abode for man, its king.

Mary has to cancel Eve. Mary sees the second Cain: Judas. Mary knows that he is the Cain of Her Jesus, of the second Abel. She knows that the blood of this second Abel has been sold by that Cain and is already being spread. But She does not curse. She loves and forgives. She loves and calls back.

Oh! Maternity of Mary Martyr! Maternity as sublime as Your virginal divine Maternity! God presented You with the latter! But You, holy Mother, Co-Redeemer, presented Yourself with the former, because You alone, in that hour, with Your heart torn to pieces by the scourges that had torn My flesh to pieces, You alone were able to speak those words to Judas, and You alone, in that hour, when

you felt the cross break Your heart, were able to love and forgive.

Mary: the new Eve. She teaches you the new religion, that urges love to forgive him who has killed a son, Do not be like Judas, who closes his heart to this Mistress of Grace and despairs saying: "He cannot forgive me", questioning the words of the Mother of Truth, and consequently My words, which had always repeated that I had come to save and not to lose, to forgive those who came to Me repentant.

Mary, the new Eve, had also a new son from God "in place of Abel killed by Cain". But She did not have Him in an hour of brutal enjoyment that soothes sorrow with the fumes of sensuality and the tiredness of satisfaction. She had Him in an hour of complete sorrow, at the foot of a cross, among the death-rattle of the Dying man Who was Her Son, among the insults of the deicide crowd and an undeserved total grief, because even God no longer comforted Her.

The new life for Mankind and for individual men begins from Mary. Her virtues and Her way of living are your school. And in Her grief, in which all aspects appeared, also that of forgiveness for the killer of Her Son, is your salvation". »

Jesus says:

« One day I will tell you more about Cain and the First Parents. There is much to be said and to be meditated on. »

602. Other Teachings on the First Parents and on the Parallelism between Cain and Judas.

5th April 1944.

Jesus says:

« In Genesis we read: "Then Adam named his wife Eve, because she is the mother of all those who live".

Oh! yes. Woman was born of the "Virago" whom God had formed as a companion for Adam, building her from the rib of man. She was born with her sorrowful destiny, because she had wanted to be born in that way, that is with her sorrowful destiny. Because she had wanted to know what God had concealed from her, reserving for Himself the joy of giving her the joy of posterity without any debasement of sensuality. Adam's companion had wanted to become acquainted with the good concealed in evil, and above all with the evil concealed in good, in apparent good. Because enticed as she was by Lucifer, she had craved for knowledge that God alone could possess without any danger, and she had made herself creatress. But by using such power of good unworthily, she had corrupted it into an evil deed, because it was disobedience to God and malice and greediness of the flesh.

By this time she was the "mother". Infinite lamentation of things

over the innocence of their profaned queen! And desolate lamentation of the queen over her desecration, of which she understands the importance and its impossible annulment! If darkness and cataclysms accompanied the death of the Innocent, darkness and storm also accompanied the death of Innocence and Grace in the hearts of the First Parents. Grief was born on the Earth. But God's providence did not want it to be eternal, as after years of sorrow He gave you the joy of coming out of sorrow to enter joy, if you know how to live with righteous minds.

Woe to man if he had had to make himself the master of life in a human way! And if he had had to live with the memory of his crimes and the continual increase of them, because it is more impossible for you to live without sinning than it is to live without breathing, you creatures who had been created to know the Light and whom Darkness has poisoned making you its victims. Darkness! It circumvents you continuously. It entangles you awakening what the Sacrament has cancelled, and as you do not oppose it with the will of being of God, it succeeds in corrupting you again with its poison, that Baptism had made harmless.

As the signs of man's disobedience were evident, God the Father removed him from the place of heavenly delights, so that he might not sin once again and more gravely by raising his thieving hand to the tree of Life. The Father could no longer trust His children, neither could He feel safe in His Earthly Paradise. Satan had entered it once to lay snares for His dearest creatures, and if he had succeeded in inducing them to sin when they were innocent, with greater ease he would be able to do it again now that they were no longer innocent.

Man had wanted to possess everything, not leaving to God the treasure of being the Generator. Let him therefore go away with his riches acquired through violence, and let him take them with him to the land of his exile to remind him always of his sin, a downcast king despoiled of his gifts. The paradisiac creature had become an earthly creature. And ages of sorrow had to go by, until the Only One, Who could stretch out His hand to the fruit of Life, should come and pick that fruit for all Mankind. And He should pick it with His pierced hands and give it to men, so that they might become again coheirs to Heaven and possessors of the Life that lives for ever.

Genesis says also: "Adam then had intercourse with his wife Eve".

They had wanted to know the secrets of good and of evil. It was fair that now they should also experience the pain of having to reproduce themselves in flesh, having God's direct help only for what man cannot create, the spirit, the spark that departs from God, the breath that is infused by God, the seal that on the flesh affixes the sign of the Eternal Creator. And Eve gave birth to Cain.

Eve was burdened with her sin. At this point I will draw your attention to a fact that escapes most people. Eve was burdened with her sin. And pain had not yet been suffered in a manner sufficient to diminish her sin. Like an organism laden with toxins, she had conveyed to her son what abounded in her. And Cain, Eve's first son, was born hard, envious, quick-tempered, lascivious, wicked, little different from wild animals with regard to instinct, much superior with regard to the supernatural, because in his fierce ego he denied respect to God, Whom he considered an enemy, believing that it was lawful for him not to have a sincere cult for Him. Satan instigated him to deride God. And he who derides God does not respect anybody in the world. Therefore those who are in touch with the deriders of God are acquainted with the bitterness of tears, because they have no hope of respectful love from their offspring, no certainty of faithful love in their consort, no certainty of honest friendship in friends.

Abundant tears streamed down Eve's face and her heart swelled with bitter tears because of the hardness of her son, and those tears sowed the germ of repentance in her heart, and they obtained a diminution of her fault, as God forgives because of the sorrow of those who repent. And Eve's second son had his soul washed in his mother's tears, and he was kind and respectful to his parents, and devout to his Lord, Whose omnipotence he perceived shine from the Heavens. He was the joy of his impoverished mother.

But the way of Eve's sorrow was to be long and painful, proportionate to her way in the experience of sin. In the latter, thrills of senses. In the former, shivers of pain. In the latter, kisses. In the former, blood. From the latter, a son. From the former, the death of a son. Of the one dearest to her because of his goodness. Abel becomes the means of purification for the guilty mother. What a painful purification! With her howling she filled the Earth terrified by the fratricide and she mixed the tears of a mother with the blood of a son, while he, who had shed it out of hatred for God and for his brother loved by God, was running away chased by remorse.

The Lord says to Cain: "Why are you angry?" If you fail in your duty towards Me, why do you grow angry because I do not look at you benignly?

How many Cains there are on the Earth! Their cult for Me is derisory and hypocritical or is non-existent, and yet they want Me to look at them with love and to fill them with happiness.

God is your King. Not your servant. God is your Father. But a father is never a servant, if one judges according to justice. God is just. You are not. But He is. As He exceedingly fills you with His favours, if you only love Him a little, He cannot certainly avoid punishing you, since you deride Him. Justice does not follow two paths. One is its path. As you do, so you receive. If you are good,

you receive good. If you are wicked, you receive evil. And, believe Me, the good you receive is always much more than the bad you should have, for your way of living, rebelling against the divine Law.

God has said: "Is it not true that if you do good you will have good and if you do wrong, sin will be immediately at your door?". In fact good leads to a constant spiritual elevation and makes one more and more capable of performing greater and greater good deeds, till one reaches perfection and becomes holy. Whereas it is enough to yield to evil to degrade oneself and deviate from perfection, becoming acquainted with the power of sin that enters hearts and by degrees makes them descend to greater and greater guiltiness.

"But" God also says "under you lies the desire of it and you must control it". Yes. God did not make you slaves of sin. Passions are under you. Not above you. God has given you intelligence and strength to control yourselves. Also to the first men, struck by God's severity, He left intelligence and moral strength. And now, since the Redeemer has consumed the Sacrifice on your behalf, you have the streams of Grace to assist your intelligence and strength, and you can and must dominate evil desires. Through your will fortified by Grace you must do it. That is why the angels at My Birth sang to the Earth: "Peace to men of good will". I had come to bring Grace back to you, and through its union with your good wills, Peace would come to men. Peace: the glory of God's Heaven.

And Cain said to his brother: 'Let us go out' ". A lie concealing a murderous betrayal under a smile. Delinquency is always mendacious, both with regard to its victims and to the world it tries to deceive. And it would like to deceive even God. But God reads hearts.

"Let us go out". Many centuries later one said: "Hail, Master" and kissed Him. The two Cains concealed their crimes under harmless appearances, and vented their envy, anger, arrogance, and all wicked instincts on the victim, because they had not controlled themselves, but had made their spirits the slaves of their corrupted egos.

In her expiation Eve rises. Cain descends towards hell. Despair seizes him and makes him fall into the abyss. And, with despair, comes the physical cowardly fear of human punishment, the last deadly blow to the spirit already languishing because of its crime. No longer a being mindful of Heaven, man with a dead soul is an animal that trembles with fear for his animal life. Death, whose appearance is a smile for the just, because through it they go to the joy of possessing God, is terrifying for those who are aware that to die means to pass from the hell of one's heart, to the Hell of Satan, for ever. And like people entranced, they see revenge everywhere ready to strike them.

But you must know, I am speaking to the just, you must know that, if remorse and the darkness of a guilty heart allow and foster the hallucinations of a sinner, no one is allowed to set himself up as judge of his brother, and least of all as executioner. Only one is the Judge: God. And if the justice of men has created its law-courts, the task of administering justice is to be remitted to them, and woe to those who profane that name and judge instigated by their own passions or pressed by human powers. Malediction upon him who makes himself the private executioner of one of his fellows! But a greater malediction upon him who, not through the influence of rash wrath, but out of cold human interest, unjustly sends a man to death or to the disgrace of jail. Because, if he who kills a man who has killed, will be given a punishment seven times greater, as the Lord said would happen to anybody who struck Cain, he who condemns without justice, through enslavement to Satan in the capacity of human Overbearingness, will be struck seventy-seven times by God's severity. You should always bear that in your minds, men, particularly at the present moment, since you kill one another to make of those who have fallen the base of your triumph, and you do not realise that you are digging under your feet the pit into which you will fall cursed by God and by men. Because I have said: "You shall not kill".

Eve rises on her way of expiation. Repentance grows deeper in her before the proofs of her sin. She wanted to know good and evil. And the remembrance of the good she had lost is for her like the remembrance of the sun for someone who has become suddenly blind; and evil is in front of her in the mortal remains of her murdered son, and around her because of the void left by her homicide fugitive son. And Seth was born. And Seth begot Enos. The first priest.

Your minds swell with the rivers of your science and you speak of evolution as of a sign of your spontaneous generation. The animal-man, evolving, will become the superman. That is what you say. Yes. It is so. But in My way. In My field. Not in yours. Not by passing from the state of quadrupeds to that of men. But passing from the state of men to that of spirits. The more the spirit grows, the more you will evolve.

You who speak of glands, and fill your mouths speaking of hypophysis or of the pineal gland, and place in it the seat of life, taken not in the time in which you live but in the days that preceded and that will follow your present life, must know that your true gland, the one that makes you the eternal possessors of Life, is your spirit. The more it develops, the more you will possess divine lights and will evolve from men to gods, to immortal gods, and so, without contravening God's desire, His order concerning the tree of Life, you will obtain the possession of this Life, exactly as God

wants you to possess it, because on your behalf He created it eternal and bright, a beatific embrace with His eternity that absorbs you in Itself and communicates Its properties to you.

The more your spirits are evolved, the more you will know God. To know God means to love Him and serve Him, and thus be able to invoke Him on your own behalf and on behalf of other people. It means to become the priests who from the Earth pray for their brothers. Because who is consecrated is a priest. But also the convinced, loving, faithful believer is a priest. And a priest above all is the victim soul that sacrifices itself out of an impulse of charity. God does not look at the garment, but at the mind. And I solemnly tell you that My eyes see many tonsured people who have nothing sacerdotal except their tonsures, and they see many laymen in whom the Charity that possesses them and by which they allow themselves to be consumed is the Oil of ordination that makes them My priests, unknown to the world but known to Me, and I bless them. »

603. John Goes to Get Mary.

10.30 a.m. Good Friday 1944 (7th April 1944). My internal warner tells me that that was the time when John went to Mary.

I see the favourite apostle who looks even paler than when he was in Caiaphas' court-yard with Peter. Perhaps because the light of the fire there gave a reflection of heat to his cheeks, which now look hollow, as if he had suffered from a serious disease and were bloodless. His face emerges from his lilac tunic like that of a drowned man, so deathlike is it. His eyes also are dimmed, his hair is dull and ruffled, his beard, which has grown during these hours, lays a veil of a light shade on his cheeks and chin, and as it is very fair, it makes him look even paler. There is nothing left in him of the kind joyful John, or of the angry John who shortly before, his face flushed with indignation, with difficulty restrained himself from manhandling Judas.

He knocks at the door of the house and, as if from inside someone, fearing he might find Judas in front of him again, were asking who was knocking, he replies: « It is I, John. » The door is opened and he goes in.

He also goes into the Supper-room, without replying to the mistress who had asked him: « But what is happening in town? »

He locks himself in and falls on his knees against the seat in which Jesus had sat and he weeps calling Him sadly. He kisses the tablecloth on the spot where Jesus had joined His hands, he caresses the chalice that He held with His fingers... Then he says: « Oh! Most High God, help me! Help me to tell the Mother! I have not got the heart!... And yet, I must tell Her. I must tell Her, because I am the only one

left! »

He stands up and is pensive. He touches the chalice again, as if he wished to draw strength from that object that the Master had touched. He looks around... In the corner in which Jesus had placed it, he sees the purificator used by the Master to dry His hands after washing the apostles' feet, and the other one with which He had girded His waist. He takes them, folds them, caresses them and kisses them.

He stands perplexed in the middle of the empty room. He says: «Let us go! », but he does not go towards the door. On the contrary, he goes back to the table and takes the chalice and the bread, a comer of which had been broken off by Jesus to give a morsel to Judas, after dipping it in the dish. He kisses them, he takes them and with the two purificators he presses them to his heart like relics. He repeats: «Let us go! » and sighs. He walks towards the little staircase and climbs it with stooping shoulders and dragging his reluctant feet. He opens the door and goes out.

« John, you have come? » Mary has reappeared at the door of Her room, leaning on the door-post as if She did not have enough strength to stand up by Herself.

John raises his head and looks at Her. He would like to speak, and he opens his mouth, but he does not manage. Two large tears stream down his cheeks. He lowers his head, ashamed of his weakness.

« Come here, John. Do not weep. You must not weep. You have always loved Him and made Him happy. May that comfort you. »

These words open the floodgates to the tears of John, who cries so loud and noisily, that the mistress appears with Mary Magdalene, Zebedee's wife and the other women...

« Come with Me, John. » Mary departs from the door-post and takes the disciple by the wrist, and drags him into the room, as if he were a little boy, and She closes the door gently, to be alone with him.

John does not react. But when he feels Mary's trembling hand rest on his head, he falls on his knees laying on the floor the objects he was holding against his heart, and with his face on the floor, holding the edge of Mary's mantle pressed on his excited face, he says sobbing: « Forgive me! Forgive me! Mother, forgive me! »

Mary, Who is standing and is utterly distressed, with one hand pressed against Her heart and the other one hanging by Her side, says in a heart-rending voice: « What must I forgive you, My poor son? What? Forgive you! »

John raises his face, showing it as it is, with no longer any trace of manly pride, the face of a poor weeping child, and he shouts: « For abandoning Him! For running away! For not defending Him! Oh! my Master! O Master, forgive me! I should have died, rather than abandon You! Mother, Mother, who will ever rid me of this

remorse? »

« Peace, John. He forgives you, He has already forgiven You. He has never taken your bewilderment into consideration. He loves you. » Mary speaks with pauses between the short sentences, as if She were panting, holding one hand on John's head and pressing the other to Her poor heart that is throbbing with anguish.

« But even yesterday evening I was not able to understand... and I slept while He was asking us to be awake and comfort Him. I left my Jesus all alone! And then I ran away when that cursed man came with the rascals... »

« John, do not curse. Do not hate, John. Let the Father judge that. Listen: where is He now? »

John falls again with his face on the floor, weeping louder.

« Tell Me, John. Where is My Son? »

« Mother... I... Mother, He is... Mother... »

« He has been condemned, I know. I am asking you: where is He just now. »

« I did everything in my power so that He might see me... I tried to apply to the mighty ones to obtain compassion, to make Him... to make Him suffer less. They have not hurt Him very badly... »

« Do not lie, John. Not even out of pity for a mother. You would not succeed. And it would be useless. I know. Since yesterday evening I have followed Him in His sorrow. You cannot see it, but My flesh is bruised by the same scourges as His, the same thorns are piercing My forehead, I felt the blows... everything. But now... I no longer see. Now I do not know where My Son is, Who has been condemned to the cross!... to the cross!... to the cross!... Oh! God, give Me strength! He must see Me. I must not feel My sorrow while He feels His. Then when everything... is over, then let Me die, o God, if You so wish. Not now. No, for His sake. So that He may see Me. Let us go, John. Where is Jesus? »

« He is leaving Pilate's house. This clamour is the crowd shouting around Him, tied as He is, on the steps of the Praetorium, awaiting the cross, or already on His way to Golgotha. »

« Inform your mother, John, and the other women. And let us go. Take that chalice, that bread, those linens... Put them here. We shall find solace in them... later... and let us go. »

John picks up the objects left on the floor and goes out to call the women. Mary waits for him, rubbing Her face with those linens as though She wanted to find the caress of Her Son's hand in them, and She kisses the chalice and the bread, and places everything on a shelf. And She envelops Herself in Her mantle, which She lowers as far as Her eyes, over the veil that wraps Her head and is folded round Her neck. She does not weep, but She is trembling. And She seems to be short of breath, as She pants so much with her mouth open. John comes back in, followed by the weeping women.

« My dear daughters! Be silent! Help me not to weep! Let us go. » And She leans on John, who guides and supports Her as if She were blind.

The vision ends thus. It is 12.30, that is 11.30 solar time.

604. The Way of the Cross from the Praetorium to Calvary.

26th March 1945.

Some time goes by so, not more than half an hour, perhaps even less. Then Longinus, who is entrusted with the task of superintending the execution, gives his orders.

But before Jesus is taken outside, into the street, to receive the cross and set out, Longinus, who has looked at Him twice or three times, with a curiosity that is already tinged with compassion and with the expert eye of one who is accustomed to certain situations, approaches Jesus with a soldier and offers Him a refreshment: a cup of wine, I think. In fact he pours a light blond rosy liquid out of a real military canteen. « It will do You good. You must be thirsty. And the sun is shining outside. And the way is a long one. »

And Jesus replies to him: « May God reward you for your compassion. But do not deprive yourself of it. »

« I am healthy and strong... You... I am not depriving myself... And even if I were... I would do it willingly, to give You some solace... A draught... to show me that You do not hate heathens. »

Jesus no longer refuses and takes a draught of the drink. As His hands are already untied and He no longer has the cane or the chlamys, He can do it by Himself. But He refuses to take more, although the good cool drink should be a great relief to His fever, which is already showing itself in the red streaks that inflame His pale cheeks and His dry lips.

« Take some, take it. It is water and honey. It will give You strength and quench Your thirst... I feel pity for You... yes... pity... It was not You Who was to be killed among the Jews... Who knows!... I do not hate You... and I will try to make You suffer only what is necessary. »

But Jesus does not drink any more... He is really thirsty... The dreadful thirst of those who have lost much blood and are feverish... He knows that it is not a drink with narcotics, and He would drink it willingly. But He does not want to suffer less. But I realise, as I understand what I am saying through an internal light, that the compassion of the Roman is of greater solace to Him than the water sweetened with honey.

« May God reward you with His blessings for this solace » He then says. And He smiles again... a heart-rending smile with His swollen wounded lips, which move with difficulty, also because the severe contusion between His nose and His right cheek-bone, caused by

the blow with a cudgel He received in the court-yard after the flagellation, is swelling considerably.

The two robbers arrive, each surrounded by a decury of soldiers. It is time to go. Longinus gives the last instructions.

A century is set out in two lines, at about three meters from each other, and moves thus into the square, where another century has formed a square barrier to drive the crowd back, so that it may not obstruct the procession. In the little square there are already some mounted soldiers: a cavalry decury with a young non-commissioned officer who commands it and has the ensign. A foot-soldier is holding the bridle of the centurion's black horse. Longinus mounts and goes to his place, about two metres in front of the eleven mounted soldiers.

The crosses are brought. Those of the two robbers are shorter. Jesus' is much longer. I say that the vertical stake is not less than four metres long.

I see that it is already assembled when they bring it. With regard to this matter, I read, when I used to read... that is, years ago, that the cross was assembled on the top of Golgotha and that along the way the condemned men carried only the two poles bundled together on their shoulders. Everything is possible. But I see a true cross, well formed, solid, perfectly mortised at the crossing of the two arms and well reinforced with nails and screw bolts at the junction. And in fact, if one considers that it was destined to support a substantial weight, such as the body of a grown-up person, and had to sustain it also in its last convulsions, one understands that it could not be assembled there and then on the narrow uncomfortable top of Calvary.

Before giving the cross to Jesus, they tie the board with the inscription « Jesus Nazarene King of the Jews » round His neck. And the rope that holds it, gets entangled with the crown, which is moved and scratches where it is not already scratched, and pierces new parts, causing fresh pain and making fresh blood spout. The people laugh with sadistic joy, they abuse and curse.

They are now ready. And Longinus gives the order of march. « First the Nazarene, behind Him the two robbers; a decury around each of them, the other seven decuries positioned on the flank as reinforcements, and the soldier who allows the condemned men to be wounded mortally will be held responsible. »

Jesus comes down the three steps that from the lobby take one into the square. And it is immediately clear that Jesus is in an extremely weak condition. He staggers coming down the three steps, hampered by the cross weighing on His shoulder all covered with sores, by the board of the inscription that sways in front of Him cutting into His neck, by the oscillations caused to the body by the long stake of the cross, which bounces on the steps and on the uneven

ground.

The Jews laugh seeing Him stagger along like a drunk man and they shout to the soldiers: « Push Him. Make Him fall. In the dust the blasphemer! » But the soldiers do only what they have to do, that is, they order the Condemned One to stay in the middle of the road and walk.

Longinus spurs his horse and the procession begins to move slowly. And Longinus would also like to make haste, taking the shortest route to Golgotha, because he is not sure of the resistance of the Condemned One. But the unrestrained mob - and it is even an honour to call it so - does not want that. Those who are more cunning have already run ahead, to the crossroads where the road forks, going towards the walls along one way, and towards the town along the other and they riot, shouting, when they see Longinus try to take the way towards the walls. « You must not do that! You must not! It is not legal! The Law prescribes that condemned men are to be seen in the town where they sinned! » The Jews at the rear of the procession realise that at the front they are trying to defraud them of a right, and they join their shouts to those of their colleagues.

For peace sake Longinus turns along the way that takes towards the town and goes a short distance along it. But he beckons to a decurion to approach him (I say decurion because he is the noncommissioned officer, but perhaps he is what we would call an orderly officer) and he says something to him in a low voice. This man trots back, and as he meets each decury commander, he conveys the order. He then goes back to Longinus to inform him that it has been done. And finally he goes to the place where he was previously, in the line behind Longinus.

Jesus proceeds panting. Each hole in the ground is a trap for His staggering feet, a torture for His shoulders covered with wounds, and for His head crowned with thorns, also because the sun, which is exceedingly warm, although now and again it hides behind a leaden awning of clouds, shines perpendicular on it. So even it is concealed, it still burns. Jesus is congested with fatigue, fever and heat. I think that also the light and the howling must be a torture for Him. And if He cannot stop His ears in order not to hear so much coarse shouting, He half closes His eyes not to see the road dazzling in the sunshine... But He must also reopen them, because He stumbles over stones and holes, and each stumble is painful, as it jerks the cross, which knocks against the crown, which rubs against the wounded shoulder, widening the sores and increasing the pain.

The Jews cannot hit Him directly any longer. But odd stones and blows with cudgels still strike Him. The former, particularly in the little squares crowded with people. The latter, instead, at bends, along the narrow streets with frequent steps going up or down, at times one, at times three, at times more, because of the continuous

variations of the ground. The procession is compelled to slow down at such places, and there is always some volunteer (!) who challenges the Roman lances if only to add a finishing touch to the masterpiece of torture that Jesus is by now.

The soldiers defend Him as best they can. But they strike Him as well, while trying to defend Him, because the long lances waved about in such narrow spaces, knock against Him and make Him stumble. But upon arriving at a certain spot, the soldiers make a perfect manoeuvre and, notwithstanding shouts and threats, the procession deviates abruptly along a street that goes directly towards the walls, downhill, a good short cut to the place of the execution.

Jesus is panting more and more. Perspiration is streaming down His face, together with the blood that trickles from the wounds of the crown of thorns. And dust sticks to His wet face leaving queer stains on it. Because also the wind is blowing now. Continual gusts at long intervals, during which the dust falls after being raised in whirlwinds by each gust, and is blown into eyes and throats.

Many people have already assembled at the Judicial Gate, that is, those who providently and in good time have chosen a good place to see. But shortly before arriving there Jesus almost falls. Only the quick intervention of a soldier, on whom He almost falls, prevents Him from falling on the ground. The rabble laugh and shout: « Leave Him! He used to say to everybody: "Rise". Let Him rise now... »

Beyond the Gate there is a stream and a little bridge. Walking on the uneven boards is a new fatigue for Jesus, as the long stake of the cross bounces on them even more violently. And there is a new mine of projectiles for the Jews. The stones of the stream fly and hit the poor Martyr...

The ascent to Calvary begins. A barren road, without the least shade, paved with uneven stones, that goes straight up the hill. Here again, when I used to read, I read that Calvary was a few metres high. It may be so. It is certainly not a mountain. But it is a hill, not certainly lower than the mount of the Crosses is, with respect to the Lungarni, where the Basilica of Saint Miniato is in Florence. Someone may say: « Oh! not much! » Yes, for one who is healthy and strong it is not much. But it is enough to have a weak heart to feel whether it is much or little!... I know that after I began to suffer from heart trouble, even if only in a mild form, I could no longer go up that hill without suffering a great deal and I was compelled to stop now and again, and I had no load on my shoulders. And I think that Jesus' heart must have been in a very bad state after the flagellation and sweating blood... and I take only these two things,-into consideration.

So Jesus suffers tremendously in climbing, also because of the

weight of the cross which, being so long, must be very heavy. He finds a protruding stone and as He is exhausted, He can lift His feet only a little, so He stumbles and falls on His right knee, but He can hold Himself up with His left hand. The crowd howls with joy...

He gets up again. He proceeds, bending and panting more and more, congested, feverish... The board that swings in front of Him obstructs His sight; His long tunic, the front part of which trails on the ground, as He now walks bending, hampers His steps. He stumbles again and falls on both knees, hurting Himself where He is already wounded; and the cross, which slips out of His hands and falls, after striking His back violently, compels Him to bend to pick it up and to toil painfully to put it back on His shoulder. While He does so, one can clearly see on His right shoulder the wound made by the rubbing of the cross, which has opened the many sores of the scourges, making them all into one, from which serum and blood transude, so that spot of His white tunic is all stained. The people even applaud for the joy of seeing Him fall so badly...

Longinus urges to make haste and the soldiers, striking with the flat of their daggers, press poor Jesus to proceed. He sets out again more and more slowly, despite all solicitations. Jesus seems completely intoxicated, as He sways so much, knocking against one or the other lines of soldiers, wandering all over the road. And the people notice it and shout: « His doctrine has gone to His head. Look, look, how He staggers! » And others, and they are not of the people, but priests and scribes, say with a grin: « No. It is still the fumes of the banquets in Lazarus' house. Were they good? Take our food now... » And other sentences of the kind.

Longinus, who turns round now and again, feels sorry for Him and orders a few minutes' stop. And the rabble insults him so much that the centurion orders the soldiers to charge them. And the fainthearted crowds at the sight of the shining threatening lances, run away shouting and hurling themselves here and there down the mountain.

It is here that, among the few people who have remained, I again see the small group of the shepherds appear from behind some ruins, probably of a collapsed low wall. They are desolate, upset, dusty, in rags, and with the power of their glances they attract the Master's attention. He turns His head round, He sees them... He looks at them fixedly as if they were the faces of angels, He seems to quench His thirst and fortify Himself with their tears, and He smiles... The order to resume the march is given and Jesus passes just in front of them and He hears their anguished weeping. With difficulty He turns His head round from under the yoke of the cross and He smiles once again... His solace... Ten faces... a rest in the burning sun...

And immediately afterwards, the pain of the third fall, a complete one. And this time He does not stumble. He falls because of

a sudden lack of strength, due to a syncope. He falls headlong, knocking His face on the uneven stones, and He remains in the dust under the cross that falls on Him. The soldiers try to raise Him. But as He seems to be dead, they go and inform the centurion. While they go and come back, Jesus comes to Himself, and slowly, with the help of two soldiers, one of whom lifts the cross and the other helps the Condemned One to stand up, He puts Himself in His Place again. But He is really exhausted.

« Make sure that He dies only on the cross! » shout the crowd.

« If you let Him die beforehand, you will answer to the Proconsul, bear that in your minds. The culprit must arrive alive at the execution Place » say the chief scribes to the soldiers.

The latter cast withering glances at them, but discipline prevents them from speaking.

But Longinus is just as afraid as the Jews that the Christ may die on the road, and he does not want to have troubles. Without needing to be reminded, he knows what is his duty as officer responsible for the execution and he takes action. He takes action disconcerting the Jews who have already ran ahead along the road that they have reached from all over the mountain, sweating, scratching themselves to pass among the few thorny bushes of the bare burnt mountain, falling on the rubble encumbering it as if it were a dump for Jerusalem, without feeling any pain except that of missing the panting of the Martyr, one of His sorrowful glances, a gesture, even an involuntary one, of suffering, and with no other fear but that of not being successful in having a good place. So Longinus gives the order to take the longer road that winds up the mountain and is therefore not so steep.

This road seems a path that by dint of being used by many people has changed into a rather comfortable road. This crossroad is situated about half-way up the mountain. But I see that farther up, the straight road is crossed four times by this one, which climbs with a slighter slope and to compensate for this is much longer. And many people are going up this road, but they do not participate in this shameful uproar of people possessed, who follow Jesus to take delight in His tortures. They are mostly women, weeping and veiled, and some small groups of men, very small ones indeed, who are much ahead of the women and are about to pass from sight, when going on their way, the road turns round the mountain.

Calvary here looks somehow pointed in its odd structure, which is snout-shaped on one side, whilst on the other side it drops sheer. The men disappear behind the stony point and I lose sight of them.

The people following Jesus are shouting with rage. It was more pleasant for them to see Him fall. While hurling obscene imprecations at the Condemned One and at those leading Him, some follow the judicial procession, and some go on almost running up the

steep road, to make up for the disappointment received, by having a very good position on the top.

The women, who are proceeding weeping, turn round upon hearing the shouts, and see the procession turn towards them. Then they stop, leaning against the mountain, lest they should be pushed down the slope by the violent Jews. They lower their veils on their faces even more, and there is one completely covered with her veil, like a Muslim, leaving only her very dark eyes free. They are sumptuously dressed and they have a strong old man to defend them, but all enveloped as he is in his mantle, I cannot see his face clearly. I can only see his long beard, which is more white than dark, stick out of his very dark mantle.

When Jesus arrives near them, they weep more loudly and bow low to Him. Then they move forward resolutely. The soldiers would like to drive them back with their lances. But the one who is all covered like a Muslim moves her veil aside for a moment before the ensign, who has just arrived on horseback to see what is the cause of this new hindrance, and he orders the soldiers to let her pass. I cannot see her face or her dress, because the shifting of the veil is done with the speed of a flash, and her dress is all concealed under a heavy mantle that reaches down to the ground and is completely closed by a set of buckles. The hand that comes out from there for a moment to shift the veil, is white and beautiful. And it is the only thing, in addition to her very dark eyes, that can be seen of this tall matron, who is certainly influential if she is so promptly obeyed by Longinus' adjutant.

They approach Jesus weeping and kneel at His feet, while He stops panting... and yet He still knows how to smile at those compassionate women and at their escort, who uncovers himself to show that he is Jonathan. But the guards do not let him pass. Only the women.

One of them is Johanna of Chuza. And she is more haggard than when she was dying. Only the traces of her tears are red, all her face is snow-white with her kind dark eyes, which, dimmed as they are, seem to have become a very dark violet shade like certain flowers. In her hand she has a silver amphora and offers it to Jesus. But He refuses it. In any case, He is so breathless that He would not even be able to drink. With His left hand He wipes the sweat and blood that trickles into His eyes and that, streaming down His purple face and neck, the veins of which are swollen through the laboured throbbing of His heart, wets all His tunic at the chest.

Another woman, who is accompanied by a young maidservant holding a small casket in her arms, opens it and takes out a square piece of very fine linen cloth, and offers it to the Redeemer. He accepts it. And as He cannot manage by Himself with one hand only, the compassionate woman helps Him to take it to His face, watching

not to knock against His crown. And Jesus presses the cool linen cloth to His poor face and holds it there, as if He felt a great relief. He then hands the linen cloth back and He says: « Thank you, Johanna, thank you, Nike Sarah... Marcella Eliza... Lydia,... Anne Valeria... and you But... do not weep for Me daughters of Jerusalem... But for your sins and for those of Your town... Bless Johanna... for not having more sons... See It is God's mercy not... not to have sons... because... they suffer for this... And you... too, Elizabeth... Better as it was... than among deicides... And you mothers... weep for your sons, because... this hour will not pass without punishment And what a punishment, if it is so for... the Innocent... You will weep then... for having conceived... suckled and for... having more... sons... The mothers... of those days... will weep because... I solemnly tell you... that he will be lucky... who then... will be the first... to fall... under the ruins. I bless you Go... home... pray for Me. Goodbye, Jonathan... take them away »

And in the midst of the loud noise of weeping women and cursing Judaeans, Jesus sets out again.

Jesus is once again completely wet with perspiration. Also the soldiers and the other two condemned men are perspiring, because the sun this stormy day is as burning as flames, and the side of the mountain, very warm by itself, increases the heat of the sun. What this sun must feel like on Jesus' woollen garment placed on the wounds of the scourges, one can easily imagine and be horrorstricken at the idea... But He never moans. But although the road is not so steep as the other one and it is not strewn with uneven stones, which were so dangerous to His feet that He is now dragging, Jesus is staggering more and more, and once again He knocks first into one line of soldiers and then into the other and is bent more than previously.

They decide to overcome the difficulty by passing a rope round His waist and holding the two ends as if they were reins. It does in fact support Him, but it does not make His load any lighter. On the contrary the rope, knocking against the cross, shifts it continuously on His shoulder and makes it strike the crown, which by now has turned Jesus' forehead into a bleeding tattoo mark. Further, the rope rubs against His waist, where there are many wounds, and it certainly makes them bleed again, in fact His white tunic is tinged with pale red at the waist. So, in order to help Him, they make Him suffer more.

The road continues. It goes round the mountain, it comes back almost to the front, towards the steep road. Here, there is Mary with John. I should say that John has taken Her to that shady place, behind the slope of the mountain, to give Her some relief. It is the steepest part of the mountain. There is no other road going round

it. Above and under it the slope rises or descends steeply, and that is why the cruel people have abandoned it. It is shady there, because I should say that it is the north, and Mary, leaning as She is on the mountain side, is protected from the sun. She is leaning against the slope, standing, but already exhausted, panting, as white as death, in Her very dark blue dress, which is almost black. John looks at Her with desolate pity. He has no trace of colour on his face either, and he looks wan, with wide-open tired eyes, unkempt, and his cheeks are sunken as if he were suffering from a disease.

The other women - Mary and Martha of Lazarus, Mary of Alphaeus and Mary of Zebedee, Susanna from Cana, the mistress of the house and some more whom I do not know - are all in the middle of the road looking to see whether the Saviour is coming. And when they see Longinus arrive, they rush towards Mary to inform Her. And Mary, supported by John who is holding Her by the elbow, departs from the hillside, stately in Her grief,, and places Herself resolutely in the middle of the road, moving aside only at the arrival of Longinus, who from the height of his black horse looks at the pale Woman and at Her blond wan companion, whose meek eyes are blue like Hers. And Longinus shakes his head while passing by followed by the eleven soldiers on horseback.

Mary tries to pass through the dismounted soldiers, who, being warm and in a hurry, strive to drive Her back with their lances, all the more that stones are thrown from the paved road, as a protest against so much compassion. It is the Jews, who once again curse because of the halt brought about by the pious women and say: « Quick! It is Easter tomorrow. Everything must be accomplished by this evening! You are accomplices who deride our Law! Oppressors! Death to the invaders and to their Christ! They love Him! Look how they love Him! Well, take Him! Put Him in your cursed Eternal City! We surrender Him to you! We don't want Him! Let rotters be with rotters! And leprosy with lepers! »

Longinus gets tired and followed by the ten lancers he spurs his horse against the reviling pack of hounds, who run away for the second time. And in doing so he sees a cart standing still, which has certainly come up from the vegetable-gardens at the foot of the mountain and is waiting for the crowds to pass, so that it may go down towards the town with its load of greens. I think that curiosity has made the man from Cyrene and his sons go up there, because it was not necessary for him to do so. The two sons, lying on the top of the green pile of vegetables, look and laugh at the fleeing Judaeans. The man, instead, a very strong man, about forty-fifty years old, standing near the little donkey, which is frightened and tries to draw back, looks attentively at the procession.

Longinus looks him up and down. He thinks that he can be useful and says to him in a commanding voice: « Man, come here. »

The man from Cyrene feigns he has not heard. But one cannot trifle with Longinus. He repeats the order in such a way that the man throws the reins to one of his sons and approaches the centurion.

« Do you see that man? » he asks. And in doing so, he turns round to point out Jesus and he sees Mary, Who is imploring the soldiers to let Her pass. He takes pity on Her and he shouts: « Let the Woman pass. » He then resumes speaking to the man from Cyrene: « He cannot proceed further laden as He is. You are strong. Take His cross and carry it in His stead as far as the summit. »

« I cannot... I have the donkey... it is restive... the boys cannot hold it... »

But Longinus says: « Go, if you do not want to lose your donkey and get twenty blows as punishment. »

The man from Cyrene dare no longer react. He shouts to the boys: « Go home and be quick. And say that I am coming at once » and he then goes towards Jesus.

He reaches Him just when Jesus turns towards His Mother, Whom only now He sees coming towards Him, because He is proceeding so bent and with His eyes almost closed, as if He were blind, and He shouts: « Mother! »

Since He began being tortured, it is the first word that expresses His sufferings. Because in that cry there is the confession of everything, and all the dreadful sorrow of His spirit, of His morale, of His body. It is the heart-broken and heart-breaking cry of a little boy who dies all alone, among torturers and the most cruel tortures... and who goes so far as to be afraid of his own breathing. It is the wailing of a raving little boy tormented by nightmare visions... and wants his mummy, his dear mummy, because only her fresh kisses soothe the ardour of his fever, her voice dispels phantoms, her embrace makes death less fearful...

Mary presses Her hand against Her heart, as if She had been stabbed, and She staggers lightly. But She collects Herself, quickens Her step and while going towards Her tortured Son with outstretched arms, She shouts: « Son! » But She says so in such a way that whoever has not got the heart of a hyena, feels it is breaking because of so much grief.

I notice signs of compassion even among the Romans... and yet they are soldiers, accustomed to slaughters, marked by scars... But the words: « Mother! » and « Son! » are always the same for all those who, I repeat it, are not worse than hyenas, they are understood everywhere and they raise waves of compassion everywhere...

The man from Cyrene feels such pity... And as he sees that Mary cannot embrace Her Son because of the cross, and that after stretching Her arms out, She lets them drop, convinced that She is unable to do so - and She only looks at Him, striving to smile with Her smile of a martyr to encourage Him, while Her trembling lips drink

Her tears, and He, turning His head round, from under the yoke of the cross, tries in His turn to smile at Her and send Her a kiss with His poor lips, wounded and split by blows and fever - he hastens to remove the cross, and he does so with the gentleness of a father, in order not to give a shove to the crown or rub against His sores.

But Mary cannot kiss Her Son... Even the lightest touch would be a torture for His torn flesh, and Mary refrains, and then... the most holy feelings have a profound modesty and they exact respect or at least compassion, whilst here there is curiosity, and above all, mockery. Only the two anguished souls kiss each other.

The procession, which sets out again under the pressure of the waves of the furious people, divides them, pushing the Mother against the mountain, to be sneered at by all the people...

Behind Jesus there is now the man from Cyrene with the cross. And Jesus, freed of that weight, is proceeding more easily. He is panting violently, He often presses His hand against His heart, as if He had a great pain or a wound there, in the sternum-heart region, and now, since His hands are no longer tied and He is able to do so, He pushes His hair, which had fallen forward and is sticky with blood and perspiration, behind His ears, to feel some air on His cyanotic face, He unties the cord round His neck, as it makes Him suffer in breathing... But He can walk better.

Mary has withdrawn with the women. She follows the procession once it has passed, and then, along a short cut, She turns Her steps towards the top of the mountain, defying the insults of the cannibalistic populace.

Now that Jesus can walk freely, the last stretch of the road around the mountain is soon covered, and they are already close to the top crowded with shouting people.

Longinus stops and orders his men to inexorably repel everybody farther down, so that the top, the place of the execution, may be free. And one half of the century carries out the order, rushing to the spot and mercilessly driving back whoever is there, making use of their daggers and lances to do so. The hail of blows with the flat of swords and clubs makes the Jews run away from the top, and they would like to stop in the open space below. But those already there do not give in and the people begin to brawl fiercely. They 'I seem to be mad.

As I told you last year, the top of Calvary is shaped like an irregular trapezium, slightly higher on the right side, after which the mountain descends steeply for more than half of its height. In this little open space there are already three deep holes, lined with bricks or slates, that is, built for a special purpose. Near them there are stones and earth ready to prop the crosses. Other holes instead are full of stones. It is obvious that they empty them each time according to the number required.

Under the trapezoidal summit, on the side of the mountain that does not descend steeply, there is a kind of platform that slopes down gently forming a second little open space. Two wide paths depart from it going round the top, which is thus isolated and raised at least two metres in height on all sides.

The soldiers, who have driven the people away from the top, with convincing blows of their lances subdue quarrels and make room, so that the procession may pass without any hindrance on the last stretch of the road, and they remain there forming a double hedge while the three condemned men, surrounded by the soldiers on horseback and protected behind by the other half of the century, arrive at the spot where they are stopped: at the foot of the natural raised platform that is the summit of Golgotha.

While that takes place, I see the Maries, and a little behind them there is Johanna of Chuza with the other four ladies mentioned previously. The others have withdrawn. And they must have gone by themselves, because Jonathan is still there, behind his mistress. The one we call Veronica and whom Jesus called Nike, is no longer there and also her maidservant is absent. And also the one, who was all covered with a veil and was obeyed by the soldiers, is no longer there. I can see Johanna, the old woman named Eliza, Anne (the mistress of the house where Jesus went for the vintage in the first year of His public life), and two more whom I cannot identify.

Behind these women and the Maries I can see Joseph and Simon of Alphaeus, and Alphaeus of Sarah with the group of the shepherds. They have scuffled with those who wanted to repel them insulting them, and the strength of these men, increased by their love and grief, has been so powerful that they defeated their opponents, forming a free semicircle at which the very pusillanimous Jews dare only to hurl cries of death and shake their fists. But nothing else, because the crooks of the shepherds are knotty and heavy, and these valiant men lack neither strength nor the ability to aim accurately. And I am not wrong in saying so. It takes real courage for a few men, known as Galileans or followers of the Galilean Master, to oppose a hostile population. It is the only place on the whole of Calvary in which Christ is not cursed!

The mountain, on the three sides on which the slopes descend gently towards the valley, is all crowded with people. The yellowish barren earth can no longer be seen. In the sun that appears and disappears, it looks like a flowery meadow with corollas of all colours, so numerous and close together are the headgears and mantles of the sadists standing there. More people are beyond the torrent, on the road, and more beyond the walls. And there are more on the terraces, which are closer. The rest of the town is deserted... empty... silent. They are all here. All the love and all the hatred. All the Silence that loves and forgives. All the Clamour that hates and

curses.

While the men responsible for the execution prepare their instruments, finishing emptying the holes, and the men condemned await in the middle of the square formed by the soldiers, the Jews, who have taken shelter in the corner opposite the Maries, insult them. They insult also the Mother: « Death to the Galileans. Death! Galileans! Galileans! Curse them! Death to the Galilean blasphemer. Nail on the cross also the womb that bore Him! Away from here the vipers that give birth to demons! Death to them! Clear Israel of the females who copulate with the billy-goat!... »

Longinus, who has dismounted, turns round and sees the Mother... He orders his men to stop the uproar... The fifty soldiers who were behind the condemned men charge the rabble and clear the second esplanade completely, as the Jews run away along the mountain, treading on one another. Also the other soldiers dismount, and one takes the eleven horses, in addition to that of the centurion, and takes them to a shady spot, behind the ridge of the mountain.

The centurion sets out towards the top. Johanna of Chuza moves forward and stops him. She gives him an amphora and a purse. She then withdraws weeping, and goes towards the edge of the mountain with the other women.

Everything is ready on the summit. They make the condemned men go up. And once again Jesus passes near His Mother, Who utters a groan, which She tries to stifle, by pressing Her mantle against Her lips.

The Jews notice it, they laugh and deride. John, the meek John, who has one arm round Mary's shoulders to support Her, turns round and glares at them. Even his eyes are phosphorescent. If he did not have to protect the women, I think that he would grip one of the cowards by the throat.

As soon as the condemned men are on the fatal platform, the soldiers surround the open space on three sides. Only the one that drops sheer is empty.

The centurion orders the man from Cyrene to go away. And he goes away, unwillingly now, and I would not say out of sadism, but out of love. In fact he stops near the Galileans, sharing with them the insults that the crowds give liberally to these haggard believers of the Christ.

The two robbers throw their crosses on the ground swearing. Jesus is silent.

The sorrowful way has come to its end.

605. The Crucifixion.

27th March 1945.

Four brawny men, who look like Judaeans, and Judaeans more

worthy of the cross than the condemned men, certainly of the same category as the scourgers, jump from a path onto the place of the execution. They are wearing short sleeveless tunics, and in their hands they are holding nails, hammers and ropes, which they show to the condemned men scoffing at them. The crowd is excited with cruel frenzy.

The centurion offers Jesus the amphora, so that He may drink the anaesthetic mixture of myrrhed wine. But Jesus refuses it. The two robbers instead drink a lot of it. Then the amphora, with a wide flared mouth, is placed near a large stone, almost on the edge of the summit.

The condemned men are ordered to undress. The two robbers do so without shame. On the contrary they amuse themselves making obscene gestures towards the crowd, and in particular towards a group of priests, who are all white in their linen garments, and who have gone back to the lower open space little by little, taking advantage of their caste to creep up there. The priests have been joined by two or three Pharisees and other overbearing personages, whom hatred has made friends. And I see people I know, such as the Pharisees Johanan and Ishmael, the scribes Sadoc and Eli of Capernaum...

The executioners offer the condemned men three rags, so that they may tie them round their groins. The robbers take them uttering the most horrible curses. Jesus, Who strips Himself slowly because of the pangs of the wounds, refuses it. He perhaps thinks that He can keep on the short drawers, which He had on also during the flagellation. But when He is told to take them off as well, He stretches out His hand to beg for the rag of the executioners to conceal His nakedness. He is really the Annihilated One to the extent of having to ask a rag of criminals.

But Mary has noticed everything and She has removed the long thin white veil covering Her head under Her dark mantle, and on which She has already shed so many tears. She removes it without letting Her mantle drop and gives it to John so that he may hand it to Longinus for Her Son. The centurion takes the veil without any objection and, when he sees that Jesus is about to strip Himself completely, facing the side where there are no people, and thus turning towards the crowd His back furrowed with bruises and blisters, and covered with sores and dark crusts that are bleeding again, he gives Him His Mother's linen veil. Jesus recognises it and wraps it round His pelvis several times, fastening it carefully so that it may not fall off... And on the linen veil, so far soaked only with tears, the first drops of blood begin to fall, because many of the wounds, just covered with blood-clots, have reopened again, as He stooped to take off His sandals and lay down His garments, and blood is streaming down again.

Jesus now turns towards the crowd. And one can thus see that also His chest, legs and arms have all been struck by the scourges. At the height of His liver there is a huge bruise, and under His left costal arch there are seven clear stripes in relief, ending with seven small cuts bleeding inside a violaceous circle... a cruel blow of a scourge in such a sensitive region of the diaphragm. His knees, bruised by repeated falls that began immediately after He was captured and ended on Calvary, are dark with hematomas and the kneecaps are torn, particularly the right one, by a large bleeding wound.

The crowds scoff at Him in chorus: « Oh! Handsome! The most handsome of the sons of men! The daughters of Jerusalem adore You... » And in the tone of a psalm they intone: « My beloved is fresh and ruddy, to be known among ten thousand. His head is purest gold, his locks are palm fronds, as silky as the feathers of ravens. His eyes are like two doves bathing in streams not of water, but of milk, in the milk of his orbit. His cheeks are beds of spices, his lips are purple lilies distilling precious myrrh. His hands are rounded like the work of a goldsmith ending in rosy hyacinths. His trunk is ivory veined with sapphires. His legs are perfect columns of white marble on bases of gold. His majesty is like that of Lebanon; he is more majestic than the tall cedar. His conversation is drenched with sweetness and he is altogether delightful »; and they laugh and shout also: « The leper! The leper! So have You fornicated with an idol, if God has struck You so? Have You mumbled against the saints of Israel, as Mary of Moses did, if You have been punished so? Oh! Oh! the Perfect One! Are You the Son of God? Certainly not. You are the abortion of Satan! At least he, Mammon, is powerful and strong. You... are in rags, You are powerless and revolting. »

The robbers are tied to the crosses and they are carried to their places, one to the right, one to the left, with regard to the place destined to Jesus. They howl, swear, curse, particularly when the crosses are carried to the holes, and they hurt them making the ropes cut into their wrists, their oaths against God, the Law, the Romans, the Judaeans are hellish.

It is Jesus' turn. He lies on the cross meekly. The two robbers were so rebellious that, as the four executioners were not sufficient to hold them, some soldiers had to intervene, to prevent them from kicking away the torturers who were tying their wrists to the cross. But no help is required for Jesus. He lies down and places His head here they tell Him. He stretches out His arms and His legs as He told. He only takes care to arrange His veil properly. Now His long, slender white body stands out against the dark wood and the yellow ground.

Two executioners sit on His chest to hold Him fast. And I think of the oppression and pain He must have felt under that weight. A third one takes His right arm, holding Him with one hand on the

first part of His forearm and the other on the tips of His fingers. The fourth one, who already has in his hand the long sharp-pointed quadrangular nail, ending with a round flat head, as big as a large coin of bygone days, watches whether the hole already made in the wood corresponds to the radius-ulnar joint of the wrist. It does. The executioner places the point of the nail on the wrist, he raises the hammer and gives the first stroke.

Jesus, Who had closed His eyes, utters a cry and has a contraction because of the sharp pain, and opens His eyes flooded with tears. The pain He suffers must be dreadful... The nail penetrates, tearing muscles, veins, nerves, shattering bones...

Mary replies to the cry of Her tortured Son with a groan that sounds almost like the moaning of a slaughtered lamb; and She bends, as if She were crushed, holding Her head in Her hands. In order not to torture Her, Jesus utters no more cries. But the strokes continue, methodical and hard, iron striking iron... and we must consider that a living limb receives them.

The right hand is now nailed. They pass on to the left one. The hole in the wood does not correspond to the carpus. So they take a rope, they tie it to the left wrist and they pull it until the joint is dislocated, tearing tendons and muscles, besides lacerating the skin already cut into by the ropes used to capture Him. The other hand must suffer as well, because it is stretched as a consequence, and the hole in it widens round the nail. Now the beginning of the metacarpus, near the wrist, hardly arrives at the hole. They resign themselves and they nail the hand where they can, that is, between the thumb and the other fingers, just in the middle of the metacarpus. The nail penetrates more easily here, but with greater pain, because it cuts important nerves, so that the fingers remain motionless, whilst those of the right hand have contractions and tremors that denote their vitality. But Jesus no longer utters cries, He only moans in a deep hoarse voice with His lips firmly closed, while tears of pain fall on the ground after falling on the wood.

It is now the turn of His feet. At two metres and more from the foot of the cross there is a small wedge, hardly sufficient for one foot. Both feet are placed on it to see whether it is in the right spot, and as it is a little low and the feet hardly reach it, they pull the poor Martyr by His malleoli. So the coarse wood of the cross rubs on the wounds, moves the crown that tears His hair once again and is on the point of falling. One of the executioners presses it down on His head again with a slap...

Those who were sitting on Jesus' chest, now get up to move to His knees, because Jesus with an involuntary movement withdraws His legs upon seeing the very long nail, which is twice as long and thick as those used for the hands, shine in the sunshine. They weigh on His flayed knees and press on His poor bruised shins, while the

other two are performing the much more difficult operation of nailing one foot on top of the other, trying to combine the two joints of the tarsi.

Although they try to keep the feet still, holding them by the malleoli and toes on the wedge, the foot underneath is shifted by the vibrations of the nail, and they have almost to unnailed it, because the nail, which has pierced the tender parts and is already blunt having pierced the right foot, is to be moved a little closer to the centre. And they hammer, and hammer, and hammer... Only the dreadful noise of the hammer striking the head of the nail is heard, because all Calvary is nothing but eyes and ears to perceive acts and noises and rejoice...

The harsh noise of iron is accompanied by the low plaintive lament of a dove: the hoarse groaning of Mary, Who bends more and more at each stroke, as if the hammer wounded Her, the Martyr Mother. And one understands that She is about to be crushed by such torture. Crucifixion is dreadful, equal to flagellation with regard to pain, it is more cruel to be seen, because one sees the nails disappear in the flesh. But in compensation it is shorter, whereas flagellation is enervating because of its duration.

I think that the Agony at Gethsemane, the Flagellation and the Crucifixion are the most dreadful moments. They reveal all the torture of the Christ to me. His death relieves me, because I say: « It is all over! » But they are not the end. They are the beginning of new sufferings.

The cross is now dragged near the hole and it jerks on the uneven ground shaking the poor Crucified. The cross is raised and twice it slips out of the hands of those raising it; the first time it falls with a crash, the second time it falls on its right arm, causing terrible pain to Jesus, because the jerk He receives shakes His wounded limbs.

But when they let the cross drop into its hole and before being made fast with stones and earth, it sways in all directions, continuously, shifting the poor Body, hanging from three nails, the suffering must be atrocious. All the weight of the body moves forward and downwards, and the holes become wider, particularly the one of the left hand, and also the hole of the feet widens out, while the blood drips more copiously. And if that of the feet trickles along the toes onto the ground and along the wood of the cross, that of the hands runs along the forearms, as the wrists are higher up than the armpits, because of the position, and it trickles down the sides from the armpits towards the waist. When the cross sways, before being fastened, the crown moves, because the head falls back knocking against the wood and drives the thick knot of thorns, at the end of the prickly crown, into the nape of the neck, then it lies again on the forehead, scratching it mercilessly. At long last the cross is

made fast and there is only the torture of being suspended.

They raise the robbers who, once they are placed in a vertical position, shout as if they were being flayed alive, because of the torture of the ropes that cut into their wrists and cause their hands to turn dark with the veins swollen like ropes.

Jesus is silent. The crowd instead is no longer silent. The people resume bawling in a hellish way.

Now the top of Golgotha has its trophy and its guard of honour. At the top there is the cross of Jesus. At the sides the other two crosses. Half a century of soldiers, in fighting trim, is placed all round the summit; inside this circle of armed soldiers there are the -ten dismounted soldiers, who throw dice for the garments of the condemned men. Longinus is standing upright between the cross of Jesus and the one on the right. And he seems to be mounting guard of honour for the Martyr King. The other half century, at rest, is on the left path and on the lower open space, under the orders of Longinus' adjutant, awaiting to be employed in case of need. The indifference of the soldiers is almost total. Only an odd one now and again looks at the crucified men.

Longinus, instead, watches everything with curiosity and interest, he makes comparisons and judges mentally. He compares the crucified men, and the Christ in particular, and the spectators. His piercing eye does not miss any detail. And to see better, he shades his eyes with his hand, because the sun must be annoying him.

The sun is in fact strange. It is yellow-red like a fire. Then the fire seems to go out all of a sudden, because of a huge cloud of pitch that rises from behind the chains of the Judaeen mountains and soars swiftly across the sky, disappearing behind other mountains. And when the sun comes out again, it is so strong that the eye endures it with difficulty.

While looking, he sees Mary, just under the slope, with Her tormented face raised towards Her Son. He calls one of the soldiers who are playing dice and says to him: « If His Mother wants to come up with the son who is escorting Her, let Her come. Escort Her and help Her. »

And Mary with John, who is believed to be Her « son », climbs the steps cut in the tufaceous rock, I think, and passes beyond the cordon of soldiers, and goes to the foot of the cross, but a little aside, to be seen and see Her Jesus.

The crowd showers the most disgraceful abuses on Her at once, associating Her with Her Son in their curses. But with Her trembling white lips, She tries only to comfort Him, with an anguished smile that wipes the tears, which no will-power can refrain.

The people, beginning with priests, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians and the like, amuse themselves by going on a kind

of roundabout, climbing the steep road, passing along the elevation at the end, and descending along the other road, or viceversa. And while they pass at the foot of the summit, on the second open space, they do not fail to offer their blasphemous words as a compliment to the Dying Victim. All the baseness, cruelty, hatred and folly, which men are capable of expressing with their tongues, is amply testified by those infernal mouths. The fiercest are the members of the Temple, with the assistance of the Pharisees.

« Well? You, the Saviour of mankind, why do You not save Yourself? Has Your king Beelzebub abandoned You? Has he disowned You? » shout three priests.

And a group of Judaeans shout: « You, Who not more than five days ago, with the help of the Demon, made the Father say... ha! ha! ha! that He would glorify You, how come You do not remind Him to keep His promise? »

And three Pharisees add: « Blasphemer He said that He saved the others with the help of God! And He cannot save Himself! Do You want us to believe You? Then work the miracle. Hey, are You no longer able? Your hands are now nailed and You are naked. »

And some Sadducees and Herodians say to the soldiers: « Watch His witchcraft, you who have taken His garments! He has the infernal sign within Himself! »

A crowd howls in chorus: « Descend from the cross and we will believe You. You Who want to destroy the Temple... Fool!... Look at it over there, the glorious and holy Temple of Israel. It is untouchable, o profaner! And You are dying. »

Other priests say: « Blasphemous You the Son of God? Come down from there, then. Strike us by lightning, if You are God. We are not afraid of You and we spit at You. »

Others who are passing by shake their heads saying: « He can but weep. Save Yourself, if it is true that You are the Chosen One! »

And the soldiers remark: « So, save Yourself! Burn to ashes this suburra of the suburra! Yes! You are the suburra of the empire, you Judaeans rabble. Do so! Rome will put You on Capitol and will worship You as a god! »

The priests and their accomplices say: « The arms of women were more pleasant than those of the cross, were they not? But, look, Your... (and they utter a disgraceful word) are already there waiting to receive You. You have the whole of Jerusalem as Your matchmaker. » And they hiss like snakes.

Others throw stones shouting: « Change these into bread, since You multiply loaves. »

Others mimicking the Hosannas of Palm Sunday, throw branches and shout: « Curses on Him Who comes in the name of the Demon! Cursed be His kingdom! Glory to Zion that cuts Him off the living! »

A Pharisee stands in front of the cross, he raises his hand in an

indecent gesture, and says: « "I entrust You to the God of Sinai" did You say? Now the God of Sinai is preparing You for the eternal fire. Why don't You call Jonah so that he may repay Your kindness? »

Another one says: « Don't ruin the cross with the strokes Of Your head. It is to be used for Your followers. A whole legion of them will die on Your cross, I swear it on Jehovah. And Lazarus will be the first one I'll put there. We shall see whether You free him from death, now. »

« Yes. Let us go to Lazarus. Let us nail him on the other side of the cross » and parrot-like they speak slowly as Jesus did, saying: « Lazarus, My friend, come out! Unbind him and let him go. »

« No! He used to say to Martha and Mary, His women: "I am the Resurrection and Life" Ha! Ha! Ha! The Resurrection cannot drive death back, and the Life is dying! »

« There is Mary with Martha over there. Let us ask them where Lazarus is and let us look for him. » And they come forward, towards the women, asking arrogantly: « Where is Lazarus? At his mansion? »

And while the other women, struck with terror, run behind the shepherds, Mary Magdalene comes forward, and finding in her grief the ancient boldness of her days of sin, she says: « Go. You will already find the soldiers of Rome in the mansion, with five hundred armed men of my land, and they will castrate you like old billygoats destined to feed the slaves of millstones. »

« Impudent! Is that how you speak to priests? »

« Sacrilegious! Filthy! Cursed! Turn round! On your backs, I can see them, you have tongues of infernal flames. »

Mary's assertion sounds so certain that the cowards, who are really struck with terror, turn round; but if they have no flames on their shoulders, they have the sharp-pointed Roman lances at their backs. In fact Longinus has given an order, and the fifty soldiers, who were resting, have come into action and they prick the buttocks of the first Judaeans they find. The latter run away shouting and the soldiers stop to block the entrances to the two roads and protect the open space. The Judaeans curse, but Rome is the stronger.

The Magdalene lowers her veil again - she had raised it to speak to the revilers - and goes back to her place. The other women join her.

But the robber on the left hand side continues to insult from his cross. He seems to have summarised all the curses of the other people and he repeats them all, and ends by saying: « Save Yourself and save us, if You want people to believe You. You the Christ? You are mad! The world belongs to crafty people, and God does not exist. I do. That is true and everything is permitted to me. God?... Nonsense! Invented to keep us quiet. Long live our egos! Man's ego alone is king and god! »

The other robber, who is on the right hand side with Mary almost

near his feet, and looks at Her almost more than he looks at Jesus, and for some moments has been weeping murmuring: « My mother », says: « Be silent. Do you not fear God even now that you suffer this pain? Why do you insult Him Who is good? And His torture is even greater than ours. And He has done nothing wrong. »

But the robber continues to curse.

Jesus is silent. Panting as a result of the effort He has to make because of His position, because of His fever and heart and breathing conditions, the consequence of the flagellation He suffered in such a violent form, and also of the deep anguish that had made Him sweat blood, He tries to find some relief by reducing the weight on His feet, pulling Himself up with His arms and hanging from His hands. Perhaps He does so also to overcome the cramp that tortures His feet and is revealed by the trembling of His muscles. But the same trembling is noticeable in the fibres of His arms, which are constrained in that position and must be frozen at their ends, because they are higher up and deprived of blood, which arrives at the wrists with difficulty and trickles from the holes of the nails, leaving the fingers without circulation. Those of the left hand in particular are already cadaveric and motionless, bent towards the palm. Also the toes of the feet show their pain, especially the big toes move up and down and open out, probably because their nerves have not been injured so seriously.

And the trunk reveals all its pain with its movement, which is fast but not deep, and tires Him without giving any relief. His ribs, wide and high as they are, because the structure of this Body is perfect, are now enlarged beyond measure, as a consequence of the position taken by the body and of the pulmonary oedema that has certainly developed inside. And yet they do not serve to relieve the effort in breathing, all the more that the abdomen with its movement helps the diaphragm, which is becoming more and more paralyzed.

And the congestion and asphyxia increase every minute, as is shown by the cyanotic colour that emphasises the lips, which the fever has made bright red, and by the red-violet streaks, which tinge the neck along the turgid jugular veins, and widen out as far as the cheeks, towards the ears and temples, while the nose is thin and bloodless, and the eyes are sunken in a circle, which is livid where no blood has trickled from the crown.

Under the left costal arch one can see the throbbing imparted by the point of the heart, an irregular but violent palpitation, and now and again, owing to an internal convulsion, the diaphragm has a deep pulsation, which is revealed by a total stretching of the skin, for what it can stretch on that poor wounded dying Body.

The Face already has the aspect we see in photographs of the Holy Shroud, with the nose diverged and swollen on one side; and the

likeness is increased by the fact that the right eye is almost closed, owing to a swelling on this side. The mouth, instead is open, with the wound on the upper lip by now turned into a crust.

His thirst, caused by the loss of blood, by the fever and by the sun, must be burning, so much so that He, with automatic movements, drinks the drops of His perspiration and His tears, as well as those of blood, that run down from His forehead to His moustache, and He wets His tongue with them...

The crown of thorns prevents Him from leaning against the trunk of the cross to help the suspension on His arms and lighten the weight on His feet. His kidneys and all His spine are curved outwards, detached from the cross from His pelvis upwards, owing to force of inertia that makes a body, suspended like His, hang forward.

The Judaeans, driven beyond the open space, do not stop insulting, and the unrepentant robber echoes their insults.

The other one, who now looks at the Mother with deeper and deeper compassion, and weeps, answers him back sharply, when he hears that She also is included in the insult. « Be silent. Remember that you were born of a woman. And consider that our mothers have wept because of their sons. And they were tears of shame... because we are criminals. Our mothers are dead... I would like to ask mine .to forgive me-... But shall I be able? She was a holy woman... I killed her with the sorrow I gave her... I am a sinner... Who will forgive me? Mother, in the name of Your dying Son, pray for me. »

The Mother for a moment raises Her tortured face and looks at him, the poor wretch who through the remembrance of his mother and the contemplation of the Mother moves towards repentance, and She seems to caress him with Her kind gentle eyes.

Disma weeps louder, which raises even more the mockery of the crowd and of his companion. The former shout: « Very well. Take Her as your mother. So She will have two criminal sons! » The latter aggravates the situation saying: « She loves you because you are a smaller copy of Her darling. »

Jesus speaks for the first time: « Father, forgive them because they do not know what they are doing! »

This prayer overcomes all fear in Disma. He dares to look at the Christ and says: « Lord, remember me when You are in Your Kingdom. It is just that I should suffer. But give me mercy and peace hereafter. I heard You speak once and I foolishly rejected Your word. I now repent. And I repent of my sins before You, the Son of the Most High. I believe that You come from God. I believe in Your power. I believe in Your mercy. Christ, forgive me in the name of Your Mother and of Your Most Holy Father. »

Jesus turns round and looks at him with deep compassion, and He smiles a still beautiful smile with His poor tortured lips. He

says: « I tell you: today you will be with Me in Paradise. »

The repentant robber calms down, and as he no longer remembers the prayers he learned when a child, he repeats as an ejaculation: « Jesus Nazarene, king of the Jews, have mercy on me; Jesus Nazarene, king of the Jews, I hope in You; Jesus Nazarene, king of the Jews, I believe in Your Divinity. »

The other robber continues cursing.

The sky becomes duller and duller. Now the clouds hardly ever open to let the sun shine. On the contrary they cluster on top of one another in leaden, white, greenish strati, they disentangle according to the caprices of a cold wind, which at times blows in the sky, then descends to the ground, and then drops again, and when it drops the air is almost more sinister, sultry and dull than when it hisses, blowing biting and fast.

The light, previously exceedingly bright, is becoming greenish. And faces look strange. The profiles of the soldiers, under their helmets and in their armour, which were previously shining and have now become rather tarnished in the greenish light and under an ashen-grey sky, are so hard that they seem to be chiselled. The Judaeans, the complexion, hair and beards of whom are mostly brown, seem drowned people, so wan are their faces. The women look like statues of bluish snow because of their deadly paleness, which is accentuated by the light.

Jesus seems to be turning ominously livid, because of a beginning of putrefaction, as if He were already dead. His head begins to hang over His chest. His strength fails Him rapidly. He shivers, although He is burning with fever. And in His weakness, He whispers the name that so far He has only uttered in the bottom of His heart: « Mother! Mother! » He murmurs it in a low voice, like a sigh, as if He were already lightly delirious and thus prevented from holding back what His will would not like to reveal. And each time Mary makes an unrestrainable gesture of stretching Her arms, as if She wished to succour Him. And the cruel people laugh at such pangs of Him Who is dying and of Her Who suffers agonies.

Priests and scribes climb up again as far as the shepherds, who, however, are on the lower open space. And as the soldiers want to drive them back, they react saying: « Are these Galileans staying here? We want to stay here as well, as we have to ascertain that justice is done to the very end. And from afar, in this light, we cannot see. »

In fact many begin to be upset by the light that is enveloping the world and some people are afraid. Also the soldiers point to the sky and to a kind of cone that seems of slate, so dark it is, and that rises like a pine-tree from behind the top of a mountain. It looks like a waterspout. It rises and rises and seems to produce darker and darker clouds, as if it were a volcano belching smoke and lava.

It is in this frightening twilight that Jesus gives John to Mary and Mary to John. He lowers His head, because the Mother has gone closer to the cross to see Him better, and He says: « Woman, this is Your son. Son, this is your Mother. »

Mary looks even more upset after this word, which is the will of Jesus, Who has nothing to give His Mother but a man, He Who out of love for man, deprives Her of the Man-God, born of Her. But the poor Mother tries to weep only silently, because it is impossible for Her not to weep... Tears stream down Her cheeks notwithstanding all the efforts to refrain them, even if on Her lips there is a heartbroken smile to comfort Him...

Jesus' sufferings increase more and more. And the light fades more and more.

It is in this sea-bottom light that Nicodemus and Joseph appear from behind some Judaeans, and they say: « Step aside! »

« You are not allowed. What do you want? » ask the soldiers.

« To pass. We are friends of the Christ. »

The chief priests turn round. « Who dare profess himself friend of the rebel? » ask the priests indignantly.

And Joseph replies resolutely: « I, Joseph of Arimathea, the Elder, and noble member of the Supreme Council, and Nicodemus the head of the Judaeans, is with me. »

« Those who side with the rebel are rebels. »

« And those who take sides with murderers, are murderers, Eleazar of Annas. I have lived as a just man. And now I am old and close to death. I do not want to become unjust, while Heaven is already descending upon me and the eternal Judge with it. »

« And you, Nicodemus! I'm surprised! »

« So am I. And of one thing only: that Israel is so corrupt that you cannot even recognise God any more. »

« You disgust me. »

« Move aside, then, and let me pass. That is all I want. »

« To become even more contaminated? »

« If I have not become contaminated being with you, nothing else will ever contaminate me. Soldier, here is the purse and my pass. » And he gives the decurion who is closest to him, a purse and a waxed board.

The decurion examines them and says to the soldiers: « Let the two men pass. »

And Joseph and Nicodemus approach the shepherds. I do not even know whether Jesus can see them in the thick fog that is getting thicker and thicker, and with His eyes that are already veiled by agony. But they see Him and they weep without any respect for public opinion, although the priests now abuse them.

The sufferings are worse and worse. The body begins to suffer from the arching typical of tetanus, and the clamour of the crowd

exasperates it. The death of fibres and nerves extends from the tortured limbs to the trunk, making breathing more and more difficult, diaphragmatic contraction weak and heart beating irregular. The face of Christ passes, in turns, from very deep-red blushes to the greenish paleness of a person bleeding to death. His lips move with greater difficulty, because the overstrained nerves of the neck and of the head itself, that for dozens of times have acted as a lever for the whole body, pushing on the cross bar, spread the cramp also to the jaws. His throat, swollen by the obstructed carotid arteries, must be painful and must spread its oedema to the tongue, which looks swollen and slow in its movements. His back, even in the moments when the tetanising contractions do not bend it in a complete arch from the nape of His neck to His hips, leaning as extreme points against the stake of the cross, bends more and more forwards, because the limbs are continuously weighed down by the burden of the dead flesh.

The people cannot see this situation very clearly, because the light now is like dark ashes, and only those who are at the foot of the cross can see well.

At a certain moment Jesus collapses forwards and downwards, as if He were already dead, He no longer pants, His head hangs inertly forward, His body, from His hips upwards, is completely detached from the cross, forming an angle with its bar.

Mary utters a cry: « He is dead! » A tragic cry that spreads in the dark air. And Jesus seems really dead.

Another cry of a woman replies to Her, and I see a bustle in the group of the women. Then some ten people go away holding something. But I cannot see who goes away so. The foggy light is too faint. It looks as we are immersed in a cloud of very dense volcanic ash.

« It is not possible » shout some of the priests and of the Judaeans. « It is a simulation to make us go away. Soldier, prick Him with your lance. It is a good medicine to give His voice back to Him. » And as the soldiers do not do so, a volley of stones and clods of earth fly towards the cross, hitting the Martyr and falling back on the armour of the Romans.

The medicine, as the Judaeans say ironically, works the wonder. Some of the stones have certainly hit the target, perhaps the wound of a hand, or the head itself, because they were aiming high. Jesus moans pitifully and recovers His senses. His thorax begins to breathe again with difficulty and His head moves from left to right, seeking where it may rest in order to suffer less, but finding nothing but greater pain.

With great difficulty, pressing once again on His tortured feet, finding strength in His will, and only in it, Jesus stiffens on the Cross, He stands upright, as if He were a healthy man with all his

strength, He raises His face, looking with wide open eyes at the world stretched at His feet, at the far away town, which one can see just indistinctly as a vague whiteness in the mist, and at the dark sky where every trace of blue and of light has disappeared. And to this closed, compact, low sky, resembling a huge slab of dark slate, He shouts in a loud voice, overcoming with His will-Power and with the need of His soul the obstacle of His swollen tongue and His oedematous throat: « Eloi, Eloi, lamma scebacteni! » (I hear Him say so). He must feel that He is dying, and in absolute abandonment by Heaven, if He confesses His Father's abandonment, with such an exclamation.

People laugh and deride Him. They insult Him saying: « God has nothing to do with You! Demons are cursed by God! »

Other people shout: « Let us see whether Elijah, whom He is calling, will come to save Him. »

And others say: « Give Him some vinegar, that He may gargle His throat. It helps one's voice! Elijah or God, as it is uncertain what this madman wants, are far away... A loud voice is required to make oneself heard! » and they laugh like hyenas or like demons.

But no soldier gives Him vinegar and no one comes from Heaven to give comfort. It is the solitary, total, cruel, also supernaturally cruel agony of the Great Victim.

The avalanches of desolate grief, which had already oppressed Him at Gethsemane, come back again. The waves of the sins of all the world come back to strike the shipwrecked innocent, to submerge Him in their bitterness. And above all what comes back is the sensation, more crucifying than the cross itself, more despairing than any torture, that God has abandoned Him and that His prayer does not rise to Him...

And it is the final torture. The one that accelerates death, because it squeezes the last drops of blood out of the pores, because it crushes the remaining fibres of the heart, because it ends what the first knowledge of this abandonment has begun: death. Because of that, as first cause, my Jesus died, o God, Who have struck Him for us! Because after Your abandonment, through Your abandonment, what does a person become? Either insane or dead. Jesus could not become insane, because His intelligence was divine, and since intelligence is spiritual, it triumphed over the total trauma of Him Whom God had struck. So He became a dead man: the Dead Man, the Most Holy Dead Man, the Most Innocent Dead Man. He Who was the Life, was dead. Killed by Your abandonment and by our sins.

Darkness becomes deeper. Jerusalem disappears completely. The very slopes of Calvary seem to vanish. Only the top is visible, as if darkness held it high up to receive the only and last surviving light, laying it as an offering, with its divine trophy, on a pool of liquid onyx, so that it may be seen by love and by hatred.

And from that light, which is no longer light, comes the plaintive voice of Jesus: « I am thirsty! »

A wind in fact is blowing, which makes even healthy people thirsty. A strong wind that now blows continuously, and is full of dust, cold and frightening. And I think of what pain its violent gusts must have caused to the lungs, the heart, the throat of Jesus, and to His frozen, benumbed, wounded limbs. Everything has really combined to torture the Martyr.

A soldier goes towards a jar, in which the assistants of the executioner have put some vinegar with gall, so that with its bitterness it may increase the salivation of those condemned to capital punishment. He takes the sponge immersed in the liquid, he sticks it on a thin yet stiff cane, which is already available nearby, and offers the sponge to the Dying Victim.

Jesus leans eagerly forward towards the approaching sponge. He looks like a starving baby seeking the nipple of its mother.

Mary Who sees and certainly has such a thought, leaning on John, says with a moan: « Oh! and I cannot give Him even one of My tears... Oh! breast of Mine, why do you not trickle milk? Oh! God, why do You abandon us thus? A miracle for My Son! Who will lift Me up, so that I may quench His thirst with My blood, since I have no milk?... »

Jesus, Who has greedily sucked the sour bitter drink, makes a wry face in disgust. Above all, it must act as a corrosive on His wounded split lips.

He withdraws, loses heart, abandons Himself. All the weight of His body falls heavily on His feet and forward. His wounded extremities are the parts that suffer the dreadful pain as they are torn open by the weight of the body that abandons itself. He makes no further movement to alleviate such pain. His body, from His hips upwards, is detached from the cross, and remains such.

His head hangs forward so heavily that His neck seems hollowed in three places: at the throat, which is completely sunken, and at both sides of the sternum cleido-mastoid. He pants more and more and interruptedly, and it sounds more like a death-rattle. Now and again a painful fit of coughing brings a light rosy foam to His lips. And the intervals between one expiration and the next one are becoming longer and longer. His abdomen is now motionless. Only His thorax still heaves, but laboriously and with difficulty... Pulmonary paralysis is increasing more and more.

And fainter and fainter, sounding like a child's wailing, comes the invocation: « Mother! » And the poor wretch whispers: « Yes, darling, I am here. » And when His sight becomes misty and makes Him say: « Mother, where are You? I cannot see You any more. Are You abandoning Me as well? » and they are not even words, but just a murmur that can hardly be heard by Her Who with Her heart

rather than with Her ears receives every sigh of Her dying Son, She says: « No, no, Son! I will not abandon You! Listen to Me, My dear... Your Mother is here, She is here... and She only regrets that She cannot come where You are... » It is heart-rending...

And John weeps openly. Jesus must hear him weep. But He does not say anything. I think that His impending death makes Him speak as if He were raving and that He does not even know what He says, and, unfortunately, He does not even understand His Mother's consolation and His favourite apostle's love.

Longinus - who inadvertently is no longer standing at ease with his arms folded across his chest, and one leg crossed over the other alternately, to ease the long wait on his feet and is now instead standing stiff at attention, his left hand on his sword, his right one held against his side, as if he were on the steps of the imperial throne - does not want to be influenced. But his face is affected in the effort of overcoming his emotion, and his eyes begin to shine with tears that only his iron discipline can refrain.

The other soldiers, who were playing dice, have stopped and have stood up, putting on the helmets that had served to cast the dice, and they are near the little steps dug in the tufa, looking heedful and silent. The others are on duty and cannot move. They look like statues. But some of those who are closer and hear Mary's words, mutter something between their lips and shake their heads.

There is dead silence. Then in utter darkness, the word: « Everything is accomplished! » is clearly heard and His death-rattle grows louder and louder, with longer and longer pauses between one rattle and the next one.

Time passes in such distressing rhythm. Life comes back when the air is pierced by the harsh breathing of the Dying Victim... Life stops when the painful sound is no longer heard. One suffers hearing it... one suffers not hearing it... One says: « Enough of this suffering! », and then one says: « Oh! God! let it not be His last breath. »

All the Maries are weeping, with their heads leaning against the scarp. And their weeping is clearly heard, because the crowd is now silent again, to listen to the death-rattles of the dying Master.

There is silence again. Then the supplication pronounced with infinite kindness, with fervent prayer: « Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit! »

Further silence. Also the death-rattle becomes fainter, It is just a breath confined to His lips and throat.

Then, there is the last spasm of Jesus. A dreadful convulsion that seems to tear the body with the three nails from the cross, rises three times from the feet to the head, through all the poor tortured nerves; it heaves the abdomen three times in an abnormal way, then leaves it after dilating it as if it were upsetting the viscera, and it drops and becomes hollow as is it were empty; it heaves, swells and contracts

the thorax so violently, that the skin sinks between the ribs which stretch appearing under the skin and reopening the wounds of the scourges; it makes the head fall back violently once, twice, three times, hitting the wood hard; it contracts all the muscles of the face in a spasm, accentuating the deviation of the mouth to the right, it opens wide and dilates the eyelids under which one can see the eye-balls roll and the sclerotic appear. The body is all bent; in the last of the three contractions it is a drawn arch, which vibrates and is dreadful to look at, and then a powerful cry, unimaginable in that exhausted body, bursts forth rending the air, the « loud cry » mentioned by the Gospels and is the first part of the word « Mother »... And nothing else...

His head falls on His chest, His body leans forward, the trembling stops, He breathes no more. He has breathed His last.

The Earth replies to the cry of the murdered Innocent with a frightening rumble. From a thousand bugle-horn giants seem to give out only one sound and on that terrible chord there are the isolated rending notes of lightning that streaks the sky in all directions, falling on the town, on the Temple, on the crowd... I think that some people were struck by lightning, because the crowd was struck directly. The lightning is the only irregular light that enables one to see at intervals. And immediately afterwards, while the volley of thunderbolts still continues, the earth is shaken by a cyclonic whirlwind. The earthquake and the tornado join together to give an apocalyptic punishment to the blasphemers. The summit of Golgotha trembles and quakes like a plate in the hands of a madman, because of the subsultory and undulatory shocks that shake the three crosses so violently that they seem on the point of being overturned.

Longinus, John, the soldiers grab whatever they can, as best they can, not to fall. But John, while grasping the cross with one arm, with the other supports Mary Who, both because of Her grief and the unsteadiness, has leaned on his chest. The other soldiers, and in particular those on the side sloping downhill, have had to take shelter in the centre, to avoid being thrown down the precipice. The robbers howl with terror, the crowd howls even more and would like to run away. But it is not possible. People fall one on top of the other, they tread on one another, they fall into the fissures of the ground, they hurt themselves, they roll down the slope as if they had gone mad.

The earthquake and the tornado recur three times, then there is the absolute immobility of a dead world. Only flashes of lightning, without the rumble of thunder, still streak the sky illuminating the scene of the Jews fleeing in every direction, at their wits' end, their hands stretched forward or raised to the sky, at which they had so far sneered and of which they are now afraid. Darkness is mitigated by a dim light which, increased by the silent magnetic lightning,

enables one to see that many are lying on the ground, I do not know whether they are dead or have fainted. A house is on fire inside the walls and the flames rise up straight in the still air, a bright red spot in the grey-green atmosphere.

Mary raises Her head from John's chest and looks at Her Jesus. She calls Him, as She cannot see Him well in the dim light and Her poor eyes are full of tears. She calls Him three times: « Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! » It is the first time that She calls Him by His name, since She has been on Calvary. Then, as a flash forms a kind of crown over the top of Golgotha, She sees Him, motionless, all bent forward, with His head hanging so much forward and to the right, that His cheek touches His shoulder and His chin rests on His ribs, and She understands. She stretches out Her hands in the dark air and shouts: « My Son! My Son! My Son! » She then listens... Also Her mouth is open, She seems to be wanting to hear also with it, as Her eyes are wide open to see... She cannot believe that Her Jesus is no longer...

John, who has also looked and heard and has understood that everything is over, embraces Mary and tries to take Her away saying: « He no longer suffers. »

But before the apostle finishes his sentence, Mary, who has understood, frees Herself, She turns round, She bends towards the ground, She covers Her eyes with Her hands and shouts: « I no longer have My Son! »

She then staggers and would fall if John did not hold Her against his heart, and he then sits down, on the ground, to sustain Her on his chest, more easily until the Maries, no longer held back by the upper circle of armed soldiers - because, since the Jews have run away, the Roman soldiers have gathered in the open space below, commenting on the event - replace the apostle near the Mother.

The Magdalene sits where John was, and she almost lays Mary on her knees, holding Her between her arms and her breast, kissing Her deadly pale face, which is reclined on her compassionate shoulder. Martha and Susanna, with a sponge and a linen cloth soaked in vinegar, moisten Her temples and nostrils, while Her sister-in-law Mary kisses Her hands calling Her in a heart-rending voice, and as soon as Mary opens Her eyes again and casts a glance that Her grief makes, so to say, dull, she says to Her: « Daughter, my beloved daughter, listen... tell me that You see me... I am Your Mary... Don't look at me so!... » And as the first sob opens Mary's throat and Her first tears begin to fall, the good Mary of Alphaeus says: « Yes, weep... Here with me, as if You were near a mother, my poor holy daughter »; and when she hears Her say: « Oh! Mary! Mary! have you seen? », she moans: « Yes, I have... but... but... daughter... oh! daughter!... » And the elderly Mary can find no other word and weeps. She weeps disconsolately, echoed by all the other women,

that is, Martha and Mary, John's mother and Susanna.

The other pious women are no longer there. I think that they have gone away, and the shepherds with them, when that feminine cry was heard...

The soldiers are speaking in low voices to one another.

« Have you noticed the Judaeans? They were afraid, now. »

« And they were beating their breasts. »

« The priests were the most terrorised! »

« What a fright! I have seen other earthquakes. But never like this one. Look: the ground is full of fissures. »

« And a whole stretch of the long way has slid down over there. »

« And there are bodies under it. »

« Leave them! So many snakes less. »

« Oh! another fire! In the country... »

« But is He really dead? »

« Can't you see? Do you doubt it? »

Joseph and Nicodemus appear from behind the rock. They had certainly taken shelter there, behind the protection of the mountain, to save themselves from the thunderbolts. They go to Longinus. « We want the Corpse. »

« Only the Proconsul can grant it. Go quick, because I heard that the Judaeans want to go to the Praetorium to obtain permission to fracture His legs. I would not like them to disfigure His body. »

« How do you know? »

« A report of the ensign. Go. I will wait. »

The two men rush down the steep road and disappear.

It is at this moment that Longinus approaches John and in a low voice says something to him, which I do not understand. Then he makes a soldier give him a lance. He looks at the women, who are all attending to Mary, Who is slowly recovering Her strength. They have all their backs turned to the cross.

Longinus places himself in front of the Crucified, he ponders carefully how to deal the blow and he strikes it. The lance penetrates deeply from the bottom upwards, from right to left.

John, wavering between the desire to see and the horror of seeing, makes a wry face for a moment.

« It is done, my friend » says Longinus, and he ends: « Better so. As for a knight. And without fracturing bones... He was really a Just Man! »

A lot of water and just a trickle of blood, already tending to clot, drip from the wound. I said drip. They only come out trickling from the neat cut that remains motionless, whereas, had there been any breathing, it would have opened and closed with the movements of the thorax and abdomen...

... While on Calvary everything remains in this tragic situation, I join Joseph and Nicodemus, who are going down along a short cut

to gain time.

They are almost at the bottom when they meet Gamaliel. An unkempt Gamaliel, with no headgear, no mantle, with his magnificent garment soiled with mould and torn by bramble. A Gamaliel who is running, climbing and panting, with his hands in his thin very grizzled hair of an elderly man. They speak to one another without stopping.

« Gamalie! You? »

« You, Joseph? Are you leaving Him? »

« No, I am not. But how come you are here? And in that state?... »

« Dreadful things! I was in the Temple! The sign! The Temple door unhinged! The purple hyacinth veil is hanging torn! The Holy of Holies is open! There is anathema upon us! » He has spoken while running towards the summit, driven mad by the test.

The two men look at him go... they look at each other... they say together: « "These stones will shudder at My last words!" He had promised him!... »

They hasten their pace towards the town.

In the country, between the mountain and the walls and beyond them, many people looking idiotic are wandering, in the still dim light... They howl, weep and lament... Some say: « His Blood has rained fire! » Some exclaim: « Jehovah has appeared in the midst of the lightning to curse the Temple! » Some moan: « The sepulchres! The sepulchres! »

Joseph gets hold of a man who is striking his head against the walls and calls him by his name, dragging him as he enters the town: « Simon! What are you saying? »

« Leave me! You are dead, too! All dead! All outside! And they curse me. »

« He has gone mad » says Nicodemus.

They leave him and they hasten towards the Praetorium.

The town is a prey to terror. People roam beating their breasts. People who jump backwards or turn round frightened upon hearing a voice or steps behind them.

In one of the many dark archivolts, the apparition of Nicodemus dressed in white wool - because, in order to be quicker, he has taken off his dark mantle on Golgotha - causes a fleeing Pharisee to utter a cry of terror. He then realises that it is Nicodemus and he clings to his neck with a strange effusion, shouting: « Don't curse me! My mother appeared to me and said: "Be cursed for ever!" » and then he collapses on the ground moaning: « I'm afraid! I'm afraid! »

« They are all mad! » say the two men.

They arrive at the Praetorium. And it is only here, while waiting to be received by the Proconsul, that Joseph and Nicodemus understand the reason for so much terror. Many sepulchres had been opened by the earthquake, and there were people who swore that

they had seen skeletons come out of them, and that for a moment they resumed human appearance and were going about accusing and cursing those who were guilty of the deicide.

I leave them in the entrance-hall of the Praetorium, which Jesus' two friends enter without so many stupid horrors and fears of contamination, and I go back to Calvary, joining Gamaliel, who by now exhausted, is climbing the last few metres. He is proceeding striking his breast, and when he arrives at the first of the two open spaces, he throws himself on the ground, face downwards, a long white form on the yellowish ground, and he says moaning: « The sign! The sign! Tell me that You forgive me! A whisper, even only a whisper, to tell me that You hear me and forgive me. »

I understand that he thinks that Jesus is still alive. And he changes his mind only when a soldier, pushing him with his lance, says: « Get up and be silent. It's of no use! You should have thought of that previously. He is dead. And I, a heathen, am telling you: this Man, Whom you have crucified, was really the Son of God! »

« Dead? Are You dead? Oh!... » Gamaliel raises his terrorised face, he tries to see as far up as the top, in the twilight. He cannot see much, but he can see enough to realise that Jesus is dead. And he sees the compassionate group that is consoling Mary, and John standing on the left side of the cross and weeping, and Longinus, standing straight on the right side, solemn in his respectful posture.

He kneels down, stretches his arms out and weeping says: « It was You! It was You! We can no longer be forgiven. We have asked Your Blood upon us. And It cries to Heaven, and Heaven curses us... Oh! But You were Mercy!... I say to You, I, the destroyed rabbi of Judah: "Your Blood on us, for pity's sake". Sprinkle us with It! Because only Your Blood can impetrate forgiveness for us... » and he weeps. And then, in a lower voice, he confesses his torture: « I have the requested sign... But ages and ages of spiritual blindness are upon my interior sight, and against my present will rises the voice of my proud thought of the past... Have mercy on me! Light of the world, let one of Your rays descend on the darkness that did not understand You! I am the old Judaeen faithful to what I thought was justice, and it was error. I am now a barren land, no longer with any of the ancient trees of the ancient Faith, without any seed or stalk of the new Faith. I am an arid desert. Work the miracle of making a flower, that has Your name, spring up in this poor heart of an old obstinate Israelite. Since You are the Liberator, come into my poor thought, which is a prisoner of formulas. Isaiah says so: "... He paid for sinners and took upon Himself the sins of many". Oh! also mine, Jesus Nazarene... »

He stands up. He looks at the cross which is becoming neater and neater in the light that is clearing up, and then he goes away, stooping, aged, destroyed.

And on Calvary there is once again silence, just broken by Mary's weeping. The two robbers, worn out by fear, no longer speak.

Nicodemus and Joseph arrive back running and they say that they have Pilate's permission. But Longinus, who is not too trustful, sends a horse-soldier to the Proconsul to learn what he has to do also with regard to the two robbers. The soldier goes and come back at a gallop with the order to hand over Jesus and break the legs of the other two, by will of the Jews.

Longinus calls the four executioners, who are cravenly crouched under the rock, still terrorised by what has happened, and orders them to give the robbers the death-blow with a club. Which takes place without any protest by Disma, to whom the blow of the club, delivered to his heart, after striking his knees, breaks in half, on his lips, the name of Jesus, in a death-rattle. The other robber utters horrible curses. Their death-rattles are lugubrious.

The four executioners would also like to take care of Jesus, taking Him down from the cross. But Joseph and Nicodemus do not allow them. Also Joseph takes off his mantle and tells John to do likewise and to hold the ladders, while they climb them with levers and tongs.

Mary stands up trembling, supported by the women, and She approaches the cross.

In the meantime the soldiers, having fulfilled their task, go away. And Longinus, before descending beyond the lower open space, turns round from the height of his black horse to look at Mary and at the Crucified. Then the noise of the hooves resounds on the stones and that of the weapons against the armour, and fades away in the distance.

The left palm is unnailed. The arm falls along the Body, which is now hanging semi-detached.

They tell John to climb up as well, leaving the ladders to the women. And John, after climbing up where Nicodemus was previously, passes Jesus' arm round his neck and holds it so, hanging completely on his shoulder, embraced at the waist by his arm and held by the tips of the fingers not to touch the horrible gash of the left hand, which is almost open. When the feet are unnailed, John has to make a great effort to hold and support the Body of his Master between the cross and his own body.

Mary has already placed Herself at the foot of the cross, sitting with Her back against it, ready to receive Her Jesus in Her lap.

But the unnauling of the right arm is the most difficult operation. Despite all John's efforts, the Body is hanging completely forward and the head of the nail is deeply sunk in the flesh. And as they do not want to make the wound worse, the two compassionate men work hard. At last the nail is seized with the tongs and pulled out gently.

John has been holding Jesus all the time by the armpits, with His head hanging on his shoulder, while Nicodemus and Joseph get hold of Him, one at the thighs, the other at the knees, and they cautiously come down the ladders.

When on the ground, they would like to lay Him on the sheet that they have spread on their mantles. But Mary wants Him. She has opened Her mantle, letting it hang on one side, and She is sitting with Her knees rather apart to form a cradle for Her Jesus.

While the disciples are turning round to give Her Son to Her, the crowned head falls back and the arms hang down towards the ground, and the wounded hands would rub on the soil, if the pity of the pious women did not hold them up to prevent that.

He is now in His Mother's lap... And He looks like a big tired child who is asleep all cuddled up in his mother's lap. Mary is holding Him with Her right arm round the shoulders of Her Son and Her left one stretched over the abdomen to support Him also by the hips.

Jesus' head is resting on His Mother's shoulder. And She calls Him... She calls Him in a heart-rending voice. She then detaches Him from Her shoulder and caresses Him with Her left hand, She takes and stretches out His hands and, before folding them on His dead body, She kisses them and weeps on their wounds. Then She caresses His cheeks, particularly where they are bruised and swollen, She kisses His sunken eyes, His mouth lightly twisted to the right and half-open.

She would like to tidy His hair, as She has tidied His beard encrusted with blood. But in doing so, She touches the thorns. She stings Herself trying to remove that crown, and She wants to do it by Herself, with the only hand which is free, and She rejects everybody saying: « No, no! I will! I will! » and She seems to be holding the tender head of a new-born baby with Her fingers, so delicately does She do it. And when She succeeds in removing the torturing crown, She bends to cure all the scratches of the thorns with Her kisses.

With a trembling hand She parts His ruffled hair, She tidies it and weeps, speaking in a low voice, and with Her fingers She wipes „he tears that drop on the cold body covered with blood and She thinks of cleaning it with Her tears and Her veil, which is still round Jesus' loins. And She pulls one end of it towards Herself and She begins to clean and dry the holy limbs with it. And She continually caresses His face, then His hands and His bruised knees and then reverts to drying His Body, on which endless tears are dropping.

And while doing so Her hand touches the gash on His chest. Her little hand, covered with the linen veil, enters almost completely into the large hole of the wound. Mary bends to see in the dim light which has formed, and She sees. She sees the chest torn open and the heart of Her Son. She utters a cry then. A sword seems to be

splitting Her heart. She shouts and then throws Herself on Her Son and She seems dead, too.

They succour and console Her. They want to take Her divine Dead Son away from Her and as She shouts: « Where, where shall I put You? In which place, safe and worthy of You? » Joseph, all bent in a respectful bow, his open hand pressed against his chest, says: « Take courage, o Woman! My sepulchre is new and worthy of a great man. I give it to Him. And my friend here, Nicodemus, has already taken the spices to the sepulchre, as he wishes to offer them. But I beg You, as it is getting dark, let us proceed... It is Preparation Day. Be good, o holy Woman! »

Also John and the women beg Her likewise and Mary allows Her Son to be removed from Her lap, and She stands up, distressed, while they envelop Him in a sheet, begging: « Oh! do it gently! »

Nicodemus and John at the shoulders, Joseph at the feet, they lift the Corpse enveloped not only in the sheet, but resting also on the mantles which act as a stretcher, and they set out down the road.

Mary, supported by Her sister-in-law and by the Magdalene, goes down towards the sepulchre, followed by Martha, Mary of Zebedee and Susanna, who have picked up the nails, the tongs, the crown, the sponge and the cane.

On Calvary remain the three crosses, the central one of which is bare and the other two have their living trophies, who are dying.

« And now » says Jesus « pay attention. I spare you the description of the burial, which was well described last year: on 19th February 1944. So you will use that one, and P.M. at the end of it will put Mary's lamentation, which I gave on 4th October 1944. Then you will put the new visions you see. They are new parts of the Passion and are to be put very carefully in their places to avoid confusion and lacunae. »

606. The Burial of Jesus and the Spiritual Distress of Mary.

19th February 1944.

It is useless to say what I feel. It would only be a description of my suffering, and therefore with no value as compared with the suffering that I see. So I will describe it, without any comment on myself.

I am present at Our Lord's burial.

The little procession, after descending Calvary, at the foot of it finds the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea, hewn out of the limestone of the mountain. The compassionate disciples enter it with Jesus' Body.

I see the sepulchre made as follows. It is a room dug in the stone, at the end of a vegetable garden all in blossom. It looks like a grotto,

but it is evident that it has been dug by man. There is the burial room proper with its loculi (they are different from those of the catacombs). These are like round cavities, that penetrate into the stone, like the cells of a beehive, to give an idea. At present they are all empty. The empty opening of each loculus looks like a black spot on the grey stone. Before this room there is a kind of anteroom, in the middle of which there is a slab of stone for anointing. Jesus is placed on it, enveloped in His sheet.

Also John and Mary go in. But nobody else, because the preparatory room is small, and if more people were in it, they would not be able to move. The other women are near the door, that is near the opening, because there is not a proper door.

The two bearers uncover Jesus.

While they prepare the bandages and spices on a sort of shelf in a corner, in the light of two torches, Mary bends over Her Son weeping. And once again She wipes Him with Her veil, which is still round Jesus' loins. It is the only washing that Jesus' Body has, this one with His Mother's tears, and if they are copious and abundant, they serve to remove the dust, sweat and blood of that tortured Body only superficially and partly.

Mary never tires of caressing those frozen limbs. With even greater delicacy than if She were touching those of a new-born baby, She takes the poor tortured hands, She clasps them in Her own, She kisses the fingers and stretches them, She tries to connect the gaping wounds, as if She wished to doctor them, so that they may not ache so much and She presses those hands, which can no longer caress, against Her cheeks, and moans and moans in Her dreadful grief. She straightens and joins the poor feet, which are so limp, as if they were deadly tired of walking so far on our behalf. But they have been displaced too much on the cross, and the left one in particular is almost flat, as if it had no ankle.

She then reverts to the body and caresses it, so cold and already stiff, and when once again She sees the gash of the lance, which is now wide open like a mouth, as Jesus is lying on His back on the stone slab, and so the cavity of the thorax can be seen more clearly - the point of the heart can be seen distinctly between the breastbone and the left costal arch, and about two centimetres above it there is the cut made by the point of the lance in the pericardium and in the heart, a cut about a good centimetre and a half long, whereas the external one on the right side is at least seven centimetres long - Mary utters a cry again as on Calvary. A lance seems to be piercing Her, so much She writhes in Her pain, pressing Her hands on Her heart, pierced like Jesus'. How many kisses on that wound, poor Mother!

She then attends to Jesus' head again and straightens it, because it is lightly bent back and much to the right. She tries to close His

eyelids, which persist in remaining half-open, and His mouth, which has remained open, contracted and a little twisted to the right. She tidies His hair, which only yesterday was beautiful and tidy, and now has become a tangle heavy with blood. She disentangles the longer locks, She smoothes them on Her fingers and curls them to give them back the form of the lovely hair of Her Jesus, so soft and curly. And She moans and moans, because She remembers when He was a little boy... It is the fundamental reason for Her grief: the recollection of Jesus' childhood, of Her love for Him, of Her carefulness, which was afraid also of the most wholesome air for Her little divine Child, and the comparison with what men have now done to Him.

Her lamentation makes me suffer. And when moaning She says: « What have they done to You, Son? », not being able to Put up with seeing Him thus, naked, rigid, on a stone, She takes Him in Her arms, passing Her arm under His shoulders and pressing Him to Her heart with the other hand and lulling Him, moving exactly as in the grotto of the Nativity, Her gesture makes me weep and suffer, as if a hand rummaged in my heart.

4th October 1944.

The terrible spiritual distress of Mary.

The Mother is standing near the anointing stone caressing, contemplating, moaning, weeping. The flickering light of the torches illuminates Her face now and again, and I see large tear drops stream down the cheeks of Her ravaged face. And I can hear Her words. Every one of them. All of them, very clearly, although whispered between Her lips, a real conversation of a mother's soul with the soul of Her Son. I am told to write them.

« Poor Son! How many wounds!... How much You have suffered! Look what they have done to You! ... How cold You are, Son! Your fingers are ice-cold. And how motionless they are! They seem to be broken. Never, not even in the sound sleep of a child, or in the heavy sleep after working as an artisan, were they so inert... And how cold they are! Poor hands! My darling, My love, My holy love, give them to Your Mother! Look how lacerated they are! John, look what a gash! Oh! cruel men! Here, give Me this wounded hand of Yours. That I may dress it. Oh! I will not hurt You... I will use kisses and tears, and I will warm it with My breath and My love.

Caress Me, Son! You are ice-cold, I am burning with fever. My fever will be relieved by Your ice, and Your ice will be mitigated by My fever. A caress, Son! Only a few hours have gone by since You last caressed Me, and they seem ages to Me. For months I was without Your caresses, and they seemed hours to Me, because I was always waiting for You to come back, and I considered each day an hour, and each hour a minute, to say to Myself that You had not

been away for one or more months, but only for a few days, for a few hours. Why is time so long now? Ah! inhuman torture! Because you are dead.

They have killed You! You are no longer on the Earth! No longer! Wherever I send My soul to look for Yours and embrace it, because finding You, having You, feeling You was the life of My body and of My spirit, wherever I look for You with the wave of My love, I no longer find you, I do not find You any more. Nothing of You is left to Me but these cold soulless remains!

O soul of My Jesus, o soul of My Christ, o soul of My Lord, where are You? O cruel hyenas joined to Satan, why have you taken away the soul of My Son? And why have you not crucified Me with Him? Were you afraid of committing a second crime? (Her voice is becoming stronger and stronger and more and more heart-rending). And what was it for you killing a poor woman, since you did not hesitate to kill God Incarnate? Have you not committed a second crime? And is letting a mother outlive her murdered son not the most nefarious crime? »

The Mother, Who with Her voice had raised also Her head, now bends again over the lifeless face and speaks in a low voice, to Him alone: « At least we would have been together in here, in the tomb, as we would have been together in the agony on the cross, and together in the journey beyond life and towards the Life. But if I cannot follow You in the journey beyond life, I can remain here waiting for You. »

She straightens Herself up again and says to those present in a loud voice: « Go away, all of you. I will stay. Close Me in here with Him. I will wait for Him. What are you saying? That it is not possible? Why is it not possible? If I had died, would I not be here, lying beside Him, waiting to be put in order? I will be beside Him, but on My knees. I was there when He, a delicate rosy baby, cried on a December night. I will be here now, on this night of the world, that no longer has the Christ. Oh! true night! The Light is no longer!... O ice-cold night! The Love is dead! What are you saying, Nicodemus? Shall I be contaminated? His Blood is not contamination. I was not contaminated even when I gave birth to Him. Ah! How you came out, You, Flower of My womb, without tearing any fibre, just like a flower of scented narcissus, that blooms from the soul of the matrix bulb and yields a flower even if the embrace of the earth has not been on the matrix. A virginal blooming that can be compared with You Son, Who came through a heavenly embrace and were born in the Diffusion of heavenly splendour. »

Now the heart-broken Mother bends once again over Her Son, estranged to everything that is not He, and She whispers slowly: « But do You remember, Son, that sublime show of brightness that filled everything when Your smile was born in the world? Do You remember

that beatific light that the Father sent from Heaven to envelop the mystery of Your flowering and to make You find this dark world less repellent, since You were the Light and You were coming from the Light of the Father and of the Paraclete Spirit? And now?... Now darkness and cold... How cold! I am shivering all over. More than that December night. Then there was the joy of having You to warm My heart. And You had two people loving You... Now... Now I am alone and I am dying, too. But I will love You for two: for those who have loved You so little that they abandoned You at the moment of sorrow; I will love You for those who have hated You, I will love You for the whole world, Son. You will not feel the chill of the world. No, You will not feel it. You did not tear My viscera to be born, but I am ready to tear them and enclose You in the embrace of My womb in order not to make You feel cold. Do you remember how My womb loved You, little throbbing embryo?... It is still the same womb. Oh! it is My right and My duty as a Mother. It is My wish. There is no one but the Mother Who can have it, Who can have a love as big as the universe for Her Son. »

Her voice has been rising, and now, with all its strength She says: « Go. I will stay. You will come back in three days' time and we will go out together. Oh! to see the world again leaning on Your arm, Son! How beautiful the world will be in the light of Your risen smile! The world thrilling in its Lord's steps! The Earth trembled when death extirpated Your soul and Your spirit departed from Your heart. But now it will tremble... oh! no longer with horror and spasm, but with a gentle throb, unknown to Me, but apprehended by My feminine insight that thrills a virgin when, after an absence, she hears the step of her bridegroom coming for the wedding. Even more: the Earth will tremble with a holy throb, as I was shaken in the deepest depth when I had the Lord One and Trine in Me, and the will of the Father with the fire of the Love created the seed from which You came, of holy Baby, My Son, all Mine! All of Your Mother! of Your Mother!... »

Every child has a father and mother. Also an illegitimate boy has a father and a mother. But You had only Your Mother to make Your flesh of rose and lily, to make these embroidered veins, as blue as our streams in Galilee, and these lips of pomegranate, and this hair more graceful than the blond fleece of the goats of our hills, and these eyes: two little lakes of Paradise. No, more than that, they are of the water that comes from the Unique and Quadruple River of the Place of Delight, and carries with it, in its four branches, gold, onyx, beryl and ivory, and diamonds, and palms, and honey, and roses, and infinite riches, o Pishon, Gihon, Tigris, Euphrates: way for the angels exulting in God, way for the kings adoring You known or unknown Essence, but Living and Present even in the most obscure heart! Only Your Mother did that for You, by means

of Her "yes" ... I formed You with music and love, I made You with purity and obedience, My Joy!

What is Your Heart? The flame of Mine, that split to condense in a crown around the kiss given by God to His Virgin. That is what your Heart is. Ah! (The shout is so heart-rending that the Magdalene hastens to succour Her with John. The other women dare not Move and weeping and veiled, look stealthily from the opening). Ah! they have broken it! That is why You are so cold, and I am so cold! There is no longer inside You the flame of My heart, and I can no longer continue to live through the reflection of that flame, which was Mine and which I gave You to make Your heart. Here, here, here, on My breast! Before death kills Me, I want to warm You up, I want to lull You. I used to sing to You: "There is no home, there is no food, there is nothing but sorrow". O prophetic words! Sorrow, sorrow, sorrow for You, for Me! I used to sing to You: "Sleep, sleep on My heart". Also now: here, here, here... , And sitting on the edge of the stone, She takes Him in Her lap, passing one arm of Her Son round Her shoulders, resting His head on Her shoulder, and bending Her head on His, holding Him close to Her breast, lulling and kissing Him, heart-broken and heart-rending.

Nicodemus and Joseph approach Her, laying vases and bandages, and the clean Shroud, and a basin of water, I think, and what seem lint wads, on a kind of seat, which is on the other side of the stone.

Mary notices it and asks in a loud voice: « What are you doing? What do you want? To prepare Him? For what? Leave Him in the lap of His Mother. If I succeed in warming Him up, He will rise sooner. If I succeed in consoling the Father and in comforting Him for the deicide hatred, the Father will forgive sooner, and He will come back sooner. » The Sorrowful Mother is almost raving.

« I will not give Him to you! I gave Him once, I gave Him once to the world, and the world did not want Him. It killed Him, because it did not want Him. Now I am not giving Him any more! What are you saying? That you love Him? Of course! Then, why did you not defend Him? You have waited, to say that you loved Him, until He could no longer hear you. What a poor love yours is! But if you were so afraid of the world that you did not dare to defend an innocent, you should at least have handed Him back to Me, to His Mother, so that She might defend Her Son. She knew who He was and what He deserved. You!... You have had Him as your Master, but you have learned nothing. Is that not true? Am I perhaps telling lies? But do you not see that you do not believe in His Resurrection? You believe in it? No. Why are you standing there, preparing bandages and spices? Because you consider Him a poor dead man, cold today, putrified tomorrow, and that is why you want to embalm Him.

'Leave your pomades. Come and worship the Saviour with the pure hearts of the shepherds of Bethlehem. Look: in His sleep He is only one who is tired and is resting. How much He worked in His lifetime! He has worked more and more, not to mention these last hours!... Now He is resting. As far as I, His Mother, am concerned, He is nothing but a big Boy who is tired and is sleeping. His bed and room are really miserable! But neither was His first pallet more beautiful, nor was His first dwelling place more cheerful. The shepherds worshipped the Saviour in His sleep as an Infant. Worship the Saviour in His sleep as Triumpher of Satan. Then, like the shepherds, go and say to the world: "Glory to God! Sin is dead! Satan is defeated! Peace be on the Earth and in Heaven between God and man!" Prepare the ways for His return. I am sending you. I, Whom Maternity makes the Priestess of the rite. Go. I said that I do not want it. I have washed Him with My tears. And it is enough. The rest is not necessary. And do not think that you will put it on Him. It will be easier for Him to rise if He is free from those funereal useless bandages.

Why are you looking at Me so, Joseph? And you, Nicodemus? Has the horror of this day made you dull-witted or absent-minded? Do you not remember? "This evil and adulterous generation, which asks for a sign, will be given no other sign but that of Jonah... So the Son of man will be for three days and three nights in the heart of the Earth". Do you not remember? "The Son of man is going to be handed over to the power of men, who will kill Him, but on the third day He will be raised again". Do you not remember? "Destroy this Temple of the true God and in three days I will rebuild it". O men, the Temple was His Body. Are you shaking your heads? Are you pitying Me? Do you think that I am insane? What? He raised the dead and will He not be able to raise Himself? John? »

« Mother! »

« Yes, call Me "mother". I cannot live thinking that I shall not be called so! John, you were present when He raised the young daughter of Jairus and the young man of Nain from the dead. They were really dead, were they not? It was not just a heavy sleep? Tell Me. »

« They were dead. The girl had been dead two hours, the young man a day and a half. »

« And did they rise at His order? »

« The rose at His order. »

« Have you heard that? You two, have you heard? But why are you shaking your heads? Ah! perhaps you mean that life comes back quicker in those who are innocent and young. But My Child is the Innocent! And He is the Always Young One. He is God, My Son!... » With tormented feverish eyes Mary looks at the two preparers, who, depressed but inflexible, are laying the rolls of bandages already soaked in the spices.

Mary takes two steps. She has laid Her Son down again on the stone with the delicacy of one who lays a new-born baby in a cradle. She takes two steps, She bends at the foot of the funereal bed, where the Magdalene is weeping on her knees, She gets hold of her shoulder, shakes her and calls her: « Mary. Tell Me. These people think that Jesus cannot rise from the dead, because He is a man and He died of wounds. But is you brother not older than He is? »

« Yes, he is. »

« Was he not one big sore? »

« Yes, he was. »

« Was he not already putrid before descending into his sepulchre? »

« Yes, he was. »

« And did he not rise from the dead after four days of asphyxia and putrefaction? »

« Yes, he did. »

« So? »

There is a long grave silence. Then an inhuman howl. Mary staggers, pressing a hand against Her breast. They support Her. She repels them. She seems to repel the compassionate people. In actual fact She repels what She alone can see. And She shouts: « Back! Back, you cruel one! Not this revenge! Be silent! I do not want to hear you! Be silent! Ah! he is biting at My heart! »

« Who, Mother? »

« O John! It is Satan! Satan who is saying: "He will not rise. No prophet said that". O Most High God! Help Me all of you, good spirits, and you compassionate men! My reason is wavering! I do not remember anything any more. What do the prophets say? What does the Psalm say? Oh! who will repeat to Me the passages that speak of My Jesus? »

It is the Magdalene who in her melodious voice recites David's psalm on the Passion of the Messiah.

Mary weeps more bitterly, supported by John, and Her tears fall on Her dead Son, wetting Him completely. Mary notices that and wipes Him saying in a low voice: « So many tears. And when You were so thirsty I could not give You even one drop. And now... I am wetting You completely! You look like a shrub under heavy dew. Here, Your Mother will dry You now, Son! You have tasted so much bitterness! Do not let also the bitterness and the salt of Your Mother's tears fall on Your wounded lips!... »

Then in a loud voice She calls: « Mary. David does not say... Do You know Isaiah? Repeat his words... »

The Magdalene repeats the passage on the Passion and she ends saying with a sob: « ... He surrendered His life to death and was taken for a sinner, He Who took away the sins of the world and prayed for sinners. »

« Oh! Be silent! Death no! Not delivered to death! No! No! Oh! your

lack of faith, forming an alliance with Satan's temptation, maker, My heart doubt! And should I not believe You, Son? Should I not believe Your holy Word?! Oh! tell My soul! Speak. From the far away shores, where You have gone to free those awaiting Your coming, cast the voice of Your soul to My anxious soul, to Mine which is here, all open to receive Your voice. Tell Your Mother that You are coming back! Say: "On the third day I will rise from the dead". I implore You, Son and God! Help Me to protect My Faith. Satan is crushing it in his coils to strangle it. Satan has removed his mouth of a snake from the flesh of man, because You have torn that prey away from him, and now with his hooked poisonous teeth he is piercing the flesh of My heart paralysing its throbs, its strength and warmth. God! God! God! Do not allow Me to be distrustful! Do not allow doubt to freeze Me! Do not let Satan be free to lead Me to despair! Son! Son! Put Your hand on My heart. It will drive Satan away. Lay it on My head. It will bring the Light back to it. Sanctify My lips with a caress, so that they may be fortified to say: "I believe" even against a whole world that does not believe. Oh! how grievous it is not to believe! Father! Those who do not believe are to be forgiven much. Because, when one no longer believes... when one no longer believes... all horror becomes easy. I tell You... I, Who am experiencing this torture. Father, have mercy on the faithless! Holy Father, for the sake of this Victim Which has been consumed, and of Me, a victim which is still consuming, give them, give the faithless Your faith! »

A long silence.

Nicodemus and Joseph beckon to John and the Magdalene. « Come, Mother. » It is the Magdalene who says so, trying to take Mary away from Her Son and to separate Jesus' fingers which are interlaced with Mary's, Who is kissing them weeping.

The Mother straightens Herself up. She is impressive. For the last time She stretches out the poor bloodless fingers and lays the inert hand along the side of the body. Then She lowers Her arms towards the ground, and standing upright, Her head bent lightly back, She prays and offers. Not a word is heard. But from Her whole appearance it is clear that She is praying. She is really the Priestess at the altar, the Priestess at the moment of the offertory. « Offerimus praeclarae majestati tuae de tuis donis, ac datis, hostiam puram, hostiam sanctam, hostiam immaculatam... »

Then She turns round and says: « You may continue. But He will rise from the dead. In vain you mistrust My reason and are blind to the truth He spoke to you. In vain Satan tries to lay snares to My faith. To redeem the world also the torture given to My heart by Satan defeated is required. I suffer it and I offer it for future men. Goodbye, Son! Goodbye, My Child! Goodbye, My little Boy! Goodbye... Goodbye.. Holy... Good... Beloved and lovable... Beauty...

Joy Source of health... Goodbye On Your eyes on Your lips on Your golden hair on Your frozen limbs on Your pierced heart oh! on Your pierced heart My kiss My kiss My kiss Goodbye Goodbye Lord! Have mercy on Me! »

[19th February 1944].

The two preparers have finished preparing the bandages.

They come to the table and they denude Jesus also of His veil. They pass a sponge, I think, or a linen cloth, on the body in a very rapid preparation of the limbs dripping from countless parts. Then they spray ointments on all the Body. In fact they bury it under a layer of pomade. First they lift it up, cleaning also the stone slab, on which they lay the Shroud, more than half of which hangs from the head of the bed. They lay Him down again, on His chest, and spread the ointments on all His back, thighs and legs, on all the posterior part. Then they turn Him round delicately, watching that the pomade of spices is not removed, and they spread also the front, first the trunk, then the limbs. First the feet, then the hands, which they join on the lower belly.

The mixture of spices must be as sticky as gum, because I see that His hands remain in place, whereas before they always slid because of their weight of dead limbs. His feet do not slide. They remain in position: one is more straight, the other more stretched.

His head is the last. After spreading it diligently, so that its features disappear under the layer of ointment, they tie it with a chin-bandage to keep the mouth closed. Mary moans more loudly.

Then they lift the hanging side of the Shroud and fold it on Jesus. He disappears under the thick cloth of the Shroud. It is nothing but a form covered with a cloth.

Joseph ensures that everything is in order and on the Face he lays another linen sudarium and other cloths of the kind, similar to wide rectangular strips, that pass from right to left, above the Body, making the Shroud adhere to the Body. It is not the typical dressing as seen in mummies and also in Lazarus' resurrection. It is a rudimentary dressing.

Jesus is now annulled. Even His shape is confused under the linens. It looks like a long heap of cloths, narrower at the ends and wider at the centre, laid on the grey stone. Mary weeps louder.

[4th October 1944]

Jesus says:

« And the torture continued with periodic attacks until dawn on Sunday. In My Passion I had only one temptation. But the Mother, the Woman, expiated on behalf of woman, guilty, several times, of every evil. And Satan behaved mercilessly with infinite cruelty towards the conqueress.

Mary had defeated him. The most atrocious temptation for Mary. Temptation against the flesh of the Mother. Temptation against the heart of the Mother. Temptation against the spirit of the Mother. The world thinks that Redemption ended with My last breath. No, it did not. The Mother completed it by adding Her treble torture to redeem the treble concupiscence, struggling for three days against Satan, who wanted to induce Her to deny My word and not to believe in My Resurrection. Mary was the only one who continued to believe. She is great and blessed also because of that faith.

You have become acquainted also with that. A torture corresponding to My torture at Gethsemane. The world will not understand this page. But "those who are in the world without being of the world" will understand it and they will have an increased love for the Sorrowful Mother. That is why I gave it. Go in peace with our blessing. »

607. The Return to the Supper Room.

28th March 1945.

Joseph of Arimathea puts out one of the torches, he has a last look round and goes to the opening of the sepulchre, holding up high the remaining torch still lit.

Mary bends once again to kiss Her Son through His wrappings. And She would like to do so controlling Her grief, to contain it in a form of respect for the Corpse, which, being already embalmed, no longer belongs to Her. But when She is close to the veiled face, She is unable to control Herself and relapses into a new crisis of affliction.

They lift Her with difficulty and with greater difficulty they take Her away from the funereal bed. They rearrange the cloths that had been upset, and carrying Her rather than supporting Her, they take away the poor Mother, Who goes off looking back to see Her Jesus, Who is left alone in the dark sepulchre.

They go into the silent vegetable garden in the evening light. The faint light, that had cleared after the tragedy on Golgotha, is already growing darker, as night is falling. And in there, under the thick branches, although still bare of leaves and just adorned with the white-pink buds of the blossoming apple-trees, strangely late in this orchard of Joseph, whereas elsewhere they are already all covered with open blossoms showing their tiny fruit, it is darker than in any other place.

They roll the heavy sepulchral stone into its lodging. Some long branches of a ruffled rose-bush hanging from the top of the grotto towards the ground seem to be knocking at the stone door saying: « Why are you closing before a weeping mother? » And they also seem to be weeping drops of blood, as they shed their red petals and their

corollas lie along the dark stone, and the closed buds knock against the inexorable door.

But soon more blood stains that sepulchral door and more tears wet it. Mary, Who so far has been supported by John and has been sobbing rather quietly, frees Herself from the apostle and with a cry, which I think makes the very fibres of the plants quiver, throws Herself against the entrance, She gets hold of the protruding stone to shift it, She skins Her fingers and breaks Her nails without being successful and prizes the rough stone even with Her head. And Her cry sounds like the roar of a lioness that wounds herself struggling near the trap in which her little ones are closed, being compassionate and wild out of motherly love.

There is nothing left in Her of the meek virgin of Nazareth, of the patient woman, known so far. She is the mother. Only and simply a mother, attached to her child with all the fibres and nerves of her body and of her love. She is the most true « mistress » of that body, to which She has given birth, the only mistress after God, and She does not want to be robbed of Her property. She is the « queen » who is defending Her crown: Her Son.

All the rebellion and rebellious acts that in thirty-three years any other woman would have had against the injustice of the world for her son, all the holy and lawful fierceness that any other mother would have felt during those last hours to wound and kill the murderers of her son with her own hands and teeth, all such feelings, which out of Her love for mankind She has always subdued, now stir in Her heart, they boil in Her blood and, meek as She is even in Her grief that makes Her rave, She does not curse, She does not rebel. She only asks the stone to move aside, to let Her go in, because Her place is in there, where He is. She only asks men, who are pitiless in their pity, to obey Her and to open the sepulchre.

After striking and staining the unrelenting stone with the blood of Her lips and hands, She turns round, She leans against it with Her arms stretched out, gripping the two edges of the stone once again, and solemn in Her majesty of Our Lady of Sorrows, She orders: « Open it! Do you not want to? Well, I am staying here. Not inside? Well, here, outside. Here is My bread and My bed. Here is My abode. I have no other home, no other purpose. You may go. Go back to the world which is disgusting. I am staying where there is no avidity or smell of blood. »

« You cannot, Woman! »

« You cannot, Mother! »

« You cannot, Mary, my dear! »

And they try to detach Her hands from the stone, while they are frightened of those eyes, which they have never seen before flash in such a way that makes them look hard and irresistible, glassy, phosphorescent.

The meek are not overbearing, and the humble do not persist in pride... And Mary's vehement will and imperious command soon vanish. Her eyes become meek again, like those of a tortured dove, Her gestures are no longer imposing and She lowers Her head in a beseeching attitude, and joining Her hands She begs them: « Oh! Do leave Me! For the sake of your dead relatives, for the sake of the living ones whom you love, have mercy on a poor mother!... Feel... Feel My heart. It needs peace to stop throbbing so fiercely. It began throbbing thus up there, on Calvary. The hammer went bang, bang, bang... and each blow wounded My Child... and each blow resounded in My brain and in My heart... and My head is full of those blows, and My heart is beating fast, as those blows did on the hands and feet of My Jesus, of My little Jesus... My Child! My Child!... »

She is overwhelmed again by Her torture, which seemed to have been appeased after Her prayer to the Father near the anointing table. They are all weeping.

« I need not to hear shouts or bangs. And the world is full of voices and noises. Every voice sounds to Me like the "great cry" that curdled the blood in My veins, and every noise sounds like that of the hammer striking the nails. I need not to see men's faces. And the world is full of faces... For almost twelve hours I have been seeing faces of killers... Judas... the executioners... the priests... the Judaeans... They are all killers, all of them!... Go away! Go away... I do not want to see anybody any more... In every man there is a wolf and a snake. Man disgusts and frightens Me... Leave Me here, under these quiet trees, on this flowery grass... Before long the stars will begin to shine... They have always been His friends and Mine... Yesterday evening they kept us company in our lonely agony... They know so many things... They come from God.. - Oh! God! God!... » She weeps and kneels down.
« Peace, My God! I am left with nothing but You! »

« Come, my daughter. God will give You peace. But come. Tomorrow is the Passover Sabbath. We shall not be able to come and bring You food... »

« Nothing! Nothing! I do not want any food! I want My Child! I will appease My hunger with My grief, I will quench My thirst with My tears... Here... Can you hear how that horned howl is weeping? It is weeping with Me, and before long nightingales will be weeping. And tomorrow, in the sunshine, wood-larks and blackcaps and all the birds He loved will weep, and doves will come with Me to knock at this stone and say: "Rise, my love, and come! Love, Who are in the large fissure of the rock, in the hiding-place of the ravine, let me see Your face, let me hear Your voice". Ah! What am I saying! They also, the wicked killers, have called Him with the word of the Canticle! Yes, come, daughters of Jerusalem, to see your King with

the diadem with which His Fatherland crowned Him on the day of His wedding with Death, on the day of His triumph as Redeemer! »

« Look, Mary! The guards of the Temple are coming. Let us go away, so that they may not scorn You. »

« The guards? Scorn? No. They are cowardly. Yes, cowardly. And if I, dreadful in My grief, should march against them, they would flee like Satan before God. But I remember that I am Mary... and I will not strike as I would be entitled to. I will be good... and they will not even see Me. And if they see Me and ask Me: "What do You want?", I will say to them: "The charity of being allowed to breathe the balmy air coming out from this fissure". I will say: "In the name of your mothers". Everybody has a mother... also the pitiful robber said so... »

« But these men are worse than robbers. They will insult You. »

« Oh!... And is there still an insult of which I am not aware, after today's? »

It is the Magdalene who finds a reason capable of bending the Sorrowful Mother to obedience. « You are good, You are holy, and You believe, and You are strong. But what are we?... You are aware of it! The majority have run away. Those who have remained are trembling. The doubt, which is already in us, would overwhelm us. You are the Mother. You have not only duties and rights on Your Son, but also duties and rights on what belongs to Your Son. You must come back with us, among us, to gather us together, to reassure us, to infuse Your faith into us. You said so, after Your just reproach for our timidity and misbelief: "It will be easier for Him to rise, if He is free from these useless bandages". I say to You: "If we succeed in being united in the faith in His Resurrection, He will rise earlier. We will evoke Him with our love... Mother, Mother of my Saviour, come back with us, since You are the love of God, to give us this love of Yours! Do You want poor Mary of Magdala to get lost again, after He saved her with so much pity? »

« No. I would be reproached for that. You are right. I must go back... and look for the apostles... the disciples... the relatives everybody... And say... say: have faith. Say: He forgives you Whom have I already told so?... Ah! The Iscariot... I will have to Yes, I will have to look also for him... because he is the biggest sinner... » Mary remains with Her head bent on Her breast, trembling as if She were disgusted, and then She says: « John, you will look for him. And you will bring him to Me. You must do that. And I must do that. Father, let also this be done for the redemption of Mankind. Let us go. »

She stands up. They leave the half-dark vegetable garden. The guards look at them go out without saying anything.

The road, dusty and thrown into a mess by the stream of people who went along it, striking it with their feet, with stones and

cudgels, runs round Calvary and arrives at the main road, Which is parallel to the walls. And the traces of what has happened are even clearer here. Twice Mary utters a cry and She Stoops to examine the ground in the feeble light, because She seems to see some blood and She thinks it is the blood of Her Jesus. But it is nothing but tatters of cloth torn off, I think, in the confusion of the flight. The little stream, that flows along the road, babbles softly in the deep silence which has fallen everywhere. The town seems to be forlorn, as nothing but silence comes from it.

They are now at the little bridge that leads to the steep Calvary road. And, in front of it, there is the Judicial Gate. Before disappearing in there, Mary turns round to look at the top of Calvary... and She weeps desolately. Then She says: « Let us go. But lead Me. I do not want to see Jerusalem, its streets, its inhabitants. »

« Yes, but let us be quick. They are about to close the Gates and, see?, their guards have been reinforced. Rome is afraid of turmoils. »

« Quite rightly. Jerusalem is a den of tigers! It is a tribe of killers! It is a rabble of robbers! And those usurpers aim with their rapacious fangs not only at property, but also at lives. For thirty-two years they have laid snares for the life of My Child... He was a little lamb of milk and roses, with golden curly hair... He could hardly say "Mummy", and take His first steps, and laugh with His few teeth between His lips of pale coral, when they came to slaughter Him... Now they say that He had blasphemed, and infringed the Sabbath, and incited people to revolt, and aimed at a throne, and sinned with women... But what had He done then? Which blasphemy could He have uttered, if He could hardly call his Mummy? What Law could He infringe, if He, the Eternal Innocent, then was also the little innocent child of man? What revolt could He stir, if He was not even able to be naughty? Which throne could He aim at? He had His throne both on the Earth and in Heaven, and He did not seek any other: in Heaven He had His Father's bosom, on the Earth My lap. He never cast a sensual glance, and you, young beautiful women, can confirm that. But then, but then... His senses were confined to the need of warmth and nourishment, He made love, yes, but to My tepid breast, to lay His little face on it and sleep so, and to My round nipple, from which My love flowed as milk... Oh! My Child!... And they wanted You dead! That is what they wanted to deprive You of: Your life! Your only treasure. They wanted to deprive the Mother of Her Son, and the Son of His Mother, to make us the most miserable and desolate people in the Universe. Why deprive the Living One of His life? Why unduly claim the right to remove this thing that is life: the gift of the flower and of the animal, the gift of man? My Jesus asked nothing of you. Neither money, nor jewels, nor houses. He had a house, a little holy one, and He left it out of love for you, you men-hyenas. For your sake

He had given up what even the young one of an animal has, and poor and alone He had gone through the world, without even the bed that the Just One had made for Him, without even the bread His Mother used to make for Him, and He had slept wherever He could and He had eaten as He was able. In the houses of kind people, like every son of man, or on the grass of meadows, watched over by the stars. Sitting at a table, or sharing the grains of corn or wild blackberries with the birds of God. And He did not ask you for anything. On the contrary, He gave you what He had. He only wanted to live, to give you the Life with His word. And all of you, and you, Jerusalem, have deprived Him of His life. Are you sated and fed with His Blood and His Flesh? Or are you not yet satisfied? And you, a hyena after being a vampire and a vulture, do you want to feed on His Corpse, and not yet satisfied with opprobrium and tortures, do you still want to be pitiless and take delight in disfiguring His remains and seeing once again His spasms, His sobs and convulsions in Me, the Mother of the Murdered One? Have we arrived? Why are you stopping? What does that man want of Joseph? What is he saying? »

Joseph, in fact, has been stopped by one of the rare passersby, and in the dead silence of the deserted town their words are heard very clearly.

« It is known that you have entered Pilate's house. You are a violator of the Law. You will answer for that. Passover is interdicted to you! You are contaminated. »

« And you, too, Helkai. You have touched me and I am all covered with the blood of Christ and with the sweat of His death! »

« Ha! horror! Away, away with that blood! »

« Be not afraid. It has already abandoned and cursed you. »

« And you as well, you cursed one. And now that you are flirting with Pilate, don't think that you can take the Corpse away. We have taken the necessary steps to ensure that the story comes to an end. »

Nicodemus has approached them slowly, while the women have stopped with John, leaning against a closed portal.

« We have seen that » replies Joseph. « Cowards! You are afraid even of a dead body! But of my vegetable garden and of my sepulchre I do what I like. »

« We shall see. »

« We shall see. I will appeal to Pilate. »

« Yes. Fornicate with Rome, now. »

Nicodemus moves forward: « Better with Rome than with the Demon, as you, deicides, do! In any case, tell me: how come you are plucking up courage again? A moment ago you were running away, a prey to terror. Are you recovering already? Is what you had not sufficient yet? Was your house not burnt down? Tremble! The Punishment is not over, on the contrary it is coming. Like the

Nemesis of the heathens it is impending over you. Neither guards or seals will prevent the Avenger from rising and striking. »

« Cursed! » Helkai runs away and goes and knocks against the women. He realises that and utters a dreadful insult against Mary.

John does not say one word. With the leap of a panther he clings to him and knocks him down and, pressing him with knees and holding his hands round his neck, he says to him: « Ask Her to forgive you or I will strangle you, you demon. » And he does not relax his hold until the other, pressed and half choked by John's hands, utters gaspingly: « Forgive me. »

But his cry has attracted the attention of the patrol. « Halt there! What's happening? Further seditions? Stand still, all of you, or you will be struck. Who are you? »

« Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, who have been authorised by the Proconsul to bury the Nazarene Who has been put to death, and we are coming back from the sepulchre with His Mother, a son and women relatives and friends. This man offended the Mother and has been compelled to ask Her forgiveness. »

« Only that? You should have cut his throat. You may go. Soldiers, arrest that man. What else do these vampires want? Also the hearts of mothers? Hail Judaeans! »

« How horrible! But they are no longer men... John, be good to them. Take into consideration the memory of Me and of My Jesus. He preached forgiveness. »

« Mother, You are right. But they are criminals and they make me lose my head. They are sacrilegious, they offend You and I cannot allow that. »

« Yes, they are criminals. And they know that they are. Look how few there are in the streets, and how those few slink away. After committing a crime, delinquents are afraid. It horrifies Me to see them flee thus, enter houses and barricade themselves there, out of fear. I feel that they are all guilty of the Deicide. Look over there, Mary, at that old man. He already has a foot in the grave and yet, now that he is illuminated by the light of that door that has opened, I think I saw him march past accusing My Jesus, up there, on Calvary... He called Him a robber... My Jesus a robber!... That young man, a little more than a boy, uttered obscene blasphemies, invoking His Blood upon himself... Oh! the wretch!... And that man? So brawny and strong, will he have refrained from striking Him? Oh! I do not want to see! Look: the faces of their souls are superimposed on the faces of their bodies and... and they no longer look like men, but like demons... So fearless they were against the Man Who had been tied and crucified... And now they run away, they hide themselves, they shut themselves up. They are afraid. Of whom? Of a dead body. He is nothing but a dead body, as far as they are concerned, because they deny that He is God. So, of what are they

afraid? Upon whom are they shutting their doors? Upon remorse. Upon punishment. It is of no avail. Remorse is within you. And it will follow you for ever. And the punishment is not a human one. And locks and sticks, doors and bars are of no use against it. It descends from Heaven, from God, the avenger of His sacrificed Son, and it penetrates through walls and doors, and with its heavenly flame it marks you for the supernatural punishment awaiting you. The world will come to the Christ, to the Son of God and Mine, it will come to Him Whom you have pierced, but you will be those marked for ever, the Cains of a God, marked as the dishonour of the human race. I, Who was born of you, I, Who am the Mother of everybody, must say that with regard to Me, your daughter, you have been more than step-fathers and that, in the immense number of My children, you are the ones who impose the greatest fatigue on Me in receiving you, because you are soiled with the crime against My Child. Neither do you repent saying: "You were the Messiah. We acknowledge and worship You". Here is another Roman patrol. Love is no longer on the Earth. There is no more Peace among men. And Hatred and War are agitated like those smoky torches. The rulers are afraid of the unrestrained crowd. By experience they know that, when that wild beast named man has tasted the flavour of blood, he becomes avid of slaughter... But be not afraid of these men. They are neither royal lions nor panthers. They are very cowardly hyenas. They rush upon defenceless lambs. But they are afraid of the lion armed with lances and authority. Do not fear these creeping jackals. The sound of your steps with hobnailed boots puts them to flight and your shining lances make them meeker than rabbits. 'Those lances! One of them slit the heart of My Son! Which of them? Their sight pierces My heart... And yet I should like to have them all in My trembling hands, to see which is the one that still has traces of blood, and say: "It is this one! Give Me it, soldier! Give it to a mother in remembrance of your far away mother, and I will pray for her and for you". And no soldier would deny Me it. Because they, the men on the war-path, were the best during the agony of the Son and of the Mother. Oh! why did I not think of that up there? I was like one whose head had been struck. It was already stunned by those blows... Oh! those blows! Who will grant Me not to hear them any more, here, in My poor head? The lance... How much I would like to have it!... »

« We can look for it, Mother. The centurion seemed to be very kind to us. I do not think that he will deny us it. I will go tomorrow. »

« Yes, John. I am poor. I have only a little money. But I will deprive Myself of it, to the last farthing, to have that lance... Oh! why did I not ask for it then? »

« Mary, my dear, none of us were aware of that wound... When You saw it, the soldiers were far away. »

« That is true... Grief has made Me feeble-minded. And His clothes? I have nothing of what belonged to Him! I would give My blood to have them... » Mary weeps again desolately.

And She arrives thus in the street where is the Supper room. And it is time, because She is exhausted and She drags Herself along like an old decrepit woman. And She says so.

« Pluck up heart. We have arrived now. »

« Arrived? So short the road that this morning seemed so long? This morning? Was it this morning? Not before? How many hours and how many ages have gone by since I came here yesterday evening and since I left it this morning? Is it really I, the fifty-year-old Mother, or a very aged woman, a woman of many years ago, laden with years on My bent shoulders and on My white hair? I seem to have lived all the sorrow of the world, and that it is all on My shoulders, which bend under its weight. An incorporeal cross, but so heavy! Of stone. Perhaps even heavier than My Jesus'. Because I carry My cross and His with the remembrance of His torture and with the reality of My torment. Let us go in. Because we must go in. But it is no consolation. It is an increase of sorrow. My Son came in through this door for His last meal. And He went out through it to face death. And He had to put His foot where His traitor had put it, when he went out to call those who had to capture the Innocent. I saw Judas at that door... I saw Judas! And I did not curse him. But I spoke to him as a mother whose heart was torn apart. Torn apart because of the good Son and of the wicked one... I saw Judas! I saw the Demon in him! I, Who have always held Lucifer under My heel, and looking only at God I never lowered My eyes on Satan, I recognised his face looking at the Traitor, I spoke to the Demon... And he ran away, because he cannot bear My voice. Will he have left him now? So that I may speak to that dead body and I, the Mother, may conceive him again with the Blood of a God and bring him forth to Grace? John, swear to Me that you will look for him and that you will not be cruel to him. I am not, although I should be entitled to... Oh! let Me go into that room, where My Jesus had His last meal. Where the voice of My Child spoke His last words in peace! »

« Yes. We shall go. But now, look, come here, where we were yesterday. Have a rest. Say goodbye to Joseph and Nicodemus, who are withdrawing. »

« Yes, I will say goodbye to them. Oh! I say goodbye to them, I thank them. I bless them! »

« Come, do come. You will do so at Your leisure. »

« No. Here. Joseph... Oh! I have not known anybody with this name who did not love Me... »

Mary of Alphaeus bursts into tears.

« Do not weep... Joseph also... It was out of love that your son was

mistaking. He wanted to give Me peace in a human way... But today!... You saw him... Oh! all the Josephs are kind to Mary... Joseph, I thank you. And you, Nicodemus... My heart prostrates itself under your feet which are tired because of the long way you have gone for Him... for the last honours paid to Him... I have but My heart to give you... and I give it to you, the loyal friends of My Son... and... and excuse a mother with a pierced heart for the words I spoke to you in the sepulchre... »

« Oh! Holy Mother! Do forgive us! » says Nicodemus.

« Be good, now. Rest in Your Faith. We will come tomorrow » adds Joseph.

« Yes, we will come. We are at Your disposal. »

« It is Sabbath tomorrow » objects the mistress of the house.

« The Sabbath is dead. We will come. The Lord be with you » and they go away.

« Come, Mary. »

« Yes, come, Mother. »

« No. Open. You promised to do so after the greetings. Open this door! You cannot close it to a mother. To a mother who is trying to breathe the smell of the breath, of the body of her child in the air of the room. But do you not know that I gave Him that breath and that body? I, Who carried Him for nine months, Who gave birth to Him, suckled Him, brought Him up and took care of Him? That breath is Mine! The smell of that body is Mine! It is Mine, and it has become more beautiful in My Jesus. Let Me smell it once again. »

« Yes, dear. Tomorrow. You are tired now. You are burning with fever, You cannot. You are not well. »

« Yes. I am not well. Because in My eyes I have the sight of His Blood, and in My nose the smell of His Body covered with sores. Let Me see the table on which He leaned when He was alive and healthy, and let Me smell the scent of His youthful body. Open it! Do not bury Him for the third time! You have already concealed Him under spices and bandages, then you have shut Him up under the stone. Why now deny a Mother the possibility of finding again the last trace of Him in the breath He left beyond this door? Let Me go in. On the floor, on the table, on the seats, I will look for the traces of His feet, of His hands. And I will kiss them, I will kiss them until I consume My lips. I will search... I will search... Perhaps I shall find a fair hair of His head. A hair not encrusted with blood. But do you know what a hair of a son means for a mother? You, Mary of Clopas, you, Salome, are mothers. And do you not understand? John? John? Listen to Me. I am your Mother. He has made Me such. He did! You must obey Me. Open the door! I love you, John. I have always loved you, because you loved Him. I will love you even more. But open the door. Open it, I say! Do you not want to? Do you not want to? Ah! So I no longer have a son!? Jesus never

refused Me anything. Because He was My Son. You are refusing. You are not a son. You do not understand My grief... Oh! John, forgive... forgive Me... Open... Do not weep... Open... Oh! Jesus! Jesus!... Listen to Me... Let Your spirit work a miracle! Open to Your Poor Mother this door that nobody wants to open! Jesus! Jesus! »

With clenched fists Mary knocks at the little closed door. It is a paroxysm of torture, until She turns pale and, while whispering: « Oh! My Jesus! I am coming! I am coming! », She collapses without strength into the arms of the weeping women, who support Her to prevent Her from falling at the foot of that door, and they carry Her thus into the room in front of it.

608. The Night of Good Friday.

29th March 1945.

Mary, assisted by the weeping women, comes to Herself and She weeps without having any other strength but that of shedding tears, It really seems that Her life must flow and be consumed completely in Her tears.

They want to give Her some refreshment. Martha offers Her some wine; the mistress of the house would like Her to take at least some honey; Mary of Alphaeus, kneeling in front of Her, offers Her a cup of lukewarm milk, saying: « I milked it myself from little Rachel's goat » (Rachel must be a daughter of the people who live in this house, I do not know whether as tenants or as keepers). But Mary does not want anything. She weeps. She can only weep. And She asks and hears them promise that they will look for the apostles and disciples, for the lance and Jesus' garments, and that at the break of the day, since they do not want to let Her go now, they will let Her go into the Supper room.

« Yes. If You calm down a little, if You rest a little, I will take You there » says Her sister-in-law. « We shall both go in, and on my knees I will look for every trace of Jesus on Your behalf... » and Mary of Alphaeus sobs. « But look! Here You have the chalice and the bread broken by Him and used by Him for the Eucharist. Is there a holier souvenir? See? John brought them for You this morning, so that You might see them this evening... Poor John, he is over there and is weeping and is afraid... »

« Afraid? Why? Come here, John. » John comes out from the shade, because in the room there is only a little lamp placed on the table near the objects of the Passion, and he kneels at the feet of Mary, Who caresses him and asks: « Why are you afraid? »

And John, kissing Her hands and weeping replies: « Because You are not well. You are feverish and worried... And You are not tranquil. And if You continue so, You will die as He did... »

« Oh! I wish it were true! »

« No! Mother! Mama! Oh! It is more pleasant to say: "Mama". As I say to my mother! Let me say so... But, as I find no difference between You and my mother, and I even love You more than I love her, because you are the Mother Whom He gave me and You are His Mother, so do not make too great a difference between the Son born of You, and the son who has been given to You... And love me a little as You love Him... If it were He Who said to You: "I am afraid that You may die", would You reply: "Oh! I wish it were true"? No. You would not say that. On the contrary, You would be sorry to go away and leave Him, Your Lamb, in a world of wolves... And do You not grieve for me?... I am so much more a lamb than He was. Not through goodness and purity, but through stupidity and fear. If I am left without You, poor John will be torn to pieces by wolves without uttering a bleat that speaks of his Master... Do You want me to die so, without serving Him? As stupid in death as in life? No, You do not, do You? So, Mother, try to calm down... For His sake... Oh! do You not say that He will rise from the dead? Yes, You do, and it is true. Then, when He rises, do You want Him to find the house devoid of You? Because He will certainly come here... Oh! poor, poor Jesus, if instead of hearing Your cry of love He should hear our cries of grief, if instead of finding Your breast to rest His tortured glorious head on, He should find Your closed sepulchre... You must live. To greet Him when He comes back... I do not say "to our love". We deserve all kinds of reproach because of our behaviour. But to Your love. Oh! what meeting will it be? And what will He be like? Mother of Wisdom, Mama of the most ignorant John, since You know everything, tell us what He will be like, when He appears after rising from the dead. »

« The sores of Lazarus' legs were healed, but one could see their marks. And He appeared wrapped in bandages full of rotteness » says Martha.

« We had to wash him and wash him over again... » adds Mary.

« And he was weak, and we had to feed him by His order » ends Martha.

« The son of the widow of Nain looked bewildered and he was like a child unable to walk and speak without difficulty, so much so that He gave him back to his mother so that she might teach him to use the gift of life once again. And He Himself guided the first steps of Jairus' little daughter... » says John.

« I think that my Lord will send an angel to us to say: "Come with a clean garment". And my love has already prepared it. It is in the mansion. I could not spin it. But I had it spun by my wet-nurse, who is no longer worried about my future, and does not weep any more. I got the most precious linen and I received the purple from Plautina, and Naomi wove the border; and I made the belt, the bag and the taleth, embroidering them by night not to be seen. I learned

from You, Mother. It is not perfect. But rather than by the pearls forming His name on the belt and on the bag, it is made beautiful by the diamonds of my tears of love and by my kisses. Every stitch is a throb of devoutness for Him. And I will take it to Him. You will allow me, will You not? »

« Oh!... I did not think that they would deprive Him of His garment... I am not familiar with the practises of the world and with its ferocity... I thought that I was aware of it... (and tears once again stream down Her pale cheeks) but I see that I did not know anything yet... And I was thinking: "He will have the garment made by His Mother also afterwards". He liked it so much! He wanted it like that. And He had told Me such a long time ago: "You will make a tunic in such a manner. And You will bring it to Me for Passover... Because Jerusalem must see Me in the purple garment of a king... " Oh! that wool, whiter than snow, while I spun it was becoming red in the eyes of God and Mine, because My heart was wounded once again by that word... The other wounds, after years and months, if they had not healed, had dried up by dripping blood. But this one! Every day, every hour, turned the sword round in My heart: "One day less! One hour less! Then He will be dead!" Oh! Oh!... And the yam on the spindle and on the loom became red... Then it was steeped in the dye for the world... But it was already red... »

Mary weeps again. They try to comfort Her speaking to Her of the Resurrection.

Susanna asks: « What do You say? What will He be like when He rises? And how will He rise? »

And Mary, bewildered and blinded in this hour of redeeming martyrdom, replies: « I do not know... I do not know anything any more... Except that He is dead!... »

She bursts into tears again and kisses the linen cloth that Jesus had round His hips, and She presses it to Her heart and lulls it as if it were a baby... And She touches the nails, the thorns, the sponge and shouts: « These are the things that Your Fatherland gave You! Iron, thorns, vinegar, gall! And insults, insults, insults! And among all the sons of Israel a man from Cyrene had to be chosen to carry the cross for You. That man is as sacred to Me as a spouse. And if I knew another one who has helped My Son, I would kiss his feet. So no one took pity on Him? Go out! Go away! It grieves Me even to see you! Because among all of you, you were not able to obtain even a less cruel torture. Useless and idle servants of your King, go out! » She is dreadful in Her outburst. Standing stiff, She looks even taller, with Her imperious eyes, Her arm stretched out pointing at the door. She commands like a queen on her throne.

They all leave without reacting to avoid exciting Her more, and they sit outside the closed door, listening to Her moaning and to any noise She may make. But after the noise of a chair pushed aside

and of Her knees falling on the floor, because She kneels down with Her-head against the table on which are the objects of the Passion, they can only hear Her weep unceasingly and disconsolately.

She whispers, but in such a low voice that those outside cannot hear Her: « Father, Father, forgive Me! I am becoming proud and bad. But You can see that what I say is true. There were crowds around Him. And all Palestine, during these festivals, is inside the holy walls... Holy? No. No longer holy... They would have remained such, if He had breathed His last within them. But Jerusalem rejected Him like a nauseating regurgitation. So only the Crime is in Jerusalem... Well, of all the people that followed Him, they were not able to gather a handful of men who could impose themselves, I do not mean to save Him, because He had to die to redeem, but to let Him die without so much torture. They remained in the shade, or they ran away... My heart revolts at so much cowardice. I am the Mother. So forgive My sin of proud harshness... » and She weeps...

... Outside the others are on tenter-hooks for many reasons. The master of the house, who had gone out to stroll about curiously, comes back in and brings dreadful news. They say that many people died in the earthquake, many were wounded in scuffles between followers of the Nazarene and the Jews, that many have been arrested and that there will be more executions because of rebellions and threats to Rome; that Pilate has given orders to arrest all the followers of the Nazarene and the leaders of the Sanhedrin who are present in town or had already ran away through Palestine; that Johanna is dying in her mansion; that Manaen has been arrested by Herod, whom he insulted in the presence of all the Court as an accomplice of the Deicide. In brief, a pile of catastrophic news...

The women moan. Not so much out of fear for themselves, but for their sons and husbands. Susanna thinks of her husband, who is known as one of Jesus' followers in Galilee. Mary of Zebedee thinks of her husband, who is the guest of a friend, and of her son James, of whom she has had no news since the previous evening. And Martha says sobbing: « Perhaps they have already gone to Bethany! Who did not know what Lazarus was for the Master? »

« But he is protected by Rome » retorts Mary Salome.

« Oh! protected! Considering how much the chiefs of Israel hate us, who knows what charges they will make to Pilate against him... Oh! God! » Martha, not knowing which way to turn, shouts: « The arms! The arms! The house is full of them... and also the mansion! I know! This morning, at dawn, Levi, the guardian came, and he told me... But you know as well! And you told the Jews on Calvary... Fool! You have put in the hands of the cruel people the weapon to kill Lazarus!... »

« I said so. I did. I spoke the truth without knowing. But be quiet,

you chicken-hearted woman! What I said is the safest guarantee for Lazarus. They will be wary of venturing on searching where they know there are armed people! They are cowards! »

« Yes, the Jews are. But the Romans are not. »

« I am not afraid of Rome. She is just and peaceful in her provisions. »

« Mary is right » says John. « Longinus said to me: "I hope you Will be left alone. But if you are not, come or send someone to the Praetorium. Pilate is benign towards the followers of the Nazarene. He was generous also towards Him. We will defend you". »

« But if the Jews act by themselves? It was they who captured Jesus yesterday evening! And if they say that we are desecrators, they are entitled to capture us. Oh! My sons! I have four of them! Where will Joseph and Simon be? They were on Calvary and later they came down when Johanna was unable to resist. They came down to help and defend the women, they, the shepherds and Alphaeus... all of them! Oh! They will certainly have already killed them. Did you hear that Johanna is dying? It is certainly because she has been wounded. And before the mob could strike a woman, they must have defended her and were killed!... And Judas and James? My little Judas! My darling! And James as kind as a girl! Oh! I have no children left! I am like the mother of the Maccabean children!... »

All the women weep desperately, except the mistress of the house, who has gone to look for a hiding place for her husband, and Mary Magdalene, who is not weeping. But her eyes are full of fire and she has become the authoritative woman of days gone by. She does not speak. But she darts angry looks at her dejected companions and in her eyes one can read an epithet very clearly: « Cowards! »

Some time goes by so... Now and again one stands up, opens the door slowly, casts a glance and closes the door again.

« What is She doing? » ask the others.

And the person who has looked answers: « She is always on Her knees. She is praying »; or: « She seems to be speaking to someone. » And also: « She has got up and She is gesticulating walking up and down the room. »

[No date]

Lament of the Blessed Virgin.

« Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Where are You? Can You still hear Me? Can You hear Your poor Mother, Who is now shouting Your Name, after keeping it in Her heart for so many hours? Your holy blessed Name that has been My love, the love of My lips, which tasted the flavour of honey repeating Your Name, of My lips, which now, instead, when they mention it, seem to be drinking the bitterness left on Your Lips, the bitterness of the terrible mixture. Your Name,

the love of My heart that swelled with joy, when repeating it, as it had swelled to pour off its blood and receive You and clothe You with it, when You descended into Me from Heaven, so small, so tiny, that You could have rested in the calyx of wild mint, You, so great, the Mighty One, humiliated in the embryo of man for the salvation of the world. Your Name, grief of My heart, now that they have torn You away from the caresses of Your Mother, to throw You into the arms of the executioners, who have tortured You to death!

My heart has been crushed by Your Name, that I had to keep within Me for so many hours and whose cry increased more and more as Your sorrow increased, until it crushed it, as if it had been trodden on by the foot of a giant. Oh! My sorrow is a giant and it crushes Me, it shatters Me, and there is nothing that can alleviate it. To whom shall I mention Your Name? Nothing replies to My cry. Even if I shouted so loud that I split the stone closing Your sepulchre, You would not hear Me, because You are dead. You cannot hear Your Mother any more.

How many times have I called You, Son, during these thirty-four years! Since I learned that I was to be a Mother and that My Little one was to be named "Jesus!" You were not yet born and I, caressing My womb, in which You were growing, used to call in a low voice: "Jesus!", and You seemed to move to say: "Mummy!" to me. I had already given You a voice and I dreamed of Your voice. I could hear it before it existed. And when I did hear it, as faint as that of a new-born lamb, tremble in the cold night in which You were born, I became acquainted with the abyss of joy... and I thought that I had become acquainted with the abyss of sorrow, because it was the weeping of My Baby Who was cold, Who was uncomfortable, Who was shedding His first tears of Redeemer, and I had neither fire nor cradle, and I could not suffer in Your stead, Jesus. I had but My lap as fire and cushion, and My love to worship You, My holy Son.

I thought that I had become acquainted with the abyss of sorrow... It was the dawn of that sorrow, it was the edge of that sorrow. Now it is the broad noon, now it is the bottom. This is the abyss, this which I am touching now, after descending into it during these thirty-four years, driven by so many things and prostrated today in the horrible bottom of Your Cross.

When You were a little baby, I used to lull You singing: "Jesus! Jesus!" Which harmony is there more beautiful and holy than this Name, which makes the angels smile in Heaven? To Me it was more beautiful than the song, so sweet, of the angels the night of Your Birth. I could see Heaven in it, the whole of Heaven I could see through that Name. And now, saying it to You Who are dead and cannot hear Me, and You do not reply to Me, as if You had never existed, I see Hell, the whole of Hell. See, now I understand what

it means to be damned. It is to be no longer able to say: "Jesus!" Horrible! Horrible! Horrible!...

How long will this hell last for Your Mother? You said: "Within three days I will rebuild this Temple". I have been repeating these words to Myself all day today, in order not to drop dead, to be ready to greet You when You come back and go on serving You... But how shall I be able to put up for three days with the knowledge that You are dead? You, My Life, for three days dead?

How come, You, Who know everything, because You are the infinite Wisdom, are not aware of the torture of Your Mother? Can You not imagine it, remembering the day I lost You in Jerusalem, and You saw Me squeeze through the crowd around You, looking like a shipwrecked person that touches the shore, after struggling so much with waves and death, with the countenance of a woman who comes out of a torture exhausted, almost bled to death, aged, heart-broken? And then it was possible for me to think that You were just lost. I could delude Myself that it was only that. But not today. Not today. I know that You are dead. No illusion is possible. I saw You being killed. And even if grief should make Me lose My memory, here is Your Blood on My veil and it says to Me: "He is dead! He is bloodless! These are the last drops that gushed out of His Heart!" Out of His Heart! Out of the Heart of My Child! Of My Son! Of My Jesus! Oh! God, merciful God, do not let Me remember that they split His Heart!...

Jesus! I cannot stay here, alone, while You are there, all alone. I, Who have never loved the roads of the world and crowds, and You know, after You left Nazareth, have more and more frequently followed You, in order not to live far from You. I could not live away from You. I faced oddities and derision, I do not take into account fatigue, because it was obliterated by the joy of seeing You, just to live where You were. And now I am here all alone. And You are there, all alone! Why did they not leave Me in Your sepulchre? I would have sat beside Your chilly bed, holding one hand of Yours in Mine, to make You feel that I was near You... No, to feel that You were close to Me. You do not feel anything any more. You are dead!

How often have I spent the night near Your cradle, praying, loving, taking delight in You! Shall I tell You how You slept, with Your little fists closed like two flower buds near Your holy little face? Shall I tell You how you used to smile in Your sleep and, certainly remembering Your Mummy's milk, You made the gesture of sucking, while sleeping? Shall I tell You how You woke up and opened Your eyes and laughed, seeing Me bent over Your face, and You stretched Your little hands joyfully, as You were anxious to be taken by Me, and how with a little cry as sweet as the trill of a blackcap You claimed Your food? Oh! I was happy when You clung to

My breast and I felt the smooth tepidity of Your cheeks, the caresses of Your little hands on My mamma!

You could not stay away from Your Mother. And now You are alone! Forgive Me, Son, for leaving You alone, for not rebelling for the first time in My life and for not insisting on remaining there. It was My place. I would have felt less desolate, if I had remained near Your funereal bed, to arrange Your clothes, as in days gone by, and change them... Even if You could not have smiled at and spoken to Me, I would have felt as if I had You again as when You were a baby. I would have held You to My heart, in order not to make You feel the chillness of the stone, the hardness of the marble. Did I not hold You also today? The lap of a mother is always capable of holding a son, even if he is grown-up man. A son is always a baby for his mother, even if he is one who has been taken down from a cross, covered with sores and wounds.

How many! How many wounds! How much sorrow! Oh! My Jesus, My Jesus so wounded! So wounded! So wounded! No. No. Lord, no! It cannot be true! I am mad! Jesus dead? I am raving. Jesus cannot die! Yes, He can suffer. But He cannot die. He is the Life! He is the Son of God. He is God. God does not die.

Does He not die? Then, why has He been named Jesus? What does "Jesus" mean? It means... oh! it means: "Saviour"! He is dead! He is dead because He is the Saviour! He had to save everybody losing Himself... I am not raving. No. I am not mad. No. I wish I were! I should suffer less! He is dead. Here is His Blood. Here is His crown. Here are the three nails. They have pierced Him with them!

Men, look with what you have pierced God, My Son! And I must forgive you. And I must love you. Because He has forgiven you. Because He told Me to love you. He made Me your Mother, the Mother of the killers of My Child! One of His last words, struggling against the death-rattle at His agony... "Mother, here is Your son... your sons!" Even if I were not She Who obeys, today I would have had to obey, because it was the order of a dying man.

So, Jesus. I forgive. I love them. Ah! My hearts breaks in this forgiveness and in this love! Do You hear that I am forgiving them and loving them? I am praying for them. Yes, I am praying for them... I am closing My eyes not to see these objects of Your torture, to be able to forgive them, love them and pray for them. Each nail serves to crucify a will of Mine not to forgive, not to love, not to pray for Your executioners.

I must, I want to think that I am near Your cradle. Also then I prayed for men. But it was easy then. You were alive and I, although I thought that men were cruel, I never went so far as to think that they could be so cruel to You, Who had assisted them excessively. I prayed and I was convinced that Your Word would make them better men. In My heart I said to them, looking at them: "You are

bad, diseased, now, brothers. But before long He will speak, before long He will defeat Satan in you. He will give you the Life lost! The life lost! It is You, You, You, Who have lost Your life for them, My Jesus! If, when You were in Your swaddling-clothes, I had seen all today's horror, My sweet milk would have turned into poison through grief!

Simeon said so: "And a sword will pierce Your heart". A sword? A mass of swords! How many wounds did they inflict on You, Son? How many groans did You utter? From how many spasms did You suffer? How many drops of blood did You shed? Well, each of them is a sword in Me. I am a mass of swords. There is not a strip of skin on You without sores. In Me there is not one that has not been pierced. They pierce My flesh and penetrate My heart.

When I was expecting You, I prepared Your swaddling-clothes and napkins, spinning the softest linen on the Earth. I did not mind the price, providing I had the softest cloth. How beautiful You looked in the swaddling-clothes made by Your Mother! Everybody said to Me: "Your Child is beautiful, Donna!" You were lovely! From the white linen there appeared Your rosy little face, Your eyes were bluer than the sky, and Your little head seemed enveloped in a golden mist, so fair and soft was Your hair. It smelt of blossoms of almond-trees. People thought that I put scent on You. No. My Darling had but the scent of the swaddling-clothes washed by His Mother, warmed and kissed by Her heart and lips. I was never tired of working for You...

And now? Now I have nothing more to do for You. For three years You have been away from home. But You were still the aim of My days. I thought of You. Of Your clothes. Of Your food: I kneaded flour and baked bread, I looked after the bees to give You honey, I took care of the trees, so that they might yield fruit for You. How much You loved the things that Your Mother brought You! No food of a rich table, no garment of precious cloth was for You like those woven, sewn, taken care of, picked by the hands of Your Mother. When I came to You, You looked at once at My hands, as You used to do when You were a little boy, and Joseph and I gave You our poor gifts, to make You feel that You were "our" King. You have never been greedy, My Child; it was love that You were seeking, that was Your food, and You found it in our attentions. Even now You found it and were looking for it, poor Son of Mine, so little loved by the world!

Now, nothing more. Everything has been accomplished. Your Mother will not do anything any more for You. You no longer need anything. Now You are alone... And I am alone... Oh! happy Joseph, who has not seen this day! I wish I had never seen it either! But in that case You would not have had even this comfort of seeing Your poor Mother. You would have been all alone on the cross, as You

are alone in the sepulchre. All alone with Your wounds.

Oh! God! God! How many wounds has Your Son, My Son! How was I able to see them without dying, whereas I almost fainted every time You hurt Yourself when You were a child?

Once You fell in the kitchen garden in Nazareth and You hurt Your forehead. Only a few drops of blood. But I, Who felt I was dying when I saw the drops of Your Blood at the Circumcision, and Joseph had to support Me as I was shaking like one who is dying, I thought that that tiny cut would kill You and I cured it more with My tears than with water and oil, and I was not at peace until I saw that it no longer bled. Another time, You were learning to work and You hurt Yourself with a saw. A slight wound. But I felt as if the saw had cut Me in two. I had no rest until six days later, when I saw Your hand healed.

And now? And now? Now You have Your hands, feet, side ripped, now Your flesh is falling in pieces, Your face is bruised, that Face which I did not dare to touch lightly with a kiss, and Your forehead and the nape of Your neck are ulcerated. And no one gave You medicament or comfort.

Look at My heart, God, Who have struck Me in My Child! Look at it! Is it not as covered with sores as the Body of Your Son and Mine? The scourges have come down on Me like hailstones, while He was being lashed. What is distance for love? I suffered the torture of My Son! I wish I alone had suffered it, and that I alone were on the sepulchral stone! Look at Me, God! Is My heart not bleeding?

Here is the circle of thorns, I can feel it. It is a band that squeezes and pierces it. Here is the hole of the nails: three stylets driven into My heart. Oh! those blows! Those blows! How did Heaven not collapse because of those sacrilegious blows on the flesh of God? And not being able to shout! Not being able to rush forward and snatch the weapon from the killers and use it to defend My Child, Who was already dying. But having to hear and hear... and not do anything! A stroke on the nail, and the nail penetrates the living flesh. Another stroke, and it penetrates even more. And another, another one, and bones and nerves break, and the flesh of My Child is pierced, and the heart of His Mother! And when they raised You on Your Cross? How much You must have suffered, Holy Son! I can still see Your hand torn by the shock of the drop. And My heart is torn likewise.

I am bruised, scourged, stung, struck, pierced like You. I was not with You on the cross. But look at Your Mother. Is She different from You? No, there is no difference of martyrdom. On the contrary, Yours is over. Mine is still on. You no longer hear the false charges; I do. You no longer hear the horrible curses. I still hear them. You no longer feel the bites of thorns and nails, You are no longer Parched or feverish. I am full of points of fire and I am like one who

is dying of thirst and delirious fever.

If they had even allowed Me to give You a drop of water. My tears, if the ferocity of men denied the Creator the water created by Him. I gave You suck for a long time, because we were Poor, My Son, and in our flight into Egypt we had lost so much, and we had to get a new house, furniture, clothes and food, and we did not know how long the exile would last, or what we would have found going back to our country. I gave You suck longer than the usual period of time, so that You might not feel the lack of food. Until we got the little goat, I was Your little goat, Child of Your Mummy. You already had so many little teeth, and You used to bite... Oh! what a joy to see You laugh in Your childish games!...

You wanted to walk. You were so healthy and strong. I held You up for hours and hours, and I did not feel My back break being bent over You, Who were taking Your first steps and at each step You would say: "Mummy, Mummy!" Oh! what a beatitude to hear You sing that name! Also today You were saying: "Mother, Mother!" But Your Mother could only see You die! I could not even caress Your feet! Your feet? Ah! even if they had been within reach, I would not have been able to touch them, to avoid increasing Your torture. How much Your poor feet must have suffered, o My Jesus!

If only I could have come up to You and placed Myself between the wood and Your body, and prevented You from rubbing against the wood in the convulsions of the agony! I can still hear Your head knock against the wood in the last gasps. And that sound, that sound drives Me mad. It is in My head... like a hammer.

Come back, come back, My dear holy Son! I am dying. I cannot bear this desolation of Mine. Show Me Your face once again. Call Me again. I cannot think that You have no voice, no eyes, that You are a cold lifeless corpse. Oh! Father, assist Me! Jesus does not hear Me! Is His Passion not over? Is it not all accomplished? Are these nails, these thorns, this blood, the-se tears of Mine not sufficient? Is still more required to heal man?

Father, I am mentioning the instruments of His sorrow and My tears. But that is the least important. What made Him die tortured in a superhuman manner was Your abandonment. What makes Me shout is Your abandonment. I cannot hear You any more! Where are You, holy Father? I was the "Full of Grace". The Angel said: "Hail, Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with You and You are blessed amongst all women". No. It is not true! It is not true! I am like a woman cursed by You for her sin. You are no longer with Me. Grace has withdrawn, as if I were a second Eve sinner.

But I have always been faithful to You. In what have I displeased You? You have dealt with Me as You liked, and I have always said to You: "Yes, Father. I am ready". So, can angels lie? And Anne, who assured Me that You would give Me Your angel in the hour

of sorrow? I am alone. I no longer have grace in Your eyes, I no longer have You, Grace, in Me. I no longer have an angel. So, do saints lie? In what have I displeased You, if they do not lie and I have deserved this hour?

And Jesus? What wrong has Your pure meek Lamb done? In what have we offended You to deserve the incalculable torture of Your abandonment, in addition to the martyrdom given by men? He, above all, He was Your Son and He called You with that voice that made the Earth shudder and shake in a sob of pity. How could You abandon Him all alone in such a torture?

Poor Heart of Jesus, Who loved You so much! Where is the sign of the wound of His Heart? Here it is. Look, Father, at this sign. This is the impression of My hand that entered the gash of the lance-thrust. Here... Here... It cannot be erased either by the tears or by the kisses of His Mother, Whose eyes are dry through weeping and Whose lips are consumed through kissing. This sign shouts and reproaches. This sign cries to You from the Earth more than Abel's blood. And You, Who cursed Cain and revenged Yourself on him, did not intervene on behalf of My Abel already bled by His Cains, and You allowed this last outrage! You crushed His Heart with Your abandonment and You allowed a man to strip Him, so that I might see Him and be crushed. With regard to Me, it does not matter. It is for Him, for Him that I ask and call You to answer. You should not have done that...

Oh! forgive Me! Forgive Me, Holy Father! Forgive a Mother Who is mourning Her Child... He is dead! My Son is dead! Dead with His Heart rent! Oh! Father! Father, have mercy! I love You! We have loved You and You have loved us so much. How did You allow the Heart of Our Son to be rent? Oh! Father!... Father, have mercy on a poor woman! I am blaspheming, Father! I, Your servant, Your nonentity, dare reproach You! Have mercy! You have been good. You have been good. The wound, the only wound that did not hurt Him, is this one. Your abandonment served to make Him die before sunset avoiding other tortures.

You have been good. You do everything for a purpose of good. It is we creatures who do not understand. You have been good. You have been good! O My soul, repeat that word, to remove the sting of Your suffering from Your suffering. God is good and has always loved You, My soul. From Your cradle to the present moment, He has always loved You. He has given You all the joy of the time. All of it. He has given You Himself. He has been good. Good. Good. Thank You, Lord. May You be Blessed for Your infinite goodness!

Thank You. Jesus, I say "thank You" also on Your behalf. This wound at least was not felt by You, Son! I only felt it in My Heart, when I saw Yours opened. Your lance is now in My heart and it rummages and tortures. But it is better so! You do not feel it. But, have

mercy, Jesus! A sign from You! A caress, a word for Your Poor Mother, Whose heart is torn to pieces!
A sign, a sign, Jesus, if You want to find Me alive when You come back! »

[29th March 1945]

A loud knock at the door makes everyone start. The master of the house bravely runs away. Mary of Zebedee would like her John to follow him and pushes him towards the yard. The other women, with the exception of the Magdalene, press against one another moaning.

It is Mary of Magdala who goes straight and resolutely to the door and asks: « Who is it? »

The voice of a woman replies: « I am Nike. I have something to be given to the Mother. Open! Quick. The patrol is around. »

John, who has freed himself from his mother and has rushed towards the Magdalene, busies himself with the many locks, which are well fastened this evening. He opens the door. Nike comes in with a servant and a brawny man who is escorting them. They close the door.

« I have a thing... » says Nike weeping and she is unable to speak...

« What? What? » They are all around her, full of curiosity.

« On Calvary... I saw the Saviour in that state... I had prepared a loincloth, so that He would not have to use the rags of the executioners... But He was so wet with perspiration, with blood in His eyes, that I thought I should give it to Him to wipe Himself. He did so... And He gave the cloth back to me. I have not used it again... I wanted to keep it as a relic with His perspiration and blood. And seeing the fury of the Jews, shortly afterwards, with Plautina and the other Roman ladies Lydia and Valeria, we decided to come back, for fear they might take this linen cloth from us. The Romans are brave women. They put the servant and me in the middle and they protected us. It is true that they are contamination for Israel... and that it is dangerous to touch Plautina. But one thinks of that in peaceful times. Today they were all drunk... At home I wept... for hours... Then there was the earthquake and I fainted... When I came to myself, I wanted to kiss that linen cloth and I saw... oh!... The face of the Redeemer is on it!
... »

« Let us see! Let us see! »

« No. The Mother first. It is Her right. »

« She is so exhausted! She will not be able to resist... »

« Oh! don't say that! On the contrary, it will comfort Her. Tell Her! » John knocks at the door lightly.

« Who is it? »

« It is I, Mother. Nike is here... She came during the night... She brought a souvenir to You... a gift... She hopes to comfort You with it. »

« Oh! one gift only can comfort Me! The smile of His Face... »

« Mother! » John embraces Her lest She should fall, and as if he were confiding the true Name of God, he says: « It is that. The smile of His Face, impressed on a linen cloth with which Nike wiped Him on Calvary. »

« Oh! Father! Most High God! Holy Son! Eternal Love! May You be blessed! The sign! The sign I asked of You. Let her, let her come in! »

Mary sits down, because She cannot stand any longer, and while John beckons to the women, who are peeping into the room, to let Nike pass, She recovers Herself.

Nike goes in and kneels at Her feet with the servant beside her. John, standing near Mary, holds his arm round Her shoulders, as if he wanted to support Her. Nike does not utter one word. But she opens the casket, takes the linen cloth out and unfolds it. And the Face of Jesus, the living Face of Jesus, the sorrowful and yet smiling Face of Jesus looks at His Mother and smiles at Her.

Mary utters a cry of sorrowful love and stretches out Her arms. The women echo Her cry from the door-space where they have crowded. And they imitate Her kneeling before the Face of the Saviour.

Nike cannot find words. She hands the linen cloth over to the motherly hands and she stoops to kiss its edge. She then goes out backwards without waiting for Mary to come out of Her ecstasy.

She goes away... She is already out, in the night, when they think of her... There is nothing to be done except to close the door, as it was before.

Mary is once again alone. In a conversation of Her soul with the image of Her Son, because they all withdraw again.

Some more time goes by. Then Martha says: « What shall we do for the ointments? Tomorrow is the Sabbath »

« And we shall not be able to get anything » says Salome.

« And we should do that Many pounds of aloe and myrrh... but He was so badly washed »

« We ought to have everything ready by dawn on the first day after the Sabbath » remarks Mary of Alphaeus.

« And what about the guards? What shall we do? » asks Susanna.

« We shall tell Joseph, if they do not let us go in » replies Martha.

« We shall not be able to shift the stone by ourselves. »

The Magdalene replies: « Oh! do you think that five of us will not be able? We are all strong... and love will do the rest. »

« In any case I will come with you » says John.

« Certainly not you. I do not want to lose you as well, son. »

« Don't worry about it. We shall be enough. »

« But in the meantime Who will give us the spices? »

They are all depressed Then Martha says: « We could have asked

Nike whether it was true about Johanna... about the rebellions... »

« That is true! But we are dull-witted. We could have taken also the spices then. Isaac was at the doorstep when we came back... »

« In the mansion there are many small vases of essences, and there is some fine incense. I will go and get them. » And Mary Magdalene stands up from her seat and puts on her mantle.

Martha shouts: « You shall not go. »

« I will go. »

« You are mad! They will get you! »

« Your sister is right. Don't go! »

« Oh! what useless howling females you are! Jesus really had a fine group of followers! Have you already used up your reserve of courage? With regard to me, the more I use the more I get. »

« I will go with her. I am a man. »

« And I am your mother and I forbid you. »

« Be good, Mary Salome, and you, too, John. I will go by myself. I am not afraid. I know what it is like going round the streets at night. I have done that thousands of times for sinful reasons... and should I be afraid now that I am going to serve the Son of God? »

« But there is a revolt in town today. You heard what the man said. »

« He is faint-hearted. And you are like him. I am going. »

« And if the soldiers find you? »

« I will say: "I am the daughter of Theophilus, the Syrian, a faithful servant of Caesar". And they will let me go. In any case... A man before a beautiful young woman is a more harmless plaything than a stalk of straw. I know, much to my shame... »

« But how do you expect to find perfumes in the mansion if no one has lived in it for years? »

« Do you think so? Oh! Martha! Do you not remember that Israel forced you to leave it, because it was one of my meeting-places with my lovers? I kept everything there that served to make them even more crazy about me. When I was saved by my Saviour, in a place known only to me, I concealed the alabasters and incenses that I used for my orgies of love. And I swore that only the tears shed on my sins and the adoration of the Most Holy Jesus would be the scented waters and the burning incenses of repentant Mary. And that I would use those signs of a profane cult of senses and of the flesh only to sanctify them on Him and to anoint Him. This is the hour. I am going. Remain here. And be calm. The angel of God will come with me and no harm will befall me. Goodbye. I will bring you news. And do not say anything to Her... You would increase Her worries... » And Mary of Magdala goes out sure of herself and imposing.

« Mother, let that be a lesson for you... And may it say to you: do not let the world say that your son is a coward. Tomorrow, no, today,

because this is already the second watch, I will go looking for my companions, as She wants... »

« It is the Sabbath... you cannot... » objects Salome to detain him.

« "The Sabbath is dead". I also say with Joseph. The new era has begun. Other laws, other sacrifices and ceremonies for it. »

Mary of Salome bends her head on her knees and weeps without protesting any more.

« Oh! I wish we could have news of Lazarus » says Mary of Clopas with a moan.

« If you let me go, you will have news, because Simon the Cananean had instructions to take my companions to Lazarus. Jesus told Simon when I was present. »

« Alas! Are they all there? So they are all lost! » Mary of Clopas and Salome weep desolately.

More time passes while they weep and wait. Then Mary Magdalene comes back triumphantly, laden with bags full of small precious vases.

« See, nothing has happened to me. Here are oils of all kinds, and nard, and olibanum, and benzoin. There is no myrrh and no aloe... I did not want any bitterness... I am drinking it all now... In the meantime we will mix these and tomorrow we will get... oh! if we pay, Isaac will give them also on a Sabbath... We will get myrrh and aloe. »

« Did anyone see you? »

« No one. There is not even a bat around. »

« And the soldiers? »

« The soldiers? I think they must be snoring in their pallets. »

« What about the seditions... the arrests... »

« The fear of that man saw them... »

« Who is in the mansion? »

« Levi and his wife. As peaceful as children. The armed men have fled... ha! ha! fine brave men we have, honestly!... They ran away as soon as they heard of the death sentence. I tell you the truth: Rome is hard and uses the scourge... But by it she makes people fear her and serve her. And she has men, not cowards... Oh! yes! He used to say: "My followers will experience the same destiny as Mine". H'm! If many Romans become followers of Jesus, that may be true. But if there are to be martyrs among the Israelites! He will remain alone... Here. This is my sack. And this one is Johanna's, who... yes. We are not only cowards, but also liars. Johanna is only depressed. She and Eliza felt ill on Golgotha. One is a mother whose son died, and, as she heard the death-rattles of Jesus, she was badly upset. The other is delicate and not used to so much walking and exposure to the sun. But there are no wounds and no agonies. She certainly weeps, as we do. Nothing else. She regrets that she was taken away. She will come tomorrow. And she sends these spices. The ones she

had. As ordered by Plautina, Valeria had remained with her, and now she has gone with the slaves to Claudia's house, because they have much incense. When she comes, because she, too, by the grace of Heaven, is not an ever trembling coward, don't start shouting as if you felt the dagger at your throats-. Come on. Get up. Let us take the mortars and work. Weeping is of no avail. Or at least weep and work. Our balm will be mixed with our tears. And He will feel them upon Himself... He will feel our love. » And she bites her lips, not to weep and to give strength to the others, who are really depressed.

They work eagerly. Mary calls John.

« Mother, what is the matter? »

« Those blows... »

« They are pounding incenses... »

« Ah!... But forgive Me... Don't make that noise... they sound like the hammers... » In fact the bronze pestles striking the marble of the mortars make the exact noise of hammers.

John tells the women, who go out into the yard, in order not to be heard so much. John goes back to the Mother.

« How did they get them? »

« Mary of Lazarus went to her house and to Johanna's... Also some more will be brought... »

« Did anybody come? »

« Nobody after Nike. »

« But look at Him, John, how handsome He is also in His sorrow! » Mary is absorbed in contemplation, with Her hands joined, before the cloth, which She has spread out on a chest holding it with some weights.

« Handsome, yes, Mother. And He is smiling at You... Do not weep any more... Some hours have already gone by. There is less to wait for His return... » and in the meantime John weeps...

Mary caresses his cheek. But She looks only at the image of Her, Son.

John goes out, blinded by his tears.

Also the Magdalene, who has come back to get some amphorae, is in the same state. But she says to the Apostle: « We must not let them see that we are weeping. Because, otherwise, the women over there will not be able to do anything. And we have to do... »

« ... and we have to believe » concludes John.

« Yes. We must believe. If one were not able to believe, it would be despair. I believe. And you? »

« I, too... »

« You say so badly. You do not love enough yet. If you loved with your whole self, it would not be possible for you not to believe. Love is light and voice. Also against the darkness of denial and the silence of death it says: "I believe". » Wonderful is the Magdalene,

so great and imposing, authoritative in her confession of faith! Her heart must be torn to pieces. And her eyes inflamed by tears confirm that. But her spirit is undefeated.

John looks at her full of admiration and whispers: « You are strong! »

« Always. I was so much, that I dared to defy the world. And I was, then, without God. Now that I have Him, I feel I know how to defy also hell. You, who are good, should be stronger than I am. Because sin disheartens, you know? More than consumption. But you are innocent... That is why He loved you so much... »

« He loved you as well... »

« And I was not innocent. But I was His conquest and...

There is a loud knock at the door.

It may be Valeria. Open the door. »

John does so without any fear, dominated by Mary's calm.

It is in fact Valeria with her slaves, who are carrying the litter, from which she comes out. She goes in uttering the Latin greeting: « Salve. »

« Peace be with you, sister. Come in » says John.

« May I offer the Mother the homage of Plautina? Claudia also has contributed. But if it is not grievous for Her to see me. »

John goes in to Mary.

« Who is knocking? Peter? Judas? Joseph? »

« No. It is Valeria. She has brought some precious resins. She would like to offer them to You... if that does not grieve You. »

« I must overcome grief. He called the children of Israel and the heathens to His Kingdom. He called everybody. Now... He is dead... But I am here for Him. And I receive everybody. Let her come in. »

Valeria enters. She has taken off her dark mantle and she is all white in her stole. She stoops to the ground. She greets and speaks. « Domina. You know who we are. The first women redeemed from heathen obscurantism. We were dirt and darkness. Your Son has given us wings and light. Now He is... sleeping in peace. We know your customs. And we want also the balms of Rome to be spread on the Triumpher. »

« May God bless you, daughters of My Lord. And... forgive Me if I am not able to say more... »

« Do not make any effort, Domina. Rome is strong. But she can also understand grief and love. She understands You, Sorrowful Mother. Goodbye. »

« Peace be with you, Valeria! My blessing to Plautina, to all of you. »

Valeria withdraws leaving her incenses and other essences.

« See, Mother? The whole world is making offerings to the King of Heaven and Earth. »

« Yes » says Mary. « The whole world. And His Mother will have

been able to give Him nothing but tears.. »

A cock crows joyfully somewhere nearby. John starts.

« What is the matter, John? » asks the Blessed Virgin.

« I was thinking of Simon Peter... »

« But was he not with you? » asks the Magdalene who has gone back into the room.

« Yes. In Annas' house. Then I understood that I had to come here. And I have not seen him again. »

« It will soon be dawn. »

« Yes. Open the windows. »

They open the window coverings, and their faces look even wanner in the greenish dawn light.

The night of Good Friday is over.

609. The Redeeming Value of Jesus' and Mary's Sufferings. John Is the Head of Lovers.

[20th February 1944]

Now, it is already night-time, Jesus says:

« You have seen how much it costs to be Saviours. You have seen it in Me and in Mary. You have become acquainted with all our tortures and you have seen with what generosity, with what heroism, with what patience, with what meekness, with what perseverance, with what strength we have suffered them through our love to save you.

All those who want, who ask the Lord God to make them "saviours", must thoroughly consider that Mary and I are the model and that those are the tortures they must share in order to save. Their torture will not be the cross, the thorns, the nails, the material scourges. They will be different, of a different form and nature. But equally painful and equally consuming. And only by consuming the sacrifice amid those sorrows can you become saviours.

It is an austere mission. The most austere of them all. The one compared to which the life of the monk or of the nun of the strictest rule is a flower compared to a mass of thorns. Because it is not a rule of a human Order. But the Rule of a priesthood, of a divine monastic life, of which I am the Founder, I, Who in My Rule, in My Order, consecrate and receive those elected to it, and impose My habit on them: total Sorrow, even to sacrifice.

You have seen My sufferings. They have been applied to make amends for your sins. No part of My body was excluded from them, because nothing in man is free from sin, and all the parts of your physical and moral egos - that ego that God gave you with the perfection of divine work and that you have depreciated with the sin of your first parent and with your tendencies to evil, with your bad will - are instruments of which you make use to commit sin. But

I have come to cancel the effects of sin with My Blood and My sorrow, washing your individual physical and moral parts in them, to cleanse and strengthen them against culpable tendencies.

My hands were wounded and imprisoned, after they had become tired carrying the Cross, to make amends for all the crimes committed by the hands of man. From the true and proper ones committed holding and operating a gun against a brother, turning yourselves into Cains, to those perpetrated stealing, writing false accusations, making gestures against the respect of your bodies and other people's, and idling in laziness, which is propitious ground for your vices. For the illicit freedom of your hands, I had Mine crucified, nailing them to the cross, depriving them of every movement more than lawful and necessary.

The Feet of your Saviour, after becoming tired and bruised on the stones of the Way of My Passion were pierced and immobilised, to make amends for the evil you do with your feet, making them means to go to your crimes, thefts, fornications. I marked the streets, the squares, the houses, the steps in Jerusalem, to purify all the streets, the squares, the houses, the steps of the earth from all the evil that had grown on and in it, sown in past and future centuries by your bad will, obedient to Satan's instigations.

My Flesh was bruised, contused, torn to punish in Me the exaggerated cult, the idolatry that you give to your flesh and to the flesh of those whom you love out of a sensual whim or also out of fondness, which is not blameworthy in itself, but you make it such by loving a parent, a husband, a son, a brother more than you love God.

No. Above all love and every tie on the earth, there is, there must be the love for your Lord God. No other love is to be superior to it. Love your relatives in God, not above God. Love God with your whole selves. That will not absorb your love to the extent of making you indifferent towards your relatives, on the contrary it will nourish your love for them with the perfection attained from God, because he who loves God has God in himself and, having God, has Perfection.

I turned My Flesh into one sore to remove from your flesh the poison of sensuality, of lack of modesty, of lack of respect, of ambition and admiration for the flesh destined to become dust again. It is not with the cult for the body that one makes it beautiful. It is with detachment from it that one gives it the eternal Beauty in the Heaven of God.

My Head was tortured with countless tortures: with blows, with exposure to the sun, with shouts, with thorns, to make amends for the sins of your minds. Pride, impatience, unbearableness, intolerance spring up like a mushroom-bed in your brains. I turned it into a tortured organ, enclosed in a casket decorated with blood, to make amends for everything that sprouts from your thought.

You have seen the only crown I wanted. The crown that only a madman or a convict can wear. No one, who is sound of mind (speaking from a human point of view) and is free to do what he likes, will put it on. But I was considered mad and mad I was from a supernatural divine point of view, as I wanted to die for you who do not love Me or love Me so little, as I wanted to die to defeat Evil in you, knowing that you love it more than you love God, and I was a prey to man, his prisoner, condemned by him. I, God, condemned by man.

How often you lose your patience over trifles, you become incompatible through trivialities, you are unbearable because of light indispositions! But look at your Saviour. Consider how irritating it must have been to be continuously stung in different parts, to have the locks of My hair entangled in the thorns, to feel the crown move continuously without being able to move My head, and not being able to lean it anywhere without being tortured! But think of what the shouts of the crowds, the blows on My head, the scorching sun were for My tortured, aching, feverish Head! Consider what pain I felt in My poor brain, since I went to the agony of Friday aching all over because of the efforts made Thursday evening, in My poor brain, which was affected by the fever of My tortured Body and of the intoxications brought about by tortures!

And in My Head, My eyes, My mouth, My nose, My tongue, each had their torture. To make amends for your glances, so anxious to see what is evil and so forgetful of seeking God, to redress the too many, too false, filthy and lustful words that you utter, instead of using your lips to pray, to teach, to console; My nose and My tongue suffered their tortures to make amends for your gluttony and your sensuality of olfaction, through which you incur imperfections, which are the ground for graver sins, and you commit sins through the eagerness for superfluous food, without taking pity on those who are hungry, food which you can afford very often by having recourse to unlawful means of profit.

My organs were not exempted from suffering. Not one of them. Suffocation and cough for My lungs, contused by the cruel scourging, and suffering from oedema because of the position on the cross. Breathlessness and heart trouble as My heart was out of its place and had been injured by the merciless flagellation, by the moral grief that had preceded it, by the ascent under the heavy weight of the cross, by anaemia, the consequence of all the blood shed. Liver congested, spleen congested, kidneys bruised and congested.

You have seen the crown of bruises round My kidneys. Your scientists, to give proof to your incredulity with regard to that evidence of My suffering, which is the Shroud, explain how the blood, the cadaveric perspiration and the urea of an overfatigued body, when mixed with the spices, can have produced that natural drawing of

My dead tortured Body.

It would be better to believe without the need of so many proofs to believe. It would be better to say: "That is the work of God" and bless God, Who has granted you an indisputable proof of My Crucifixion and of the tortures preceding it!

But as now you are no longer able to believe with the simplicity of children, but you need scientific proofs - how poor is your faith, that without the support and the spur of science cannot stand up straight and walk - you must know that the cruel bruises of My kidneys have been the most powerful chemical agent in the miracle of the Shroud. My kidneys, almost crushed by the scourges, were no longer able to work. Like those of people burnt by fire, they were unable to filter, and urea accumulated and spread in My blood, in My body, bringing about the sufferings of uraemic intoxication and the reagent that oozed out of My corpse and fixed the impression on the cloth. But any doctor among you, or anyone suffering from uraemia, will realise what sufferings the uraemic toxins caused to Me, as they were so plentiful as to produce an indelible impression.

Thirst. What a torture thirst! And yet you have seen it. Among so many, there was not one who gave Me a drop of water. From the Supper onwards, I had no refreshment. And fever, sunshine, heat, dust, loss of blood, made your Saviour so thirsty.

You have seen that I refused the wine mixed with myrrh. I did not want any lenitive for My suffering. When we offer ourselves as victims, we must be victims without pitiful arrangements, compromises, mitigations. It is necessary to drink the chalice as it is offered. We must relish the vinegar and gall to the very end. Not the spiced wine that deadens pain.

Oh! the destiny of a victim is really severe. But blessed are those who chose it as their fate.

That was the suffering of your Jesus in His innocent Body. And I will not mention the tortures of My love for My Mother and for Her sorrow. That sorrow was required. But for Me it was the most cruel torture. Only the Father knows what His Word suffered in His spirit, His morale, His physique! Also the presence of His Mother, even if it was what My heart most wished, as it needed that comfort in the infinite solitude that surrounded it, infinite solitude coming from God and from men, was a torture.

She was to be there, an angel of flesh, to prevent despair from assailing Me, as the spiritual angel had prevented it in Gethsemane, She was to be there to join Her Sorrow to Mine for your Redemption, She was to be there to receive the investiture of Mother of mankind. But to see Her die at each shudder of Mine was My greatest sorrow. Not even the betrayal, not even the knowledge that My Sacrifice would be useless for so many people, these two sorrows, which shortly before had seemed so great as to make Me sweat

blood, were comparable with this one.

But you have seen how great Mary was in that hour. Her torture did not prevent Her from being by far stronger than Judith. The latter killed. The former allowed Herself to be killed through Her Child. And She did not curse, She did not hate. She prayed, She loved, She obeyed. Always a Mother, to the extent of thinking, among Her tortures, that Her Jesus needed Her virginal veil on His innocent body, to defend His decency, She was able to be at the same time the Daughter of the Father of Heaven and obey His dreadful will in that hour. She did not curse, She did not rebel. Either against God, or against men. She forgave the latter. She said "Fiat" to the Former.

Also later you heard Her say: "Father, I love You and You have loved us!" She remembers and She proclaims that God has loved Her and She renews Her act of love for Him. In that hour! After the Father had pierced Her and deprived Her of Her reason for existing. She loves Him. She does not say: "I do not love You any more because You have struck Me". She loves Him. And She does not grieve over Her sorrow. But over what Her Son suffered. She does not shout because Her heart is broken, but because Mine is pierced. She asks the Father the reason for that, not for Her sorrow. She asks the reason of the Father in the name of their Son.

She is the Spouse of God. It is She who conceived through union with God. She knows that no human contact has generated Her Child, but only the Fire descended from Heaven to penetrate Her immaculate womb and lay there the divine Embryo, the Body of the Man-God, of the God-Man, of the Redeemer of the world. She knows, and both as Spouse and as Mother She asks the reason for that wound. The others were to be given. But why this one, when everything had been accomplished?

Poor Mother! There was a reason, which Your sorrow did not allow You to read on My wound. And it was that men should see the Heart of God. You have seen it, Mary. And you will never forget it.

But, see? Although Mary at that moment did not see the supernatural reasons for that wound, She immediately thinks that it did not hurt Me, and She blesses God for that. She does not mind that that wound hurts Her, poor Mother, so much. It did not hurt Me, and that is enough and serves Her to bless God Who sacrifices Her.

She only asks for a little comfort in order not to die. She is necessary for the dawning Church, of which a few hours previously She was created the Mother. The Church, like a new-born baby, needs the care and milk of a mother. Mary will give it to the Church supporting the Apostles, speaking to them of the Saviour, praying for it. But how would She be able to do so if She breathed Her last tonight? The Church, that only in a few days' time will be left without her Head, would be completely an orphan if also Mary died.

And the destiny of new-born orphans is always precarious.

God never disappoints a just prayer and He comforts His children who hope in Him. Mary proves that through the comfort of Veronica. She, the poor Mother, had the image of My dead Face impressed in Her eyes. She cannot resist that sight. That is not Her Jesus, aged, swollen, with eyes closed not looking at Her, with lips twisted that do not speak to Her or smile. But here is a face that is the face of Jesus alive. Sorrowful, wounded, but still alive. Here His eyes are looking at Her, his lips seem to be saying: "Mother!" Here His smile still greets Her.

Oh! Mary! Look for your Jesus in your sorrow. He will always come and will look at you, He will call you and will smile at you. We will share sorrow, but we shall be united!

John, little John, you have shared sorrow with Mary and with Jesus. Be like John, always. Also in that. I have already said to you: "You shall not be great because of contemplations and dictations. They are Mine. But because of your love. And the deepest love is in the sharing of sorrow". That gives you the possibility to know by insight the least desires of God and to turn them into reality despite all obstacles.

Look at the lively delicate sensitiveness of John's behaviour from the Thursday night to the Friday night. And further. But let us consider it during those hours.

A moment of dismay. An hour of dullness. But after he overcomes sleepiness through the excitement of the arrest, and the excitement through love, he comes, dragging Peter with him, so that the Master may have some comfort seeing the Head of the apostles and the Favourite apostle.

He then thinks of the Mother, to Whom some cruel person may shout that Her Son has already been captured. And he goes to Her. He does not know that Mary is already living the tortures of Her Son and that while the apostles were sleeping, She was awake and was praying, agonising with Her Son. He does not know. And He goes to Her and prepares Her for the news.

Then he goes to and fro from Caiaphas' house to the Praetorium, from Caiaphas' house to Herod's palace, and then again from Caiaphas' house to the Praetorium. And to do so that morning, elbowing his way through a crowd intoxicated with hatred, wearing garments that point him out as a Galilean, is not pleasant. But love supports him, and he does not think of himself, but of Jesus' and His Mother's sorrows. He could be stoned as a follower of the Nazarene. It does not matter. He defies everything. The others have run away, they are hiding, they are led by prudence and fear. He is led by love, and he remains and shows himself. He is pure. Love thrives in purity.

And if his pity and common sense of a man of the people persuade

him to keep Mary away from the crowds and from the Praetorium - he does not know that Mary shares all the tortures of Her Son, suffering them spiritually - when he decides that the time has come when Jesus needs His Mother, and that it is not right to keep the Mother any longer away from Her Son, he takes Her to Him, he supports Her, he defends Her.

What is that handful of loyal people: a man all alone, unarmed, young, with no authority, leading a few women, with respect to a furious crowd? Nothing. A little pile of leaves that the wind can scatter. A small boat on a stormy ocean that can sink it. It does not matter. Love is his strength and his sail. He is armed with it, and with it he protects the Woman and the women until the end.

John possessed the love of compassion as no other person, except My Mother, possessed it. He is the Head of those who love with such love. He is your master with regard to that. Follow him in the example he gives you of purity and love, and you will be great.

Go in peace, now. I bless you. »

610. The Holy Saturday.

30th March 1945.

It dawns with difficulty. And daybreak is strangely delayed, although there are no clouds in the sky. But the stars seem to have lost all their brightness. And the sun, when it appears, is as pale as the moon was during the night. Opaque... Have they perhaps wept as well, as they look so dull, like the eyes of good people who have wept and still weep over the death of the Lord?

As soon as John realises that the Gates are open, he goes out, turning a deaf ear to his mother's entreaties. The women barricade themselves in the house, even more frightened now that also the Apostle has gone away.

Mary, still in Her room, Her hands resting in Her lap, looks fixedly out of the window, which opens on a not very large garden, but quite spacious and full of roses in bloom along the high walls and the bizarre flower-beds. The tufts of lilies, instead, are still without the stalks of the future flowers: thick and beautiful, but with nothing but leaves. She looks and looks, but I think that She does not see anything, except what there is in Her poor tired brain: the agony of Her Son.

The women go backwards and forwards. They approach Her, they caress Her, they beg Her to take some refreshment, and each time, as they come, there is a wave of a heavy, compound, stunning perfume.

And each time Mary thrills. But nothing else. She does not speak. She does not make a gesture. Nothing. She is exhausted. She is waiting. It is only a wait. She is the One Who awaits.

There is a knock at the door... The women rush to open. Mary turns round on Her seat, without standing up, and stares at the halfopen door.

The Magdalene goes in. « Manaen is here... He would like to be useful in some way. »

« Manaen... Let him come in. He was always good. But I did not think that it was he... »

« Who did You think, Mother!... »

« Later... later. Let him come in. »

Manaen goes in. He is not as pompous as usual. He is wearing a very common tunic, of a brown shade which is almost black, and a similar mantle. No jewels and no sword. Nothing. He looks like a well-to-do person, but of the common people. He stoops to greet, first with his hands crossed on his chest, and then he kneels down as if he were in front of an altar.

« Stand up. And forgive Me if I do not reply to your bow. I cannot... »

« You must not. I would not allow that. You know who I am. So I beg You to consider me Your servant. Do You need me? I see that there is no man here. I heard from Nicodemus that they have all run away. There was nothing to be done. That is true. But at least we should have given Him the comfort of seeing us. I... I greeted Him at the Sixtus. And then I was no longer able, because... But it is useless to mention it. That also was wanted by Satan. Now I am free and I have come to put myself at Your service. Give me Your orders, Woman. »

« I should like to know and let Lazarus know... His sisters are worried, and also my sister-in-law and the other Mary. We should like to know whether Lazarus, James, Judas, and the other James are safe. »

« Judas? The Iscariot! But he betrayed Him! »

« Judas, the son of the brother of My spouse. »

« Ah! I will go » and he stands Up. But in doing so he makes a gesture of pain.

« Are you wounded? »

« H'm... yes. Nothing serious. An arm is aching a little. »

« Because of us, perhaps? Is that why you were not up there? »

« Yes. That is why. And that is the only thing I regret. Not the wound. The remainder of Pharisaism, of Hebraism, of Satanism that was in me, because the cult of Israel has become Satanism, has all come out with that blood. I am like a baby, that after the excision of the sacred umbilical cord, has no further contact with his mother's blood, and the few drops still remaining in the excised cord do not flow into him, obstructed as they are by the linen string. But they fall... by now useless. The new-born baby lives with his own heart and his own blood. So do I. Till now I was not yet completely

formed. Now I have come to the end, and I come, and I was born to the Light. I was born yesterday. My Mother is Jesus of Nazareth. And He gave birth to me when He uttered His last cry. I know... Because I ran to Nicodemus' house last night. I should only like to see Him. Oh! when you go to the Sepulchre, let me know. I will come... I do not know His Face as the Redeemer! »

« It is looking at you, Manaen. Turn round. »

The man, who had gone in with his head so lowered and then had had eyes only for Mary, turns round almost frightened and sees the veronica. He throws himself on the floor, worshipping... And he weeps.

He then stands up. He bows to Mary and says: « I am going. »

« But it is the Sabbath. You know. They already accuse us of infringing the Law through His instigation. »

« We are on an equal footing, because they infringe the law of Love. The first and greatest. He said so. May the Lord console You. » He goes out.

Hours go by. How slow they are for those who are waiting...

Mary stands up and, leaning on pieces of furniture, She goes to the door. She tries to walk across the large entrance hall. But when She has nothing to lean on, She staggers as if She were intoxicated.

Martha, who sees Her from the yard, which is beyond the door open at the end of the hall, rushes towards Her. « Where do You want to go? »

« In there. You promised Me. »

« Wait until John comes. »

« Enough of waiting. You can see that I am calm. Since you have had the room locked from inside, go and have it opened. I will wait here. »

Susanna, as all the women have gathered there, goes away to call the master of the house with the keys. Mary in the meantime leans on the little door, as if She wished to open it with the power of Her will. The man arrives. Frightened and downcast, he opens the door and withdraws. And Mary, supported by the arms of Martha and Mary of Alphaeus, goes into the Supper room.

Everything is still as it was at the end of the Supper. The course of events and the instructions given by Jesus have prevented tampering. Only the seats have been put back in their places. And Mary, Who has not been in the Supper room, goes straight to the place where Her Jesus was sitting. She seems to be guided by a hand. And She looks like a sleep-walker, so stiff is She in Her effort to walk... She proceeds. She walks round the couch, She insinuates Herself between it and the table... She remains standing for a moment and then She collapses across the table in a fresh outburst of tears. She then calms down. She kneels down and prays with Her head resting on the edge of the table. She caresses the table-cloth, the seat,

the dishes, the edge of the large tray on which the lamb was, the large knife used to carve it, the amphora placed before that seat. She does not know that She is touching what also the Iscariot has touched. She then remains stupefied, with Her head resting on Her arms crossed on the table.

All the women are silent, with the exception of Her sister-in-law who says: « Come, Mary. We are afraid of the Jews. Would You like them to come in here? »

« No. This is a holy place. Let us go. Help Me... You have done the right thing in telling Me. I would also like a chest, a beautiful large one with a lock, to close all My treasures in it. »

« I will have it brought to You from our mansion tomorrow. It is the nicest one in the house. It is strong and safe. I give it to You with joy » says the Magdalene promising it.

They go out. Mary is really exhausted. She staggers in climbing the few steps. And if Her grief is less dramatic, it is because it no longer has the strength of being so. But in its quietness it is even more tragical.

They go into the room in which they were previously, and before going back to Her seat, Mary caresses the Holy Face of the veronica, as if it were a face of flesh.

There is another knock at the door. The women hasten to go out and close the door.

In Her tired voice Mary says: « If it is the disciples, and in particular Simon Peter and Judas, let them come to Me at once. »

But it is Isaac, the shepherd. He goes in weeping after some minutes and he prostrates himself at once before the veronica and then before the Mother, and he does not know what to say. It is Mary Who says: « Thank you. He saw you and I saw you. I know. He looked at you as long as He could. »

Isaac weeps louder. He can speak only when he has finished weeping. « We did not want to go away. But Jonathan begged us. The Jews were threatening the women... and later we were no longer able to come. It was... it was all over... Where should we have gone then? We scattered through the countryside and at dead of night we gathered together half way between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. We thought we would turn His Death away by going towards His Grotto... But then we felt that it was not right to go there... It was selfishness, and we came back towards the City... And we found ourselves, without knowing how, at Bethany... »

« My sons! »

« Lazarus! »

« James! »

« They are all there. Lazarus' fields at dawn were strewn with people who were wandering and weeping... His useless friends and disciples!... I... went to Lazarus and I thought I was the first... Instead

your two sons were already there, woman, and yours, with Andrew, Bartholomew, Matthew. Simon Zealot had convinced them to go there. And Maximinus, who had gone out in the country early in the morning, had found more. And Lazarus has helped them all. And he is still doing so. He says that the Master had ordered him to do that. And also the Zealot says so. »

« But Simon and Joseph, my other sons, where are they? »

« I don't know, woman. We had been together until the earthquake. Then... I don't know anything else precisely. Amidst the darkness and lightning and the dead who had risen and the quaking ground and the whirlwind, I lost my head. I found myself in the Temple. And I still wonder how I got there, beyond the sacred limit. Consider that between me and the altar of scents there was only a cubit... Imagine! I was where only the priests on duty are allowed to stand!... And... and I saw the Holy of Holies!... Yes. Because the veil of the Holy is torn from top to bottom, as if the power of a giant had torn it... If they had seen me in there, they would have stoned me. But no one could see any more. I met nothing but ghosts of dead and ghosts of living people. Because we looked like ghosts in the light of thunderbolts, in the bright light of fires, and with terror on our faces... »

« Oh! my Simon! My Joseph! »

« And Simon Peter? And Judas of Kerioth? And Thomas and Philip? »

« I do not know, Mother... Lazarus sent me to see you, because they had told him that... they had killed you all. »

« Well, go at once to reassure him. I have already sent Manaen. But you had better go as well and tell him... tell him that He alone has been killed. And I with Him. And if you see any of the other disciples, take them there with you. But I want the Iscariot and Simon Peter here. »

« Mother... forgive us if we did not do more. »

« I forgive everything... Go. »

Isaac goes out. And Martha and Mary, Salome and Mary of Alphaeus overwhelm him with prayers, recommendations, orders. Susanna weeps silently, because nobody speaks to her of her husband. And that reminds Salome of hers. And she weeps as well.

There is silence again, until there is a further knocking at the door.

Since the town is quiet, the women are not so frightened. But when through the half open door they see Longinus' clean-shaven face appear, they all run away as if they had seen a dead body enveloped in its shroud or the Devil himself. The master of the house, who is idling about the hall curiously, is the first to run away.

The Magdalene, who was with Mary, rushes there. Longinus, with an involuntary mocking smile on his lips, has gone in, and has closed

the heavy main door himself. He is not wearing a uniform, but he has on a short grey tunic under a mantle which is also dark.

Mary Magdalene looks at him and he looks at her. Still leaning against the door, Longinus asks: « May I come in without contaminating anybody? And without terrifying anyone? This morning at dawn I saw Joseph, the citizen, and he mentioned the Mother's desire to me. I apologise for not thinking of it myself. Here is the lance. I had kept it as a souvenir of a... of the Saint of Saints. Oh! He is indeed! But it is right that the Mother should have it. With regard to the garments... it is more difficult. Do not tell Her... but perhaps they have already been sold for a few coins... It is the right of the soldiers. But I will try to find them... »

« Come. She is in there. »

« But I am a heathen! »

« It does not matter. I will go and tell Her, if you wish so. »

« Oh! no... I did not think I deserved that. »

Mary Magdalene goes to the Blessed Virgin. « Mother, Longinus is out there... He offers the lance to You. »

« Let him come in. »

The master of the house, who is at the entrance, grumbles: « But he is a heathen. »

« I am the Mother of everybody, man. As He is everybody's Redeemer. »

Longinus goes in and on the threshold he salutes in the Roman way, with his arm (he has taken off his mantle) and then he greets Her saying: « Ave, Domina. A Roman greets you: the Mother of mankind. The true Mother. I would have liked not to be there at... at... at that affair. But it was an order. But, if I serve to give what You wish, I forgive destiny for choosing me for that horrible thing. Here » and he gives Her the lance enveloped in a red cloth. Only the steel head, not the shaft.

Mary takes it and becomes even wanner. Her very lips disappear in the pallor. The lance seems to open Her veins. And Her lips tremble as She says: « May He lead you to Himself. Because of your kindness. »

« He was the only Just Man I ever met in the vast empire of Rome. I regret I only knew Him through the words of my companions. Now... it is late! »

« No, son. He has finished evangelizing. But His Gospel remains. In His Church. »

« Where is His Church? » Longinus is slightly ironical.

« It is here. Today it is struck and scattered. But tomorrow it will gather like a tree that tidies up its foliage after a storm. And, even if there were nobody else, I am here. And the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Mine, is all written in My heart. All I need do is to look at My heart in order to be able to repeat it to you. »

« I will come. A religion that has as its head such a hero can but be divine. Ave, Domina! »

And also Longinus goes away.

Mary kisses the lance where there is still the Blood of Her Son... And She does not want to remove that Blood. But She leaves it saying: « A ruby of God, on the cruel lance »...

The day goes by thus, amid clear spells and threats of storms.

John comes back only when the sun shining perpendicularly tells that it is midday. « Mother, I have not found anybody, except... Judas of Kerioth. »

« Where is he? »

« Oh! Mother! How horrible! He is hanging from an olive-tree, all swollen and black, as if he had been dead for weeks. Rotten. Horrible... Above him vultures, crows, I do not know what, are shrieking fighting atrociously... It was their brawling that called me in that direction. I was on the road of the Mount of Olives, and on a hillock I saw ugly black birds wheel round and round. I went... Why? I do not know. And I saw. How horrible!... »

« How horrible! You are right. But above Goodness there was Justice. In fact Goodness is absent, now... But Peter! But Peter!... John, I have the lance. But the garments... Longinus did not mention them. »

« Mother, I want to go to Gethsemane. He had no mantle on when He was captured. Perhaps it is still there. Then I will go to Bethany. »

« Go. Go for the mantle... The others are with Lazarus. So do not go to Lazarus. It is not necessary. Go and come back here. »

John runs away, without taking any refreshment. Mary also is without any. The women, standing, have eaten bread and olives, working all the time at their balms.

Then Johanna of Chuza comes with Jonathan. Her features are disfigured by tears. And as soon as she sees Mary, she says: « He saved me! He saved me and He is dead. Now I wish I had never been saved! »

It is Our Lady of Sorrows Who has to comfort this woman, who was cured but has remained morbidly sensitive. And She consoles and fortifies her saying: « You would not have known and loved Him, and now you would not be able to serve Him. How much there is to be done in future! And we will have to do it, because you can see... We have remained, and the men have run away. The true giver of life is always the woman. In Good. In Evil. We will generate the new Faith. We are full of it, as it was deposited in us by the Spouse God. And we will generate for the Earth. For the welfare of the world. Look how handsome He is! How He smiles and begs for this holy work of ours! Johanna, I love you, you know that. Do not weep any more. »

« But He is dead! Yes. There He still looks as if He were alive. But

He is no longer alive. What is the world without Him? »

« He will come back. Go. Pray. Wait. The more you believe, the sooner He will rise from the dead. That belief is My strength... And only God, Satan and I know how many assaults have been made upon this faith of Mine in His Resurrection. »

Johanna also goes away, weak and bent like a lily too saturated with water.

But once she has gone out, Mary relapses into Her torture. « I have to give strength to everybody. To everybody! And who gives it to Me? » And She weeps, caressing the Face of the image, because She is now sitting near the chest on which the veronica is spread.

Joseph and Nicodemus come. And they spare the women the trouble of going out to buy myrrh and aloe, because they have brought some little bags of them. But their strength yields before the Face impressed on the linen cloth and the ravaged face of the Mother. They sit in a corner after greeting Her and they become silent. They are grave, gloomy... Later they go away.

Mary has no more strength to speak. But the darker it gets, which occurs rather early because of a mass of sultry clouds, the more She is tortured. The shadows of the evening are also for Her, as for all those who suffer, a source of deeper grief.

The other women also become sadder. Particularly Salome, Mary of Alpheus and Susanna. But at last they have some consolation as Zebedee, Susanna's husband, Simon and Joseph of Alpheus arrive in a group. The first two remain in the hall, explaining that John found them as he was going through the Ophel suburb. The other two instead were found by Isaac while they were wandering through the countryside, undecided as to whether they should go back to town, or go to their brothers who they supposed were at Bethany.

Simon asks: « Where is Mary? I want to see Her » and preceded by his mother, he goes in and kisses his distressed relative.

« Are you alone? Why is Joseph not with you? Why have you parted? Are you still at variance with each other? You must not. See? The reason of the disagreement is dead! » And She points at the face of the veronica.

Simon looks at it and weeps. He says: « We have never parted again. And we will not part. Yes, the reason of the disagreement is dead. But not as You think. It is dead because Joseph, now, has understood... Joseph is out there... and he dare not come in... »

« Oh! no. I never frighten anybody. I am nothing but mercy. I would have forgiven also the Traitor. But it is no longer possible. He has killed himself. » And She stands up. She walks with a stoop and calls: « Joseph! Joseph! »

But Joseph, overwhelmed with weeping, does not reply.

She goes to the door, as She had done to speak to Judas, and leaning

on the door-post, She stretches the other hand out and lays it on the head of the eldest and most stubborn of Her nephews. She caresses him and says: « Let Me lean on a Joseph! Everything was peace and serenity as long as I had that name as king in My house. Then My holy man died... And all the human welfare of poor Mary died as well. The supernatural welfare of My God and Son has remained... Now I am the Forlorn wretch... But if I can be embraced in the arms of a Joseph I love, and you know whether I love you, I shall be less forlorn. I shall seem to have gone back in time. And that I can say: "Jesus is absent. But He is not dead. He is at Cana, at Nain, working, but He will soon be back... " Come, Joseph. Let us go in together where He is waiting to smile at you. He left His smile to us to tell us that He bears us no ill-will. »

Joseph goes in, held by the hand by Her, and as soon as he sees Her sat down, he kneels in front of Her, with his head on Her lap and sobbing says: « Forgive me! Forgive me! »

« It is not Me, it is Him you must ask. »

« He cannot forgive me. On Calvary I tried to attract His attention. He looked at everybody, but not at me... He is right... I have known and loved Him, as a Master, too late. Now, it is all over. »

« It begins now. You will go to Nazareth and say: "I believe". Your faith will have an infinite value. You will love Him with the perfection of future apostles, who will have the merit of loving Jesus known only through the spirit. Will you do that? »

« Yes! I will! To make amends. But I should like to hear a word from Him. And I shall never hear it again... »

« On the third day He will rise and He will speak to those whom He loves. The whole world is awaiting His Voice. »

« You are blessed, since You can believe... »

« Joseph! Joseph! My spouse was your uncle. And he believed something that is much more difficult to believe than this. He did believe that poor Mary of Nazareth was the Spouse and Mother of God. Why can you, the nephew of that Just man after whom you are named, not believe that a God can say to Death: "Enough!" and to Life: "Come back!?" »

« I do not deserve that faith, because I have been bad. I was unfair to Him. But You... You are the Mother. Bless me. Forgive me... Give me peace... »

« Yes... Peace... Forgiveness... Oh! God! Once I said: "How difficult it is to be the 'redeemers' ". Now I say: "How difficult it is to be the Mother of the Redeemer!". Have mercy, My God! Mercy!... Go, Joseph. Your mother has suffered so much during these hours. Console her... I am staying here... With what I have of My Child... And My solitary tears will obtain Faith for you. Goodbye, My dear nephew. Tell everybody that I want to be silent... to think... to pray... I am... I am a poor woman hanging from a thread over an

abyss... The thread is My Faith... And your lack of faith, because nobody is capable of believing totally and holily, your lack of faith knocks continuously against My thread... And you are not aware of what exhaustion you induce in Me... You do not know that you are helping Satan to torture Me. Go... »

And Mary remains alone... She kneels before the veronica. She kisses the forehead, the eyes, the lips of Her Son and says: « So! So! To have strength... I must believe. I must believe. On behalf of everybody. »

Night has fallen. A starless, dark, sultry night. Mary remains in the shadow with Her sorrow.

The day of the Sabbath is over.

611. The Night of Holy Saturday.

31st March 1945.

Mary of Alphaeus goes in cautiously and listens. Perhaps she thinks that the Blessed Virgin has fallen asleep. She approaches Her and bends over Her. And she sees Her on Her knees, with Her face on the floor against the veronica. She whispers: « Oh! poor wretch! She has stayed like that! » She must think that She has fallen asleep like that or She has fainted.

But Mary, ending Her prayer, says: « No, I was praying. »

« On Your knees! In the dark! In the cold! With the window open! See? You are frozen. »

« But I feel so much better, Mary. While I was praying - and only the Eternal knows how exhausted I was after giving strength to so many wavering faiths and enlightening so many minds that not even His death had illuminated - I seemed to smell an angelical scent, a heavenly freshness, a caress of a wing... Only for a moment... Not longer. A drop of pacifying sweetness seemed to be instilled into the sea of myrrh that has been submerging Me furiously for three days now. The closed vault of Heaven seemed to open a little and a beam of bright love seemed to descend upon the Abandoned Mother. And I seemed to hear an incorporeal whisper, coming from an infinite distance, say: "It is really all over". My prayer, so far desolate, has become more peaceful. It became tinged with the bright peace - oh! just a nuance! - with the bright peace that I used to experience in My contacts with God during My prayers... 'My prayers!... Mary, did you love your Alphaeus very much, when you were his virgin bride? »

« Oh! Mary!... I rejoiced at dawn saying: "Another night has gone by. One less to wait". I rejoiced at sunset saying: "Another day is over. Nearer is my entrance into his house". And as the sun set, I used to sing like a skylark thinking: "He will soon be here". And when I saw him come, looking as handsome as my Judas - that is

why Judas is my favourite - but with the eyes of a deer in love like my James, oh! then I no longer knew where I was! And when he greeted me saying: "My sweet bride!" and I was able to say to him: "My Lord", then I... I think that, if at that moment I had been crushed by a heavy cart or struck by an arrow, I would have felt no pain. And later!... When I became his wife... Ah!... » Mary is lost in the ecstasy of recollections. She then asks: « But why that question? »

« To explain to you what My prayers were for Me. Multiply Your feelings by one hundred, raise them to thousands powers, and you will understand what prayer and the wait for the hour of prayer have always been for Me... Of course, I think that, even if I did not pray in the peace of the grotto or of My room, but I was intent on the work of a woman, My soul prayed incessantly... But when I was able to say: "Well, the hour to collect My thoughts in God is coming", My heart would burn throbbing fast. And when I got lost in Him... then... No... I cannot explain this to you. When you are in the light of God you will understand... All that had been lost for three days... And it was even more heart-rending than not having My Son any more... And Satan worked on these two wounds, laid one on top of the other, the death of My Son and the abandonment by God, creating a third wound: the terror of the lack of faith. Mary, I am fond of you and you are relative of Mine. Later, you will tell your sons, the apostles, so that they may persevere in their apostolate and triumph over Satan. I am sure that, if I had accepted the doubt, if I had yielded to Satan's temptation and I had said: "It is not possible for Him to rise from the dead" denying God - because to say that was the same as denying God with His Truth and Power - such a great Redemption would have come to nothing. I, the new Eve, would have bitten once again at the forbidden fruit of pride and of spiritual sense, and I would have destroyed the work of My Redeemer. The apostles will be continuously tempted thus: by the world, by the flesh, by power, by Satan. Let them be firm against all tortures, and the corporal ones will be the lightest, so that they may not destroy what Jesus has done. »

« You, Mary, should tell my sons... What do You expect Your poor sister-in-law to say?! Oh! however! If they had come! That they should run away at first, well!... But later! »

« You know that Lazarus and Simon were ordered to take them to Bethany. Jesus knows everything... »

« Yes... But... Oh! when I see them, I will reproach them severely. They behaved cowardly. That everybody else should behave so is understandable, but not them, my sons! I will never forgive them... »

« Forgive them, forgive them... It was a moment of dismay... They did not believe that He could be captured. He had said so... »

« That is why I will not forgive them. They knew. So they were

already prepared. When one knows something, and believes the person who tells it, nothing surprises any more! »

« Mary, also to all of you He said: "I will rise". And yet... If I could lay your breasts and heads open, on your hearts and on your brains I would see written: "It is not possible". »

« But, at least... Yes... It is difficult to believe... But we remained on Calvary. »

« Through the gratuitous grace of God. Otherwise we would have run away as well. Longinus, did you hear him? He said: "horrible thing". And he is a warrior. We, women, all alone with a boy, we resisted through God's direct help. So do not boast about it. It is no merit of ours. »

« And why was it not given to them? »

« Because they will be the priests of tomorrow. So they must know. They must know, having experienced it themselves, how easy it is for a follower of a Creed to lapse into abjuration. Jesus does not want priests like those who are so little so, that they have been His most obstinate enemies... »

« You speak of Jesus as if He had already come back. »

« See? You also admit that you do not believe. So how can you reproach your sons? »

Mary of Alphaeus does not know what to say in reply. She remains with her head lowered and mechanically moves some objects. She finds the little lamp and goes out with it and comes back in after lighting it, and she puts it in its usual place.

Mary is sitting once again near the stretched out veronica. The veronica, in the yellow flickering little flame of the oil lamp acquires a particular liveliness, and the lips and eyes seem to move.

« Are You not taking anything? » asks Mary's sister-in-law, who is somewhat mortified.

« A little water. I am thirsty. »

Mary goes out and comes back... with some milk.

« Do not insist. I cannot. Some water, yes. There is no more water in Me. I think I have no more blood either. But... »

There is a knock at the door. Mary of Alphaeus goes out. People can be heard talking in low voices in the hall, then John looks into the room.

« John. Have you come back? Still nothing? »

« Yes. Simon Peter... and Jesus' mantle... together... At Gethsemane. The mantle... » John falls on his knees and says: « Here it is... But it is all torn and covered with blood. The marks of the hands are Jesus'. Only He had them so long and thin. But it has been torn by teeth, it is very clear that this is the mouth of a man. I think it must have been... it must have been Judas Iscariot, because near the spot where Simon Peter found the mantle, there was a piece of Judas' yellow tunic. He went back there... later... before committing

suicide. Look, Mother. »

Mary has done nothing but caress and kiss the heavy red mantle of Her Son, but, pressed by John, She opens it and sees the marks of blood, dark against the red of the Blood, and the tears of the teeth. She trembles and whispers: « How much blood! » She does not seem to see anything but that.

« Mother... the ground is red with it. Simon, who ran up there in the early morning hours, says that there was still fresh blood on the leaves of the grass... Jesus... I do not know... He did not seem to me to be wounded... Where did so much blood come from? »

« From His Body. In the bitter anguish... Oh! Jesus total Victim! Oh! My Jesus! » Mary weeps so distressingly, with an exhausted lament, that the women appear at the door and look in and then they go away. « This, this while everybody was abandoning You... What were you doing, while He was suffering His first agony? »

« We were sleeping, Mother... » John weeps.

« Was Simon there? Tell Me. »

« I had gone to look for the mantle. I had thought of asking Jonah and Mark... But they have run away. The house is closed and everything has been abandoned. So I went down to the walls, to go along all the road we had gone on Thursday... I was so tired that evening, and so grieved, that now I could not remember where Jesus had taken off His mantle. It seemed to me that He had it, then that He did not have it... On the spot where He was arrested there was nothing... Where we three were, nothing... I went along the path taken by the Master... And I thought that also Simon Peter was dead, because I saw him there, all crouched against a rock. I shouted. He raised his head... and I thought he had gone mad, so changed was he. He uttered a cry and tried to run away. But he staggered, blinded by his weeping, and I got hold of him. He said to me: "Leave me. I am a demon. I denied Him. As He said... and the cock crowed and He looked at me. I ran away... I ran here and there through the country, and then I found myself here. And, see? Jehovah made me find His Blood here to accuse me. Blood everywhere. Blood everywhere! On the rock, on the ground, on the grass. I had it shed. Like you, like everybody. But I denied that Blood". He seemed delirious. I tried to calm him and take him away. But he did not want. He said: "Here. Here. To guard this Blood and His mantle. And I want to wash it with my tears. When there is no more blood on the cloth, perhaps I will go back among the living, beating my breast and saying: 'I have denied the Lord!' ". I told him that You wanted him. That You had sent me looking for him. But he would not believe me. Then I told him that You wanted also Judas, to forgive him, and that You were suffering as You were no longer able to do so, because of his suicide. Then he wept more calmly. He wanted to know everything. And he told me that there was still fresh Blood

on the grass and that the mantle had been maltreated by Judas, of whose tunic he had found a piece. I let him talk and talk, and then I said: "Come to the Mother". Oh! how much I had to insist to convince him! And when I thought that I had succeeded in convincing him and I got up to come, he did not want to come any more. He came only when it was getting dark. But when he arrived beyond the gate, he hid once again in a desert vegetable garden saying: "I don't want people to see me. I bear written on my forehead the word: Denier of God". Now that it is completely dark, I have succeeded in dragging him here. »

« Where is he? »

« Behind that door. »

« Let him come in. »

« Mother... »

« John... »

« Do not reproach him. He is repentant. »

« Do you still know Me so little? Let him come in. »

John goes out. He comes back. Alone. He says: « He dare not. Try to call him Yourself. »

And Mary calls him kindly: « Simon of Jonah, come. » Nothing. « Simon Peter, come. » Nothing. « Peter of Jesus and Mary, come. » A sharp burst of weeping. But he does not go in. Mary stands up. She leaves the mantle on the table and goes to the door.

Peter is crouched outside. Like a dog with no master. He cries so loud and all curled up, that he cannot hear the noise of the door that opens squeaking or the shuffling of Mary's sandals. He realises that She is there when She bends so low as to take his hand, pressed against his eyes, and She compels him to stand up. She goes back into the room dragging him like a little boy. She closes the door and locks it, and bent with sorrow, as he is with shame, She goes back to Her seat.

Peter kneels at Her feet and weeps without restraint. Mary caresses his grey hair, wet with the perspiration of sorrow. Nothing but such caress, until he calms down.

Then, when at last Peter says: « You cannot forgive me. So do not caress me. Because I have denied Him », Mary says:

« Peter, you have denied Him. That is true. You had the courage of denying Him in public. The cowardly courage of doing that. The others... Everybody, except the shepherds, Manaen, Nicodemus and Joseph and John, has only been cowardly. They have all denied Him: the men and women of Israel, except a few women... I will not mention the nephews and Alphaeus of Sarah. They were relatives and friends. But the others!... And they did not even have the satanic courage of lying to save themselves, or the spiritual courage of repenting weeping, or the more elevated one of acknowledging their error in public.

Your are a poor man. Or rather, you were. As long as you relied on yourself. Now you are a man. Tomorrow you will be a saint. But even if you were not what you are, I would have forgiven You the same. I would have forgiven also Judas, to save his soul. Because the value of a soul, also of one only, deserves every effort to overcome disgust and resentment, to the extent of being crushed thereby. Bear that in mind, Peter. I will repeat it to you: "The value of a soul is such that, at the cost of dying through the effort of suffering to have it close to us, one must hold it so, in one's arms, as I am holding your grey-haired head, if one realises that, by holding it so, it can be saved". So... Like a mother who, after the father's punishment, presses the head of her guilty son to her heart, and more with the words of her distressed heart that beats with love and sorrow, than with the father's blows, reforms and achieves.

Peter of My Son, poor Peter who have been, like everybody, in the hands of Satan in this hour of darkness, and you were not aware of it, and you think that you had done everything by yourself, come, do come here, on the heart of the Mother of My Son's children. Here Satan can no longer harm you. Here storms abate, and while waiting for the sun, My Jesus, Who will rise to say to you: "Peace to you, My Peter", the morning star rises, pure, beautiful, and making everything it kisses pure and beautiful, as happens on the clear waters of our sea in the fresh spring mornings. That is why I have wished so much to have you. At the foot of the Cross, I was tortured because of Him and of you and - how come you did not perceive it? - and I called your spirits so loud that I think they really came to Me. And closed in My heart, or rather, laid on My heart, like the loaves of the offering, I held them under the bath of His Blood and His tears. I was able to do so, because, in John, He made Me the Mother of all His progeny... How much I longed for you!... That morning, in that afternoon, at night and the following day... Why, poor Peter, wounded and trampled on by the Demon, did you keep a mother waiting so long? Do you not know that it is the task of mothers to tidy up, cure, forgive and lead their children? I will lead you to Him.

Mould you like to see Him? Would you like to see His smile, to be convinced that He still loves you? Would you? Oh! then move away from My poor lap of a woman, and lay your forehead on His crowned forehead, your lips on His wounded lips and kiss your Lord. »

« He is dead... I shall never be able. »

« Peter. Reply to Me. Which do you think is the last miracle of your Lord? »

« The Eucharist. No. That of the soldier cured there... there... Oh! do not remind me!... »

« A faithful, loving strong woman met Him on Calvary and wiped

His Face. And He, to tell us how much love can do, impressed the image of His Face on the linen cloth. Here it is, Peter. A woman achieved that, in an hour of hellish darkness and of divine wrath. Simply because she loved. Bear that in mind, Peter, for the hours in which the Demon will seem to you to be stronger than God. God was the prisoner of men, He was already overwhelmed, condemned, scourged, He was already dying... And yet, as God is always God even among the most cruel persecutions, and if the Idea is struck, God Who inspires it is untouchable, so God to deniers, to unbelievers, to the men of the foolish "whys", of the guilty "it cannot be ", of the sacrilegious "what I do not understand is not true ", replies, without any words, with this cloth. Look at it. One day, you told Me, you said to Andrew: "The Messiah showed Himself to you? It cannot be true", and then your human reason had to bend before the power of the spirit, that saw the Messiah where reason did not see Him. On another occasion, on the stormy sea, you asked: "Shall I come, Master?" and then, when you were half way, on the agitated water, you became doubtful saying: "Water cannot hold me" and, with your doubt as ballast, you were almost drowned. Only when the spirit that believed prevailed against human reason, you were able to find the help of God. On another occasion you said: "If Lazarus has been dead four days, why have we come? To die in vain?". Because with your human reason you could not suppose any other solution. And your reason was disproved by the spirit, that by pointing out to you, through the man raised from the dead, the glory of Him Who had raised him, showed you that you had not gone there in vain. Another time, many other times, upon hearing your Lord speak of death, and a cruel death, you said: "That will never happen to You!" And you can see how your reason has been given the lie. I now wait to hear the word of your spirit in this last case... »

« Forgive me. »

« No. Another word. »

« I believe. »

« Another one. »

« I don't know... »

« I love. Peter, love. You will be forgiven. You will believe. You will be strong. You will be the Priest, not the Pharisee who oppresses and has nothing but formalism and lack of active faith. Look at Him. Dare to look at Him. Everybody has looked at Him and venerated Him. Even Longinus... And would you not be able? And yet you were able to deny Him! If you do not recognise Him now, through the fire of My motherly loving sorrow that joins you and reconciles you, you will never be able again. He rises from the dead. How will you be able to look at Him in His new splendour, if you do not know His face in the passage from the Master you know to

the Triumpher Whom you do not know? Because sorrow, all the Sorrow of ages and of the world, has worked on Him with chisel and mallet in the hours from Thursday evening to the ninth hour on Friday. And they have changed His Face. Previously He was only the Master and Friend. Now He is the Judge and King. He has ascended on His throne to judge. And He has put on His crown. He will remain so. The only difference is that after His glorious Resurrection, He will no longer be the Man Judge and King, but the God Judge and King. Look at Him. Look at Him while Humanity and Sorrow veil Him, in order to be able to look at Him when He triumphs in His Divinity. »

Peter at last raises his head from Mary's lap and looks at Her, with his eyes red with weeping, in the face of an old child, who is desolate and surprised at the evil he has done and at all the good he finds.

Mary compels him to look at his Lord. Then while Peter, as if he were before a living face, says moaning: « Forgive me, forgive me! I do not know how it happened. What happened. I was not myself. It was something that made me be not myself. But I love You, Jesus! I love You, my Master! Come back! Come back! Do not go away like that, without telling me that You have understood me! », Mary repeats the gesture already made in the sepulchral room. Standing, Her arms outstretched, She looks like the priestess at the moment of the offerings. And as there She offered the immaculate Host, here She offers the repentant sinner. She is indeed the Mother of saints and sinners!

Then She makes Peter stand up and continues to console him. And She says to him: « I am now happier. I know that you are here. Go now where the women and John are. You all need rest and food. Go. And be good... » as if he were a boy.

And while in the house, which is calmer this second night after His death and is inclined to go back to the human customs of sleep and food, and has the tired resigned appearance of dwellings where the survivors recover slowly from the blow of death, Mary alone wants to stay up, motionless in Her place, awaiting, in prayer. Always. Always. Always. For the living and for the dead. For the just and the guilty. For the return. The return. The return of Her Son.

Her sister-in-law wanted to stay with Her. But now she is sound asleep, sitting in a corner, with her head leaning against the wall. Martha and Mary go in twice, but then, sleepy as they are, they withdraw into a nearby room, and after a few words, they fall asleep as well... And farther away, in a room as small as a plaything, Salome and Susanna are sleeping, while, on two mats laid on the floor, Peter and John are sleeping noisily. The former still sobbing mechanically at intervals in his snoring, the latter with the smile

of a child who is dreaming of a happy vision.

Life resumes its activity and the flesh its rights... Only the Morning Star shines wakefully, with Her love watching near the image of Her Son.

And the night of Holy Saturday passes by thus. Until the crow of a cock, at the first light of daybreak, makes Peter jump to his feet with a shout. And his frightened sorrowful cry awakes those who were sleeping.

The truce is over for them and sorrow begins all over again. As for Mary, it only increases the anxiety of Her wait.

THE GLORIFICATION

612. The Morning of the Resurrection.

1st April 1945.

The women resume working at the ointments, which, during the night, in the cool of the court-yard, have become a thick Pomade.

John and Peter think that they ought to tidy up the Supper-room, cleaning the tableware, but putting everything back, as if the Supper were just over.

« He told us » says John.

« He had also said: "Do not fall asleep"! He had said: "Do not be proud, Peter. Do you not know that the hour of the trial is about to come?" And... and He said: "You will deny Me... " » Peter weeps again, while with deep grief he says: « And I did deny Him! »

« Enough, Peter! Now you have collected yourself. Enough of this torture! »

« No, never enough. If I should become as old as the ancient patriarchs, if I should live the seven hundred or the nine hundred years of Adam and of his first grandchildren, I would never cease having this torture. »

« Do you not hope in His Mercy? »

« Yes, I do. If I did not believe in that, I should be like the Iscariot: a desperate man. But even if He forgives me from the bosom of His Father, where He has gone back, I will not forgive myself. I! I! I who said: "I do not know Him", because at that moment it was dangerous to know Him, because I was ashamed of being His disciple, because I was afraid of being tortured... He was going towards His death... and I thought of saving my life. And to save it, I rejected Him, like a woman in sin, who, after giving birth to a child, rejects the fruit of her womb, which is dangerous to keep, before her unaware husband comes back. I am worse than an adulteress... worse than... »

Mary Magdalene, attracted by their shouts, comes in. « Do not shout like that. Mary can hear you. She is so exhausted! She has no strength left, and everything hurts Her. Your useless unseemly shouts renew Her torture of what you have been... »

« See? See, John? A woman can order me to be quiet. And she is right. Because we, the males sacred to the Lord, have only been able to lie or to run away. The women have been brave. You, a little more than a woman, so young and pure you are, were able to remain. We, the strong ones, the males, have fled. Oh! how the world must despise me! Tell me, tell me, woman! You are right! Put your foot on my lips that lied. On the sole of your sandal there is perhaps a little of His Blood. And only that Blood, mixed with the mud of the road, can give the denier a little forgiveness, a little peace. I

must get accustomed to the scorn of the world! What am I? Tell me: what am I? »

« You are full of pride » replies calmly the Magdalene. « Sorrow? Also. But you must believe that out of ten parts of your sorrow, five, I do not want to offend you by saying six, five are of your sorrow of being one who can be despised. And I will really scorn you if you continue only to moan and get into a frenzy, just like a foolish woman! What is done is done. And no unseemly shouting can repair it or cancel it. It only serves to draw attention and beg for undeserved pity. Be manly in your repentance. Do not shout. Act. I... you know who I was... But, when I realised that I was more despicable than vomit, I did not fall into fits of convulsions. I acted. In public. Without being indulgent towards myself and without asking for indulgence. Did the world despise me? It was right. I had deserved it. The world said: "A new whim of the prostitute"? And it called blasphemy my recourse to Jesus? It was right. The world remembered my previous behaviour that justified such remarks. So? The world had to convince itself that the sinner Mary no longer existed. By means of facts, I convinced the world. Do the same and be quiet. »

« You are severe, Mary » objects John.

« More with myself than with other people. But I admit it. I do not have the light hand of the Mother. She is Love. I... oh! I! I lashed my feelings with the whip of my will. And I will do so even more. Do you think that I have forgiven myself for being lustful? No, I have not. But I only say so to myself. And I will always repeat it to myself. I shall die consumed with this secret regret of having been my own corrupter, with this inconsolable sorrow of having profaned myself and not having been able to give Him but a trampled on heart... See... I have worked more than all the others at the balms... And with greater courage than the others I will uncover Him... Oh! God! what will He be like now! (Mary of Magdala grows pale at the very thought of it). And I will cover Him with fresh balms, removing those which are certainly all tainted on His countless wounds... I will do so, because the other women will look like convolvuli after a downpour... But it grieves me to have to do it with these hands of mine accustomed to caressing lustfully, and to have to approach His Holiness with this stained body of mine... I should like... I should like to have the hand of the Virgin Mother to accomplish this last unction... »

Mary is now weeping silently, without sobbing. How different she is from the theatrical Mary always shown to us! She is weeping noiselessly, as she did on the day of her forgiveness in the house of the Pharisee.

« Are you saying that... the women will be afraid? » Peter asks her.

« Not afraid... But they will be upset seeing His Body, which is certainly already rotten... swollen... black. And then, and this is certain, they will be afraid of the guards. »

« Do you want me to come? With John? »

« Ha! Certainly not! We women are all going. Because, as we were all up there, so it is fair that we should all be round His death bed. You and John will remain here. She cannot remain alone!... »

« Is She not coming? »

« We are not letting Her come! »

« She is convinced that He will rise from the dead... What do you think? »

« I, after Mary, am the one who believes more. I have always believed that that could be. He said so. And He never lies... Never!... Oh! before I used to call Him Jesus, Master, Saviour, Lord... Now, now I feel that He is so great that I do not know, I dare not give Him a name any more... What shall I say to Him when I see Him?... »

« But do you really think that He will rise?... »

« Another one! Oh! By dint of telling you that I do believe and of hearing you say that you do not believe, I will end up by not believing any more myself! I have believed and I do believe. I have believed and a long time ago I prepared a garment for Him. And tomorrow, as tomorrow is the third day, I will bring it here, to have it ready... »

« But if you say that He will be black, swollen, filthy? »

« Filthy, never. Sin is filthy. But... of course! He will be black. So? Was Lazarus not already putrid? And yet he rose. And his body was healed. But, if I say so!... Be quiet, you misbelievers! My human reason says also to me: "He is dead and will not rise". But my spirit, "His" spirit, because I have received a new spirit from Him, shouts resounding like blares of silver trumpets: "He will rise! He will rise! He will rise!". Why do you hurl me like a little boat against the cliffs of your doubts? I believe! I believe, my Lord! Although torn by grief, Lazarus has obeyed the Master and has remained in Bethany... I, who know who Lazarus of Theophilus is, a strong man, not a fearful leveret, can appreciate the sacrifice he made by remaining in the shade and not near the Master. But he obeyed. And by such obedience he has been more heroic than if with weapons he had snatched Him from armed men. I have believed and I believe. And I am staying here. Waiting like Her. But let me go. It is daybreak. As soon as there is enough light, we will go to the Sepulchre... »

And the Magdalene goes away, her face flushed with weeping, but always brave.

She goes back into Mary's room.

« What was the matter with Peter? »

« A nervous fit. But he has got over it. »

« Do not be severe, Mary. He suffers.. »

« So do I. But You know that not even once have I asked a pitying caress of You. He has already been cured by You... On the contrary, I think that You alone, Mother, are in need of a balsam. My holy, beloved Mother! But take heart... Tomorrow is the third day. We shall lock ourselves in here, the two of us: His lovers. You, the holy Lover; I, the poor lover... But I love Him as much as I can, with my whole self. And we will wait for Him... The rest, those who do not believe, we will lock them in over there, with their doubts. And I will put many roses here... I will have the chest brought here today... I will go to the mansion house and I will instruct Levi. All these horrible things must disappear! Our Resurrected Lord must not see them... So many roses... And You will put on a new dress... He must not see You so. I will comb Your hair, I will wash Your poor face disfigured by tears. Eternal maid, I will act as Your mother... I shall have, at last, the joy of taking motherly care of a child more innocent than a new-born baby! Dear!d » and with her emotional exuberance, the Magdalene presses to her breast the head of Mary Who is sitting, she kisses and caresses Her, she tidies the light locks of Her hair ruffled behind Her ears, with her linen dress she wipes the fresh tears that stream down Her cheeks again, again, always...

The women come in with lights and amphorae and large-mouthed vases.

Mary of Alphaeus is carrying a heavy mortar. « It is not possible to stay outside. There is a weak wind that blows out the lamps » she explains.

They place themselves on one side. They lay all their things on a long narrow table, then they give the final touch to their balms by mixing the already heavy pomade of essences in the mortar with a white powder, handfuls of which they take from a little sack. They mix working with all their energy and then they fill a large-mouthed vase. They place it on the floor. They repeat the same operation with another vase. Perfumes and tears fall on the resins.

Mary Magdalene says: « This is not the unction that I hoped I should be able to prepare for You. » Because it is the Magdalene who, being more skilled than the other women, has controlled and directed the composition of the perfume, which is so strong that they decide to open the door and leave the window ajar over the garden, which is just beginning to appear in the early light of dawn.

They all weep more loudly after the remark made by the Magdalene in a subdued voice.

They have finished. All the vases are full.

They go out with the empty amphorae, the mortar no longer useful, and many lamps. Two only are left in the little room and they tremble, they seem to be sobbing as well, with the flickering of their light...

The women come back again and they close the window, because it is a rather cold dawn. They put on their mantles and they take large sacks into which they put the vases of the balm.

Mary stands up and looks for Her mantle. But they all crowd round Her convincing Her not to come.

« You are not fit to stand, Mary. You have not had any food for two days. Only a little water. »

« Yes, Mother, We will do it quickly and well. And we shall soon be back. »

« Be not afraid. We will embalm Him like a king. Look what precious balm we have prepared! And how much of it!... »

« We will not neglect any part of the body or any wound and we will arrange Him properly with our hands. We are strong and we are mothers. We will place Him like a child in a cradle. And the others will only have to close the place. »

But Mary insists: « It is My duty » She says. « I have always taken care of Him. Only these last three years that He was in the world, I surrendered the care of Him to other people, when He was far away from Me. Now that the world has rejected and disowned Him, He is Mine again. And I am once again His servant. »

Peter, who had approached the door with John, without being seen by the women, runs away upon hearing these words. He runs to some secluded corner to bewail his sin. John remains near the door. But he does not say anything. He would like to go as well. But he makes the sacrifice of remaining with the Mother.

Mary Magdalene takes Mary back to Her seat. She kneels in front of Her, she embraces Her knees raising her sorrowful loving face towards Her, and she promises: « With His Spirit, He knows and sees everything. But with my kisses I will tell His Body Your love and Your wish. I know what is love. I know what spur, what hunger it is to love, what nostalgia of being with whoever is our love. And that applies also to any base love that looks like gold, but is filth. And when she who has sinned can understand what is the holy love for the living Mercy, Whom men did not know how to love, then she can understand better what is Your love, Mother. You know that I know how to love. And You know that He said so, that evening of my true birth, on the shores of our serene lake, that Mary knows how to love much. Now this exuberant love of mine, like water that overflows from a tilted basin, like a flowery rosery that streams down a wall, like a flame that finding timber spreads and grows, has poured onto Him, and from Him-Love has drawn fresh power... Oh! my power of loving was not able to take His place on the Cross!... But what I was not able to do for Him - to suffer, and bleed, and die in His place, amid the mockery of all the world, happy, happy, happy to suffer in His place, and I am certain that the thread of my poor life would have been burnt more by the triumphant

love than by the infamous scaffold, and from the ashes there would have sprung up the fresh snow-white flower of the new virgin life, unaware of everything that is not God - all that I was not able to do for Him, I can still do for You... Mother, Whom I love with all my heart. Rely on me. I, who in the house of Simon, the Pharisee, knew how to gently caress His holy feet, now, with my soul that opens more and more to Grace, with greater gentleness will be able to caress His holy limbs, to dress His wounds embalming them more with my love, with the balm taken from my heart wrung by love and sorrow, than with the ointment. And death will not spoil that body that has loved so much and is so much loved. Death will flee, because Love is stronger. Love is invincible. And I, Mother, with Your perfect love, with my total love, will embalm my King of Love. »

Mary kisses this impassioned woman who, at last, has been able to find so much passion, and She yields to her entreaties.

The women go out taking a lamp. One only is left in the room. The Magdalene is the last to go out, after a last kiss to the Mother Who remains.

The house is all dark and silent. The road is still dark and solitary.

John asks: « Do you really not want me? »

« No. You may be useful here. Goodbye. »

John goes back to Mary. « They did not want me... » he says in a low voice.

« Do not feel mortified. They are with Jesus. You with Me. John, let us pray a little together. Where is Peter? »

« I don't know. Somewhere in the house. But I have not seen him. He is... I thought that he was stronger... I am suffering, too, but he... »

« He has two sorrows. You have only one. Come. Let us pray also for him. » And Mary slowly says the « Our Father ».

Then She caresses John saying: « Go to Peter. Do not leave him all alone. He has been so much in darkness during these hours, that he cannot stand even the feeble light of the world. Be the apostle of your lost brother. Begin your preaching with him. On your road, and it will be a long one, you will always find people like him. Begin your work with your companion... »

« But what shall I say?... I don't know... Everything makes him weep... »

« Mention His precept of love to him. Tell him that he who fears only, does not yet know God sufficiently, because God is Love. And if he says to you: "I have sinned", reply to him that God has loved sinners so much that He sent His Only-Begotten Son for them. Tell him that we must reply with love to so much love. And love makes one trust in the very good Lord. That trust does not make us be afraid of His judgement, because through it we have recognised the divine Wisdom and Goodness, and we say: "I am a poor creature.

But He knows. And He gives me the Christ as guarantee of forgiveness and as a supporting pillar. My misery is overcome by my union with the Christ". It is in Jesus' name that everything is forgiven... Go, John. Tell him that. I am staying here, with My Jesus.. » and She caresses the veronica.

John goes out, closing the door behind him.

Mary kneels down, as She did the previous evening, face to face with the veil of the Veronica. And She prays and speaks to Her Son. While She is strong enough to give strength to other people, when She is alone She bends under Her overwhelming cross. And yet, now and again, like a flame no longer oppressed by the bushel, Her soul rises towards a hope that cannot die in Her. On the contrary it grows as hours pass. And She expresses Her hope also to the Father. Her hope and Her request.

(You can put here the prayer of last year, the lament of this Passover dawn, dated 21st February 1944, leaving it exactly as it is, because no change is to be made to it).

[21st February 1944]

« Jesus, Jesus! Are You not coming back yet? Your poor Mother can no longer put up with the idea that You are lying dead over there. You said it, but no one understood You. But I understood You! "Destroy the Temple of God and I will rebuild it in three days". This is the beginning of the third day. Oh! My Jesus! Do not wait till it ends to come back to life, to Your Mother, Who needs to see You alive in order not to die remembering that You are dead, Who needs to see You handsome, healthy, triumphant, in order not to die remembering You in that state in which I left You!

Oh! Father! Father! Give My Son back to Me! That I may see Him come back as a Man and not as a corpse, a King, not a condemned man. Later, I know, He will come back to You, in Heaven. But I shall have seen Him cured of so much evil, I shall have seen Him strong after so much weakness, I shall have seen Him triumphant after struggling so much, I shall have seen Him God after so much humanity suffered on behalf of men. And I shall feel happy even if I lose the possibility of being near Him. I shall know that He is with You, Holy Father, I shall know that He is for ever free from Sorrow. Now, instead, I cannot forget that He is in a sepulchre, that He is there, killed because of all the sorrow they have given Him, that He, My Son-God, is sharing the destiny of men in the dark of a sepulchre, He, Your Living Son.

Father, Father, listen to Your servant. Because of that "yes"... I have never asked anything of You for My obedience to Your will; it was Your Will, and Your Will was Mine; I did not have to exact anything for the sacrifice of My will to Yours, Holy Father. But

now, but now, for the sake of that "yes" that I said to the messenger Angel, o Father, listen to Me!

He is now free from tortures, because He accomplished everything with the agony of three hours after the tortures of the morning. But I have been for three days in this agony. You can see My heart and You hear its throbs. Our Jesus said that no feather falls off a bird without You seeing it, that no wild flower dies without its agony being consoled by You with Your sunshine and Your dew. Oh, Father, I am dying of this grief! Deal with Me as You do with the sparrow that You reclothe with a new feather, and with the flower that You warm and quench its thirst in Your pity. I am dying frozen by sorrow. I have no more blood in My veins. Once it became all milk to nourish Your Son and Mine; now it has all turned into tears because I have no Son any more. They have killed Him, they have killed Him, Father, and You know how!

I have no more blood! I have shed it all with Him on Thursday night, on the sorrowful Friday. I am as cold as one whose veins have been severed. The sun no longer shines for Me, because He is dead, My holy Sun, My blessed Sun, the Sun born of My womb for the joy of His Mother, for the salvation of the world. I have no more refreshment, because I no longer have Him, the sweetest fountain for His Mother, Who drank His Word, Who quenched Her thirst with His presence. I am like a flower in dry sand. I am dying, I am dying, holy Father.

And I am not afraid to die, because He also is dead. But what will these little ones do, the little herd of My Son, so weak, so frightened, so fickle, if there is no one to support it? I am nothing, Father. But, by the desires of My Son, I am like a formation of armed men. I defend, I will defend His Doctrine and His heritage as a she-wolf defends her wolf-cubs. I, a ewe-lamb, will become a she-wolf to defend what belongs to My Son, and consequently, what is Yours.

You have seen it, Father. Eight days ago this town stripped its olive-trees, stripped its houses, stripped its gardens, stripped its inhabitants and became hoarse shouting: "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed He Who comes in the name of the Lord". And while He was passing walking on carpets of branches, of garments, of clothes, of flowers, the citizens pointed Him out to one another saying: "He is Jesus, the Prophet from Nazareth in Galilee. He is the King of Israel". And while those branches had not yet withered and their voices were still hoarse through so much singing hosannas, they changed their cries into accusations and curses and requests for death, and of the branches cut off for the triumph they made cudgels to strike Your Lamb, Whom they were taking to His death. If they have done so much while He was among them and spoke to them, and smiled at them, and looked at them with His eyes that melt hearts, and even stones tremble when looked at by them, and

He helped them and taught them, what will they do when He comes back to You?

His disciples, You have seen them. One betrayed Him, the others ran away. He was no sooner struck than they ran away like cowardly sheep, and they did not even stay around Him while He was dying. One only, the youngest, remained. Now comes the elder. But he already denied Him once. When Jesus is no longer here to watch him, will he persist in his Faith?

I am a nonentity, but a little of My Son is in Me, and My love supplies what I lack and annuls it. So I become something useful for the cause of Your Son, for His Church, that will never find peace and needs to strike deep roots in order not to be uprooted by winds. I am the one who will take care of it. Like a diligent gardener I will watch that it grows up strong and straight in its dawn. Then I shall not be worried about dying. But I cannot live if I remain any longer without Jesus.

Oh! Father, Who have abandoned Your Son for the welfare of men, and then You have comforted Him, because You have certainly received Him on Your bosom after His death, do not leave Me any longer in abandonment. I suffer it and offer it for the welfare of men. But console Me, now, Father. Father, mercy! Mercy, Son! Mercy, divine Spirit! Remember Your Virgin! »

[1st April 1945]

Later, prostrated on the floor, Mary seems to be praying with Her attitude as well as with Her heart. She is really a poor crushed thing. She looks like that flower parched to death of which She has spoken.

She does not even notice the shaking of a short but strong earthquake that makes the master and mistress of the house shout and run away, while Peter and John, as white as death, drag themselves as far as the threshold of the room. But as they see Her absorbed in Her prayer, inattentive, unaware of what is not God, they withdraw closing the door, and frightened as they are, they go back into the Supper room.

613. The Resurrection.

1st April 1945.

I see again the joyful and powerful Resurrection of Christ.

In the kitchen garden all is silent and glittering with dew. Above it the sky is becoming a clearer and clearer sapphire shade, after leaving its dark-blue hue studded with stars, that through the whole night had watched over the world. Dawn is driving back, from east to west, these still dark zones, like a wave that during the high tide advances more and more, covering the dark beach and replacing the

grey-dark shade of the damp sand and of the reef with the blue sea water.

A few little stars do not want to die yet and peep more and more faintly through the wave of the white greenish light of dawn, a white shaded with grey, like the leaves of the drowsy olive-trees that form a crown on that not far away hillock. And then it is wrecked, submerged by the wave of dawn, like land overflowed by water. And there is a star less... And then also another one less... and another one, and another one. The sky loses its herd of stars and only over there, to the remote east, three, then two, then one remain to contemplate that daily wonder, which is the rising dawn.

And then, when a pink thread draws a line on the turquoise silk of the eastern sky, a breath of wind passes over leaves and herbs and says: « Wake up. The day has risen. » But it awakes only leaves and herbs, that shiver under their dewy diamonds and rustle gently while the falling drops resound like arpeggios. The birds have not awakened yet among the thick branches of a very tall cypress .hat seems to dominate like a lord in his kingdom, or in the thick entanglement of a laurel hedge that shelters from the north wind.

The guards, weary, cold, sleepy, in various postures are watching over the Sepulchre, the stone of which has been reinforced round its edge, as if it were a buttress, with a thick layer of lime, on the opaque white of which stand out the large rosettes of red wax of the Temple seal, impressed with others directly on the fresh lime.

The guards must have lit a little fire during the night, because there are ashes and half-burnt fire-brands on the ground, and they must have played and eaten, because scattered around there are remains of food and some small clean bones, which have certainly been used for some game, like our dominoes or our children's games of marbles, which are played on a coarse board traced on a path. Then they became tired and left things as they are now, and they tried to find more or less comfortable postures to sleep or to keep watch.

In the clear sky, where to the east there is now a completely rosy zone, which is spreading out more and more widely, but where, however, there are no sunbeams as yet, a very bright meteor appears, coming from unknown depths, and it descends like a sphere of fire of unsustainable splendour, followed by a glowing trail, which perhaps is nothing but the persistence of its brightness in our retinae. It descends at a very high speed towards the Earth, shedding such an intense phantasmagoric light, frightful in its beauty, that the rosy light of dawn vanishes, outshone by such white incandescence.

The guards, astonished, raise their heads, also because with the light there comes a mighty, harmonious, solemn rumble that fills the whole of Creation with its roar. It comes from heavenly depths.

It is the alleluia, the angelical glory, that follows the Spirit of the Christ, which is returning to His glorious Flesh.

The meteor clashes on the useless closure of the Sepulchre, tears it off, throws it on the ground, and it strikes with terror and noise the guards placed as jailors of the Master of the Universe, producing with its return to the Earth a new earthquake, as it had caused one when this Spirit of the Lord fled from the Earth. It enters the dark Sepulchre that becomes all bright with its indescribable light, and while it remains suspended in the still air, the Spirit is infused again into the Body motionless under the funereal bandages.

All this takes place not in a minute, but in the fraction of a minute, so fast have been the appearance, descent, penetration and the disappearance of the Light of God...

The « I want » of the divine Spirit to its cold Body is noiseless. It is uttered by the Essence to the immobile Matter. But no word is perceived by the human ear. The Flesh receives the order and obeys it with a deep sigh... Nothing else for some minutes.

Under the Sudarium and the Shroud, the glorious Body is recomposed in eternal beauty, it awakes from the sleep of death, it comes back from the « nothing » in which it was, it lives after being dead. The heart certainly awakes and gives its first throb, it propels the remaining frozen blood through the veins and at once creates the full measure of it in the empty arteries, in the immobile lungs, in the dark brain, and brings back warmth, health, strength, thought.

Another moment, and there is a sudden movement under the heavy Shroud. It is so sudden that, from the moment He certainly moves His folded arms to the moment He appears standing, imposing, splendid in His garment of immaterial matter, supernaturally handsome and majestic, with a gravity that changes and elevates Him, and yet leaves Him exactly Himself, the eye has hardly time to follow the development. And now it admires Him: so different from what the mind remembers, tidied up, without wounds or blood, only blazing with the light that gushes from the five wounds and issues from every pore of His skin.

When He takes His first step - and in the movement the rays emanating from His Hands and Feet halo Him with beams of light: from His Head haloed with a garland, made with the countless little wounds of the crown, but they no longer bleed but only shine, to the hem of His tunic, when, opening His arms, that were folded across His chest, He uncovers the zone of very bright luminosity that filters through His tunic inflaming it like a sun at the height of His Heart - then it is really the « Light » that has taken a body. Not the poor light of the Earth, not the poor light of the stars, not the poor light of the sun. But the Light of God: all the heavenly brightness that gathers in one Being and grants Him its inconceivable azure as eyes, its golden fire as hair, its angelic whiteness as

garment and complexion and all that exists, but cannot be described by human words, the supereminent ardour of the Most Holy Trinity, that outshines with its ardent power every fire in Paradise, absorbing Him in Itself to generate Him again at each moment of the eternal Time, Heart of Heaven that attracts and spreads His blood, the countless drops of His incorporeal blood: the blessed souls, the angels, everything there is the Paradise: the love of God, the love for God, all this is the Light that is, that forms the Risen Christ.

When He moves, coming towards the exit, and the eye can see beyond His brightness, two most beautiful brilliances, but similar to stars compared with the sun, appear to me, one on this side, the other on the other side of the threshold, prostrated in the adoration of their God, Who passes by enveloped in His light, beatifying with His smile, and He goes out, leaving the funereal grotto and going back to walk on the earth, that awakes out of joy and shines in its dews, in the hues of herbs and roseries, in the countless corollas of apple-trees, that open, by a wonder, to the early sun that kisses them, and to the eternal Sun Who proceeds under them.

The guards are there, shocked... The corrupt powers of man do not see God, whereas the pure powers of the universe - the flowers, herbs, birds - admire and venerate the Mighty One, Who passes by in a halo of His own Light and in an aureola of sunlight.

His smile, His eyes that rest on flowers, on dead branches, that look up at the clear sky, everything becomes more beautiful. And more soft and shaded than a silky rosery are the millions of petals forming a flowery foam on the head of the Conqueror. And brighter are the diamonds of the dew. And of a deeper blue is the sky reflecting His refulgent eyes, and more joyful is the sun that with gladness paints a little cloud blown by a light wind, that comes to kiss its King with scents stolen from gardens and with caresses of silky petals.

Jesus raises His Hand and blesses and then, while the birds sing more loudly and the wind carries its scents, He disappears from my sight, leaving me in a joy that cancels even the slightest remembrance of sadness and sufferings and hesitancy for tomorrow...

614. Jesus Appears to His Mother.

[21st February 1944]

Mary is prostrated with Her face on the floor. She looks like a poor wretch. She looks like that withered flower of which She has spoken.

The closed window is opened with a violent banging of the heavy shutters, and with the first ray of the sun, Jesus enters.

Mary, Who has been shaken by the noise and has raised Her head to see which wind has opened the shutters, sees Her radiant Son:

handsome, infinitely more handsome than He was before suffering, smiling, lively, brighter than the sun, dressed in a white garment that seems woven light, and Who is advancing towards Her.

She straightens Herself up on Her knees and crossing Her hands on Her breast, She says with a sob that is joy and grief: « Lord, My God ». And She remains thus, enraptured in contemplating Him, with Her face all washed by tears, but made serene, pacified by His smile and by the ecstasy.

But He does not want to see His Mother on Her knees, like a servant. And He calls Her, stretching out His hands, from the wounds of which emanate rays that make His glorious Flesh even brighter: « Mother! » But it is not the sorrowful word of the conversations and the farewells before His Passion, or the heart-rending lament of the meeting on Calvary and of the agony. It is a cry of triumph, of joy, of freedom, of rejoicing, of love, of gratitude. And He bends over His Mother, Who dare not touch Him, and He places His hands under Her bent elbows, and He lifts Her up, He presses Her to His Heart and kisses Her.

Oh! Mary realises then that it is not a vision, that it is Her Son Who has really risen, that it is Her Jesus, the Son Who still loves Her as a Son. And with a cry, She flings Her arms round His neck, and She embraces and kisses Him, laughing in Her weeping. She kisses His Forehead, where there are no longer any wounds, His Head no longer unkempt and bloody, His shining Eyes, His healed Cheeks, His Mouth no longer swollen. She then takes His Hands and kisses their backs and palms, their radiant wounds, and She suddenly bends down to His Feet and uncovers them from under His bright garment and kisses them. Then She stands up, looks at Him, but dare not.

But He smiles and understands. He uncovers His chest a little and says: « And this one, Mother, are You not kissing it, this one that grieved You so much and that You alone are worthy to kiss? Kiss My Heart, Mother. Your kiss will cancel the last remembrance of what is sorrowful and will give Me that joy, which My Joy of having risen from the dead still lacks. » And He takes the face of His Mother in His Hands and He lays Her lips on the lips of the wound of His Chest, from which streams of a very bright light are flowing.

Mary's face is haloed by that light, flooded as it is with its beams. She kisses and kisses, while Jesus caresses Her. She never tires kissing. She looks like a thirsty woman whose mouth is attached to a fountain and who drinks from it the life that was escaping her.

Jesus speaks now.

« It is all over, Mother. You no longer have to weep over Your Son The trial is over. Redemption has taken place.

Mother, thanks for conceiving Me, for bringing Me up, for helping Me in life and in death.

I heard Your prayers come to Me. They have been My strength in My grief, My companions in My journey on the Earth and beyond the Earth. They came with Me on the Cross and to Limbo. They were the incense that preceded the Pontiff, Who was going to call His servants and take them to the temple that does not die: to My Heaven. They have come with Me to Paradise, preceding, like an angelical voice, the procession of the redeemed led by the Redeemer, so that the angels should be ready to greet the Conqueror, Who was returning to His Kingdom. They have been seen and heard by the Father and by the Spirit, Who smiled at them, as if they were the most beautiful flower and the sweetest song born in Paradise. They have been recognised by the Patriarchs and by the new Saints, by the new, first, citizens of My Jerusalem, and I bring You their thanks, Mother, together with the kisses of their relatives, with their blessings and with that of Joseph, the spouse of Your soul.

The whole of Heaven sings its hosanna to You, Mother, Holy Mother! A hosanna that does not die, that is not a false one like the one given to Me a few days ago.

I will now go to the Father in My human appearance. Paradise must see the Conqueror in His appearance of Man, by means of which He defeated the Sin of Man. But I will come again. I must confirm in the Faith those who do not yet believe and are in need to believe to lead the others to believe, I must fortify the pusillanimous ones who will need so much strength to resist the world.

Then I will ascend to Heaven. But I will not leave You alone. Mother, can You see that veil? In My annihilation, I still exhaled the power of miracle on Your behalf, to give You that comfort. But for You I will work another miracle. You will have Me, in the Sacrament, as real as when You carried Me.

You will never be alone. But these past days You have been alone. But also that sorrow of Yours was required for My Redemption. Much is continuously to be added to Redemption, because much will be continuously created in the way of Sin. I will call all My servants to this redeeming participation. You are the one who by Yourself will do more than all the others together. But also this long abandonment was required.

Now no longer so. I am no longer separated from the Father. You will no longer be separated from Your Son. And, by having Your Son, You have our Trinity. A living Heaven, You will bring the Trinity to men on the Earth, and You will sanctify the Church, You, Queen of the Priesthood and Mother of the Christians.

Then I will come to get You. And no longer shall I be in You, but You will be in Me, in My Kingdom, to make Paradise more beautiful.

I am going now, Mother. I am going to make the other Mary happy. Then I will ascend to the Father. Thence I will come to those

who do not believe. Mother, Your kiss as a blessing. And My Peace to You as a companion. Goodbye. »

And Jesus disappears in the sunshine that streams down from the early morning clear sky.

615. The Pious Women at the Sepulchre.

2nd April 1945.

The women, in the meanwhile, after leaving the house are walking close to the wall, shadows in the shade. They are silent for some time, all muffled up and frightened in so much silence and solitude. Then, recovering confidence seeing that the town is completely calm, they group and dare to speak.

« Will the Gates be already open? » asks Susanna.

« Certainly. Look over there at the first market-gardener who is going in with vegetables. He is going to the market » replies Salome.

« Will they say anything to us? » asks Susanna again.

« Who? » inquires the Magdalene.

« The soldiers, at the Judicial Gate. There... only few people are going in and even fewer are coming out... We shall rouse suspicion... »

« So? They will look at us. They will see five women going towards the country. We could be also people who, after celebrating Passover, are going back to their villages. »

« But... In order not to attract the attention of any malicious person, why do we not go out by another Gate and then we can go round along the walls?... »

« We would go the long way round. »

« But we shall be safer. Let us take the Gate of the Water... »

« Oh! Salome! If I were you, I should choose the Eastern Gate! You would have to go a longer way round! We must make haste and go back soon. » It is the Magdalene who is so resolute.

« Then another one, but not the Judicial Gate. Be good... » they all beg her.

« All right. Well, since that is what you want, let us call on Johanna. She begged me to let her know. If we had gone straight there, we could have done without seeing her. But since you want to go a longer way round, let us call on her... »

« Oh! yes. Also because of the guards placed there... She is well known and respected... »

« I think we should call also on Joseph of Arimathea. He is the owner of the place. »

« Why not! To avoid attracting people's attention, we will form a procession! What a timid sister I have! Rather, do you know what, Martha? Let us do this. I will go ahead and have a look. You will follow me with Johanna. I will stand in the middle of the road, should there be any danger, and you will see me. And we will come

back. But I can assure you that the guards, seeing this, I thought of it (and she shows a purse full of money) will let us do everything. »

« We will tell Johanna as well. You are right. »

« Go then, and let me go. »

« Are you going all alone, Mary? I will come with you » says Martha, who is afraid for her sister.

« No. You will go with Mary of Alphaeus to Johanna's. Salome and Susanna will wait for you near the Gate, outside the walls. And then you will all come together along the main road. Goodbye. » And Mary Magdalene cuts other possible comments short, as she goes away quickly with her bag full of balms and her money in her breast.

She flies, so fast she goes along the road, which is becoming more delightful in the first pink shade of dawn. She goes in by the Judicial Gate, to be quicker. And no one stops her...

The others watch her go, then they turn their backs to the crossroads where they were, and they take another one, narrow and dark, which near the Sixtus opens out into a wider road, where there are some beautiful houses. They part again, Salome and Susanna proceed along the road, while Martha and Mary of Alphaeus knock at the iron door and show themselves at the little window (judas-hole) half opened by the porter.

They enter and go to Johanna, who already up and all dressed in a very dark violet garment that makes her look even paler, is preparing some oils with her nurse and a maidservant.

« Have you come? May God reward you. But, if you had not come, I should have gone by myself... To find comfort... Because many things have remained upset after that dreadful day. And, in order not to feel alone, I must go against that Stone and knock and say: "Master, I am poor Johanna... Do not leave me alone, You, too..." » Johanna weeps silently but with deep desolation, while Esther, her nurse, makes large indecipherable gestures behind the back of her mistress, while putting a mantle on her.

« I am going, Esther. »

« May God comfort you! »

They leave the mansion house to join their companions. It is at this moment that the short but strong earthquake takes place, creating a panic again in the people of Jerusalem, still terrorised by the events of Friday. The three women retrace their steps precipitately, and they remain in the large hall, among maidservants and servants who are howling and imploring the Lord, fearing new shocks...

... The Magdalene, instead, is just on the border of the path that takes one to the kitchen garden of Joseph of Arimathea, when she is caught in the powerful and also harmonious roar of this heavenly sign, while, in the faint rosy light of dawn, that is advancing in the sky, where to the west a persistent star still resists, and that

makes fair the so far greenish light, a very bright light appears and descends like and incandescent wonderful globe, cutting the calm air in a zigzag course.

Mary of Magdala is almost grazed and thrown on the ground by it. She bends for a moment whispering: « My Lord! » and then she straightens up like a stalk after the wind has passed by, and she runs towards the kitchen garden even faster.

She enters it quickly, and goes towards the sepulchre in the rock as fast as a bird that is chased and is looking for its nest. But, no matter how fast she runs, she cannot be there when the heavenly meteor acts as a lever and as a flame on the seal of lime, placed as a reinforcement for the heavy stone, or when with the final crash the stone door collapses, causing such a shake that joins the one of the earthquake, which, although of a short duration, is so violent that it knocks the guards down as if they were dead.

When Mary arrives, she sees the useless jailors of the Triumpher thrown on the ground like a sheaf of mown corn. Mary Magdalene does not associate the earthquake with Resurrection. But looking at the spectacle, she thinks it is a punishment of God for the desecrators of Jesus' Sepulchre, and she falls on her knees saying: « Alas! They have stolen Him! » She is really disconsolate and weeps like a girl who has come, being sure that she would find her father whom she was looking for, and instead finds the house empty.

She then stands up and runs away to go to Peter and John. And as she thinks of nothing but of informing the two, she forgets to go and meet her companions and remain on the road, but as fast as a gazelle she goes back the road she came, she passes through the Judicial Gate, and flies through the streets, which are a little more crowded, and she rushes against the door of the hospitable house and knocks at it furiously. The mistress opens the door to her.

« Where are John and Peter? » asks Mary Magdalene panting.

« There » says the woman pointing at the Supper-room.

Mary of Magdala enters and as soon as she is in, standing before the two astonished men, and in her voice, kept low out of pity for the Mother, there is more anguish than if she had shouted, she says: « They have taken the Lord away from the Sepulchre! I wonder where they have put Him! » and for the first time she staggers and is unsteady, and in order not to fall, she holds on whatever she can.

« What? What are you saying? » ask the two.

And panting she replies: « I went ahead... to buy the guards... so that they would let us go. They are there like dead bodies... The Sepulchre is open, the stone is on the ground... Who? Who did it? Oh! come! Let us run... »

Peter and John set out at once. Mary follows them for a few steps. Then she goes back. She seizes the mistress of the house, she shakes her, violent in her far-sighted love, and she shouts in her face: « Mind

you do not let anybody go to Her (and she points at the door of Mary's room). Remember that I am your mistress. Obey and be silent. » Then she leaves her aghast and joins the apostles, who are striding towards the Sepulchre...

... In the meantime Susanna and Salome, after leaving their companions and reaching the walls, are caught in the earthquake. Frightened, they take shelter under a tree and remain there, torn between their desire to go to the Sepulchre or to run to Johanna's. But love overcomes fear and they go towards the Sepulchre.

They are still frightened when they enter the garden and see the senseless guards... they see a bright light come out of the open Sepulchre. Their fright increases and reaches its climax when, holding each other's hand to pluck up courage, they peep in from the threshold and in the dark sepulchral cave, they see a bright most beautiful creature, that smiling kindly greets them from the place where it is standing: leaning on the right hand side of the anointment stone, which, grey as it is, disappears behind so much incandescent brightness. They fall on their knees, utterly astonished.

But the angel speaks to them gently: « Be not afraid of me. I am the angel of the divine Sorrow. I have come to rejoice at its end. The sorrow of the Christ, His humiliation in death is over. Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified Whom you are looking for, has risen from the dead. He is no longer here! The place where He was laid is empty. Rejoice with me. Go. Tell Peter and the disciples that He has risen and will precede you in Galilee. You will see Him there for a short time, as He said. »

The women fall with their faces on the ground, and when they raise them, they run as if they were chased by a punishment. They are terrorised and they whisper: « We shall die now! We have seen the angel of the Lord! »

They calm down a little in the open country and they consult with each other. What are they to do? If they relate what they have seen, they will not be believed. If they say where they come from, they may be charged by the Judaeans with the murder of the guards. No. They cannot say anything to friends or to enemies...

Fearful, dumbfounded, they go back home along a different road. They go in and take shelter in the Supper room. They do not even ask to see Mary... And in there they think that what they have seen is nothing but a deception of the Demon. Humble as they are, they conclude that « it is not possible that they have been granted to see the messenger of God. It is Satan who wanted to frighten them to send them away from there. »

They weep and pray like two little girls frightened by a nightmare...

... The third group, that of Johanna, Mary of Alphaeus and Martha, when they see that nothing new is happening, decides to

go where their companions are certainly waiting for them. They go out into the streets, where by now there are frightened people, who comment on the new earthquake connecting it with the event of Friday, and see also things which do not exist.

« It is better if they are all frightened! The guards may be so as well and will raise no objection » says Mary of Alphaeus. And they walk fast towards the walls.

But while they are going there, Peter and John, followed by the Magdalene, have arrived at the garden. And John, who runs faster, is the first to arrive at the Sepulchre. The guards are no longer there. Neither is the angel there any more.

John, timid and sorrowful, kneels down at the open entrance to venerate and get some indication from the things he sees. But he only sees, heaped on the floor, the linen cloths placed on the Shroud. « There is really nothing, Simon! Mary has seen accurately. Come, come in, look. »

Peter, who is breathless after so much running, goes into the Sepulchre. On the way he had said: « I will never dare to approach that place. » But now he thinks only of finding out where the Master may be. And he calls Him also, as if He might be concealed in some dark corner.

At this early hour in the morning it is still very dark in the deep Sepulchre, which receives light only from the opening of the entrance, where John and the Magdalene now cast a shadow... And Peter finds it hard to see, and has to help himself with his hands to ascertain what the situation is... He touches, trembling, the table of the anointment, and feels that it is empty...

« He is not here, John! He is not here!... Oh! come here! I have wept so much that I can hardly see in this poor light. »

John stands up and goes in. And while he does so, Peter discovers the sudarium in a corner, folded diligently and within it the Shroud rolled up carefully.

« They have really abducted Him. The guards were not here for us, but to do that... And we have let them do it. By going away, we have allowed that... »

« Oh! where will they have put Him? »

« Peter, Peter! This... is really the end! »

The two disciples come out looking annihilated.

« Let us go, woman. You will tell the Mother... »

« I am not going away. I am staying here... Somebody will come... Oh! I am not coming... There is still something of Him here. The Mother was right... To breathe the air where He was is the only relief left to us. »

« The only relief... Now you also can see that it was nonsense to hope... » says Peter.

Mary does not even reply to him. She crouches on the ground, close

to the entrance, and weeps, while the others go away slowly.

She then raises her head and looks inside, and through her tears she sees two angels, sitting at the head and at the foot of the anointment stone. Poor Mary is so stupefied in her fiercest struggle between hope that is dying and faith that does not want to die, that she looks at them like one whose mind is completely blank, without even being surprised. The strong woman, who has resisted everything like a heroine, has nothing left but tears.

« Why are you weeping, woman? » asks one of the two shining young boys, because they look like very beautiful adolescents.

« Because they have taken away my Lord and I do not know where they have put Him. »

Mary is not afraid to speak to them. She does not ask: « Who are you? » Nothing. Nothing amazes her any more. She has already suffered everything that can astonish a human being. Now she is only a broken thing that weeps without strength or reserve.

The angelical youth looks at his companion and smiles. And so does the other. And in a flash of angelical joy they both look outside, towards the garden all in bloom with millions of corollas that have opened at the first sunshine on the closely planted apple-trees of the orchard.

Mary turns round to see whom they are looking at. And she sees a Man, most handsome, and I do not know how she does not recognise Him at once. A Man Who looks at her pitifully and asks her: « Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for? » It is true that Jesus is dimmed out of pity for the woman, whom emotions have exhausted and who might die from sudden joy, but I really wonder why she does not recognise Him.

And Mary sobbing says: « They have taken my Lord Jesus! I had come to embalm Him while awaiting His resurrection... I gathered all my courage, my hope and my faith around my love... and now I cannot find Him any more... Or rather, I put my love around faith, hope and courage to defend them from men... but all in vain! Men have abducted my Love and with it they have deprived me of everything... O my lord, if you have taken Him away, tell me where you have put Him. And I will get Him... I will not tell anybody... It will be a secret between you and me. Look: I am the daughter of Theophilus, Lazarus' sister, but I am on my knees before you to implore you, like a slave. Do you want me to pay you for His Body? I will do so. How much do you want? I am rich. I can give you as much gold and as many gems as it weighs. But give it back to me. I will not denounce you. Do you want to strike me? Do so. Until I bleed, if you wish so. If you bear Him a grudge, let me expiate it. But give Him back to me. Oh! don't make me wretched with this misery, my lord! Have mercy on a poor woman!... Do you not want to do it on my behalf? Then, do it for His Mother. Tell me! Tell me

where is my Lord Jesus. I am strong. I will take Him in my arms and I will carry Him like a child to safety. Lord... lord... You can see it... for three days we have been struck by the wrath of God for what was done to the Son of God... Do not add Desecration to Crime... »

« Mary! » Jesus shines in calling her. He reveals Himself in His triumphant brightness.

« Rabboni! » Mary's cry is really the « great cry » that-closes the cycle of death. With the first one, the darkness of hatred enveloped the Victim with funereal bandages; with the second, the lights of love increased His brightness. And Mary stands up as her cry fills the garden, she rushes to Jesus' feet and would like to kiss them.

Jesus moves her away, hardly touching her forehead with the tips of His fingers: « Do not touch Me! I have not yet ascended to My Father in this appearance. Go to My brothers and friends, and tell them that I am ascending to My Father and yours, to My God and yours. And then I will come to them. » And Jesus disappears, absorbed by an unsustainable light.

Mary kisses the ground where Jesus was and she runs towards the house. She goes in like a rocket, because the main door is half open, to let the master pass, who is going to the fountain; she opens the door of Mary's room and drops on Her breast shouting: « He has risen! He has risen! » and she weeps happily.

And while Peter and John rush there, and Salome and Susanna, still frightened, come from the Supper room and listen to her narration, Mary of Alphaeus with Martha and Johanna come in, from the street, and out of breath they say « that they have been there as well, and they saw two angels, who said that they were the Guardian of the Man God and the angel of His Sorrow, and ordered them to tell the apostles that He had risen from the dead. » And as Peter shakes his head, they insist saying: « Yes. They said: "Why are you looking for the Living One among the dead? He is not here. He has risen from the dead, as He said when He was still in Galilee. Do you not remember? He said: 'The Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of sinners to be crucified. But on the third day he will rise from the dead' ". »

Peter shakes his head saying: « Too many things during these days! They have been upset. »

The Magdalene raises her head from Mary's breast and says: « I have seen Him! I have spoken to Him. He told me that He is ascending to the Father and then He will come. How handsome He was! » and she weeps as she had never wept, now that she no longer has to torture herself to oppose the doubt rising from every side.

But Peter and John are very doubtful. They look at each other and their eyes say: « Women's fancy! »

Then also Susanna and Salome dare to speak. But the very inevitable

difference in the details of the guards that first are there like dead bodies and then are not there, of the angels that sometimes are one and sometimes are two and did not show themselves to the apostles, of the two versions concerning Jesus' coming here or His preceding His disciples in Galilee, makes the doubt, and more than that, the persuasion of the apostles grow stronger and stronger.

Mary, the blessed Mother, is silent, supporting the Magdalene... I do not understand the mystery of this maternal silence.

Mary of Alphaeus says to Salome: « Let the two of us go back there. Let us see whether we are all intoxicated... » And they run out.

The other women remain there, quietly derided by the two apostles, near Mary Who is silent, engrossed in a thought that each interprets in a personal manner, and no one realises that it is ecstasy.

The two elderly women come back: « It is true! It is true! We have seen Him. He said to us, near Barnabas' kitchen garden: "Peace to you. Be not afraid. Go and tell My brothers that I have risen from the dead, and that they should go within a few days to Galilee. We shall be together again there". That is what He said. Mary is right. We must inform those who are at Bethany, Joseph, Nicodemus, the most faithful disciples, the shepherds, we must go and do, and do... Oh! He has risen!... » and they all weep happily.

« You are mad, women. Grief has upset you. The light has seemed an angel to you. The wind, a voice. The sun, the Christ. I do not criticise you. I understand you, but I can only believe what I have seen: the open empty Sepulchre, and the guards who have run away with the stolen Corpse. »

« But if the very guards say that He has risen! If the whole town is in a turmoil and the Princes of the Priests are mad with rage, because the guards have spoken while running away terrified! Now they want them to say something different and they are paying them for that. But it is already known. And if the Judaeans do not believe in the Resurrection, they do not want to believe, many other people do believe... »

« H'm! Women!... » Peter shrugs his shoulders and is about to go away.

Then the Mother, Who still has on Her heart the Magdalene, who is weeping like a willow-tree in a downpour, for her too great joy, and who kisses Her fair hair, raises Her transfigured face and says a short sentence: « He has really risen. I have had Him in My arms and I kissed His Wounds. » She then bends over the head of the passionate woman and says: « Yes, joy is even stronger than sorrow. But it is only a grain of sand compared to what will be your ocean of eternal joy. You are blessed because you made your spirit speak above reason. »

Peter dare not deny any longer... and with one of those sudden changes of the old Peter, who is coming back to light again, he says

and shouts, as if the delay depended on the others and not on him: « Then, if it is so, we must let the others know. Those spread out in the country look for them take action Come on, get a move on. If He really should come let Him at least find us », and he does not realise that again he confesses that he does not believe blindly in His Resurrection.

616. Comment on the Resurrection.

[21st February 1944]

Jesus says:

« The fervent prayers of Mary have anticipated My Resurrection by some time.

I had said: "The Son of man is about to be killed, but on the third day He will rise from the dead" I died at three o'clock in the afternoon of Friday. Whether you count the days by their names, or you count them by their hours, it was not the dawn on Sunday that was to see Me rise. With regard to the hours, they were only thirty-eight instead of seventy-two, in which My Body had remained lifeless. With regard to the days, it should have been the evening of the third day to say that I had been in the sepulchre three days.

But Mary anticipated the miracle. As when with Her prayers She opened the Heavens a few years in advance of the predetermined time, to give the world its Salvation, so now She obtains some hours in advance to give comfort to Her dying heart.

And I, at the beginning of dawn on the third day, descended like the sun and with My brightness I broke the human seals, so useless before the power of a God, with My power I prized open and overthrew the stone watched over in vain, with My apparition like lightning I knocked down the utterly useless guards placed as guardians of a death that was Life, that no human power could prevent from being such.

By far more powerful than your electric current, My Spirit entered like a sword of divine Fire to warm the cold remains of My Corpse, and in the new Adam the Spirit of God breathed life, saying to Itself: "Live. I want it".

I, Who had raised the dead when I was only the Son of Man, the Victim appointed to be burdened with the sins of the world, should I not have been able to raise Myself, now that I was the Son of God, the First and the Last, the eternal Living Being, He Who holds in His hands the keys of Life and of Death? And My Corpse felt Life go back to It.

Look: like a man who awakes after a sleep brought about by enormous labour, I breathe deeply, and I do not open My eyes yet. Blood begins to circulate again, though not fast yet, in My veins, it brings thought again to the mind. But I come from so far! Look: like a

wounded man, whom a miraculous power heals, blood comes back into My empty veins, it fills My Heart, warms My limbs, heals My wounds, bruises and sores disappear, strength comes back. But I was wounded so badly!

Look: Power works. I am cured. I am awake. I have come back to Life. I was dead. Now I live! Now I rise! I shake the linens of death, I cast off the covering of ointments. I do not need them to appear the eternal Beauty, the eternal Integrity. I clothe Myself with a garment that is not of this Earth, but is woven by Him Who is My Father and Who weaves the silk of the virginal lilies. I am dressed in splendour. I adorn Myself with My wounds, which no longer drip blood, but give off light. The light that will be the joy of My Mother and of the blessed souls, and the terror, the unsustainable sight of the damned and of the demons on the Earth and on the last day.

The angel of My life of man and the angel of My sorrow are prostrated before Me and worship My Glory. Both My angels are here. One to delight in the sight of Him Whom he guarded, and Who now no longer needs angelical protection. The other, who saw My tears, to see My smile; who saw My struggle, to see My victory; who saw My grief, to see My joy.

And I go out into the garden full of flower buds and of dew. And the apple-trees open their corollas to form a flowery arch over My Royal head and the grass makes a carpet of gems and corollas for My Foot, that treads again on the Earth redeemed after being lifted up on it to redeem it. And the early sun, and the sweet April wind, and the light cloud that passes by, as rosy as the cheek of a child, and the birds among branches, they all greet Me. I am their God. They adore Me.

I pass through the stunned guards, a symbol of souls in mortal sin, that do not perceive the passing of God.

It is Passover, Mary! This is really the "Passing of the Angel of God"! His Passing from death to life. His Passing to give Life to those who believe in His Name. It is Passover! It is the Peace that passes through the world. The Peace no longer veiled by the condition of man, but free, complete in its recovered efficiency of God.

And I go to My Mother. It is fair that I should go. It was fair for My angels. It is much more so for Her Who, besides being My guardian and comfort, gave Me life. Before going back to the Father in My glorified appearance of Man, I go to My Mother. I go in the splendour of My paradisiac appearance and of My living Gems. She can touch Me, She can kiss them, because She is the Pure, the Beautiful, the Beloved, the -Blessed Saint of God.

The new Adam goes to the new Eve. Evil entered the world through a woman, and was defeated by the Woman. The Fruit of the Woman has detoxicated men of the slaver of Lucifer. Now, if

they want, they can be saved. She saved woman who had remained so fragile after the mortal wound.

And after showing Myself to the Pure One, to Whom by right of Holiness and Maternity it is just that the Son-God should go, I present Myself to the redeemed woman, to the file-leader, to the representative of all the female creatures, whom I have come to free from the sting of lust. So that she may tell them to approach Me to be cured, to have faith in Me, to believe in My Mercy that understands and forgives, to look at My Body adorned with the five wounds, in order to defeat Satan, who rummages in their flesh.

I do not let her touch Me. She is not the Pure One, who can touch, without contaminating Him, the Son Who goes back to the Father. She has still much to purify through penance. But her love deserves that reward. She was able to rise through her own will from the sepulchre of her vice, to strangle Satan who held her, to defy the world out of love for Her Saviour, she was able to divest herself of everything that was not love, she was able to be nothing but love that is consumed for her God. And God calls her: "Mary". Listen to her replying: "Rabboni!" Her heart is in that cry.

As she deserved it, I entrusted her with the task of being the messenger of Resurrection. And once again she will be somewhat derided, as if she were raving. But the judgement of men is of no importance to her, to Mary of Magdala, to Mary of Jesus. She saw Me raised from the dead and that gives her a joy that appeases all other feelings.

Do you see how I love also who was guilty, but wanted to come out of guilt? Not even to John did I show Myself first. It was to the Magdalene that I showed Myself. John had already received the state of son from Me. He could have it, because he was pure and could be not only a spiritual son, but also one who gave the Pure Mother of God and received from Her those needs and those cares which are connected with the body.

The Magdalene, the one revived to Grace, has the first vision of Grace Risen.

When you love Me to the extent of overcoming everything for Me, I take your diseased heads and hearts in My pierced hands and I breathe My Power on your faces. And I save you, I save you, children whom I love. You become again beautiful, wholesome, free, happy. You become again the dear children of the Lord. I make you the bearers of My Goodness among poor men, to witness My Goodness to them and convince them of it and of Me.

Have, have, have faith in Me. Love. Be not afraid. May what I suffered to save you assure you of the Heart of your God. »

617. Jesus Appears to Lazarus.

3rd April 1945.

The sun of a clear April morning fills the thickets of roses and jasmine in Lazarus' garden with bright scintillation. And the hedges of box and laurel, the tuft of a tall palm-tree swaying gently at the end of an avenue, the very thick bay near the fish-pond, seem to have been washed by a mysterious hand, so neatly the abundant night dew has deterged and sprayed their leaves, which now seem covered with fresh enamel, so glossy and spotless are they.

But the house is silent, as if it were full of dead people. The windows are open, but not even one voice, not even a noise comes from the rooms, which are in a dim light because all the curtains have been lowered.

Inside, beyond the hall, in which there are many doors, now all open - and it is strange to see the halls without any preparation, while they are generally used for more or less numerous banquets - there is a large court-yard, which is paved and surrounded by a porch filled with seats. Many disciples are sitting on them, and some are sitting also on the floor, on mats, or on the marble itself. Among them I see the apostles Matthew, Andrew, Bartholomew, the brothers James and Judas of Alphaeus, James of Zebedee, the shepherd disciples with Manaen, besides some whom I do not know. I do not see the Zealot, Lazarus or Maximinus.

Finally Maximinus comes in with some servants and he gives bread to everybody with various foodstuffs, that is, olives or cheese, or honey, and also new milk to those who want it. But they are not anxious to eat, although Maximinus exhorts everybody to do so. They are all deeply dejected. In a few days their faces have become sunken and ashen under the redness of tears. The apostles in particular, and those who ran away at the very first hours, look downcast, whilst the shepherds and Manaen are less dejected, nay, less ashamed, and Maximinus is only sorrowful in a manly manner.

The Zealot enters almost running and asks: « Is Lazarus here? »

« No, he is in his room. What do you want? »

« At the end of the path, near the fountain of the sun, there is Philip. He has come from the Jericho plain. He is exhausted. And he does not want to come here, because... like everybody, he feels he is a sinner. But Lazarus will convince him. »

Bartholomew stands up and says: « I will come, too... »

They go to Lazarus, who, upon being called, comes out from the half-dark room, where he certainly has wept and prayed, with a downcast face.

They all go out and go across the garden first, then the village, where it descends towards the slopes of the Mount of Olives, they then reach the end of the village, where also the tableland, on which it is built, ends, and they proceed along the only mountain road that

rises and descends along natural flights of steps across the mountains, which slope down towards the plain to the east and rise towards the town of Jerusalem to the west.

There is a fountain here with a large basin, where cattle and men quench their thirst. The place just now is solitary and cool, because there is plenty shade of thick trees around the cistern full of pure water, which is renewed continuously by the spring-water of some mountain, and overflows keeping the ground damp.

Philip is sitting on the upper edge of the fountain, with his head lowered, his hair unkempt, dusty, his broken sandals hanging from his grazed feet.

Lazarus calls him in a pitiful voice: « Philip, come to me! Let us love one another for His sake. Let us be united in His Name. We shall still love Him by doing so! »

« Oh! Lazarus! Lazarus! I ran away... and yesterday, beyond Jericho, I heard that He is dead!... I... I cannot forgive myself for running away... »

« We all ran away. With the exception of John, who remained faithfully with Him, and Simon who gathered us together by His order, after we had cowardly run away. So... of us apostles, no one was faithful » says Bartholomew.

« And can you forgive yourself? »

« No. But I am thinking of making amends, as I can, by not giving myself up to sterile dejection. We must join together. We must join John and learn about His last hours. John followed Him all the time » Bartholomew replies to his companion Philip.

« And not let His Doctrine die. We must preach it to the world. We must keep at least that alive, since we did not take action in time to save Him from His enemies, as we were too slow and late » says the Zealot.

« You could not have saved Him. Nothing could have saved Him. He told me. I repeat it again » says Lazarus resolutely.

« Did you know, Lazarus? » asks Philip.

« Yes, I did. It was my torture to be informed, since the Sabbath evening, of His death by Him, and in detail, to be told how we would act... »

« No. Not you. You have obeyed and suffered. We acted like cowards. You and Simon are the ones who were sacrificed to obedience » exclaims Bartholomew.

« Yes. To obedience. Oh! How hard it is to resist love in order to obey the Beloved! Come, Philip. Almost all the disciples are in my house. You must come, too. »

« I am ashamed of appearing to the world, to my companions... »

« We are all alike! » says Bartholomew moaning.

« Yes. But my heart does not forgive itself. »

« That is pride, Philip. Come. On the Sabbath evening He said to

me: "They will not forgive themselves. Tell them that I forgive them, because I know that they are not acting freely, but it is Satan who is leading them astray". Come. »

Philip weeps more loudly, but he surrenders. And, stooping as if he had aged in a few days, he walks beside Lazarus as far as the court-yard where they are all waiting for him. And the glance he casts at his companions, and the ones his companions cast at him, are the most evident confession of their total dejection.

Lazarus is aware of it and says:

« A new sheep of the herd of Christ, that was frightened by the coming of wolves and had run away after the arrest of the Shepherd, has been received by His friend. To this lost sheep, that has experienced the bitterness of being alone, without even the comfort of weeping over the same error with his brothers, I repeat His testament of love.

In the presence of the heavenly choruses I swear that He said to me, among many other things that your present human weakness cannot bear, because they are so distressing that they have torn my heart during these last ten days - and if I did not know that my life is of some use to the Lord, although it is so poor and faulty, I should give myself up to the wound of this grief of a friend and disciple who has lost everything by losing Him - He said to me: "The miasmata of corrupt Jerusalem will drive also My disciples mad. They will run away and they will come to you". In fact, you can see that you are all here. I could say all of you. Because, with the exception of Simon Peter and of the Iscariot, you have all come towards my house and to my heart of a friend. He said: "You will gather them. You will encourage My scattered sheep. You will tell them that I forgive them. I entrust you with My forgiveness for them. They will not set their minds at rest for having run away. Tell them not to fall into the greater sin of despairing of my forgiveness".

That is what He said. And I have forgiven you on His behalf. And I blushed in giving you in His Name this thing which is so holy, so peculiar of Him, which is Forgiveness, that is, the perfect Love, because he who forgives a guilty person, loves perfectly. This ministry has been a solace to my hard obedience... Because I should have liked to be there, like Mary and Martha, my sweet sisters. And if He was crucified on Golgotha by men, I swear it to you, I am crucified here by obedience, and it is really a heart-rending martyrdom. But if it serves to give solace to His Spirit, if it serves to save His disciples for Him, until He gathers them to bring them to perfection in faith, well, once again I sacrifice my wish to go to at least venerate His corpse before the third day ends.

I know that you doubt. You must not. Of His words at the Passover banquet I know only what you have told me. But the more

I think of them, the more I raise, one by one, these diamonds of His truthful words, and the more I feel that they have a sure reference to the immediate morrow. He cannot have said: "I am going to the Father and then I will come back", if He were not really to come back. He cannot have said: "When you see Me again you will be full of joy" if He had disappeared for good. He has always said: "I will rise from the dead". You told me that He said: "Dew is about to fall on the seeds sown in you and will make them all sprout, then the Paraclete will come and will make them become mighty trees". Did He not say so? Oh! do not allow that to happen only for the last of His disciples, for poor Lazarus, who was with Him only rarely! When He comes back, ensure that all His seed has sprouted under the dew of His Blood.

Since the dreadful hour when He was lifted up on the Cross, there is in me a great glow of light, a mighty outburst of strength. Everything is bright, everything revives and springs up. There is not one word left in me in its poor human meaning. But everything I heard from Him or of Him, now becomes full of life, and my barren land really changes into a fertile flower-bed, where every flower has His Name and every sap draws life from His blessed Heart.

I believe, Christ! But so that these may believe in You, in every promise of Yours, in Your forgiveness, in everything that is You, I offer You my life. Consume it, but do not let Your Doctrine die! Crush poor Lazarus to smithereens, but gather together the scattered members of the apostolic group. Everything You may wish, but in return let Your Word be vivid and eternal, and now and for ever, let those come to it who only through You can possess eternal life. »

Lazarus is really inspired. Love elevates him to a very high sphere and his transport is so strong that it relieves also his companions. Some call him on his right, some on his left, as if he were a confessor, a doctor, a father. The court-yard of Lazarus' rich house, I do not know why, reminds me of the abodes of Christian patricians in the days of persecutions and of heroic faith...

He is bent over Judas of Alphaeus, who can find no reason to appease his anguish for leaving His Master and cousin, when something makes him stand up straight all of a sudden. He turns round and then he says clearly: « I am coming, Lord. » His usual word of prompt assent. And he goes out, as if he were running behind someone who was calling and preceding him.

They all look at one another, seized with astonishment. They consult with one another.

« What has he seen? »

« But there is nothing! »

« Have you heard a voice? »

« I have not. »

« Neither have I. »

« So? Is Lazarus perhaps not well again? »

« May be... He has suffered more than we have, and he has encouraged us so much, we... the cowards! Perhaps he is raving. »

« In fact he looks worn out. »

« And his eyes were inflamed while he was speaking. »

« Perhaps Jesus has called him to Heaven. »

« In fact Lazarus offered Him his life not long ago... He has picked him at once like a flower... Oh! how wretched we are! What shall we do now? »

Comments are desperate and sorrowful.

Lazarus crosses the hall, he goes out into the garden, running all the time, smiling, whispering, and there is his soul in his voice: « I am coming, Lord. » He arrives at a box thicket that forms a green shelter, we would say a green bower, and he falls on his knees, with his face on the ground, shouting: « Oh! my Lord! »

Because Jesus, in His beauty of the Resurrection, is on the threshold of this green bower and smiles at him... and says: « Everything has been accomplished, Lazarus. I have come to thank you, My faithful friend. I have come to ask you to tell our brothers to come at once to the house of the Supper. You - another sacrifice, My dear friend, out of love for Me - will remain here, for the time being... I am aware that you suffer because of that. But I know that you are generous. Mary, your sister, has already been comforted, because I have seen her and she has seen Me. »

« You no longer suffer, my Lord. And that repays me for every sacrifice. I suffered... knowing that You were suffering... and that I was not there... »

« Oh! you were! Your spirit was at the foot of My Cross, and it was in the darkness of My sepulchre. From the depth where I was, you have evoked Me earlier, like all those who have loved Me with their whole selves. Just now I said to you; "Come, Lazarus". As on the day of your resurrection. But for several hours you have been saying to Me: "Come". I have come. And I called you, to draw you out, in My turn, from the depth of your grief. Go. Peace and blessings to you, Lazarus! Grow greater in your love for Me. I will come again. »

Lazarus has remained on his knees all the time without daring to make a gesture. The majesty of the Lord, although mitigated by love, is such that it paralyses Lazarus' usual behaviour.

But before disappearing in a flood of light that absorbs Him, Jesus takes a step and with His hand He touches the faithful forehead lightly.

It is at that moment that Lazarus recovers from his blissful astonishment, he stands up and running headlong towards his companions and with brightness of joy in his eyes and on his forehead

barely touched by the Christ, he shouts: « He has risen, brothers! He called me. I went. I have seen Him. He spoke to me. He told me to tell you to go at once to the house of the Supper. Go! Go! I am staying here, because He wants that. But my joy is complete... » And Lazarus weeps in his joy, while he urges the apostles to be the first to go where He orders. « Go! Go! He wants you! He loves You! Be not afraid of Him... Oh! He is more than ever the Lord, the Goodness, the Love! »

Also the disciples stand up... Bethany becomes empty. Lazarus remains with his great heart comforted...

618. Jesus Appears to Johanna of Chuza.

4th April 1945.

In a rich room, where the light hardly filters from outside, Johanna is weeping, completely dejected on a seat near the low bed covered with magnificent covers. She is weeping with her arm resting on the edge and her forehead on her arm, completely shaken by sobs, that must break her breast. When, in the anguish of her tears, she raises her face for a moment to breathe, a large damp spot can be seen on the precious cover, while her face is literally flooded with tears. Then she rests it again on her arm and once again one can see only her very white thin neck, the mass of her brown hair, her very slender shoulders and the top of her trunk. The rest is lost in the dim light, where her body disappears, enveloped in her dark violet dress.

Without moving the curtains or opening the door Jesus goes in, and without making any noise He approaches her. He touches her hair lightly with His Hand and in a whisper He asks: « Why are you weeping, Johanna? »

And Johanna, who must think that it is her angel who has asked her the question, and who does not see anything because she does not raise her head from the edge of the bed, with more desolate tears she expresses her torture: « Because I do not even have the Sepulchre of the Lord any more, to go and shed my tears there and not be alone... »

« But He has risen. Are you not happy? »

« Oh! yes! But all the women have seen Him with the exception of Martha and me. And Martha will certainly see Him at Bethany... because their house is a friendly one. Mine... mine is no longer a friendly house... I have lost everything with His Passion... Both my Master and my husband... and his soul... because he does not believe... he does not believe... and he derides me... and he orders me not to venerate even the memory of my Saviour... in order not to ruin him... Human interests are more important for him... I... I... I do not know whether I should continue to love him or to be disgusted

at him. I do not know whether I should obey him, being his wife, or disobey him, as my soul would like to do, because of the greater nuptial tie of the spirit with the Christ, to Whom I will remain faithful... I... I should like to know... And who will advise me, if poor Johanna can no longer reach Him? Oh!... the Passion is over for my Lord!... But for me it began on Friday, and it lasts... Oh! I am so weak and I have not got the strength to carry this cross!... »

« But if He helped you, would you carry it for His sake? »

« Oh! yes! Providing He helps me... He knows what it means to carry the cross by oneself... Oh! have mercy on my misfortune!... »

« Yes. I know what it is to carry the cross by oneself. That is why I have come and I am beside you. Johanna, do you realise Who is speaking to you? Is your house no longer friendly with the Christ? Why? If he, your earthly husband, is like a star covered with a cloud of human miasmata, you are still Johanna of Jesus. The Master has not left you. Jesus never leaves the souls who have become His spiritual spouses. He is always the Master, the Friend, the Spouse, also now that He has risen. Johanna, raise your head. Look at Me. In this hour of a secret lesson, which is even sweeter than if I had appeared to you as I did to the other women disciples, I will tell you what your future behaviour is to be. The same as that of many sisters of yours. Love your upset husband patiently and submissively. Increase your kindness all the more as he fosters the bitterness of human fears in himself. Increase your spiritual brightness the more he gives off shadows of human interests. Be faithful for two. And be strong in your spiritual nuptial tie. How many women, in future, will have to choose between the will of God and that of their husbands! But they will be great when, above love and maternity, they follow God. Your passion is beginning. Yes. But you can see that every passion ends in a resurrection... »

Johanna has been raising her head little by little. Her sobbing had become less frequent. She now looks and sees, she slides down on her knees, worshipping and whispering: « The Lord! »

« Yes. The Lord. You can see that I have not dealt with any of the women disciples as I have done with you. But I see peculiar needs and I arrange in gradations the assistance to be given to souls that expect help from Me. Climb your Calvary of a wife with the help of My caress and with that of your innocent child. He has entered Heaven with Me and he has given Me his caress for you. I bless you, Johanna. Have faith. I saved you. You will save, if you have faith. »

Johanna now smiles and she dares to ask: « Are You not going to the children? »

« I kissed them at dawn while they were still sleeping in their little beds, and they believed I was an angel of the Lord. I can kiss the innocent whenever I wish. But I did not wake them not to upset them too much. Their souls keep the memory of My kiss... and

in due time, they will transmit it to their minds. Nothing is lost of what is Mine. Always be a mother to them. And always be a daughter of My Mother. Never be completely detached from Her. With motherly gentleness She will perpetuate what was our friendship. And take the children to Her. She needs children to feel less deprived of Her Child... »

« Chuza will not agree... »

« Chuza will let you do. »

« Will he repudiate me, Lord? » It is the cry of a fresh torture.

« He is a dimmed star. Bring him back to light with your heroism of a wife and of a Christian. Goodbye. With the exception of My Mother, do not mention this coming of Mine to anybody else. Also revelations are to be mentioned to those to whom and when it is fair to do so. »

Jesus smiles at her shining brightly, and He disappears in His refulgence.

Johanna stands up, lost in reverie, torn between joy and sorrow, between the fear of having dreamt and the certainty of having seen. But her feelings reassure her. She goes to the little ones, who are playing quietly on the upper terrace, and kisses them.

« Are you not weeping any more, mummy? » asks Mary shyly, no longer the poor wretched little girl, but a delicate gentle girl, well dressed and with tidy hair; and Matthias, swarthy and lean, with the exuberance of a nice little boy says: « Tell me who makes you weep, and I will punish him. »

Johanna embraces them together and presses them to her heart, and says speaking over the brown-haired head of Mary and over the dark hair of Matthias: « I am not weeping any more. Jesus has risen and He blesses us. »

« Oh! so does He not bleed any more? Does He not suffer any longer? » asks Mary.

« Silly girl! You should rather say: He is no longer dead! Then, He is happy now!... Because it must be awful to be dead... » says Matthias.

« So is there no reason to weep any more, mummy? » asks Mary again.

« No. Not for you, innocent children. Rejoice with the angels. »

« The angels!... Last night, I don't know what watch it was, I felt being caressed and I woke up saying: "Mummy!", but I was not calling you. I was calling my dead mother, because that caress was lighter and gentler than yours, and I opened my eyes for a moment. But I saw only a bright light and I said: "My angel has kissed me to console me for my deep grief over the death of the Lord" » says Mary.

« I, too. But I was very sleepy, and I said: "Is it you?" I was thinking of my Guardian angel and I wanted to say to him: "Go and kiss Jesus and Johanna, so that they may no longer be afraid", but I did

not succeed. I fell asleep again and I began to dream, and I seemed to be in Heaven with you and Mary. Then there was that earthquake and I woke up and was frightened. But Esther said to me: "Don't be afraid. It is already all over" and I fell asleep again. »

Johanna kisses them again, and then she leaves them to their peaceful games and she goes to the house of the Supper.

She asks after Mary. She goes into Her room. She closes the door and says her great word: « I have seen Him. I tell You. I am comforted and happy. Love me, because He said that I must be united to You. »

The Mother replies: « I have already told you, on the day of the Sabbath, that I love you. Yesterday. Because it was yesterday... And that day of weeping and darkness seems so far from this day of light and smiles! »

« Yes... Now I remember that You had already said what He has now repeated to me. You said: "We women will have to take action, because we remained and the men ran away... The true giver of life is always the woman... " Oh! Mother, help me to give life to Chuza! He has abandoned Faith!... » Johanna begins to weep again.

Mary takes her in Her arms: « Love is stronger than faith. It is the most active virtue. With it you will create a new soul for Chuza. Be not afraid. But I will help you. »

619. Jesus Appears to Joseph of Arimathea, to Nicodemus and to Manaen.

4th April 1945.

Manaen, with the shepherds, is walking fast along the slopes that from Bethany take one to Jerusalem. A beautiful road goes straight towards the Mount of Olives. And Manaen turns towards it, after leaving the shepherds, who, few at a time, want to enter the town to go to the Supper room.

Shortly before, I gather this from their conversation, they must have met John, who was coming towards Bethany to bring the news of the Resurrection and the order for everybody to be in Galilee in a few days' time. They part precisely because the shepherds want to repeat personally to Peter, what they have already told John, that is, that the Lord, when he appeared to Lazarus, said that they had to gather in the Supper room.

Manaen climbs a secondary road towards a house in the middle of an olive-grove. A beautiful house, with around it a row of cedars of Lebanon, which with their imposing mass dominate the numerous olive-trees of the mountain. He goes in resolutely and to the servant, who has rushed to meet him, he says: « Where is your master? »

« Over there with Joseph. He came not long ago. »

« Tell him that I am here. »

The servant goes away and comes back with Nicodemus and Joseph.

The voices of the three men mingle in the same cry: « He has risen! » They look at one another, surprised that they all know.

Then Nicodemus takes his friend and leads him to a room inside the house. Joseph follows them.

« Have you dared to come back? »

« Yes. He said: "At the Supper room". I do want to see Him now, glorious, to get rid of the grievous memory of Him tied and covered with filth, like a criminal struck by the rage of the world. »

« Oh! we should like to see Him as well... to free ourselves from the horror of remembering Him tortured, of His countless wounds... But He has shown Himself only to the women » whispers Joseph.

« And that is fair. They have always been faithful to Him during these last years. We were afraid. The Mother said so: "A very poor love indeed, if it waited until now to show itself!" » says Nicodemus objecting.

« But to defy Israel, now more than ever opposed to Him, we should really need to see Him!... If you knew! The guards have spoken... Now the Leaders of the Sanhedrin and the Pharisees, not yet converted by so much wrath of Heaven, are looking for those who are aware of His Resurrection, to put them in prison. I have sent little Martial - a child passes unnoticed more easily - to inform the people at home to be on the alert. They have taken sacred money from the Treasury of the Temple to pay the guards, so that they may say that the disciples stole Him, and that what they had said previously about the Resurrection, was a lie, as they were afraid of being punished. The town is in a turmoil. And there are some disciples who are already leaving it out of fear... I mean the disciples that were not at Bethany... »

« Yes, we would need His blessing to have courage. »

« He appeared to Lazarus... It was almost the third hour. Lazarus seems transfigured to us. »

« Oh! Lazarus deserves it! We... » says Joseph.

« Yes. We are still encrusted with doubt and human thoughts, like a leper badly cured... And there is no one but He Who can say: "I want you to be cleansed!" So, now that He has risen, will He no longer speak to us, who are less perfect? » asks Nicodemus.

« And will He not work any more miracles, to punish the world, now that He is the One Who has Risen from death and from the miseries of the flesh? » asks Joseph again.

But their questions can have but one reply. His. And it does not come. The three remain dejected.

Then Manaen says: « Well. I am going to the Supper room. If they kill me, He will absolve my soul and I shall see Him in Heaven,

if I do not see Him here, on the Earth. Manaen is such a useless thing in the group of His followers that, if he falls, he will leave the same void that is left by a flower picked in a meadow crowded with corollas: he will not even be noticed... » and he gets up to go.

But, as he turns towards the door, the latter is brightly illuminated by the Divine Resurrected Lord, Who, with His open hands, in a gesture of an embrace, stops him saying: « Peace to you! Peace to you two! But remain where you are, you and Nicodemus. Joseph may still go, if he wishes so. But you have Me here, and I speak the word you requested: "I want you to be cleansed of what is still impure in your belief". Tomorrow you will go down to the town. You will go to the brothers. This evening I have to speak only to the apostles. Goodbye. And may God be always with you. Thanks, Manaen. You have believed more than these two. So, thanks also to your spirit. I thank you two for your pity. But ensure that it may become something higher through a life of fearless faith. » Jesus disappears behind a dazzling incandescence.

The three are blissful and bewildered.

« But was it He? » asks Joseph.

« And did you not hear His voice? » replies Nicodemus.

« Also a spirit can have... a voice... You, Manaen, since you were so close to Him, what do you think? »

« A real body. Most handsome. He breathed. I could feel His breath. And He emitted heat. And then... His Wounds, I saw them. They looked as if they had been opened then. They did not bleed, but it was living flesh. Oh! do not doubt any more! So that He may not punish you. We have seen the Lord. I mean Jesus, Who has come back as glorious as His Nature wants! And... He still loves us... Truly, if Herod should now offer me his kingdom, I should say to him: "Your throne and crown are dust and dung, as far as I am concerned. Nothing exceeds what I possess. I have the blissful knowledge of the Face of God". »

620. Jesus Appears to the Shepherds.

4th April 1945.

They also walk fast under the olive-trees, and they are so certain of His Resurrection that they converse with the joy of happy children. They go straight towards the town.

« We will tell Peter to look at Him carefully and to tell us how beautiful is His face » says Elias.

« Oh! no matter how beautiful it may be, I shall never be able to forget what He was like when He was tortured » whispers Isaac.

« But do you remember Him when He was lifted up on the Cross? » asks Levi. « And do you all remember Him? »

« I do, and perfectly. The light was still good then. Later, with my

old eyes, I could not see much » says Daniel.

« I instead, saw Him until He seemed to be dead. But I would have preferred to be blind, in order not to see » says Joseph.

« Oh! well. Now He has risen. That must make us happy » says John to comfort him.

« And the thought that we only left Him for an act of charity » adds Jonathan.

« But our hearts remained up there. All the time » whispers Matthias.

« Yes. All the time. Since you have seen the veronica, tell us: what is it like? Does it look like Him? » asks Benjamin.

« As if He were speaking » replies Isaac.

« Will we see that veil? », many ask.

« Oh! the Mother shows it to everybody. You will certainly see it. But it is a sad sight. It would be better to see... Oh! Lord! »

« Faithful servants. Here I am. Go. I will wait for you in Galilee in a few days' time. I want to tell you once more that I love you. Jonah is blissful, with the others, in Heaven. »

« Lord! Oh! Lord. »

« Peace to you of good will. »

The Risen Lord vanishes in the bright midday sunbeam. When they raise their heads, He is no longer there. But there is the joy of having seen Him as He is now: glorious.

They stand up, transfigured with joy. In their humbleness they cannot be persuaded that they deserved to see Him and they say: « To us! To us! How good is our Lord! From His birth to His triumph, always humble and good to His poor servants! »

« And how handsome He was! »

« Oh! He was never so handsome! What majesty! »

« He looks even taller and of riper age. »

« He is really the King! »

« Oh! They called Him the peaceful King! But He is also the terrible King for those who must be afraid of His judgement! »

« Did you see what beams were emitted by His Face? »

« And how His eyes flashed! »

« I did not dare stare at Him. And I would have liked to stare at Him, because I think that perhaps I shall be granted to see Him so only in Heaven. And I want to know Him, so that I shall not be afraid of Him then. »

« Oh! we must not be afraid if we remain as we are: His faithful servants. You have heard Him: "I want to tell you once more that I love you. Peace to you of good will". Oh! not a word too many. But in that little there is His full approval of what we have done so far and His greatest promises for our future lives. Oh! let us intone the song of joy. Of our joy: "Glory to God in the most high Heavens and peace on earth to men of good will. The Lord has really

risen, as He had said through the mouths of the prophets and with His own faultless word. With His Blood He has wiped off the corruption that the kiss of a man had laid on Him, and, as the altar is cleansed, His Body has assumed the inexpressible beauty of God. Before ascending to Heaven He has shown Himself to His servants. Alleluia. Let us go on singing, alleluia! The eternal youth of God! Let us go announcing to the people that He has risen, alleluia! The Just, the Holy Lord has risen, alleluia, alleluia! From the Sepulchre He has risen immortal. And just men have risen with Him. In sin, as in a grotto, the hearts of men were closed. He died to say: 'Rise!' And those who were dispersed have risen, alleluia! Having opened the gates of Heaven, He said to the chosen ones: 'Come'. For the sake of His holy Blood may He grant us to ascend as well. Alleluia!" »

Matthia, the elderly ex-disciple of John the Baptist, goes ahead singing, as perhaps in days gone by David had sung before His people along the streets in Judaea. The others follow him, replying in chorus to each alleluia with holy joy.

Jonathan, who is a member of the group, while Jerusalem is already at the feet of the hillock which they are descending rapidly, says: « Through His birth I have lost fatherland and home, and through His death I have lost the new house where for thirty years I worked honestly. But even if they had taken my life because of Him, I would have died happily, because I would have lost it for Him. I bear him, who is unfair to me, no grudge. Through His death my Lord has taught me perfect meekness. And I am not worried about the future. My abode is not here, but in Heaven. I shall live in the poverty so dear to Him and I will serve Him until He calls me... and... yes... I will offer Him also the fact that I have to abandon... my mistress... This is the most aching pain... But now that I have seen the suffering of the Christ and His glory, I must not weigh my grief, but only hope in the celestial glory. Let us go and tell the apostles that Jonathan is the servant of the servants of the Christ. »

621. Jesus Appears to the Disciples of Emmaus.

5th April 1945.

Along a mountain road two middle-aged men are walking fast turning their backs on Jerusalem, whose mountains are disappearing more and more behind those that follow with uninterrupted undulations of summits and valleys.

They are speaking to each other. The elder one says to the other, who must be about thirty-five years old at most: « Believe me: it was better to do so, I have a family, and you have one, too. The Temple is not joking. They want to have really done with this matter.

Are they right? Are they wrong? I don't know. I know that they clearly intend to put an end to this matter once for all. »

« To this crime, Simon. Give it its right name. Because it is at least a crime. »

« It depends. Love instigates us against the Sanhedrin. But perhaps... who knows! »

« Not at all. Love enlightens. It does not lead to error. »

« Also the Sanhedrin, also the Priests and the Chiefs love. They love Jehovah, Whom all Israel has loved since the agreement was made between God and the Patriarchs. So, love is light also for them and does not lead to error! »

« Their love is not for the Lord. Yes. Israel has been in that Faith for ages. But tell me. Can you say that it is still Faith what the Chiefs of the Temple, the Pharisees, the scribes, the Priests give us? You can see it. With the gold sacred to the Lord - people already knew or at least suspected that it happened - with the gold sacred to the Lord they have paid the Traitor and now they are paying the guards. The former, to make him betray the Christ, the latter to make them lie. Oh! I don't know how the eternal Power has limited Itself to overthrowing the walls and tearing the Veil! I tell you that I would have liked the new Philistines to have been buried under the ruins. All of them! »

« Cleopas! You would be complete vengeance. »

« I would. Because, let us admit that He was only a prophet, is it legal to kill an innocent? Because He was innocent! Have you ever seen Him commit one of the crimes with which they charged Him to kill Him? »

« No. Not even one. But He made one mistake. »

« Which, Simon? »

« He did not show His power from the height of His Cross, to confirm our faith and to punish the incredulous sacrilegious people. He should have accepted the challenge and descended from the Cross. »

« He has done more than that. He has risen from the dead. »

« Is it really true. Risen how? Only with His Spirit or with His Spirit and His Body? »

« But the spirit is eternal! It need not rise! » exclaims Cleopas.

« I know that, too. What I mean is whether He has risen only with His Nature of God, superior to all the snares of man. Because they laid snares to His Spirit through the terror of man. You did hear, didn't you? Mark said that at Gethsemane, where He went to pray against a rock, there is blood everywhere. And John, who has spoken to Mark, said to him: "Do not let that place be trampled on, because it is Blood sweated by the Man-God". If He sweated blood before being tortured, He must have been terrified of the torture! »

« Our poor Master!... » they become silent feeling dejected.

Jesus joins them and asks: « What were you speaking of? In the silence I could hear your words at intervals. Who has been killed? » It is a Jesus veiled under the humble appearance of a poor wayfarer who is in a hurry.

The two do not recognise Him. « Have you come from far away, man? Have you not stopped in Jerusalem? Your dusty tunic and your sandals in that state look like those of an indefatigable pilgrim. »

« I am. I have come from very far... »

« So you must be tired. Are you going far? »

« Yes, very far, even farther than the place from which I come. »

« Are you in business? Markets? »

« I have to purchase an enormous number of herds for the greatest Lord. I have to go round the whole world to choose sheep and lambs, and I have to go also among wild herds, which, however, once they have been tamed, will be better than the ones which at present are not wild. »

« Hard work. And have you gone on your way without stopping in Jerusalem? »

« Why do you ask Me? »

« Because you seem to be the only one who is unaware of what happened there these past days. »

« What happened? »

« You have come from afar and therefore perhaps you do not know. And yet your way of speaking is Galilean. So, even if you are the servant of a foreign king or the son of emigrated Galileans, you must know, if you are circumcised, that for three years in our Fatherland a great Prophet had risen, named Jesus of Nazareth, powerful in deeds and in words before God and before men, and He went preaching all over the Country. And He said that He was the Messiah. His words and His deeds were really those of the Son of God, as He said He was. But only of the Son of God. All Heaven... Now you know why... But are you circumcised? »

« I am the first-born and sacred to the Lord. »

« Then do you know our Religion? »

« I know every syllable of it. I know the precepts and the customs. The Halacha, the midrash and the Haggadah are known to Me like the elements of the air, of the water, of the fire and of the light, that are the first to which tend the intelligence, the instinct and the needs of man, shortly after he is born. »

« Well, in that case you know that Israel was promised the Messiah, but as a powerful king who would re-unite Israel. This one instead was not so... »

« How, then? »

« He did not aim at earthly power. But He said that He was the king of an eternal spiritual kingdom. He did not re-unite, on the

contrary He divided Israel, because the country is now divided between those who believe in Him and those who say that He is a criminal. Really, He was not the stuff kings are made of, because He only wanted meekness and forgiveness. And can one subdue and defeat with such weapons?... »

« So? »

« So the Chiefs of the Priests and the Elders of Israel captured Him and sentenced Him to death... charging Him, really, with crimes of which He was not guilty. His only fault was to be too good and too severe... »

« If He was one, how could He be the other? »

« It was possible, because He was too severe in speaking the truth to the Chiefs in Israel and too good in not working miracles of death on them, striking His unjust enemies dead. »

« Was He as severe as the Baptist? »

« Well... I would not know. He used to reproach scribes and Pharisees very severely, particularly recently, and He threatened those of the Temple, as if they were marked by the wrath of God. But if one was a sinner and repented, and He saw true repentance in that heart, because the Nazarene read hearts better than a scribe can read the text, then He was kinder than a mother. »

« And did Rome allow an innocent to be killed? »

« Pilate condemned Him... But he did not want to, and said that He was "just". But they threatened to report him to Caesar, and he was frightened. In short He was condemned to be crucified and He died on the Cross. And that, together with the fear of the members of the Sanhedrin, has greatly disheartened us. Because I am Cleopas, the son of Cleopas, and he is Simon, both from Emmaus, and relatives, because I am the husband of his oldest daughter, and we were disciples of the Prophet. »

« And are you no longer so? »

« We hoped that He would free Israel and also that, by means of a miracle, He would confirm His words. Instead!... »

« What words had He spoken? »

« We have told you: "I have come to the Kingdom of David. I am the peaceful King" and so forth. And He used to say: "Come to the Kingdom", but, then, He did not give us the kingdom. And He would say: "On the third day I will rise from the dead". Now this is the third day since He died. And it is even finished, because it is later than the ninth hour, and He has not risen. Some women and guards say that He has risen. But we have not seen Him. The guards now state that they said so to justify the theft of the corpse made by the disciples of the Nazarene. But the disciples!... We all abandoned Him out of fear when He was alive... and we certainly did not steal Him now that He is dead. And the women... who believes them? That is what we were talking about. And we wanted to know

whether He intended to say that He would rise only with the Spirit that had become divine again, or also with His body. The women say that the angels - because they say that they saw also angels after the earthquake, and it may be, because on Friday some just people had already appeared out of their sepulchres - they say that the angels said that He is like one who has never died. And in fact that is how the women seemed to see Him. But two of us, two chiefs, went to the Sepulchre. And while they saw it empty, as the women had said, they did not see Him there or anywhere else. And it is a great desolation, because we no longer know what to think! »

« Oh! how foolish you are and hard to understand! And how slow you are in believing the words of the prophets! And had all that not already been said? The error of Israel is this: they have misinterpreted the regality of the Christ. That is why He was not believed. That is why He was feared. That is why you are now in doubt. In high places, in low ones, in the Temple, in villages, everywhere people thought of a king according to human nature. The reconstruction of the Kingdom of Israel was not limited, in the mind of God, in time, in space and in means, as it was in you.

Not in time: no royalty, even the most powerful one, is eternal. Remember the mighty Pharaohs who oppressed the Jews in the days of Moses. How many dynasties have come to an end, and only soulless mummies remain of them at the bottom of secret hypogea! And a remembrance remains, if even that still remains, of their power of one hour, and even less, if we measure their centuries by the eternal Time. This Kingdom is eternal.

In space. It was called: Kingdom of Israel. Because the stock of the human race came from Israel; because in Israel there is, so to say, the seed of God; and therefore, by saying Israel, it was meant: the kingdom of those created by God. But the regality of the King Messiah is not limited to the small space of Palestine, but it stretches from north to south, from east to west, wherever there is a being with a spirit in its body, that is, wherever there is a man. How could one person alone gather under him all the peoples, hostile to one another, and form only one kingdom, without shedding rivers of blood and subjecting them all by means of cruel oppressions of armed men? So, how could He have been the peaceful king mentioned by the prophets?

In means: the human means, I said, is oppression. The superhuman means is love. The former is always limited, because peoples rebel against the oppressor. The latter is unlimited, because love is loved or, if it is not loved, it is derided. But as it is spiritual, it cannot be attacked directly. And God, the Infinite, wants means to be like Himself. He wants what is not finite, because He is eternal: the spirit; what belongs to the spirit; what leads to the Spirit. That has been the error: that men conceived in their minds a Messianic

idea that is wrong in means and form.

Which is the highest regality? God's. Is it not so? Therefore, this Admirable, this Immanuel, this Holy, this sublime Germ, this Strong, this Father of the future century, this Prince of peace, this God like Him from Whom He comes, because so is He named and so is the Messiah, will He not have a regality like that of Him Who generated Him? Of course, He will! A regality which is completely spiritual and eternal, immune from violence and blood, unaware of betrayals and abuse of power. His Regality! That which the Eternal Goodness bestows also on poor men, to give honour and joy to His Word.

But did David not say that this powerful King had all things placed under His feet as a footstool? Did Isaiah not narrate all His Passion, and did David not count, one might say, also His tortures? And is it not said that He is the Saviour and Redeemer, Who with His holocaust will save sinful mankind? And is it not stated, and Jonah is the sign, that for three days He would be swallowed by the insatiable stomach of the Earth, and then He would be ejected as the prophet was by the whale? And was it not said by Him: "My Temple, that is My Body, the third day after being destroyed, will be rebuilt by Me (that is, by God)?" And what did you think? That by magic He would raise the walls of the Temple again? No. Not the walls. But Himself. And God only could make Himself rise from the dead. He has raised the true Temple: His Body of the Lamb. Sacrificed, as Moses received the order and the prophecy, to prepare the "passage" from death to Life, from slavery to freedom, of men, the children of God and slaves of Satan.

How did He rise? you ask each other. I reply: He has risen with His true Body and with His Divine Spirit that dwells in it, as in every mortal body there dwells the soul as queen of the heart. That is how He has risen after suffering everything to expiate everything, and make amends for the primitive Offence and for the countless ones that every day are committed by Mankind. He has risen as it had been said under the veil of the prophecies. He had come at His time, I remind you of Daniel, at His time He was sacrificed. And listen and remember, at the time predicted after His death the deicide town will be destroyed.

I advice you to do this: read the prophets with your souls, not with proud minds, from the beginning of the Book to the words of the Sacrificed Word; remember the Precursor who indicated Him as the Lamb; recall which was the destiny of the symbolic Mosaic lamb. The first-born of Israel were saved through that blood. Through this Blood the first-born of God will be saved, that is, those who with good will have made themselves sacred to the Lord. Remember and understand the Messianic psalm of David and the Messianic prophet Isaiah. Remember Daniel, recall to your minds,

but raising these from the filth of the earth to the celestial blue, recall every word on the regality of the Saint of God, and you will understand that no other more just or more strong sign could be given to you than this victory over Death, than this Resurrection accomplished by Himself. Remember that it would have been contrary to His mercy and to His mission to punish from the height of His Cross those who had put Him on it. He was still the Saviour, even if He was the Crucified scoffed at and nailed to a scaffold! His limbs were crucified, but His spirit and will were free. And with the latter He wanted to wait, to give the sinners time to believe and to invoke His Blood on themselves, not with blasphemous cries, but with groans of contrition.

Now He is risen. He has accomplished everything. Glorious He was before His incarnation. Three times glorious He is now that, having humbled Himself in a body for so many years, He sacrificed Himself, elevating Obedience to the perfection of being able to die on the Cross to do God's Will. Most glorious, with His glorified Body, now that He ascends to Heaven, and enters into the eternal Glory, beginning the Kingdom that Israel has not understood. To this Kingdom, in a more and more pressing manner, through the love and the authority of which He is full, He calls the tribes of the world. As foreseen and predicted by the just of Israel and by the prophets, all peoples will come to the Saviour. And there will no longer be Judaeans or Romans, Scythians or Africans, Iberians or Celts, Egyptians or Phrygians. The land beyond the Euphrates will join the springs of the perennial River. The Hyperboreans beside the Numidians will come to His Kingdom, and races and languages will fall away. There will no longer be different customs and different colours of skins and hair, but there will be an immense bright pure people, one language only and one love. It will be the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of Heaven. And eternal Monarch: the Sacrificed Lord Who has risen again from the dead. The eternal subjects: the believers in His Faith. Do believe, in order to belong to it.

Here is Emmaus, My friends. I am going farther. No stop is granted to the Wayfarer Who has to travel so far. »

« Sir, you are more learned than a rabbi. If He were not dead, we should say that He has spoken to us. We should like to hear some more and wider truths from you. Because now, we are like sheep without a shepherd, upset by the storm of Israel's hatred, and we are no longer able to understand the words of the Book. Do you want us to come with you? See, you would go on teaching us, completing the work of the Master Who was taken away from us. »

« You have had Him for such a long time and was He not able to complete your instruction? Is this not a synagogue? »

« Yes, it is. I am Cleopas, the son of Cleopas the synagogue Leader who died in the joy of having become acquainted with the

Messiah. »

« And have you not succeeded yet in believing with clear firm faith? But it is not your fault. After the Blood, the Fire is still missing. And then you will believe, because you will understand. Goodbye. »

« O sir, it is nearly evening and the sun is beginning to set. You are tired and thirsty. Come in. Stay with us. You will speak to us of God, while we share bread and salt. »

Jesus goes in and they serve Him with the customary Jewish hospitality, offering Him drinks and water for His tired feet.

Then they sit at the table and the two beg Him to offer the food for them.

Jesus stands up holding the bread in the palms of His hands, and raising His eyes to the red sky of the evening, He recites the thanksgiving for the food and sits down. He breaks the bread and gives some to His two guests. And, in doing so, He reveals Himself for what He is: the Risen Lord. He is not the bright Risen Lord Who appeared to the others who are dearer to Him. But He is a Jesus full of majesty, with the wounds very clear in His long Hands: red roses against the ivory of His skin. A Jesus fully alive in His recomposed Body. But He is also clearly God in the majesty of His eyes and of all His aspect.

The two recognise Him and fall on their knees... But when they dare to lift their faces, there is nothing left of Him except the broken bread. They take it and kiss it. Each takes his own piece and after enveloping it in a linen cloth, he puts it, like a relic, on his chest.

They weep saying: « It was He! And we did not recognise Him. And yet did you not feel your heart bum within you while He spoke and explained the Scriptures to us? »

« Yes, I did. And now I seem to see Him again. And in the light coming from Heaven. The light of God. And I see that He is the Saviour. »

« Let us go. I am no longer hungry or tired. Let us go and tell Jesus' disciples in Jerusalem. »

« Let us go. Oh! I wish my old father had enjoyed this hour! »

« Don't say that! He has enjoyed it more than we have. Without the veils used out of pity for the weakness of our flesh, he, the just Cleopas, with his spirit has seen the Son of God enter heaven again. Let us go! Let us go! We shall arrive at dead of night. But if He so wishes, He will find a way to let us pass. If He has opened the gates of death, He will certainly be able to open those of the walls! Let us go. »

And in the fully purple sunset, they go speedily towards Jerusalem.

622. Jesus Appears to the Other Friends.

5th April 1945.

The house of the Supper room is full of people. The hall, the court-yard, the rooms, apart from the Supper room and the Virgin Mary's room, show the joyful excited appearance of a place where many people meet, after some time, for a feast. The apostles are there, except Thomas. The shepherds are there. The faithful women are there, and with Johanna, there are Nike, Eliza, Syra, Marcella, Anne. They are all speaking in low voices, but with evident joyful excitement. The house is locked, as if they were afraid, but the fear from outside does not affect the joy inside.

Martha goes backwards and forwards with Marcella and Susanna, preparing the supper of the « servants of the Lord », as she calls the apostles. The other women and men ask one another questions, they confide their impressions, their joys and fears... like many children awaiting something that thrills them and also frightens them a little.

The apostles would like to appear as the most self-confident. But they are the first to become uneasy if a noise seems the knock at a door or sounds like a window that bursts open. Also Susanna, who rushes with two multi-flamed lamps to help Martha, who is looking for some table-linen, makes Matthew jump back shouting: « The Lord! », which causes Peter, who is evidently more excited than the others, to fall on his knees.

A resolute knock at the door cuts all words short and leaves them all in suspense. I think that all their hearts are beating fast.

They look through the spy-hole and open with an « Oh! » of surprise, as they see the unexpected group of the Roman ladies escorted by Longinus and by another man, who like Longinus, is wearing dark clothes. Also the ladies are all enveloped in dark mantles, which cover also their heads. They are not wearing any jewels, in order not to attract attention.

« May we come in for a moment to express our joy to the Mother of the Saviour? » says Plautina, who is the most respected of them all.

« Do come in. She is there. »

They go in, in a group, with Johanna and Mary of Magdala, who gives me the impression that she knows them very well.

Longinus and the other Roman remain, separate in a corner of the hall, as they are looked at somewhat askance.

The women greet with their: « Ave Domina! » and they then kneel down saying: « If previously we admired the Wisdom, now we want to be daughters of the Christ. And we are telling You. You alone can overcome the Jewish distrust towards us. We will come to You to be taught until they (and they point at the apostles standing still in a group near the door) allow us to say that we are of Jesus. » It

is Plautina who has spoken on behalf of everybody.

Mary smiles blissfully and says: « I ask the Lord to cleanse My lips as He did with the prophet, so that I may be able to speak worthily of My Lord. May you be blessed, the first fruits of Rome. » « Longinus also would like to... and the Roman lance, who felt a fire in his heart when... when at the cry of God, Earth and Heaven opened. But if we know little, they know nothing, apart that He was the Saint of God and that they no longer want to belong to the Error. »

« You will tell them to come to the apostles. »

« They are over there. But the apostles distrust them. »

Mary stands up and goes towards the soldiers. The apostles look at Her go, trying to guess Her mind.

« May God lead you to His Light, sons! Come! To meet the servants of the Lord. This is John. And you know him. And this is Simon Peter, chosen by My Son and Lord to be the head of the brothers. This is James and this is Judas, cousins of the Lord. This is Simon and this is Andrew, who is Peter's brother. And this is James, John's brother. And these are Philip, Bartholomew and Matthew. Thomas is absent, still far away, but I mention his name as if he were present. They are the ones who have been chosen for a special mission. But these ones, who are standing humbly in the shade, are the first in the heroism of love. For over thirty years they have been preaching the Christ. Neither persecutions against them, nor the conviction of the Innocent have impaired their faith. Fishermen and shepherds, and you patricians. But in Jesus' name distinctions do not exist any more. Love in the Christ makes us all equal and brothers. And My love calls you sons, including you of another nation. Even more, I say that I find you once again after losing you, because, at the moment of sorrow, you were near My Dying Son. And I will not forget your compassion, Longinus, or your words, soldier. I looked as if I had been killed. But I saw everything. I do not have the possibility of rewarding you. And, really, for holy things there is no money, but only love and prayer. And that is what I will give you, praying our Lord Jesus Himself to reward you. »

« We have received it, Domina. That is why we have dared to come all together. A common impulse gathered us together. Faith has already placed its tie from heart to heart » says Longinus.

They all go near with curiosity. And there is someone who, overcoming the reluctance and perhaps the disgust of contact with heathens, says: « What did you receive? »

« I, a voice, His. And it said: "Come to Me" » says Longinus.

« And I heard: "If you think that I am Holy, believe in Me" » says the other soldier.

« And we » says Plautina « while this morning we were speaking of Him, saw a light, a light! It changed into a face. Oh! you... please

say how bright it was. It was His. And He smiled so kindly at us, that we wanted only one thing, to come and say to you: "Do not reject us". »

Voices whisper making comments. They all speak, telling how they saw it.

The ten apostles are silent, mortified. In order to recover from their unpleasant situation, and not appear as the only ones who had been left without His greetings, they ask the Hebrew women whether they were without a Passover gift.

Eliza says: « He removed from my heart the sword of sorrow for the death of my son. »

And Anne: « I heard His promise concerning the eternal salvation of my relatives. »

And Syra: « I received a caress. »

And Marcella: « I saw a flash and I heard his voice say: "Persevere". »

« And what about you, Nike? » they ask her, since she is silent.

« She had already had her gift » reply others.

« No. I have seen His Face, and He said to me: "That it may be impressed on your heart". How beautiful it was! »

Martha goes backwards and forwards, silently and quickly, and does not speak.

« And what about you, sister? Nothing for you? You are silent and you smile. You smile too sweetly to have no joy of your own » says the Magdalene.

« It is true. Your eyes are closed and your tongue is silent, but your eyes shine so much under the veil of your eyelids, that you seem to be singing a song of love. »

« Oh! speak then! Mother, did she tell You? »

The mother smiles but does not speak.

Martha, who is busy laying the cloth on the table, does not want to reveal her happy secret. But her sister gives her no rest. Then Martha, blushing blissfully, says: « He gave me a rendezvous for the hour of my death and the accomplishment of the nuptials... » and her face lights up with a brighter flush and the smile of her soul.

623. Jesus Appears to the Ten Apostles.

6th April 1945.

They are gathered in the Supper room. It must be late in the evening, because no noise comes from the street or the house. I think that all those, who had come earlier, have withdrawn to their houses or to sleep, tired of so many emotions.

The ten apostles, instead, after eating some fish, some of which is still left on a tray on a sideboard, are conversing in the light of only one little flame of the chandelier, the one closest to the table,

at which they are still sitting. Their conversation is fragmentary, and sounds like monologues, as each seems to be talking to himself, rather than to his companion. And the others let him speak, while they, in turn, speak of something completely different. But one feels that these rambling talks, that give me the impression of the spokes of a broken wheel, deal with one subject only, which is their centre, even if they are so disconnected, and it is Jesus.

« I hope that Lazarus has not misunderstood, and that the women have understood better than he did... » says Judas of Alphaeus.

« At what time did the Roman lady say that she saw Him? » asks Matthew.

No one replies to him.

« I am going to Capernaum tomorrow » says Andrew.

« How wonderful! To arrange things in such a way that Claudia's litter should come out just at that moment! » says Bartholomew.

« We made a mistake in coming away at once this morning, Peter... If we had stayed, we would have seen Him as the Magdalene did » says John with a sigh.

« I don't understand how He could be at Emmaus and at the mansion house at the same time. And how He was here with His Mother, and there with the Magdalene and at Johanna's all at the same time... » says James of Zebedee talking to himself.

« He will not come. I have not wept enough to deserve it... He is right. I say that He will keep me waiting for three days because of my three denials. How was I able to do that? »

« How transfigured was Lazarus! I tell you: he looked like a sun himself. I think that it happened to him as it did to Moses after he had seen God. And immediately after - it's true, isn't it, you who were there? - immediately after he had offered his life! » says the Zealot.

No one listens to him.

James of Alphaeus turns towards John and asks: « What did He say to those from Emmaus? I think that He excused us, did He not? Did He not say that everything happened because we Israelites failed to understand the nature of His Kingdom? »

John does not pay attention to him, and turning round to look at Philip, he says... wasting his breath, because he does not speak to Philip: « It is sufficient for me to know that He has risen. And then... And then that my love may be stronger and stronger. You have noticed this, eh! If you consider things properly, He has gone in proportion to the love we have had: the Mother, Mary Magdalene, the children, my mother and yours, and then Lazarus and Martha... When did He appear to Martha? I say when she intoned David's psalm: "The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He has laid me in meadows of green grass, He has led me to waters of repose. He has called my soul to Himself..." Do you remember how

she made our hearts beat violently with that unexpected song? And those words are connected to what she said: "He has called my soul to Himself". Martha, in fact, seems to have found her way again... Previously, she, the strong woman, was lost! Perhaps, when calling her, He told her the place where He wants her. And more than that, it is certain, because, if He gave her a rendezvous, He must know where she will be. What did she mean by: "accomplishment of the nuptials"? »

Philip, who has looked at him for a moment, and then has left him to talk to himself, says moaning: « If He comes, I shall not know what to say to Him... I ran away... and I feel that I will run away. Previously out of fear of men. Now out of fear of Him. »

Everybody says: « He is most handsome. Can He be more handsome than He already was? » asks Bartholomew.

« I will say to Him: "You forgave me without saying one word, when I was a publican. Forgive me also now with Your silence, because my cowardice does not deserve Your Word" » says Matthew.

« Longinus said that he was thinking: "Shall I ask Him to be cured or to believe?" But his heart said: "To believe", and then the Voice said: "Come to Me", and he felt that he wanted to believe and that he was cured at the same time. That is exactly what he told me » states Judas of Alphaeus.

« My mind is always fixed on the idea that Lazarus was rewarded at once because of his offering... I also said: "My life for Your glory". But He has not come » says the Zealot with a sigh.

« What do you think, Simon? As you are a learned man, tell me: what shall I say to Him to make Him understand that I love Him and I ask Him to forgive me? And you, John? You have conversed a great deal with the Mother. Help me. If you are compassionate, you cannot leave poor Peter alone! »

John feels pity for his dejected companion and says: « Well... I would simply say to Him: "I love You". Repentance and the wish for forgiveness are also included in love. But... I don't know. Simon, what do you think? »

And the Zealot: « I would say what was the cry for miracles: "Jesus, have mercy on me!" I would say: "Jesus". Nothing else. Because He is by far more than the Son of David! »

« That is exactly what I think and makes me tremble. Oh! I will hide my head... Also this morning I was afraid of seeing Him and... »

« ... and then you were the first to go in. But don't be so afraid. One would think that you do not know Him » says John encouraging him.

The room lightens brightly, as if there were a dazzling flash. The apostles cover their faces, fearing it is lightning. But they hear no noise and they raise their heads.

Jesus is in the middle of the room, near the table. He stretches

out His arms saying: « Peace be with you. »

No one replies. Some look paler, some flush, they all look at Him with fear and embarrassment. They are fascinated and at the same time they are almost anxious to run away.

Jesus takes a step forward, smiling more brightly. « But do not be so afraid! It is I. Why are you so upset? Were you not wishing to see Me? Did I not let you know that I would come? Did I not tell you on Passover evening? »

No one dare open his mouth. Peter is already weeping, and John is already smiling, while His two cousins, with shining eyes and lips that tremble without uttering a word, look like two statues representing desire.

« Why do you have in your hearts thoughts that are in such contrast between doubt and faith, love and fear? Why do you still want to be flesh and not spirit, and only with the latter see, understand, judge, act? Have your old egos not been completely burnt by the flame of sorrow, and have your new egos not risen to a new life? I am Jesus. Your Jesus, Who has risen from the dead, as He had said. Look, John, who have seen My wounds, and you all, who are not aware of My torture. Because what you know is quite different from the exact knowledge that John has. Come, be the first. You are already completely cleansed. So cleansed that you can touch Me without fear. Love, obedience, loyalty had already cleansed you. My Blood, which wetted you completely when you took Me down from the Cross, has finished cleansing you. Look. These are real hands and real wounds. Look at My feet. Can you see that the mark is that of the nail? Yes. It is really I and not a ghost. Touch Me. Ghosts do not have bodies. I have real flesh on a real skeleton. » He lays His Hand on the head of John who has dared to approach Him: « Can you feel it? It is warm and heavy. » He breathes on his face: « And this is My breath. »

« Oh! my Lord! » John whispers in a low voice, so...

« Yes. Your Lord. John, do not weep out of fear and desire. Come to Me. I am always the one who loves you. Let us sit down, as usual, at the table. Have you nothing to eat? Well, give Me it. »

Andrew and Matthew, with the gestures of sleep-walkers, from the sideboards take bread and fish, and a tray with a honeycomb, a corner of which has just been nibbled at.

Jesus offers the food and eats, and gives each of them a little of what He eats. And He looks at them. He is so kind and so majestic that they are paralysed.

James, John's brother, is the first who dares to speak: « Why do You look at us so? »

« Because I want to know you. »

« Do You not know us yet? »

« As you do not know Me. If you knew Me, you would know Who

I am and how I love you, and you would find words to tell Me your torture. You are silent, as if you were before a mighty stranger of whom you are afraid. Not long ago you were speaking... For almost four days you have been talking to yourselves saying: "I will say this to Him... saying to My Spirit: "Come back, Lord, that I may tell You this". Now I have come, and you are silent? Have I changed so much that I no longer seem Myself to you? Or have you changed so much that you no longer love Me? »

John, sitting near his Jesus, makes the usual gesture of laying his head on His chest, while he whispers: « I love You, my God », but he becomes stiff, preventing such abandon out of respect for the shining Son of God. Because Jesus seems to be shedding a light, although His Body is like ours.

But Jesus clasps him to His Heart, and then John opens the floodgates to his blissful tears. And it is the sign for everybody to do the same.

Peter, two seats behind John, falls on his knees between the table and the seat and he weeps shouting: « Forgive me, forgive me! Take me out of this hell in which I have been for so many hours. Tell me that You have seen my error for what it was. Not of the spirit, but of the flesh that overwhelmed my heart. Tell me that You have seen my repentance... It will last until my death. But... but do tell me that I must not fear You as Jesus... and I, and I... I will try to behave so well, as to make also God forgive me... and die... having only a long purgatory to suffer. »

« Come here, Simon of Jonah. »

« I am afraid. »

« Come here. Be no longer cowardly. »

« I do not deserve to come near You. »

« Come here. What did My Mother say to you? "If you do not look at Him on this veronica, you will never have the heart to look at Him again". O foolish man! Did that Face not tell you with its sorrowful look that I understood you and forgave you? And yet I gave that linen as comfort, guide, absolution and blessing... But what has Satan done to you to blind you so much? Now I say to you: if you do not look at Me now, that I have spread a veil on My glory to adapt Myself to your weakness, never again will you be able to come to your Lord without fear. And then what will happen to you? You sinned out of presumption. Do you want now to sin again out of obstinacy? Come, I tell you. »

Peter drags himself along on his knees, between the table and the seats, covering his weeping face with his hands. Jesus stops him when he is at His feet, by laying His Hand on his head. Peter, weeping more bitterly, takes that Hand and kisses it, amid hearty sobs without restraint. He can only say: « Forgive me! Forgive me! »

Jesus frees Himself from his grip and lifting the chin of the apostle

with His hand, He compels him to raise his head, and He stares at his reddened, burnt eyes, tortured by repentance, with His own clear bright Eyes. He seems to be wishing to pierce his soul. He then says: « Come on. Remove the shame of Judas from Me. Kiss Me where he kissed Me. Wash with your kiss the sign of betrayal. »

Peter raises his head, while Jesus bends even more, and he touches His cheek lightly... then he rests his head on Jesus' knees and remains thus... like an old child who has done wrong but is forgiven.

The others, who now see Jesus' kindness, become somewhat daring, and they approach Him, as best they can.

His cousins are the first to come... They would like to say so much, but they do not succeed in saying anything. Jesus caresses them and encourages them with His smile.

Matthew comes with Andrew. Matthew says: « As in Capernaum... », and Andrew: « I... I love You, I do. »

Bartholomew comes moaning: « I was not wise, but foolish. He is wise » and he points at the Zealot, at whom Jesus is already smiling.

James of Zebedee comes and he whispers to John: « You should tell Him... »; and Jesus turns round and says: « You have said it for four evenings, and I have pitied you all that time. »

Philip, the last, comes completely stooped. Jesus compels him to raise his head and says to him: « Greater courage is required to preach the Christ. »

They are all now around Jesus. They pluck up courage little by little. They find again what they had lost or had feared they had lost for good. Confidence and tranquillity come to light again and, although Jesus is so majestic as to make His apostles have a new respect for Him, they at long last find the courage to speak.

It is His cousin James who says with a sigh: « Why have You done this to us, Lord? You knew that we are nothing and that everything comes from God. Why did You not give us the strength to remain beside You? »

Jesus looks at him and smiles.

« Now everything has happened. And You do not have to suffer anything any more. But do not ask this sort of obedience of me any more. I have grown five years older every hour, and Your sufferings, which love and Satan have also increased five times more in my imagination than what they really were, have really consumed all my strength. I have left only what I need to continue to obey, holding, like one who is drowning with his hands broken, my strength with my will, like teeth set on a board, in order not to perish... Oh! do not ask Your leper that any more. »

Jesus looks at Simon Zealot and smiles.

« Lord, You know what my heart wanted. But later I no longer had my heart... as if the rascals who had captured You had torn it off me... and I was left with a hole through which all my previous

thoughts escaped. Why did You allow that, Lord? » asks Andrew.

« I... you say it was your heart? I say that I was one who no longer had his reason. Like one who is struck by a club on the nape of his neck. When, at dead of night, I found myself at Jericho... oh! God! God!... But can a man perish like that? I say that that is what possession is like. Now I realise what is that dreadful thing!... » Philip opens his eyes wide at the recollection of his suffering.

« Philip is right. I was looking back. I am old and not devoid of wisdom. And I did not know anything of what I had known till that hour. "I looked at Lazarus, so tortured but so sure of himself, and I said to myself: "But how can it be possible that he still knows how to find a reason and I can no longer find anything?" » says Bartholomew.

« I also was looking at Lazarus. And as I hardly know what You have explained to us, I was not thinking of knowledge. But I said to myself: "If at least my heart were like his!"; instead I felt nothing but grief, grief, grief. Lazarus was grieved but had peace... Why so much peace for him? »

Jesus in turn looks first at Philip, then at Bartholomew and then at James of Zebedee. He smiles and is silent.

Judas says: « I was hoping to get to see what Lazarus certainly saw. That is why I was always close to him... His face!... A mirror. Shortly before the earthquake on Friday he was like a man who is crushed to death. Then all of a sudden he became imposing in his grief. Do you remember when he said: "An accomplished duty gives peace"? We all thought that it was only a reproach for us or an approval for himself. Now I think that he said so referring to You. Lazarus was like a lighthouse in our darkness. How much You have given him, Lord! »

Jesus smiles and is silent.

« Yes. His life. And perhaps with it You have given him a different soul. Because, after all, in what is he different from us? And yet he is no longer a man. He is already something more than a man, and considering what he was in the past, he should have been even less perfect in spirit than we are. But he has made himself, and we... Lord, my love has been empty like certain ears of wheat. I have produced only chaff » says Andrew.

And Matthew: « I cannot ask for anything. Because I have already received so much with my conversion. Of course! I should have liked to have what Lazarus had. A soul given by You. Because I also think as Andrew does... »

« Also the Magdalene and Martha were like lighthouses. It must be their race. You did not see them. One was piety and silence. The other! If we were like a bundle round the Blessed Mother, it is because Mary of Magdala grouped us together with the flames of her courageous love. Yes. I said: the race. But I must say: love. They

have exceeded us in love. That is why they have been what they have been » says John.

Jesus smiles and is always silent.

« But they have received a great reward for it... »

« You appeared to them. »

« To the three of them. »

« To Mary immediately after Your Mother... »

It is clear that the apostles have a regret for these privileged apparitions.

« Mary for so many hours has known that You had risen. And we can only see You now... »

« They are no longer in doubt. With us, instead, well... only now we feel that nothing has come to an end. Why to them, Lord, if You still love us and You do not reject us? » asks Judas of Alphaeus.

« Yes. Why to the women, and in particular to Mary? You also touched her forehead, and she says that she seems to be wearing an eternal crown. And to us, Your apostles, nothing... »

Jesus no longer smiles. His Face is not upset, but He has stopped smiling. He looks gravely at Peter, who was the last to speak, recovering boldness as his fear vanishes, and He says:

« I had twelve apostles. And I loved them with all My Heart. I had chosen them and like a mother I took care to bring them up in My Life. I had no secrets for them. I told them everything, I explained everything, I forgave everything. Their humanity, their thoughtlessness, and their stubbornness... everything. And I had some disciples. Some rich and some poor disciples. I had women with a gloomy past or of a delicate constitution. But the apostles were the favourite ones.

My hour came. One betrayed Me and handed Me over to the executioners. Three slept while I was sweating blood. All of them, with the exception of two, ran away cowardly. One denied Me out of fear, although he had the example of another one, who was young and faithful. And, as if it were not enough, among the twelve I had a desperate suicide and one who doubted My forgiveness so much that only with difficulty and through maternal words he believed in God's Mercy. So that, if I had looked at My group, if I had looked at it with human eyes, I should have said: "With the exception of John, faithful out of love, and of Simon, faithful to obedience, I no longer have disciples". That is what I should have said while I was suffering in the enclosure of the Temple, in the Praetorium, along the streets, on the Cross.

I had some women... And one, the most guilty in the past, has been, as John said, the flame that has joined together the broken fibres of hearts. That woman is Mary of Magdala. You denied Me and you ran away. She defied death to be close to Me. When they insulted her, she uncovered her face, ready to receive spittle and

slaps, considering that by doing so she would resemble her crucified King more. And when people sneered at her from the depth of their hearts because of her firm faith in My Resurrection, she continued to believe. Although tortured, she took action. When she was desolate this morning she said: "I will divest myself of everything, but give me my Master". Can you still dare to ask Me: "Why to her?"

I had some poor disciples: the shepherds. I did not approach them very often, and yet how able they were to acknowledge Me with their faithfulness!

I had some shy women disciples, like all the Hebrew women. And yet they left their homes and amid a tremendous crowd of people that cursed Me, they came to give Me that assistance that My apostles had denied Me.

I had some heathen women who admired the "philosopher". Such I was for them. But the mighty Roman ladies were able to lower themselves to Hebrew customs, to say to Me, in the hour that I was forsaken by a world of ungrateful people: "We are friends of Yours. "

My face was covered with spittle and blood. Tears and perspiration dripped on My wounds. Filth and dust encrusted them. Whose hands cleansed Me? Yours? Or yours? Or yours? None of your hands. This man was near My Mother. This one was gathering together the scattered sheep. You. And if My sheep were scattered, how could they help Me? You were concealing your faces, because you were afraid of the scorn of the world, while your Master was covered with the contempt of all the world. And He was innocent.

I was thirsty. Yes. You had better know also that. I was dying of thirst. I had nothing but a temperature and pain. My Blood had already been shed in Gethsemane, drawn by the grief of being betrayed, forsaken, denied, beaten, overwhelmed by the infinite sins and by God's severity. And it had been shed in the Praetorium... Who thought of giving Me a drop of water for My parched throat? A hand of Israel? No. The pity of a heathen. The same hand that, by an eternal decree, opened My chest to show that My Heart already had a mortal wound, the one made by lack of love, by cowardice and by the betrayal. A heathen. I remind you: "I was thirsty and you gave Me drink". There was not even one person in the whole of Israel who gave Me comfort, either out of lack of possibility to do so, as in the case of My Mother and the faithful women, or because of bad will. And for the Unknown One a heathen found the pity that My people had denied Me. In Heaven he will find the sip he gave Me.

I solemnly tell you that, while I refused all comforts, because when one is a Victim one must not mitigate one's destiny, I did not want to reject the heathen, in whose offer I tasted the sweetness of all the love that will come to Me from the Gentiles, as compensation

for the bitterness Israel gave Me. It did not quench My thirst, but it relieved My dejection. That is why I took that ignored sip. To draw to Me him who was already inclined towards Good. May he be blessed by the Father for his pity!

Are you no longer speaking? Why do you not continue to ask Me why I acted so. Do you not dare ask? I will tell you. I will tell you everything of the whys of this hour.

Who are you? My continuators. Yes, you are, notwithstanding your bewilderment. What are you to do? To convert the world to Christ. Convert it! It is the most delicate and difficult matter, My friends. Indignation, disgust, pride, excessive zeal, are all harmful to success. But, as nothing and nobody would induce you to be kind, complying, charitable with those who are in darkness, it has been necessary - do you understand? - it has been necessary for you, once for all, to crush your pride of Hebrews, of males, of apostles, to make room only for the true wisdom of your ministry: for meekness, patience, compassion, love without ostentation and disgust.

You can see that everybody, among those whom you looked at with scorn or with proud indulgence, has exceeded you in believing and in acting. Everybody. The woman who had sinned in the past. Lazarus, imbued with profane culture, the first who in My Name has forgiven and guided. And the heathen ladies. And Chuza's delicate wife. Delicate? She really surpasses all of you! The first martyr of My faith. And the soldiers of Rome. And the shepherds. And the Herodian Manaen. And even Gamaliel, the rabbi. Do not start, John. Do you think that My Spirit was in darkness? All of you. And I say this so that in future, remembering your error, you may not close your hearts to those who come to the Cross.

I tell you. And I know that, although I tell you, you will not do it until the Strength of the Lord bends you like twigs to My Will, which is to have Christians all over the Earth. I defeated Death. But it is not so hard as old Hebraism. But I will bend you.

You, Peter, instead of weeping dejectedly, since you are to be the Stone of My Church, have these bitter truths engraved in your heart. Myrrh is used to preserve from corruption. So, become imbued with myrrh. And when you want to close your heart and the Church to someone of a different faith, remember that it was not Israel, it was not Israel, it was not Israel, but it was Rome that defended Me and took pity on Me. Remember that not you, but a woman, a sinner, remained at the foot of the Cross and deserved to be the first to see Me. And in order not to be worthy of reproach, be the imitator of your God. Open your heart and the Church saying: "I, poor Peter, cannot despise anybody, because if I do, I shall be despised by God, and my error will become alive once again in His eyes". Woe to you, if I had not broken you so! You would not have become a shepherd, but a wolf. »

Jesus stands up. He looks most imposing.

« My children. I will speak to you again, while I remain among you. But, in the meantime, I absolve you and forgive you. May the peace of forgiveness come to you, after the trial, that, although humiliating and cruel, has been beneficial and necessary. And with this peace in your hearts, become once again My faithful strong friends. The Father sent Me into the world. I send you into the world to continue My evangelization. All kinds of miseries will come to you asking for relief. Be kind, thinking of your misery when you remained without your Jesus. Be enlightened. It is not possible to see in darkness. Be pure to give purity. Be love, to love. Then He will come, Who is Light, Purification and Love. But in the meantime, to prepare you for your ministry, I communicate the Holy Spirit to you. For those whose sins you forgive, they will be forgiven. For those whose sins you retain, they will be retained. May your experience make you just in judging. May the Holy Spirit make you saints, so that you may sanctify. May your sincere wish to overcome your faults make you heroes for the life expecting you. What is still to be said, I will tell you when your absent companion has come. Pray for him. Remain with My peace and without being upset by doubts about My love. »

And Jesus disappears as He had come in, leaving an empty place between John and Peter. He disappears in a flash that is so bright that it makes the apostles close their eyes. And when their dazzled eyes are opened again, they find that only Jesus' peace is left, a flame that burns and cures and consumes the bitterness of the past in one only desire: to serve.

624. The Incredulity of Thomas. Jesus' Warning to the "Thomases" of Today.

7th April 1945.

The ten apostles are in the court-yard of the house of the Supper room. They are talking to one another and then they pray. Later they resume speaking.

Simon Zealot says: « I am really distressed at Thomas' disappearance. I do not know where to look for him any more. »

« Neither do I » says John.

« He is not with his relatives. And no one has seen him. Has he perhaps been arrested? »

« If that were the case, the Master would not have said: "I will tell you the rest when your absent companion is here". »

« That is true. But I want to go to Bethany again. Perhaps he is wandering about those mountains and does not dare show himself. »

« Go, Simon. You gathered us all together... and by gathering us you saved us, because you took us to Lazarus. Did you hear what

words the Master spoke of him? He said: "The first who in My Name has forgiven and guided". Why does He not put him in the place of the Iscariot? » asks Matthew.

« Probably because He does not want to give His perfect friend the place of the betrayer » replies Philip.

« A short while ago, I heard, when I was going round the markets and I spoke to the fishmongers, that... I can trust them, of course, that those of the Temple do not know what to do with Judas' body. I do not know who it was... but at dawn this morning the guards of the Temple found his putrid body inside the sacred enclosure, with the rope still round his neck. I think it must have been some heathens who pulled him down and threw him in there, who knows how » says Peter.

« Instead, yesterday evening at the fountain I was told, I heard them say that since yesterday evening they threw the bowels of the traitor even at Annas' house. Heathens, certainly. Because no Hebrew would touch that body after more than five days. I wonder how rotten it must have been! » says James of Alphaeus.

« Oh! it was horrible since the Sabbath! » says John turning pale at the recollection.

« But how did he end up in that place? Did it belong to him? »

« And who was ever told anything precise by Judas of Kerioth? Remember how reserved and complicated he was... »

« You can say: false, Bartholomew. He was never sincere. He was with us for three years, and we, who had everything in common, before him were like people before the high wall of a fortress. »

« Of a fortress? Oh! Simon! Of a labyrinth! » exclaims Judas of Alphaeus.

« Oh! listen. Let us not speak of him! I get the impression that we are evoking him and that he is to come to give us trouble. I should like to cancel his memory from me and from all hearts, whether they are the hearts of Hebrews or of Gentiles. Of Hebrews, in order not to blush because our race gave birth to that monster. Of Gentiles, so that none of them may say to us one day: "His betrayer was one from Israel".

I am a boy. And I should not be the first one to speak before you. I am the last and you, Peter, are the first. And here is the Zealot and Bartholomew, both learned men, and there are the brothers of the Lord. But, now, I should like to put one in the twelfth place at once, someone who is holy, because, as long as I see that empty place in our group, I shall see the mouth of hell with its stench among us. And I am afraid that it may lead us astray... »

« No, John! You have been struck by the ugliness of his crime and of his hanging body... »

« No, no. The Mother also said: "I saw Satan when I saw Judas of Kerioth". Oh! let us be quick in finding a holy person to put in

that place! »

« Listen, I am not going to choose anybody. If He, Who was God, chose an Iscariot, what will poor Peter choose? »

« And yet you will have to... »

« No, my dear friend. I am not choosing anything. I will ask the Lord. Enough of the sins committed by Peter! »

« We have to ask so many things. The other evening we were like dull-witted people. But we must be taught. Because... How will we be able to understand whether a thing is really a sin? Or whether it is not? You have seen how the Lord speaks of the heathens in a different manner than we do. You have seen how He excuses more cowardice and a denial than the doubt about the possibility of His forgiveness... Oh! I am afraid of doing the wrong thing » says James of Alphaeus disconsolately.

« He has really spoken to us so much. And yet I seem to know nothing. I have been dull-witted for a week » states the other James dejectedly.

« And I. »

« And I. »

« I, too. »

They are all in the same situation and they look at each other utterly bewildered. They have recourse to the solution which is by now customary: « We shall go to Lazarus » they say. « We may find the Lord there... and Lazarus will help us. »

There is a knock at the main door. They all become silent and listen. And they utter an « oh! » of surprise when they see Elias come into the hall with Thomas. Such a strange Thomas that he seems another person.

His companions crowd round him shouting their joy: « Do you know that He has risen and has come? And He is waiting for you so that He may come back! »

« Yes. Also Elias told me. But I do not believe it. I believe what I see. And I see that it is the end for us. I see that we are all scattered. I see that there is not even a known sepulchre where we may mourn over His death. I see that the Sanhedrin wants to get rid of both their accomplice, whose burial they have decreed at the foot of the olive-tree where he hanged himself, as if he were a filthy animal, and of the followers of the Nazarene. On Friday I was stopped at the gates and they said to me: "Were you one of His followers as well? He is dead, now. Go back to beating gold". And I ran away... »

« Where? We have looked for you everywhere. »

« Where? I went towards the house of my sister at Ramah. But I did not dare to go in because... I did not want to be reproached by a woman. So I wandered about the Judaeen mountains and yesterday I ended up at Bethlehem, in His grotto. How much I wept... I

fell asleep among the ruins and Elias, who had come there... I do not know why, found me. »

« Why? Because in the hours of too great a joy or too great a sorrow, one goes where God is more felt. Many a time, in these past years, I have gone there by night, like a thief, to feel my soul being caressed by the remembrance of His cries. And then I would run away at sunrise, in order not to be stoned. But I was already comforted. Now I went there to say to that place: "I am happy" and to take what I can from it. That is what we have decided. We want to preach His Faith. And the strength to do so will be given to us by a bit of that wall, by a handful of that soil, by a splinter of those poles. We are not holy, as to dare to take the earth of Calvary... »

« You are right, Elias. We shall have to do that as well. And we will. But Thomas?... »

« Thomas slept and wept. I said to him: "Wake up and stop weeping. He has risen". He would not believe me. But I insisted so much that I convinced him. Here he is. He is now with you and I will go away. I will join my companions who are going to Galilee. Peace to you. » Elias goes away.

« Thomas: He has risen. I am telling you. He was with us. He ate some food. He spoke. He blessed us. He forgave us. He has given us the power to forgive. Oh! why did you not come before? »

Thomas does not shake off his dejection. He stubbornly shakes his head. « I do not believe. You have seen a ghost. You are all mad. The women first of all. A dead man does not rise by himself. »

« A man, no. But He is God. Do you not believe that? »

« Yes. I believe that He is God. But, just because I believe that, I think and say that, no matter how good He is, He cannot be so good to the extent of coming among those who have loved Him so little. And I say that, however humble He may be, He must have had enough of humiliating Himself in our filthy flesh. No. He may be, He certainly is triumphant in Heaven, and, perhaps, He may appear as a spirit. I say: perhaps. We do not deserve even that! But risen in flesh and bones, no. I do not believe it. »

« But we have kissed Him, we have seen Him eat, we have heard His voice, we have felt His hand, we have seen His wounds! »

« Nothing. I do not believe it. I cannot believe. I should see in order to believe. If I do not see the holes of the nails in His hands, and I do not put my finger into them, if I do not touch the wounds of His feet and if I do not put my hand where the lance opened His chest, I will not believe. I am not a child or a woman. I want evidence. I reject what my reason cannot accept. And I cannot accept your word. »

« But Thomas! Do you think that we want to deceive you? »

« No, my poor fellows. On the contrary! May you be blessed since you are so kind as to wish to guide me to that peace, that you have

succeeded in giving yourselves through this illusion of yours. But... I do not believe in His Resurrection. »

« Are you not afraid of being punished by Him? He hears and sees everything, you know? »

« I ask Him to convince me. I am gifted with reason, and I make use of it. Let Him, the Master of human reason, revise mine if it has been led astray. »

« But reason, He said so, is free. »

« All the more reason for not making it the slave of a collective suggestion. I love you and I love the Lord. I will serve Him as best I can and I will stay with you to help you to serve Him. I will preach His doctrine. But I can only believe by seeing. »

And Thomas, obstinate, listens only to himself. They speak to him of all those who have seen Him and how they have seen Him. They advise him to speak to the Mother. But he shakes his head, sitting on a stone seat, more stony himself than the seat. As obstinate as a child, he repeats: « I will believe if I see... »

The big word of unhappy people who deny what is so pleasant and holy to believe, admitting that God can do everything.

Jesus says:

« Little John, the cycle is over. After this you will put My Apparition to incredulous Thomas, as given to you on 9th August 1944. But when all the Gospel has been written, much will still have to be added to Palm Sunday, to the Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday morning in Holy Week, as I said at the beginning. The parts to be inserted, taken from what you saw last year, have already been pointed out to you by Me. If Father Migliorini so wishes, he can put the dictations of last year that I now point out to you. [...] »

And, as I foresee the remarks of too many Thomases and of the too many scribes of the present days on a sentence of this dictation, which seems to be in contrast with the sip of water offered by Longinus... - oh! how happy the deniers of the supernatural, the rationalists of perfection contrariwise, would be, if they could find a fissure in the wonderful complex of this work of divine bounty and of your sacrifice, little John, to make it all collapse, by prizing open such fissure with the pick of their lethal rationalism - to prevent them, I say and explain.

That poor sip of water - a drop in the fire of the fever and in the dryness of the emptied veins - taken out of love for a soul that was to be convinced of love to lead it to the Truth, taken with great difficulty in the severe pain that obstructed My breathing and prevented My from swallowing, so crushed I was by the cruel scourges, gave Me only a supernatural relief. For My body it was nothing, not to say that it was a torture... Rivers would have been required to quench My thirst then... And I could not drink because

of the anguish of the praecordial pain. And you are aware of that pain... Rivers would have been required later... and they were not given to Me. Neither could I have accepted them because of the stronger and stronger suffocation. But how much relief they would have given to My Heart, had they been offered! It was of love that I was dying. Of love not given. Pity is love. And in Israel there was no pity.

When you, good people, contemplate, or you, sceptical philosophers, analyse that "sip", give it the right name: "pity", not drink. So it can be said, without incurring falsehood, that "from the Supper onwards I had no comfort". Of all the people who surrounded Me there was not one who gave Me any comfort, as I did not want to take the spiced wine. I had vinegar and mockery. I had betrayal and blows. That is what I had. Nothing else.

You asked: "Why did I not see this deed of Longinus last year?" Because you were terrorised by the vision, suffered by you, of My tortures. Because you were not yet capable of describing and seeing. I shortened the times to give you consolation for your impending passion. But you can see that I had to take you again with Me to go back through all My Torture with greater perfection and peace. Is it perfect? Oh! no. A creature, although held in My arms and melted with Me, is still a creature, and will always have the reactions and capabilities of a creature. Being a creature, it will never be able to understand and describe the feelings and sufferings of the Man-God with absolute veracity and perfection.

And, in any case, they would not be understood by most people. Even these are not understood. And, instead of kneeling down and blessing God, Who has granted you this knowledge, the only thing to be done, the majority will take books, new ones and old ones, will check, measure, look against the light, hoping, hoping, hoping. What? To find discrepancies with other similar works, and thus demolish, demolish, demolish. In the name of (human) science, of (human) reason, of (human) criticism, of the three times human pride. How much of holy works is demolished by man, to build with the ruins edifices that are not holy. You have removed the pure gold, poor men. The simple and precious gold of Wisdom. You have put stucco and plaster, badly painted with gilt dust, that the impact of life, of people, of human storms washes away at once, leaving a pitting of leprosy that soon crumbles, reducing your knowledge to nothing.

Oh! poor Thomases, who believe only what you understand and what you feel in yourselves! But bless God and try to ascend, because I will give you a hand! Ascend in faith and in love. I wanted the mortification of the apostles, so that they may become capable of being the "fathers of souls". I beg you, and I speak in particular to you, My priests. Accept the humiliation of being placed after a

layman, in order to become "fathers of souls". This work is for everybody. But this Gospel is dedicated to you in particular, as in it the Master takes His priests by the hand and leads them through the rows of the pupils, so that they, the priests, may become teachers capable of guiding the pupils, and in it the Doctor takes you among the sick people - every man has his spiritual disease - and He shows you the symptoms and the treatment!

So, take heart. Come and look. Come and eat. Come and drink. And do not refuse. And do not hate little John. The good among you will receive a holy joy from this work. The honest scholars a light. The absent-minded, who are not wicked, a pleasure. The wicked a means to give vent to their evil science. But little John has had only sorrow and fatigue, so that, now, at the end of the work, he is like a person languishing with a disease.

So, what shall I say to his friends and Mine: to Mary of Magdala and John, to Martha and Lazarus and Simon, to the angels who have watched over him in his work? I will say: "Little John, our friend, is languishing. Let us go and take the water of the eternal rivers to him and say: "Come, little John. Look at the Sun and rise. Because many would like to see what you see. But only the favourites are granted to know, in advance, the eternal Lord and His days in the world. Come. The Saviour, with His friends, is coming to your abode, while waiting for you to go, with Him and Them, to His Abode".

Go in peace. I am with you. »

7th April 1945, Five o'clock p.m.

625. Jesus Appears to the Apostles with Thomas. Speech on Priesthood.

[9th August 1944]

The apostles are gathered in the Supper room, around the table where the Passover supper was consumed. But out of respect, the central seat, that of Jesus, has been left empty.

Also the apostles, now that there is no longer One Who groups and distributes them according to His will or by choice of love, have placed themselves differently. Peter is still in his place. But Judas Thaddeus is now in John's place. Then comes Bartholomew, the oldest of the apostles, then James, John's brother, almost at the corner of the table on the right hand side, with respect to me who am looking on. John is sitting near James, but on the narrow side of the table. After Peter, instead, comes Matthew, and after him Thomas, then Philip, then Andrew, then James, Judas Thaddeus' brother, and Simon Zealot on the other sides. The long side in front of Peter is empty, as the apostles are sitting closer than they were at Passover.

The windows are closed and the doors are locked. The lamp, of which only two flames are lit, sheds a feeble light only on the table. The rest of the large room is in a dim light.

As there is a sideboard behind him, John is entrusted with the task of serving his companions with what they wish of their frugal meal, consisting of fish, which is on the table, bread, honey and fresh cheese. As he turns again towards the table, to give his elder brother the cheese he asked for, John sees the Lord.

Jesus has appeared in a very strange manner. The central part of the wall behind the apostles sitting at the table - a wall all of one piece except for the little door in the corner - brightens up at about one metre from the floor, with a feeble phosphoric light, like that shed by certain little pictures, which are luminous only in the dark at night. The light, about two metres high, is oval, like a niche. From the brilliancy, as if He were advancing from behind veils of luminous mist, Jesus emerges with increasing neatness.

I do not know whether I have made myself understood. His Body seems to flow through the thickness of the wall, which does not open. It remains compact, but the Body passes just the same. Light seems to be the first emanation of His Body, the announcement of His approach. The Body at first consists of soft lines of light, as in Heaven I see the Father and the holy angels: immaterial. Then it becomes more and more material, taking the aspect of a real body in everything, that of His Divine glorified Body.

It has taken me a long time to describe this, but it happened in a few seconds.

Jesus is dressed in white, as when He rose and appeared to His Mother. He is most handsome, loving and smiling. He is standing with His arms along the sides of His Body, a little detached from it, but with His Hands towards the floor and the palms towards the apostles. The two wounds of His Hands are like two diamond stars, from which two very bright beams issue. I do not see His Feet, covered by His tunic, or His Chest. But from the fabric of His garment, which is not an earthly one, light emanates where the divine Wounds are concealed. At -the beginning Jesus seems to be nothing but a Body of lunar whiteness, later, when it materialises appearing outside the halo of light, His hair, eyes, skin have their natural colours. In short, it is Jesus, Jesus-Man-God, but looking more solemn now that He has risen.

John sees Him when He is already like that. Nobody else had become aware of the apparition. John jumps to his feet, dropping the plate of the little round whole cheeses on the table and, laying his hands on the edge of the table, he bends a little towards it sideways, as if he were attracted by a magnet, and in a low subdued voice he utters an intensely expressive « Oh! ».

The others, who had raised their heads from their plates at the

noisy fall of the plate of the cheese and at John's start and had looked at him with astonishment, when they see his ecstatic posture, look in the same direction as he is looking. They turn their heads or they turn round, according to their position with respect to the Master, and they see Jesus. They all stand up, deeply moved and happy, and they rush towards Him, as He, smiling more brightly advances towards them, walking now on the floor like all mortals.

Jesus, Who previously looked fixedly only at John, and I think that the latter turned round because he felt attracted by that glance that caressed him, looks at them all and says: « Peace to you. »

They are all now around Him, some on their knees at His feet, and among these there is Peter with John - and John even kisses the hem of His tunic and presses it to his face as if he wished to be caressed by it - some farther back, standing, but stooping in a respectful attitude.

Peter, to arrive quicker, jumps over the seat without waiting for Matthew to come out first and make room for him. It must be borne in mind that the couch-seat served for two persons at a time.

The only one who has remained a little farther away, somewhat embarrassed, is Thomas. He is on his knees near the table. But he dare not come forward, on the contrary, he seems to be trying to hide behind the corner of the table.

Jesus, while stretching out His Hands to be kissed - the apostles seek them with holy loving eagerness - looks around at the lowered heads, as if He were looking for the eleventh. He has actually seen him from the very beginning and He is behaving so only to give Thomas time to pluck up courage and come forward. When He sees that the incredulous apostle dare not do so, ashamed as he is of his lack of faith, He calls him: « Thomas. Come here. »

Thomas raises his head, embarrassed, almost in tears, but he dare not go. He lowers his head again.

Jesus takes a few steps towards him and repeats: « Come here, Thomas. » Jesus' voice is more authoritative than the first time.

Thomas stands up reluctantly, abashed, and goes towards Jesus.

« Here is the man who does not believe unless he sees! » exclaims Jesus. But in His voice there is the smile of forgiveness.

Thomas feels that, he dares to look at Jesus and sees that He is really smiling, so he musters up courage and walks faster.

« Come here, quite close to Me. Look. Put your finger, if it is not sufficient for you to look, into the wounds of your Master. »

Jesus has stretched His Hands out, then He has opened His tunic on His chest, uncovering the gash on His Side. No light emanates now from the Wounds. It no longer emanates since He began to walk like a mortal Man, when He came out of the halo of lunar light, and the Wounds now appear in their bloody reality: two irregular holes, the left one of which extends as far as the thumb, and they pierce

a wrist and a palm at its base, and a long gash, which in the upper part is lightly curved like a circumflex accent, on His Side.

Thomas trembles, looks but does not touch. He moves his lips, but is not able to speak clearly.

« Give Me your hand, Thomas » says Jesus so kindly. And with His right hand He takes the right one of the apostle, He grasps his forefinger and takes it towards the hole of His left Hand, He thrusts it well into it, to make him feel that His palm has been pierced, and then from His Hand He takes it to His Side. Now He grasps the four fingers of Thomas, at their base, at the metacarpus, and puts those four big fingers into the gash of His Side, making them go in deeply, not limiting Himself to leaning them against its edge, and He holds them there, looking fixedly at Thomas. A severe yet kind look, while he continues to say: « ... Put your finger here, put your fingers and also your hand, if you wish so, into My Side and do not doubt, but believe. » That is what He says while doing what I have said previously.

Thomas - it would appear that the closeness of the divine Heart, which He almost touches, has communicated courage to him - succeeds at last in speaking and uttering words, and falling on his knees with his arms raised and bursting into tears of repentance, he says: « My Lord and My God! » He cannot say anything else.

Jesus forgives him. He lays His right hand on his head and replies: « Thomas, Thomas! You believe now because you have seen... But blessed are those who will believe in Me without seeing! Which reward shall I have to give them, if I have to reward you, whose faith has been assisted by the power of seeing?... »

Then Jesus lays His arm on John's shoulder, He takes Peter by the hand and approaches the table. He sits at His place. They are now sitting as they were on Passover evening. But Jesus wants Thomas to sit next to John.

« Eat, My friends » says Jesus.

But no one is hungry any more. Joy fills them. The joy of contemplation.

So Jesus gathers together the little cheeses scattered on the table, He puts them on a plate, He cuts them and hands them out, and He gives the first bit just to Thomas, laying it on a piece of bread and passing it behind John's shoulders; He pours wine from the amphorae into a chalice and hands it to His friends: this time Peter is the first to be served. Then He has some honeycombs given to Him, He breaks them and gives the first bit to John, with a smile which is sweeter than the golden trickling honey. And to encourage them He eats some of it Himself. He tastes nothing but the honey.

John with his usual gesture rests his head on Jesus' shoulder, and Jesus draws him to His Heart and speaks holding him so.

« You must not get upset, My friends, when I appear to you. I am

always your Master, Who has shared with you food and sleep and Who has chosen you because He loves you. I love you also now. » Jesus lays much stress upon these last words.

« You » He continues « have been with Me in the trials... You will be with Me also in the glory. Do not lower your heads. On Sunday evening, when I came to you for the first time after My Resurrection, I infused the Holy Spirit into you... may the Spirit come also to you who were not present... Do you not know that the infusion of the Spirit is like a baptism of fire, because the Spirit is Love, and love cancels sins? Therefore your sin of desertion, while I was dying, is forgiven. »

In saying so Jesus kisses the head of John who did not desert, and John weeps for joy.

« I have given you the power to remit sins. But one cannot give what one does not possess. So you must be certain that I possess this power in a perfect manner and I make use of it for you, who must be pure in the highest degree to purify those who will come to you, soiled with sin. How could one judge and purify, if one deserved to be condemned and were personally impure? How could a man judge another man if he had planks in his own eyes and infernal weights in his heart? How could he say: "I absolve you in the name of God" if, because of his own sins, he did not have God with him?

My friends, consider your dignity of priests.

Before, I was among men to judge and to forgive. Now I am going to the Father. I am going back to My Kingdom. The faculty to judge is not taken off Me. On the contrary, it is entirely in My hands, because the Father has entrusted it to Me. But it is a terrible judgement because it will take place when it is no longer possible for man to obtain forgiveness through years of expiation on the Earth. Each human being will come to Me with his spirit when, through material death, he leaves his body as useless mortal remains. And I will judge him for the first time. Then Mankind will come again clothed with its flesh, resumed by divine order, to be separated into two parts. The lambs with the Shepherd, the wild billy-goats with their Torturer. But how many men would there be, who would be with their Shepherd, if after the Baptismal bath they did not have who can forgive them in My name?

That is why I create priests. To save those who had been saved by My Blood. My Blood saves. But men continue to fall into death. To fall again into Death. It is necessary for them to be continuously washed in It, seventy and seventy times seven, by those who have the authority to do so, so that they may not be a prey to Death. You and your successors will do that. That is why I absolve you of all your sins. Because you need to see, and sin blinds one, because it deprives the spirit of the Light which is God. Because you need to

understand, and sin makes one dull, because it deprives the spirit of the Intelligence which is God. Because it is your ministry to purify, and sin sullies, because it deprives the spirit of the Purity which is God.

Great is your ministry of judging and absolving in My name!

When you consecrate the Bread and Wine for you and make them My Body and My Blood, you will do a great, supernaturally great and sublime thing. In order to accomplish it worthily you must be pure, because you will touch Him Who is the Pure One and you will nourish yourselves with the Flesh of a God. You must be pure in your hearts, minds, limbs and tongues, because with your hearts you must love the Eucharist, and no profane love is to be mixed with this celestial love, as that would be a sacrilege. Pure in your minds, because you must believe and understand this mystery of love, and the impurity of thought kills Faith and Intellect. The science of the world remains, but the Wisdom of God dies in you. You must be pure in your limbs, because the Word will descend into your bosoms, as it descended into Mary's womb by deed of the Love.

You have the living example of how a bosom, which receives the Word Incarnate, must be. The example is the Woman Who, without original sin and without personal sin, bore Me. Look how pure is the summit of the Hermon still enveloped in the veil of winter snow. From the Mount of Olives it looks like a lot of lilies stripped of their petals or like sea-foam, that rises like an offering against the other whiteness of the clouds, blown by the April wind along the blue fields of the sky. Look at a lily that now opens the mouth of its corolla to a scented smile. And yet both purities are not so bright as that of the womb that carried Me. Dust blown by the winds has fallen on the snow of the mountain and on the silk of the flower. Human eyes cannot perceive it, so light is it. But it is there, and it spoils the whiteness. Even more, look at the purest pearl taken from the sea, from the shell where it was born, to adorn the sceptre of a king. It is perfect in its compact iridescence, that is unaware of the desecrating touch of all flesh, as it was formed in the pearly hollow of the oyster, isolated in the sapphire fluid of sea depths. And yet it is not so pure as the womb that bore Me. In its centre there is a grain of sand: a very minute corpuscle, but still an earthly one. In Her Who is the Pearl of the Sea, there is no grain of sin, not even of incentive to sin. The Pearl born in the Ocean of the Trinity to bring the Second Person to the Earth, She is compact around Her fulcrum, which is not the seed of earthly concupiscence, but the spark of the eternal Love. The spark that found correspondence in Her and thus engendered the Divine Meteor, that now calls and draws to Itself the children of God: I, the Christ, the Morning Star. I give you that inviolate Purity as example.

But when, as vintagers do with vats, you dip your hands into the

sea of My Blood and from it you draw what is needed to cleanse the soiled stoles of the poor wretches who committed sin, be perfect, in addition to being pure, in order not to stain yourselves with a greater sin, even more, with several sins, by shedding or touching the Blood of a God in a sacrilegious manner, or by failing in love and justice, denying or giving it with a severity that is not of the Christ, Who was good to the wicked to attract them to His Heart, and three times good with the weak, to encourage them to be trustful. Such severity would be used three times undeservedly, because it would be used against My Will, My Doctrine and Justice. How can one be severe with lambs when one is an idol shepherd?

O My beloved friends, whom I am sending along the roads of the world to continue the work that I began and that will be pursued until the end of Time, remember these words of Mine. I am telling you them so that you may repeat them to those whom you will consecrate to the ministry, to which I have consecrated you.

I see... I look at future ages... Time and the infinite crowds of men that will exist are all in front of Me... I see... massacres and wars, false peace treaties and horrible slaughters, hatred and robbery, sensuality and pride. Now and again a green oasis: a period of return to the Cross. Like an obelisk that indicates pure water among the arid sands of the desert, My Cross will be raised with love, after the poison of evil has made men rabid, and around it, planted on the edges of healthy waters, there will thrive the palms of a period of peace and wealth in the world. Spirits, like deer and gazelles, like swallows and doves will rush to that pleasant, cool, nourishing shelter, to be cured of their sorrows and hope once again. And it will gather its branches close together like a dome as a protection from storms and dog-days and will keep away serpents and wild animals with the Sign that puts Evil to flight. And it will be so, as long as men so wish..

I see... Men and men... women, old people, children, warriors, scholars, doctors, peasants... They all come and pass by with their loads of hopes and sorrows. And I see many stagger, because their sorrow is too great, and their hope has slipped off the load first of all, as the load is too heavy, and their hope has crumbled on the ground... And I see many fall on the roadsides, because they are pushed by others who are stronger, stronger or luckier, as their weights are lighter. And I see many who, feeling that they are abandoned by those who pass by, and they are even trampled on, and feeling that they are about to die, go to the extent of hating and cursing.

Poor children! Among all these, struck by life, who pass by or fall, My Love has deliberately spread some compassionate Samaritans, good doctors, lights in the night, voices in the silence, so that the weak who fall may find assistance, and once again they may see

Light and hear the Voice that says: "Hope. You are not alone. Over you there is God. Jesus is with you". I have deliberately placed this active charity, so that My poor children may not die in their spirits, losing their paternal abode, and they may continue to believe in Me-Love, seeing My reflection in My ministers.

But, o grief that makes the Wound of My Heart bleed as it did when it was opened on Golgotha! But what do My divine eyes see? Are there perhaps no priests among the infinite crowds passing by? Is that why My Heart is bleeding? Are seminaries empty? So does My divine invitation no longer resound in hearts? Is man's heart no longer capable of hearing it? No. Throughout ages there will be seminaries and Levites in them. Priests will come out of them, because in the hour of adolescence My invitation will have sounded with a celestial voice in many hearts, and they will have followed it. But other, other, other voices will have come later with their youth and maturity, and My Voice will have been overwhelmed in those hearts. My Voice that speaks throughout ages to its ministers, that they may always be what you are now: the apostles at Christ's school. The cassock has remained. But the priest is dead. This will happen to too many in the course of ages. Useless dark shadows, they will not be a lever that lifts, a rope that pulls, a fountain that quenches people's thirst, corn that satisfies their hunger, a heart that is a pillow, a light in darkness, a voice that repeats what the Master says to him. But for poor mankind they will be a weight of scandal, a weight of death, a parasite, a putrefaction... Horror! Once again and always I shall have the greatest Judases of the future in My priests!

My friends, I am in My glory, and yet I weep. I take pity on these infinite crowds, herds without shepherds or with too few shepherds. Infinite pity! Well, I swear it on My Divinity, I will give them the bread, the water, the light, the voice that those chosen for this work do not want to give. I will repeat the miracle of the loaves and fish in future ages. With few mean little fish, and with scanty crusts of bread - humble laic souls - I will give food to many people, and they will be satisfied, and there will be some for those of the future, because "I feel sorry for this people" and I do not want it to perish.

Blessed are those who will deserve to be such. Not blessed because they are such. But because they will have deserved it with their love and sacrifice. And most blessed those priests who will remain apostles: bread, water, light, voice, rest and medicine for My poor children. They will shine in Heaven with a special light. I swear it to you, I Who am the Truth.

Let us get up, My friends, and come with Me, that I may teach you again to pray. It is prayer that nourishes the strength of the apostle, because it blends him with God. »

And here Jesus stands up and goes towards the little staircase.

But when He is at its bottom, He turns round and looks at me. Oh! Father! He looks at me! He thinks of me! He looks for His little « voice », and the joy of being with His friends does not make Him forget me! He looks at me over the heads of the disciples, and smiles at me. He raises His hand blessing me and He says: « Peace be with you ».

And the vision ends.

626. At Gethsemane with the Apostles.

11th April 1947.

The apostles put on their mantles and ask: « Where are we going Lord? »

Their language is no longer so familiar as it was before Passover. If I were allowed to say so, I should say that they speak with their souls on their knees. Rather than the posture of their bodies, which are always respectfully somewhat bent before the Risen Lord, rather than their reservedness in touching Him and their trembling joy when He touches, caresses or kisses them, or speaks to some in particular, it is their whole attitude, something that cannot be described but is so obvious, and that says that, more than their humanity, it is their spirits that cannot become again as they were in their relationship with the Master, and pervade all their human acts with their new feelings.

Previously He was « the Master ». The Master Whom their faith believed to be God. But for their senses He was always a man. Now He is « the Lord ». He is God. It is no longer necessary to make an act of faith to believe it. Evidence has abolished such need. He is God. He is the Lord to Whom the Lord has said: « Sit at My right hand, and has proclaimed it by means of His word and of the miracle of His Resurrection. He is God like the Father. And He is the God Whom they abandoned out of fear, after receiving so much from Him... »

They always look at Him with their eyes full of the reverential veneration, with which a true believer looks at the Host glowing in the monstrance, or looks at the Body of Christ raised by the priest in the daily Sacrifice. In their eyes that want to see the beloved face, which is even more handsome than in the past, there is also the expression of one who dare not see, of one who dare not linger to look... Love urges them to set their hearts on their Beloved, fear makes them close their eyes and lower their heads, as if they were dazzled by lightning.

In fact, although Jesus, the Risen Jesus, is really He, it is not He at the same time. If one looks at Him carefully, He is different. The features of His face, the colour of His eyes and of His hair, His size,

hands and feet are identical, and yet He is different. His voice and actions are the same, and yet He is different. His body is a real one, so much so that it now intercepts the light of the setting sun, as its last rays enter the room through the open window. It casts behind Him the shadow of His tall person. And yet He is different. He has not become proud or offish, and yet He is different.

A new perennial majesty has spread where there reigned so much the indefatigable Master's humble modest aspect, at times so modest as to appear disheartened. Now that the emaciation of the last days has disappeared, that the mark of the physical and moral tiredness, which made Him look older, has vanished, that His eyes are no longer sorrowful and imploring, as when He seemed to ask without speaking: « Why do you reject Me? Take Me... », the Risen Christ seems even taller and stronger, free from all encumbrances, sure, victorious, majestic, divine. Not even when He was mighty in His powerful miracles, or imposing in the most important moments of His teaching, was He as He is now that He has risen and is glorified. No light emanates from Him. No. No light emanates as in His transfiguration and in His first apparitions after His resurrection. And yet He seems bright. It is really the Body of God, with the beauty of glorified bodies. He attracts and frightens at the same time.

Perhaps it is those wounds, so clearly visible on His hands and feet, that command such deep respect. I do not know. I know that the apostles, although Jesus is so kind to them and tries to recreate the atmosphere of days gone by, are different. Whilst previously they were so insistent and talkative, now they speak very little, and if He does not reply, they do not insist. If He smiles at them or at one of them, they change colour and do not dare reply, with a smile, to His smile. If, as He is doing now, He stretches out His hand to take His white mantle - He is always dressed in a white garment which shines more than the whitest satin, since He is the Risen Lord - none of them go, as they used to do previously, contending for the joy and the honour of helping Him. They seem to be afraid to touch His garments and His body. And He has to say, as He does now: « Come, John. Help your Master. These wounds are real wounds, and wounded hands are not as agile as they were previously... »

John obeys, helping Jesus to put on His wide mantle, and he seems to be dressing a Pontiff, so careful and diligent are his movements, avoiding to touch His Hands on which are the red stigmata. But, however careful he is, he knocks against Jesus' left hand and he shouts as if he had been hurt, and he looks fixedly at the back of that hand, fearing to see it bleed again. That cruel wound is so sensitive!

Jesus lays His right hand on his head saying: « You had more courage when you received Me as I was taken off the Cross. And

then it was still dripping blood, so much so that your hair was red with it. New dew of the night on the new loving disciple. You had picked Me like a bunch from the stump... Why are you weeping? I gave you My dew of a Martyr. On My Head you shed your dew of compassion. But then you could cry... Not now. And you, Simon Peter, why are you weeping? You have not knocked against My Hand. You did not see Me dead... »

« Ah! my God! That is why I am weeping! Because of my sin. »

« I have forgiven you, Simon of Jonah. »

« But I cannot forgive myself. No. Nothing will put an end to my tears. Not even Your forgiveness. »

« But My glory will. »

« You glorious, I sinner. »

« You glorious, after being My fisherman. Peter, you will have a great, good, miraculous haul. Then I will say to you: "Come to the eternal banquet". And you will not weep any more. But you all have tears in your eyes. And you, James, My brother, are lying in that comer as if you had lost all blessings. Why? »

« Because I was hoping that... So, do You feel Your Wounds? Do You still feel them? I was hoping that all sorrow had come to an end for You, that every sign had been cancelled. Also for us. For us sinners. Those Wounds!... How grievous it is to see them! »

« Yes. Why have You not effaced them? No sign was left with Lazarus... They are a... a reproach those Wounds! They shout in a dreadful voice! They are more dazzling and frightening than the lightning on Sinai » says Bartholomew.

« They shout our cowardice. Because we ran away while You were receiving them... » says Philip.

« And the more we look at them, the more our consciences reproach us and throw cowardice, foolishness and incredulity in our faces » says Thomas.

« For the sake of our peace and that of this people of sinners, as You have died and risen to forgive the world, o Lord, cancel those charges against the world! » begs Andrew.

« They are the Health of the world. It is in them that there is Health. The world that hates, opened them, but the Love has turned them into Medicine and Light. Through them Fault was nailed. Through them all the sins of men were suspended and supported, so that the Fire of Love might consume them on the true Altar. When the Most High ordered Moses to make the ark and the altar of incense, did He not want them pierced with rings, so that they could be lifted and carried wherever the Lord wanted? I have been pierced, too. I am more than ark and altar. I am by far more than ark and altar. I have burnt the incense of My love for God and for My neighbour, and I carried the weight of all the iniquities of the world. And the world must remember that, to remember how much

it cost a God. To remember how a God loved it. To remember what is brought about by sin. To remember that in One only there is salvation: in Him Whom they pierced. If the world did not see the redness of My Wounds, it would really soon forget that a God sacrificed Himself for its sins, it would forget that I really died in the most cruel torture, it would forget which is the balm for its wounds. Here is the balm. Come and kiss it. Each kiss is an increase of purification and grace for you. I solemnly tell you that purification and grace are never sufficient, because the world consumes what is infused by Heaven and it is necessary to counterbalance the ruins of the world by means of Heaven and its treasures. I am Heaven. All Heaven is in Me, and the celestial treasures flow from the open wounds. »

He stretches out His Hands to be kissed by His Apostles. And He has to press His wounded Hands against the eager timid lips, because the fear of increasing His pain prevents those lips from pressing against those Wounds.

« This is not what causes pain, even if it gives stiffness. The pain is a different one!... »

« Which, Lord? » asks James of Alphaeus.

« That I died for too many in vain... But let us go. Or rather, go ahead. We are going to Gethsemane... What? Are you afraid? »

« Not for ourselves, Lord... The fact is that the great ones in Jerusalem hate You more than previously. »

« Be not afraid. Neither for yourselves, as God protects you, nor for Me. With regard to Me the constraints of Mankind are over. I am going to My Mother, and then I will join you. We have to cancel many horrible things of the recent past of sin and hatred. And we will do it through love, through the opposite of sin... See? Your kisses cancel and soothe the pain and consequences of the nails in the live flesh. So, what we do will cancel the horrible signs and will sanctify the places desecrated by sin. So that their sight may not grieve you too much... »

« Are we going also to the Temple? » Everybody's face shows dreadful fear.

« No. I would sanctify it through My presence. And that is not possible. It could have been possible. But it did not want it. There is no more redemption for it. It is a corpse that is decomposing quickly. Let us leave it to its dead people, so that they may bury it. Lions and vultures will really tear the sepulchre and the corpse to pieces and not even the skeleton will be left of the Great Dead One that did not want the Life. »

Jesus climbs the little staircase and goes out. The others follow Him silently. But when they set foot in the corridor that serves as an entrance-hall, Jesus is no longer there. The house is silent and seems desert. All the doors are closed.

John points at the door in front of the Supper room and says: « Mary is there. She is always there. As if She were in continuous ecstasy. Her face shines with ineffable light. It is the joy that irradiates from Her Heart. Yesterday She said to me: "Consider, John, how much happiness has spread through all the kingdoms of God". I asked Her: "Which kingdoms?" I thought that She was acquainted with some wonderful revelation on the kingdom of Her Son, Who had defeated also death. She replied to me: "In Paradise, in Purgatory, in Limbo". Forgiveness to those in Purgatory. Ascent to Heaven of all the just and of all those who had been forgiven. Paradise peopled with blissful souls. God glorified in them. Our ancestors and relatives up there, in jubilation. And happiness also to the kingdom which is the Earth, where the sign is now shining, and the fountain, that defeats Satan and cancels the Sin and sins, is opened. No longer just peace to men of good will, but also redemption and re-election to the rank of children of God. I see the crowds, oh! how many! descend to this Fountain, and plunge into it and come out renewed, beautiful, in wedding-dresses, in royal garments. The wedding of souls with Grace, the royalty of being children of the Father and brothers of Jesus". »

They have gone out into the street, while speaking, and they go away, as it grows dark.

The street is not very crowded, particularly at this time, when people gather round tables for supper. Jerusalem, after the stream of people that flooded it at Passover, and abandoned it after the festivities, which were so tragical this year, looks even more empty than usual. And Thomas notices it and makes the others notice it.

« That's what it is. The foreigners, who were terrorised, left the town precipitately after the Friday, and those who had resisted the great fear of that day, ran away at the second earthquake, the one that certainly took place when the Lord came out of the Sepulchre. And also those who were not Gentiles fled. Many, I am certain of this, did not even consume the lamb and they will have to come back for the supplementary Passover. And also the citizens of this place have fled or run away, some to take their dead relatives away, those who had died in the earthquake on Preparation Day, some out of fear of the wrath of God. It has been a very strong example » says the Zealot.

« And it was a good thing. Lightning and stones on all sinners! » imprecates Bartholomew.

« Don't say that! Don't say that! We deserve the punishments of Heaven more than anybody else. We also are sinners... Do you remember in this place?... How long ago? Ten? Ten evenings... or ten years, or ten hours? So remote and so near my sin seems to me, those hours, that evening... that I never know... I am dull-witted! We were so sure, so bellicose, so heroic! And then? And then?

Ah!... » and Peter strikes his forehead with his hand and points at the little square, where they already are: « There. And I was already afraid there! »

« Enough! Enough, Simon! He has forgiven you. And Mary, before Him. Stop it! You are torturing yourself » says John.

« Oh! I wish I were! You, John, must always support me, you know? Always! It's because you can guide people that He gave you His Mother. It is just. But I, a faint-hearted lying worm, need to be guided more than Mary does. Because I have scales on my eyes and I cannot see... »

« You will really get them if you behave like that. You will really burn your eyes, and the Lord will not be here to cure them... » says John again, embracing his shoulders to comfort him.

« It would suffice me to see well with my soul. And then... my eyes do not matter. »

« But they do matter to many people!! What will sick people do now? Yesterday you saw how desperate was that woman! » says Andrew.

« Yes... » They look at one another and then all together they admit: « And none of us felt worthy of imposing our hands on her... » Humbleness, brought about by the recollection of their behaviour, crushes them.

But Thomas says to John: « But you could have done it. You did not run away, you did not deny, you were not incredulous... »

« I have a sin as well. And it is a sin against love, like yours. Near the arch of Joshua's house, I caught Helkai by the neck and I would have strangled him, because he was abusing the Mother. And I hated and cursed Judas of Kerioth! » says John.

« Be silent! Don't mention that name. It's the name of a demon, and I am under the impression that he is not in hell yet, and that he is wandering about here, around us, to make us sin again » says Peter with real terror.

« Oh! he is in hell all right! But even if he were here, his power is over now. He had everything to be an angel, and he was the demon, and Jesus has defeated the demon » says Andrew.

« All right... But it is better not to mention his name. I am afraid. Now I know how weak I am. As far as you are concerned, John, do not feel guilty. Everybody will curse the man who betrayed the Master! »

« It is right to do so » says Thaddeus, who has always had the same opinion of the Iscariot.

« No. Mary said to me that the judgment of God is enough for him and that we must cherish only one feeling: gratitude for not being the traitors. And if She does not curse, although She is the Mother Who saw the tortures of Her Son, shall we do so? Let us forget... »

« That's foolish! » exclaims his brother James.

« And yet it is the Master's word for Judas' sins... » says John with a sigh and then becomes silent.

« What? Are there others as well? You know... Speak up! »

« I have promised to try and forget, and I am striving to do so. With regard to Helkai... I was guilty of excess... But on that day each of us had his angel and his demon beside him, and we did not always listen to the angel of light... »

The Zealot says: « Do you know that Nahum is crippled and his son was crushed by a wall or a landslip? Yes. On the day of His death. He was found later. Oh! much later, when he already was putrid. He was found by one who was coming to the market. And Nahum was with others like him, and I do not know what happened to him, whether he was struck by a rock or he had a stroke of apoplexy. I know that he looks like shattered and does not even understand. He looks like a beast, he slobbers and howls, and yesterday with his only sound hand he caught by the throat his... master who had gone to him and he shouted and shouted: "Because of you! Because of you!" If the servants had not rushed there... »

« How do you know, Simon? » they ask the Zealot.

« I saw Joseph yesterday he » replies laconically.

« I think that the Master is late in coming. And I am worried » says James of Alphaeus.

« Let us go back... » suggests Matthew.

« Or let us stop here at the little bridge » says Bartholomew.

They stop. But James of Zebedee and the other James, Andrew and Thomas, go back, and pensive, they look at the ground, they look at the houses.

Andrew, growing pale, points at the wall of a house, where a redbrown spot stands out on the white of the lime, and he says: « It is blood! Perhaps Blood of the Master? Was He already losing blood here? Oh! tell me! »

« And what do you want us to tell you, if none of us followed him? » says James of Alphaeus dejectedly.

« But my brother, and above all John, followed Him... »

« Not at once. Not at once. John told me that they followed Him from Malachi's house onwards. There was nobody here. None of us... » says James of Zebedee.

They look, as if they were hypnotised, at the large dark spot on the white wall, a little off the ground, and Thomas remarks: « Not even the rain has washed it away. Not even the hailstones, which fell so heavily these past days, have scraped it... If I knew that it is His Blood, I would scrape that wall... »

« Let us ask the people of the house. Perhaps they know... » suggests Matthew, who has joined them.

« No, you know? They might recognise us as His apostles, they might be enemies of the Christ and... » replies Thomas.

« And we are still cowards... » ends James of Alphaeus with a deep sigh.

Very slowly they have all approached that wall and they look...

A woman passes by, a late-comer who is coming back from the fountain with pitchers dripping cold water. She watches them. She lays her pitchers on the ground and questions them.

« Are you looking at that spot on the wall? Are you disciples of the Master? You seem to be so, even if you are haggard-faced and... even if I did not see you follow the Lord, when He passed by here, captured to be put to death. This makes me feel uncertain, because a disciple, who follows the Master in pleasant hours and is proud to be His disciple, and looks severely at those who are not as prompt as he is to leave everything in order to follow the Master, should follow the Master also in unpleasant hours. He should at least do that. And I have not seen you. No. I have not seen you. And if I did not see you, it means that I, a woman from Sidon, went behind Him Whom His Jewish disciples did not follow. But I received a favour from Him. You... Had He perhaps never favoured you? It seems strange to me, because He helped Gentiles and Samaritans, sinners and also highwaymen, giving them eternal life, if He could no longer give them the life of their bodies. Did He perhaps not love you? Then that means that you were worse than asps and unclean hyenas, although, I really think that He loved also vipers and jackals, not because they are such, but because they were created by His Father. That is blood. Yes. It is blood. The blood of a woman from the shores of the great sea. Once it was the land of the Philistines, and its inhabitants are still somewhat despised by the Hebrews. And yet she was able to defend the Master, until her husband killed her, throwing her there with so much strength, after beating her, that her head was split, and brains and blood squirted out on the wall of the house, where her orphans are now weeping. But she had been helped. The Master had cured her husband, who was unclean with a horrible disease. So she loved the Master. She loved till she died for Him. She preceded Him in Abraham's bosom, as you say. Also Annaleah preceded Him, and she also would have been able to die like that, if she had not died unexpectedly beforehand. And also a mother, further up, has washed the street with her blood, with the blood of her womb opened by her brutal son, to defend the Master. And an old woman died of grief, when she saw Him, Who had given eyes back to her son, pass by wounded and beaten. And an old man, a beggar died, because he stood up to defend Him, and his head was struck by the stone destined to the head of your Lord. Because you believed Him to be such, did you not? The valiant men of a king die around him. But none of you died. You were far away from those who were striking Him. Ah! no! One died. He killed himself. But not out of grief. Not to defend the Master. First he sold Him, then

he pointed Him out with a kiss, then he killed himself. He had nothing else to do. He could not grow any more in iniquity. He was perfect. Like Beelzebub. The world would have stoned him to remove him from the earth. Oh! I think that that compassionate woman, who died to prevent the Martyr from being struck, I think that old Anne, who died of grief seeing Him in that state, and the old beggar and Samuel's mother and the virgin who died and I, who am not able to go up to the Temple, because I feel sorry for the lambs and doves that are sacrificed, I think that we would have had the courage to stone him, and we would not have trembled seeing him torn by our stones... He was aware of that, and he spared the world the trouble of killing him, and he spared us the trouble of becoming executioners to avenge the Innocent... »

She looks at them with contempt. Her contempt has become more and more evident as she has spoken. Her large black eyes have the hardness of the eyes of rapacious animals, while she looks at the group that does not know how to react and cannot react... The last word is hissed through her teeth: « Bastards! », and she picks up her pitchers and goes away, and she is happy that she has spat her scorn on the disciples who abandoned their Master...

They are crushed, with their heads lowered, their arms hanging, enervated... The truth overwhelms them. They meditate on the consequences of their cowardice... They are silent... They dare not look at one another. Even John and the Zealot, the two who are free from this fault, have the same attitude as the others, probably because of their sorrow seeing their companions so mortified and because of their impossibility to cure the wound brought about by the sincere words of the woman...

The road is by now in a dim light. The moon, in her last days, rises late, so twilight deepens quickly. There is dead silence. Not a noise or a human voice. And only the bubbling of the Kidron reigns in the silence. So, when Jesus' voice resounds, it makes them start, as if it were a frightening sound, whilst it is so gentle when it says: « What are you doing here? I was waiting for you among the olive-trees... Why are you contemplating dead things when Life is awaiting you? Come with Me. » Jesus seems to be coming towards them from Gethsemane.

He stops beside them. He looks at that spot, on which are fixed the terrified eyes of the apostles and He says: « That woman is already in peace. And she has forgotten her sorrow. Inactive for her children? No. Twice as active. And she will sanctify them, because that is all she asks of God. »

He sets out and they follow Him, in silence. But Jesus turns round and says: « Why do you ask in your hearts: "And why does she not ask for the conversion of her husband? She is not holy if she hates him..." She does not hate him. She forgave him since the time he

killed her. But, being a soul that has entered the Kingdom of Light, she can see with wisdom and justice. And she sees that there is no conversion and forgiveness for her husband. So she prays for those who may benefit by her prayer. No, it is not My blood. And yet I lost so much of it also on this road!... But the steps of My enemies have spread it, mixed it with dust and filth, and the rain has dissolved and carried it away among the layers of dust. But there is so much of it, still visible... Because so much flowed out of Me that steps and water will not be able to cancel it easily. We will go together, and you will see My Blood shed for you... »

« Where? Where does He want to go? To the place where He wept? To the Praetorium? » they ask each other.

And John says: « But Claudia went away again two days after the Sabbath, and they say that she was indignant and even frightened of being near her husband... The Roman lance told me. Claudia separates her responsibility from her husband's. Because she had warned him not to persecute the Just Man, as it is better to be persecuted by men rather than by the Most High, Whose Messiah was the Master. And neither Plautina nor Lydia are here. They followed Claudia to Caesarea. And Valeria has gone to Bether with Johanna. If they had been here, we could have gone in. But now... I do not know... Longinus is not here either, as Claudia wanted him to escort her... »

« It will be where you saw the grass wet with blood... »

Jesus, Who is ahead of them, turns round and says: « At Golgotha. There is so much of My Blood there, that the dust is like hard ferrous mineral. And there is someone who has preceded you... »

« But it is an unclean place! » shouts Bartholomew.

Jesus smiles compassionately and replies: « Every place in Jerusalem is unclean after the dreadful sin; and yet you feel no other uneasiness to stay there, except that of fear of the crowds... »

Highwaymen have always died there...

« I died there. And I have sanctified it for ever. I solemnly tell you, that until the end of times, there will be no holier place than it, and from all over the Earth and in all ages crowds will come to kiss that dust. And there is already someone who has preceded you, without fearing mockery and revenge, without being afraid of being contaminated. And yet, the person who has preceded you had double reason for being afraid of that. »

« Who is it, Lord? » asks John, whose side Peter prods with his elbow to make him ask the question.

« Mary of Lazarus! As she picked the flowers trampled on by My feet as I entered her house, before Passover, a souvenir of joy that she distributed to her companions, so now she went up to Calvary, and with her hands she dug the earth, hard with My Blood, and she came down with her load and laid it on My Mother's lap. She was

not afraid. And she was known as "the Sinner" and as "the disciple". Neither She, Who in Her lap received that earth of the place of the Skull, thought She would be contaminated. My Blood has cancelled everything, and holy is the clod of earth where it fell. Tomorrow, before the sixth hour, you will go up to Golgotha. I will join you... But who wants to see My Blood, here it is. » He points at the parapet of the little bridge. « My mouth struck here, and blood came out... My mouth had uttered but holy words, and words of love. So why was it struck, and why did no one doctor it with a kiss?... »

They go into Gethsemane. But Jesus first has to open a lock, that now blocks the entrance to the Garden of Olives. A new lock. A strong fence, with sharp points, tall, closed with a strong new lock. Jesus has the key, which is so new that it shines like steel, and He opens the lock in the light of a burning branch that Philip has lit in order to see, as it is now completely dark.

« It was not here... Why?... » they whisper to one another, looking at the enclosure that isolates Gethsemane. « Lazarus certainly did not want anybody here any more. Look over there. Stones and bricks and lime. It is wood now, later it will be a wall... »

Jesus says: « Come. Do not attend to dead things, I tell you... Here. You were here... And here I was surrounded and captured, and you ran away there... If this enclosure had been there at that time... It would have prevented you from running away at once. But how could Lazarus think, since he was so anxious to follow Me, while you were anxious to run away, that you would run away? Am I making you suffer? I suffered previously. And I want to cancel that sorrow. Kiss Me, Peter... »

« No, Lord! No! The gesture of Judas, here, at the same hour, no, no, no! »

« Kiss Me. I want you to make with sincere love the insincere gesture of Judas. Afterwards you will be happy. We shall be happier. You and I. Come, Peter. Kiss Me. »

Peter does not only kiss Him. With his tears he washes the cheek of the Lord and he withdraws, covering his face and sitting on the ground to weep. One after the other, the others kiss Him in the same place. Some more, some less, they all have tears on their faces...

« And now let us go. All together. I separated you from Me that evening after fortifying you with My Body, and for a few hours. But you fell immediately. Always remember how weak you were, and that without the help of God you would not be able to remain in justice for one hour. Here. Here I told those, who considered themselves the strongest, to keep watch, they considered themselves so strong as to ask to drink at My chalice and to proclaim, even at the cost of their death, that they would not deny Me. And I left them, advising them to pray... I left them, and they fell asleep. Remember

this and teach it: he who is left by Jesus, if he does not keep in touch with Him through prayer, is overcome by drowsiness and can be captured. If I had not waked you up, you could really have been killed in your sleep and have appeared at the judgement of God heavily laden with humanity. Come here... There you are! Lower the branch, Philip. There! Who wants to see some of My Blood, should look. Here, in the greatest anguish, like one who is dying, I sweated blood. Look... So much, that the earth is hard with it and the grass is still red, because the rain was not able to melt the clots of blood that had dried up among stalks and corollas. There! And I leaned there and the angel of the Lord hovered here to comfort Me in My will to do the Will of God. Because, remember this, if you always wish to do the Will of God, where the creature cannot persist, God comes with His angel to support the exhausted hero. When you are in anguish, do not be afraid of falling into cowardice or abjuration, if you persist in wanting what God wants. God will make you giants of heroism, if you remain faithful to His will. Remember that! Remember that! I told you once that after the temptation in the desert I was assisted by angels. Now you must know that here also, after the extreme temptation, I was assisted by an angel. And the same will happen to you and to all those who will be My believers. Because I solemnly tell you that what I have had as help, you also will have. I would obtain it for you Myself, if it were not already the Father, in His loving justice, to grant it to you. Only your sorrow will always be inferior to Mine... "Sit down. The moon is rising in the east. She will shed her light on us. I do not think that you will sleep tonight, although you are still so much and only men. No. You will not sleep because an agent, that you did not have previously, has entered into you. It is remorse. A torture, that is true. But it serves to pass to higher stages, both in good and in evil. In Judas of Kerioth, as he moved away from God, it brought about desperation and damnation. In you who have never come away from the closeness to God - I can assure you, because in you there was not the will and the full consideration of what you were doing - it will cause a trustful repentance that will lead you to wisdom and justice. Remain where you are. I am withdrawing over there, within a stone's throw, awaiting dawn. »

« Oh! do not leave us, Lord! You have said what we are, when we are far from You! » implores Andrew on his knees, his hands stretched out, as if he were begging for an offer of pity.

« You have your remorse. It is a good friend in good people. »

« Do not go away, Lord! You told us that we would pray together... » beseeches Thaddeus, who no longer dare take the friendly attitude of a relative towards the Risen Master and is standing with his tall person lightly bent forwards in veneration.

« And is meditation not the most active prayer? And have I not

made you contemplate and meditate and have I not given a subject on which to meditate since I met you on the road, moving your hearts with true acts of holy feelings? This is prayer, men: to get in touch with the Eternal and with the things that help to lead the spirit far beyond the Earth, and from the meditation on the perfections of God and the miseries of man, of one's ego, rouse acts of a will, which is either loving or repairing, but always adoring, even if it is a will rising from a meditation on a fault or a punishment. Evil and good serve for the final purpose, if one knows how to make use of them. I have told you many a time. Sin is an irremediable ruin only if it is not followed by repentance and atonement. In the opposite case, the contrition of a heart makes a solid mortar to keep the foundations of holiness compact and its stones are good resolutions. Could you keep stones joined together without mortar? Without the substance, that is apparently ugly and base, but without which clean stones and polished marbles will not remain united together to form a building? »

Jesus is on the point of going away.

John, to whom his brother and the other James with Peter and Bartholomew have spoken in low voices, stands up and follows Him saying: « Jesus, my God. We were hoping to say the prayer to Your Father with You. Your prayer. We feel that we have been forgiven only a little, if You do not grant us to say it with You. We feel that we need it so much... »

« Where two are united in prayer, I am in the middle of them. So say the prayer together, and I shall be among you. »

« Ah! You no longer judge us worthy of praying with You! » shouts Peter with his face concealed in the grass, not all clean of the divine Blood, and he weeps bitterly.

James of Alphaeus exclaims: « We are unhappy, brot... Lord. » He corrects himself at once, saying: "Lord" instead of "brother".

And Jesus looks at him and says: « Why do you not say brother to Me, you, who are of My blood? A brother to all men, I am so twice, three times to you, as son of Adam, as son of David, as son of God. Complete your word. »

« Brother, my Lord, we are unhappy and foolish, as You know, and the dejection in which we are makes us more foolish. How can we say Your prayer with our souls, if we do not know its meaning? »

« How many times, as to boys under age, have I explained it to you! But more stubborn and obstinate than the most absent-minded pupil "of a pedagogue, you have not remembered My word! »

« That is true! But now our minds are fixed on our torture of not having understood You... Oh! we have understood nothing! I confess it on behalf of everybody! And we do not understand You well yet, Lord. But, I beg You, take the indulgence for our evil from the same evil that makes us dull-witted. You had breathed Your last

and the great rabbi shouted the truth on the dullness of Israel, over there, at the foot of Your Cross. And You, omnipresent God, Spirit of God freed from the prison of the Body, heard those words: "Ages and ages of spiritual blindness are upon the interior sight", and he made this request to You: "Since You are the Liberator, come into my poor thought, which is a prisoner of formulas". O my adored and adorable Jesus, Who have saved us from the original Sin, taking our sins upon Yourself and consuming them in the ardour of Your perfect love, take and consume also our intellects of obstinate Israelites, give us new mentalities, as pure as that of a new-born baby, make us lose our memories, to fill us only with Your wisdom. So many things of the past died on that horrible day. Dead like You. But now that You have risen from the dead, make a new thought come into our minds. Create new hearts and new minds for us, my Lord, and we shall understand You » begs John.

« That task is not for Me, but for Him of Whom I spoke to you at the last Supper. Every word of Mine is lost in the abyss of your thoughts, all or in part, or remains locked and closed in its spirit. Only the Paraclete, when He comes, will draw My words from your abyss and will open them to you, to make you understand the spirit of them. »

« But You have infused Him into us » says the Zealot objectingly.

« But You said that, when You had gone to the Father, He, the Spirit of Truth, would come » objects also Matthew with the Zealot.

« Tell Me: when a baby is born, has he a soul infused in him? »

« Of course he has! » they all reply.

« But has that soul the Grace of God? »

« No. There is the Sin of origin on it and it deprives it of Grace. »

« And where do the soul and Grace come from? »

« From God. »

« Why then does God not give man a soul in grace directly? »

« Because Adam was punished, and we in him. But now that You have become the Redeemer, it will be so. »

« No. It will not be so. Men will always be born impure in their souls, that God created and that Adam's inheritance has stained. But, through a rite that I will explain to you another day, the soul infused into man will be vivified by Grace, and the Spirit of the Lord will take possession of it. But you, who were baptised with water by John, will be baptised with Fire by the Power of God. And then the Spirit of God will really be in you. And it will be the Master, Whom men cannot persecute or drive away, and Who in your interior will explain the spirit of My words to you and many other instructions. I have infused it into-you, because only through My merits everything can be obtained and be valid. God can be obtained and the word of a delegate of God can obtain validity. But the Spirit of Truth is not yet in you as Master. »

« Well, let it be so. In due course it will come. But in the meantime, let us feel that You have forgiven us. Be our Master, my Lord. Again, again, because You said that we must forgive seventy times seven » insists John and he concludes - he is always the most confiding and loving one - daring to take in his own hands Jesus' left Hand, which is hanging down His side and on which the moonlight seems to enlarge the hole of the nail, saying: « Since You are the eternal Light, do not allow Your servants to remain in darkness » and he kisses His fingers lightly, on the tips, these fingers which have remained a little bent just like those of one who has been wounded and is cured, but the nerves are left slightly contracted.

« Come. Let us go farther up and we will say the prayer together » says Jesus obligingly, leaving His hand in those of John, while He already walks towards the highest limit of Gethsemane, towards the higher road which, through the Field of the Galileans, goes to Bethany.

Here also one can see that the delimitation works wanted by Lazarus are in course. Even more, here, farther away from the house of the keeper of the olive-grove, they have built a smooth high wall, that follows the hedge and the winding path that were the limit of Gethsemane.

Jerusalem, below, comes slowly out of darkness, also on the western side, because the moon is now at her zenith and illuminates everything with the white light of her thin crescent, as bright as a diamond flame laid on the dark firmament, where there are palpitating the shining corollas of an incalculable number of stars, of the unbelievable stars of the eastern skies.

Jesus stretches out His arms in His usual attitude of prayer and intones: « Our Father Who art in Heaven. » He stops and comments:

« That He is a Father is proved to you by the fact that He has forgiven you. You, obliged to be perfect more than anybody else, you, who have received so many favours, and so, as you say, unsuited for the mission, which Lord, who were not your Father, would not have punished you? I have not punished you. The Father has not punished you. Because the Son does what the Father does, because the Father does what the Son does, as we are one only Divinity united in Love. I am in the Father, and the Father is with Me. The Word is always near God, Who is without beginning. And the Word is before all things, since always, since an eternity named always, since an eternal present near God, and is God like God, being the Word of the divine Thought.

So, when I shall have gone, and in this manner you will pray our, My, your Father, whereby we are brothers, I the first-born, you, the younger brothers, be always willing to see also Me in My Father and yours. Be willing to see the Word, Who was "the Master" for you, and loved you even to accepting death and beyond death, leaving

Himself to you in food and drink, so that you may be in Me and I in you as long as the exile lasts, and then you and I in the Kingdom, for which I taught you to pray, saying: "Thy Kingdom come", after you have implored that your work may sanctify the Name of the Lord, giving Him glory on Earth and in Heaven. Yes. There would be no Kingdom for you in Heaven, the Kingdom for those who will believe like you, if first you did not want the Kingdom of God in yourselves through the real practice of the Law of God and of My word, which is the perfecting of the Law, having given, in the time of Grace, the Law of the chosen ones, that is, of those who are, beyond the civil, moral, religious constitutions of the Mosaic time, already in the spiritual Law of the time of Christ.

You see what it is to have the closeness of God, but not God in you; what it is to have the word of God, but not the real practice of that word. Man has committed every crime by having God close to him, but not in his heart; by having the knowledge of the word, but not the obedience to it. Everything! Everything because of that. Dullness and delinquency, deicide, betrayal, tortures, the death of the Innocent and of His Cain, everything has come through that. And yet, who was loved by Me like Judas? But he did not have Me-God in his heart. And he is the damned deicide, infinitely guilty as an Israelite and as a disciple, as a suicide and a deicide, in addition to his seven deadly sins and every other sin of his.

You can now have the Kingdom of God in yourselves more easily, because I have obtained it for you with My death. I have redeemed you with My sorrow. Bear that in your minds. So let no one trample on Grace, because it cost the life and the Blood of a God. So let the Kingdom of God be in you, men, through Grace; let it be on the Earth, through the Church, let it be in Heaven, for the blessed souls who, having lived with God in their hearts, united to the Body of which Christ is the Head, united to the Vine of which every Christian is a branch, deserve to rest in the Kingdom of Him for Whom all things have been made: Me, Who am speaking to you and Who have given Myself to the Will of the Father, so that everything might be accomplished. I can therefore teach you, without hypocrisy, that you must say: "Thy Will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven". How I have done the will of My Father can be told even by the clods of earth, by plants, by flowers, by the stones in Palestine, by My wounded Body and by a whole population.

Do as I did. To the very end. Even unto death on a cross, if God so wishes. Because, remember, I have done it, and there is no disciple who deserves mercy more than I do. And yet I have consumed the greatest sorrow. And yet I have obeyed with perpetual renunciations. You know. You will understand even more in future when you resemble Me drinking a draught at My chalice... Let this thought be constantly present to you: "Through His obedience to the Father,

He saved us". And if you want to be saviours, do what I have done. There will be some who will be acquainted with the cross, some with the tortures of tyrants, some with the torture of love, some with the exile from Heaven, to which they will tend until a very late age before ascending there. Well, in everything let the will of God be done. Consider that the torment of death or the torment of life, while you would like to die to come where I am, are the same in the eyes of God, if they are suffered with cheerful obedience. They are His Will. So they are holy.

" Give us this day our daily bread". Day by day, hour by hour. It is faith. It is love. It is obedience. It is humility. It is hope, this asking for the bread for one day, and accepting it as it is. Sweet today, bitter tomorrow, much, little, with spices or with ashes. Always as it is just. God, Who is a Father, gives it. So it is good.

Another time I will speak to you of the other Bread, which it would be healthy to eat every day, and to pray the Father to keep it. Because woe betide that day and those places where there should be none through the will of men! Now you can see how mighty men are in their deeds of darkness. Pray the Father that He may defend His Bread and give you it. The more darkness will try to suffocate the Light and the Life, as it did on Preparation Day, the more He may give you of it. The second Preparation Day would be without resurrection. Remember that, all of you. If the Word can no longer be killed, His doctrine could still be killed and the freedom and will of loving Him could be extinguished in too many people. But then also Life and Light would come to an end for men. And woe betide that day! Let the Temple be an example for you. Remember, I said: "It is the great Corpse".

"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us".

Since you are all sinners, be meek with sinners. Remember My words: "Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye, if first you do not take the plank out of your own eye?" That Spirit that I infused into you, that order that I gave you, grant you the authority to remit the sins of your neighbour, in the name of God. But how will you be able to do that, if God does not remit them to you? I will speak again of that. For the time being I say to you: Forgive those who offend you, in order to be forgiven and to be entitled to absolve or to condemn. He who is without sin can do so with full justice. He who does not forgive, while he is in sin and feigns to be scandalised, is a hypocrite and Hell awaits him. Because, if there is still mercy for wards, severe will be the verdict against the guardians of wards, guilty of the same or greater sins, although they had the fullness of the Spirit to assist them.

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil". That is humility, the fundamental stone of perfection. I solemnly tell you

to bless those who humiliate you, because they give you what is necessary for your celestial thrones.

No. Temptation is not a ruin, if man remains humbly near the Father and asks Him not to allow Satan, the world and the flesh to triumph over him. The crowns of the blessed souls are adorned with the gems of the temptations they overcame. Do not look for them. But do not be cowards when they come. Humble, and thus strong, shout to My Father and yours: "Deliver us from evil", and you will defeat evil. And you will really sanctify the Name of God with your deeds, as I said at the beginning, because every man, when seeing you, will say: "God exists, because they live as gods, so perfect is their behaviour", and they will come to God, multiplying the citizens of the Kingdom of God.

Kneel down, that I may bless you and My blessing may open your minds to meditate. »

They prostrate themselves on the ground and He blesses them, then He disappears, as if He were absorbed by a moonbeam.

Shortly afterwards the apostles raise their heads, surprised at not hearing any more words, and they realise that Jesus has disappeared... They prostrate themselves again with their faces on the ground, in the age-old fear of every Israelite who experiences the sensation of having been in touch with God, as He is in Heaven.

627. The Apostles Go along the Way of the Cross.

14th April 1947.

Jerusalem is already burning hot in the midday sun. A shady archivolt is a relief for one's eyes dazzled by the sun, that blazes down on the white walls of houses and makes the surface of streets exceedingly hot. And the incandescent white of the walls and the dark of the archivolts make Jerusalem a whimsical picture in black and white, a succession of bright lights and dim lights, and the contrast with the bright lights makes the latter look dark, a succession as tormenting as an obsession, because it deprives one of the faculty of sight, because the light is either too strong or too dim. People proceed with half-closed eyes, striving to walk fast in the areas of light and heat, slowing down under the archivolts, where one must go slow, because the contrast between light and darkness prevents one from seeing anything, even if one's eyes are open.

That is how the apostles proceed in a town that the midday heat makes deserted. And they perspire and wipe their faces and necks with their head-coverings and they pant...

But when they have to leave the town, they no longer have the relief of the archivolts. The road that runs along the walls and disappears towards the north and the south like a dazzling ribbon of incandescent dust, gives the impression of a furnace ground. The

heat rising from it is like that of an oven, a heat that dries one's lungs. The little torrent that flows beyond the walls has a thin trickle of water in the centre of its bed of stones, that the sun makes as white as desiccated skulls. The apostles rush towards that stream of water and drink it. They immerse their head-coverings into it, and after washing their faces, they put them on their heads still dripping. They wallow in it, in that thin trickle of water, with their bare feet. Of course, it is a very poor relief. The water is as warm as if it had been poured out of a pot hanging over a fire. And they say so: « It is warm and scanty. It tastes of mud and lye. When it is so little, it tastes of the washing done at dawn. » They begin to climb Golgotha. The scorched Golgotha, where the blazing sun has dried the sparse grass that looked like thin down on the yellowish mountain fifteen days previously. Now only stiff and very rare tufts of thorny plants, all aculei and no leaves, here and there prick up their skeleton-like stems, of a yellowish green because of the dust of the mountain, exactly like bones just taken out of the earth. Yes. They do look like bunches of desiccated bones stuck into the ground. There is one of them, which after a straight stem about two spans long, has a sudden bend that ends in five twigs after a kind of palette. It really looks like the hand of a skeleton, stretched out to catch whoever passes by and hold him in that place of nightmares.

« Do you want to take the long road or the short one? » asks John, who is the only one who has already been up that mountain.

« The shorter one! The shorter one! Let us be quick! One suffocates to death here! » they all say, except the Zealot and James of Alphaeus.

« Let us go! »

The stones of the paved street are as hot as plates taken out of a fire.

« But it is not possible to go on here! It is impossible! » they say after a few metres.

« And yet the Lord climbed up as far as that spot, where that thornbush is, and He was already wounded and was carrying the cross » remarks John, who has been weeping since he has been on Calvary.

They proceed. But they soon throw themselves on the ground, utterly exhausted and gasping for air. Their head-coverings which they had dipped into the stream, have already been dried by the sun, on the other hand their garments are wet with perspiration.

« Too steep and too hot! » says Bartholomew, puffing and blowing.

« Yes. Far too much! » confirms Matthew, who is congested.

« The sun is the same everywhere. But to go uphill, let us take that road. It is longer, but not so toilsome. Longinus also took it to make it possible for the Lord to climb it. See there, where that rather dark stone is? The Lord fell there and we thought He was dead, as we were looking from there, from the north, over there, see? where that

cavity is, before the slope rises steeply. He did not move any more. Oh! the cry of His Mother! It resounds in me here! I will never forget that cry! I will not forget any of Her moaning... Ah! there are things that make one an old man in one hour and they give the measure of the sorrow of the world... Come on, let us go! Our Martyr, the Lord, did not stop here as long as you have done! » says John urging them.

They stand up looking astonished and they follow him as far as the intersection of the paved road with the spiral path, and they go along the latter. Yes. It is not so steep. But as far as the sun is concerned! Its heat is even stronger, as the slope, which the path skirts, reverberates its heat on the wayfarers already scorched by the sun.

« But why make us come up here at this time?! Could He not have made us come up at dawn, as soon as there was enough light to see where we were putting our feet? All the more that we were outside the walls and we could have come without awaiting the gates to be opened. » They complain and grumble among themselves.

Men, still and always men, now, after the tragedy of Good Friday, which is more the tragedy of their proud and cowardly humanity, than a tragedy of the Christ, Who is always the triumphant hero even when dying; men as they were previously, when they were inebriated with the shouts of hosannas of the crowds, and they were overjoyed thinking of the feasts and sumptuous banquets in Lazarus' house... Deaf, blind, dull-minded to all the signs and warning of the impending storm.

James of Alphaeus and the Zealot are weeping silently. Also Andrew no longer complains after John's last words. John speaks also now, remembering, and his recollections are a brotherly admonition, an exhortation not to complain... He says: « This is the hour in which He came up here. And He had already walked for a long time. Oh! I could say that, since He left the Supper room, He did not have a moment's rest! And it was a very warm day! There was the sultriness of the oncoming storm... And He was burning with a high temperature. Nike says that she had the impression of touching fire when she laid the linen cloth on His face. The place where He met the women must be somewhere here... As we were on the opposite side, we did not see the meeting. But, as Nike and the other women told me... Come on. Let us go! Just consider that the Roman ladies, who are accustomed to moving about in litters, walked up this road exposed to the sun from the morning, from the third hour, when He was sentenced to death. Oh! they, the heathen women, preceded everybody, and they sent slaves to warn the others who were absent for some reason... »

They proceed... That road is a burning torture! They even stagger.

Peter says: « If He does not work a miracle, we shall fall struck by the sun. »

« Yes. My heart is burning in my throat » says Matthew in agreement.

Bartholomew no longer speaks. He seems to be inebriated. John holds him by the elbow and supports him, as he did with the Mother on the cruel Good Friday. And to comfort them he says: « Not far from here there is some shade. Where I took the Mother. We will rest there. »

They proceed, more and more slowly...

They are now at the rock where Mary was. And John tells them. There is in fact a little shade. But the air is still and hot.

« If there were at least a stalk of anise, a mint leaf, a blade of grass! My mouth is like parchment placed near a fire. But nothing! Nothing! » moans Thomas, whose veins are swollen at his neck and forehead.

« I would give the rest of my life for a drop of water » says James of Zebedee.

Judas Thaddeus bursts into tears and shouts: « My poor brother, how much You suffered! He said... He said, do you remember? that He was dying of thirst! Oh! now I understand! I had not understood the full meaning of those words! He was dying of thirst! And there was not one who gave Him a drop of water, while He was still able to drink! And He was feverish, in addition to the sun! »

« Johanna had taken Him a refreshment... » says Andrew.

« He was no longer able to drink, by that time! He could not speak any more... When He met His Mother over there, ten steps from here, all He could say was: "Mother!", and He could not even kiss Her, not even from afar, although Simon from Cyrene had relieved Him of the cross. His lips were dry, hardened by the wounds... Oh! I could see Him clearly, from behind the line of legionaries! Because I did not pass here. I would have taken His cross, if they had allowed me to pass! But they were afraid for me... because of the crowd that wanted to stone us... He could not speak... or drink... or kiss... It was almost impossible for Him to look with His painful eyes through the crusts of blood that ran down from His forehead!... His garment was torn near His knee, that one could see wounded, bleeding... His hands were swollen and wounded... He had a wound on His chin and cheek... The cross had made a wound on His shoulder, already cut by the scourging... The ropes had cut into His waist... His hair was dripping with the blood of the wounds made by the thorns... He had... »

« Be quiet! Be quiet! It is not possible to listen. Be quiet! I beg and I order you! » shouts Peter, who seems to be tortured.

« It is not possible to listen to me! You cannot listen to me! But I had to see and hear Him in His torture! And His Mother? What

about His Mother, then? »

They bend their heads, sobbing and they resume going on... They no longer complain. But now they all weep over Christ's sorrows.

They are now at the top. On the first esplanade: a slab of fire. The reflection of the heat is such that the earth seems to be trembling, because of that phenomenon caused by the sun on the burning sands of deserts.

« Come. Let us go up here. The centurion made us pass here. Me as well. He thought I was Mary's son. The women were over there. And the shepherds there. And over there the Judaeans... » John points out the various places and concludes: « But the crowd was below, below, they covered the slope down to the valley, down to the road. They were on the walls, on the terraces near the walls. As far as one could see. I saw that when the sun began to be veiled. Previously it was as it is now, and I could not see... »

In fact Jerusalem looks like a mirage trembling down at the bottom. The excess of light acts as a veil for those who want to see it. And John says: « In other hours - Mary of Lazarus said so, but I did not know when and why she had come here - one can see the black remains of the houses set on fire by lightning. The houses of the most guilty ones... of many, at least, among them... Look! Here (John counts his steps, he reconstructs the scene) Longinus was here and Mary and I here. And here was the cross of the repentant robber and over there the other one. And this is where they cast lots for His garments. And over there the Mother fell when He died... and from here I saw His Heart being pierced (John becomes as white as death) because His Cross was here » and he kneels down on the ground, worshipping with his face on the earth that had been dug along the whole length of earth covered with blood under the transverse bar of the cross and around the vertical stake of it. The Magdalene must have worked hard to dig so much earth, about a good span deep, in a soil so hard, mixed with stones and rubble, that make it a compact crust!

They have all thrown themselves on the ground to kiss the dust, which they now wet with their tears...

John is the first to stand up, and lovingly pitiless, he recalls every episode... He no longer feels the heat of the sun... Nobody feels it... He tells them how Jesus refused the wine with myrrh, how He took His clothes off and put on His Mother's veil, how He appeared so badly scourged and wounded, how He lay down on the cross and shouted at the first nail, and then He no longer shouted, so that His Mother should not suffer so much, and how they lacerated His wrist and dislocated His arm to pull it to the right point and how, when He had been completely nailed, they turned the cross over to hammer in the nails, and it lay heavy on the Martyr, Whose panting could be heard, and the cross was turned over again and raised while

they were dragging it, and it was dropped into the hole and earthed up, and how His Body fell down tearing His hands, and the crown moving tore His head, and the words He spoke to His Father in Heaven, His words asking forgiveness for those who crucified Him and forgave the repentant robber, and His words to His Mother and to John, and the arrival of Joseph and Nicodemus, so openly heroic in defying the whole world, and the courage of Mary of Magdala, and His cry full of anguish to His Father Who had abandoned Him, and His thirst, and the vinegar with gall, and His last agony, and His feeble entreaty to His Mother, and Her words, with His soul already at the point of death because of the torture, the torture... and His resignation and abandonment to God, and His last horrible convulsion and the cry that made the world tremble, and Mary's cry when She saw Him dead...

« Be quiet! Be quiet! Be quiet! » shouts Peter, and he seems to be pierced by the lance. Also the others implore him saying: « Be silent! Be silent!... »

« I have nothing further to say. The sacrifice was over. The burial... our torture, not His. There is no value in it other than the Mother's grief. Our torture! Does it perhaps deserve compassion? Let us give Him it, instead of asking compassion for ourselves. We have always avoided sorrow, fatigue and abandonment too much, leaving all that to Him, to Him alone. We have really been worthless disciples, as we loved Him for the joy of being loved, out of pride of being great in His kingdom, but we did not love Him in His sorrow... Now no longer so. Here. We must swear here, this is an altar, and it is high up, facing Heaven and Earth, that it will no longer be so. Now joy for Him, the cross for us. Let us swear it. It is the only way to give peace to our souls. Here Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, the Lord died, to be the Saviour and Redeemer. Let the man, that is, what we are, die here, and the true disciple rise. Rise! Let us swear in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ that we want to embrace His doctrine to the extent of being able to die for the redemption of the world. »

John seems a seraph. While he is gesticulating his, head-covering has fallen off, and his fair hair shines in the sun. He has climbed on some rubble thrown on one side, probably the supports of the crosses of the robbers, and he unintentionally takes the stretchedout arms attitude, that Jesus often took when teaching, and in particular the attitude He had on the cross.

The others look at him, so handsome, so fervent, so young, the youngest of them all, and so mature spiritually. Calvary has made him reach a perfect age... They look at him and shout: « We swear it! »

« Let us pray then, so that the Father may ratify our oath: "Our Father Who art in Heaven... " »

The chorus of the eleven voices becomes confident, more and more

confident as it proceeds. And Peter beats his breast while he says: « forgive us our trespasses » and they all kneel down when they say the last supplication: « deliver us from evil. »

They remain so, bent to the ground, meditating...

Jesus is among them. I have not seen when and whence He appeared. One would say from that part of the mountain that is inaccessible. He shines with love in the bright midday light and He says: « He who remains in Me will have no harm from the Evil One. I solemnly tell you that those who are united to Me in serving the Most High Creator, Whose desire is the salvation of every man, will be able to expel demons, to make reptiles and poisons harmless, to pass among wild beasts and through flames without being hurt, for all the time that God wants them to remain on the Earth to serve Him. »

« When did You come, Lord? » they say raising their heads, but remaining on their knees.

« Your oath called Me. And now, now that the feet of My apostles have trodden on these clods, go down quickly to town, to the Supper room. The women from Galilee will leave in the evening with My Mother. You and John will go with them. We will all meet in Galilee, on the Tabor » He says to the Zealot and John.

« When, Lord? »

« John will know and he will tell you. »

« Are You leaving us, Lord? Will You not bless us? We need Your blessing so much. »

« I will give you it here and in the Supper room. Prostrate yourselves! »

He blesses them, and the brightness of the sun envelops Him as in His Transfiguration, but here it conceals Him. Jesus is no longer there.

They look up. There is nothing but the sun and the parched earth... « Let us get up and go! He has gone! » they say sadly.

« His staying with us is becoming shorter and shorter! »

« But today He looked happier than yesterday evening. Don't you think so, brother? » Thaddeus asks James of Alphaeus.

« Our oath has made Him happy. May you be blessed, John, for making us take it! » says Peter, embracing John.

« I was hoping that He would speak of His Passion! Why did He make us come here and then say nothing? » asks Thomas.

« We will ask Him this evening » says Andrew.

« Yes. But let us go now. It is a long way and we want to spend some time with Mary, before She goes away » says James of Alphaeus.

« Another pleasantness that comes to an end! » says Thaddeus with a sigh.

« We are remaining orphans! What shall we do? » They turn towards John and the Zealot and, with a touch of envy

in their voices, they say: « You, at least, are going with the Mother! And you remain with Her, all the time. »

John makes a gesture, as if to say: « It is so. » But they, whose envy is not malicious but gentle, say at once: « However, it is right. Because you were here with Her and you had to forgo being here out of obedience. We... »

They begin to descend. But as soon as they set foot on the second esplanade, the lower one, they see a woman who arrives there, in the sun, from the steep road, and who looks them up and down without speaking, directing her steps resolutely to the upper esplanade.

« People are already coming here! It is not only Mary who comes. But what is she doing? She is weeping, looking at the ground. Did she perhaps lose something on that day? » they ask one another. In fact it may be so, because one cannot see who she is. The face of the woman is completely covered with her veil.

Thomas shouts in his strong deep voice: « Woman! What have you lost? »

« Nothing. I am looking for the place of the Lord's Cross. I have a brother who is dying and the good Master is no longer on the Earth... » she says weeping under her veil. « Men have driven Him away! »

« He has risen, woman. He exists for ever. »

« I know that He exists for ever. Because He is God, and God does not perish. But He is not among us any more. A world did not want Him and He has gone away. A world has denied Him, even His disciples abandoned Him as if He were a highwayman, and He has abandoned the world. And I have come looking for a little of His Blood. I have faith that it will cure my brother, more than the imposition of the hands of His disciples, because I do not believe that they can work miracles after being unfaithful. »

« The Lord was here not long ago. He has risen in soul and body and is still among us. The perfume of His blessing is still on us. Look, He rested His feet here only a short while ago » says John.

« No. I am looking for a drop of His Blood. I was not here and I do not know the place... » she says, while she is bent, searching the ground.

John says to her: « This is the place of His cross. I was here. »

« Were you? As a friend or as one of those who crucified Him? People say that only one of His favourite disciples was under His cross, and a few more disciples faithful to Him, near here. But I should not like to speak to one of His executioners. »

« I am not, woman. Look, here where the cross was, there is still earth red with His blood, although they have dug it. He lost so much blood that it penetrated deeply. Take this. And may your faith be rewarded. » John with his fingers has dug in the hole where the cross

was, and has taken out some reddish earth, that the woman places in a little linen cloth, and thanking him, she goes away quick with her treasure.

« You did the right thing in not revealing who we are. »

« Why did you not say who you are?. » say the apostles. As usual, human thoughts are contrasting.

John looks at them but does not speak. He is the first to set out down the steep paved road.

If it is easier to descend than to ascend, the sun is still very hot, and when they are down at the foot of Golgotha, they are really very thirsty. But there are some sheep in the stream and some shepherds who have certainly come out of some pen nearby to pasture them before evening. The water is muddy and it is not possible to drink it.

Their thirst is such that Bartholomew addresses a shepherd saying: « Have you a drop of water in your flask? »

The man looks at them severely and is silent.

« A little milk, then. The udders of your sheep are swollen. We will pay for it. We should have liked something cold to drink, but it is enough to have a drink. »

« I have neither water nor milk for those who abandoned their Master. I recognise you, you know? I saw you one day at Bethzur and I listened to you. You, exactly you, who are asking... But I did not see you when I met those who were carrying the killed Master down. Only that one was there. There was no water for Him, I was told by those who were on the mountain. And there is no water for you either. » He whistles to his dog, he gathers the sheep, and goes away northwards, where the ground begins to rise and is covered with olive-trees and strewn with grass.

The depressed apostles cross the bridge and go into town.

They walk close to the walls, their head-coverings lowered over their eyes, stooping a little. Because the roads are becoming busy again with pedestrians, as the great heat of the early afternoon hours is over.

But they must cross the whole town, before arriving at the house of the Supper room, and there are too many people who know the apostles and consequently it is practically impossible for them to pass through without any incident. And they are soon met with a lashing burst of laughter, while a scribe (I really thought I was not going to see any more, which made me happy) shouts to the people, who are numerous in that narrow cross road where a fountain gurgles: « There they are! Look! Here are the remains of the army of the great king! The valiant faint-hearted disciples of the seducer. Contempt and mockery on them. And the pity one has for madmen! »

It is the beginning of a turmoil of sneers. Some shout: « Where were you when He has suffering? »; some: « Are you convinced now that

He was a false prophet? »; and some: « In vain you have stolen and concealed Him. The idea is dead. The Nazarene is dead. Jehovah has struck the Galilean by lightning. And you with Him »; and some with false compassion: « Leave them alone. They have become aware of it and have repented, too late, but still in time to run away at the right moment! »; and some harangue the common people, consisting mainly of women, who seem inclined to side with the apostles, saying: « As you still doubt our justice, let the attitude of the most faithful followers of the Nazarene enlighten you. If He had been God, He would have fortified them. If they had recognised Him as the true Messiah, they would not have run away, considering that no human power could triumph over the Christ. Instead He died in the presence of the people. And in vain His corpse has been stolen, after they attacked the guards who had fallen asleep. Ask the guards whether that is the truth. He is dead, and His people have been scattered, and great in the eyes of God is he who frees the holy soil of Jerusalem from the last traces of Him. Anathema on the followers of the Nazarene! Get stones, o holy people, and let us stone them outside the walls. »

It is too much for the still shaky courage of the apostles! They have already withdrawn a little towards the walls, in order not to instigate the rising with an imprudent challenge to the accusers. But now, rather than prudence, fear is the winner. And they turn round and save themselves by running away towards the gate. James of Alphaeus and James of Zebedee, with John, Peter and the Zealot, are those who, being more calm and having more self-control, follow their companions without running. And an odd stone reaches them before they go out of the gate, and above all they are struck with a lot of dirt.

The guards, who have come out of the guard-room, ensure that they are not followed beyond the walls. But they run and run and take shelter in the apple-orchard of Joseph, where the Sepulchre was.

The place is calm and silent, and pleasant is the light under the trees that in those days have come into leaf, still thin, but so emerald green as to form a veil of a gentle hue under the strong trunks. They throw themselves on the ground, to overcome their palpitation.

At the end of the vegetable garden a man is hoeing and earthing up vegetables, helped by a young man, and he is not aware of them, who are hiding behind a hedge. After scanning the sky and saying in a loud voice: « Come, Joseph, and bring the donkey to tie it to the water-wheel », he directs his steps towards them, where there is a rustic well, hidden in a group of bushes that shade it. « What are you doing? Who are you? What do you want in the kitchen garden of Joseph of Arimathea? And you, fool, why do you leave the gate

open, that Joseph wants closed, now that he has put it there? Do you not know that he does not want anybody here, where the Lord was laid? »

I tell the truth when I say that, in the pain of assisting at Jesus, deposition, and in the amazement of His Resurrection, I had never noticed whether the kitchen garden, in addition to the enclosure of a green hedge of boxes and bushes, had a gate or not, but I think it was put there recently, because it is completely new and it is supported by two square pillars, the plaster of which does not look old. Also Joseph, like Lazarus, has enclosed the places sanctified by Jesus.

John stands up, with the Zealot and James of Alphaeus, and without any fear he says: « We are the apostles of the Lord. I am John, this is Simon, a friend of Joseph, and this is James, a brother of the Lord. The Lord had called us to Golgotha and we went. He ordered us to go to the house where His Mother is, and the crowds have chased us. We have come in here, awaiting evening... »

« But are you wounded? And you! and you! Come, that I may help you. Are you thirsty? You are panting. You... quick, draw some water. The first water is pure, afterwards the buckets make it muddy. And give them some to drink, then wash some of that fresh lettuce, and oil them with the oil we use to tie grafts. I have nothing else to give you. My house is not here. But, if you wait, I will take you with me... »

« No. No. We must go to the Lord. May God reward you. »

They have a drink and they let them dress their wounds. They all have wounds on their heads. The Jews are good shots!

« Go out on the road, and look, without drawing people's attention, whether there is any spy » the gardener orders the boy.

« There is no one, father. The road is deserted » says the boy coming back.

« Have a look towards the door and come back quickly. »

He picks some anise stalks and offers them, apologising that he has nothing but legumes and those anises, as the fruit trees have just lost their blossoms.

The boy comes back. « Nobody, father. The road on the other side of the door is deserted. »

« Let us go, then. Harness the donkey to the cart and throw the refuse of the herbs on it. We shall look like men who are coming back from the country. Come with me. You will go the long way round... But it is better than being pelted with stones. »

« We shall always have to enter the town... »

« Yes. But we will go in by a different part, along dark lanes. Come without fear. »

He locks the strong gate with a big key, he makes the older ones get on the cart, he gives hoes and rakes to the others, he puts a bundle

of trimmings on Thomas' back and a bale of hay on John's, and he goes away resolutely, along the walls southwards.

« But your house... It is desert here. »

« The house is over there, on the other side, and will not run away. My wife will wait. First I serve the servants of the Lord. », He looks at them... « Eh! We all make mistakes! I was frightened as well! And we are all hated because of His Name. Even Joseph. But what does it matter? God is with us. People!... They hate and love. They love and hate. And then! What they do today, they forget tomorrow. Of course... If there were no hyenas! But they are the ones who instigate the people. They are furious because He has risen. Oh! if He only showed Himself on the top of a pinnacle of the Temple, so that the people would be certain that He has risen. Why does He not do that? I believe. But not everybody is capable of believing. And they give large sums of money to those who tell the people that He has been stolen by you, when He was already decomposed, and that He has been buried or cremated in a grotto of Josaphat. »

They are now in the southern side of the town, in the Hinnom valley.

« There you are. There is the Zion Gate. Do you know how to get to the house from there? It is not far. »

« We know. May God be with you because of your kindness. »

« As far as I am concerned, you are always the saints of the Master. You are men and I am a man. He alone is more than Man and was able not to tremble. I can understand and pity. And I say that you, who are weak today, will be strong tomorrow. Peace to you. »

He relieves them of the herbs and of the agricultural tools and goes back, while they enter the town as fast as hares and steal away along suburban lanes towards the house of the Supper room.

But the misfortunes of that day are not yet over. A group of legionaries, on their way to a nearby inn, meets them, and one watches them and points them out to the others. And they all laugh. And when the poor ill-treated disciples are compelled to pass before them, one of the soldiers leaning against the door addresses them: « Hey! Calvary did not stone you and men have struck you? By Jove! I thought you were more courageous! And that you were not afraid of anything, since you had the courage to climb up there. Have the stones of the mountain not reproached you for being cowardly? And were you so daring as to go up there? I have always seen guilty people run away from the places that reminded them of their sin. Nemesis pursues them. Perhaps she dragged you up there to make you tremble with horror today, since you did not tremble with pity, then. »

A woman, probably the mistress of the tavern, comes to the door and laughs. She has the frightening face of a rascal and she shouts in a shrill voice: « Hebrew women, look at what your wombs

produce! Vile perjurers, who come out of their dens when the danger is over! Roman wombs conceive nothing but heroes. Come and drink to the greatness of Rome. Choice wines and beautiful girls... » and she goes away, followed by the soldiers, into her dark cave.

A Hebrew woman looks at them - there are some women in the street with amphorae, where one can hear the fountain gurgle near the house of the Supper room - and she takes pity on them. She is an elderly woman. She says to her companions: « They made a mistake... but a whole people did wrong. » She approaches the apostles and greets them: « Peace to you. We do not forget... Tell us only this. Has the Master really risen from the dead? »

« He has risen. We swear to it. »

« Then, be not afraid. He is God, and God will triumph. Peace to you, brothers. And tell the Lord to forgive this people. »

« And we ask you to pray that the people may forgive us and forget the scandal we have given. Women, I, Simon Peter, ask you to forgive me. » And Peter weeps...

« We are mothers and sisters and wives, man. And your sin is that of our sons, brothers and husbands. May the Lord have mercy on everybody. »

These pious women have accompanied them to the house and they knock at the closed door. And Jesus opens the door, filling the dark room with His glorified person, and He says: « Peace to you for your compassion. »

The women are petrified with astonishment. They remain so, until the door is closed on the apostles and on the Lord. They then come to themselves.

« Have you seen Him? It was He. Handsome! More than previously. And alive! Not a phantom! A real man. His voice! His smile! He moved His hands. Did you notice how red were His Wounds? No, I was watching His chest breathe like that of a living person. Oh! let no one come and say it is not true! Let us go! Let us go and tell everybody! Let us knock at the door to see Him again. What are you saying? He is the Son of God, He has risen. It is already a great thing that He has shown Himself to us, poor women! He is with His Mother, the women disciples and the apostles. No. Yes... »

The wise ones win. The group goes away.

In the meantime Jesus has gone into the Supper room with His apostles. He watches them and smiles. They have taken their headcoverings off, which before entering the house they were wearing like bandages, and they put them on again as is customary. So their bruises can no longer be seen. They sit down tired and silent, more grieved than tired.

« You are late » says Jesus kindly.

Silence.

« Are you not going to say anything to Me? Speak up! I am always

Jesus. Has your boldness of today already vanished? »

« Oh! Master! Lord! » shouts Peter, falling on his knees at Jesus feet. « Our boldness has not vanished. But we are destroyed as we realise the harm we have done to Your Faith. We are crushed! »

« Pride dies, humility is born. Knowledge rises, love increases. Be not afraid. You are becoming apostles, now. That is what I wanted. »

« But we shall not be able to do anything any more! The people, and they are right, deride us! We have destroyed Your work. We have destroyed Your Church! » They are all distressed. They shout and gesticulate...

Jesus is solemnly calm. Sustaining His words with a gesture, He says: « Peace! Peace! Not even Hell will destroy My Church. It will not be the unsteadiness of a stone, not fixed properly yet, that will cause the building to perish. Peace! Peace! You will work. And you will do much good, because now you humbly acknowledge what you are, because now you are wise with a great wisdom: the knowledge that every act has very wide repercussions, at times, indelible, and that who is high up - remember what I told you about the lamp that is to be placed high up so that it may be seen, and just because it is seen by everybody its flame must be pure - and that who is high up has the obligation, more than those who are not high up, to be perfect. See, My children? What passes unnoticed or excusable when it is done by a believer, does not pass unnoticed if it is done by a priest, and the judgement of the people is severe. But your future will cancel your past. I did not speak to you on Golgotha, but I let the world speak. I comfort you. Come on, do not weep. Take some refreshment now, and let Me cure you. So. » He touches their wounded heads lightly. Then He says: « But you had better go away from here. That is why I said: "Go to Mount Tabor to pray". You will be able to stay in the nearby villages and go up every morning at dawn awaiting Me. »

« Lord, the world does not believe that You have risen » says Thaddeus in a low voice.

« I will convince the world. I will help you to defeat the world. Be faithful to Me. I do not ask for anything else. And bless those who humiliate you, because they sanctify you. »

He breaks the bread, He divides it into parts, He offers it, hands it out, saying: « This is My viaticum for you who are going away. I have already prepared the food there for My pilgrims. Do the same yourselves, in future, with those among you who will be leaving. Be paternal to all the believers. Everything I do, or I make you do, do it yourselves as well. In future, make also the journey to Calvary, meditating and making people meditate on the stations of the Cross. Contemplate! Do contemplate My sorrows. Because it is through them, not through the present glory, that I have saved you. In the other room there is Lazarus with his sisters. They have come

to say goodbye to the Mother. You may go in, too, because My Mother will be leaving shortly in Lazarus' wagon. Peace be with you. » He stands up and goes out quickly.

« Lord! Lord! » shouts Andrew.

« What do you want, brother? » asks Peter.

« I wanted to ask Him so many things. I wanted to inform Him of those who ask to be cured... I don't know! When He is among us, we are not able to say anything! » and he runs away looking for the Lord.

« It is true! We are like absent-minded people! » they all agree.

« And yet He is so good to us. He called us: "children" with so much kindness that it opened my heart! » exclaims James of Alphaeus.

« But He is so much God, now! I tremble when He is near me, as if I were near the Holy of Holies » says Thaddeus.

Andrew comes back: « He is no longer here. Space, time and walls are subjected to Him. »

« He is God! He is God! » they also say, full of veneration...

628. Jesus Appears to Various People in Different Places.

16th and 17th April 1947.

I. To Annaleah's mother.

Eliza, Annaleah's mother, is weeping disconsolately in her house, closed in a little room, where there is a small bed without any bedclothes, probably Annaleah's bed. Her head is resting on her arms, which, in turn, are lying stretched out on the little bed, as if she wanted to embrace it all. Her body lies heavy on her knees in a languid posture. There is nothing vigorous about her but her tears.

A faint light comes in through the open window. The day has just dawned. But there is a bright light when Jesus enters. I say: enters, meaning that He is in the room, whilst previously He was not. And I will always say so to mean His appearing in a closed place, without repeating myself as to how He shows Himself from behind a great brightness, which recalls that of the Transfiguration, from behind a white fire - allow me the comparison - that seems to melt walls and doors to allow Jesus to enter with His real, breathing, solid, glorified Body: a fire, a brightness that closes itself in Him and conceals Him when He goes away. But afterwards, it takes the beautiful aspect of the Risen Master, but a Man, a real Man, a hundred times more beautiful than He was before His Passion. It is He, but it is He the glorious King.

« Why are you weeping, Eliza? »

I do not know how the woman does not recognise the unmistakable voice. Perhaps sorrow overwhelms her. She replies as if she

were speaking to a relative, who has probably come to her after Annaleah's death. « Did you hear those men yesterday evening? He was nothing. Magic power, but not divine. And I was resigning myself to the death of my daughter, thinking that she was loved by God, in peace... He had told me!... » she weeps more loudly.

« But many have seen Him risen. God only can raise Himself from the dead by Himself. »

« That is what I also told those people yesterday. You heard me. I fought against their words. Because their words were the death of my hope, of my peace. But they - did you hear them? - they said: "It was all a make-believe of His followers, in order not to admit that they were fools. He is dead, dead and buried, and decomposed, they have stolen and destroyed His corpse, and now they say that He has risen". That is what they said... And that is why the Most High sent the second earthquake, to make them feel His wrath for their sacrilegious lie. Oh! I have no more consolation. »

« But if you saw the risen Lord with your own eyes, and you touched Him with your own hands, would you believe?... »

« I am not worthy of that... But I should certainly believe! It would be sufficient for me to see Him. I should not dare touch His Body because, if it were so, it would be a divine body, and a woman cannot approach the Holy of Holies. »

« Raise your head, Eliza, and see Who is standing in front of you! »

The woman raises her white-haired head, her face disfigured by tears, and she sees... She drops even lower on her heels, she rubs her eyes, she opens her mouth to utter a cry that wants to come up, but is stifled in her throat by amazement.

« It is I. The Lord. Touch My Hand. Kiss it. You sacrificed your daughter to Me. You deserve it. And on this hand find again the spiritual kiss of your child. She is in Heaven. She is blessed. You will speak to the disciples about that and about this day. »

The woman is so enraptured that she dare not make the gesture, and it is Jesus Himself who presses the tips of His fingers against her lips.

« Oh! You have really risen!!! Happy! Happy I am! May You be blessed for comforting me! » She stoops to kiss His feet, and she does so, and she remains like that.

The supernatural light envelops the Christ in its brightness and the room is devoid of Him. But the mother's heart is full of unshakeable certainty.

II. To Mary of Simon at Kerioth, with Anne, the mother of Johanna, and old Ananias.

The house of Anne, the mother of Johanna. The country house where Jesus, in the company of Judas' mother, worked the miracle of curing Anne. Here also there is a room and a woman lying on

a bed. A woman who is altered beyond recognition by mortal anguish. Her face is worn out. Fever devours it, inflaming her cheekbones, so sunken are her cheeks. Her eyes, black ringed, red with fever and tears, are half closed under her swollen eyelids. Where there is no reddening caused by fever, her complexion is yellowish, greenish, as if bile were spread in her blood. Her lean arms and thin hands are relaxed on the bedclothes, which are raised by her rapid panting.

Near the sick woman, who is no one else but Judas' mother, there is Anne, Johanna's mother. She wipes perspiration and tears, she waves a fan of palm, she changes the cloths, dipped in spicy vinegar, on the forehead and throat of the sick woman, she caresses her hands and loose hair, that in a short time has become more white than black, and is spread on the pillow, and, wet as it is with perspiration, adheres to her ears, which have become transparent. Also Anne weeps, uttering words of comfort: « Don't, Mary! Don't! Enough! He... he has sinned. But you, you know how the Lord Jesus... »

« Be quiet! That Name... to me... said to me... is profaned... I am the mother... of the Cain... of God! Ah! » Her quiet weeping changes into exhausted heart-rending sobbing. She feels she is choking, she catches hold of the neck of her friend, who assists her while she vomits some bile.

« Peace! Peace, Mary! Don't! Oh! what shall I tell you to convince you that He, the Lord, loves you? I repeat it to you! I swear it on the things which are most holy to me: my Saviour and my child. He told me when you brought Him to me. He had for you words and providence of infinite love. You are innocent. He loves you. I am certain, certain that He would give Himself once again to give you peace, poor martyr mother. »

« Mother of the Cain of God! Can you hear it? That wind, out there... It says so... The voice goes all over the world... the voice of the wind, and it says: "Mary of Simon, the mother of Judas, he who betrayed the Master and handed Him over to His executioners". Can you hear it? Everything says so... The stream out there... The doves... the sheep... The whole Earth shouts that I am... No, I do not want to recover my health. I want to die!... God is just and He will not punish me in the next life. But here, no. The world does not forgive... it does not distinguish... I am becoming mad, because the world howls... : "You are Judas' mother. »

She is exhausted and collapses on the pillows. Anne recomposes her and goes out to take away the dirty linen cloths...

Mary, her eyes closed, deadly pale after the effort she made, moans: « The mother of Judas! of Judas! of Judas! » She pants, then resumes: « But what is Judas? What did I give birth to? What is Judas? What have I... »

Jesus is in the room, which is lit up by a trembling light, because daylight is still too faint to illuminate the large room, in which the bed is at the end, very far from the only window. He calls her gently: « Mary! Mary of Simon! »

The woman is almost delirious and does not attach importance to the voice. Her mind is far away, carried away by the vortex of her grief, and she repeats the ideas that haunt her brain, monotonously, like the tick-tack of a pendulum-clock: « The mother of Judas! What have I given birth to? The world shouts: "The mother of Judas"... »

Two tears well up in the corners of Jesus' very mild eyes. I am surprised at them. I did not think that Jesus could weep also after His resurrection...

He bends. The bed is so low for Him Who is so tall! He lays His hand on the feverish forehead, pushing aside the cloths damp with vinegar, and He says: « A poor wretch. That and nothing else. If the world shouts, God covers the shout of the world saying to you: "Have peace, because I love you". Look at Me, poor mother! Gather your lost spirit and put it in My hands. I am Jesus!... »

Mary of Simon opens her eyes, as if she were coming out of a nightmare and she sees the Lord, she feels His Hand on her forehead, she covers her face with her trembling hands and moans: « Do not curse me! If I had known what I was giving birth to, I would have torn my womb to prevent him from being born. »

« And you would have sinned. Mary! oh! Mary! Do not depart from your justice because of the sin of another person. The mothers who have fulfilled their duty must not consider themselves responsible for the sins of their sons. You have done your duty, Mary. Give Me your poor hands. Be calm, poor mother. »

« I am Judas' mother. I am unclean like all the things that demon touched. The mother of a demon! Do not touch me. » She struggles to avoid the divine Hands that want to hold her.

The two tears of Jesus fall on her face burning once again with fever. « I have purified you, Mary. My tears of compassion are on you. I have not shed My tears on anybody since I consumed My sorrow. But I am weeping over you with all My loving pity. » He has succeeded in getting hold of her hands and He sits, yes, He really sits down on the edge of the little bed, holding her trembling hands in His.

The loving compassion of His bright eyes caresses, envelops and cures the poor wretch, who calms down weeping silently and whispering: « Have You no grudge against me? »

« I have love. That is why I have come. Have peace. »

« You forgive! But the world! Your Mother! She will hate me. »

« She thinks of you as of a sister. The world is cruel. That is true. But My Mother is the Mother of the Love, and She is good. You cannot

go about in the world, but She will come to you when everything is at peace. Time pacifies... »

« Make me die, if You love me... »

« A little longer. Your son was not able to give Me anything. Give Me a period of time of your suffering. It will be a short one. »

« My son has given You too much... Infinite horror he has given You. »

« And you your infinite sorrow. The horror is over. It no longer serves. Your sorrow serves. It joins these wounds of Mine, and Your tears and My Blood wash the world. All sorrows join together to wash the world. Your tears are between My Blood and the tears of My Mother and around them there is all the sorrow of the saints who will suffer for the Christ and for men, for My sake and for the sake of men. Poor Mary! » He lays her down gently, He crosses her hands and watches her as she calms down...

Anne comes back in and stops dumbfounded on the threshold.

Jesus, Who is now standing, looks at her saying: « You have complied with My wish. There is peace for obedient people. Your soul has understood Me. Live in My peace. »

He lowers His eyes again on Mary of Simon, who looks at Him through a stream of tears which are now more calm, and He smiles at her again. And He says to her: « Lay your hope in the Lord. He will give you all His comfort. » He blesses her and is about to go away.

Mary of Simon utters a passionate cry: « They say that my son betrayed You with a kiss! Is it true, Lord? If it is so, allow me to wash it by kissing Your Hands. There is nothing else I can do! I cannot do anything else to cancel... to cancel... » She is struck with deeper grief.

Jesus, oh! Jesus does not give her His hands to kiss, those hands on which the wide sleeve of His snow-white tunic reaches down to half the metacarpus concealing the wounds, but He takes her head in His hands and He bends and with His divine lips He lightly touches the burning forehead of the most unhappy of all women, and standing up again He says to her: « My tears and My kiss! No one has ever had so much from Me. So be at peace, because there is nothing but love between you and Me. »

He blesses her and, after going across the room quickly, He goes out behind Anne, who did not dare to come forward, or to speak, but is weeping deeply moved.

But when they are in the corridor that leads to the main door, Anne dares to speak and to ask the question which she has at heart: « My Johanna? »

« For fifteen days she has rejoiced in Heaven. I did not mention it there, because too big is the contrast between your daughter and her son. »

« It is true! A great torture! I think she will die of it. »

« No. Not soon. »

« Now she will be more at peace. You have consoled her. You! You Who more than anybody... »

« I Who pity her more than anybody else. I am the Divine Pity. I am the Love. I tell you, woman: if Judas had only cast a glance of repentance at Me, I would have obtained God's forgiveness for him... »
How sad is Jesus' face!

The woman is struck by it. Words and silence struggle on her lips, but she is a woman, and curiosity is the winner. She asks: « Was it a... an... Yes, I mean: did that wretched man sin all of a sudden, or... »

« He had been sinning for months and no word of Mine, no act of Mine was able to stop him, so strong was his will to sin. But do not tell her that... »

« I will not!... Lord! Because now, when Ananias ran away from Jerusalem, the very night of the Preparation Day, without even completing the Passover, he came in here shouting: "Your son has betrayed the Master and has handed Him over to His enemies! He betrayed Him with a kiss. And I have seen the Master beaten, covered with spittle, scourged, crowned with thorns, laden with a cross, crucified and dead through the action of your son. And our name is shouted with obscene triumph by the enemies of the Master, and they relate the feats of your son, who, for less than the price that a lamb costs, has sold the Messiah and with the betrayal of a kiss has pointed Him out to the guards!", Mary fell on the ground, and became black all of a sudden, and the doctor says that her liver has burst and the bile has flown out and all her blood is corrupted by it. And... the world is bad. She is right... I had to bring her here, because they came near her house in Kerioth to shout: "Your son is a deicide and a suicide! He has hanged himself! And Beelzebub has taken his soul, and Satan has come to take even his body". Is that horrible wonder true? »

« No, woman. He was found dead, hanging from an olive-tree... »

« Ah! And they shouted: "Christ has risen and is God. Your son has betrayed God. You are the mother of the betrayer of God. You are the mother of Judas". At night, with Ananias and a faithful servant, the only one left to me, because no one wanted to stay near her... I brought her here. But Mary hears those cries in the noises of the earth, in everything. »

« Poor mother! It is horrible, indeed. »

« But did that demon not think of all this, Lord? »

« It was one of the reasons I had recourse to, to hold him back. But to no avail. Judas went so far as to hate God, as he had never loved his father and mother or any other neighbour with true love. »

« That is true. »

« Goodbye, woman. May My blessing comfort you to bear the

mockery of the world because of your compassion for Mary. Kiss My hand. I can show it to you. It would have done too much harm to her to see this. » He throws the sleeve back, uncovering the pierced wrist.

Anne utters a groan as with her lips she lightly touches the tips of His fingers.

The noise of a door that is opened and a stifled cry: « The Lord! », A rather old man prostrates himself and remains so.

« Ananias, the Lord is good. He has come to comfort your relative and to comfort us as well » says Anne to console also the elderly man, who is too deeply moved.

But the man dare not move. He weeps saying: « We are of horrible blood. I cannot look at the Lord. »

Jesus goes to him. He touches his head, repeating the same words as He said to Mary of Simon: « Relatives who have done their duty must not consider themselves responsible for the sin of a relative. Take heart, man! God is just. Peace to you and to this house. I have come and you will go where I send you. For the supplementary Passover the disciples will be at Bethany. You will go to them and you will tell them that on the twelfth day from His death, you saw the Lord at Kerioth, alive and true, in Body and Soul and Divinity. They will believe you, because I have already been with them quite a lot. But it will confirm them in their faith on My Divine Nature to know that I am everywhere on the same day. And before that, this very day, you will go to Kerioth to ask the leader of the synagogue to gather the people together, and in the presence of everybody you will say that I came here, and that they are to remember My words of the farewell. They will certainly say to you: "Why did He not come to us?" You will reply so: "The Lord told me to say to you that, if you had done what He told you to do to the innocent mother, He would have shown Himself. You failed in your duty of love, and that is why the Lord has not shown Himself". Will you do that? »

« That is difficult, Lord! It is difficult to do that! They consider us all as heart lepers... The leader of the synagogue will not listen to me, and he will not let me speak to the people. He may beat me... However, I will do it, because You want it. » The elderly man does not raise his head. He speaks bent in deep prostration.

« Look at Me, Ananias! »

The man looks up trembling with veneration.

Jesus is as bright and handsome as He was on Mount Tabor... The light envelops Him, concealing His features and His smile... And the corridor is left without Him, without any door being moved to let Him pass.

The two worship and worship, as they have become all adoration through the divine manifestation.

III. To the children of Juttah with their mother Sarah.

The orchard of Sarah's house. The children who are playing under the leafy trees. The youngest one who rolls on the grass near a thick row of vine-leaves, the other bigger ones who chase one another with joyful cries of swallows, playing at hide-and-seek behind hedges and vines.

Jesus appears near the little one to whom He gave His name. Oh! holy simplicity of the innocents! Jesai is not surprised seeing Him there all of a sudden, but he stretches out his little arms, so that Jesus may take him in His, and Jesus takes him: there is the greatest simplicity in the acts of both.

The others arrive running - and once again the blessed simplicity of children! - and without any astonishment they approach Him happily. Nothing seems to have changed for them. They probably do not know.

But after Jesus has caressed each of them, Mary, the oldest and most sensible one, says: « So do You no longer suffer, Lord, now that You have risen? I was so sorry!... »

« I no longer suffer. I have come to bless you before I ascend to My Father and yours, in Heaven. But also from there I will always bless you, if you are always good. You will tell those who love Me that I have left My blessing with you today. Remember this day. »

« Are You not coming to the house? Mother is there. They will not believe us » says Mary again.

But her brother does not ask. He shouts: « Mummy, mummy. The Lord is here!... » and running towards the house, he repeats that cry.

Sarah rushes, she looks out of the window... just in time to see Jesus, very handsome at the edge of the orchard, disappear in the light that absorbs Him...

« The Lord! But why did you not call me before?... » says Sarah as soon as she is able to speak. « But when? where did He come from? Was He alone? How foolish you are! »

« We found Him here. A moment before He was not here... He did not come from the road or from the kitchen garden. And He had Jesai in His arms... And He told us that He had come to bless us and to give us His blessing for those who love Him in Jutta and to remember this day. And now He is going to Heaven. But He will love us if we are good. How handsome He was! He had wounds in His hands. But they no longer hurt Him. Also His feet were wounded. I saw them among the grass. That flower there touched just the wound of one foot. I will pick it... » they all speak together, excited with emotion. They even perspire in the excitement of speaking.

Sarah caresses them whispering: « God is great! Let us go. Come. Let us go and tell everybody. You, innocents, will speak. You can speak of God. »

IV. To young Jaia, at Pella.

The young man is working with zeal around a cart. He is loading it with vegetables picked in a nearby vegetable garden. The little donkey beats the hard surface of the country road with its hoof.

When he turns round to take a basket of lettuce, he sees Jesus Who smiles at him. He drops the basket on the ground and he kneels down, rubbing his eyes, incredulous of what he sees, and he whispers: « Most High, do not lead me into illusions! Lord, do not allow me to be deceived by Satan by means of false seducing appearances. My Lord is really dead! And He was buried, and they now say that His corpse has been stolen. Have mercy, Most High Lord! Show me the truth. »

« I am the Truth, Jaia. I am the Light of the World. Look at Me. See Me. That is why I gave your sight back to you, so that you may witness My power and My Resurrection. »

« Oh! It is really the Lord! It is You! Yes! You are Jesus! » He drags himself along on his knees to kiss His feet.

« You will say that you have seen Me and have spoken to Me and that I am really alive. You will say that you have seen Me today. My peace and My blessing to you. »

Jaia remains alone. He is happy. He forgets the cart and the vegetables. In vain the restless donkey beats the road and brays, protesting because of the long wait... Jaia is enraptured.

A woman comes out of the house near the kitchen garden and sees him there, wan with emotion, his face with a far-away look. She shouts: « Jaia! What is the matter with you? What happened to you? » She rushes towards him and shakes him. She brings him back to earth...

« The Lord! I have seen the Risen Lord. I have kissed His feet and seen His wounds. They have told lies. It was really God and He has risen. I thought it was a deceit. But it is He! It is He! »

The woman trembles thrilled with emotion and whispers: « Are you quite sure? »

« You are good, woman. For His sake you have taken my mother and me as your servants. Do not refuse to believe!... »

« If you are sure, I believe. But was He really flesh? Was He warm? Did He breathe? Did He speak? Did He really have a voice, or did you think so? »

« I am certain. It was the warm flesh of a living being, it was a real voice, it was breath. As handsome as God, but Man, like me and you. Let us go, let us go and tell those who suffer or are in doubt. »

V. To John of Nob.

The old man is all alone in his house. But he is serene. He is repairing a chair as on one side the nails have come out, and he

smiles at I wonder which dream.

There is a knock at the door. The old man, without leaving his work, says: « Come in. What do you want, you who come? Still one of those? I am too old to change! Even if the whole world shouted to me: "He is dead", I say: "He is living". Even if I had to die to say so. So, come in! »

He gets up to go to the door, to see who knocks without going in. But when he is near it, the door opens and Jesus goes in.

« Oh! Oh! Oh! My Lord! Alive! I believed! And He comes to reward my faith! Blessed! I did not doubt. In my grief I said: "If He sent me the lamb for the banquet of joy, it means that He will rise this day". Then I understood everything. When You died and the Earth was shaken, I understood what I had not yet understood. And they thought that I was mad, at Nob, because at sunset on the day after the Sabbath, I prepared a banquet and I went and invited some beggars saying: "Our Friend has risen!". They were already saying that it was not true. They were saying that they had stolen You during the night. But I did not believe them, because since You died I understood that You were dying to rise again, and that that was the sign of Jonah. »

Jesus, smiling, lets him speak. Then he asks: « And do you still wish to die now, or do you want to stay to witness My glory? »

« Whatever You want, Lord! »

« No. What you want. »

The old man is pensive. He then decides: « It would be lovely to go out of this world, where You no longer are as You were previously. But I forgo the peace of Heaven to say to the incredulous: "I have seen Him!". »

Jesus lays His hand on his head blessing him and He adds: « But it will soon be also peace, and you will come to Me with the rank of confessor of the Christ.. »

And He goes away. In this case, probably out of pity for the old man, He did not appear or disappear in a wonderful way, but He did everything as if He were the Jesus of days gone by, when He used to enter or come out of a house in a normal human way.

VI. To Matthias, the old solitary man near Jabesh-Gilead.

The old man is working at his vegetables and is talking to himself: « All wealth that I have for Him. And He will never taste them again. I have worked in vain. I believe that He was the Son of God, that He died and has risen. But He is no longer the Master, Who sits at the table of the poor or of the rich and shares the food with equal love, perhaps, no certainly with more love with the poor than with the rich. Now He is the Risen Lord. He has risen to confirm us, His believers, in our faith. And they say that it is not true. That no one has ever risen by himself. No one. No. No man. But He did.

Because He is God. »

He claps his hands to drive away the pigeons that come down to steal the seed in the earth that has just been dug and sown, and he says: « It is useless now for you to procreate! He will never relish your little ones again! And you, useless bees? For whom do you produce honey? I was hoping to have Him at least once with me, now that I am not so poor. Every thing has flourished here, after He came... Ah! but with that money, that I have never touched, I want to go to Nazareth, to His Mother, and say to Her: "Make me Your servant, but let me stay here where You are, because You are still He"... » He wipes a tear with the back of his hand...

« Matthias, have you some bread for a pilgrim? » Matthias looks up, but, as he is on his knees, he cannot see who is speaking from behind the tall hedge, that surrounds his small property lost in this green solitary place beyond the Jordan. But he replies: « Whoever you may be, come, in the name of the Lord Jesus. » And he stands up to open the fence.

He finds himself facing Jesus, and he remains with his hand on the latch, unable to make a gesture.

« Do you not want Me as your guest, Matthias? You did once. And you were regretting that you could not do so again. I am here and are you not opening to Me? » says Jesus smiling...

« Oh! Lord... I... I... I am not worthy that my Lord should come in here... I... »

Jesus passes His hand over the fence and opens the lock saying: « The Lord enters wherever He wants, Matthias. »

He goes in, He proceeds along the humble kitchen garden, He goes towards the house and on the threshold He says: « So, you can sacrifice the little ones of your pigeons. Take your vegetables away from the garden and the honey from your bees. We will share the bread together, and your work will not have been useless, and your desire vain. And this place will be dear to you, and you will not have to go where there will soon be silence and abandonment. I am everywhere, Matthias. He who loves Me, is always with Me. My disciples will be in Jerusalem. My Church will arise there. Make sure you are there for the supplementary Passover. »

« Forgive me, Lord. But I could not resist in that place and I ran away. I arrived there at the ninth hour the day before Preparation Day, and the day after... Oh! I ran away as I did not want to see You die. Only for that, Lord. »

« I know. And I know that you went back, and you were one of the first, to weep over My sepulchre. But I was already out of it. I know everything. Here, I will sit here and rest. I have always rested here... And the angels know that. »

The man busies himself, but he seems to be moving in a church, so reverently he moves about. Now and again he wipes a tear, which

is about to mingle with his smile, while he comes and goes to get the little pigeons, kill them, prepare them, poke the fire, pick and wash the vegetables, and put the early figs in a plate, and lay the table with the best tableware. But when everything is ready, how can he sit down and eat? He wants to serve, which seems a great deal to him, and does not want anything else. But Jesus, Who has offered and blessed the food, offers him half of the pigeon, which He has cut, placing the meat on a piece of bread, that He has dipped into the sauce.

« Oh! as to a favourite! » says the man, and he eats, weeping for joy and emotion, without taking his eyes off Jesus, Who eats... drinks, enjoys the vegetables, the fruit, the honey, and offers His chalice to him after taking a sip of wine. Previously He had always drunk water.

The meal is over.

« I am really alive, as you can see. And you are quite happy. Remember that twelve days ago I was dying by the will of men. But nothing is the will of men when the will of God does not agree to it. And more than that, the contrary will of men becomes a servile instrument of the eternal Will. Goodbye, Matthias. As I said that he will be with Me, who gave Me a drink when I was the Pilgrim about Whom every doubt was lawful, so I say to you: you will have part in My celestial Kingdom. »

« But I am losing You now, Lord! »

« In every pilgrim see Me; in every beggar, Me; in every sick person, Me; in everyone needing bread, water and clothes, Me. I am in whoever suffers, and what is done to those who suffer, is done to Me. »

He stretches out His arms blessing and disappears.

VII. To Abraham of Engedi, who dies in His Arms.

The square of Engedi: pillared temple of rustling palm-trees. The fountain: mirror for the April sky. The pigeons: low murmur of organ. Old Abraham passes through it with his working tools on his shoulders. He looks even older, but serene like one who has found relief after a violent storm. He passes also through the rest of the town, and goes to the vineyards near the fountains. The beautiful fertile vineyards, already promising abundant crops. He goes in and begins to hoe, to prune, to tie. Now and again he stands up, he leans on the hoe, he ponders. He smoothes his patriarchal beard, he sighs, he shakes his head, in an inward conversation.

A man, all enveloped in his mantle, comes up the road towards the fountains and the vineyards. I say: a man. But it is Jesus, because it is His garment and His gait. But for the old man it is a man. And the Man asks Abraham: « May I stop here? »

« Hospitality is sacred. I have never denied it to anybody. Come.

Come in. May the rest in the shade of my vines be pleasant to you. Do you want some milk? Some bread? I will give you what I possess here. »

« And what can I give you? I have nothing. »

« He who is the Messiah has given me everything, for every man. And no matter what I give, it is nothing when compared to what He has given me. »

« Do you know that they crucified Him? »

« I know that He has risen from the dead. Are you one of those who crucified Him? I am not allowed to hate, because He does not want hatred. But, if I were allowed, I would hate you if you were. »

« I am not one of His crucifiers. Do not worry. So you know everything about Him. »

« Yes, everything. And Elisha... He is my son, you know? Elisha did not come back any more from Jerusalem, and he said: "Dismiss me, father, because I am leaving all my wealth in order to preach the Lord. I will go to Capernaum to look for John, and I will join the faithful disciples". »

« So your son has left you? So old and alone? »

« What you call abandonment is the joy I have dreamt of. Had leprosy not deprived me of him? And who gave him back to me? The Messiah. And am I losing him because he preaches the Lord? Of course not! I shall find him again also in eternal life. But you speak in a way that makes me suspicious. Are you an emissary of the Temple? Have you come to persecute those who believe in the risen Master? Strike! I will not run away. I will not imitate the three wise men of remote days. I will stay. Because if I fall for Him, I shall join Him in Heaven and my prayer of last year will be answered.) »

« That is true. You then said: "I anxiously waited for the Lord, and He heard me". »

« How do you know? Are you one of His disciples? Were you here with Him when I prayed Him? Oh! if you are such, help me to make my cry reach Him, so that He may remember. » He prostrates himself, thinking that he is speaking to an apostle.

« It is I, Abraham of Engedi, and I say to you: "Come". » Jesus stretches out His arms towards him, revealing Himself, and inviting him to throw himself into them, relaxing on His Heart.

At that moment a boy comes into the vineyard. He is followed by an adolescent and he shouts:
« Father! Father! Here we are to help you. »

But the trilling cry of the boy is drowned by the powerful cry of the old man, a true cry of liberation:
« Here I am! I am coming! » And Abraham throws himself into the arms of Jesus, shouting again:
« Jesus, Holy Messiah! Into Your hands I commit my spirit! »

A blessed death. A death I envy! On the Heart of Christ, in the

serene peace of the April flowery country...

Jesus lays the old man gently on the flowery grass that waves in the breeze, at the foot of a row of vines, and He says to the children, who, astonished and frightened, are about to burst into tears: « Do not weep. He died in the Lord. Blessed are those who die in Him! Go, boys, and tell those of Engedi that their synagogue leader has seen the risen Lord and had his prayer answered by Him. Do not weep! Do not weep! » He caresses them while leading them to the exit.

He then goes back to the deceased man and tidies his beard and hair, He lowers his eyelids, which were half closed, He puts the body in order, and on it He lays the mantle that Abraham had taken off to work.

He remains there until He hears some voices coming from the road. Then He stands up. Wonderful... Those who rush there see Him. They shout. They run faster to reach Jesus. But He disappears from their eyes in the refulgence of beams brighter than the sun.

VIII. To Elijah, the Essene of Mount Cherith.

The harsh solitude of the rough mountain at the bottom of which flows the Cherith. Elijah is praying, even more emaciated and bearded, wearing a coarse woollen garment, which is neither grey nor brown, and makes him look like the rocks surrounding him.

He hears a noise resembling that of wind or thunder. He looks up. Jesus has appeared on a rock hanging balanced over the precipice, at the bottom of which there is the torrent.

« The Master! » He throws himself on the ground, face downwards.

« I, Elijah. Did you not hear the earthquake on Preparation Day? »

« Yes, I did, and I went down to Jericho and to Nike. I did not find any of those who love You. I asked after You. They hit me. Then I felt the earth tremble once again, but not so violently, and I came back here to do penance, thinking that the dam of celestial wrath had opened. »

« Of Divine Mercy. I died and have risen. Look at My wounds. Join the servants of the Lord on Mount Tabor and tell them that I sent you. »

He blesses him and disappears.

IX. To Dorcas and her child in the castle of Caesarea Philippi.

Dorcas' little boy, supported by his mother, is taking his first steps on the rampart of the fortress. And Dorcas, bent as she is, does not see the Lord appear. But when, having left the little boy somewhat free, she sees him walk steadily and fast towards the corner of the rampart, she straightens herself up to run, so that he may not fall and may perish passing through the battlements or openings made on purpose for offensive weapons. And in doing so she

sees Jesus, Who takes up the child, pressing him to His heart and kissing him.

The woman dare not make a gesture. But she utters a loud cry. A cry that makes those of the courts look up and causes faces to lean out of windows: « The Lord! The Lord! The Messiah is here! He has really risen. » But before people can rush there, Jesus has already disappeared.

« You are mad! You were dreaming! Plays of light have made you see a ghost. »

« Oh! He was really alive! See how my son is looking there and how he is holding in his hands an apple as beautiful as his little face. He is gnawing at it with his little teeth. I have no apples... »

« Nobody has ripe apples these days, and so fresh... » they say rather shocked.

« Let us ask Tobias » say some of the women.

« What do you want to do? He can hardly say "mummy"! » say the men mockingly.

But the women bend over the little boy and say: « Who gave you the apple? »

And the lips, that can hardly say the most simple words, in a joyful smile that displays his tiny little teeth and his still empty gums, without any hesitation says: « Jesus. »

« Oh! »

« Hey! you call him Jesai! He can say his name. »

« Jesus you, or Jesus the Lord? Which Lord? Where did you see Him? » insist the women.

« There, the Lord. Jesus the Lord. »

« Where is He? Where did He go? »

« There. » He points at the sky full of sun and smiles happily and bites his apple.

And while the men go away shaking their heads, Dorcas says to the women: « He was handsome. He seemed to be dressed in light. And on His hands He had the signs of the nails, as red as gems against so much whiteness. I saw Him very well, because He held the child so » and she makes the gesture of Jesus.

The superintendent hastens there, he makes them repeat the story, he ponders, and concludes: « The psalm says: "On the lips of children and babes in arms You have placed the perfect praise". And why not the truth? They are innocent. And we... Let us remember this day... No! I am going to the village of the disciples. I am going to see whether the Rabbi is there... And yet... He was dead... Who knows! ... »

And with this « who knows! » that ends its conclusion internally, the superintendent goes away, while the women, full of excitement, continue asking questions of the child, who laughs and repeats: « Jesus, there. And then there. Jesus Lord » and he points at the place

where Jesus was, then at the sun where he saw Him disappear, happy, happy.

X. To the people gathered in the synagogue of Kedesh.

The people of Kedesh are gathered in the synagogue and are discussing the last events with Matthias, the synagogue leader. The synagogue is rather half dark, because the doors are closed and the curtains are lowered on the windows, heavy curtains that the April wind hardly moves.

A lightning illuminates the room. It looks like a lightning, but it is the light that precedes Jesus. And Jesus shows Himself, astonishing many people. He stretches out His arms and the wounds on His hands and feet appear clearly visible, because He shows Himself on the last of the three steps that lead to a closed door. He says: « I have risen from the dead. I remind you of the dispute between the scribes and Me. I have given the wicked generation the sign that I had promised. That of Jonah. I give My blessing to those who love Me and are faithful to Me. » Nothing else. He disappears.

« But it was He! Where from? And yet He was alive! He had said so! Well! Now I understand. The sign of Jonah: three days in the bowels of the Earth and then the resurrection... »

A babble of comments...

XI. To a group of rabbis at Giscala.

A poisonous group of rabbis who try to convince some hesitating men of their requests. They would like to get these men to go to Gamaliel, who has closed himself in his house and does not want to see anybody.

These men say: « We tell you that he is not here. We do not know where he is. He came. He consulted some rolls. He went away. He did not say one word »; « He was frightening, so upset and aged he was » reply the others.

With a bad grace the rabbis turn their backs on those who have spoken and they go away saying: « Also Gamaliel is as mad as Simon! It is not true that the Galilean has risen! It is not true! It is not true! It is not true that He is God. It is not true. Nothing is true. We alone are in the truth. » The very pain they take in saying that it is not true, proves that they are afraid that it is true, that they need to be reassured.

They have walked along the wall of the house and they are near Hillel's tomb. Howling their denials all the time, they raise their heads... and they run away shouting. The Jesus extremely kind to good people is there, frighteningly powerful, with His arms opened out as on the cross... The wounds on His hands are as red as if they were still dripping blood. He does not utter one word. But His eyes fulminate them.

The rabbis run away, they fall, they get up, they wound themselves against trees and stones, mad, driven mad by fear. They look like homicides who have been taken back into the presence of their victim.

XII. To Joachim and Mary of Bozrah.

« Mary! Mary! Joachim and Mary! Come outside. »

The two, who are in a quiet room, illuminated by a lamp, one intent on sewing, the other on making up accounts, raise their heads, look at each other... Joachim, growing pale with fear, whispers: « The voice of the Rabbi! It comes from the other life... » The woman, frightened, presses against her husband.

But the call is repeated and the two, holding on tightly to each other, to pluck up courage, dare to go out, in the direction of the voice.

In the garden, illuminated by the crescent of the new moon, there is Jesus, shining in a light much stronger than many moons. The light surrounds Him and makes Him God. His very sweet smile and loving eyes make Him Man: « Go and tell those of Bozrah that you have seen Me, real and alive. And you, Joachim, say so at Tabor, to those who have gathered there. » He blesses them and disappears.

« But it was He! It was not a dream! I... Tomorrow I will go to Galilee. He said at the Tabor, did He not?... »

XIII. To Mary of Jacob, at Ephraim.

The woman is kneading flour to make bread. She turns round, upon hearing that she is being called, and she sees Jesus. She throws herself on the floor, face and hands on the floor, in silent adoration, a little frightened.

Jesus speaks: « You will tell everybody that you have seen Me and that I have spoken to you. The Lord is not subjected to the sepulchre. I rose on the third day as I had predicted. Do persevere, you who are on My way, and do not let yourselves be seduced by the words of those who crucified Me. My peace to you. »

XIV. To Syntyche, at Antioch.

Syntyche is preparing a travelling bag. It is evening, because a little lamp is lit, its faint light flickers, and it is placed on a table near the woman intent on folding some garments.

The room is brightly lit up and Syntyche raises her head, surprised, to see what is happening, what is the source of such a bright light in that room which is completely closed. But before she can see, Jesus forestalls her: « It is I. Be not afraid. I have shown Myself to many people to confirm them in their faith. I am showing Myself also to you, My obedient faithful disciple. I have risen. See? I no longer suffer. Why are you weeping? »

The woman, before the beauty of the Glorified Master, finds no words... Jesus smiles at her to encourage her and He adds: « I am the same Jesus Who gladly received you on the road near Caesarea. Although you were so timid then, you did speak to Me and you did not know Me. And now, can you not say one word to Me? »

« O Lord! I was about to leave... To relieve my heart of so much anxiety and sorrow. »

« Why sorrow? Did they not tell you that I had risen? »

« They told me and denied it. But I have not been upset by their contradictions. I knew that You could not rot in a sepulchre. I wept over Your martyrdom. I believed, even before they told me, in Your resurrection. And I continued to believe when others came to say that it was not true. But I wanted to come to Galilee. I was thinking: I can no longer do Him any harm. He is now more God than Man. I do not know whether what I say is right... »

« I understand what you mean. »

« And I said: I will worship Him, and I shall see Mary. I was thinking that You would not remain long among us, and I was hastening my departure. I used to say: when He has gone back to His Father, as He said, His Mother will be somewhat sad in Her joy. Because She is a soul, but She is also a mother... And I will try to comfort Her, now that She is alone... I was proud! »

« No. You were compassionate. I will inform My Mother of your thought. But do not come there. Remain where you are and continue to work for Me. Now more than previously. Your brothers, the disciples, need the work of everybody to propagate My doctrine. You have seen Me. Mary is entrusted to John. Do not worry any more. You will be able to fortify your spirit with the certainty of having seen Me and with the power of My blessing. »

Syntyche is longing to kiss Him. But she dare not. Jesus says to her: « Come. » And she dares to drag herself on her knees close to Jesus and makes the gesture of kissing His feet. But she sees the two wounds and dare not. She takes the hem of His tunic and kisses it weeping. And she whispers: « What they have done to You! »

Then she asks a question: « And John-Felix? »

« He is happy. He remembers nothing but love and lives in it. Peace to you, Syntyche. » He disappears.

The woman remains in her adoring attitude, on her knees, her face raised, her hands stretched out a little, tears on her face, a smile on her lips...

XV. To Zacharias, the Levite.

He is in a small room. Zacharias, the Levite, is pensive. He is sitting, with his head reclined on one of his hands.

« Do not be in doubt. Do not listen to the voices that upset you. I am the Truth and the Life. Look at Me. Touch Me. »

The young man, who has looked up at the first words and has seen Jesus, and has fallen on his knees, shouts: « Forgive me, Lord. I have sinned. I received in me the doubt concerning Your truth. »

« Those who try to seduce your spirit are more guilty than you are. Do not yield to their temptations. I am a real living body. Feel the weight and the warmth, the solidity and strength of My hand. » He takes him by the forearm and lifts him with His strength, saying: « Rise and walk in the ways of the Lord, out of doubt and fear. And you will be blessed if you can persevere till the end. » He blesses him and disappears.

The young man, after a moment's dumbfounded amazement, runs out of the room shouting: « Mother! Father! I have seen the Master. It is not true what the others say! I was not mad. Do not persist in believing falsehood, but bless the Most High with me, as He has had mercy on His servant. I am going away. I am going to Galilee. I will find some of His disciples. I am going to tell them to believe that He has really risen. »

He does not take a sack with food and garments. He puts on his mantle and runs away, without giving his parents time to recover from their amazement and to be able to intervene to hold him back.

XVI. To a woman of the Sharon plain.

A coast road. Perhaps the one that links Caesarea to Joppa, or another one. I do not know. I know that I see a country on one side and the sea on the opposite side, a deep-blue sea beyond the yellowish line of the shore. The road is certainly a Roman thoroughfare, as is evidenced by its paving.

A woman in tears is going along it in the early hours of a clear morning. The day has just dawned. The woman must be very tired, because now and again she stops and sits down on a milestone or on the road. Then she gets up and proceeds, as if something were urging her to go on, notwithstanding her great tiredness.

Jesus, a wayfarer enveloped in a mantle, sets off beside her. The woman does not look at Him. She proceeds absorbed in her grief. Jesus asks her: « Why are you weeping, woman? Where are you coming from? And where are you going all alone? »

« I am coming from Jerusalem and I am going back home. »

« Far? »

« Half way between Joppa and Caesarea. »

« On foot? »

« In the valley, before Modin, some highwaymen took my donkey and what was on it. »

« It was unwise of you to go all alone. It is not customary to come by oneself at Passover. »

« I did not come for Passover. I remained at home, because I have,' and I hope I still have him, a boy who is ill. My husband had gone

with other people. I let him go ahead and four days later I set off Because I said: "He is certainly in Jerusalem for Passover. I will look for Him". I was somewhat afraid. But I said: "I am not doing anything wrong. God sees. I believe. I know that He is good. He will not reject me, because... " » She stops, as if she were frightened, and casts a quick glance at the man who is walking beside her, and who is so covered up that one can hardly see his eyes, the unmistakable eyes of Jesus.

« Why have you become silent? You are afraid of Me. Do you think that I am an enemy of Him Whom you were looking for? Because you were looking for the Master of Nazareth, to ask Him to come to your house and cure the boy while your husband was away... »

« I see that you are a prophet. It is so. But when I arrived in town, the Master was dead. » Tears choke her...

« He has risen. Do you not believe it? »

« I know. I believe it. But I... But I... For some days I hoped to see Him myself... They say that He has shown Himself to some people. And I delayed my departure... every day a torture, because... my boy is so ill... my heart was divided... whether I should go to comfort him at his death... or stay looking for the Master... I did not expect Him to come to my house, but to promise to cure him. »

« And would you have believed? Do you think that from afar?... »

« I believe. Oh! if He had said to me: "Go in peace. Your son will recover", I should not have doubted. But I do not deserve it, because... » she weeps, pressing her veil against her lips, so as to be prevented from speaking.

« Because your husband is one of the accusers and crucifiers of Jesus Christ. But Jesus Christ is the Messiah. He is God. And God is just, woman. He does not punish an innocent person because of a guilty one. He does not torture a mother because a father is a sinner. Jesus Christ is Mercy alive... »

« Oh! are you perhaps one of His apostles? Perhaps you know where He is? You... Perhaps He sent you to me to tell me this. He has heard, He has seen my grief, my faith, and He has sent you to me as the Most High sent the archangel Raphael to Tobias. Tell me whether it is so, and although I am so tired as to be feverish, I will retrace my steps to look for the Lord. »

« I am not an apostle. But the apostles have remained in Jerusalem for many days after His Resurrection... »

« That is true. I could have asked them. »

« So. They continue the Master. »

« I did not think they could work miracles. »

« They have still worked them... »

« But now... I was told that one only remained faithful, and I did not think... »

« Yes. Your husband told you so, sneering at you in his frenzy of false triumph. But I tell you that man can sin, because God alone is perfect. And he can repent. And if he does repent, his strength grows, and God increases His graces in him for his contrition. Did the Most High Lord not forgive David? »

« But who are you? Who are you who speak so gently and wisely, if you are not an apostle? An angel perhaps? The angel of my child. He has perhaps breathed his last and you have come to prepare me... »

Jesus lets His mantle fall off His head and face, and passing from the humble aspect of a common pilgrim to His magnificence of God-Man, risen from the dead, with kind solemnity He says: « It is I. The Messiah crucified in vain. I am the Resurrection and the Life. Go, woman. Your son lives, because I have rewarded your faith. Your son is cured. Because, if the Rabbi of Nazareth has finished His mission, the Immanuel continues His until the end of time for all those who have faith, hope and charity in the One and Trine God, of Whom the incarnate Word is one Person, Who through divine love left Heaven to come to teach, to suffer, to die in order to give the Life to men. Go in peace, woman. And be strong in faith, because the time has come when in a family the husband will be against his wife, the father against his sons, and these against him, out of hatred or love for Me. But blessed are those whom persecution will not tear away from My Way. »

He blesses her and disappears.

XVII. To some shepherds on the Great Hermon.

A group of herds and shepherds. They have stopped on some slopes with wonderful pastures. And they are speaking of the events of Jerusalem. And they are distressed, saying to one another: « We shall no longer have the friend of shepherds on the Earth », and they recall the many meetings they had with Him here or there... « Meetings » says an old man « that we shall never have again. »

Jesus appears as if He were setting foot in that place from behind an entangled wood, where the tall trees are embraced by low bushes that conceal the sight of the path.

They do not recognise Him in the solitary man, and seeing Him so enveloped in white garments, they whisper: « Who is it? An Essene? Here? A rich Pharisee? » They are puzzled.

Jesus asks them: « Why do you say that you will never meet the Lord again? Because He, of Whom you are speaking, is the Lord. »

« We know. But do you not know what they have done to Him? Now some people say that He has risen, some say that He has not. But even if He has risen, which we prefer to believe, He will have gone away by now. How can He love and remain among people who have crucified Him? And we, who loved Him, even if not everyone

had made His acquaintance, are sad because we have lost Him. »

« There is still a way to have Him. He taught it. »

« Oh! yes. By doing what He taught us. Then one has the Kingdom of God and is with Him. But one must first live and then die. And He is no longer among us to comfort us. » They shake their heads.

« My dear children, for those who live what He taught, keeping His teachings in their hearts, it is just the same as if they had Jesus in their hearts. Because Word and Doctrine are one thing only. He was not a Master Who taught things that were not as He was. So, he who does what He said, has Jesus alive in himself and is not separated from Him. »

« What you say is correct. But we are poor men and... we want to see also with our eyes to feel our joy properly... I have never seen Him, neither has my son, nor Jacob, nor Melkiah, nor James, nor Saul. See, only among us, how many have not seen Him? We have always looked for Him, but when we arrived, He had left. »

« Were you in Jerusalem on that day? »

« Oh! we were there! But when we heard what they wanted to do to Him, we ran away like madmen up the mountains, and we went back to town after the Sabbath. We are not guilty of His Blood, because we were not in town. But we did the wrong thing in being cowards. We would at least have seen Him and greeted Him. He would certainly have blessed us for our greetings... But we did not really have the courage to look at Him amid tortures... »

« He blesses you now. Look at Him Whose face you wish to know. » He shows Himself, magnificently divine on the green of the meadow. While their amazement throws them on the ground, but glues their eyes to His divine Face, He disappears in a refulgent light.

XVIII. At Sidon, to the little boy born blind.

The little boy is playing all alone under a thick pergola. He hears someone call him and he finds himself in front of Jesus. Not in the least frightened, he asks Him: « But are You not the Rabbi Who gave me my eyes? » and he fixes his limpid eyes of a child, of the same blue hue as Jesus', on the divine sparkling eyes.

« It is I, My child. Are you not afraid of Me? » He caresses his head.

« No, I am not afraid. But my mother and I have wept very much, when my father came back before the time and he told us that he had run away because they had taken the Rabbi to put Him to death. He did not celebrate Passover and now he has to leave again to celebrate it. So, did You not die? »

« I died. Look at My wounds. I died on the cross. But I have risen again. Tell your father to remain for some time in Jerusalem, after the second Passover, and to stay near the Mount of Olives, at Bethphage. He will find there who will tell him what to do. »

« My father was thinking of looking for You. At the Feast of the Tabernacles he did not succeed in speaking to You. He wanted to tell You that he loves You because of the eyes that You have given me. But he was not able to do so, neither then nor now... »

« He will do so through his faith in Me. Goodbye, My dear child. Peace to you and to your family. »

XIX. To Johanan's peasants.

Johanan's fields kissed by the moon. Dead silence. The poor houses of the peasants, in a sultry night that compels people to keep at least a door open in order not to die stifled by the heat in the low rooms, where too many bodies are crammed in comparison with the capacity of the place.

Jesus goes into one large room. The very moon seems to lengthen her beams to form a royal carpet for Him on the floor of beaten earth. He bends over a man who is sleeping, lying face downwards in the heavy sleep of fatigue. He calls him. He passes on to another one, to another one. He calls them all, His poor faithful friends. He passes as lightly and quickly as an angel in flight. He goes into other hovels... Then He goes to wait for them outside, near a group of trees.

The peasants, half asleep, come out of their hovels. Two, three, one only, five together, some women. They are surprised that they have all been called like that, by a known voice, that said the same words to everybody: « Come to the apple-orchard ». They go there, the men finishing to put on their poor clothes, the women to arrange their plaits, and they speak in low voices.

« It sounded like the voice of Jesus of Nazareth to me. »

« Perhaps His spirit. They killed Him. Did you hear that? »

« I cannot believe it. He was God. »

« And yet also Joel saw Him pass under the cross... »

« I was told yesterday, while I was waiting for the bailiff to deal with his market business, that some disciples passed through Jezreel and they said that He has really risen. »

« Be quiet! You know what the master says. Who says that, gets scourged. »

« Is put to death, perhaps. But would it not be better, rather than suffer like this? »

« And now He is no longer here! »

« And they are even more wicked, now that they have succeeded in killing Him. »

« They are wicked, because He has risen. »

They speak in low voices while going to the place pointed out to them.

« The Lord! » shouts a woman, the first to fall on her knees.

« His fantasm! » shout others, and some are afraid.

« It is I. Be not afraid. Do not shout. Come forward. It is really I. I have come to confirm your faith, as I know that other people are laying snares for it. See? My Body casts a shadow because it is a real body. You are not dreaming. My voice is a real one. I am the same Jesus Who shared bread with you and gave you love. And also now I give you love. I will send My disciples to you. And it will be still I, because they will give you what I used to give you and what I have given them in order to be able to communicate with those who believe in Me. Bear your crosses, as I bore Mine. Be patient. Forgive. They will tell you how I died. Imitate Me. The way of sorrow is the way to Heaven. Follow it in peace and you will have My Kingdom. There is no other way beside that of resignation to the will of God, of generosity, of charity towards everybody. If there were another one, I should have pointed it out to you. I have come along this one, because it is the just way. Be faithful to the Law of Sinai, which is immutable in its ten commandments, and to My Doctrine. My disciples will come to teach you, so that you may not be abandoned to the intrigues of wicked people. I bless you. Always remember that I have loved you and that I have come to you before and after My glorification. I solemnly tell you that many people would like to see Me now, and they will not see Me. Many mighty people. But I show Myself to those whom I love and who love Me. »

A man dares to say: « So... Does the Kingdom of Heaven really exist? Were You really the Messiah? They influence us... »

« Do not listen to their words. Remember Mine, and receive those of My disciples who are known to you. They are words of truth. And those who receive them and put them into practice, even if he is a servant or a slave here, will be a citizen and coheir to My Kingdom. »

He blesses them stretching out His arms and disappears.

« Oh! I... I no longer fear anything! »

« Neither do I. Did you hear that? There is a place also for us! »

« It is necessary to be good! »

« To forgive! »

« To have patience! »

« To be able to resist. »

« To look for the disciples. »

« He has come to us, poor servants. »

« We will tell His apostles. »

« If Johanan knew! »

« And Doras! »

« They would kill us so that we could not speak. »

« But we will keep quiet. We will only tell the servants of the Lord. »

« Micah, do you not have to go to Sephoris with that load? Why do you not go to Nazareth and tell... »

« Whom? »

« The Mother. The apostles. They may be with Her... »

They go away, whispering their plans.

XX. To Daniel, a relative of Helkai, the Pharisee, with Simon, the member of the Sanhedrin.

Helkai, the Pharisee, is discussing with some of his peers what to do with Simon, the member of the Sanhedrin, who became insane on Good Friday and now speaks too much and says too many things. There are various proposals. Some say that he should be isolated in some desert place, where his shouting can be heard only by a very faithful servant, who is of their same mind, some, more benignly, feel sure, as it is a transient illness, that it is sufficient to leave him where he is.

Helkai replies: « I brought him here, because I do not know any other place where I can take him. But you know that I mistrust my relative Daniel very much... »

Others, who are even more wicked than Helkai, say: « He wants to run away, to go by sea. Why not please him? »

« Because he is incapable of orderly actions. All alone at sea he would perish, and none of us is capable of steering a boat. »

« And then! Even if we were! What would happen at the landingstage, considering what he says? Let him choose the way... In the presence of everybody, also of your relative, let him say what he wants to do, and let it be done as he wishes. »

This proposal is approved and Helkai calls a servant and orders him to bring Simon and to call Daniel. They both come and, if Daniel looks like a man who feels ill at ease in the company of certain people, the other looks just like an idiot.

« Listen to us, Simon. You say that we are keeping you in prison because we want to kill you... »

« You must. Because that is the order. »

« You are raving, Simon. Be quiet and listen. Where do you think you would recover your health? »

« At sea. At sea. Out in the open sea. Where no voice is heard. Where there are no sepulchres. Because sepulchres open and the dead come out and my mother says... »

« Be silent! Listen. We love you. Like one of our blood. Do you really want to go there? »

« I certainly do. Because the sepulchres here open up and my mother... »

« You will go there. We will take you to the seaside, we will give a boat and you... »

« But you are committing a homicide! He is mad! He cannot go by himself! » shouts honest Daniel.

« God does not do violence to the will of man. Could we do what God does not do? »

« But he is insane! He no longer has a will. He is more foolish than a new-born baby! You cannot!... »

« Be silent. You are a farmer and nothing else. We know... Tomorrow we will leave for the sea. Cheer up, Simon. For the sea, do you understand? »

« Ah! I shall no longer hear the voices of the Earth! No more the voices... Ah! » a long cry, a delirious agitation, eyes and ears close. And another cry, of Daniel, who runs away terrorised.

« Who is it? What is happening? Stop that madman and that fool! Are we all losing our wits? » shouts Helkai.

But he whom Helkai calls a "fool", that is his relative Daniel, after running away a few metres, prostrates himself on the ground, whereas the other one froths at the mouth, where he is, in a frightful convulsion, and shouts, shouts: « Make Him be quiet! He is not dead and He shouts and shouts and shouts! More than my mother, more than my father, more than He did on Golgotha! There, there, can you not see there? » He points at the place where Daniel is, placid, smiling, with his face upwards, after being with his face downwards on the ground.

Helkai reaches him and shakes him violently, furious as he is, without bothering about Simon, who rolls on the ground and foams, uttering beastly shouts amid all the others who look terrified as they surround him. Helkai says to Daniel: « You visionary idler, will you tell me what you are doing? »

« Leave me. Now I know who you are. And I am going away from you. I have seen, benign to me, dreadful to you, Him Who you want me to believe is dead. I am going away. I want to protect my soul rather than money and wealth. Goodbye, you cursed one! And if you can, try to deserve God's forgiveness. »

« But where are you going? Where? I do not want! »

« Are you entitled to keep me prisoner? Who gave you that right? I leave you what you love and I will follow what I love. Goodbye » he turns his back on him and goes away, as fast as if he were drawn by a superhuman power, down the green slope of olive-trees and orchards.

Helkai is livid with rage, and he is not the only one. Rage chokes them all. Helkai threatens to take vengeance upon his relative, upon all those who « with their frenzies, he says, maintain that the Galilean is alive. He wants to say, he wants to do... »

One, I do not know who it is, says: « We will do, we will do, but we shall not be able to close all the mouths, all the eyes, that speak, because they see. We are defeated! The crime is upon us. Now comes the expiation... » and he beats his breast, seized with such anguish, that he looks like one who is climbing the steps of the scaffold. « The revenge of Jehovah » he also says, and all the age-old terror of Israel resounds in his voice.

In the meantime Simon wounded, frothing at the mouth, frightened, raves shouting like a damned soul: « Parricide, He said to me! Make Him keep quiet! Quiet! Parricide! The same word as my mother's! So do all the dead speak the same words?!... »

XXI. To a Galilean woman.

The moon, which is almost on the point of setting, is about to conceal her still thin crescent of a new moon behind the summit of a mountain. And her light is, therefore, very faint, and before long she will no longer shine on the wide country.

And yet a wayfarer is on the solitary road, a small road, a path among the fields, more than anything else. He is walking holding a very simple lantern hanging from a ring, one of those which, being as old as the world, I think are generally used by carters to have light at night. As glass was not a common thing - I think it was completely unknown, as I never happened to see any in any house, such as a drinking glass, or a vase, or as a shelter at windows the flame was protected by something, that could be either mica or parchment. The light that filters is so faint, that it illuminates only a small space around the lantern. But as the moon is completely concealed, the light of the poor lantern seems to grow stronger, forming a clear dancing point in the darkness of the country.

The wayfarer walks, walks... Dawn begins to appear in the sky at the extreme horizon. But it is so feeble, at present, that it does not illuminate anything, and the poor lantern is still needed.

Another wayfarer, all enveloped in a mantle, is waiting or resting near a little bridge.

The one with the lantern, who is making for that bridge, stops in a doubtful attitude. He is uncertain whether he should pass there or go back, where in the gravel-bed of a little torrent, there are large stones that can serve to cross over the little water at the bottom.

The one sitting on the rustic parapet, made of the trunk of a tree with a white-green bark still on it, raises his head, watching the one who has stopped. He stands up and says: « Be not afraid of Me. Come forward. I am a good companion, not a highwayman. » It is Jesus. I recognise Him more by His voice than by His appearance, which is veiled by the deep twilight, that the light cannot penetrate as far as Jesus.

But the person stops, still doubtful.

« Come, woman. Do not be afraid. We shall go together for a stretch of the road and it will be a good thing for you. »

The woman, now I know that it is a woman, comes forward, won over by the kindness of the voice or by a mysterious force and she shakes her head as she proceeds, whispering: « There is no more good for me. »

They now proceed side by side along the path, which is so wide

as to allow only two pedestrians to pass. The advancing dawn shows, on one side of the path, a stiff forest in miniature of ripe corn awaiting the sickle. On the other side the corn has already been cut and is lying in sheaves in the field despoiled of its glory of a ripe harvest.

« May they be cursed! » says the woman in a low voice, casting a glance at the sheaves lying in the field.

Jesus is silent.

The day is advancing. The woman puts out the poor lantern and, to do so, she uncovers her face disfigured by tears. And she raises her head to look eastwards, where a yellow pink line announces the rising of the sun. She shakes her fist eastwards and she says again: « May you be cursed, too! »

« The day? God made it. As He made the corn. They are favours of God. They are not to be cursed... » says Jesus kindly.

« And I curse them. I curse the sun and the crops. And I have a reason for that. »

« Have they not been good to you for so many years? Did the former not ripen your daily bread, the grapes that change into wine, the vegetables and the fruit of the kitchen garden, did it not make the pastures grow to feed sheep and lambs, on whose milk and meat you fed and with whose wool you wove your garments? And did the corn not give bread to you, to your children, to your father and to your mother, to your husband? »

She bursts into tears and shouts: « I no longer have my husband! They have killed him! He went to work as a day-labourer, because we have seven children and the little we have of our own was not sufficient to appease the hunger of ten people. And yesterday evening he came and said: "I am tired and I feel out of sorts" and he threw himself on the little bed, burning with fever. His mother and I assisted him as best we could, as we intended to send for the doctor in town today... But after cock-crow he died. The sun killed him. Yes, I am going to town. To get what is necessary. I will inform his brothers when I come back. I left his mother to watch her son and my children... and I came away to do what is to be done... And should I not curse the burning sun and corn? »

So reserved as she was previously, so much so that I would not have thought she was a woman, and above all a distressed one, she has now broken the barriers to her sorrow, which overflows violently. She says what she did not say at home « in order not to wake up the children sleeping in the next room », what weighed so much on her heart as to give her the sensation that it was about to burst. Recollections of love, dismay for the future, grief of a widow, pass confusedly like rubble carried away by the swollen waves of a river in spate...

Jesus lets her speak. Because Jesus knows how to pity sorrow,

He allows it to give vent to its feelings, so that man may be relieved thereby, and the tiredness itself, that follows the impetuosity of sorrow, may make him capable of understanding who comforts him. He then says kindly: « At Nain and at Nazareth, and in the places between the former and the latter, there are the disciples of the Rabbi of Nazareth. Go to them... »

« And what do You expect them to do? If He were still here!... But they? They are not saints! My husband was in Jerusalem on that day. And he knows... Oh! no! He knew! He knows nothing any more! He is dead! »

« What did your husband do on that day? »

« When the uproar of the street woke him, he ran up to the terrace of the house where he was with his brothers and he saw the Rabbi pass by, as He was taken to the Praetorium, and with other Galileans he followed Him until He died. They pelted him and the others with stones, when they found out that they were Galileans, up there on the mountain, and they repelled them farther down. But they were there until everything was accomplished. Then... they came away... And now he is dead. Oh! if at least I knew that he is at peace because of his compassion for the Rabbi! »

Jesus does not reply to that wish. But He says: « He will then have seen that there were some disciples on Golgotha. Were all the Galileans perhaps like your husband? »

« Oh! no. Many, also from Nazareth, abused Him. It is known. What a shame! »

« So, if many people also from Nazareth showed no love for their Jesus, and yet He has forgiven them, and many will become holy in future, why do you want to judge all the disciples of Christ in the same way? Do you want to be more severe than God is? God grants much to those who forgive... »

« The good Rabbi is no longer! here! He is no longer here! And my husband is dead. »

« The Rabbi has given His disciples the power to do what He did. »

« I am prepared to believe that. But He alone could defeat death. He alone! »

« And do we not read that Elijah gave the spirit back to the son of the widow of Zarephath? I solemnly tell you that Elijah was a great prophet, but the servants of the Saviour, Who died and has risen because He was the Son of the true God and became incarnate to redeem men, have even a greater power, because on the Cross He forgave them their sins, and they were the first to be forgiven, as He was aware, through divine wisdom, of the true sorrow of their contrite spirits, He sanctified them after His resurrection forgiving them again, and He infused the Holy Spirit into them, so that they could represent Me worthily both with their words and their deeds, and the world might not remain desolate after My departure

from it. »

The woman steps back lively, dumbfounded. She throws her veil back to look at her companion. But she does not recognise Him. She thinks that she has misunderstood. But she dare not speak any more...

« Are you afraid of Me? First you thought that I was a highwayman ready to snatch the money you have in your breast and serves to buy what is necessary for the burial. And you were afraid. Are you now afraid to know that I am Jesus? And is Jesus not the One Who gives and does not take? He Who saves and does not ruin? Go back, woman. I am the Resurrection and the Life. Sudarium and spices are not necessary for him who is not dead, who is no longer dead, because I am He Who defeats death and rewards who has faith. Go! Go home! Your husband is alive. Not one faith in Me is left without reward. » He makes the gesture of blessing her and going away.

The woman comes out of her petrification. She does not ask, she does not doubt... Nothing. She falls on her knees, adoring. Then, at last, she opens her mouth and, searching in her breast, she pulls out a small purse, the poor purse of poor people, to whom misery forbids solemn honours for their dead relatives, and offering her purse she says: « I have nothing else... nothing else to tell You my gratitude, to honour You, to... »

« I no longer need money, woman. You will take it to My apostles. »

« Oh! yes. I will go to them with my husband... But what can I give You, my Lord? What? You appeared to me... this miracle... and I did not recognise You... and I so upset... yes, unjust even with things... »

« Yes. And you did not think that they are because I am, and that everything that God made is good. If there had been no sun, if there had been no corn, you would not have had the present grace. »

« But how much sorrow!... » The woman weeps remembering it.

Jesus smiles and shows His hands saying: « This is the least part of My sorrow. And I consumed it all, without complaining, for your welfare. »

The woman stoops to the ground to confess: « It is true. Forgive my lament. »

Jesus disappears in His light, and when she looks up she sees that she is alone. She stands up, looks round. Nothing can prevent her from seeing, because it is broad daylight, and there is nothing but fields of crops around. The woman says to herself: « And yet I have not dreamt! » Perhaps the demon tempts her to make her doubt, because she is in a state of uncertainty for a moment, while she weighs her purse in her hands.

But then faith triumphs, and she turns her back to the place where she was going, retracing her steps, as fast as if the winds were carrying

her without making her fatigue, her face shining with a joy which is greater than any human joy, so peaceful it is. Now and again she repeats: « How good is the Lord. He is really God! He is God! Blessed be the Most High and He Whom He sent. » She cannot say anything else. And her litany mingles with the singing of birds.

The woman is so absorbed that she does not hear the greetings of some reapers who see her pass by and ask her where is she coming from at that early hour... One joins her and says to her: « Is Mark better? Have you been for the doctor? »

« Mark died at cock-crow and has risen from the dead. Because the Messiah of the Lord has done that » she replies, walking fast all the time.

« Sorrow has made her insane! » whispers the man, and he shakes his head joining his companions, who have begun to cut the corn.

The fields are filling with more and more people. But curiosity overwhelms many who decide to follow the woman, who quickens her steps more and more.

She goes on. There is a very poor house, low, solitary, lost in the country. She directs her steps towards it, pressing her hands against her heart.

She goes in. But as soon as she sets foot in it, an old woman throws herself in her arms shouting: « Oh! my daughter, what a grace of the Lord! Take heart, daughter, because what I have to tell you is so great, so happy, that... »

« I know, mother. Mark is no longer dead. Where is he? »

« You know... How? »

« I met the Lord. I did not recognise Him, but He spoke to me and when it pleased Him, He said to me: "Your husband lives". But here... when? »

« I had just opened the window, and I was looking at the first sunbeam on the fig-tree. Yes, just so. The first beam touched the figtree then, against the room... when I heard a deep sigh, like that of one who wakes up. I turned round frightened and I saw Mark sit up and throw behind him the sheet that I had laid on his face, and look up with a face, a face... Then he looked at me and said: "Mother! I am cured!" I... I almost died myself, and he assisted me, and he realised that he had been dead. He does not remember anything. He says that he remembers up to the moment we put him to bed, and then nothing else till he saw an angel, a kind of angel who looked like the Rabbi of Nazareth and who said to him: "Rise!" And he rose.

Just when the sun had completely risen. » « Just when He said to me: "Your husband lives". Oh! mother, what a grace! How much God has loved us! »

Those who come in find them embraced, weeping. And they think that Mark is dead and that his wife, in a moment of clearness of mind, has realised her misfortune. But Mark, upon hearing

the voices, appears, looking serene, with a child in his arms, and the others holding on his tunic, and he says in a loud voice: « Here I am. Let us bless the Lord! »

The newcomers beset him with questions, and as is usual with human things, discrepancies arise. Some believe in a real resurrection, and some, the majority, say that he had only fallen into a torpor, but he had not died. Some admit that Christ has appeared to Rachel and some say that it is a lot of nonsense, because some say: « He is dead » and some: « He has risen, but He is so indignant, He must be, that He works no more miracles for His murderous people. »

« You can say what you like » says the man losing his patience « and say it where you like. As long as you do not say it here, where the Lord has raised me from the dead. And go away, o unfortunate people! And may Heaven enlighten your heads so that you may believe. But go away now and leave us in peace. » He drives them out and closes the door.

He presses his wife and mother to his heart and says: « Nazareth is not far. I am going there to proclaim the miracle. » « That is what the Lord wants, Mark. We will take this money to His disciples. Let us go and bless the Lord. Just as we are. We are poor, but He also was poor, and His apostles will not despise us. »

She busies herself tying the laces of the children's sandals, while her mother puts some provisions in a bag and closes doors and windows, and Mark goes to do I do not know what.

They go out when they are ready and walk fast, the little ones in their arms, the others happy and somewhat bewildered, eastwards, towards Nazareth, obviously. Perhaps this place is still in the Esdraelon plain, but in a different part than that of Johanan's estate.

629. Jesus Appears on the Shores of the Lake. The Mission Conferred to Peter.

19th April 1947.

A calm sultry night. There is not a breath of wind. The stars, large and throbbing, crowd the clear sky. The lake, so calm and still, as to look like a very large basin sheltered from winds, reflects with its surface the glory of that sky that palpitates with stars. The trees along the shores form a block with no rustling. The lake is so calm that its surge on the shore is reduced to a very light lapping. Some boats off-shore, hardly visible as roaming forms, that at times place little stars at a short distance from the waves, with their tiny lights tied to the masts of the sails, to illuminate the interiors of the small hulls.

I do not know which part of the lake it is. I should say the more southern one, where the lake is about to become a river again. At

the outskirts of Tarichea, I should say, not because I can see the town, which is hidden by a group of trees, that stretch on the lake forming a little hilly promontory, but because I am led to think so by the little stars of the lights of the boats, that move away northwards, when they depart from the shores of the lake. I say outskirts, because there is a little group of poor houses gathered there at the foot of the little promontory, but they are so few that they cannot even be considered a village. They are poor houses, almost on the shore, certainly of fishermen.

Some boats are beached on the little shore; others are already prepared to sail, in the water, near the shore, and they are so still as to seem fixed to the ground, instead of floating.

Peter puts his head out of a hovel. The flickering light of a fire lit in the smoky kitchen illuminates the sturdy figure of the apostle from behind, making it show up like a drawing. He looks at the sky, he looks at the lake... He comes forward, as far as the edge of the shore. Then - he is wearing a short tunic and is bare-footed he paddles in the water up to half his thigh, and stretching out his brawny arm, he caresses the gunwale of a boat. Zebedee's sons join him.

« Lovely night. »

« It will soon be moonlight. »

« Fishing night. »

« But with oars. »

« There is no wind. »

« What shall we do? »

They speak slowly, with detached sentences, like men accustomed to fishing and to the manoeuvres of sails and nets, for which attention is required and so, few words.

« We ought to go. We could sell part of the catch. »

Andrew, Thomas and Bartholomew come and join them on the shore.

« What a warm night! » exclaims Bartholomew.

« Will there be a storm? Do you remember that night? » asks Thomas.

« Oh! no! Calm, fog perhaps, but no storm. I... I am going fishing. Who is coming with me? »

« We are all coming. Perhaps it will be cooler out there » says Thomas, who is perspiring, and he adds:

« The woman needed that fire, but it was like being at the hot baths... »

« I am going to tell Simon. He is all alone over there » says John.

Peter is already preparing the boat with Andrew and James.

« Shall we go as far as our house? A surprise for my mother... » asks James.

« No. I do not know whether I can get Marjiam to come. Before... before... Well, yes! Before going to Jerusalem - we were still at

Ephraim - the Lord told me that He wanted to celebrate the second Passover with Marjiam. But later He has not said anything to me... »

« I think He said that He would » says Andrew.

« Yes. The second Passover, yes. But I do not know whether He wants the boy to come here first. I have made so many mistakes that... Oh! are you coming, too? »

« Yes, Simon of Jonah. This fishing will remind me of many things... »

« Eh! it will remind everybody of many things... Things that will never come back again... We used to go out on the lake with the Master in this boat... And I loved it as if it were a royal palace, and I thought I could not live without it. But now that He is no longer here, well, I am in the boat and I do not enjoy it » says Peter.

« No one has the joy of past things. It no longer is the same life. And also in looking back... between the hours of the past and the present ones there is always that dreadful period of time... » says Bartholomew with a sigh.

« We are ready. Come. You at the rudder and we at the oars. We are going towards the bend of Hippos. It is a good spot. Pull-ho! Pull-ho! »

Peter sets the rate and the boat slides on the calm water, with Bartholomew at the rudder. Thomas and the Zealot act as servants ready to cast the net, which they have already spread out. The moon rises, that is, she is over the mountains of Gadara (if I am not mistaken) or Gamala, that is, the ones on the eastern shore towards the south of the lake, and the lake is illuminated by her rays that trace a road of diamonds on the still water.

« She will be with us until morning. »

« If there is no mist. »

« The fish leave the bottom attracted by the moon. »

« If we have a good catch, it will be a blessing, because we have no more money. We will buy bread and will take fish and bread to those who are up the mountain. » Words uttered slowly, with long pauses between one voice and the next one.

« You row very well, Simon. You have not lost the stroke!... » says the Zealot admiring him.

« Yes... Damn! »

« What is the matter with you? » the others ask him.

« The... The matter is that the recollection of that man haunts me everywhere. I remember that day when in two boats we competed to see who was the best oarsman, and he... »

« I instead was thinking that one of the first times that I had the vision of his abyss of wickedness, was when we met, or rather, we came into collision with the boats of the Romans. Do you remember? » says the Zealot.

« Eh! we do remember! However!... He defended him... and we... what with the defensive attitude of the Master, what with the double-dealing of... of our companion, we never clearly understood... » says Thomas.

« H'm! I more than once... But He would say: "Do not judge, Simon!" »

« Thaddeus always suspected him. »

« What I cannot believe is that this fellow here never knew anything about it » says James, poking his brother in the ribs.

But John, bending his head, is silent.

« Now he can speak... » says Thomas.

« I am trying to forget. That is what I have been ordered. Why do you want me to disobey? »

« You are right. Let us leave him alone » says the Zealot defending him.

« Cast the net. Slowly. Row. Row slowly. Turn to port, Bartholomew. Haul. Veer. Haul. Veer. Is the net spread? Is it? Oars up and let us wait » orders Peter.

How beautiful is the placid lake in the peace of the night, kissed by the moon! So pure that it is paradisiac. The moon from the sky is fully reflected in it and gives it the appearance of diamonds, her phosphorescence quivers on the hills, it discloses them and makes the towns on the shores as white as snow... Now and again they haul the net. A cascade of diamonds playing arpeggios on the silver of the lake. It is empty. They cast it again. They change place. No luck... Hours go by. The moon sets, while the light of dawn begins to appear, uncertain, green-blue... A heat mist steams towards the shores, particularly towards the southern end of the lake. Tiberias is veiled with it, and Tarichea is also veiled with it. A low fog, not dense, that will melt in the early sun. In order to avoid it they prefer to go along the eastern side, where it is less dense, whilst to the west, as it comes from the marsh beyond Tarichea on the right bank of the Jordan, it thickens as if the marsh were steaming. They row carefully to avoid possible dangers of the depth, familiar as they are with the lake.

« You, on the boat! Have you anything to eat? » shouts a man's voice from the shore. A voice that makes them start.

But they shrug their shoulders, replying in a loud voice: « No »; then they say to one another: « We always seem to be hearing Him!... »

« Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find them. »

The right-hand side is off-shore. They cast the net, rather perplexedly. Jerks, weight that makes the boat bend on the side where the net hangs.

« But that is the Lord! » shouts John.

« The Lord, are you sure? » asks Peter.

« And do you doubt it? We thought it was His voice, but this is the proof of it. Look at the net! It is like that time! I tell you that it is He! Oh! my Jesus! Where are You? »

They all open their eyes wide to see through the veils of fog, after fastening the net safely to drag it in the wake of the boat, as it would be a dangerous manoeuvre to try to hoist it and they row to go back to shore. But Thomas has to take the oar of Peter who, after hurriedly slipping on his short tunic over his very short trousers, the only garment he had on, like that of all the others, except Bartholomew, jumps into the water and swims with vigorous strokes in the calm water, preceding the boat. He is the first to set foot on the desert little beach, where on two stones sheltered by a thorny bush, a fire of dry twigs is gaily blazing. And near the fire, there is Jesus, smiling and benign.

« Lord! Lord! » Peter is breathless because of his emotion and is unable to say anything else. Dripping wet, as he is, he dare not even touch the tunic of his Jesus, and prostrated on the sand with his tunic sticking to him, he adores.

The boat rubs on the shingly shore and stops. They are all standing, excited with joy...

« Bring some of those fish here. The fire is ready. Come and have something to eat » orders Jesus.

Peter runs to the boat and helps the others to heave the net, and he gets hold of three big fish in the wriggling heap, he beats them on the gunwale of the boat to kill them and guts them with his knife. But his hands shake, oh! not with cold! He rinses the fish, he takes them where the fire is and puts them on it, and he watches them cooking. The others are worshipping the Lord, a little away from Him, timorous, as always, of Him Who has risen so divinely powerful.

« Here you are. Here is the bread. You have worked all night and you are tired. Now you will take some refreshment. Is it ready, Peter? »

« Yes, my Lord » says Peter in a voice that is more hoarse than usual, bent over the fire, and he wipes his eyes, which are wet with tears, as if the smoke made them weep, irritating them and his throat at the same time. But it is not the smoke that is the cause of that voice and of those tears... He takes the fish, which he has laid on a rough leaf, it looks like the leaf of a gourd, handed to him by Andrew after he had rinsed it in the lake.

Jesus offers and blesses, He breaks the bread and the fish, making eight portions which He hands out, and He tastes some as well. They eat with the respect with which they would fulfil a rite. Jesus looks at them and smiles. But He also is silent, until He asks: « Where are the others? »

« On the mountain. Where You said. And we came to fish, because

we have no more money and we do not want to take advantage of the disciples. »

« You are doing the right thing. But from now on, you apostles will stay on the mountain in prayer, edifying the disciples with your example. Send them fishing. It is better for you to remain there in prayer and to listen to those who are in need of advice or may come to give you information. Keep the disciples in a very united group. I will come soon. »

« We will do that, Lord. »

« Is Marjiam not with you? »

« You did not tell me to make him come so soon. »

« Make him come. The time of his obedience is over. »

« I will make him come, Lord. »

There is silence. Then Jesus, Who had been with His head bent a little, thinking, looks up and fixes His eyes on Peter. He looks at him with the glance of the moments when He worked the greatest miracles or was most authoritative. Peter is startled, almost frightened and he withdraws a little... But Jesus, laying a hand on Peter's shoulder, holds him firmly and while holding him so, He asks him: « Simon of Jonah, do you love Me? »

« Certainly, Lord! You know that I love You » replies Peter decidedly.

« Feed My lambs... Simon of Jonah, do you love Me? »

« Yes, my Lord. And You know that I love You. » His voice is not so bold, and he is rather surprised at the repetition of the question.

« Feed My lambs... Simon of Jonah, do you love Me? »

« Lord... You know everything... You know whether I love You... » Peter's voice trembles, as he is sure of his love, but he is under the impression that Jesus is not sure.

« Feed My sheep. Your treble profession of love has cancelled your treble denial. You are completely pure, Simon of Jonah, and I say to you: put on the pontificals and take the Holiness of the Lord among My flock. Fasten your clothes at your waist and keep them fastened, until from Shepherd you also become lamb. I solemnly tell you that when you were young, you put on your own belt and you went where you liked, but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and somebody else will put a belt round you and will take you where you would rather not go. But now it is I Who say to you: "Gird yourself and follow Me on My own way". Stand up and come. »

Jesus stands up and Peter stands up going towards the shore, and the others begin to put out the fire smothering it under the sand.

But John, after picking up the remains of the bread, follows Jesus. Peter hears the shuffling of steps and turns round. He sees John, and pointing him out to Jesus, he asks: « And what will happen to him? »

« If I want him to stay until I come back, what does it matter to you? You are to follow Me. »

They are on the shore. Peter would like to go on speaking, but Jesus' majesty and the words he has heard detain him. He kneels down, imitated by the others and adores. Jesus blesses them and dismisses them. They get on the boat and go away rowing. Jesus looks at them go.

630. Jesus Appears on Mount Tabor to the Apostles and to about Five Hundred Believers.

20th April 1947.

All the apostles are there, all the shepherd disciples, also Jonathan, whom Chuza has dismissed from his service. There is Marjiam and Manaen and many of the seventy two disciples and many more. They are in the shade of trees, which with their foliage mitigate light and heat. They are not up towards the summit, where the Transfiguration took place, but half-way up the hill, where a wood of oak-trees seems to be wanting to veil the summit and support the sides of the mountain with its powerful roots.

Almost everybody is dozing, because of the hour and also because of the inactivity and the long wait. But the cry of a boy - I do not know who he is, because I cannot see him from where I am - is sufficient to make them all stand up, in a first impulsive movement, which soon changes into prostration with their faces among the grass.

« Peace to all of you. Here I am among you. Peace to you. Peace to you. » Jesus passes amid them greeting and blessing.

Many weep, many smile blissfully. But there is so much peace in everybody.

Jesus goes and stops where the apostles and the shepherds form a thick group with Marjiam, Manaen, Stephen, Nicolaus, John of Ephesus, Hermas, and some of the more faithful disciples, whose names I do not remember. I see the man from Korazim who left off burying his father in order to follow Jesus, and another whom I have seen at other times. Jesus takes in His hands the head of Marjiam, who weeps looking at Him, He kisses his forehead and then presses him against His heart.

He then turns round towards the others and says: « Many and few. Where are the others? I know that many are My faithful disciples. Why here there are hardly five hundred people here, without taking into account the children of this one or that one among you? »

Peter, who had remained kneeling on the grass, stands up and speaks on behalf of everybody: « Lord, between the thirteenth and twentieth day from Your death, many people have come here from many towns in Palestine, saying that You were among them. So

many of us, in order to see You sooner, went some with this one, some with that one. Some have just left. Those who came here said that they had seen You and spoken to You in different places, and, what was wonderful, they all said that they had seen You on the twelfth day from Your death. We thought this was a deceit of some of those false prophets, that You said will rise to deceive the chosen ones. You said so, on the Mount of Olives, the evening before... before... » Peter, seized again with grief at that recollection, lowers his head and becomes silent. Two tears, followed by more, fall from his beard on the ground...

Jesus lays His right hand on the shoulder of Peter, who quivers at that contact and, as he dare not touch that Hand with his own, he bends his neck, his face to caress that adorable Hand with his cheek, and touch it lightly with his lips.

James of Alphaeus continues the narration: « And we discouraged people from believing those apparitions, that is those among us who got up to run towards the great sea, or towards Bozrah, or Caesarea Philippi, Pella or Kedesh, to the mountain near Jericho and to the plain, and also to the Esdraelon plain, to the great Hermon and to Beth-horon and Beth-shemesh, and to other places which have no names, as they are isolated houses in the plain near Japhia or Gilead. Too uncertain. Some people said: "We have seen Him and heard Him". Others sent word that they had seen You and had even a meal with You. Yes, we wanted to hold them back, because we thought that they were either snares of those who oppose us, or even phantasms seen by just people, who think of You so much that they end up by seeing You where You are not. But they wanted to go away. Some here, some there. And so we are reduced to less than one third. »

« You were right in insisting to hold them back. Not because I have not really been where those, who came to tell you, said. But because I had ordered you to stay here, united in prayer awaiting Me. And because I want My words to be obeyed, particularly by those who are My servants. If My servants begin to be disobedient, what will the believers do?

Listen all of you who are around here. Remember that in an organism a hierarchy is required, so that it may be really active and wholesome, that is, someone who commands, someone who transmits orders, and those who obey. That is what happens in the courts of kings, as well as in religions. From our Hebrew religion to the others, even if they are so impure, there is always a chief, his ministers, the servants of the ministers, and lastly the believers. A pontiff cannot act by himself. A king cannot act by himself. And their dispositions concern only human contingencies, or the formalism of rites... Yes. Unfortunately, now, also in the Mosaic religion, there is nothing left but the formalism of rites, the continuation of

the movements of a device that goes on making the same gestures, even now that the spirit of the gestures is dead. Dead for ever. Their Divine Enlivener, He Who gave import to the rites, has withdrawn from them. And the rites are gestures, nothing else. Gestures that any histrion could mime on the stage of an amphitheatre.

Woe, when a religion dies, and from a real living power becomes a clamorous exterior pantomime, an empty thing behind a painted scenery, behind pompous garments, the movements of devices performing certain actions, just as a key activates a spring, but neither key nor spring is conscious of what they do. Woe! Ponder! Remember this truth and tell your successors about it, so that it may be known throughout ages. The fall of a planet is less frightening than the fall of religion. If the sky should be depopulated of its stars and planets, it would not be for peoples as bad a misfortune as if they remained without religion. God would provide with provident power for the needs of men, because God can do everything for those who, in a wise way, or in the way that their ignorance knows, seek and love the Divinity in a right spirit. But if the day should come when men no longer loved God, because the priests of every religion had made only an empty pantomime of it, as they were the first not to believe in their religion, woe betide the Earth!

Now, if I say so for those religions that are impure, as some have come through partial revelation to a wise person, some derive from the instinctive need of man to create a faith for himself to nourish his soul to love a god - as this need is the strongest incentive of man, the permanent state of research for Him Who is, and Who is wanted by the spirit even if the proud intellect refuses to pay homage to any god, even if man, unaware of the soul, is unable to give a name to such need that stirs within him - what shall I say for this religion that I have given you, for this one that bears My Name, for this one of which I have created you pontiffs and priests, for this one that I order you to propagate all over the world? For this religion Unique, True, Perfect, Immutable in the Doctrine taught by Me, the Master, completed by the continuous teaching of Him Who will come, the Holy Spirit, the Most Holy Guide for My Pontiffs and for those who will help them, second chiefs in the various Churches created in the various regions where My Word will be asserted. These Churches, although various in number, will not be different in thought, but will be one thing only with the Church, as with their individual parts they will form the great building, greater and greater, the great new Temple, that with its pavilions will reach all the corners of the earth. Not different in thought, nor contrasting with one another, but united, brotherly to one another, all subjected to the Head of the Church, to Peter, and to his successors until the end of time.

And those that for any reason should separate from the Mother

Church, would be members cut off, no longer nourished with the mystic blood that is Grace coming from Me, the divine Head of the Church. Like prodigal sons, separated through their own will from the paternal house, in their short-lived wealth and constant and graver and graver misery, they would be blunting their spiritual intellects by means of too heavy foods and wines, and then they would languish eating the bitter acorns of unclean animals until they returned to the paternal house, saying with contrite hearts: "We have sinned. Father, forgive us and open the doors of your abode to us". Then, whether it is a member of a separated Church, or an entire Church - oh! if it were so, but where, when will so many imitators of Me arise, capable of redeeming these entire separated Churches, at the cost of their lives, to make, to remake only one Fold under only one shepherd, as I ardently wish? - then whether it is only one person or an assembly that comes back, open the doors to them.

Be fatherly. Consider that all of you, for one hour or for many, perhaps for years, were, individually, prodigal sons enveloped in concupiscence. Do not be hard on those who repent. Remember! Remember! Many of you ran away twenty two days ago. And was your running away perhaps not an abjuration of your love for Me? Therefore, as I received you as soon as you, repentant, came to Me, do the same yourselves. Do everything I did. That is My command. You lived with Me for three years. You know My deeds and My thoughts. When, in future, you will find yourselves in front of a case to be decided, look back to the time when you were with Me and behave as I behaved. You will never go wrong. I am the living perfect example of what you have to do.

And remember also that I did not refuse Myself even to Judas of Kerioth... A priest must try to save, by all possible means. And let love always prevail, among the means used to save. Consider that I was not unaware of Judas' horror... But, overcoming all disgust, I treated the wretch as I treated John. You... you will often be spared the bitterness of knowing that nothing is of any use to save a beloved disciple... And you will therefore be able to work without the tiredness that affects one, when one knows that everything is useless... One must work even then... always... until everything is accomplished... »

« But You are suffering, Lord!?! Oh! I did not believe that You could suffer any more! You still suffer because of Judas! Forget him Lord! » shouts John, who does not turn his eyes away from his Lord for one moment.

Jesus opens His arms, in His usual attitude of resigned confirmation of a painful fact, and He says: « It is so... Judas has been and is the deepest sorrow in the sea of My sorrows. It is the sorrow that remains... The other sorrows have come to an end with the end of

the Sacrifice. But this one remains. I loved him. I consumed Myself in the effort to save him... I was able to open the doors of Limbo and bring out the just, I was able to open the doors of Purgatory, and bring out those who were being purified. But the place of horror was closed upon him. In vain I died for him. »

« Do not suffer! Do not suffer! You are glorious, my Lord! Glory and joy to You. You have consumed Your sorrow! » implores John again.

« No one really thought that He could still suffer! » they all say, amazed and moved, whispering to one another.

« And do you not think of how much sorrow My Heart will still have to suffer throughout ages, for every unrepentant sinner, for every heresy that denies Me, for every believer who abjures Me, for every - torture of all tortures - for every guilty priest, the cause of scandal and ruin? You do not know! You do not know as yet. You will never know fully, until you are with Me in the Light of Heaven. Then you will understand... In contemplating Judas, I contemplated the chosen ones whose election is changed into ruin through their wicked will... Oh! you who are faithful, you who will form the future priests, remember My sorrow, grow holier and holier to comfort My sorrow, make them holy so that, as far as possible, there may be no repetition of this sorrow, exhort, watch, teach, fight, be as heedful as mothers, as untiring as teachers, as vigilant as shepherds, as manlike as warriors, to support the priests that will be formed by you. Ensure, oh! do ensure that the sin of the twelfth apostle may not have too many repetitions in future... Be as I was with you, as I am with you.

I said to you: "Be as perfect as the Father in Heaven". And let your humanity tremble at that command, now even more than when I told you. Because now you are aware of your weakness. Well, to encourage you I will say to you: "Be like your Master". I am the Man. What I have done, you can do. Also miracles. Yes, also them. So that the world may know that it is I Who send you, and he who suffers may not weep, disheartened by this thought: "He is no longer among us to cure our sick people and to comfort our sorrows". During these days I have worked miracles to comfort hearts and convince them that the Christ is not destroyed because He was put to death, on the contrary, He is stronger, eternally strong and powerful. But when I am no longer among you, you will do what I have done so far, and what I will still do. But not so much out of the power or working miracles, but because through your holiness the love for the new Religion will grow greater. And it is over your holiness, not over the gift I transmit to you, that you must be jealously watchful. The holier you are, the dearer you will be to My Heart, and the Spirit of God will enlighten you, while the Goodness of God and His Power will fill your hands with the gifts of

Heaven.

A miracle is not a common and essential act for the life in faith. On the contrary, blessed are those who will be able to remain in the faith without extraordinary means to help them to believe! But neither is a miracle an act so exclusively reserved to special times, that it must cease when they cease. There will always be miracles in the world. Always. And the more numerous are the just in the world, the more numerous will the miracles be. When you see that the true miracles are becoming very rare, you can then say that faith and justice are languishing. Because I said: "If you have faith, you will be able to move mountains". Because I said: "The signs that will accompany those, who have true faith in Me, are the victories over demons and diseases, over elements and snares". God is with those who love Him. The sign of how My believers are in Me will be the number and the power of the miracles they will work in My name and to glorify God. To a world without true miracles, it will be possible to say, without slander: "You have lost faith and justice. You are a world without saints".

So, to go back to what I was saying at the beginning, you did the right thing in trying to detain those who, like children seduced by the noise of music or by something glittering strangely, run away absentmindedly from what is certain. But, see? They have their punishment, because they lose My word. But you have been wrong as well. You did remember that I told you not to run here and there at every rumour saying that I was in a certain place. But you did not remember that I also said that, in His second coming, the Christ will be like lightning striking in the east and flashing into the west, in a time shorter than the blinking of an eye. Now this second coming began at the moment of My Resurrection. It will culminate in the apparition of the Christ Judge to all the risen. But before that, how many times I will appear to convert, to cure, to console, to teach, to give orders!

I solemnly tell you: I am about to go back to My Father. But the Earth will not lose My Presence. I shall be watchful and friendly, Master and Doctor, where bodies or souls, sinners or saints, will need Me or will be elected by Me to transmit My words to other people. Because, and this also is true, Mankind will be in need of a continuous act of love from Me because it is so hard to bend, so easy to wane, ready to forget, eager to descend instead of ascending, that if I did not detain it with supernatural means, the law, the Gospel, the divine assistance administered by My Church would be of no avail to keep Humanity in the knowledge of the Truth and in the will to reach Heaven. And I am speaking of the Humanity that believes in Me... Always little when compared to the great mass of the inhabitants of the Earth.

I will come. Let those who will have Me remain humble. Let

those who will not have Me, not be eager to have Me, to be praised thereby. Let no one wish what is uncommon. God knows when and where to give you it. It is not necessary to have extraordinary things to enter Heaven. On the contrary, they are a weapon, that, when it is badly used, may open hell instead of Heaven. And now I will tell you how. Because pride may arise. Because a state of the spirit may intervene, contemptible in the eyes of God, as it is like a torpor in which one may relax to caress the treasure received, considering oneself already in Heaven having been granted that gift. No. In that case, instead of flame and wing, it becomes ice and boulder, and the soul falls and dies. And also: a gift badly used may give rise to the eagerness to have even more, in order to be more praised. Then, in that case, the Spirit of Evil might replace the Lord to seduce the imprudent believers by means of impure prodigies. Always keep away from all kinds of enticements. Avoid them. Be happy with what God grants you. He knows what is useful to you and in what manner. And always consider that every gift is also a trial, in addition to being a gift, a trial of your justice and will. I have given everyone of you the same things. But what improved you, ruined Judas. Was it therefore a bad gift? No. But wicked was the will of that spirit...

The same now. I have appeared to many people. Not only to console and assist, but also to make you happy. You have begged Me to convince the people that I have risen, because the members of the Sanhedrin are trying to convince them of what they think. I have appeared to children and to adults, on the same day, in places so distant from one another, that it would take many days' walk to reach them. But I am no longer subjected to distances. And My simultaneous appearances have puzzled you as well. You have said to one another: "These people have seen phantasms". So you have forgotten part of My words, that is, that from now on I shall be east and west, north and south, wherever I think it is just that I should be, without anything preventing Me from doing so, and as fast as lightning flashing across the sky. I am a real Man. Here are My limbs, My solid warm Body, capable of moving, breathing, speaking, as you do. But I am true God. And if for thirty three years My Divinity, for a supreme purpose, was concealed in My Humanity, now the Divinity, although joined to the Humanity, has overwhelmed the latter, and My Humanity enjoys the perfect freedom of glorified bodies. Queen with the Divinity no longer subjected to what is limitation for Humanity. Here I am. I am here with you and I could be, if I wanted, in a moment at the end of the world to draw to Myself a spirit seeking Me.

And what effect will have the fact that I have been near Caesarea on the Sea and at the high Caesarea, and at the Cherith, and at Engedi, and near Pella and Juttah, and in other places in

Judaea, and at Bozrah, and on the Great Hermon, and at Sidon and at the borders of Galilee? And that I cured a boy, and I brought back to life one who had breathed his last shortly before, and I consoled an anguished person, and I called to My service one who had mortified himself with hard penance, and to God a just man who had begged Me to do so, and I gave My message to some innocents and My orders to a faithful heart? Will that convince the world? No, it will not. Those who believe, will continue to believe, with greater peace, but not with greater strength, because they already really believed. Those who did not believe with true faith will remain doubtful, and the wicked will say that My apparitions are frenzy and falsehood, and that the dead man was not dead, but was sleeping...

Do you remember when I told you the parable of Dives? I said that Abraham replied to the damned soul: "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not believe even one who rises from the dead to tell them what they have to do". Did they perhaps believe Me, the Master, and My miracles? What did Lazarus' miracle achieve? My hurried death sentence. And My Resurrection? An increase of their hatred. Even My miracles of these last days among you will not convince the world, but only those who no longer belong to the world, as they have chosen the Kingdom of God with its present fatigue and pains and its future glory.

But I am glad that you have been confirmed in the faith and that you have been faithful to My order, by remaining upon this mountain waiting, without being in a hurry to enjoy things that are also good, but are different from the ones I mentioned to you. Disobedience gives one tenth and takes away nine tenths. They went away and will hear words of men, always those. You have remained and you have heard My Word which, even if it repeats things already said, is always good and useful. The lesson will serve as an example for all of you, and also for them, for the future. »

Jesus looks around at those faces gathered there and calls: « Elisha of Engedi, come here. I have something to tell you. »

I had not recognised the ex-leper, the son of old Abraham. Then he was a ghastly skeleton, now he is a buxom man in the prime of life.

He goes near, prostrating himself at the feet of Jesus, Who says to him: « A question is trembling on your lips since you heard that I have been to Engedi. And it is this: "Have You comforted my father?" I say to you: "I have more than consoled him! I have taken him with Me". »

« With You, my Lord? And where is he, since I do not see him? »

« Elisha, I am still here for a short time. Then I will go to My Father... »

« Lord!... You mean... My father is dead! »

« He died peacefully on My Heart. Sorrow is over also for him. He consumed it all, and by remaining always faithful to the Lord. Do not weep. Had you not left him to follow Me? »

« Yes, my Lord... »

« Well. Your father is with Me. Therefore, by following Me, you still come near your father. »

« But when? And how? »

« In his vineyard, where he heard Me speak for the first time. He reminded Me of his prayer of last year. I said to him: "Come". He died a happy death, because you left everything to follow Me. »

« Forgive me if I weep... He was my father... »

« I do appreciate grief. » He lays His hand on his head to comfort him and says to the disciples: « Here is a new companion. Love him, because I took him from his sepulchre, so that he may serve Me. »

He then calls: « Elias. Come to Me. Do not be shy like one who is a stranger among brothers. All the past is destroyed. And you come, too, Zacharias, who left father and mother for Me, go among the seventy-two with Joseph of Cintium. You deserve it, as you have defied the ways of the mighty ones for My sake. And you, Philip, and you, his companion, who do not want to be called with your name any more, as it sounds horrible to you, so take that of your father, who is a just man, even if he is not yet among those who follow Me openly. Can you all see? I do not exclude anybody of good will. Neither those who followed Me already as disciples, nor those who performed good deeds in My name, even if they did not belong to the groups of My disciples, nor those who belonged to sects, that not everybody loves, as they can always take the right road and are not to be rejected. Do, as I do. I join these to the old disciples. Because the Kingdom of Heaven is open to all those of good will. And, although they are not present, I tell you not to reject the Gentiles either. I have not repelled them, when I knew that they were anxious to know the Truth. Do what I have done. And you, Daniel, who have really come out, not of the pit of the lions, but of the jackals, come and join these. And you, Benjamin. I join you to these (he points to the group of the seventy-two which is almost complete) because the harvest of the Lord will be very rich and many labourers are required. Now let us be united here for a short time, while the day wears on. In the evening you will depart from the mountain and at dawn you apostles and you two, whom I have mentioned separately, will come with Me, with all those who are here of the seventy-two (He points at Zacharias and at this Joseph of Cintium, who is not new to me). The others will remain here, waiting for those who have run away here and there like idle wasps, to tell them in My name that one cannot find the Lord by imitating unwilling disobedient children, and that they all have to be at Bethany twenty days before Pentecost, because later they would

look for Me in vain. Sit down now, and rest. You, come with Me a little aside. »

He sets out, holding Marjiam by the hand all the time, followed by the eleven apostles.

He sits down in the thickest part of a thick wood of oak-trees, and draws to Himself Marjiam, who is very sad. So sad that Peter says: « Comfort him, Lord. He was already sad, now he is even more so. »

« Why, child? Are you not with Me? Should you not be happy to know that I have overcome sorrow? »

Marjiam's only answer is to burst into tears.

« I do not know what the matter is with him. I have asked him in vain. And today I was not expecting these tears! » grumbles Peter, somewhat annoyed.

« But I know » says John.

« So much the better for you! So why is he weeping? »

« He did not begin to weep today. He has been weeping for days... »

« Eh! I have noticed that! But why? »

« The Lord knows, I am sure. And I know that He alone has the word that can comfort him » says John smiling.

« That is true. I know. And I know that Marjiam, a good disciple, is really a little boy just now, a little boy who does not see the reality of things. But, My beloved one among all the disciples, do you not consider that I went to corroborate wavering faiths, to absolve, to receive lives that had come to an end, to annul poisonous doubts with which the weaker ones had been imbued, to reply with pity or severity to those who still want to fight against Me, to testify with My presence that I have risen from the dead, where they were more eager to say that I was dead? Was there any need for Me to come to you, a child, whose faith, hope, charity, whose good will and obedience are known to Me? Should I have come to you for a moment, when I shall have you with Me, as now, much more often? Who will celebrate Passover with Me, except you alone among all the other disciples? Can you see all these? They have celebrated their Passover, and the flavour of the lamb and of the caroset, of the unleavened bread and of the wine became completely like ashes and gall and vinegar for their palates immediately afterwards. But you and I, My dear boy, will consume our Passover joyfully, and it will be like honey that trickles and remains such. Who wept then, will rejoice now. Who rejoiced then, cannot expect to rejoice again. »

« Really... We were not very cheerful that day... » whispers Thomas.

« Yes. Our hearts trembled... » says Matthew.

« And we were boiling over with suspicion and indignation, at least I was » says Thaddeus.

« And so you all say that you would like to celebrate the supplementary

Passover... »

« It is so, Lord » says Peter.

« One day you complained because the women disciples and your son were not taking part in the Passover banquet. Now you complain because who did not rejoice then, must do so now. »

« That is true. I am a sinner. »

« And I am He Who is compassionate. I want you all to be around Me, and not you only, but also the women disciples. Lazarus will give us hospitality once again. I did not want your daughter, Philip, or your wives, I did not want Myrtha, Naomi, and the young girl who is with them, and this boy. Jerusalem, in those days, was not a place for everybody! »

« True! It is a good thing that they were not there » says Philip with a sigh.

« Yes. They would have seen our cowardice. »

« Be quiet, Peter. It has been forgiven. »

« Yes. But I confessed it to my son and I thought that that was why he was so sad. I confessed it, because every time I confess it, it is a relief. It is as if I removed a big stone from my heart. I feel more absolved every time I humiliate myself. But if Marjiam is sad because You have shown Yourself to other people... »

« For that and for nothing else, father. »

« Then, cheer up! He loved you and He loves you. You can see that. But I informed you of the second Passover... »

« I thought that I had done the obedience that Porphirea had given me in Your name not too willingly, Lord. And that, therefore, You were punishing me. And I also thought that You did not show Yourself to me because I hated Judas and those who crucified You » confesses Marjiam.

« Do not hate anybody. I have forgiven. »

« Yes, my Lord. I will not hate any more. »

« And do not be sad any longer. »

« I will not be so any more, Lord. »

Marjiam, like all very young people, is not so timid with Jesus as the others are, and he relaxes confidently in Jesus' arms, now that he is sure that Jesus is not angry with him. And even more, like a chick under its mother's wing, he takes shelter in the arms of Jesus, Who presses Him against Himself, and as the anxiety that had made him sad and upset for so many days ceases, he blissfully falls asleep.

« He is still a boy » remarks the Zealot.

« Yes. But how much he has suffered! Porphirea told me when, informed by Joseph of Tiberias, she brought him to me » Peter replies to him. "Then he says to the Master: « Porphirea also at Jerusalem? » How much eagerness there is in Peter's voice!

« All the women. I want to bless them before I ascend to My Father.

They have served as well, and very often better than men. »

« And to Your Mother? Are You not going? » asks Thaddeus.

« We are together. »

« Together When? »

« Judas, Judas, and do you think that I, Who have always found joy near Her, should not stay with Her now? »

« But Mary is all alone in Her house. My mother told me yesterday. »

Jesus smiles and replies: « Only the High Priest goes behind the Holy of Holies. »

« So? What do You mean? »

« That there are beatitudes that cannot be described and known. That is what I mean. »

He gently moves Marjiam away from Himself and entrusts him to the arms of John, who is the one closest to Him. He stands up. He blesses them. And while they all, with their heads lowered, on their knees, with the exception of John, who has Marjiam's head in his lap, receive His blessing, He disappears.

« He is really like the lightning of which He speaks » says Bartholomew.

They remain meditating, awaiting sunset.

The Lord wants me to take another copy book for the last instructions and visions, as they could not be contained here, the pages being too few.

631. The Last Teachings before Ascension-Day.

I should have begun with a new copy-book. But as Martha is ill, I wrote here and then I copied it on the new one.

22nd April 1947.

They are up on another mountain, which is even more covered with woods, not far from Nazareth, to which a road leads running along the foot of the mountain.

Jesus makes them sit down in a circle, the apostles closer to Him, behind them the disciples (those of the seventy-two who did not go away here and there) with Zacharias and Joseph. Marjiam is at His feet in a privileged position.

Jesus speaks as soon as they are all sitting and quiet, paying attention to His words. He says:

« Pay attention to Me, because I will tell you things of the greatest importance. You will not understand them all, neither will you understand them all well. But He Who comes after Me, will make you understand them. So, listen to Me.

Nobody is more convinced than you are, that without the help

of God man sins easily, as his very weak constitution was debilitated by the Sin. So I should be an imprudent Redeemer, if after giving you so much to redeem you, I did not give you also the means of retaining you in the effects of My Sacrifice.

You know that all the easiness to commit sin derives from the Sin that, by depriving men of Grace, despoils them of their strength: of the union with Grace. You have said: "But You have given Grace to us". No. It was given to the just up to My Death. To give it to future people a means is required. A means that will not be only a ritual figure, but on those who receive it will really impress the real character of children of God, as Adam and Eve were, whose souls vivified by Grace, possessed sublime gifts, given by God to His beloved creatures.

You are aware of what man had and what man lost. Now, through My Sacrifice, the gates of Grace have been reopened and its river can descend on all those who ask it out of their love for Me. Men will therefore have the character of children of God through the merits of the First-Born among men, of Him Who is speaking to you, your Redeemer, your eternal Pontiff, your Brother in the Father, your Master. It will be by Jesus Christ and through Jesus Christ that present and future men will be able to possess Heaven and enjoy God, the last purpose of man. Up to the present time, even the most just among the just, although circumcised as children of the chosen people, were not able to attain that purpose. Although their virtues were taken into consideration by God, and their places were ready in Heaven, the latter was closed and the enjoyment of God was denied to them, because on their souls, blessed flower-beds blooming with every virtue, there was also the cursed tree of Original Sin, and no action, no matter how holy it might be, could destroy it; neither is it possible to enter Heaven with the roots and foliage of so evil a tree.

On Preparation Day the sighs of the patriarchs and prophets, and of all the just of Israel, appeared in the joy of the accomplished Redemption, and their souls, whiter than mountain snow, such was their virtue, lost the only Stain that segregated them from Heaven.

But the world continues. Generations and generations arise and will arise. Peoples and peoples will come to the Christ. Can the Christ die with each new generation to save it, or for each people that comes to Him? No. He cannot. The Christ died once, and He will never die again, for ever. Then, must these generations, these peoples, become wise through My Word, but not possess Heaven and enjoy God, because they are injured by Original Sin? No. It would not be just, neither for them, because their love for Me would be useless, nor for Me, because I would have died for too few. So? How can the different things be conciliated? Which new miracle will the Christ work, and He has already worked so many, before leaving

the world for Heaven, after loving men to the extent of dying for them?

He has already worked one, by leaving you His Body and His Blood as a fortifying and sanctifying food and as a remembrance of His love, by giving you the order to do what I have done in memory of Me and as a sanctifying means for the disciples, for the disciples of the disciples, until the end of time.

But that evening, when you were already purified exteriorly, do you remember what I did? I girded Myself with a towel and I washed your feet, and to one of you, who was scandalised at that too humiliating gesture, I said: "If I do not wash you, you will have no part in common with Me". You did not understand what I meant, of which part I was speaking, which symbol I performed. Well, I will tell you. Besides teaching you humility and the necessity of being pure, in order to enter and take part in My Kingdom, in addition to bringing benignly to your notice that from a man, who is just, and therefore pure in his spirit and intellect, God exacts only a last wash of the part that is necessarily easier to become contaminated also in just people, even only with the dust that the necessary cohabitation among men lays also on clean limbs, on bodies, I have taught you another thing. I washed your feet, the lowest part of body, the one that goes among mud and dust, at times among dirty things, to signify the flesh, the material part of man, which part always has some imperfections, with the exception of those who are without the Original Sin, either through the deed of God or by the Nature of God, and such imperfections are at times so slight that only God can see them, but really, one must watch them, so that they may not grow stronger and turn into natural habits, and fight them to extirpate them.

So I washed your feet. When? Before breaking the bread and wine and transubstantiating them into My Body and My Blood. Because I am the Lamb of God, and I cannot descend where Satan has his mark. So, I washed you first. Then I gave Myself to you. You also will wash with Baptism those who will come to Me, so that they may not receive My Body unworthily and it may not change for them into a dreadful death sentence.

You are dismayed. You are looking at one another. With your eyes you are asking: "And Judas, then?" I say to you: "Judas ate his death". The supreme act of love did not touch his heart. The last attempt of his Master knocked against the stone of his heart, and on that stone, in the place of the Tau, was engraved the horrible initial of Satan, the sign of the Beast.

So I washed you before admitting you to the Eucharistic banquet, before listening to the confession of your sins, before infusing the Holy Spirit into you and consequently the character of both true Christians reconfirmed in Grace, and of My Priests. Let the same

be done to the others whom you will have to prepare for the Christian life.

Baptise with water in the Name of the God One and Trine and in My Name and through My infinite Merits, so that the Original Sin may be cancelled from hearts, sins may be remitted, Grace and the Holy Virtues may be infused, and the Holy Spirit may descend to dwell in consecrated temples, that is, in the bodies of men living in the Grace of the Lord.

Was water necessary to cancel the Sin? Water does not touch the soul. But neither does the immaterial sign touch the sight of man, who is so material in all his actions. I could very well have infused Life also without a visible means. But who would have believed it? How many are the men who can firmly believe if they do not see? So take the lustral water of the ancient Mosaic Law, the water that was used to purify unclean people and admit them again to the camps, after they had become contaminated by a corpse. In actual fact, every man who is born is contaminated, by having contact with a soul dead to Grace. So let it be purified of the unclean contact by the lustral water and made worthy of entering the eternal Temple.

And let water be a dear thing to you... After expiating and redeeming through thirty-three years of laborious life, which culminated in the Passion, after giving all My Blood for the sins of men, then the wholesome waters to wash the Original Sin were drawn from the bloodless consumed Body of the Martyr. By means of the consumed Sacrifice I redeemed you from that stain. If on the point of death a divine miracle of Mine had made Me descend from the cross, I solemnly tell you that with the blood I had shed I would have redeemed the sins, but not the Sin. The full consummation was required for it. Really, the wholesome water of which Ezekiel speaks came out of this Side of Mine. Immerse souls into it, so that they may come out of it spotless, to receive the Holy Spirit Who, in recollection of that breath which the Creator breathed on Adam to give him the spirit and thus the image and likeness of Himself, will come to breathe and dwell in the hearts of men who have been redeemed.

Baptise with My Baptism, but in the Name of the God Trine, because, really, if the Father had not wanted and the Spirit had not acted, the Word would have not become incarnate and you would have had no Redemption. So it is just and fair that every man should receive the Life through Those Who joined together in wanting to give it to him, mentioning the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the act of Baptism, which takes the name of Christian after Me, to distinguish it from the others past and future, which will be rites, but not indelible signs on the immortal part.

Take the Bread and the Wine as I did, and bless them, break

them and hand them out in My Name; and let Christians feed on Me. And of the Bread and Wine make an offering to the Father of Heavens, consuming it then in memory of the Sacrifice that I offered and consumed on the Cross for your salvation. I, Priest and Victim, by Myself offered and consumed Myself, as no one, if I had not wanted, could do that of Me. You, My Priests, do that in memory of Me and so that the infinite treasures of My Sacrifice may ascend imploringly to God, and descend propitiously on all those who invoke them with firm faith.

Firm faith, I said. No science is called for to avail oneself of the Eucharistic Food and of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, but faith. Faith that in that bread and in that wine, that one authorised by Me and by those who will come after Me - you Peter, the new Pontiff of the new Church, you James of Alphaeus, you John, you Andrew, you Simon, you Philip, you Bartholomew, you Thomas, you Judas Thaddeus, you Matthew, you James of Zebedee - will consecrate in My Name, is My true Body, My true Blood, and he who feeds on it receives Me in Flesh, Blood, Soul and Divinity and he who offers Me really, offers Jesus Christ, as He offered Himself for the sins of the world. A child or an ignorant person can receive Me, just like a learned man and an adult. And a child and an ignorant person will receive the same advantages from the Sacrifice offered, as those that anyone among you will have. It is sufficient that faith and the grace of the Lord are in them.

But you are about to receive a new Baptism, that of the Holy Spirit. I promised it to you and it will be given to you. The very Holy Spirit will descend upon you. I will tell you when. And you will be replete with It, in the fullness of sacerdotal gifts. You will be able, therefore, as I did with you, to infuse the Spirit with which you are replete, to confirm the Christians in grace and instil the gifts of the Paraclete into them. As a regal Sacrament, little inferior to the Priesthood, it must have the solemnity of Mosaic consecrations with the imposition of hands and the unction with scented oil, which was once used to consecrate Priests.

No. Do not look at one another so frightened! I am not speaking sacrilegious words! I am not teaching you sacrilegious acts! The dignity of a Christian is such, I repeat it, that it is little inferior to a priesthood. Where do priests live? In the Temple. And a Christian will be a living temple. What do priests do? They serve God with prayers, sacrifices and taking care of the believers. That is what they should have done... And a Christian will serve God with prayer and sacrifice and with brotherly love.

And you will listen to the confession of sins, as I listened to yours and to those of many and I forgave where I saw true repentance.

Are you becoming upset? Why? Are you afraid that you may not

be able to distinguish? On other occasions I have already spoken of sin and of the judgement of sin. But remember, when judging, to ponder on the seven conditions whereby an action may or may not be sinful and of different gravity. I will recall them. When one sinned and how many times, who sinned, with whom, with what, which is the matter of the sin, which is the cause, why did one sin. But be not afraid. The Holy Spirit will assist you.

What I implore you with all My heart to observe is a holy life. It will increase the supernatural lights in you to such an extent, that you will succeed in reading the hearts of men without mistaking, and you will be able, with love or with authority, to tell sinners, who fear to disclose their sin or refuse to confess it, the state of their hearts, helping the timid and humiliating the unrepentant. Bear in mind that the Earth is about to lose its Absolver and that you must be what I was: just, patient, merciful, but not weak. I said to you: what you will loose on Earth will be loosed in Heaven and what you bind here will be bound in Heaven. So with measured deliberation judge every man without allowing yourselves to be corrupted by likes or dislikes, by gifts or threats, being impartial in everything and with everybody as is God, bearing in mind the weakness of man and the snares of his enemies.

I remind you that at times God allows also His chosen ones to fall, not because He likes to see them fall, but because a greater future advantage may come from a fall. So offer your hands to those who fall, because you do not know whether that fall is the resolute crisis of an illness that dies for ever, leaving in the blood a purification that brings about health. In our case: that brings about holiness.

Be instead severe with those who have no respect for My Blood, and with their souls just cleansed by the divine bath, throw themselves into filth one and one hundred times. Do not curse them, but be severe, exhort them, reproach them seventy times seven, and have recourse to the extreme punishment of cutting them off from the chosen people, only when their obstinacy in a fault that scandalises the brothers, compels you to take action in order not to become accomplices of their deeds. Remember what I said: "If your brother has sinned, correct him between your two selves. If he does not listen to you, correct him in the presence of two or three witnesses. If that is not sufficient, inform the Church. If he does not listen even to the Church, consider him as a Gentile and a publican".

In the Mosaic religion matrimony is a contract. In the new Christian religion let it be a sacred indissoluble act, on which may the grace of the Lord descend to make of husband and wife two ministers of His in the propagation of the human race. From the very first moments try to advise the consort belonging to the new religion to convert the consort, who is still out of the number of the

believers, to enter and become part of it, to avoid those painful divisions of thought, and consequently of peace, that we have noticed also among ourselves. But when it is a question of believers in the Lord, for no reason whatsoever what God united is to be dissolved. And when a consort is Christian and is united to a heathen, I advice that consort to bear his/her cross with patience, meekness and also with strength, to the extent of dying to defend his/her faith, but without leaving the consort whom he/she married with full consent. This is My advice for a more perfect life in the matrimonial state, until it will be possible, with the diffusion of Christianity, to have marriages between believers. Then let the bond be sacred and indissoluble, and the love holy.

It would be bad, if owing to the hardness of hearts, what happened in the old faith should happen also in the new one: the authorization of repudiation and dissolution to avoid scandal created by the lust of man. I solemnly tell you that everybody must bear his cross in every state, also in the matrimonial one. And I also solemnly tell you that no pressure is to subdue your authority in saying: "It is against the law" to those who want to marry for the second time before one of the consorts is dead. It is better, I tell you, that a putrid part breaks off, by itself or followed by others, rather than to keep it in the Body of the Church, grant it something contrary to the holiness of marriage, scandalising the humble and making them express thoughts unfavourable to sacerdotal integrity and on the value of wealth and power.

Marriage is a grave and holy act. And to prove that, I took part at a wedding and I worked My first miracle there. But woe if it degenerates into lust and whim. Let marriage, the natural contract between man and woman, be elevated to a spiritual contract, by which the souls of two people who love each other swear to serve the Lord in reciprocal love, offered to the Lord in obedience to His order of procreation to give children to the Lord.

And also... James, do you remember the conversation on Mount Carmel? Since that time I have spoken to you about this. But the others do not know... You saw Mary of Lazarus spread ointment on My limbs at the supper of the Sabbath at Bethany. I then said to you: "She has prepared Me for My burial". In actual fact she did. Not for My burial, because she thought that that sorrow was still far away, but to purify and embalm My limbs from all the impurities of the road, so that I might ascend the throne scented with balsamic oil.

The life of man is a road. The entry of man into the next life ought to be an entry into the Kingdom. Every king is anointed and perfumed before ascending his throne and showing himself to his people. Also the Christian is the son of a king, and he goes along his road, directing his steps towards the kingdom where the Father

calls him. The death of a Christian is nothing but the entry into the Kingdom to ascend the throne that the Father has prepared for him. Death is not frightful for him who is not afraid of God, knowing that he is in His grace. But let the garment of him who is to ascend the throne be purified of all rubbish, so that it may be preserved beautiful for the resurrection, and let his spirit be purified, so that it may shine on the throne that the Father has prepared for him and he may appear in the dignity befitting a son of such a great king. Let the unction given to dying Christians, or rather, to Christians being born, because I solemnly tell you that he who dies in the Lord is born to the eternal life, let that unction be an increase of Grace, the annulment of sins of which the man is fully repentant, the exciter of fervent yearning for Good, the giver of strength for the supreme struggle.

Repeat the gesture of Mary on the bodies of the chosen ones. And let no one deem it unworthy of him. I accepted that balsamic oil from a woman. Every Christian should consider himself honoured by it, as a supreme grace of the Church whose son he is, and should accept it from the priest to be cleansed of the last stains. And every priest ought to be happy to repeat on the body of his dying brother, the gesture of love that Mary made on the suffering Christ. I truly tell you that what you did not do to Me then, letting a woman exceed you, and now you think of it with so much regret, you can do in future and for as many times as you will bend over one who is dying to prepare him to his meeting with God. I am in beggars and in dying people, in pilgrims, in orphans, in widows, in prisoners, in those who are hungry, thirsty or cold, in who is grieved or tired. I am in all the members of My mystic Body, which is the union of all My believers. Love Me in them and you will make amends for your indifference on so many occasions, giving great joy to Me and so much glory to yourselves.

Finally, consider that the world, age, diseases, time, persecutions conspire against you. Therefore do not be avaricious with what you have received and do not be imprudent. For this reason transmit the Priesthood in My Name to the best disciples, so that the Earth may not be left without priests. And ensure that the sacred character is granted after a severe examination, not verbal, but of the deeds of him who asks to be a priest, or of him whom you judge suitable to be one.

Consider what is a Priest. The good he can do. The evil he can do. You have had the example of what can be done by a priest who has lapsed from his sacred character. I truly tell you that this country will be dispersed because of the sins of the Temple. But I also truly tell you that also the Earth will be destroyed when the abomination of desolation will affect the new Priesthood, by leading men to apostasy in order to embrace the doctrines of hell. Then the son

of Satan will arise and peoples will moan in dreadful fright, as only few will remain faithful to the Lord, and also then, after horrible convulsions, the end will come after the victory of God and of His few Chosen ones, and the wrath of God on all the cursed ones. Woe, three times woe if for those few there will still be no saints, the last pavilions of the Temple of Christ! Woe, three times woe, if to comfort the last Christians, there will be no true Priests, as there will be for the first ones. Really the last persecution will be horrible, as it will not be the persecution of men but of the son of Satan and of his followers. Priests? Those of the last hour will have to be more than priests, so wild will be the persecution of the hordes of the Antichrist. Like the man dressed in linen, who is so holy as to be beside the Lord, in the vision of Ezekiel, they will have to be untiring in marking a Tau with their perfection on the spirits of the few faithful ones, so that the flames of may do not cancel that sign. Priests? Angels. Angels swinging the thurible of the incences of their virtues to purify the air of the miasmata of Satan. Angels? More than angels: other Christs, others Myself, so that the believers of the last times may be able to persevere until the end. That is what they will have to be.

But future good and evil have roots in the present. Avalanches begin with a snowflake. A priest who is unworthy, impure, heretic, unfaithful, incredulous, tepid or cold, dull, insipid, lustful, does ten times as much harm as a believer guilty of the same sins, and he drags many more to commit sin. Laxity in the Priesthood, the reception of impure doctrines, selfishness, greed, concupiscence in the Priesthood, you are aware of the result of all that: deicide. Now, in future ages, the Son of God can no longer be killed, but the faith in God, the idea of God, can. So a deicide will be accomplished, which is even more irreparable, because it is without resurrection. Oh! it can be accomplished, yes. I see... It will be possible to accomplish it, because of the too many Judases of Kerioth of future ages. How horrible!...

My Church demolished by its own ministers! While I support it with the help of victims. And they, the Priests, who will have only the garment and not the soul of a Priest, who help the ebullition of the waves agitated by the infernal Snake against your boat, Peter. Stand up! Rise! Transmit this order to your successors: "Hands on the rudder, the lash on the shipwrecked people who wanted to be shipwrecked, and try to founder the boat of God". Strike, but save and proceed. Be severe, because just is the punishment for marauders. Defend the treasure of the faith, Hold the lamp aloft, like a lighthouse above the rough sea, so that those who follow your boat may see and not perish. Shepherd and pilot for the dreadful times, gather, guide, hold My Gospel high, because safety is found in it and in no other science.

The days will come when, as it happened to us in Israel, but even more deeply, the Priesthood will think it is a chosen class, because it knows the superfluous and does not know the indispensable any longer, or is aware of it in the deaf form in which the Priests now know the Law: in its garment, exaggeratedly overburdened with fringes, but not in its spirit. The days will come when all the books will replace the Book, and this will be used only as one, who must use an object by force, handles it mechanically, as a peasant ploughs, sows, harvests, without meditating on the wonderful providence which is that multiplication of seeds that is renewed each year: a seed is thrown into turned soil and it becomes stalk, ear of corn, then flour and then bread through God's paternal love. Who, putting a mouthful of bread in his mouth, raises his spirit to Him Who created the first seed and for ages has made it spring up again and grow, giving the right quantity of rain and heat, so that it may open and grow and ripen without rotting or getting burnt? Likewise the time will come when the Gospel will be taught scientifically well, spiritually badly.

Now, what is science if it lacks wisdom? It is straw. Straw that swells and does not nourish. And I truly tell you that the time will come in which too many among the Priests will be like swollen straw-stacks, proud straw-stacks, that will stand up straight in the pride of being so swollen, as if they had given themselves all those ears of wheat that crowned the straw, as if the ears were still on the summits of the straw, and will think that they are everything because, instead of the handful of wheat, the true nourishment that is the spirit of the Gospel, they will have all that straw: a heap! A heap! But can straw be enough? It is not even sufficient for the stomach of a beast of burden, and if its master does not strengthen the animal with fodder and fresh herbs, the beast of burden nourished only with straw wastes away and may even die. And yet I tell you that the time will come when the Priests, forgetting that with few ears of wheat I taught spirits the Truth, and forgetting also what it cost their Lord that true bread of the spirit, drawn completely and only from the Divine Wisdom, spoken by the Divine Word, dignified in its doctrinal form, indefatigable in its repetitions, so that the truth spoken should not get lost, humble in its form, without the false glitter of human sciences, without historical or geographical completions, will not take care of its soul, but of the garment to be thrown on it, to show the crowds how many things they know, and the spirit of the Gospel will get lost in them, under avalanches of human science. And if they do not possess it, how can they transmit it? What will these swollen straw-stacks give the believers? Straw. What nourishment will the spirits of the believers get from it? Enough to lead a wretched languishing life. Which fruit will ripen from such teaching and from this imperfect knowledge

of the Gospel? The coolness of hearts, the replacement of the only true doctrine with heretical doctrines, with doctrines and ideas that are more than heretical, the preparation of the ground in favour of the Beast for his transient icy dark horrible kingdom.

I truly tell you that, as the Father and Creator multiplies the stars so that the sky may not become depopulated because of those that perish, when their lives end, likewise I shall have to evangelize thousands of times the disciples that I will scatter among men in future ages. And I also truly tell you that the destiny of these disciples will be the same as Mine: the synagogue and proud people will persecute them as they persecuted Me. But both they and I have our reward: that of doing the Will of God and serving Him even to death on a cross, so that His glory may shine and the knowledge of Him may not perish.

But you, Pontiff, and you, Shepherds, watch that the spirit of the Gospel may not get lost in you and in your successors, and pray the Holy Spirit untiringly that the Pentecost may be continually renewed in you - you do not understand what I mean, but you will soon know - so that you may understand all the languages and choose and distinguish My voices from those of the Monkey of God: Satan. And do not allow My future voices to become void. And each of them is an act of mercy of Mine to assist you, and the more are the reasons by which I see that Christianity needs them to get through the storms of times, the more numerous they will be.

Shepherd and pilot, Peter! Shepherd and pilot. It will not be sufficient for you one day to be shepherd if you are not pilot, and to be pilot if you are not shepherd. You will have to be both to keep the lambs gathered together, as hellish tentacles and fierce claws will try to snatch them from you, or music of false impossible promises will seduce you, and to proceed with the boat caught in all the winds blowing from the north, south, east and west, lashed and tossed by the powers of the depths, hit by the arrows shot by the archers of the Beast, burnt by the breath of the dragon, with its edges swept by its tail, so that the imprudent ones will be burnt and will perish, falling into the stormy sea.

Shepherd and pilot in dreadful times. And your compass is the Gospel. In it there is Life and Safety. And everything is said in it. Every article of the holy Code, every answer for the manifold cases of souls are in it. And ensure that Priests and believers do not depart from it, and that no doubts arise about it. And take care that no alterations, changes and adulterations are made to it. The Gospel is I Myself. From My birth to My death. In the Gospel there is God. Because the works of the Father, of the Son, of the Holy Spirit are manifest in it. The Gospel is love. I said: "My Word is Life". I said: "God is Love". So let people know My Word and have love in them, that is, God, to have the Kingdom of God. Because he who is not

in God, does not have the Life in him. Because those who do not receive the Word of the Father will not be able to be one thing with the Father, with Me and with the Holy Spirit in Heaven, and they will not be able to belong to the only Fold, which is as holy as I want it. They will not be vine-shoots joined to the Vine, because he who, wholly or partly, rejects My Word is a member in whom the sap of the Vine no longer flows. My Word is juice that nourishes, makes one grow and yield fruit.

You will do all that in memory of Me, as I taught you. There is still much that I should tell you about what I have now said to you. But I have only sown the seed. The Holy Spirit will make it sprout in you. I wanted to give you the seed Myself, because I know your hearts and I know how you would falter with fear at spiritual immaterial orders. The fear of deceit would paralyse all will in you. So I am the first to speak to you of all things. Then the Paraclete will remind you of My words and will enlarge on them in detail. And you will not be afraid, because you will remember that I gave you the first seed. Allow yourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit. If My hand was kind in guiding you, His Light is very mild. He is the Love of God. So I am going away happy, because I know that He will take My place and will lead you to the knowledge of God. You do not know Him yet, although I have said so much to you about Him. But it is not your fault. You have done everything to understand Me and you are therefore justified, even if in three years you have understood little. The lack of Grace dulled your spirits. Even now you understand little, notwithstanding that the Grace of God descended upon you from My cross. You are in need of the Fire. One day I spoke to one of you about it, while going along the roads near the Jordan.

The hour has come. I am going back to My Father, but I am not leaving you all alone, because I leave you the Eucharist, that is, your Jesus made food for men. And I leave you the Friend: the Paraclete. He will guide you. I pass your souls from My light to His Light, and He will accomplish your formation. »

« Are You leaving us now? Upon this mountain? » They are all desolate.

« No. Not yet. But time flies and it will soon be that moment. »

« Oh! do not leave me on the Earth without You, Lord. I have loved You from Your birth to Your Death, from Your Death to Your Resurrection, and always. But it would be too sad to know that You are no longer among us! You heard the prayer of Elisha's father. You have satisfied so many. Hear mine, Lord! » implores Isaac on his knees with his hands stretched out.

« The life you could still have would be a sermon on Me, perhaps the glory of martyrdom. You have been a martyr out of love for Me, a baby, are you now afraid of being one for Me glorious? »

« It would be my glory to follow You, Lord. I am poor and foolish. What I could give, I gave with a good will. Now this is what I would like: to follow You. But let it be done as You wish, now and always. »

Jesus lays His hand on Isaac's head, and leaves it there on a long caress, while He addresses them all saying: « Have you no questions to ask Me? These are the last lessons. Speak to your Master... See how the little ones are on familiar terms with Me? » In fact also today Marjiam leans his head on Jesus' body, pressing himself against Him, and Isaac did not show any shyness in expressing his wish.

« Really... Yes... We have something to ask... » says Peter.

« Ask then. »

« Well... Yesterday evening, after You left us, we were talking among ourselves of what You had said. Now other words are urging us with regard to what You have said. Yesterday and also today, if one considers them properly, You have spoken as if heresies and separations were to arise, and soon. This makes us think that we shall have to be very prudent with those who will want to come among us. Because the seed of heresy and separation will certainly be in them. »

« Do you think so? And is Israel not already divided in coming to Me? You mean this: that the Israel, that loved Me, will never be heretical and divided. Is that right? But has she ever been united for ages, even in the ancient formation? And has she been united in following Me? I truly tell you that the root of heresy is in her. »

« But... »

« But she has been idolatrous and heretical for ages under the outer appearance of faithfulness. You know her idols. And her heresies. The Gentiles will be better than she is. That is why I have not excluded them, and I tell you to do what I have done. That will be one of the most difficult things for you. I know. But remember the prophets. They prophesy the vocation of the Gentiles and the hardness of the Judaeans. Why would you like to close the gates of the Kingdom to those who love Me and come to the Light that their souls were seeking? Do you think that they are bigger sinners than you, because they have not known God as yet, because they have followed their religion and they will follow it until they are attracted by ours? You must not. I say that many a time they are better than you because, while they have a religion that is not holy, they know how to be just. There is no lack of just people in any country and religion. God observes the deeds of men, not their words. And if He sees that a Gentile, out of the justice of his heart, according to nature does what the Law of Sinai prescribes, why should He consider him contemptible? Is it not more meritorious that a man, who does not know God's command not to do this or that because it is

evil, should take upon himself not to do what his reason tells him is not good and should follow it faithfully, than the very relative merit of him who, knowing God, the scope of man and the Law that enables him to attain it, comes to continuous compromises and designs, in order to adapt the perfect order to a corrupt will? What do you think? That God appreciates the ways out of obedience devised by Israel in order not to sacrifice her concupiscence too much? What do you think? That when a Gentile departs from this world, and is just in the eyes of God as he has followed the right law that his conscience imposed on itself, God will consider him a demon? I tell you: God will judge the actions of men, and the Christ, the Judge of all peoples, will reward those to whom the desire of their souls was a voice of an intimate law to attain the final scope of man, which is to be reunited to his Creator, to the God unknown to the heathens, but to the God Who they feel is True and Holy, beyond the painted scenery of any false Olympus.

Even more, pay attention not to be the cause of scandal to the Gentiles. Too often the name of God has already been derided among the Gentiles because of the deeds of the children of the people of God. Do not consider yourselves the absolute treasurers of My gifts and of My merits. I died for the Judaeans and for the Gentiles. My Kingdom will belong to all peoples. Do not take advantage of the patience with which God has treated you so far, by saying: "We are allowed everything". No. I tell you. There is no longer this or that people. There is My People. And in it the vases used up in the service of the Temple and those that are now being laid on the tables of God have the same value. And more than that, many vases used up in the service of the Temple, but not of God, will be thrown into a corner, and in their stead on the altar will be placed those that do not yet know incense, oil, wine or balm, but are anxious to be filled with them and to be used for the glory of the Lord.

Do not demand too much of the Gentiles. It is enough for them to have faith and to obey My Word. A new circumcision replaces the old one. Man is to be circumcised in his heart, from now on; in his spirit, even better than in his heart, because the blood of the circumcised, symbolising the purification from the concupiscence that excluded Adam from the divine filiation, has been replaced by My most pure Blood. It is valid both for those who are circumcised and for those who are uncircumcised in their bodies, providing the latter have received My Baptism and they renounce Satan, the world, the flesh, out of love for Me. Do not despise the uncircumcised. God did not despise Abraham. Because of his justice God chose him as the head of His People even before circumcision had bitten his flesh. If God approached Abraham uncircumcised, to give him His orders, you can approach the uncircumcised to teach them the Law of the Lord. Consider to how many sins and to what sin

the circumcised have come. So do not be inexorable towards the Gentiles. »

« But shall we have to tell them what You taught us? They will not understand anything, because they do not know the Law. »

« You say so. But did Israel, who knew the Law and the Prophets, understand? »

« That is true. »

« But be careful. You will say what the Spirit advises you to say, verbally, without any fear, without wanting to do it by yourselves. When false prophets arise among the believers, and they profess their ideas as if they were inspired, and they are the heretics, then you will have to fight their heretical doctrines with means firmer than words. But do not worry. The Holy Spirit will guide you. I never say anything that may not happen. »

« And what shall we do with heretics? »

« Fight the heresy itself with all your strength, but with every means try to convert the heretics to the Lord. Never get tired in looking for the sheep that have gone astray in order to take them back to the Fold. Pray, suffer, get people to pray, to suffer, go around begging the pure, the good, the generous believers for sacrifices and sufferings, because these are the means to convert your brothers. The Passion of Christ continues in Christians. I have not excluded you from this great work, which is the Redemption of the world. You are all members of one single body. Help one another, and let those who are strong and healthy work for the weaker ones, and those who are united stretch out their hands and call their brothers who are far away. »

« But will there be any, after they have been brothers in one house? »

« There will be some. »

« Why? »

« For so many reasons. They will still have My Name. And what is even more, they will take pride in that Name. They will work to make it known. They will help in making Me known as far as the extreme boundaries of the Earth. Let them do, because, I remind you, who is not against Me is for Me. But, poor children! their work will always be incomplete, their merits always imperfect. They cannot be in Me if they are separated from the Vine. Their works will always be incomplete. You, I say you, referring to your future successors, must be where they are. Do not say pharisaically: "I am not going in order not to be contaminated". Or lazily: "I am not going, because there already is who preaches the Lord". Or timidly: "I am not going in order not to be driven away by them". Go. I tell you: Go. To all peoples. As far as the boundaries of the world. So that all My Doctrine and My Only Church may be made known and souls may be able to become part of it. »

« And shall we tell them or write all your actions? »

« I have told you. The Holy Spirit will advise you what it is right to say or be quiet about, according to the times. You can see it! What I have done is believed or denied, and at times is used as a weapon against Me, manipulated as it is by hands that hate Me. They have called Me Beelzebub when, as the Master, I worked miracles in the presence of everybody. And what will they say now, when they learn that I have acted in such a supernatural manner? They will curse Me even more. And you would be persecuted before the time. So be silent until it is the time to speak. »

« But if that hour should come when we, the witnesses, are dead? »

« In My Church there will always be priests, doctors, prophets, exorcizers, confessors, people who work miracles or are inspired, as is necessary so that peoples may have from the Church what is necessary. Heaven: the Church Triumphant will not leave the Church Teaching all alone, and the latter will assist the Church Militant. They are not three bodies. They are only one Body. There is no division among them, but communion of love and of purpose: to love Charity and enjoy it in Heaven, its Kingdom. And for this reason the Church Militant will have to provide with love for the suffrages on behalf of that part of it which, already destined to the Church Triumphant, is still excluded from it, because of the satisfactory expiation of faults absolved but not entirely expiated with regard to the Perfect Divine Justice. In the mystic Body everything is to be done in love and through love. Because love is the blood that circulates in it. Assist your brothers who are being purified. As I said that the works of corporal mercy achieve a reward for you, in Heaven, so I told you that also the spiritual ones achieve it for you. And I truly tell you that a prayer for the souls of the dead, that they may enter into peace, is a great work of mercy, for which God will bless you and the souls for whom you have prayed will be grateful. When, at the resurrection of the bodies, you are all gathered before Christ Judge, among those whom I will bless, there will be also those who showed love for their brothers who were being purified, making offerings and praying for their peace. I tell you. Not one of the good actions will be left without fruit, and many will shine brightly in Heaven, without having preached, administered, made apostolic journeys, embraced special states, but only because they prayed and suffered to give peace to the souls that were being purified, to lead men to conversion. They also, priests unknown to the world, unknown apostles, victims whom God alone sees, will receive the reward of the workers of the Lord, as of their lives they made a perpetual sacrifice of love for their brothers and for the glory of God. I truly tell you that one can arrive at eternal life along many ways, and this is one of them, and it is so dear to My Heart. Have you anything else to ask? Speak up. »

« Lord, yesterday and not only yesterday, we were thinking that You said: "You will sit on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel". But now we are eleven... »

« Elect the twelfth. It is your duty, Peter, to do so. »

« Mine? Not mine, Lord! I ask You to choose him. »

« I elected My Twelve once and I formed them. Then I appointed their chief. Then I gave them Grace and I infused the Holy Spirit into them. It is their turn now to walk, because they are no longer babies unweaned unable to do so. »

« But at least tell us where we are to lay our eyes... »

« Here you are. This is the chosen part of the herd » says Jesus, making a circular gesture on those of the seventy-two who are present.

« Not us, Lord. Not us. The place of the traitor frightens us » they say imploringly.

« Let us take Lazarus. Do You agree, Lord? »

Jesus is silent.

« Joseph of Arimathea?... Nicodemus?... »

Jesus is silent.

« Yes! Let us take Lazarus. »

« And do you want to give the perfect friend that place that you do not want? » asks Jesus.

« Lord, I should like to say something » says the Zealot.

« Speak. »

« I am sure that Lazarus for Your sake would accept also that place and would hold it in such a perfect manner as to make people forget whose place that was. But I do not think it is befitting to do so for other reasons. Lazarus' spiritual virtues can be found in many among the humble people of Your flock. And I think that it would be better to give them the preference, so that the believers may not say that we sought only power and wealth, as the Pharisees do, instead of virtue only. »

« You are right, Simon. And what you said is so much more true, as you have spoken with justice, without letting Lazarus' friendship prevent you from speaking. »

« Then let us appoint Marjiam as twelfth apostle. He is a boy. »

« In order to cancel that horrible empty space, I would accept it, but I am not worthy of it. How could I, a boy, speak to an adult? Lord, You must say whether I am right. »

« You are right. But do not be in a hurry. The time will come and you will be surprised at all being of the same opinion. Pray, in the meantime. I am going away. Withdraw to pray. I dismiss you for the time being. Ensure that you are all at Bethany on the fourteenth of Civ. »

He stands up, while they all kneel down prostrating themselves with their faces on the grass. He blesses them and the light, the maid who announces Him and precedes Him when He comes as she

receives Him when He departs, embraces Him and hides Him, absorbing Him once again.

632. The Supplementary Passover.

23rd April 1947.

Jesus' order has been carried out to the letter, this time, and Bethany is crowded with disciples. Meadows, paths, orchards, Lazarus' olive-groves are full of them and as they are not sufficient to hold so many people, who do not want to damage the property of Jesus' friend, many of them have spread out also among the olivegroves that are between Bethany and Jerusalem along the roads of the Mount of Olives. Closer to the house are the disciples of early days, many others are farther away. Faces not well known or completely unknown. But who can now recognise so many faces and mention their names? I think there are hundreds of them. Now and again, in the medley, a face or a name reminds me of faces seen among those helped and converted by Jesus, even at the last hour. But it is beyond my capability to remember so many faces and names, and to recognise them all. It would be the same as if one expected me to recognise who was among the people that crowded the streets in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday or on Good Friday, or covered Calvary with a carpet of faces, most of which were drawn with hatred.

The apostles go in and out from Simon's house, moving around the people to keep them quiet or to reply to their questions. Also Lazarus and Maximinus help them. At the upper-floor balcony windows of Simon's house one can see all the faces of the women disciples appear and disappear: grey-haired or brown-haired heads, among which shine the fair-haired heads of Mary of Lazarus and of Aurea. Now and again one comes out, looks and withdraws. They are all there, really all of them, the young ones and the old ones, also those who had never come, such as Sarah of Aphek. On the terrace many children are playing, those gathered by Sarah, the grandchildren of Anne of Merom, Mary and Matthias, the little boy Shalem, who was crippled and was the grandchild of Nahum and who is now happy and healthy, and some more. A flock of happy little birds, watched over by Marjiam and by other young disciples, such as the little shepherd of Enon and Jaia of Pella. Among the children I now see also the little boy of Sidon, who was blind. It is obvious that he was brought by his father.

The sun is beginning to set in a very bright clear sky. Peter consults with Lazarus and with his companions.

« I think that it is better to dismiss the people. What do you say? He will not come today either. And many of these people have to consume the little Passover this evening » says Peter.

« Yes. It is better to dismiss them. Perhaps the Lord has wisely decided not to come today. All those of the Temple have gathered in Jerusalem. I do not know how they heard that He was coming and... » says Lazarus.

« And even so? What can they do to Him any more? » says Thaddeus vehemently.

« You are forgetting that they are they. And these words of mine say everything. Even if they can do Him no harm, they can do a lot of harm to these people who have come to worship Him. And the Lord does not want to damage His believers. And then! Do you think that they, blinded by their sin and their thought, which is always the same one, among the contrasting ideas in their heads, do not also have the idea that the Lord has risen, that is, that He never died and He came out from there like one who awakes by himself or with the complicity of many? You do not know what wild confusion of thoughts, what entanglement, what storm of suppositions is in their minds. They have created it all in order not to admit the truth. We can really say that those who were accomplices yesterday are divided today, for the same cause that previously kept them joined together. And some people have been seduced by their ideas. See? Some are no longer among the disciples... » says Lazarus.

« And let them go! Other better ones have come. Certainly, those who have informed the Sanhedrin that the Lord will be here on the fourteenth day of the second month, are to be looked for among those who have gone away. And after the delation they no longer have the courage to come. Come on! Stop it! Enough of traitors! » says Bartholomew.

« We shall always have some, my dear friend! Man!... He yields too easily to impressions and to pressures. But we must not be afraid. The Lord said that we must not be afraid » says the Zealot.

« And we are not afraid. A few days ago we were still frightened. Do you remember? I, as far as I am concerned, was afraid when I thought of coming back here. Now I no longer seem to be so frightened. But I do not trust myself too much, and you as well ought not to trust your Cephas too much. I have already proved once that I am made of clay that crumbles, instead of being of solid granite. Well, let us dismiss these people. It is your duty, Lazarus. »

« No, Simon Peter. It is yours. You are the chief... » says Lazarus kindly, embracing Peter's shoulder with his arm and pushing him thus towards the staircase and up it, as far as the terrace surrounding Simon's house.

Peter makes a gesture meaning that he wants to speak and the people nearby become silent and those farther away move towards him. Peter waits until most of them are near him, then he says: « Men from every part of Israel, listen. I exhort you to go back to town. The sun has already begun to set. So, go. If He comes, we will let

you know at all costs. God be with you. »

He withdraws, going into an airy room where, around the Blessed Virgin, there are all the more faithful women disciples and also the other women who loved the Lord as their Master, although they never followed Him on His pilgrimages. And Peter goes and sits in a corner, looking at Mary Who smiles at him.

The people, outside, slowly part into two groups: that of those who remain and that of those who go back to town. Voices of adults calling the children, the shrill voices of children replying to them. Then the buzzing noise subsides.

« And now » says Peter « we will go as well... »

« Father, but the Lord said that He would come!... »

« Eh! I know! But, as you can see, He has not come. And this is the day He prescribed... »

« Yes, and my brother has already prepared everything for you, and here is Mark of Jonas, who has come to take you there and open the gate to you. But I am coming as well. We are all coming. Lazarus has provided for everybody » says Mary of Magdala.

« And where can we consume the supper with so many people? »

« Gethsemane itself will be the Supper room. Inside the house, the room for those who Jesus said. Outside, near the house, the tables for the others. That is what He wanted. »

« Who? Lazarus? »

« The Lord. »

« The Lord? But when did He come? »

« He came... What does it matter to you when? He came and He spoke to Lazarus. »

« I think that He will come, and even more, that He has come to each of us, even if none of us say so, keeping that joy as his dearest pearl, that he is even afraid to show, fearing it may lose its most beautiful light. The secrets of the King! » says Bartholomew, and he looks at the group of the virgin disciples, whose faces blush as if the beams of the setting sun set them aflame. But it is a spiritual flame of intense joy that lights them.

Mary, the Virgin of the virgins, all white in Her linen dress, a lily dressed in white, lowers Her head smiling, without speaking. How much She resembles, at this moment, the young Virgin of the Annunciation!

« Certainly... He will not leave us all alone, even if He does not appear visibly. I say that it is He Who puts certain thoughts in my poor heart and even more in my poor mind... » admits Matthew.

The others do not speak... They look at one another while they put on their mantles, scrutinising one another. But the very care with which some cover their faces as much as possible, to keep concealed the wave of spiritual joy enlivened by the recollection of the divine secret meetings, reveal them as the most favoured ones.

« Well, say so! » exclaim the others. « We are not jealous! We are not so intrusive as to want to know. But we shall be comforted by the hope that we shall not be deprived of His sight for good! Remember the words of Raphael to Tobias: "It is certainly right to keep the secret of the king, but it is more honourable to reveal and publish the works of God". The angel of God is right! Keep the secret of the words He has given you, but disclose His continuous love for us. »

James of Alphaeus looks at Mary, as if he wished to be enlightened by Her, and realising by Her smile that She agrees, He says: « It is true. I have seen the Lord. » Nothing else. And he is the only one to say so. The other two, who have covered themselves carefully, do not utter one word.

They all go out and in groups, the eleven ahead, then Lazarus with his sisters and the women disciples around Mary, last the shepherds and many of the seventy-two disciples. They set out towards Jerusalem along the upper road that takes one to the Mount of Olives. The children who have stayed run backwards and forwards happily.

Mark shows them a path that avoids the Field of the Galileans and the busier areas and goes directly to the new enclosure of the Garden of Gethsemane. He opens, lets them pass, and closes. Many disciples whisper to one another and some go to ask the apostles, and John in particular, questions. But they make a gesture to wait, as it is not yet the time to do what they ask, and they all remain quiet.

How much peace in the vast olive-grove, still kissed by the last sunbeams in the upper part, whereas the lower ones are already in the shade! A light rustling of the wind among the silver-green leaves and the cheerful chirping of birds greeting the dying day.

Here is the little house of the keeper. On the terrace, which is its roof, Lazarus has had a number of tents put up, so that the terrace has changed into an aerial supper room for the disciples who were not able to consume the Passover the previous month. Downstairs, on the very clean threshing-floor, there are more tables. In the house, in the best room, is the table for the women disciples.

The roasted lambs, lettuce, unleavened bread and the reddish sauce are brought to the various tables of those who have not celebrated the Passover, and the ritual chalice is placed on the tables. But on the table of the women there is no chalice, but as many cups as the people sitting at the table. The women were obviously exempted from that part of the ceremony. On the table of those who have consumed the Passover at the proper time there is the lamb, but there is no unleavened bread and no lettuce with reddish sauce.

Lazarus and Maximinus supervise everything. And Lazarus bends over Peter to tell him something that makes the chief Apostle

shake his head violently in obstinate denial.

« And yet... it is your duty » says Philip, who is beside him.

But Peter points at James of Alphaeus: « It is his duty. »

While they are discussing so, the Lord appears at the beginning of the threshing-floor and says greeting: « Peace to you. »

They all stand up and the noise warns the women of what is happening. They are on the point of going out, but Jesus enters the house greeting them as well.

Mary says: « Son! » and She worships Him more deeply than the others, teaching them by such a gesture that, no matter how Jesus may be a friend, such a friend and relative as to be even Her Son, He is always God, and is to be worshipped as God. Always worshipped, with an adoring spirit, even if His love for us is so full as to urge Him to give Himself with full confidence, as our Brother and Spouse.

« Peace to You, Mother. Sit down and eat. I am going upstairs, where Marjiam is awaiting his reward. »

He goes out to climb the little staircase and He calls in a loud voice: « Simon Peter and James of Alphaeus. Come. »

The two He has called go up behind Him and Jesus sits at the central table, where Marjiam is, and says to the two Apostles: « You will do what I tell you » and to Matthias, who is at the head of the table, He says: « Begin the Passover banquet. » This evening Jesus has Marjiam beside Him, where John was the last time. Peter and James are behind the Lord awaiting His orders.

And the banquet is celebrated with the same ritual of the Passover Supper: hymns, questions, libations. I do not know whether it is the same at the other tables. I look fixedly where Jesus is, unless His will compels me to look elsewhere, and I forget everything to contemplate my Lord, Who is now offering the best morsels of His lamb - He has taken it on His plate but He does not eat any of it, neither does He take any lettuce or sauce, and He does not drink of the Chalice - and He offers the best morsels to Marjiam, who is really blissful.

At the beginning Jesus made a gesture to Peter to bend and listen to Him, and Peter after listening to Him said in a loud voice: « At this moment the Lord offered the chalice for us all, as He was the Father and Head of His Family. »

Now He makes another gesture to Peter, who listens again and then stands up and says: « And at this point the Lord girded Himself to purify us and teach us what we are to do to consume the Eucharistic Sacrifice worthily. »

The supper proceeds until at another sign Peter says again: « At this moment the Lord, after taking the bread and the wine, offered them, and praying blessed them, and after breaking the bread into parts, He handed them to us saying: "This is My Body and this is

My Blood of the new eternal Testament, and it will be shed for you and for many to the remission of sins". »

Jesus stands up. He is most imposing. He orders Peter and James to take a loaf of bread and break it into small morsels and to fill a chalice, the biggest one there is on the tables, with wine. They obey and hold the bread and the wine in front of Him, and Jesus stretches out His hands over them and prays without any other action except His enraptured look...

« Hand out the morsels of bread and offer the brotherly chalice, Every time you do this, you shall do it in memory of Me. »

The two Apostles obey, full of veneration...

While the distribution of the Species takes place, Jesus goes down to the women. I think, but I cannot see, because I do not go in where they are, that Jesus administers Holy Communion to His Mother with His own hands. This is what I think, but I do not know whether it is true. But I cannot understand why He should go there, if it were not to do that.

Then He goes back up to the terrace. He does not sit down any more. The supper is about to end. He asks: « Is it all consumed? »

« It is all consumed, Lord. »

« As I did on the Cross. Stand up. Let us pray. »

He stretches out His arms, as if He were on the cross, and He intones the prayer of the Our Father.

I do not know why I am weeping. I think that it is perhaps the last time that I shall hear Him say it... And, as no painter or sculptor will ever be able to give us the true image of Jesus, so no one, however holy he may be, will ever be able to say the Our Father so manfully and at the same time so gently. I shall always feel a great nostalgia for these Our Fathers as I heard them from Jesus, a real conversation of His soul with the most loved and adored Father of Heaven, a cry of honour, of obedience, of faith, of submission, of humility, of mercy, of wish, of trust... everything!

« Go. And may the Grace of the Lord be in all of you and may His peace accompany you » Jesus says dismissing them. And He disappears in a bright light that by far exceeds the moonlight, as the moon is now full and high over the silent Garden, and the light of the lamps placed on the tables.

Not a voice. Tears on faces, adoration in hearts... and nothing else. The night watches and knows, with the angels, the throbs of those blessed hearts.

633. Farewell to His Mother before Ascension.

22nd February 1944.

I always see the room where Mary lives. The signs of the Passion have disappeared.

The Virgin is sitting and reading. They must be holy books, because She certainly does not read anything else in the scroll She is holding in Her hands. She is no longer tortured. Her face is more grave than before the Passion, more mature. But it is no longer that tragical face. It is stately but serene.

It seems to be morning, because the sun is already shining brightly and through the open window it illuminates the quiet room, but one can see that the garden, surrounded by high walls and on to which the window opens, is still all fresh with dew.

Jesus goes in. He is still wearing the wonderful garment of the morning of the Resurrection. His face sheds brightness and His wounds are like small suns.

Mary kneels down smiling, then She stands up and kisses His right Hand. Jesus presses Her to His Heart and kisses Her forehead, smiling, and asks Her for a kiss, which She also gives Him on His Forehead.

« Mother. The time of My stay on the earth is over. I am ascending to My Father. I have come to say a special farewell to You and to show Myself to You once again as I shall be in Heaven. It was not possible for Me to show Myself to men in this splendid garment. They would not have been able to bear the beauty of My glorified Body. It exceeds by far their possibilities. But to You, yes, Mother. And I have come to gladden You once again with it. Kiss My Wounds, so that in Heaven I may smell the perfume of Your lips and the sweetness of My Blood may remain on them for You.

But be sure, Mother, that I will never leave You. I will come out of Your heart only those few moments necessary for the consecration of the Bread and of the Wine, to return there, after getting detached from You with difficulty, with an eagerness of love like Your own, o My living Heaven of which I am the Heaven. We shall never be so united as from now on. Previously there was My embryonal inability, then My childhood, then the struggle of life and of work, then My mission, and then the Cross and the Sepulchre to keep Me away and to prevent Me from telling You how much I love You. But now I shall be in You no longer as a creature that is being formed, no longer near You among the obstacles of the world that forbids the fusion of two who love each other. Now I shall be in You as God, and nothing, nothing on Earth and in Heaven will be able to separate Me from You, You from Me, Holy Mother. I will speak words of ineffable love to You, I will give You caresses of inexpressible kindness. And you will love Me for those who do not love Me.

Oh! Mother, with Your perfect love, You fill the measure of love that the world will not give the Christ. So, rather than a farewell, Mine is the greeting of one who goes out for a moment, as if I were going to pick roses and lilies in this flowery garden. But from

Heaven I will bring You other roses and other lilies, more beautiful than these that have bloomed here. I will fill Your heart with them, Mother, to make You forget the stench of the Earth, that does not want to be holy, and to give You in advance the air of the blissful Paradise, where You are expected with so much love.

And the Love, Who cannot wait, will come upon You in ten days' time. Make Yourself beautiful with Your most beautiful joy, O Virgin Mother, because Your Spouse is coming. Winter is over... the vineyards in blossom shed their scent, and He sings: "Rise, o most beautiful one. Come, My Bride, you will be crowned". With His Fire He will crown You, o Holy Mother, and will make You happy with His spirit, which will be infused into You with all its magnificence, o Queen of Wisdom, His Queen, Who understood Him since the dawn of Your life and loved Him as no creature in the world ever loved.

Mother. I am ascending to Our Father. Upon You, Blessed Mother, the blessing of Your Son. »

Mary beams with joy in Her ecstasy, in the room that is still bright in the light of Christ.

Jesus says:

« Do not discuss, men, whether it was or was not possible for Me to change garment. I no longer was the Man bound to the necessities of man. I had the Universe as My footstool and all the powers as My obedient servants. And if, while I was the Evangelizer, I was able to become transfigured on the Tabor, should I have not been able to become transfigured for My Mother, when I became the glorious Christ? Or rather, change Myself for men and appear to Her as I was by now, divine, glorious, transfigured, from Man as I showed Myself to everybody in What I really was? And yet She had seen Me, poor Mother, transfigured by tortures. It was fair that She should see Me transfigured by Glory.

Do not discuss whether I could really be in Mary. If you say that God is in Heaven and on the earth and everywhere, why can you doubt whether at the same time I could be in Heaven and in the Heart of Mary, Who was a living Heaven? If you believe that I am in the Blessed Sacrament and enclosed in your ciboria, why can you doubt whether I was in that most pure and ardent Ciborium that was the Heart of My Mother?

What is the Eucharist? It is My Body and My Blood united to My Soul and to My Divinity. Well, when She was pregnant with Me, what else had She in Her womb? Did She not have the Son of God, the Word of the Father with His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity? Do you, perhaps, not have Me because Mary had Me and She gave Me to you, after carrying Me for nine months? Well, as I left Heaven to dwell in Mary's womb, so, now that I was leaving the Earth, I was electing Mary's womb as My Ciborium. And which ciborium,

in which cathedral, is more beautiful and holy than this one?

Holy Communion is a miracle of love that I worked for you, men. But at the summit of my thought of love, there was shining the thought of infinite love of being able to live with My Mother and make Her live with Me until we should be reunited in Heaven. I worked the first miracle for the joy of My Mother, at Cana in Galilee. The last miracle, or rather, the last miracles, for the consolation of Mary, in Jerusalem. The Eucharist and the veil of the veronica. The latter, to give a drop of honey to the bitterness of the Desolate Mother. The former, to prevent Her from feeling that Jesus was no longer on the Earth.

Everything, everything, everything, but try and understand this once and for all, you have through Mary! You ought to love and bless Her at each breath of yours.

The veil of veronica is also a goad to your sceptical souls. Since you, o rationalists, o tepid people vacillating in your faith, proceed through arid examinations, compare the face of the veronica with that of the Holy Shroud. One is the Face of a living person, the other of a dead one. But length, width, somatic types, form, distinctive features, are identical. Superimpose the images. You will see that they correspond. It is I. I Who wanted to remind you how I was and how I had become out of love for you. If you had not gone astray, if you were not blind, those two Faces should be enough to bring you to love, to repentance, to God.

The Son of God leaves you, blessing you with the Father and with the Holy Spirit. »

634. Farewell and Ascension of the Lord.

24th April 1947.

As the day dawns the eastern sky is tinged with a light rosy hue. Jesus is walking with His Mother along the slopes of Gethsemane. No words are spoken, only glances of indescribable love are visible. Words have probably already been spoken. Perhaps they were never uttered. The two souls have spoken: Christ's and Christ's Mother's. Now it is loving contemplation, reciprocal contemplation. The dewy nature, the pure morning light are acquainted with it, the kind creatures of God: the herbs, flowers, birds, butterflies are acquainted with it. Men are absent.

I feel even ill at ease being present at this farewell. « Lord, I am not worthy! » I exclaim among the tears falling from my eyes, as I look at the last hour of the earthly union of the Mother and Her Son, and I consider that we have come to the end of the loving fatigue, that is Jesus, Mary and the poor, little unworthy child, whom Jesus wanted as witness of all the Messianic time, and whose name is Mary, but whom Jesus loves to call « little John » or also the « sweet

violet of the Cross. »

Yes. Little John. Little, because I am a nonentity. John, because I am really the one to whom God has done great favours, and because, in an infinitesimal measure - but it is all I possess, and by giving everything that I possess I know that I give in a perfect measure that pleases Jesus, because He is the « all of my nothing - and because in an infinitesimal measure, I, as the great beloved John, have given all my love to Jesus and to Mary, sharing tears and smiles with them, following them, anguished at seeing them distressed and at not being able to defend them from the hatred of the world at the cost of my very life, and now palpitating with the throbs of their hearts for what ends for ever... »

Yes, sweet violet. A sweet violet that has tried to remain hidden among the grass so that Jesus should not avoid it, as He loved all created things so much, since they are the work of His Father, but He should press me under His divine foot, and I might die exhaling my light scent in the effort to sweeten His contact with the rough hard earth. Yes, sweet violet of the Cross. And His Blood filled my calyx even to make it bend on the ground...

Oh! my Beloved Who, first, filled me with Your Blood, making me contemplate Your wounded feet, nailed to the wood « ... and at the foot of the cross there was a little plant of sweet-smelling violets in bloom, and drops of the divine Blood were falling on the little plant of sweet-smelling violets in bloom... » A remote recollection, and always so close and present! A preparation to what I was later: Your mouthpiece who is now completely besprinkled with Your Blood, with Your perspiration and tears, with the tears of Mary Your Mother, but who also knows Your words, Your smiles, everything, everything about You, and no longer smells of sweet-smelling violets but of You alone, my One and Only Love, of that divine perfume that yesterday evening lulled my sorrow, and comes to me, as sweet as a kiss, as comforting as Heaven itself, and makes me forget everything to live only in You...

I have Your promise in me. I know that I shall not lose You. You have promised me and Your promise is sincere: it is the promise of God. I will still have You, for ever. Only if I sinned of pride, falsehood, disobedience, I should lose You, You said so, but You know that, with Your Grace supporting my will, I do not want to sin, and I hope that I will not sin, because You will support me. I am not an oak-tree. I know. I am a sweet violet. A frail stalk that can be bent by the foot of a little bird and also by the weight of a scarab. But You are my strength, o Lord. And my love for You is my wing.

I shall not lose You. You have promised me. You will come, entirely for me, to give joy to Your dying sweet violet. But I am not selfish, Lord. You know. You know that I should like You to be seen no longer by me, but to be seen by many more people, whom

I should like to believe in You. You have already given me so much, and I am not worthy of it. You have really loved me as You alone know how to love Your beloved children.

I think of how pleasant it was to see You « live » as Man among men. And I think that I shall no longer see You so. Everything has been seen and said. I also know that You will not be cancelled out of my thought in Your actions of Man amongst men, and that I shall need no books to remember You as You really were: it will be enough for me to look within myself, where all Your life is fixed with indelible letters. But it was sweet, sweet...

Now You are going to ascend... The Earth will lose You. Mary of the Cross will lose You, Master Saviour. You will remain for her the most sweet God, and You will no longer pour Blood but celestial honey into the violet calyx of Your sweet violet... I am weeping... I have been Your disciple with the other women disciples along the roads of mountains and forests, along the barren dusty roads of the plains, on the lake and near the lovely river of Your Fatherland. You are now going away and only in my memory I shall see Bethlehem and Nazareth on their hills green with olive-trees, and Jericho burning in the sun and with its rustling palm-trees, and friendly Bethany, and Engedi, a pearl lost in the deserts, and beautiful Samaria, and the fertile plains of Sharon and Esdraelon, and the strange tableland beyond the Jordan, and the nightmare of the Dead Sea, and the sunny towns on the Mediterranean coasts, and Jerusalem, the town of Your sorrow, its roads uphill and downhill, the archivolts, the squares, the suburbs, the wells and cisterns, the hills and even the sad valley of the lepers, where so much of Your mercy was effused... And the house of the Supper room... the little fountain weeping nearby... the little bridge on the Kidron, the place where You sweated blood... the court-yard of the Praetorium...

Ah, no! everything that is Your sorrow is here. It will remain for ever... I shall have to look for all the souvenirs to find them, but Your prayer at Gethsemane, Your scourging, Your ascent to Golgotha, Your agony and death, and the sorrow of Your Mother, no, I shall not have to look for them: they are always present. I may forget them in Paradise... and it seems impossible to me that they can be forgotten even there... I remember everything of those dreadful hours. Even the shape of the stone on which You fell. Even the bud of a red rose that knocked against the stone that closed Your sepulchre, and looked like a drop of blood on the granite... My most divine Love, Your Passion lives in my mind... and it breaks my heart...

The day has dawned completely. The sun is already high and the voices of the apostles can be heard. It is a signal for Jesus and Mary. They stop. They look at each other, One in front of the Other, then

Jesus opens His arms and presses His Mother to His chest... Oh! He was really a Man, the Son of a Woman! To believe it is enough to watch this farewell! Love overflows in a shower of kisses for the beloved Mother. Love covers the beloved Son with kisses. They seem unable to part. When they seem to be on the point of doing so, another embrace joins them again and among the kisses words of reciprocal blessings are uttered... Oh! it is really the Son of Man Who is leaving Her Who gave birth to Him! It is really the Mother Who, in order to give Him back to the Father, dismisses Her Child, the Token of the Love for the Most Pure Mother... God Who kisses the Mother of God!...

Finally the Woman, as a creature, kneels at the feet of Her God, Who is also Her Son, and Her Son, Who is God, imposes His hands on the head of the Virgin Mother, of the Eternal Beloved, and blesses Her in the Name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and then He bends and lifts Her up, with a last kiss on Her forehead, which is as white as a petal of a lily under Her golden hair still so young-looking...

They go once again towards the house, and no one, seeing how calmly they proceed One beside the Other, would think of that wave of love that overwhelmed them shortly before. But how much difference there is also, in this farewell, from the sadness of other farewells of the past and from the torture of the farewell of the Mother to Her Son Who had been killed and was to be left all alone in the Sepulchre!... In the present case, although their eyes are shining with the natural tears of those who depart from their Beloved ones, their lips smile out of joy knowing that this Beloved is going to the Abode befitting His Glory...

« Lord! Out there, between the mountain and Bethany are all those that You told Your Mother You wanted to bless today » says Peter.

« All right. We will go to them now. But come first. I want to share the bread once again with all of you. »

They go into the room where ten days previously were the women for the supper of the fourteenth day of the second month. Mary accompanies Jesus so far, then She withdraws. Jesus remains with the eleven.

On the table there is some roasted meat, some cheese and small black olives, a small amphora of wine and a larger one with water, and some broad loaves of bread. A simple table, not set for an important ceremony, but only for the necessity of taking some food.

Jesus offers and makes the portions. He is in the centre between Peter and James of Alphaeus. He has called them to those places. John, Judas of Alphaeus and James are in front of Him, Thomas, Philip and Matthew are on one side, Andrew, Bartholomew and the Zealot are on the other. So everybody can see Jesus... A quick, silent meal. The apostles, who are at their last day with Jesus, notwithstanding

that the subsequent apparitions, both collective and individual, from the Resurrection onwards, have been full of love, have never got out of that reserve and veneration that have characterised their meetings with the Risen Jesus.

The meal is over. Jesus opens His hands over the table, with His usual gesture when facing an unavoidable fact, and says:

« Well. The hour has come when I have to leave you to go back to My Father. Listen to the last words of your Master.

Do not go away from Jerusalem during these days. Lazarus, to whom I have spoken, has seen to the fulfilment of the desires of his Master, and he gives you the house of the Last Supper, so that you may have a residence where to hold meetings and concentrate in prayer. Remain there during these days and pray assiduously to be prepared for the coming of the Holy Spirit, Who will complete you for your mission. Remember that I, although I was God, prepared Myself with severe penance for My ministry of evangelizer. Your preparation will be easier and easier and shorter and shorter. But I do not exact anything else from you. It is sufficient that you pray assiduously, together with the seventy-two and under the guide of My Mother, Whom I entrust to you with the concern of a Son. She will be for you a Mother and Teacher of love and perfect wisdom.

I could have sent you elsewhere to prepare yourselves to receive the Holy Spirit, instead I want you to remain here, because it is Jerusalem, the denier, that must be astonished at the continuation of the divine prodigies, which are given in reply to its denials. Later, the Holy Spirit will make you understand the necessity that the Church should arise just in this town, that from a human point of view is the most unworthy of having it. But Jerusalem is always Jerusalem, even if sin overwhelms it and the deicide was accomplished here. Nothing will be of avail to it. It is condemned. But if it is condemned, not all its citizens are condemned. Remain here for the few just people who are in its bosom, and remain here because this is the royal town and the town of the Temple, and because, as predicted by the prophets, here, where the King Messiah has been anointed and acclaimed and raised, here is to begin His kingdom over the world, and here again, where the synagogue received the libel of repudiation from God for its too many horrible crimes, the new Temple is to arise, and the peoples of all countries will come to it. Read the prophets. Everything is predicted in them. My Mother first, the Spirit Paraclete later, will make you understand the words of the prophets for this period of time.

Remain here until Jerusalem repudiates you as it repudiated Me, and hates My Church as it hated Me, brooding over plots to exterminate it. Then take the see of this beloved Church of Mine elsewhere, because it must not perish. I tell you: not even hell shall

prevail against it. But if God gives you the assurance of His protection, do not tempt Heaven by exacting everything from Heaven. Go to Ephraim as your Master went there because it was not the hour for Him to be caught by His enemies. I say Ephraim, meaning the land of idols and heathens. But it is not Ephraim in Palestine that you must choose as the see of My Church. Remember how many times, I spoke of this to you, all united or to one individually, foretelling you that you would go along the roads of the Earth to arrive at the heart of it and establish My Church there. It is from the heart of man that blood circulates through all the members. It is from the heart of the world that Christianity must spread all over the Earth.

At present My Church is like a creature that has already been conceived but is still forming in the matrix. Jerusalem is its matrix, and inside it the still tiny heart, around which the few members of the dawning Church gather, gives its small waves of blood to these members. But, when the hour marked by God comes, the stepmotherly matrix will expel the creature that formed in its womb, and it will go to a new land, and it will grow there becoming a great Body spread all over the Earth, and the throbs of the strong heart of the Church will propagate to all the great Body. The throbs of the heart of the Church, freed from all ties with the Temple, eternal and victorious over the ruins of the perished and destroyed Temple, living in the heart of the world, will tell Hebrews and Gentiles that God alone triumphs and wants what He wants, and that no hatred of men or group of idols can stop His will.

But this will happen later, and at that time you will know what to do. The Spirit of God will lead you. Be not afraid. For the time being hold the first meeting of the believers in Jerusalem. Then more meetings will take place as their numbers grow. I truly tell you that the citizens of My Kingdom will increase rapidly like seeds sown in very good soil. My people will spread all over the Earth. The Lord says to the Lord: "Because you have done this, and for My sake you have not spared yourself, I will bless you and I will make your descendants as many as the stars of heaven and the grains of sand on the seashore. Your descendants shall gain possession of the gates of their enemies and in your descendants all the nations of the Earth shall be blessed". My Name, My Sign and My Law are blessings, wherever they are known as sovereigns.

The Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier is about to come and you will be replete with Him. Ensure that you are as pure as everything that is to approach the Lord. I also was Lord like Him. But I had put on a garment over My Divinity to be able to stay among you, and not only to teach you and redeem you with the organs and the blood of that garment, but also to bring the Holy of Holies among men, without it being unbecoming that every man, even an impure one,

could lay his eyes on Him, Whom the Seraphim are afraid of looking at. But the Holy Spirit will come without the veil of flesh, and will alight on you and will descend in you with His seven gifts and will advise you. Now, the advice of God is such a sublime thing, that it is necessary to be prepared for it with a heroic will of a perfection that may make you resemble your Father and your Jesus, and your Jesus in His relationship with the Father and with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, perfect charity and perfect love in order to be able to understand the Love and receive Him on the thrones of your hearts.

Get lost in the eddy of contemplation. Strive to forget that you are men and strive to change into Seraphim. Throw yourselves into the furnace, into the flames of contemplation. The contemplation of God is like a spark that flashes from the friction of steel on flintstone and gives fire and light. The fire that consumes the opaque and always impure matter and transforms it into bright and pure flame is purification.

You will not have the Kingdom of God in you, if you do not have love. Because the Kingdom of God is the Love, and appears with the Love, and through the Love it is established in your hearts in the brightness of a huge light, that penetrates and fecundates, removes ignorance and gives wisdom, devours man and creates the god, the son of God, My brother, the king of the throne that God has prepared for those who give themselves to God, in order to have God, God, God, God alone. So be pure and holy through fervent prayer that sanctifies man, because it plunges him into God's fire, which is charity.

You must be holy. Not in the relative meaning that this words has had so far, but in the absolute meaning that I gave it, as I proposed the Holiness of the Lord as its example and limit, that is, perfect Holiness. Among us the Temple is called holy, holy the place where the altar is, the Holy of Holies the veiled place where the ark and the propitiatory are kept. But I truly tell you that those who possess the Grace and live in holiness out of love for the Lord, are more holy than the Holy of Holies, because God does not only alight on them, as on the propitiatory that is in the Temple, to give His orders, but He lives in them to give them His love.

Do you remember My words of the Last Supper? I promised you the Holy Spirit. Well, He is about to come to baptise you, not with water, as John did with you, preparing you for Me, but with fire to prepare you to serve the Lord, as He wants you to do. So he will be here, within a few days. And after His coming your capabilities will increase immeasurably, and you will be able to understand the words of your King, and do the deeds that He told you to do, to spread His Kingdom all over the Earth. »

« So will You rebuild the Kingdom of Israel then, after the coming

of the Holy Spirit? » they ask interrupting Him.

« There will no longer be a Kingdom of Israel, but My Kingdom. And it will be accomplished when the Father said. It is not for you to know the times and the moments that the Father has reserved for Himself in His power. But you, in the meantime, will receive the virtue of the Holy Spirit Who will come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judaea and in Samaria and as far as the boundaries of the Earth, establishing meetings where men meet in My Name; baptising peoples in the Most Holy Name of the Father, of the Son, of the Holy Spirit, as I told you, so that they may have the Grace and they may live in the Lord; preaching the Gospel to everybody, teaching what I taught you, doing what I ordered you to do. And I shall be with you every day until the end of the world.

And I want also this: James, My brother, to preside over the meeting in Jerusalem. Peter, as head of all the Church, will often have to set out on apostolic journeys, because all the neophytes will wish to meet the Pontiff Supreme Head of the Church. But great will be My brother's ascendancy over the believers of this first Church. Men are always men and they see as men. They will think that James is a continuation of Me, only because He is My brother. I truly tell you that he is greater and more like the Christ because of his wisdom than through relationship. But it is so. Men, who did not look for Me while I was among them, will now look for Me in him who is a relative of Mine. And you, Simon Peter, are destined to other honours... »

« That I do not deserve, Lord. I told You when You appeared to me and I tell you again now in the presence of everybody. You are good, divinely good, besides being wise, and You rightly judged me, who denied You in this town, ill-suited to be its spiritual head. You want to spare me so many just derisions... »

« We were all the same, except two, Simon. I also ran away. Not because of this, but because of the reasons that He mentioned, the Lord has destined me to this place; but you are my Chief, Simon of Jonah, and I acknowledge you as such, and in the presence of the Lord and of all my companions I profess obedience to you. I will give you what I can to help you in your ministry, but I beg you, give me your orders, because you are the head and I the subject. When the Lord reminded me of a conversation of long ago, I bent me head saying: "Let Your will be done". I will say the same to you, because, once the Lord has left us, you will be His Representative on the Earth. And we will love each other, helping each other in the sacerdotal ministry » says James, bowing from his place to pay homage to Peter.

« Yes. Love one another, helping one another reciprocally, because that is the new commandment and the sign that you really belong

to Christ.

Do not be upset for any reason. God is with you. You can do what I want of you. I would not impose things on you if you could not do them, because I do not want your ruin, on the contrary I want your glory. Well. I am going to prepare your places beside My throne. Remain united to Me and to the Father in love. Forgive the world that hates you. Call sons and brothers those who come to you, or are already with you out of love for Me.

Be at peace knowing that I am always ready to help you to carry your crosses. I will be with you in the work of your ministry and in the hours of persecutions, and you will not perish, you will not succumb even if those who see with the eyes of the world think so. You will be oppressed, grieved, tired, tortured, but My joy will be in you, because I will help you in everything. I truly tell you that, when you have the Love as a Friend, you will understand that everything suffered and lived for My love becomes light, even if it is a heavy torture of the world. Because for him who clothes all his actions, whether they are voluntary or imposed, with love, the yoke of life and of the world changes into a yoke given to him by God, by Me. And I repeat to you that My load is always proportioned to your strength and My yoke is light, because I help you to carry it.

You know that the world does not know how to love. But from now on you are to love the world with a supernatural love, to teach it how to love. And if seeing you persecuted, they should say to you: "Is that how God loves you? Making you suffer, grieving you? Then it is not worth while being of God", reply: "Sorrow does not come from God. But God allows it, and we know the reason and we are proud of having the part that Jesus Saviour, the Son of God, had". Reply: "We are proud of being nailed to the cross and of continuing the Passion of our Jesus". Reply with the words of Wisdom: "Death and sorrow were brought into the world by the envy of the demon, but God is not the maker of death and sorrow and He does not take delight in the sorrow of creatures. Everything coming from Him is life and wholesome". Reply: "At present we seem persecuted and defeated, but on the day of God, when lots have changed, we just people, who were persecuted on the Earth, will stand gloriously in front of those who oppressed and despised us". But also say to them: "Come to us! Come to the Life and Peace. Our Lord does not want your ruin, but your salvation. That is why He sent His beloved Son, so that you all might be saved".

And rejoice at taking part in My sufferings, so that later you may be in the glory with Me. "I shall be your exceedingly great reward" the Lord in Abraham promised all His faithful servants. You know how the Kingdom of Heaven is conquered: by strength, and one arrives there through many tribulations. But he who perseveres as I persevered will be where I am. I have told you which is the way

and which is the door that lead to the Kingdom of Heaven, and I was the first to walk along it and I have gone back to the Father by it. If there had been another one, I would have taught you it, because I take pity on your weakness as men. But there is no other one... And pointing it out to you as the only way and the only door, I also tell you, I repeat to you which is the medicine that gives strength to go along it and enter. It is love. Always love. Everything becomes possible when there is love in us. And the Love Who loves you will give you all the love, if in My Name you ask for so much love as to become athletes in holiness.

Now let us give each other the parting kiss, My beloved friends. »

He stands up to embrace them. They all imitate Him. But, while Jesus smiles peacefully, a smile really divinely beautiful, they weep, they are all upset, and John, throwing himself on Jesus' chest, shaken by all the sobs that are so violent as to break his chest, on behalf of everyone, as he realises everybody's wish, asks: « Give us at least Your Bread, that it may fortify us in this hour! »

« Let it be so! » Jesus replies to him. And taking a piece of bread, He breaks it, after offering and blessing it, repeating the ritual words. And He does the same with the wine, repeating then: « Do this in memory of Me » and He adds: « Who have left you this pledge of My love, to be still and always with you until you will be with Me in Heaven. » He blesses them and says: « And now let us go. »

They come out of the room, of the house...

Jonah, Mary and Mark are there outside, and they kneel down worshipping Jesus.

« May peace remain with you. And may the Lord reward you for what you have given Me » says Jesus, blessing them while passing by.

Mark stands up saying: « Lord, the olive-groves along the Bethany road are full of disciples awaiting You. »

« Go and tell them to go to the Field of the Galileans. »

Mark darts away with all the speed of his young legs.

« So, they have all come » say the apostles to one another.

Further aside, sitting between Marjiam and Mary of Clopas, there is the Mother of the Lord. And She stands up when She sees Him coming, worshipping Him with all the palpitations of Her heart of Mother and believer.

« Come, Mother, and you too, Mary... » says Jesus inviting them, when He sees them stand still, immobilised by His majesty that blazes as in the morning of the Resurrection. But Jesus does not want to overwhelm with His majesty, and He kindly asks Mary of Alphaeus: « Are you alone? »

« The other women... the others are ahead... With the shepherds and... with Lazarus and all his family... But they left us here, because... »

« Oh! Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!... How shall I put up with not seeing You any more, blessed Jesus, my God, I who loved You even before You were born, I who wept so much over You when I did not know where You were after the slaughter... I who had my sun in Your smile after You came back, and all, all my blessings?... How many blessings! How many You have given me!... Now I am really becoming poor, a widow, all alone!... While You were here, there was everything!... I thought I had experienced all sorrow that evening... But the very grief, all the sorrow of that day had dulled my mind and... yes, it was not so deep as it is now... And then... there was the fact that You were going to rise. I seemed as if I could not believe it, but now I realise that I did believe it, because I did not feel what I am feeling now... » she says weeping and panting, so much do her tears choke her.

« My good Mary, you are worrying just like a little boy, who thinks that his mother does not love him and has abandoned him, because she has gone to town to buy him presents that will make him happy, and who will soon go back to him to cover him with kisses and gifts. And am I not doing so with you? Am I not going to prepare joy for you? Am I not going to come back and say to you: "Come, My dear relative and beloved disciple, mother of My beloved disciples"? Am I not leaving you My love? Shall I give you My love, Mary? You know whether I love you! Do not weep so, but rejoice, because you will no longer see Me despised and fatigued, no longer chased and rich only in the love of few people. And with My love I leave you My Mother. John will be like a son to Her, and I ask you to be a good sister to Her, as you have always been. See? My Mother is not weeping. She is aware that, if Her nostalgia for Me is the file that will consume Her heart, the wait will be always short as compared to the great joy of an eternal union, and She also knows that this parting of ours will not be so absolute as to make Her say: "I no longer have My Son". That was Her cry of sorrow on that day of sorrow. Now hope sings in Her heart: "I know that My Son is ascending to His Father, but He will not leave Me without His spiritual love". That is what you believe, and everybody... Here are the other men and women. Here are My shepherds. »

The faces of Lazarus and of his sisters among all the servants of Bethany, the face of Johanna like a rose under a veil of rain, and those of Eliza and of Nike, already marked by age - and wrinkles are now deepened by pain, always pain for creatures, even if the soul rejoices because of the triumph of the Lord - the face of Anastasica, the lily-like faces of the first virgins, and the ascetic face of Isaac, the inspired one of Matthias, and the virile face of Manaen, and the severe ones of Joseph and Nicodemus... Faces, faces, faces...

Jesus calls to Himself the shepherds, Lazarus, Joseph, Nicodemus,

Manaen, Maximinus and the others of the seventy-two disciples. But He particularly keeps the shepherds close to Himself saying: « Here. You were near the Lord Who had come from Heaven, bent over His annihilation, You are to be near the Lord Who is going back to Heaven, with your souls rejoicing because of His glorification. You have deserved this place, because you did believe notwithstanding that all the circumstances were unfavourable, and you were able to suffer for your faith. I thank you for your faithful love. I thank all of you. You, My friend Lazarus, you, Joseph, and you, Nicodemus, who took pity on the Christ when to do so might have been very dangerous. You Manaen, who despised the filthy favours of an unclean man to follow Me on My way. You, Stephen, flowery crown of justice, who left what was imperfect for what was perfect and will be crowned with a garland, with which you are not yet acquainted, but will be announced to you by the angels. You John, for a short period of time brother to the most pure breast and who have come more to the Light than to the sight. You, Nicolaus, who, as a proselyte, have been able to console Me for the grief of the sons of this Nation. And you, good women disciples, stronger, in your kindness, than Judith. And you, Marjiam, My child, and from now on you will be called Martial, in remembrance of the Roman boy killed on the road and laid at Lazarus' gate with the defying script: "And now tell the Galilean to bring you back to life again, if He is the Christ and has risen from the dead", the last of the innocents who lost their lives in Palestine to serve Me also unconsciously, and first of the innocents of every Nation who, having come to the Christ, will be hated for that and extinguished prematurely, like buds of flowers torn off the stems before blooming. And may this name, o Martial, show you your future destiny: be the apostle in barbarian countries and conquer them to your Lord, as My love conquered the Roman boy to Heaven. You are all blessed by Me in this farewell, as from the Father I invoke the reward for those who have comforted the sorrowful journey of the Son of Man. Blessed be Mankind in the chosen part there is among Hebrews and Gentiles, and that has manifested itself in its love for Me. Blessed be the Earth with its herbs and flowers, and its fruits that have given Me pleasure and refreshment so many times. Blessed be the Earth with its waters and its tepidness, for its birds and its animals that many a time exceeded man in giving relief to the Son of Man. May you be blessed, sun, and you, sea, and you, mountains, hills, plains. Blessed you, stars, My companions in My night prayers and in My sorrow. And you, moon, who illuminated Me as I wandered around in My pilgrimages of the evangelizer. May all you creatures be blessed, the works of My Father, My companions in this mortal hour, friendly to Him Who had left Heaven to relieve tortured Mankind of the troubles of the Sin that separates from God. And

may you also be blessed, you innocent instruments of My torture: thorns, metals, wood, twisted hemp, because you have assisted Me in fulfilling the will of My Father! »

How thundering is Jesus' voice! It spreads through the tepid calm air, like a bronze gong that has been struck, it propagates in waves over the sea of faces looking at Him from all directions.

I say that there are hundreds of people around Jesus as He goes up, with His more beloved ones, towards the top of the Mount of Olives. But when Jesus arrives at the Field of the Galileans, in which there are no tents in this period of time between two festivities, He says to His disciples: « Stop the people where they are, and then follow Me. »

He climbs farther up, as far as the highest summit of the mountain, the one closer to Bethany, which it dominates from above, than to Jerusalem. Close to Him are His Mother, the Apostles, Lazarus, the shepherds and Marjiam. Farther away, in a semicircle, are the other disciples to hold the people back.

Jesus is standing on a large stone, that protrudes a little and stands out in its whiteness among the grass of a clearing. He is brightly illuminated by the sun that makes His garment shine as white as snow and His hair like gold. His eyes sparkle in a divine light. He opens out His arms in the gesture of an embrace. He seems to be wishing to press to His chest the multitudes of the Earth, whom His spirit sees represented in that crowd. His unforgettable inimitable voice gives the last order: « Go! Go in My Name to evangelize the peoples as far as the ends of the Earth. God be with you. May His Love comfort you, may His Light guide you, may His Peace dwell in you until you reach eternal life. »

He becomes transfigured in beauty. Handsome! As handsome and even more so than He was on Tabor. They all fall on their knees worshipping. While He is already rising from the stone on which He is standing, He looks once again for the face of His Mother, and His smile reaches a power that no one will ever be able to express... It is His last goodbye to His Mother. He rises, rises... The sun, now more free to kiss Him, as no foliage, not even a thin leaf, intercepts its beams, brightens with its splendour the God-Man, Who with His most Holy Body is ascending to Heaven, and displays His glorious Wounds that shine like living rubies. The rest is a pearly smile of light. And it is really the Light that is revealing itself for what it is, at this last moment as on Christmas night. Creation sparkles in the light of the Christ Who is ascending. A light exceeding that of the sun. A superhuman and most blissful light. A light descending from Heaven to meet the Light ascending to it... And Jesus Christ, the Word of God, disappears from the sight of men in this ocean of brightness...

On the earth, only two noises in the deep silence of the ecstatic

crowd: the cry of Mary when He disappears: « Jesus! », and the weeping of Isaac. The others are struck dumb with religious astonishment, and they remain there, as if they were waiting, until two snow-white angelical lights, in human form, appear repeating the words mentioned in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

635. The Election of Matthias.

26th April 1947.

It is a placid evening. The light is fading gently and the sky so far purple, is becoming a delicate amethystine velarium. It will soon be dark, but at present there is still light, and this faint evening light is pleasant after so much burning sunshine.

The court-yard of the house of the Supper room, a large yard among the white walls of the house, is crowded with people as in the evenings after Resurrection. And a harmonious whispering of prayers, interrupted now and again by pauses of meditation, rises from these people engrossed in thought.

As the light becomes fainter and fainter in the court-yard, surrounded as it is by the high walls of the house, some people bring lamps and place them on the table, close to which the apostles are gathered: Peter in the centre, James of Alphaeus and John beside him, and then the others. The flickering light of the small flames shines upwards on the faces of the apostles, making their features stand out and showing their expressions: concentrated the expression of Peter, as if he were overstrung in the effort to perform these first functions of his ministry in a worthy way; ascetically mild that of James of Alphaeus; serene and dreaming that of John, and beside him the pensive face of Bartholomew, followed by the countenance full of life of Thomas, and then Andrew's, veiled by his humility that makes him stay with his eyes almost closed, his head slightly bent: he seems to be saying: "I am not worthy"; close to him Matthew, one elbow resting on the hand of the other arm, his cheek leaning on the hand of his raised arm; and then James of Alphaeus, Thaddeus, with his authoritative face and his eyes that remind one so much of the eyes of Jesus, with their colour and expression: a real ruler of crowds.

Even now he is keeping the meeting quiet, under the fire of his eyes, more than all the rest together; and yet, from his involuntary regal magnificence, the feeling of his heart filled with compunction can be seen to emerge, particularly when it is his turn to intone a prayer. When he says the psalm: « Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to Your Name give glory for Your mercy and loyalty, so that the nations may not say: "Where is their God?" » he really prays with his soul prone before Him Who chose him, and the strongest feeling within him vibrates in his voice; with all his praying he also says:

« I am not worthy of serving You, Who are so perfect. »

Philip, beside him, his face already marked by age, although he is still in full manhood, looks like a man who is contemplating a sight known to him alone, and is standing with his hands pressed against his cheeks, a little bent and somewhat sad... whereas the Zealot is looking up, far away, with an intimate smile that embellishes his face, which is not beautiful, but is charming because of its austere distinction. James of Zebedee, impulsive and quivering, says his prayers as if he were still speaking to his beloved Master, and the twelfth psalm is uttered impetuously by his inflamed spirit.

They end with the long and beautiful psalm one hundred and eighteen, of which they say a strophe each, in two turns to complete the number of the strophes. Then they all become absorbed in silence until Peter, who had sat down, stands up, as if he were urged by an inspiration, praying in a loud voice with his arms stretched out as the Lord used to do: « Send Your Spirit to us, o Lord, so that we may see in His Light. »

« Maran atha » they all say.

Peter collects his thoughts in an intense silent prayer, but perhaps he listens more than he prays, or at least he waits for words of light... Then he raises his head again and once again he stretches out his arms, which he had folded across his chest, and as he is small as compared to the majority of his companions, he climbs on his seat to dominate the little crowd thronging the court-yard, and to be seen by everybody. And everybody, realising that he is going to speak, becomes silent and looks at him paying attention.

« My brothers, it was necessary that the Scripture predicted by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David and concerning Judas should be accomplished, Judas in fact was the guide who led those who captured the Lord and our Blessed Master: Jesus.

He, Judas, was one of ours, and was entrusted with this ministry. But his election changed into ruin for him, because Satan entered into him through many ways and from apostle of Jesus made him the traitor of his Lord. He thought he would triumph and rejoice and thus revenge himself on the Holy Master, Who had disappointed the unclean hopes of his heart full of every concupiscence. But when he thought he was going to triumph and rejoice, he realised that the man who makes himself slave of Satan, of the flesh, of the world, does not triumph, on the contrary he bites the dust like one who is defeated. And he learned that the taste of food given by man and by Satan is very bitter and completely different from the sweet simple bread that God gives His children. He then became acquainted with despair and he hated the whole world after hating God, and he cursed everything the world had given him and he killed himself by hanging himself from an olive-tree in the olivegrove that he had bought with his iniquities, and on the day that

the Christ rose gloriously from the dead, his putrid and already verminous body burst and his bowels were scattered on the ground at the foot of the olive-tree, making that place unclean.

The redeeming Blood rained on Golgotha and purified the Earth, because it was the Blood of the Son of God, Who had become incarnate for us. On the hill near the place of the ill-famed Council, not blood, not tears of good remorse, but the filth of rotten bowels rained on the dust. Because no other blood could be mixed with the Most Holy Blood in those days of purification, in which the Lamb was washing us in His Blood, and less than ever was it possible for the Earth, that was drinking the Blood of the Son of God, to drink also the blood of the son of Satan.

The fact is well known. And it is also known that Judas, in his fury of a damned soul, took the money of the infamous transaction back to the Temple, striking with it, unclean as it was, the face of the High Priest. And it is known that with that money, which had been taken from the Treasury of the Temple, but could no longer be put back into it, because it was the price of blood, the princes of the Priests and the Elders, after consulting with one another, have bought the field of the potter, as the prophecies had said, specifying even its price. And the place will be handed down to posterity under the name of Hakeldama. So everything about Judas has been said, and let even the memory of his face vanish from us, but let us bear in mind the ways through which, from being called by the Lord to the Heavenly Kingdom, he descended to being prince in the Kingdom of eternal darkness, so that we ourselves may not tread on them imprudently, becoming other Judases for the Word that God has entrusted to us and which is still the Christ, the Master among us.

But it is written in the book of Psalms: "Let their house become desert, let no one live in it and let his office be taken by somebody else". So it is necessary that one of these men, who have been with us all the time that the Lord Jesus was with us, coming and going, beginning from the Baptism by John until the day in which from the middle of us He ascended to Heaven, is appointed to be witness with us of His Resurrection. And it is necessary to do so quickly, so that he may be present with us at the Baptism of Fire, of which the Lord has spoken to us, so that he, who did not receive the Holy Spirit from the Master, may receive it directly from God and be enlightened and sanctified by it, and he may have the virtues that we shall receive, and he may judge and remit and do what we shall do, and his actions may be valid and holy.

I would suggest to choose him among the most faithful of the faithful disciples, those who have suffered for Him remaining faithful also when He was the One Unknown to the world. Many of them come to us from John, the Precursor of the Messiah, spirits modelled

throughout years for the service of God. The Lord was very fond of them, and the most fond among them was Isaac, who had suffered so much because of the child Jesus. But you know that his heart broke during the night that followed the Ascension of the Lord. Let us not mourn him. He has joined his Lord. It was the only desire of his heart... And also ours... But we have to suffer our passion. Isaac had already suffered it. So you are to suggest some names among these, so that the twelfth apostle may be elected according to the usages of our people, leaving the power of indicating, in the gravest circumstances, to the Lord, to Him Who knows. »

They consult with one another. After a short time the most important disciples (among the non-shepherds), by mutual consent with the ten apostles, inform Peter that they propose Joseph, the son of Joseph of Saba, to honour his father, a martyr for Christ, by means of his son, a faithful disciple, and Matthias, for the same reasons as for Joseph, and, further, to honour also his first master: John.

And as Peter agrees to their advice, they make the two come forward to the table and in the meantime they pray with their arms stretched forward in the usual attitude of the Hebrews: « Most High Lord, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Only and Trine God, Who know the hearts of all men, show us which of these two You have chosen to take in this ministry and apostolate the place of Judas, who prevaricated, and go in his stead. »

« Maran atha » they all reply in chorus.

As they have no dice or anything else with which to cast lots, and as they do not wish to use coins for this purpose, they take some small stones spread about the yard, some poor little stones, as many white as dark, and they decide that the white ones are for Matthias, the others for Joseph. They put them in a bag, after emptying it of its contents, they shake it and they offer it to Peter who, after making a blessing gesture on it, puts his hand in it, praying with his eyes at the sky, strewn with stars, and pulls out a little stone: as white as snow. The Lord has indicated Matthias as Judas' successor.

Peter goes to the front of the table and embraces him « to make him like himself » he says. Also the other ten make the same gesture amid the applause of the little crowd.

At the end Peter, after going back to his place holding by the hand the chosen apostle who is beside him - so Peter is now between Matthias and James of Alphaeus - says: « Come to the place that God has reserved for you and with your justice cancel the memory of Judas, helping us, your brothers, to accomplish the deeds that Jesus told us to do. May the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be always with you. »

He addresses all the others, dismissing them...

While the disciples disperse slowly through a secondary exit, the

apostles go back into the house taking Matthias to Mary, Who is engrossed in prayer in Her room, so that the new apostle may receive the word of greeting and election also from the Mother of God.

636. The Descent of the Holy Spirit. End of the Messianic Cycle.

27th April 1947.

No voices or noises can be heard in the house of the Supper room. None of the disciples are present, at least I cannot hear anything that can authorise me to say that people are gathered in the other rooms of the house. There is only the presence and the voices of the Twelve and of the Most Holy Virgin gathered in the hall of the Supper.

The room looks wider, because the furniture is placed differently and leaves all the centre of the room and also two of the walls free. The large table used for the Supper has been pushed against the third wall, and between them and the wall, and also at the two narrower sides of the table, they have placed the couch-seats used for the Supper and also the stool that Jesus used for the Washing of feet. But the couch-beds are not vertical to the table, as they were for the Supper, but parallel to it, so that the apostles can sit down without occupying all of them, and they have left one, the only one placed vertically to the table, all for the Blessed Virgin, Who is at the centre of the table, in the place that Jesus occupied at the Supper.

There are no table-cloths or tableware on the table, there is nothing on the sideboards, and the ornaments have been taken off the walls. Only the chandelier in the centre is lit, but only one flame is lit, the other small flames on the circle forming a corolla to the strange chandelier are out.

The windows are closed and barred with heavy metal bars placed across them. But a sunbeam penetrates boldly through a tiny hole and like a long thin needle it descends on the floor forming a round spot of sunshine.

The Blessed Virgin, sitting all alone on Her seat, has Peter and John at Her sides, on their seats, Peter on Her right, John on Her left hand side. Matthias, the new apostle, is between James of Alphaeus and Thaddeus. In front of Her, Our Lady has a large low chest of dark wood, which is closed. Mary is dressed in deep blue. Her hair is covered with a white veil, over which is placed the edge of Her mantle. All the others are bare-headed.

Mary is reading slowly in a loud voice. But as the light that arrives there is very faint, I think that rather than read She is repeating by heart the words written on the scroll that She is holding

spread out. The others follow Her in silence, meditating. Now and again they reply, when it is appropriate.

Mary's face is transfigured by an ecstatic smile. I wonder what She sees, that is capable of inflaming Her eyes, like two clear stars, and make Her ivory cheeks blush, as if a rosy flame reflected on Her! She is really the mystic Rose...

The apostles bend forward, sitting a little sideways, to see Her face, while She smiles so gently and reads and Her voice sounds like the song of an angel. And Peter is so deeply moved that two large tears fall from his eyes, and stream down along wrinkles on both sides of his nose to get lost in the thicket of his grey beard. But John reflects the virginal smile and is inflamed like Her with love, while he follows with his eyes what the Virgin is reading on the scroll and, when he hands Her a new scroll he looks and smiles at Her.

The reading is over. Mary's voice stops. The rustling of the parchments rolled and unrolled comes to an end. Mary concentrates in secret prayer, joining Her hands on Her breast and leaning Her head on the chest. The apostles imitate Her...

A very loud and harmonious roar, that resembles the wind and the harp, as well as human singing and the sound of a perfect organ, suddenly resounds in the silence of the morning. It comes near, more and more harmonious and loud, and with its vibrations it fills the Earth, propagates them and impresses them on the house, on the walls, on the furniture. The flame of the chandelier, so far immobile in the peace of the closed room, flickers as if a wind were blowing and the little chains of the chandelier tinkle vibrating under the wave of the supernatural sound that strikes them.

The apostles raise their heads frightened, and as that most beautiful rumble, in which are all the loveliest notes that God gave the Heavens and the Earth, approaches them more and more, some stand up ready to run away, some crouch on the floor covering their heads with their hands and mantles, or beat their breasts asking God to forgive them, some press against Mary, too frightened to keep the reserve they always have for the Most Pure Mother. Only John is not frightened, because he sees the bright peace of joy that is accentuated on the face of Mary, Who raises Her head smiling at a thing known to Her alone, and Who then slides down on Her knees opening Her arms, and the two blue wings of Her mantle so opened stretch out on Peter and John, who have imitated Her, kneeling down. But all this, which took me some minutes to describe, has taken place in less than one minute.

And then the Light, the Fire, the Holy Spirit enters, with a last melodious loud noise, in the form of a very shining burning globe, into the closed room, without any door or window being moved, and remains hovering for a minute over Mary's head, about three palms

above Her head, which is now uncovered, because Mary, upon seeing the Fire Paraclete, has raised Her arms to invoke Him and has thrown Her head back with a cry of joy, with a smile of boundless love. And, after that moment in which all the Fire of the Holy Spirit, all the Love, is collected in His Spouse, the Most Holy Globe splits into thirteen canorous very bright flames, of so bright a light that no earthly comparison can describe, and it descends to kiss the forehead of each apostle.

But the flame that descends upon Mary is not a tongue of a straight flame on Her forehead that it kisses, but it is a crown that embraces and encircles the virginal head like a wreath, crowning as Queen the Daughter, the Mother, the Spouse of God, the Incorruptible Virgin, the Wholly Beautiful, the Eternally Loved, the Eternally Maiden Whom nothing can humiliate, and in nothing, Whom sorrow had aged but Who has revived in the joy of the Resurrection, sharing with Her Son an accentuation of beauty and freshness of bodies, of looks, of vitality... having already an advance of the beauty of Her glorious Body received into Heaven to be the flower of Paradise.

The Holy Spirit makes His flames shine round the head of His Beloved. Which words does He speak to Her? Mystery! Her blessed face is transfigured with supernatural joy and smiles with the smiles of Seraphim, while blissful tears shine like diamonds on the cheeks of the Blessed Virgin, struck as they are by the Light of the Holy Spirit.

The Fire remains so for some time... Then it vanishes... In memory of its descent there remains a fragrance that no earthly flower can exhale... The Perfume of Paradise...

The apostles collect themselves... Mary remains in Her ecstasy. She only folds Her arms across Her breast, closes Her eyes, lowers Her head... Her conversation with God continues... insensible to everything... No one dare disturb Her.

John, pointing at Her, says: « She is the altar. And the Glory of the Lord has rested on Her glory... »

« Yes. Let us not upset Her joy. But let us go and preach the Lord and let His works and His words be known to peoples » says Peter with supernatural impulsiveness.

« Let us go! Let us go! The Spirit of God is burning in me » says James of Alphaeus.

« And it is urging us to act. All of us. Let us go and evangelize the peoples. »

They go out as if they were pushed or attracted by a wind or by a vigorous force.

Jesus says:

« And here the Work, that My love for you has dictated and that

you have received through the love that a creature has had for Me and for you, is over. It ended today, the day of the Commemoration of Saint Zita from Lucca, the humble maid who served her Lord with charity in this Church of Lucca, where I, from remote places, have brought My little John, so that he should serve Me with charity and with the same love that Saint Zita had for all unhappy people. Zita used to give bread to the poor, remembering that I am in each of them, and that blessed will they be, who, side by side with Me, give bread and drink to the hungry and thirsty. Mary-John has given My words to those who languish in ignorance or in tepidness or in doubt about Faith, remembering that Wisdom said that those who work hard to make God known, will shine like stars in eternity, giving glory to their Love by making it known and loved, and to many people.

And, further, it ended today, the day in which the Church raises the pure lily of the fields Mary Theresa Goretti to the altars, the lily whose stem was broken while its corolla was still a bud. And by whom was it broken if not by Satan, envious of that purity that shone more than his ancient angelic aspect? Broken because it was sacred to the Divine Lover. Mary, virgin and martyr of this century of disgrace, in which also the honour of the Woman is held in contempt, by spitting the slaver of reptiles to deny the power of God to give an inviolate dwelling to His Word, Who was becoming incarnate by the Holy Spirit, in order to save those who believe in Him. Also Mary-John is martyr of the Hatred, who does not want My wonders to be celebrated by the Work, the weapon capable of snatching so many preys from him. But also Mary-John knows, as Mary Theresa knew, that martyrdom, whatever its name and aspect are, is the key that without delay opens the Kingdom of Heaven to those who suffer to continue My Passion.

The Work is finished. And with its end, with the descent of the Holy Spirit, ends the Messianic cycle, that My Wisdom has enlightened from its dawning: the Immaculate Conception of Mary, to its setting: the descent of the Holy Spirit. All the Messianic cycle is the work of the Spirit of Love, for those who see properly. It was therefore right to begin it with the mystery of the Immaculate Conception of the Spouse of the Love, and finish it with the seal of the Fire Paraclete on the Church of Christ.

The revealed works of God, of the Love of God, end with Pentecost. From then onwards the intimate mysterious work of God continues in His believers, united in the Name of Jesus in the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church; and the Church, that is, the assembly of the believers - shepherds, - sheep and lambs - can proceed without erring because of the continuous spiritual operation of the Love, the Theologian of theologians, He Who forms the true theologians, that is', those who are lost in God and have God in themselves - the life of

God in them through the direction of the Spirit of God that guides them - that is, those who really are the "children of God" according to the concept of Paul.

And at the end of the Work, once again I have to put the complaint that I have put at the end of each evangelical year, and in My grief seeing My gift despised, I say to all of you: "You shall not have anything else, because you have not received this that I have given you". And I say also that about which I had you informed last summer (21.5.46) to call all of you on the right path: "You will not see Me until the day comes when you will say: 'Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord' ". »

The Work was finished today 27th April 1947.

Viareggio, Via Fratti 113 - Maria Valtorta.

637. Peter Celebrates the Eucharist in a Meeting of the First Christians.

Conclusion of the Work, that is: From Pentecost to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. 1st episode (3-6-1944). Peter, no longer a coarse fisherman, in his new capacity of Pontiff.

3rd June 1944.

It is one of the very first meetings of Christians, in the days immediately after Pentecost.

The twelve apostles are once again twelve, because Matthias, already elected in the place of the traitor, is among them. And the fact that all twelve are there proves that they had not yet parted to go and evangelize, according to the order of the Master. So it must have been Pentecost only a short time ago, and the persecutions of the Sanhedrin against the servants of Jesus Christ have not yet begun. Because if they had begun, they would not celebrate with so much calm, and without taking any precautions, in a house even too well known to those of the Temple, that is in the house of the Supper room, and exactly in the room where the Last Supper was consumed, the Eucharist was instituted, and the true and total betrayal as well as the Redemption began.

The large room, however, has undergone a modification, necessary for its new function as a church, and required by the number of the believers. The large table is no longer near the wall of the little staircase, but it is near, or rather against the wall facing it, so that even those who cannot go into the Supper room, already crowded with people - in the Supper room, the first church of the Christian world - can see what is happening there, thronging the entrance corridor, near the little door, completely open, that admits to the room.

In the room there are men and women of all ages. In a group of

women, near the large table, but in a corner, there is Mary, the Mother, surrounded by Martha and Mary of Lazarus, by Nike, Eliza, Mary of Alphaeus, Salome, Johanna of Chuza, in short, by many of the women disciples, both Jewish and not Jewish, whom Jesus had cured, comforted, evangelized, and who had become sheep of His fold. Among the men there are Nicodemus, Lazarus, Joseph of Arimathea, a large number of disciples, among whom there are Stephen, Hermas, the shepherds, Elisha the son of the leader of the synagogue of Engedi, and many more. There is also Longinus, not in his military uniform, but as if he were an ordinary citizen, with a long plain greyish tunic. Then many more, who have certainly entered the flock of Christ after Pentecost and the first evangelization of the Twelve.

Peter speaks also now, evangelizing and teaching the people present. He speaks once again of the Last Supper. Again, because from his words it is clear that he has already spoken of it.

He says: « I tell you once again » and he stresses these words very much « of this Supper in which, before being sacrificed by men, Jesus the Nazarene, as He was called, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Saviour, as He is to be called and believed with all our hearts and minds, because our salvation is in this faith, sacrificed Himself of His own free will, and out of excess of love, giving Himself in Food and Drink to men and saying to us, His servants and continuators: "Do this in memory of Me". And that is what we do. But, o men, as we, His witnesses, believe that in the Bread and in the Wine, offered and blessed, as He did, in His memory and out of obedience to His divine order, there is His Most Holy Body and His Most Holy Blood, that Body and that Blood that are of a God, of the Son of the Most High God, and that they have been crucified and shed for the sake and the lives of men, so you also, all of you, who have come to be part of the true, new, immortal Church, predicted by the Prophets and founded by the Christ, must believe it. Believe and bless the Lord Who to us - His crucifiers, if not materially, certainly morally and spiritually, because of our weakness in serving Him, because of our dullness in understanding Him, because of our cowardice in abandoning Him running away in His supreme hour, in our, no, in my personal betrayal of a man fearful and cowardly to the extent of disowning and denying Him and denying that I was His disciple, and more than that, the first among His servants (and large tears stream down Peter's face) shortly before the first hour, there, in the Court of the Temple - believe and bless, I was saying, the Lord, Who leaves this eternal sign of forgiveness to us. Believe and bless the Lord, Who allows those, who did not know Him when He was the Nazarene, to know Him now that He is the Word Incarnate reunited to His Father. Come and take it. He said: "He who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood will have eternal

Life". And we did not understand then (and Peter weeps again). We did not understand because we were slow in understanding. But now the Holy Spirit has brightened our intelligence, has fortified our faith, has infused charity into us, and we understand. And in the name of the Most High God, of the God of Abraham, of Jacob, of Moses, in the most high name of the God Who spoke to Isaiah, to Jeremiah, to Ezekiel, to Daniel and to the other Prophets, we swear to you that this is the truth and we beseech you to believe, so that you may have eternal Life. »

Peter is full of stateliness while speaking. There is no longer anything in him of the rather coarse fisherman of not long ago. He has climbed on a stool to speak and to be seen and heard better, because, small as he is, if he had remained standing on the floor of the room, he could not have been seen by those farther away, whereas he wants to dominate the crowd. He speaks moderately, in an appropriate voice, with the gestures of a true orator. His eyes, always expressive, are now more eloquent than ever. Love, faith, authority, contrition, everything shines through his eyes anticipating and reinforcing his words.

He has finished speaking now. He comes down from the stool and passes behind the large table, in the space between the table and the wall, and waits.

James and Judas, that is the two sons of Alphaeus and cousins of the Christ, now lay a white table-cloth on the table. To do so they lift the large low chest, which is on the centre of the table, and they spread a very fine linen cloth also on its lid.

The apostle John goes now to Mary and asks Her something. Mary slips off from Her neck a kind of a small key and gives it to John. John takes it, goes back to the chest, opens it, letting down the front panel, which is laid on the table and covered with a third linen cloth.

Inside the chest there is a horizontal partition that divides it into two sections. In the lower section there is a chalice and a metal plate. In the upper section, in the centre, the chalice used by Jesus at the Last Supper and for the first Eucharist, the remains of the bread broken by Him, laid on a small plate as precious as the chalice. On the sides of the chalice and of the small plate laid on it, on one side there is the crown of thorns, the nails and the sponge. On the other side one of the shrouds, rolled up, the veil with which Nike wiped Jesus' Face, and the one that Mary gave Her Son to gird up His loins. At the bottom there are other things, but as they remain rather concealed and no one speaks of them or shows them, it is not known what they are. The other ones, instead, and which are visible, are shown to the people present by John and Judas of Alphaeus, and the crowd kneels in front of them. But neither the chalice nor the small plate of the bread are touched or shown, nor is the Shroud unfolded, but only the rolled cloth is shown, saying what it is.

Perhaps John and Judas do not unfold it in order not to awake in Mary the sorrowful memory of the cruel tortures suffered by Her Son.

When this part of the ceremony is over, the apostles in chorus intone some prayers, I should say some psalms, because they are sung as the Hebrews used to do in their synagogues or in their pilgrimages to Jerusalem for the solemnities prescribed by the Law. The chorus of the apostles is joined by the crowd and so it becomes more and more impressive.

At the end they bring some bread that is laid on the small metal plate, which was in the lower section of the chest, and also some small amphorae, which are also of metal.

John, who is kneeling on the other side of the table - whereas Peter is always between the table and the wall, but facing the crowd - hands the tray with the bread to Peter, who raises it and offers it. He then blesses it and lays it on the chest.

Judas of Alphaeus, who is also kneeling beside John, in his turn, hands Peter the chalice of the lower section and the two amphorae that were previously near the small plate of the bread, and Peter pours their contents into the chalice, which he then raises and offers, as he had done with the bread. He blesses also the chalice and lays it on the chest beside the bread.

They say more prayers. Peter breaks the bread into many morsels, while the people prostrate themselves even more, and he says: « This is My Body. Do this is memory of Me ».

He comes out from behind the table, taking the tray full of the morsels of bread, and as first thing he goes to Mary and gives Her a morsel. Then he goes to the front of the table and hands out the consecrated Bread to all those who approach him to have it. A few morsels are left over, and still on their tray, they are laid on the chest.

He now takes the chalice and offers it, always beginning from Mary, to those who are present. John and Judas follow him with the small amphorae and they add the liquids when the chalice is empty, while Peter repeats the elevation, the offering and the blessing to consecrate the liquid.

When all those who asked to be nourished with the Eucharist are satisfied, the apostles consume the bread and wine left over. Then they sing another psalm or hymn and after it Peter blesses the crowd who, after his blessing, go away little by little.

Mary, the Mother, Who has always remained on Her knees during the whole ceremony of the consecration and the distribution of the species of the Bread and Wine, stands up and goes to the chest. She bends across the large table and with Her forehead She touches the upper section of the chest, where the chalice and the small plate used by Jesus at the Last Supper are laid, and She kisses the edges

of them. A kiss that is also for all the relics gathered there. Then John closes the chest and hands the key back to Mary, Who puts it again round Her neck.

638. The Blessed Virgin Takes up Her Abode at Gethsemane with John, Who Foretells Her Assumption.

21st August 1951.

Mary is still in the house of the Supper room. All alone in Her usual room, She is sewing some very fine linen cloths, like long narrow table-cloths. Now and again She raises Her head to look at the garden and ascertain thus the time of the day by the position of the sunshine on its walls. And if She hears a noise in the house or in the street, She listens carefully. She seems to be waiting for someone.

Some time goes by so. Then there is a knock at the door of the house, followed by the rustling of sandals of someone who rushes to open it. Voices of men resound in the corridor and they become louder and louder and closer and closer.

Mary listens... Then She exclaims: « Are they here?! What on earth has happened?! » While She is still uttering these words, somebody knocks at the door of Her room. « Come in, brothers in Jesus, My Lord » replies Mary.

Lazarus and Joseph of Arimathea enter, and greeting Her with deep veneration they say: « Blessed are You among all mothers! The servants of Your Son and our Lord greet You », and they prostrate themselves to kiss the hem of Her dress.

« The Lord be always with you. For what reason, and while the ferment of the persecutors of the Christ and of His followers has not yet ceased, have you come to Me? »

« First of all, to see You. Because seeing You is still seeing Him, and thus we feel less distressed because of His departure from the Earth. And then to propose to You what we have resolved to do, after a meeting in my house of the more loving and faithful servants of Jesus, Your Son and our Lord » Lazarus replies to Her.

« Tell Me. It will be your love that speaks to Me, and with My love I will listen to you. »

Joseph of Arimathea now begins to speak and says: « Woman, You know and You have said so, that the ferment, and what is even worse, still last against all those who have been close to Your Son and God's, either through relationship, or faith, or friendship. And we are aware that You do not intend to leave these places, where You have seen the perfect manifestation of the divine and human nature of Your Son, His total mortification, and His total glorification, through His Passion and Death as true Man, through His glorious Resurrection and Ascension, as true God. And we also

know that You do not want to leave the apostles all alone, as You wish to be a Mother and guide to them in their first trials, You, the See of Divine Wisdom, You, the Spouse of the Spirit Revealer of the Eternal Truths, You, eternally beloved Daughter of the Father Who from eternity chose You as Mother of His Only-Begotten Son, You, the Mother of this Word of the Father, Who certainly taught You His infinite and most perfect Wisdom and Doctrine, even before He was in You, as a creature that was forming, or He was with You as a Son Who grows in age and wisdom to such an extent as to become the Master of masters. John told us the day after the first astonishing sermon and apostolic manifestation, which took place ten days after the Ascension of Jesus to Heaven. You, in turn, know, as You saw it at Gethsemane on the day of the Ascension of Your Son to His Father and as You were told by Peter, John and other apostles, that Lazarus and I, immediately after the Death and Resurrection, began to build a wall around my kitchen garden near Golgotha and at Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, so that those places, sanctified by the Divine Martyr's Blood, that dropped, alas!, warmed by fever at Gethsemane, and frozen and clotted in my garden, may not be profaned by Jesus' enemies. The work has now been completed, and both Lazarus and I, and his sisters with him and the apostles, who would suffer too much not having You here any longer, say to You: "Take up Your abode in the house of Jonah and Mary, the keepers of Gethsemane". »

« And Jonah and Mary? That house is a small one, and I love solitude. I have always loved it. And I love it even more now, because I need it to get lost in God, in My Jesus, so that I may not die of anguish, not having Him here any longer. It is not fair that human eyes should be laid on the mysteries of God, because He is God now more than ever. I Woman, Jesus Man. But our Humanity was, and is, different from every other one, both because of our immunity from sin, also from the original one, and because of our relationship with God One and Trine. We are unique in these things among all creatures past, present and future. Now man, even the best and most prudent one, is naturally and inevitably curious, particularly if he is near an extraordinary manifestation. And only Jesus and I, as long as He was on the Earth, know what sufferings... yes, also shame, uneasiness, torture is experienced when human curiosity pries into, watches, spies upon our secrets with God. It is the same as if they placed us naked in the middle of a square. Think of My past, how I have always sought secrecy, silence, how I have always concealed, under the appearance of the common life of a poor woman, the mysteries of God in Me. Recall how, in order not to reveal them even to My spouse Joseph, I almost made of him, a just man, an unjust one. Only the angelic intervention avoided that danger. Think of the life so humble, hidden, common, led by Jesus for thirty-three

years, how easily He would withdraw and become isolated when He was the Master. He had to work miracles and teach, because that was His mission. But, He told Me Himself, He suffered - one of the many reasons for the severity and sadness that flashed in His large powerful eyes - He suffered, I was saying, because of the exaltation of the crowds, because of the more or less good curiosity with which they watched every action of His. How many times did He order His disciples and those He had cured miraculously, saying: "Do not mention what you have seen. Do not mention what I have done for you"! ... Now I should not like human eyes to inquire into the mysteries of God in Me, mysteries that have not ceased with the return to Heaven of Jesus, My Son and My God, no, on the contrary they last, and I should say that they increase, thanks to His goodness, and to keep Me alive, until the hour comes, for which I have longed so much, of joining Him for ever. I would like only John with Me. Because he is prudent, respectful, loving with Me like another Jesus. But Jonah and Mary will know... »

Lazarus interrupts Her: « It has already been done, o Blessed Mother! We have already seen to it. Mark, Jonah's son, is among the disciples. Mary, his mother and Jonah, his father, are already at Bethany. »

« But the olive-grove? It needs to be taken care of! » Mary replies to him.

« Only when it is time to prune, to plough and pick the olives. So, only a few days each year and which will be even fewer, because in those periods I will send my servants from Bethany with Mark. You, Mother, if You want to make us happy, my sisters and me, will come to Bethany in those days, to the Zealot's solitary house. We shall be close to one another, but our eyes will not be indiscreet with regard to Your meetings with God. »

« But the oil-mill?... »

« It has already been transferred to Bethany. Gethsemane, completely enclosed, the property even more reserved of Lazarus of Theophilus, is awaiting You, Mary. And I assure You that the enemies of Jesus, out of fear of Rome, will not dare to violate its peace and Yours. »

« Oh! since it is so! » exclaims Mary. And She presses Her hands against Her heart, and looks at them, with a countenance that is almost ecstatic, so blissful it is, with an angelic smile on Her lips and tears of joy on Her fair eyelashes. She continues: « John and I! Alone! We two all alone! I shall seem to be once again at Nazareth with My Son! Alone! In peace! In that peace! Where My Jesus gave forth so many words and so much spirit of peace! Where, it is true, He suffered so much that He sweated blood and received the supreme moral sorrow of the infamous kiss and the first... » A sob and a very painful recollection interrupt Her words and upset Her

face that, for a few moments, has once more the sorrowful expression it had on the days of the Passion and Death of Her Son. She then collects Herself and says: « There, where He went back to the infinite peace of Paradise! I will soon send Mary of Alphaeus instructions to look after My little house in Nazareth, which is so dear to Me, because the mystery was accomplished there and My spouse, so pure and holy, died there, and Jesus grew up in it. So dear! But never as much as these places where He instituted the Rite of rites, and He became Bread, Blood, Life for men, and He suffered and redeemed, and He founded His Church and, with His last blessing, He made all the things of Creation good and holy. I will remain. Yes. I will remain here. I will go to Gethsemane. And from there, walking along the outside of the walls, I shall be able to go to Golgotha, and to your kitchen garden, Joseph, where I wept so much, and I shall be able to come to your house, Lazarus, where I have always had so much love, in My Son first, and then for Myself. » « But I should like... »

« What, Blessed Mother? » they both ask Her.

« I should like to come back here as well. Because together with the apostles, we had decided, providing Lazarus allows us... » « Everything You want, Mother. Everything I have, is Yours. Previously I used to say so to Jesus. Now I say it to You. And if You accept My gift, it is always I who receive a grace. »

« Son, let Me call you so, I should like you to allow us to make of this house, that is of the Supper room, a place for meetings and for the brotherly agape. »

« It is just. In this place Your Son instituted the new eternal Rite, He founded His new Church, elevating His apostles and disciples to a new Pontificate and Priesthood. It is just that that room should become the first temple of the new religion: the seed that tomorrow will be a tree, and then a huge forest, the embryo that tomorrow will be a complete vital organism, and that will grow more and more in height, depth and width, spreading all over the Earth. Which table and altar are holier than the ones on which He broke the Bread and laid the Chalice of the new Rite, that will last as long as the Earth? »

« That is true, Lazarus. And, see? For it I am sewing clean tablecloths. Because I believe, as no one will believe with equal strength, that the Bread and Wine are He, in His Flesh and in His Blood; Most holy and innocent Flesh, Redeeming Blood, given in Food and Drink of Life to men. May the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit bless you, o good wise men, who have always been compassionate to the Son and to His Mother. »

« So it is decided. Take this. It is the key that opens the various gates of the enclosure of Gethsemane. And this is the key of the house. And be happy, as much as God grants You to be and as much

as our poor love would like You to be. »

Now that Lazarus has finished speaking, Joseph of Arimathea in turn says: « And this is the key of the enclosure of my kitchen garden. »

« But you... you are quite entitled to go in! »

« I have another one, Mary. The market-gardener is a just man, and so is his son. You will find only them and me there. And we will be prudent and respectful. »

« May God bless you again » repeats Mary.

« Thanks to you, Mother. Our love and the peace of God to You, always. » They prostrate themselves after this last greeting, they kiss the hem of Her dress once again and they go away.

They have just gone out of the house, when another moderate knock is heard at the door of the room in which Mary is.

« Come in » says Mary.

John does not make Her repeat it twice. He goes in and closes the door, somewhat worried. He asks: « What did Joseph and Lazarus want? Is there any danger? »

« No, son. There is only the satisfaction of a wish of Mine. A wish of Mine and of other people. You know how Peter and James of Alphaeus, the former the Pontiff, the latter the head of the church of Jerusalem, are desolate at the thought of losing Me, as they are afraid they will not know what to do without Me. James in particular. Not even the special apparition of My Son to him, and his election by the will of Jesus, comfort and fortify him. But also the others!... Lazarus is now satisfying this general wish and makes us the masters of Gethsemane. You and I. All alone there. Here are the keys. And this is the key of Joseph's kitchen garden... We shall be able to go to the Sepulchre, to Bethany, without going through the town... And to go to Golgotha... And come here every time there is the brotherly agape. Lazarus and Joseph are granting us everything. »

« They are really two just men. Lazarus received a lot from Jesus. That is true. But, even before receiving, He always gave everything to Jesus. Are You happy, Mother? »

« Yes, John. So much! I will live, as long as God wants, helping Peter and James and all of you, and I will help the first Christians in every way. If the Judaeans, the Pharisees and the priests are not wild animals also towards Me, as they were for My Son, I shall be able to breathe My last where He ascended to His Father. »

« You will ascend as well, Mother. »

« No. I am not Jesus. I was born in a human way. »

« But without stain of origin. I am a poor ignorant fisherman. With regard to doctrines and scriptures I know only what the Master taught me. But I am like a boy, because I am pure. And so, perhaps I know more than the Rabbis of Israel, because, He said so, God

hides things from the wise and reveals them to the little and pure ones. And that is why I think, or better, I feel that You will have the destiny that Eve would have had, if she had not sinned. And even more, because You have not been the spouse of an Adam-man, but of God, to give the Earth the new Adam faithful to Grace. The Creator, when He created our first Parents, did not destine them to die, that is to the corruption of the most perfect body created by Him, and made the most noble among all the bodies created, because it is endowed with a spiritual soul and with the gratuitous gifts of God, whereby they could be called "adoptive sons of God", but what He wanted for them was only a passage from the earthly Paradise to the celestial one. Now You have never had any stain of sin on Your soul. Not even the great common sin, the heritage of Adam to all human beings, affected You, because God preserved You from it by a singular unique privilege, as from ever, You had been destined to become the Ark of the Word. And the Ark, even the one that, alas!, contains nothing but cold, arid, dead things, because, really, the people of God do not put them into practice as they should, is and must always be most pure. The Ark is, yes. But among those who approach it, Pontiff and Priests, who is really as pure as You are? No one. That is why I feel that You, the second Eve, and Eve faithful to Grace, are not destined to death. »

« My Son, the second Adam, Grace itself, always obedient to His Father, to Me, in a perfect manner, died. And of what death! »

« He had come to be the Redeemer, Mother. He left His Father, Heaven, He took Flesh upon Himself, in order to redeem men, through His Sacrifice, give Grace back to them, and then elevate them once again to the rank of adoptive sons of God, heirs to Heaven. He had to die. And His Most Holy Humanity died. And You died in Your heart seeing His cruel torture and His Death. You have already suffered everything to be the redeemer with Him. I am a poor foolish boy, but I feel that You, the true Ark of the true living God, will not be, You cannot be subject to corruption. As the cloud of fire protected and guided the Ark of Moses towards the promised Land, so the Fire of God will attract You to its Centre. As the branch of Aaron did not wither, did not perish, on the contrary, although detached from the tree, it put forth buds, leaves and yielded fruit and lived in the Tabernacle, so You, chosen by God among all the women who lived and will live on the Earth, will not die like a plant that withers, but You will live for ever, with Your whole Self, in the Tabernacle of Heaven. As the waters of the Jordan opened to let the Ark, its bearers and all the people pass in the days of Joshua, so the barriers that the sin of Adam placed between Heaven and Earth will open for You, and from this world You will pass to the eternal Heaven. I am sure of that. Because God is just. And the decree issued by God for those who have neither hereditary

nor voluntary sin on their souls applies to You. »

« Has Jesus revealed that to you? »

« No, Mother. The Spirit Paraclete tells me, He Who the Master informed us would reveal future things and all truth to us. The Comforter is already telling me in my spirit, to make less bitter for me the thought of losing You, blessed Mother, Whom I love and venerate as much and even more than my own mother, because of what You have suffered, because You are good and holy, inferior only to Your Most Holy Son among all present and future Saints. The greatest Saint. » And John, deeply moved, prostrates himself venerating Her.

639. The Blessed Virgin and John in the Places of the Passion.

8th September 1951.

It is dawn. A clear summer dawn. Mary, with faithful John, leaves the little house at Gethsemane and walks quickly through the silent desert olive-grove. Only the singing of some birds and the chirping of nestlings break the deep silence of the place.

Mary without any hesitation directs Her steps towards the rock of the Agony. She kneels against it, She kisses where some thin fissures in the rock still show rusty-red traces of Jesus' Blood, that penetrated into the fissures and coagulated there, She caresses them, as if She were still caressing Her Son or part of Him. John, standing behind Her, watches Her and weeps silently, wiping his eyes quickly when Mary makes the gesture of standing up, he even helps Her to do so, and he does it with so much love, veneration and compassion.

Mary now goes down to the open area where Jesus was captured. Also there She kneels down and She bends to kiss the earth, after asking John: « Is this exactly the place of the horrible ill-famed kiss, that contaminated this place even more than the filthy corrupting conversation of the Serpent with Eve disgraced the earthly Paradise? » She then stands up saying: « But I am not Eve. I am the Woman of the Ave. I turned things upside down. Eve threw what belonged to Heaven into the filthy mud. I have accepted everything: incomprehension, criticism, suspicion, sorrow - how many sorrows and of how many kinds, before the supreme grief - to remove from the filthy mud what Eve and Adam had thrown into it, and elevate it again towards Heaven. The demon was not able to speak to Me, although he tried to, as he tried with My Son, to destroy the redemption plan definitively. He was not able to speak to Me, because I closed My ears to his voice and My eyes to his sight, and above all I closed My heart and My spirit against every attack of what is not holy and pure. My limpid ego, but which, like a pure diamond, cannot

be scratched, opened only to the announcing Angel. My ears listened only to that spiritual voice, and so I repaired and rebuilt what Eve had damaged and destroyed. I am the Woman of the Ave and of the Fiat. I restored the order upset by Eve. And now I can remove and wash with My kiss and My tears the impression of that cursed kiss and of that contamination. The greatest of all of them, because it was done not by a creature to a creature, but by a creature to his Master and Friend, to his Creator and God. »

She then goes towards the gate, which John opens. They come out together from Gethsemane, they go down to the Kidron, they cross the little bridge, and there also Mary kneels down to kiss the rustic parapet of the bridge, on the spot where Her Son fell on it. She says: « Every place where He suffered supreme sorrows and abuse is sacred to Me. I should like to have everything in My little house. But it is not possible to have everything! »

She sighs and then says: « Let us go on quickly, before people get about. » And She takes to the road again with John.

She does not go into town. They go along the Hinnom valley and the caves where the lepers live. She raises Her eyes towards those caverns of sorrow. She gives John a nod and he at once lays on a rock some foodstuffs that he had in a bag, uttering a cry at the same time to call them. Some lepers look out and come towards the rock thanking them. But none of them ask to be cured. Mary notices it and says: « They know that He is no longer here and shocked as they are at His horrible Death, they can no longer have faith in Him and in His disciples. Twice unhappy! Twice lepers! Twice? No, even more, completely unhappy, lepers, dead! Both on the Earth and in the next world. »

« Shall I try and speak to them, Mother? »

« It is useless! Peter, Judas of Alphaeus, Simon Zealot have tried... And they derided them. Mary of Lazarus came, as she always assists them in memory of Jesus, and she was derided as well. Lazarus also went, with Joseph and Nicodemus, to convince them that He was the Christ, telling them of his resurrection worked by Jesus, after being for four days in the sepulchre, and of that of the Man-God, through His own power, and of His Ascension. It was all to no avail. They replied: "Lies. Those who know the truth say that they are lies". »

« And they are certainly the Pharisees and the priests. They are the ones who are working to destroy faith in Him. I am sure it is they! »

« It may be, John. It is certain that the lepers who were not converted before, in the face of Jesus' miracles, will not be converted any more. No more. A sign and symbol of all those who, throughout ages, will not be converted to the Christ, and by their free will, will be lepers of sin, dead to the Grace, which is Life, the symbol

of all those for whom He died in vain... And in that manner!... » and She weeps, quietly, without sobbing, but with a real flood of tears.

John takes Her by the arm when Mary, to conceal Her tears from some passersby who are watching Her, covers Her face with Her veil. John, while leading Her lovingly, says to Her: « It is not possible for Your tears, for Your prayers, for Your, even more, for Your and Jesus' love for all men - Yours, because Yours is active, as active, perfectly active as Jesus' glorious in Heaven, and Your sorrow, because of the deafness of men, and His, because of the obstinate sinning of too many people - not to yield fruit. Have hope, Mother! Men have given You and will still give You much sorrow, but they will also give You love and joy. Who will not love You, when he hears about You? Now here You are not known, the world is unacquainted with You. But when the Earth knows, because it has become Christian, how much love will come to You! I am sure, o holy Mother. »

Golgotha is now close at hand, and Joseph's kitchen garden is even closer. When they reach the latter, Mary does not go in. She goes to Golgotha first. And in the places where particular episodes took place during the Passion, that is, in the places of His falls, of His meeting with Nike and with Her as well, She kneels down and kisses the ground.

When She arrives at the summit, Her kisses become more frequent at the place of the Crucifixion. Kisses and tears, the former almost convulsive, the latter calm, but as thick as rain, fall on the yellowish earth wetting it and making its yellowish colour darker.

A little plant has come up just where the earth was moved to plant the cross there, a humble wild little plant, with heart-shaped leaves and little flowers as red as rubies. Mary looks at it, She becomes pensive, then She removes it delicately from the soil with a little loose earth, She lays it in the hem of Her mantle, saying to John: « I will put it in a vase. It looks like His blood, and it has come up in the earth made red by His Blood. It is certainly a seed carried by the whirlwind of that day, it came from who knows where and fell there who knows why, to take root in the dust fertilised by that Blood. I wish it were so for all the souls! Why is the majority of them more reluctant than the arid and cursed earth of Golgotha, the place of torture for highwaymen and killers, and of the deicide of a whole people? Cursed? No. He has sanctified this dust. Cursed by God are those who turned this hill into the place of the most horrible, unjust, sacrilegious crime that will ever be on the Earth. » Now Her sobs are joined to Her tears.

John embraces Her shoulders with his arm, to make Her feel all his love, and he convinces Her to leave that place, which is too sorrowful for Her.

They go down to the foot of the hill again. They go into Joseph's

kitchen garden. The Sepulchre shows its inside with a wide opening, no longer closed by the stone, which is still lying overturned on the ground among the grass. It is empty inside. All traces of the Deposition and of the Resurrection have disappeared. It looks like a sepulchre that has never been used.

Mary kisses the stone of the unction, She casts loving glances at the walls. Then She asks John: « Tell Me once again how you found things here, when you came here with Peter at dawn of the Resurrection. »

And John, moving here and there, outside and inside the Sepulchre, describes how the things were and what he and Peter did, and he ends by saying: « We should have collected the linens. But we were so upset by all the events of those days, that we did not think about it. When we came back here, the linens were no longer here. »

« Those of the Temple must have taken them, to desecrate them » says Mary interrupting him and weeping. And She concludes: « Not even Mary of Magdala thought that they should have been taken away to be given to Me. She was too upset as well. »

« The Temple? No. I think that Joseph has taken them. »

« He would have told Me... Oh! Jesus' enemies must have taken them for a last insult! » says Mary moaning.

« Do not weep, do not suffer any more. He is now in His glory. In infinite perfect love. Hatred and insults can no longer touch Him. »

« That is true. But those linens... »

« They would be the cause of sorrow to You, as is the first Shroud, that You have not the strength to spread out, because besides the traces of His Blood, there are those of the filthy things thrown on that Most Holy Body. »

« That shroud, yes. But these linens, no. They absorbed what trickled from Him when He no longer suffered... Oh! you cannot understand! »

« I see, Mother. But I did not think that You, Who are certainly not separated from Him God, as we are, and even more are the simple believers in Him, felt so strong the desire, even more, the need to have something of Him, the tortured Man. Forgive my stupidity. Come... We will come back here again. Let us go now, because the sun is rising more and more, it is strong, and long is the road we have to take in order to avoid the town. »

They come out of the Sepulchre, and then of the kitchen garden, and along the same road by which they came, they go back to Gethsemane. Mary walks quickly and silently, all enveloped in Her mantle. She has only a sensation of disgust and horror when She passes near the olive-grove where Judas hanged himself and near the country house of Caiaphas, and She whispers: « Here he completed

his damnation of an unrepentant soul in despair, and there he finalised the deal. »

640. The Two Shrouds of the Lord.

5th October 1951.

It is night-time. The moon, at her highest point, with her silvery light illuminates the whole of Gethsemane and the little house of Mary and John. Everything is silent. Even the Kidron, which has become a fine stream of water, makes no noise.

All of a sudden a rustling of sandals can be heard in the deep silence and it becomes more and more distinct and closer, and with it the whispering of some deep masculine voices. Then three people appear from the clump of trees and they direct their steps towards the little house. They knock at the door.

A lamp is lit and a faint flickering light filters through a fissure in the door. A hand opens, a head looks out, a voice, John's, asks: « Who are you? »

« Joseph of Arimathea. And with me are Nicodemus and Lazarus. The hour is indiscreet. But prudence has forced it on us. We have brought something for Mary and Lazarus has escorted us. »

« Come in. I will go and call Her. She is not sleeping. She is praying up there, in Her little room, on the terrace. She likes it so much! » says John, and he quickly climbs the little staircase leading to the terrace and to the room.

The three, who have remained in the kitchen, speak to one another in low voices, in the faint light of the lamp, gathered near the table, still enveloped in their mantles, with the exception of their heads, which they have uncovered.

John comes back in with Mary, Who greets the three saying: « Peace to all of you. »

« And to You, Mary » they reply, bowing.

« Is there any danger? Has anything happened to the servants of Jesus? »

« Nothing, Woman. We have decided to come to give You a thing that - now we know for a certainty, but we had already had a foreboding of it - You wished to have. We did not come sooner, because there has been a contrast of ideas among us, and also between us and Mary of Lazarus. Martha has not declared her opinion on the matter. She only said: "The Lord, either directly, or by inspiring other people to speak, will tell you what to do". And, actually, we have been told what to do. And that is why we have come » explains Joseph.

« Has the Lord spoken to you? Has He come to you? »

« No, Mother. He has not come any more, after His ascension to Heaven. Previously yes. He appeared to us, and we told You, in a

supernatural way, after His resurrection, in my house. On that day He appeared to many people, at the same time, to give proof of His Divinity and of His Resurrection. Then we have seen Him again while He remained among men, but no longer in a supernatural manner, but as the apostles and disciples saw Him » says Nicodemus replying to Her.

« So? How did He show you the way you had to follow? »

« Through the words of one of His favourites and successors. »

« Peter? I do not think so. He is still too frightened, both of his past and of His new mission. »

« No, Mary, not Peter, who, however, is really becoming more and more confident and, now that he knows for which purpose Lazarus has used the house of the Supper room, has decided to begin regular agapes and to celebrate the mysteries regularly on the day after each Sabbath. Because he says that that is now the day of the Lord, as on that day He rose from the dead and appeared to many people to confirm them in their faith in His eternal Nature of God. There is no longer the Sabbath, as it has been for the Hebrews perhaps since the Shabuoth. There is no longer the Sabbath, because there is no longer the synagogue for Christians, but the Church, as predicted by the prophets. But there is still, and there will always be, the day of the Lord, in memory of the Man-God, of the Master, Founder, eternal Pontiff, after being the Redeemer, of the Christian Church. So from the day after the next Sabbath there will be the agapes among Christians, and there will be many of them, in the house of the Supper room. Which was not possible before, both because of the hatred of Pharisees, Priests, Sadducees and scribes, and of the temporary dispersion of many followers of Jesus, shaken in their faith in Him and frightened of the hatred of the Judaeans. But now those who hated us, both because of their fear of Rome, that has found fault with the behaviour of the Proconsul, and of the crowds, and because they consider the "excitement of the fanatics" to be over - that is how they define the faith of the Christians in Christ, owing to the momentary scattering of the believers, truly of a short duration and now completely over, because all the sheep have gone back to the Fold of the true Shepherd - are not keeping such a watchful eye on us, I should say that they take no interest in it, as if it were a dead matter that had come to its end. And that allows us to assemble for the agapes.

We want You to be able, also with regard to the previous one, to have this souvenir of Him to be shown to the believers, in order to confirm them in their faith, without it grieving You too much. » And Joseph hands Her a bulky roll, that enveloped in a dark red cloth, he had held so far concealed under his mantle.

« What is it? » asks Mary, growing pale. « His garments, perhaps? The one I made for Him for... Oh! ... » She says weeping.

« At no price could we find them any more. Who knows how and where they ended up! » replies Lazarus. And he adds: « But this is also His garment. His last one. It is the clean Shroud in which the most pure Lord was enveloped after His torture and after the purification, although hurried and relative, of His members soiled by His enemies, and the summary embalming. When He rose, Joseph took both away from the Sepulchre and brought them to us at Bethany to avoid any sacrilegious abuse of them. Jesus' enemies will not dare too much in Lazarus' house. And less than ever since they heard that Rome censured the action of Pontius Pilate. Then after the first days, the most dangerous ones, we gave You the first Shroud, and Nicodemus got the other and took it to his country house. »

« Really, Lazarus, they belonged to Joseph » remarks Mary.

« That is true, Woman. But Nicodemus' house is out of town, so it does not strike the eye so much and it is safer for other reasons » Joseph replies to Her.

« Yes, particularly since Gamaliel with his son pays frequent visits to it » adds Nicodemus.

« Gamaliel!?! » exclaims Mary much surprised.

Lazarus cannot help smiling sarcastically while he replies to Her: « Yes. The sign, the famous sign that he was waiting for, to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, has shaken him. No one can deny that the sign was such as to crush even the hardest heads and hearts and make them surrender. And Gamaliel was shaken, crushed and demolished by the most powerful sign, more than the houses that collapsed on Preparation Day, while the world seemed to perish with the Great Victim. Remorse has torn him, more than the veil of the Temple was torn, the remorse for never having understood Jesus for what He really was. The closed sepulchre of his spirit of an old pig-headed Jew has opened, like the tombs that let the bodies of the just appear, and he is now anxiously seeking truth, light, forgiveness, life. The new life. The one that only through Jesus and in Jesus can be obtained. Oh! He will still have to work hard to clear his ancient ego completely of the rubble of his past way of thinking! But he will succeed. He is seeking peace, forgiveness and knowledge. Peace for his remorse and forgiveness for his stubbornness. And full knowledge of Him Whom, when he could, he did not want to know fully. And he goes to Nicodemus to reach the aim that he is now determined to reach. »

« Are you sure that he will not betray you, Nicodemus? » asks Mary.

« No. He will not betray me. After all he is a just man. Remember that he dared to impose himself on the Sanhedrin, during the infamous trial, and that he openly showed his disdain and disgust towards the unjust judges, by going away and by ordering his son to go away in order not to be an accomplice, not even by a passive presence, in that supreme crime. That with regard to Gamaliel.

Then, with regard to the Shrouds, since I am no longer a Hebrew and consequently no longer subject to the prohibition of Deuteronomy concerning carved images and castings, I was thinking of making a statue of Jesus crucified, as best I can - I will use one of my gigantic cedars of Lebanon - and of concealing one of the Shrouds inside it, the first one, if You, Mother, will give it back to us. It would always distress You too much to see it, because the filthiness with which Israel struck the Son of its God is visible on it. Further, certainly because of the shocks it received when descending from Golgotha, shocks that continuously shifted that tortured Head, the image is so confused that it is difficult to distinguish it. But that cloth, although the image is confused and it is dirty, is always dear and sacred to me, because on it there is always some of His blood and perspiration. Hidden in that sculpture it will always be safe, because no Israelite of the high castes will ever dare to touch a sculpture. But the other one, the second Shroud, which was on Him from the evening of Preparation Day until the dawn of the Resurrection, must come to You. And - I am warning You so that You may not be too deeply moved in seeing it - and you must be informed that the more the days passed, the more clearly His image appeared, as He was after being washed. When we collected it from the Sepulchre, it seemed that it simply retained the impression of His members covered with the oils, and, mixed with them, the drainage of blood and serum from the many wounds. But either through a natural process or, which is much more certain, by a supernatural will, a miracle of Him to give joy to You, the more time passed, the more precise and clear the impression has become. He is there on the cloth, handsome, imposing, even if wounded, serene, peaceful, also after so many tortures. Have You the courage to see it? »

« Oh! Nicodemus! That was My supreme desire! You say that His appearance is peaceful... Oh! to be able to see Him thus, not with the tortured expression that is on Nike's veil! » replies Mary, joining Her hands against Her heart.

Then the four shift the table to have more room; then, as Lazarus and John stand on one side, Nicodemus and Joseph on the other, they slowly unfold the long cloth. The dorsal side appears first, beginning from the feet; then after the quasi-junction of the heads, the front side. The lines are very clear, and clear are the signs, all the signs of the scourging, crowning with thorns, rubbing of the cross, bruises caused by blows received or by falls, and the wounds of the nails and of the lance.

Mary falls on Her knees, She kisses the cloth, She caresses those impressions, She kisses the wounds. She is distressed, but visibly happy to be able to have that supernatural miraculous image of Him.

When She finishes venerating it, She turns and says to John, who

cannot be near Her, compelled as he is to hold one corner of the cloth: « It was you who told them, John. You alone could tell them, because you alone were aware of this desire of Mine. »

« Yes, Mother, it was I. And I did not even have time to inform them of Your desire, that they agreed to it. But they have had to wait for a suitable moment to do so... »

« That is, a very clear night, in order to be able to come without torches or lamps, and a period of time without the festivities that assemble crowds and notables here in Jerusalem and nearby places. And that out of prudence... » explains Nicodemus.

« And I have come with them for greater safety. As the owner of Gethsemane, I was able to come and see this place without shocking the eyes of anyone... commissioned to watch everything and everybody » says Lazarus concluding.

« May God bless you all. But you have spent the money for the Shrouds... And that is not fair... »

« It is fair, Mother. I, from the Christ, Your Son, have received a gift that no money can buy: life given back to me after four days in a sepulchre, and before that, the conversion of my sister Mary. Joseph and Nicodemus have had from Jesus the Light, the Truth, the Life that does not die. And You... You, with Your sorrow of a Mother and Your love of the Most holy Mother for all men, have purchased for God, not a cloth, but the whole Christian world that will always be greater and greater. There is no money that can compensate You for what You have given. So take this, at least. It is Yours. And it is just that it should be so. Also Mary, my sister, thinks so. That has always been her opinion, since the moment that He rose and even more since He left You to ascend to His Father » Lazarus replies to Her.

« Then let it be So. I will go and get the other one. It in fact grieves Me so much to see it... This one is different. This one gives peace! Because here He is serene, in peace by now. In His mortal sleep, He already seems to be feeling the Life that is coming back and the glory that no one will ever be able to strike and demolish. I now wish nothing else, apart from being reunited to Him. But that will happen when and as God has predisposed. I am going. And may God give you one hundred times as much joy as you have given Me. »

She takes the Shroud reverently, after the four have folded it, She goes out of the kitchen and quickly climbs the little staircase... And She soon comes down again and comes in with the first Shroud, which She hands to Nicodemus, who says to Her: « May God reward You, Woman. We are going now, as it is almost dawn, and it is wise to be home before its light spreads and people come out of their houses. »

The three venerate Her before going out, and then with quick steps, going back along the road by which they came, they go

towards one of the gates of Gethsemane, the one closest to the Bethany road.

Mary and John remain at the door of the little house until they see them disappear, they then go back into the kitchen and close the door speaking to each other in low voices.

641. The Martyrdom of Stephen. Saul and Gamaliel.

7th August 1944.

The hall of the Sanhedrin, identical, both with regard to disposition and to people, to what it was in the night between Thursday and Friday, during Jesus' trial. The High Priest and the others are sitting on their seats. In the middle, in front of the High Priest, in the empty space where, during the trial Jesus was, there is now Stephen.

He must have already spoken professing his faith and bearing witness to the true Nature of the Christ and to His Church, because the tumult is at its climax and in its violence it is similar to the one that raged against the Christ in the fatal night of the betrayal and deicide. Blows, curses, horrible oaths are hurled against the deacon Stephen who, under the brutal blows, staggers and totters while they savagely tug him here and there.

But he keeps his calm and dignity, and even more. He is not only calm and dignified, but he is even blissful and almost ecstatic. Disregarding the spittles streaming down his face and the blood running from his nose, that has been violently struck, at a certain moment he raises his inspired face and his bright smiling eyes to stare at a vision known to him alone. He stretches his arms out crosswise, he raises them up as if he wished to embrace what he sees, then he falls on his knees exclaiming: « Here, I can see the Heavens thrown open, and the Son of Man, Jesus, the Christ of God, Whom you have killed, standing at the right hand of God. »

Then the tumult loses even that least part that it still retained of humanity and legality and, with the fury of a pack of wolves, of jackals, of rabid wild beasts, they all hurl themselves on the deacon, they bite him, they trample on him, they grasp him, they raise him lifting him by his hair, they drag him, letting him drop again, while fury opposes fury, because in the rush those who try to drag the martyr outside are hindered by those who pull him in another direction to strike him and tread on him again.

Among the most furious ones there is a young short ugly looking man, named Saul. The fierceness of his face is indescribable.

In a corner of the hall there is Gamaliel. He has never taken part in the brawl, neither has he ever addressed Stephen or any mighty person. His disgust for the unfair wild scene is manifest. In another corner there is Nicodemus, who is also disgusted and does not take

part in the trial or in the brawl, and is looking at Gamaliel, whose countenance is clearer than any word. But suddenly, and precisely when he sees Stephen being lifted by his hair for the third time, Gamaliel envelops himself in his very wide mantle and he goes towards an exit in the opposite direction to that towards which the deacon is being dragged.

His action does not pass unnoticed to Saul who shouts: « Rabbi, are you going away? »

Gamaliel does not reply.

Saul, fearing that Gamaliel has not understood that the question was made to him, repeats and specifies it: « Rabbi Gamaliel, are you evading this judgement? »

Gamaliel turns round all of one piece and, looking furious, disgusted as he is, dignified and frigid, he replies only: « Yes. » But his « yes » is worth more than a long speech.

Saul understands everything that that « yes » implies, and leaving the wild pack, he rushes towards Gamaliel. He reaches him, stops him, says to him: « You are not going to tell me, o rabbi, that you disapprove of our condemnation. »

Gamaliel does not look at him, neither does he reply to him.

Saul insists: « That man is doubly guilty, as he denied the Law, following a Samaritan possessed by Beelzebub, and for doing so after being your disciple. »

Gamaliel continues to look away from him and to be silent.

Saul then asks him: « But are you perhaps, you as well, a follower of that criminal named Jesus? »

Gamaliel now speaks and says: « I am not yet. But if He was what He said, and truly many things prove that He was, I pray God that I may become one. »

Horrible shouts Saul.

« There is nothing horrible. Every man has an intelligence to make use of it, and a freedom to apply it. So let everybody make use of it according to that freedom that God has given to every man and to that light that He has put in everybody's heart. The just, sooner or later, will use these two gifts of God, for Good purposes, and the wicked, for Evil purposes. » And he goes away, directing his steps towards the court where the Treasury is, and he goes and leans against the same column against which Jesus spoke of the poor widow who gave the Treasury of the Temple everything she had: two farthings.

He has not been there long when Saul joins him again and places himself in front of him. The contrast between the two is very strong.

Gamaliel is tall, of a noble bearing, handsome in his strong Semitic features, with a high forehead, with eyes which are very dark, intelligent, piercing, long and deeply sunken under his thick

straight eyebrows, on the sides of his nose which is also straight, long and thin, and reminds one a little of Jesus' nose. Also his complexion, his thin-lipped mouth remind one of Jesus'. But Gamaliel's beard and moustache, once very dark, are now grizzled and longer.

Saul instead is short, thickset, almost rickety, his legs are short and thick, a little apart at the knees, which are clearly visible because he has taken his mantle off and he has on only a short greyish tunic. His arms are short and brawny like his legs, his neck is short and thickset, supporting a big brown head with short rough hair, with rather protruding ears, snub nose, thick lips, with high big cheek-bones, bulging forehead, dark rather bulging eyes, neither mild nor kind, but very intelligent under his very arched, thick, ruffled eyelashes. His cheeks are covered with a very thick beard, as bristly as his hair, but cut short. Perhaps because of his very short neck he seems to be slightly hunchbacked or to have very round shoulders.

He is silent for a moment, staring at Gamaliel. Then he says something to him in a low voice.

Gamaliel replies to him in a clear loud voice: «I do not approve of violence, for any reason whatsoever. You will never obtain my approval for any violent plan. I have told also all the Sanhedrin, in public, when Peter and the other apostles were arrested for the second time and brought before the Sanhedrin to be judged. And I repeat the same things: "If it is the plan and work of men, it will perish by itself; if it comes from God, it cannot be destroyed by men, on the contrary they may be struck by God". Bear that in mind. »

« Are you the protector of these blasphemous followers of the Nazarene, you, the greatest rabbi in Israel? »

« I am the protector of justice. And justice teaches us to be prudent and just in judging. I repeat it to you. If the thing comes from God, it will last, if not, it will fall by itself. But I do not want to stain my hands with blood that I do not know whether it deserves death. »

« Is that how you, a Pharisee and doctor, speak? Are you not afraid of the Most High? »

« More than you are. But I ponder. And I remember... You were only a little child, not yet a son of the Law, and I was already teaching in this Temple with the wisest rabbi of our days... and with others, wise, but not just. Within these walls our wisdom received a lesson that made us ponder for the rest of our lives. The eyes of the most wise and just man of our times closed on the recollection of that hour, and his mind on the study of those truths, heard from the lips of a child, who was revealing himself to men, particularly if just. My eyes have continued to watch and my mind to think, coordinating events and things... I have had the privilege of hearing the Most High speak through the mouth of a child, who later was

a man just, wise, mighty, holy, and who was put to death, just because of these qualities of his. His words of that time have afterwards been confirmed by events that happened many years later, at the time mentioned by Daniel... Poor me, as I did not understand sooner! As I awaited the last terrible sign to believe, to understand! Poor people of Israel, who did not understand then and does not understand even now! The prophecy of Daniel and those of other prophets and of the Word of God continue, and will be fulfilled for Israel stubborn, blind, deaf, unjust, as it continues to persecute the Messiah in His servants! »

« Damn! You are blaspheming! There will really be no salvation for the people of God, if the rabbis of Israel blaspheme and deny Jehovah, the true God, to exalt and believe in a false Messiah! »

« I am not blaspheming, but all those are, who insulted the Nazarene and continue to despise Him, by scorning His followers. You, yes, you are blaspheming, because you hate Him, in Himself, and in His followers. But you were right when you said that there is no more salvation for Israel. Not because there are Israelites who have passed into His flock, but because Israel has struck Him to death. »

« You fill me with horror! You are betraying the Law, the Temple! »

« Denounce me, then, to the Sanhedrin, that I may share the lot of him who is about to be stoned. It will be the beginning and the happy conclusion of your mission. And I shall be forgiven, through this sacrifice of mine, for not having recognised and understood the God Who was passing, as Saviour and Master, among us, His children and His people. »

Saul, with an angry gesture, goes away, rudely, to the court facing the hall of the Sanhedrin, the court in which the crowd is still shouting in exasperation against Stephen. In this court Saul joins the torturers who were waiting for him, and with the others he comes out of the Temple and then out of the town walls. Abuse, jeers continue to be shouted at, and blows to be dealt to the deacon, who already tired out and wounded, proceeds staggering towards the place of the execution.

Outside the walls there is a stretch of waste land covered with stones, completely desert. When the executioners arrive there, they spread out forming a circle, leaving the condemned man all alone in the centre with his torn garments and his body bleeding in many parts as a result of the wounds already inflicted on it. They tear his garments off him before moving away from him. Stephen is left with a very short tunic. They all take their long garments off and remain with their tunics only, as short as the one worn by Saul, to whom they entrust their garments, as he does not take part in the lapidation, either because he has been upset by Gamaliel's words, or because he knows that he is not good at hitting the mark.

The executioners pick up some large pebbles and some sharp stones, in which the place abounds, and they begin the lapidation.

Stephen receives the first blows standing, and with a smile of forgiveness on his wounded lips which, a moment before the beginning of the lapidation, have shouted to Saul, intent on gathering the clothes of the lapidators: « My friend, I will wait for you on the way of the Christ. »

To which Saul replied: « Pig! Possessed! » adding to the insults a mighty kick on the shin-bone of the deacon, who almost falls because of the blow and of the pain.

After some blows with stones, that strike him from all directions, Stephen falls on his knees, supporting himself with his wounded hands, and certainly recollecting a remote episode, he whispers, touching his temple and his wounded forehead: « As He foretold me! The crown... The rubies... O my Lord, Master, Jesus, receive my spirit »

Another hail of blows on his already wounded head makes him collapse on the ground that becomes impregnated with his blood. While he lies on the stones, always under hails of more of them, on the point of breathing his last, he whispers: « Lord... Father... forgive them... bear them no grudge for this sin of theirs... They do not know what... » Death breaks the sentence on his lips, a last start makes him curl himself up, and he remains so. Dead.

The executioners approach him, they throw another volley of stones on him, and almost bury him under them. They then put their clothes on, and they go away back to the Temple, intoxicated with satanic zeal, to report what they have done.

While they are speaking to the High Priest and other mighty people, Saul goes in search of Gamaliel. He does not find him at once. Inflamed with hatred against the Christians, he goes back to the Priests, he speaks to them, he convinces them to give him a parchment with the seal of the Temple, authorising him to persecute the Christians. The blood of Stephen must have made him as furious as a bull that sees red, or a generous wine given to an alcoholic.

He is about to come out of the Temple when he sees Gamaliel under the Porch of the Gentiles. He goes to him. Perhaps he wants to begin a dispute or a justification. But Gamaliel goes across the court, he enters a hall and closes the door in the face of Saul, who, offended and furious, runs out of the Temple to persecute the Christians.

[Jesus says:]

« I have shown Myself many times and to many people, also in extraordinary manifestations. But My manifestation did not produce the same effect in everybody. We can see how to each manifestation of Mine corresponds a sanctification of those who possessed the good will required of men to have Peace, Life, Justice.

So, Grace worked in the shepherds for the thirty years of My concealed life, then it flowered yielding a holy ear of corn when it was the time in which the good parted from the wicked to follow the Son of God, Who was passing along the ways of the world, uttering His cry of love to assemble the sheep of the eternal Flock, scattered and dispersed by Satan. Present among the crowds that followed Me, they were My messengers, because with their simple and convincing reports, they proclaimed the Christ saying: "It is He. We recognise Him. The lullabies of the angels descended upon His first wailing. And we were told by the angels that men of good will will have peace. Good will is the desire of Good and Truth. Let us follow Him! Follow Him! We shall all have the Peace promised by the Lord".

Humble, ignorant, poor, My first messengers among men, rushed like sentries along the road of the King of Israel, of the King of the world. Faithful eyes, honest mouths, loving hearts, thuribles exhaling the perfume of their virtues to make less corrupt the air of the Earth around My Divine Person, that had become incarnate for them and for all men, and I found them even at the foot of the Cross, after blessing them with My eyes along the sanguinary road of Golgotha, the only ones, with very few more, who did not curse Me among the unrestrained crowd, but who loved, believed, still hoped, and looked at Me with compassionate eyes, thinking of the remote night of My Birth and weeping on the Innocent, Who slept His first sleep on an uncomfortable piece of wood, and His last one on an even more painful one. That because My manifestation to them, who were righteous souls, had sanctified them.

And the same happened to the three Wise Men from the East, to Simeon and Anne in the Temple, to Andrew and John at the Jordan, and to Peter, James and John at Tabor, to Mary of Magdala at dawn on Easter Sunday, to the eleven when on the Mount of Olives, and even before that, at Bethany, they were forgiven their bewilderment... No, John, the pure apostle, did not need to be forgiven. He was the faithful ever loving hero. His most pure love, his purity of mind, of heart, of body, preserved him from all weakness.

Gamaliel, and with him Hillel, were not as simple as the shepherds, as holy as Simeon, as wise as the three Wise men. In him, and in his master and relative, there was the tangle of Pharisaic lianas to suffocate the light and the free expansion of the tree of faith. But in their being Pharisaic there was purity of intentions. They thought they were in the right and they wished to be so. They wished it by instinct, because they were just, and by intellect, because their spirits shouted out of discontent: "There are too many ashes mixed with this bread. Give us the bread of the real Truth".

Gamaliel, however, was not so strong as to have the courage to break these Pharisaic lianas. His humanity enslaved him still too

much, and with it, the considerations of human esteem, of personal danger, of family welfare. Because of all these things Gamaliel had not been able to understand "the God that was passing among His people", or to use "that intelligence and that freedom" that God has given every man so that he may use them for his own good. Only the sign awaited for so many years, the sign that had demolished and tortured him with never ending remorse, would provoke in him the recognition of the Christ and the change of his ancient thought, whereby, from the rabbi of error - as the scribes, Pharisees and the doctors had corrupted the essence and the spirit of the Law, suffocating the simple bright truth that had come from God under a large quantity of human precepts, which were often wrong, but always to their advantage - he would become a disciple of the divine Truth, after a long struggle between his ancient ego and his present ego.

In any case he had not been the only one to be uncertain in deciding and strong in acting. Also Joseph of Arimathea, and even more Nicodemus, did not trample on the Judaic customs and lianas at once and embrace the new Doctrine openly, so much so that they used to come to the Christ "secretly", out of fear of the Judaeans, or they used to meet with him by chance, and mainly in their country houses, or in Lazarus' house at Bethany, as they knew that it was safer and more feared by Christ's enemies, who were well aware of the protection of Rome for Theophilus' son. However, they were certainly always much more advanced in Good and braver, when compared to Gamaliel, to the extent that they dared to take the compassionate action on Good Friday.

Rabbi Gamaliel was less advanced. But you, who are reading, pay attention to the power of his upright intention. Through it, his very human justice, becomes tinged with a superhuman hue. Saul's instead, gets soiled with something demoniac, when the unchecked fury of evil compels him and his master Gamaliel to face the alternative choice between Good and Evil, justice and injustice.

The tree of Good and Evil stands straight in front of every man to present its fruits of Evil to him, in the most alluring and attractive appearance, while among the foliage in a deceitful voice of a nightingale, the tempting Serpent hisses. It is up to man, a creature gifted with reason and with a soul given to him by God, to be able to distinguish and want the good fruit among the many, which are not good and cause damage and death to the spirit; and to pick that one, even if it is prickly and difficult to pick, bitter to taste and miserable looking. Its metamorphosis, by which it becomes so much smoother and softer to the touch, sweeter to the taste, more beautiful to the sight, takes place only when, through justice of spirit and reason, one chooses the good fruit and feeds on its juice, which is bitter but holy.

Saul stretches out his greedy hands to the fruit of Evil, of hatred, of injustice, of crime, and he will stretch them out until he is struck with lightning, crushed, deprived of human sight, so that he may achieve the superhuman sight and may become not only just, but an apostle and confessor of Him, Whom he previously hated and persecuted in His servants.

Gamaliel breaking the persistent lianas of his humanity and of Hebraism, to let spring up and bloom the remote seed of light and justice, not only human but also superhuman, that My fourth epiphany, or manifestation, which is perhaps a word clearer and more comprehensible to you, had put in his heart, in his heart with upright intentions, the seed that he had preserved and defended with honest fondness and noble eagerness to see it spring up and bloom, stretches out his hands to the fruit of Good. His will and My Blood broke the hard husk of that remote seed, that he had preserved in his heart for dozens of years, in that heart of rock that split with the veil of the Temple and the earth of Jerusalem, and shouted its supreme desire to Me, Who could no longer hear him with human hearing, but I could hear him well with My divine spirit, when he was there, prostrated on the ground, at the foot of the cross. And under the sunny fire of the apostolic words and of the best disciples, and the shower of the blood of Stephen, the first martyr, that seed takes root, becomes a tree, blossoms and yields fruit. The new tree of his Christian Faith, which had come up where the tragedy of Good Friday had overthrown, uprooted and destroyed all the ancient trees and herbs.

The plant of his new Christian faith and of his new holiness has come up and grown before My eyes. Forgiven by Me, although guilty of not understanding Me previously, because of his justice that refused to take part in My condemnation or in Stephen's, his desire to become My follower, the son of the Truth, of the Light, is blessed also by the Father and by the Sanctifying Spirit, and from desire it becomes reality, without the need of powerful violent lightning, as was necessary for Saul on the Damascus road, for the arrogant man, who with no other means could have been subdued and led to Justice, to Charity, to Light, to Truth, and to the eternal glorious Life in Heaven. »

642. Deposition of Stephen's Body.

8th August 1951.

It is the dead of night, and a very dark night, because the moon has already set, when Mary comes out of the little house at Gethsemane with Peter, James of Alphaeus, John, Nicodemus and the Zealot.

Because of the dark night, Lazarus, who is waiting for them in

front of the house, at the beginning of the path that leads to the lower gate, lights an oil lamp, which he has fitted with a protection of thin sheets of alabaster or other transparent material. The light is faint, but when the lamp is held low towards the ground, as it is now, it always helps to see stones and obstacles that may be found on the way. Lazarus goes beside Mary, so that She, above all, may see clearly. John is on the other side and supports the Mother by the arm. The others are behind them, in a group.

They go as far as the Kidron and proceed along it, so that they are half-hidden by the wild bushes that grow near its banks. Also the murmur of the water serves to conceal and confuse the noise of the sandals of the wayfarers.

Going along the outer side of the walls all the time as far as the Gate closest to the Temple, and then proceeding into the barren desert area, they arrive at the place where Stephen was stoned. They direct their steps towards the pile of stones under which he is half buried, and they remove the stones until his poor body appears. It is by now deathly pale, both because of death and because of the blows it received during the lapidation, it is hard, stiff, all curled up as it was when he breathed his last.

Mary, Who has been mercifully kept away a few steps by John, frees Herself and runs towards that poor body, which is lacerated and covered with blood. Without worrying about the stains that the clotted blood leaves on Her dress, Mary, helped by James of Alphaeus and John, lays the body on a cloth stretched on the ground, in a spot devoid of stones, and with a linen cloth, that She dips in a small amphora handed to Her by the Zealot, She cleans, as best She can, the face of Stephen, She tidies his hair, trying to bring it round to his temples and wounded cheeks, in order to cover the horrible marks left by the stones. She cleans also the other parts of the body and She would also like to arrange them in a less tragical posture. But the chill of death, which had taken place many hours previously, allows that only partially. Also the men try, stronger as they are both physically and morally than Mary, Who looks once again like the Sorrowful Mother of Golgotha and of the Sepulchre. But they also have to resign themselves to leave him in the position they have succeeded in placing him after so many efforts. They dress him again with a clean long tunic, because his has been lost or stolen, in contempt, by the lapidators, and the short tunic they have left on him is all torn and stained with blood.

Having done that, always in the faint light of the lamp that Lazarus holds very close to the poor body, they lift him and lay him on another clean cloth. Nicodemus picks up the first cloth, wet with the water used to wash the martyr and with the clotted blood, and places it under his mantle. John and James at the head, Peter and the Zealot at the feet, lift the cloth containing the body, and they

set out on the way back, preceded by Lazarus and Mary. But they do not go back along the same way they came, on the contrary, going into the country and going round at the foot of the Mount of Olives, they reach the road that goes to Jericho and Bethany.

They stop there to rest and to speak. And Nicodemus, who having been present at Stephen's condemnation, although in a passive manner, and being one of the elders of the Judaeans, was more acquainted than the others with the decisions of the Sanhedrin, warns those present that the persecution against the Christians has been ordered and has broken-out, and that Stephen is only the first of a long list of names indicated as followers of the Christ.

The first cry of all the apostles is: « Let them do what they like! We will not change, either because of threats or out of prudence! »

But the more judicious ones among the people present, that is Lazarus and Nicodemus, point out to Peter and to James of Alphaeus that the Church has only few priests of the Christ, and that if the more important ones of them were killed, that is Peter the Pontiff and James the Bishop of Jerusalem, the Church would survive with difficulty. They remind also Peter that their Founder and Master had left Judaea for Samaria, in order not to be killed before He had formed them properly, and how He had advised His servants to follow His example until the shepherds are so many that one will not have to fear the dispersion of the believers because of the death of the shepherds. And they conclude saying: « You ought to scatter as well through Judaea and Samaria. Get proselytes there, many more shepherds, and from there scatter through the Earth, so that, as He ordered you to do, all the peoples may become acquainted with the Gospel. »

The apostles are perplexed. They look at Mary, as if they wanted to know Her opinion on the matter.

And Mary, Who understands their looks, says: « It is a good piece of advice. Take it. It is not cowardice, but prudence. He taught you: "Be as simple as doves and as prudent as snakes. I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Beware of men..." »

James interrupts Her: « Yes, Mother. But He also said: "But when they hand you over and you will be dragged before governors, do not worry about what you have to answer. It is not you who will be speaking, but the Spirit of the Father will be speaking for you and in you". And I am staying here. A disciple is to be like his Master. He died to give life to the Church. Every death of ours will be a stone added to the great new Temple, an increase in life for the great immortal body of the universal Church. Let them kill me, if they wish so. Living in Heaven I shall be happier, because I shall be beside my Brother, and even more powerful. I am not afraid of death. But of sin. By abandoning my place I seem to be imitating the gesture of Judas, the perfect betrayer. James of Alphaeus will

never commit that sin. If I have to fall, I will fall like a hero, at my place of action, where He wanted me to be. »

Mary replies to him: « I will not pierce into your secrets with the Man-God. If that is what He inspires you with, do so. He alone, Who is God, is entitled to give orders. We are all only entitled to obey Him always, in everything, to do His Will. »

Peter, less heroic, is chatting with the Zealot to hear his opinion on the matter.

Lazarus, who is close to the two and hears them, suggests: « Come to Bethany. It is close to Jerusalem and to the road to Samaria. The Christ left from there many a time to avoid His enemies... »

Nicodemus in turn suggests: « Come to my country house. It is safe and close both to Bethany and to Jerusalem, and it is on the road that takes one to Ephraim, via Jericho. »

« No, mine is better, as it is protected by Rome » insists Lazarus.

« You are already hated too much, since Jesus raised you from the dead, asserting so, powerfully, His divine Nature. Consider that His destiny was decided just because of that. Watch that you do not decide yours » Nicodemus replies to him.

« And what about my house? It is really Lazarus'. But they still call it mine » says Simon Zealot.

Mary intervenes saying: « Let Me ponder, think, decide which is the best thing to do. God will not leave Me without His light. When I know, I will tell you. For the time being, come to Gethsemane with Me. »

« Seat of all Wisdom, Mother of the Word and of the Light, You are always the Star that guides us safely. We obey You » they all say together, as if the Holy Spirit had really spoken in their hearts and on their lips.

They stand up from the grass on which they had sat at the edge of the road, and while Peter, James, Simon and John go with Mary towards Gethsemane, Lazarus and Nicodemus lift the cloth in which the body of Stephen is enveloped, and at the first light of dawn, they set out towards the Bethany and Jericho road.

Where are they taking the martyr? A mystery.

643. Gamaliel Becomes a Christian.

1st November 1951.

Some years must have gone by, because John seems to be in full manhood, more sturdily built, with a more mature appearance, while his fair hair, beard and moustache are of a much darker colour.

Mary, Who is spinning, while John is tidying up the kitchen of the little house at Gethsemane, the walls of which have been recently whitewashed, while wooden items have been painted - stools,

door, a cabinet that serves also as a shelf for the lamp - does not appear at all changed. Her aspect is fresh and serene. All traces left on Her face by the sorrow for the death of Her Son, for His return to Heaven, for the first persecutions against the Christians, have disappeared. Time has not engraved its traces on that kind face. And age has not had the power to alter its fresh pure beauty.

The lamp, lit on the shelf, casts its flickering light on the small industrious hands of Mary, on the snow-white wool wound round the distaff, on the thin thread, on the twirling spindle, on Her golden hair gathered in a thick knot on the nape of Her neck.

Through the open door a very limpid moon-beam penetrates into the kitchen, laying a kind of silver strip from the threshold to the feet of the stool on which Mary is sitting, so that Her feet are illuminated by the moon-beam, and Her hands and head by the reddish light of the lamp. Outside, on the olive-trees surrounding the house of Gethsemane, some nightingales are singing their songs of love.

They suddenly become silent, as if they were frightened, and after a few moments, the shuffling of steps can be heard, and it becomes closer and closer, until it stops on the threshold of the kitchen, at the same time making the white lunar strip disappear, that previously silvered the coarse dark bricks of the floor.

Mary raises Her head and looks towards the door. John, in turn, looks towards the door and an « oh! » full of wonder is uttered by their lips, while, with one movement only they both rush towards the door, on the threshold of which Gamaliel has appeared and stopped. A very old Gamaliel by now, ghastly, so thin is he in his white garments, which the moon, shining on him from behind, makes almost phosphorescent. A Gamaliel crushed, overwhelmed by events, by his remorse, by so many things, even more than by age.

« You here, rabbi? Come in! Come! And peace be with you » John says to him, as he is in front of him and very close to him, while Mary is a few steps behind.

« If you will guide me... I am blind... » replies the old rabbi, in a voice that is trembling more because of secret tears, than because of his age.

John, dumbfounded, asks, with emotion and compassion in his voice: « Blind?! Since when? »

« Oh!... Since long ago! My sight began to grow weaker immediately after... after... Yes. After I did not recognise the true Light that had come to enlighten men, until the earthquake tore the veil of the Temple and shook the mighty walls, as He had said. Really a double veil, that covered the Holy of the Holies of the Temple and the even truer Holy of Holies, the Word of the Father, His eternal Only-Begotten, concealed by the veil of a most pure human flesh, that only His Passion and His glorious Resurrection revealed to the

most dull-minded people, and to me first of all, for what He really was: the Christ, the Messiah, the Immanuel. Since that moment darkness began to descend upon my eyes, becoming thicker and thicker. A just punishment for me. For some time I have been completely blind. And I have come... »

John interrupts him asking him: « Perhaps to ask a miracle? »

« Yes. A great miracle. I am asking it of the Mother of the true God. »

« Gamaliel, I do not have the power that My Son had. He was able to give life and sight to blind eyes, word to dumb people, movement to those who were paralysed. But not I » Mary replies to him. And She continues: « But come here, near the table, and sit down. You are tired and old, rabbi. Do not tire yourself any more » and pitifully, with John, She leads him towards the table and makes him sit on a stool.

Gamaliel, before leaving Her hand free, kisses it with veneration, then he says to Her: « I am not asking of You, Mary, the miracle to see once again. No. I am not asking this material thing. What I ask of You, o Blessed amongst all women, is the sight of an eagle for my spirit, so that I may see all the Truth. I do not ask of You the light for my blind eyes, but the supernatural divine true light that is wisdom, truth, life, for my soul and my heart torn by and exhausted with the remorse that gives me no rest. I have no desire to see with my eyes this Hebrew world, so... Yes. So stubbornly rebellious to God, Who has been and is so compassionate towards it, as we really did not deserve that He should be. On the contrary I am glad that I do not have to see it any more, and that my blindness has exempted me from all engagements with the Temple and with the Sanhedrin, who have been so unfair to Your Son and to His followers. What I wish to see, with my mind, my heart, my spirit, is He, Jesus. To see Him in me, in my spirit, to see Him spiritually, as You certainly, o Holy Mother of God, and John, so pure, and James, as long as he lived, and the others, for support in their grave and hampered ministry, see Him. To see Him in order to love Him with my whole self, and through this love, be able to make amends for my sins, and be forgiven by Him, to have the eternal Life, that I failed to deserve... » He bends his head on his arms that are folded on the table and he weeps.

Mary lays Her hand on his head shaken by sobs and replies to him: « No, you have not failed to deserve to have eternal Life! Those who repent their past errors are forgiven everything by the Saviour. He would have forgiven even His betrayer, if he had repented his horrible sin. And the sin of Judas of Kerioth is immense as compared with yours. Consider. Judas was the apostle received by the Christ, instructed by the Christ, loved by the Christ more than anyone else, if one considers that, although He knew everything about

him, Christ did not reject him from the group of His Apostles, on' the contrary, up to the very last moment, He resorted to every expedient, so that they might not understand who he was and what he was planning. My Son was the Truth itself, and for no reason whatsoever did He ever lie. But when He saw the other eleven be suspicious and they asked Him questions about the Iscariot, without lying, He was able to divert their suspicious and not reply to their questions, ordering them not to be inquisitive, out of prudence and out of charity for a brother. Your fault is by far smaller. And what is more, it cannot even be called a fault. Yours is not incredulity, on the contrary it is excess of faith. You believed so much in the twelve-year-old Boy Who spoke to you in the Temple that, obstinately, but with upright intention, based on your absolute faith in that Boy, on Whose lips you had heard words of infinite wisdom, you awaited the sign to believe in Him and see the Messiah in Him. God forgives those who have such a strong loyal faith. Even more He forgives whoever, although still in doubt about the true Nature of a man, unjustly accused, does not want to take part in his condemnation, which he feels is unjust. Your spiritual seeing the Truth has been growing and growing since you left the Sanhedrin in order not to agree to that sacrilegious deed. And it increased even more when, being in the Temple, you saw the fulfilment of the sign, so longed for, that marked the beginning of the Christian era. It increased further when at the foot of the cross of My Son, already cold and dead, you prayed with those mighty anguished words. It has become almost perfect every time that, either with your words, or by withdrawing aside, you defended the servants of My Son or you refused to take part in the condemnation of the first martyrs. Believe Me, Gamaliel, every act of sorrow, of justice, of love of yours, has increased your spiritual sight in your. »

« All that is still not enough! See, I had the rare grace of becoming acquainted with Your Son as from His first public manifestation, when He came of age. I should have seen since then! I should have understood! I was blind and foolish... I did not see and I did not understand. Neither then, nor in other occasions, when I had the grace of approaching Him, by that time a Man and Master, and I heard His ever more just and powerful words. I was stubbornly awaiting the human sign, the shaken stones... And I did not see that everything in Him was a sure sign! And I did not see that He was the corner Stone predicted by the Prophets, the Stone that was already shaking the world, all the Hebrew and Gentile world; the Stone that shook the stones of hearts with His Word, with His prodigies! I did not see on Him the clear sign of His Father in everything He did or said! How can He forgive so much stubbornness? »

« Gamaliel, can you believe that I, Who am the Seat of Wisdom, the Full of Grace, Who, both because of the Wisdom Who took Flesh

in Me, and of the Grace He gave Me, have the fullness of knowledge of supernatural matters, can give you good advice? »

« Oh! of course I believe it! Just because I believe that that is what You are, I have come to You to receive light. You, Daughter, Mother, Spouse of God, Who certainly since Your conception filled You with His sapiential lights, can but show me the way that I must take to have peace, to find the truth, to conquer the true Life. I am so aware of my errors, so crushed by my spiritual misery, that I am in need of help to dare to go to God. »

« What you consider a hindrance is instead a wing to elevate you to God. You have demolished yourself, you have humiliated yourself, you were a mighty mountain, you have made yourself a deep valley. Bear in mind that humility is like a fertilizer of the most arid soil, to prepare it to give plants and rich crops. It is a step to climb. Even more, it is a ladder to ascend to God, Who, upon seeing a humble man, calls him to Himself to exalt him, to inflame him with His Love, and enlighten him with his lights, so that he may see. That is why I say to you that you already are in the Light, on the right Way, towards the true Life of the children of God. »

« But in order to receive the Grace I must enter the Church, receive Baptism that cleanses us from sin and makes us once again the adoptive sons of God. I am not against that. On the contrary! I have destroyed the son of the Law in myself, I can no longer esteem and love the Temple. But I do not want to be nothing. So I must rebuild the new man and the new faith on the ruins of my past. But I think that apostles and disciples are mistrustful and prejudiced against me, the great stubborn rabbi... »

John interrupts him saying: « You are wrong, Gamaliel. I am the first who loves you and I should mark the day, on which I could call you a lamb of the flock of Christ, as a day of an extremely great grace. I should not be His disciple if I did not put into practice the teachings of the Christ. And He ordered us to have love and understanding for everybody, and especially for the weaker people, the sick, those who have been misled. He ordered us to follow His examples. And we saw that He was always full of love for repentant sinners, for prodigal sons returning to the Father, or for lost sheep. From the Magdalene to the Samaritan woman, from Aglae to the highwayman, how many He redeemed through mercy! He would have forgiven even Judas his supreme crime, if he had, repented. He had forgiven him so many times! I alone know how much He loved him, although He was aware of every action of his. Come with me. I will make you a son of God and a brother of the Christ Saviour. »

« You are not the Pontiff. Peter is the Pontiff. And will Peter be good to me? He is, I know, quite different from you. »

« He was. But since he has realised how weak he was, to the point

of being a coward and a denier of his Master, he no longer is what he was, and he has mercy on everybody. »

« Then take me to him at once. I am old and I have delayed too long. I felt that I was too unworthy, and I was afraid that all the servants of Jesus judged me in the same manner. Now that Mary's words and yours have comforted me, I want to enter the Flock of the Master at once, before my old heart, crushed by so many things, stops. Lead me there, because I dismissed the servant who brought me here, so that he might not hear anything. He will come back at the first hour. But I shall be already far away then. And in two ways. From this house and from the Temple. For ever. First I, a rebel son, will go to the house of the Father, I, a lost sheep, to the true Fold of the eternal Shepherd. Then I will go back to my far away house, to die there in peace and in the grace of God. »

With a spontaneous impulse Mary embraces him saying: « May God give you peace. Peace and eternal glory, because you have deserved them by showing your real thoughts to the mighty leaders of Israel, without fearing their reactions. May God be always with you. May God give you His blessing. »

Gamaliel searches for Her hands again. He takes them in his own and kisses them, he kneels down begging Her to lay those blessed hands on his old tired head.

Mary satisfies him. She does even more. She traces the sign of the cross on his bent head. Then, with John, She helps him to stand up, She takes him to the door and remains looking at him go away, led by John, towards the true Life: a man, humanly finished, but supernaturally re-created.

644. Peter Converses with John.

4th November 1951.

Peter and John are on the terrace of Simon's house, which is all lit up by the moon at her summit. They are speaking in low voices, pointing towards Lazarus' house, which is all closed and silent. They speak for a long time, walking backwards and forwards on the terrace. Then, for I wonder which reason, the discussion becomes more animated, and their voices, previously subdued, become higher in tone and very clear.

Peter, striking the parapet with his fist, exclaims: « But do you not understand that we must act so? I am speaking to you in God's name, so listen to me and do not be obstinate. It is better to act as I say. Not out of cowardice and fear, but to avoid a total destruction, which would be deleterious to the Church of Christ. They now watch every move of ours. I noticed that, and Nicodemus has confirmed that I am right. Why could we not remain at Bethany? Just for that reason. Why is it not more prudent to stay in this house,

or in Nicodemus', or in Nike's, or in Anastasica's? Always for the same reason. To prevent the Church from dying, because of the death of its leaders. »

« The Master assured us many a time that not even hell will be able to exterminate it and prevail against it » John replies to him.

« That is true. And hell will not prevail, as it did not prevail against the Christ. But men will. As they prevailed against the Man-God, Who defeated Satan, but was not able to gain a victory over men. »

« Because He did not want to win. He had to redeem, and so he had to die. And of that death. But if He had wanted to defeat them! How many times He avoided the snares of all kinds they set for Him! »

« Snares will be laid also for the Church, but it will not perish completely, providing we shall have so much prudence, as to prevent the present leaders from being exterminated, before many more Priests of His, of all ranks, are created by us, His first ones, and prepared for their ministry. Do not deceive yourself, John! Pharisees, scribes, priests and members of the Sanhedrin, are doing everything to kill the shepherds, so that the flock may be dispersed. The flock which is still weak and fearful. Above all, this flock in Palestine. We must not leave it without shepherds, until many lambs, in turn, become shepherds. You have seen how many have already been killed. Think of what a large part of the world is awaiting us! His order was clear: "Go and evangelize all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe what I ordered you". And on the shore of the lake, for three times He ordered me to pasture His sheep and His lambs, and He prophesied that only when I am old I will be tied and led to confess the Christ with my blood and my life. And quite far from here! If I have understood one of His speeches properly, before Lazarus' death, I have to go to Rome and found there the immortal Church. And did He Himself not judge that it was right to withdraw to Ephraim, because His evangelization had not yet been accomplished? And only at the right moment He came back to Judaea to be arrested and crucified. Let us imitate Him. No one can certainly say that Lazarus, Mary and Martha were fearful people. And yet, you can see that, although with deep sorrow, they have gone away from here, to take His divine Word elsewhere, as here it would have been suffocated by the Judaeans. I, chosen by Him as His Pontiff, have decided. And with me the others, apostles and disciples, have equally decided. We will scatter. Some will go to Samaria, and some towards the great sea, and some towards Phoenicia, pushing on and on, to Syria, to the islands, to Greece, to the Roman Empire. If in these places here, darnel and Judaeans poison make the fields and the vineyards of the Lord sterile, let us

go elsewhere and sow other seeds in other fields and vineyards, so that there may be not only a harvest, but it may be a rich one. If in these places the hatred of the Jews poisons the waters and infects them, so that I, a fisher of souls, and my brothers cannot catch souls for the Lord, let us go to other waters. We have to be prudent and shrewd at the same time. Believe me, John. »

« You are right. But I was insisting because of Mary. I cannot, I must not leave Her. We should both suffer too much. And it would be an evil deed, on my side... » John replies to him.

« You will stay. And She will stay, because it would be absurd to tear Her away from here... »

« And Mary would never agree to it. I will join you later. When She is no longer on the Earth. »

« You will come. You are young... You have still a long time to live. »

« And Mary a very short one. »

« Why? Is She ill, suffering, weak, perhaps? »

« Oh! no! Time and sorrows have had no power over Her. She is always young, in appearance and in spirit. Serene, even more, I should say blissful. »

« Then why do you say... »

« Because I realise that Her flourishing in beauty and joy is the sign that She feels already close at hand Her reunion with Her Son. I mean a total reunion. Because the spiritual one has never ceased. I will not lift the veils on the mysteries of God. But I am sure that She sees Her Son daily, in His glorious appearance. And that is Her beatitude. I think that in contemplating Him, Her spirit is enlightened and is able to know all the future, as God knows it. Also Her own. She is still on the Earth with Her body, but I could almost say, without fear of mistaking, that Her spirit is almost always in Heaven. Such is Her union with God that I do not think that I speak a sacrilegious word saying that God is in Her, as when She carried Him in Her womb. Even more. As the Word was united to Her to become Jesus Christ, so now She is so united to the Christ as to be a second Christ, as to have taken on a new humanity, that of Jesus Himself. If what I say is heresy, may God let me know my error and forgive me for it. She lives in love. This fire of love inflames Her, nourishes Her, enlightens Her, and that fire of love will also abduct Her from us, at the destined moment, without any pain for Her, without decomposition for Her body... We alone will be grieved... I in particular... We shall no longer have our Teacher, our Guide, our Comforter... And I shall be really all alone... » And John, whose voice was already trembling striving to repress his tears, is seized with a fit of heart-rending sobbing, such as he never experienced before, not even at the foot of the Cross or in the Sepulchre.

Peter also, although more calmly, begins to weep and in a tearful voice he implores John to inform him, if he can, so that he may be present at Her passage or at least, at Her burial.

« I will do so, if I can. But I doubt it very much. Something within me tells me that as it happened to Elijah who was abducted by a celestial whirlwind on a chariot of fire, so it will happen to Her. I shall not have time to become aware of Her imminent passage that She will already be in Heaven with Her soul. »

« But Her body at least will remain here. Also the Master's remained. And He was God! »

« It was necessary for Him that it should be so. But not for Her. With His Resurrection He had to give the lie to the Judaean slanders, with His apparitions He had to convince the world, that had become doubtful, and even negatory, because of His death on the Cross. But She does not need that. If, however, I can do so, I will let you know. Goodbye, Peter, my Pontiff and my Brother in the Christ. I am going back to Her, as She is certainly waiting for me. God be with you. »

« And with you. And tell Mary to pray for me and to forgive me once again for my cowardice in the night of the Trial, a memory that I cannot cancel from my heart, and gives me no peace... » and tears stream down the cheeks of Peter, who concludes: « May She be a Mother to me. A Mother of love for Her miserable prodigal son... »

« I need not tell Her. She loves you more than a mother by blood. She loves you as the Mother of God, and with the love of the Mother of God. If She was ready to forgive Judas, whose sin was incommensurable, consider whether She has forgiven you! Peace to you, brother, I am going. »

« And I will follow you, if you allow me. I want to see Her once again. »

« Come. I know which road to take to go to Gethsemane, without being seen. »

They set out and walk quickly and in silence towards Jerusalem, but passing along the upper road, that arrives at the Mount of Olives on the side farthest from town. When they arrive it is already daybreak. They go into Gethsemane, and descend towards the little house.

Mary, Who is on the terrace, sees them coming and, uttering a cry of joy, She goes down to meet them.

Peter really falls at Her feet, with his face on the ground, saying to Her: « Mother, forgive me! »

« For what? Have you perhaps sinned in anything? He Who reveals everything to Me, has only revealed to Me that you are His worthy successor in the Faith. I have always found you to be a just man, even if at times impulsive. So what have I to forgive you? »

Peter weeps and is silent.

John explains: « Peter cannot set his mind at rest for having denied Jesus, in the Court of the Temple. »

« That is a thing of the past and it has been cancelled, Peter. Has Jesus perhaps reproached you? »

« Oh! no! »

« Was He less loving to you than previously? »

« No. Not really. On the contrary!... »

« And does that not tell you how He, and I with Him, have understood you and forgiven you? »

« That is true. I am always the same fool. »

« Then go and be at peace. I tell you that we shall all be together, you, I, the other apostles and deacons, all in Heaven, near the Man-God. For what is given to Me, I bless you » and as She did with Gamaliel, Mary lays Her hands on the head of Peter and traces a sign of the cross on it.

Peter bends to kiss Her feet, he then stands up, much more serene than before, and still in the company of John, he goes back to the upper gate, passes it, and goes away, while John, after closing that entrance, goes back to Mary.

645. The Blissful Passage of the Blessed Virgin.

21st November 1951.

Mary, in Her solitary little room, on the high terrace, all dressed in white linen, both in the dress that covers Her body, and in the mantle that, fastened at the nape of Her neck, falls down Her back, and in the very thin veil that hangs from Her head, is arranging Her garments and Jesus', which She has always kept. She picks the best ones. And they are few. Of Her own She takes the dress and the mantle She had on Calvary; of Her Son's, a linen tunic that Jesus used to wear on summer days, and the mantle that was found at Gethsemane, still stained with the blood He shed with the bloody perspiration of that dreadful hour.

After folding these garments carefully and kissing Jesus' mantle stained with blood, She goes towards the chest, in which for years have been gathered and kept the relics of the Last Supper and of the Passion. She gathers all these things in one compartment, the upper one, and She lays the clothes in the lower one.

She is closing the chest when John, who had gone up to the terrace silently and had looked in to see what Mary was doing, perhaps worried because of Her long absence from the kitchen, as She had gone upstairs to spend the morning hours, makes Her turn round suddenly by asking Her: « What are You doing, Mother? »

« I have put straight what is to be kept. All the souvenirs... Everything that is witness to His infinite love and sorrow. »

« Why, Mother, do You reopen the wounds of Your heart by looking again at these sad things? You are pale and Your hand is trembling... So You suffer seeing them » John says to Her, approaching Her, as if he were afraid that, wan and trembling as She is, She might feel ill and fall on the floor.

« Oh! that is not why I am wan and I am trembling. It is not because they reopen My wounds... They, in fact, have never been closed completely. And yet peace and joy are in Me, and they have never been so complete as they are now. »

« Never as now? I do not understand... The sight of those things, full of cruel memories, awakens in me the anguish of those hours. And I am only a disciple. You are the Mother... »

« And you mean that as such I should suffer more. And from a human point of view, you are right. But it is not So. I am accustomed to enduring the sorrow of being separated from Him. It was always sorrowful, because His presence and closeness were My Paradise on Earth. But I always suffered them willingly and serenely, because every action of His was wanted by His Father, it was obedience to the divine Will, and so I accepted it, because I also have always obeyed the will and plans of God for Me. Every time Jesus left Me, I suffered. Certainly. I felt lonely. Only God has measured in its most real intensity My sorrow when He, a boy, left Me secretly, for the dispute with the doctors of the Temple. And yet, with the exception of the fair question that I, His mother, asked Him, as He had left Me in that manner, I did not say anything else to Him. Likewise I did not hold Him back when He left Me to become the Master... and I was already a widow, and therefore all alone, in a town that, with the exception of a few people, did not love Me. And I showed no surprise at His reply at the banquet in Cana. He was doing the will of His Father. And I was leaving Him free to do it. I could dare make a suggestion or a request. A suggestion for His disciples, a request for some poor wretch. But more than that, no. I suffered every time He left Me to go into the world, hostile to Him and so sinful that to live in it was a great suffering to Him. But how much joy every time He came back to Me! It was really, so intense that it recompensed Me seventy times seven for the sorrow of the separation. The sorrow of the separation following from His Death was heart-rending, but with which words could I describe the joy I felt when He, risen from the dead, appeared to Me? Immense was the pain of the separation, which would end only when My earthly life would be completed, when He ascended to His Father. I am now rejoicing, immense is My joy as immense was My pain, because I feel that My life is completed. I have done what I had to do. I have completed My earthly mission. The other one, the celestial one, will have no end. God has left Me on the Earth until I also, like My Jesus, have accomplished everything of what

I had to do. And I have in Me that secret joy, the only drop of balm in His extreme tortures full of bitterness, that Jesus had when He was able to say: "Everything is accomplished". »

« Joy in Jesus? At that moment? »

« Yes, John. A joy incomprehensible to men. But comprehensible to the spirits that already live in the light of God and see the deep things hidden under the veils that the Eternal spreads over His secrets as King, thanks to that Light. I, so distressed, so upset by those events, associated with Him, My Son, in the abandonment of the Father, did not understand then. The Light was extinguished for the whole world in that hour, for the whole world that had not wanted to receive it. And also for Me. Not as a just punishment, but because, as I had to be the Co-Redeemer, I also had to suffer the anguish of the abandonment of divine comforts, the darkness, the desolation, the temptation of Satan of not making Me believe any longer that what He had said was possible, everything that He also suffered, in His spirit, from Thursday to Friday. But later I understood. When the Light, that had risen for ever, appeared to Me, I understood. Everything. Also the secret extreme joy of the Christ, when He was able to say: "I have accomplished everything that the Father wanted Me to accomplish. I have filled the measure of divine charity by loving the Father even unto the sacrifice of Myself, by loving men even unto dying for them. I have accomplished everything that I had to accomplish. I am dying happily in My spirit, although lacerated in My innocent flesh". I also have accomplished everything that, ab aeterno, was written I should accomplish. From the generation of the Redeemer, to the help given to you, His priests, for your perfect formation. The Church is now formed and strong. The Holy Spirit enlightens it, the blood of the first martyrs cement it and multiply it, My assistance has cooperated in making It a holy organism, that the love towards God and the brothers nourishes and fortifies more and more, and in which hatred, ill-feelings, envy, slander, wicked plants of Satan, take no root. God is pleased with that, and He wants you to know that from My lips, as He wants Me to tell you to continue to grow in love in order to grow in perfection, and so also in number of Christians and in power of doctrine. Because the doctrine of Jesus is the doctrine of love. Because the life of Jesus, and also Mine, have always been guided and urged by love. We rejected nobody, we forgave everybody. One only we did not forgive, because he, already a servant to the Hatred, did not want our love that had no limits. Jesus in His last farewell before His death, gave you the commandment to love one another. And He also gave you the measure of the love that you had to have for one another, saying: "Love one another as I have loved you. From this it will be known that you are My disciples". The Church in order to live and grow, needs charity.

Charity above all in its ministers. If you did not love one another with all your strength, and likewise you did not love your brothers in the Lord, the Church would become sterile. And difficult and scanty would be the restoration and the super restoration of men to their rank of children of the Most High and coheirs to the Kingdom of Heaven, because God would cease helping you in your mission. God is love. Every action of His has been an action of love. From creation to the Incarnation. From this to the Redemption. And from this to the foundation of the Church. And finally from this to the celestial Jerusalem, that will assemble all the just so that they may rejoice in the Lord. I am telling you these things, because you are the Apostle of love and you can understand them better than the others... »

John interrupts Her saying: « Also the others love and love one another. »

« Yes. But you are preeminently the Loving One. Each of you had his peculiarity, as, after all, is the case of every creature. You, among the twelve, were always love, pure and supernatural love. Perhaps, no, certainly because you are so pure, you are so loving. Peter, instead, was always the man, the genuine impetuous man. His brother, Andrew, was as silent and timid as the other was not. James, your brother, was the impulsive one, so much so that Jesus called him the son of thunder. The other James, Jesus' brother, the just and heroic one. Judas of Alphaeus, his brother, the noble and loyal one, always. The Davidic extraction was obvious in him. Philip and Bartholomew were the traditionalists. Simon Zealot, the prudent one. Thomas, the peaceful one. Matthew, the humble one, who mindful of his past, strove to be unnoticed. And Judas of Kerioth, alas! the black sheep of the flock of Christ, the snake warmed by His love, was the satanic liar, always. But you, who are all love, can understand better and can become the voice of love for all the others, for those who are far away, to give them this last piece of My advice. You will tell them that they are to love one another and everybody, also their persecutors, in order to be one thing with God, as I was, so as to deserve to be elected spouse of the Eternal Love, in order to conceive the Christ. I gave Myself to God without limit, although I understood at once how much sorrow would come to Me for that. The prophets were present in My mind, and the divine light made their words very clear to Me. So from My first "fiat" to the Angel I knew that I was consecrating Myself to the greatest sorrow a mother can suffer. But nothing placed a limit to My love, because I know that it is, for those who make use of it, strength, light, magnet that attracts upwards, fire that purifies and beautifies what it burns, transforming and transhumanising those caught in its embrace. Yes. Love is really a flame. The flame, that although it destroys what is perishable, be it a wreck, some rubble, a poor wretch,

makes a purified spirit of it, worthy of Heaven. How many wrecks, how many men stained, corroded, worn out you will find on your ways of evangelizers! Do not despise any of them. On the contrary, love them, so that they may reach love and be saved. Infuse love into them. Many a time man becomes wicked, because no one ever loved him or loved him badly. Do love them, so that the Holy Spirit, after the purification, may come to dwell again in those temples, that many things made empty and filthy. God, to create man, did not take an angel or choice materials. He took some mud, the most worthless material. Then infusing His breath into it, that is, His love again, He elevated the worthless material to the sublime rank of adoptive son of God. My Son, on His way, found many wrecks of men who had fallen into filth. He never trampled on them despisingly. On the contrary He gathered them and received them and He changed them into chosen souls of Heaven. Always bear that in your minds. And do as He did. Remember everything, the actions and the words of My Son. Remember His kind parables. Live them, that is, put them into practice. And write them, so that they may remain for future generations, to the end of time, and they may always serve as a guide for men of good will, to achieve life and eternal glory. You will certainly not be able to repeat all the bright words of the Eternal Word of Life and Truth. But write as many of them as you can. The Spirit of God, Who descended upon Me so that I might give the Saviour to the world, and Who descended also upon you a first and a second time, will help you to remember, and when you speak to the crowds, in order to convert them to the true God. You will continue that spiritual maternity that I began on Calvary to give many children to the Lord. And the same Spirit, speaking in the recreated children of the Lord, will fortify them so that it will be pleasant for them to die among tortures, to suffer exile and persecutions, to confess their love to Christ and join Him in Heaven, as Stephen and James, My James, have already done, and others as well... When you are the only one left, save this chest... »

John, growing pale and becoming upset, even more than he blanched since Mary said that She felt that Her mission was accomplished, interrupts Her exclaiming and asking: « Mother! Why do You say that? Are You not well? »

« No. I am well. »

« Do You want to leave me, then? »

« No. I shall be with you until I am on the Earth. But, My dear John, prepare yourself to be alone. »

« Then You are not well, and You want to conceal it from me!... »

« No, believe Me. I have never felt so strong, at peace, joyful, as I do now. But I have such a jubilation, such a fullness of supernatural life, that... Yes, that I think that I shall not be able to endure it while continuing to live. I am not eternal, on the other hand. You

must understand that. My spirit is eternal. My body is not. And it is subject, like the flesh of every man, to death. »

« No! No! Don't say that. You cannot, you must not die! Your immaculate body cannot die like that of a sinner! »

« You are wrong, John. My Son died! And I shall die as well. I shall not suffer the disease, the agony, the pang of death. But as far as dying is concerned, I shall die. In any case, bear in mind, son, that if I have a desire, all Mine and only Mine, and that lasts since He left Me, it is just this one. This is My first, mighty desire, entirely Mine. I can even say: My first will. Everything else in My life was nothing but the consent of My will to the divine will. The will of God, put in My heart of a little girl by God Himself, the will to be a virgin. His will: My marriage with Joseph. His will: My virginal divine Maternity. Everything in My life was done by the will of God and by My obedience to His will. But this desire, of wanting to join Jesus, is a will entirely Mine. To leave the Earth for Heaven, to be with Him for ever and continuously! My desire of so many years! And now I feel it is on the point of becoming reality. Do not be so upset, John! Listen instead to My last wishes. When My body, deprived of the vital spirit, will lie in peace, do not subject Me to the customary embalment of the Hebrews. Because I am no longer a Jewess, but a Christian, the first Christian, if one considers the situation properly, because I was the first to have Christ, Flesh and Blood, in Me, because I was His first disciple, because I was Co-Redeemer with Him and His continuator here, among you, His servants. No living being, with the exception of My father and mother, and those who assisted at My birth, has seen My body. You often call Me: "The living Ark that contained the divine Word". Now you know that the Ark can be seen only by the High Priest. You are a priest, and much holier and purer than the Pontiff of the Temple. But I want only the Eternal Pontiff to see My body at the right time. So, do not touch Me. In any case, see? I have already purified Myself, and I have put on a clean dress, the dress of the eternal wedding... But why are you weeping, John? »

« Because the storm of sorrow is stirring up in me. I know that I am about to lose You. How shall I be able to live without You? I feel my heart being torn to pieces at this thought! I shall not be able to stand this grief! »

« You will stand it. God will help you to live, and for a long time, as He helped Me. Because, if He had not helped Me, on Golgotha and on the Mount of Olives, when Jesus died and ascended, I would have died, as Isaac died. He will help you to live and to remember what I have told you before, for the welfare of everybody. »

« Oh! I will remember. Everything. And I will do what You wish, also for Your body. I understand as well that the Hebrew rites no longer serve for You, a Christian, and for You, the Most Pure

Mother, Who, I am sure, will not be subjected to the corruption of the flesh. Your body, deified as no other mortal body, both because You have been exempted from the Sin of Origin, and even more because in addition to being the full of Grace, You contained in You Grace itself, the Word, whereby You are His most true relic, Your body cannot experience the decomposition, the rottenness of all dead flesh. This will be the last miracle of God on You, in You. And you will be preserved as You are... »

« Do not weep, then! » exclaims Mary looking at the upset face of the apostle, all washed by his tears. And She adds: « If I am preserved as I am, you will not lose Me. So, do not worry! »

« I shall lose You just the same, even if You remain incorrupt. I feel it. And I feel as if I were caught in a hurricane of sorrow. A hurricane that breaks me and knocks me down. You were everything for me, particularly since my relatives died, and the other brothers, both by blood and by mission, are far away, also beloved Marjiam, whom Peter has taken with him. I shall now be left alone, and in the strongest storm! » and John falls at Her feet, weeping even more bitterly.

Mary bends over him, She lays Her hand on his head shaken by sobs and She says to him: « No. Not so. Why are you grieving Me? You were so strong under the Cross, and it was an incomparable scene of horror, both because of the cruelty of His martyrdom and of the satanic hatred of the people! And you were so strong in comforting Him and Me, then! And today, or rather, this Sabbath evening, so serene and calm, and in front of Me Who am rejoicing for an imminent happiness of which I have a premonitory feeling, you are so upset?! Calm yourself. Imitate, even more, join what is around us and in Me. Everything is peaceful. Be at peace as well. Only the olive-trees, with their gentle rustling, break the absolute calm of this hour. But this gentle noise is so pleasant, that it sounds like the flight of angels around the house. And they are, perhaps, really here. Because angels, one or many, have always been near Me, when I have been in a special moment of My life. They were at Nazareth, when the Spirit of God made My virginal womb prolific. And they were with Joseph, when he was upset and uncertain about My state and how to behave with Me. And at Bethlehem a first and a second time, when Jesus was born, and when we had to flee to Egypt. And in Egypt when they ordered us to come back to Palestine. And - if not to Me, because the King of the angels Himself had come to Me, as soon as He had risen - and angels appeared to the pious women at the dawn of the first day after the Sabbath and gave them the order to tell you and Peter what you had to do. Angels and light always at the decisive moments of My life and of Jesus'. Light and ardour of love that, descending from the Throne of God to Me, His maid, and ascending from My heart to go God,

My King and Lord, united Me to God and Him to me, so that what was written that was to be accomplished, should be accomplished, and also to create a veil of light spread over the secrets of God, so that Satan and his servants should not be aware of the accomplishment of the sublime mystery of the Incarnation, before the right time. Also this evening I feel the angels around Me, although I do not see them. And I feel a Light, an unsustainable light, grow within Me, like the light that enveloped Me when I conceived the Christ, when I gave Him to the world. A light that comes from an impetuosity of love more powerful than usual. Through a similar power of love, I snatched the Word from Heaven before time, so that He might become the Man and the Redeemer. Through a similar power of love, as the one that assails Me this evening, I hope that Heaven will abduct Me and carry Me where I long to go with My spirit to sing My imperishable "Magnificat" to God, for the things He has done to Me, His maid, with the people of the saints and the choruses of the angels, for ever and ever. »

« Probably not only with Your spirit. And the Earth will reply to You, and with its peoples and nations will glorify and honour and love You until the end of the world, as rightly Tobias predicted of You, although covertly, because You are really the One Who carried the Lord in Herself, and not the Holy of Holies. You have given God, by Yourself, as much love as all the High Priests and all the others of the Temple have not given Him throughout ages. Ardent most pure love. Because of that God will make You Most blessed. »

« And He will satisfy My only wish, the only thing I want. Because love, when it is so complete as to be almost perfect, as the love of My Son and God, achieves everything, even what, according to human opinion, would seem impossible to achieve. Remember that, John. And inform also your brothers of that. Men will fight against you so much! All kinds of obstacles will make you be afraid of defeat, massacres by persecutors and defections of Christians of... Iscariotic morality will dishearten your spirits. Be not afraid. Love, and be not afraid. In proportion to how you love, God will help you and will make you triumph over everything and everybody. Everything can be achieved, if one becomes a seraph. Then the soul, this wonderful eternal thing, which is the very breath of God, infused by Him into us, hurls itself towards Heaven, falls like a flame at the foot of the Divine Throne, speaks and is listened to by God, and obtains from the Almighty what it wants. If men knew how to love as is prescribed by the ancient Law, and how My Son loved and taught people to love, they would obtain everything. I love thus. That is why I feel that I shall cease to be on the Earth, I through excess of love, as He died through excess of sorrow. Well! The measure of My capacity of loving is full. My soul and My body are no longer able to contain it. Love overflows from it, it submerges Me

and raises Me at the same time towards Heaven, towards God, My Son. And His voice says to Me: "Come! Come out! Ascend to our Throne and to our Trine embrace!" The Earth, what surrounds Me, disappears in the bright light that comes to Me from Heaven! Noises are drowned by this celestial voice! My moment for the divine embrace has come, My dear John! »

John, who had calmed down a little, although still somewhat upset, listening to Mary, and who at the last part of Her speech was looking at Her ecstatically, and almost enraptured as well, as pale in his face as Mary, Whose pallor, however, changes into a very white light, rushes towards Her to support Her, and in the meantime he exclaims: « You are like Jesus when He became transfigured on Tabor! Your flesh is shining like the moon, Your garments are as bright as a diamond sheet placed before a very white flame! You are no longer human, Mother! The heaviness and opacity of the flesh has disappeared! You are light! But You are not Jesus, He, being God, besides being Man, could stand also by Himself, there, upon Tabor, as He did here, on the Mount of Olives, when He ascended. You cannot. You cannot stand. Come. I will help You to lay Your tired blessed body on Your little bed. Rest. » And he lovingly leads Her towards the poor bed, on which Mary lies, without taking off even Her mantle.

Folding Her arms across Her breast, closing Her eyelids on Her kind eyes, bright with love, She says to John who is bent over Her: « I am in God. And God is in Me. While I contemplate Him and feel His embrace, say the psalms, and any other pages of the Scriptures becoming Me, particularly in this hour. The Spirit of Wisdom will point them out to you. Then say the prayer of My Son, repeat the words of the announcing Archangel and of Elizabeth to Me, and My hymn of praise... I will follow you with what I still have of Myself on the Earth...

John, struggling against the tears that rise from his heart, striving to control the emotion that upsets him, in his beautiful voice, which, as years have gone by, has become very like Jesus'- which Mary notices with a smile, saying: I seem to have My Jesus beside Me! » - intones psalm one hundred and eighteen, which he says almost entirely, then the first three verses of psalm forty-one, the first eight of psalm thirty-eight, psalm twenty-two and psalm one. He then says the Our Father, the words of Gabriel and Elizabeth, the canticle of Tobias, the twenty-fourth chapter of Ecclesiasticus, from verse eleven to forty-six. Lastly he intones the "Magnificat". But when he arrives at verse nine, he notices that Mary does not breathe any more, although She is still natural in Her posture and appearance, smiling, peaceful, as if She had not noticed that life had stopped.

John, with a heart-rending cry throws himself on the floor against

the edge of the bed, and calls and calls Mary. He cannot convince himself that She is no longer able to reply to him, that Her body is now deprived of the vital soul. But he has to surrender to evidence! He bends over Her face, still fixed in an expression of supernatural joy, and tears stream copiously from his eyes on that sweet face, on those pure hands so gently folded on Her breast. It is the only washing that Mary's body had: the tears of the Apostle of love and of Her son of adoption by Jesus' will.

When the first transport of sorrow is over, John, remembering Mary's wish, picks up the edges of Her wide linen mantle, which were hanging from the sides of the little bed, and those of the veil, which were also hanging from the pillow, and he spreads the former over Her body, and the latter on Her head. Mary is now like a statue of white marble, laid on the cover of a sarcophagus. John contemplates Her at some length, and more tears fall from his eyes as he does so.

Then he rearranges the room, removing all superfluous furniture. He leaves only the bed, the little table against the wall and he places the chest with the relies on it, a stool, that he places between the door leading to the terrace and the bed on which Mary is lying, and a shelf, on which there is a lamp that John lights, as it is beginning to get dark.

Then he hurries down to Gethsemane, to pick as many flowers as he can, and some branches of olive-trees, with olives already on them. He goes back up to the little room, and in the light of the lamp he arranges the flowers and the branches around Mary's body, as if it were in the centre of a huge wreath.

While doing so, he speaks to the body on the bed, as if Mary could still hear him. He says: « You have always been the lily of the valley, the sweet rose, the beautiful olive-tree, the fruit-bearing vineyard, the holy ear of wheat. You have given us Your perfumes, and the Oil of Life, and the Wine of the strong, and the Bread that preserves the spirits from death, for those who worthily feed on it. These flowers look lovely here around You, as they are simple and pure like You, adorned with thorns like You and peaceful like You. Now let us put this lamp closer. So, near Your bed, that it may watch over You and keep me company while I watch You, while awaiting for at least one of the miracles that I am expecting and for whose fulfilment I pray. The first one is that, according to his wish, Peter, and the others, whom I will get Nicodemus' servant to inform, may see You once again. The second one is that You, as in everything You had the same lot as Your Son, may wake up, like Him, within the third day, in order not to leave me an orphan twice. The third is that God may give me peace, if what I hope may happen to You, as it happened to Lazarus, who was not like You, should not take place. But why should it not happen? Jairus' daughter, the

young man from Nain, Theophilus' son, came back to life... It is true that then the Master acted... But He is with You, even if not in a manifest way. And You did not die of a disease like those who were raised by the deed of Christ. But are You really dead? Dead as every man dies? No. I feel it is not so. Your spirit is no longer in You, in Your body, and in that respect we could say it is death. But by the way Your passage took place, I think that Yours is only a temporary separation of Your soul, without sin and full of grace, from Your most pure and virginal body. It must be so! It is so! How and when the reunion will take place and life will come back to You, I do not know. But I am so certain of this that I will remain here, beside You, until God, either with His word, or with His action, will show me the truth on Your destiny. »

John, who has finished arranging everything, sits on the stool, placing the lamp on the floor, near the little bed; and he contemplates the body lying on it, praying.

646. The Assumption of Our Lady.

8th December 1951.

How many days have gone by? It is difficult to ascertain it. If one judges by the flowers that form a crown around the dead body, one should say that only a few hours have gone by. But if one judges by the olive branches on which the fresh flowers are lying, branches with leaves already withered, and by the other withered flowers lying like relics on the cover of the chest, one must conclude that some days have by now gone by.

But Mary's body is exactly the same as it was when She breathed Her last. There is no trace of death on Her face or on Her little hands. There is no unpleasant smell in the room. On the contrary an undefinable scent like that of incense, of lilies, of roses, of lilies of the valley, of mountain herbs, all mixed together, hangs in the air of the room.

John, who I wonder for how many days has been awake, has fallen asleep, overcome by tiredness, sitting on the stool, his shoulders leaning against the wall, near the open door that leads to the terrace. The light of the lamp, which from the floor shines upwards on him, allows one to see his tired face, which is also very pale, except around his eyes, red with weeping.

It must be already dawn, because in its faint light the terrace and the olive-trees surrounding the house are visible, a light that becomes stronger and stronger and that, penetrating through the door, makes more distinct also the objects in the room, of which, being far from the little lamp, it was previously possible to catch only a glimpse.

All of a sudden a strong light fills the room, a silvery light,

shaded with blue, almost phosphoric, and it becomes more and more intense, making the light of dawn and of the lamp vanish. A light like the one that flooded the Grotto in Bethlehem at the moment of the divine Nativity. Then in this paradisiac light, angelic creatures show themselves, a light even brighter in the already strong light that appeared first. As it already happened when the angels appeared to the shepherds, a dance of sparks of all shades bursts forth from their gently moved wings, which emit a harmonious murmur, as sweet as if it were played by a harp.

The angelic creatures place themselves around the little bed, they bend over it, they lift the immobile body, and flapping their wings more vigorously, which increases the sound existing previously, through a passage opened miraculously in the roof, as miraculously Jesus' Sepulchre was opened, they go away, taking with them the body of their Queen, a Most Holy Body, it is true, but not yet glorified, and therefore still subject to the laws of matter, to which the Christ was not subject, because He was already glorified when He rose from the dead. The sound made by the angelic wings increases and it is now as powerful as the sound of an organ.

John, who, although still asleep, had moved twice or three times on his stool, as if he had been disturbed by the strong light and by the sound of the angelic wings, awakes completely because of that powerful sound and because of a strong current of air that, descending from the opened roof and going out through the open door, forms a vortex that shakes the covers of the bed, by now empty, and John's garments, blowing out the lamp and closing the door with a loud bang.

The apostle looks around, still half asleep, to realise what is happening. He notices that the bed is empty and that the roof is open. He understands that a wonderful event has taken place. He runs out on the terrace, and as if by spiritual instinct, or by a heavenly call, he raises his head, shading his eyes from the sun, in order to see, without being prevented from doing so by the rising sun.

And he sees. He sees the body of Mary, still deprived of life, and completely identical to that of a person asleep, that ascends higher and higher, supported by the angelic group. As a last gesture of farewell, a hem of the mantle and of the veil are agitated, probably by the wind caused by the rapid assumption and by the movement of the angelic wings; and some flowers, the ones that John had placed and renewed round the body of Mary, and that have certainly remained among the folds of the garments, rain on the terrace and on the ground of Gethsemane, while the mighty hosanna of the angelic group moves farther and farther away and thus becomes fainter.

John continues to stare at that body that rises towards Heaven and, certainly through a prodigy granted to him by God, to comfort

him and to reward him for his love for his adoptive Mother, he distinctly sees Mary, enveloped now in the beams of the sun that has risen, come out of the ecstasy that had separated Her soul from Her body, become alive, stand on Her feet, as She also now enjoys the gifts typical of bodies already glorified.

John looks and looks. The miracle granted to him by God enables him, against all natural laws, to see Mary as She is now, while She rapidly ascends towards Heaven, surrounded, but no longer helped to ascend, by the angels singing hosannas. And John is enraptured by that vision of beauty that no pen of man, or human word, or work of artist will be ever able to describe or reproduce, because it is of indescribable beauty.

John, still leaning against the low wall of the terrace, continues to stare at that splendid shining form of God - because Mary can really be said to be so, formed in a unique manner by God, Who wanted Her immaculate, so that She might be the form for the Word Incarnate - while it ascends higher and higher. And the God-Love grants a last supreme prodigy to His perfect loving disciple: to see the meeting of the Most Holy Mother with Her Most Holy Son, Who splendid and shining as well, handsome with indescribable beauty, descends rapidly from Heaven, arrives at His Mother, presses Her to His heart, and together, more refulgent than two major planets, returns with Her whence He came.

John's vision is over. He lowers his head. On his tired face are visible both his sorrow for the loss of Mary and his joy for Her glorious destiny. But by now joy exceeds sorrow.

He says: « Thanks, my God! Thanks! I foresaw that this would happen. And I wanted to be awake, in order not to lose any episode of Her Assumption. But I had not slept for three days now! Sleep, tiredness, joined to sorrow, overcame and defeated me just when Her Assumption was imminent... But perhaps You wanted that Yourself, o God, so that I should not upset that moment and I should not suffer too much... Yes. You certainly wanted it, as now You wanted me to see what, without a miracle of Yours, I could not have seen. You have granted me to see Her again, although already so far, already glorified and glorious, as if She were close to me. And to see Jesus again! Oh! most happy, un hoped for and not to be hoped for vision! O gift of the gifts of Jesus-God to His John! Supreme Grace! To see my Master and Lord again! To see Him near His Mother! He like a sun, She like a moon, both most splendid, because they were glorious and happy to be reunited for ever! What will Paradise be like now that You both shine in it, You major planets of the heavenly Jerusalem? What is the jubilation of the angelic choruses and of the saints? It is such the joy that the vision of the Mother with Her Son has given me, a thing that cancels every pain of His, every pain of theirs, even more, also mine ceases, and peace

takes over in me. Of the three miracles that I had asked of God, two have been accomplished. I have seen life come back to Mary, and I feel peace come back to me. All anguish of mine ends, because I have seen You reunited in glory. Thanks for that, o God. And thanks for having made it possible for me to see, even for a most holy creature, but still human, what is the lot of saints, what it will be after the last judgement; and the resurrection of the bodies, and their rejoining, their fusion with their spirits, that have ascended to Heaven at the moment of their death. I did not need to see to believe. Because I have always firmly believed every word of the Master. But many will doubt that, after ages and thousands of years, the flesh, that has become dust, can become a living body. I shall be able to tell them, swearing on the most sublime things, that not only the Christ became alive again, by His own divine power, but that also His Mother, three days after Her death, if death it can be called, came to life again, and with Her flesh joined to Her soul took up Her eternal abode in Heaven, beside Her Son. I shall be able to say: "Believe, o Christians, in the resurrection of bodies, at the end of time, and in the eternal life of souls and bodies, a blissful life of saints, horrible for unrepentant guilty people. Believe and live as saints, as Jesus and Mary lived, in order to have their same lot. I have seen their bodies ascend to Heaven. I can bear witness to that. Live as just people, so that one day you may be in the new eternal world, in body and soul, near Jesus-sun, and near Mary the Star of all stars". Thank You again, o God! And now let us put together what is left of Her. The flowers that fell from Her garments, the olive branches left on the bed, and let us keep them. They will serve... Yes, they will serve to assist and comfort my brothers, whom I have awaited in vain. Sooner or later I will find them... »

He picks up the petals of the flowers that had been shed in falling, he goes back into the room, holding them in a fold of his tunic. He then looks more carefully at the opening in the roof and exclaims: « Another miracle! And another wonderful proportion in the prodigies of the lives of Jesus and Mary! He, God, rose by Himself, and by His own will He overturned the stone of His Sepulchre, and only with His own power He ascended to Heaven. By Himself. Mary, the Most Holy Mother, but a daughter of man, by means of angelic help had the passage opened for Her assumption to Heaven, and always through angelic help She ascended there. In the Christ the spirit came back to animate His Body while it was still on the Earth, because it had to be so, to silence His enemies and to confirm all His followers in their faith. In Mary the spirit came back when Her most holy body was already at the threshold of Paradise, because there was no other need for Her. Perfect power of the Infinite Wisdom of God!... »

John now gathers in a piece of cloth the flowers and branches that

were still on the little bed, he adds to them those that he had gathered outside, and lays them all on the cover of the chest. He then opens it and puts the little pillow of Mary and the coverlet of the little bed into it; he goes down into the kitchen, he collects other utensils used by Her - the spindle and distaff and Her kitchenware - and adds them to the other things.

He closes the chest and sits on the stool exclaiming: « Now everything is accomplished also for me! Now I can go freely wherever the Spirit of God will lead me. I can go! And sow the Divine Word that the Master gave me so that I may give it to men. And teach Love. Teach them so that they may believe in Love and in its power. Let them know what the God-Love has done for men. His Sacrifice and His perpetual Sacrament and Rite, by means of which, until the end of time, we shall be able to be united to Jesus Christ in the Eucharist and renew the Rite and the Sacrifice as He ordered us to do. All the gifts of the perfect Love! Make them love the Love, so that they may believe in Him, as we believed and believe. Sow the Love so that the harvest and the catch may be abundant for the Lord. Love achieves everything, Mary told me in Her last conversation with me, whom She justly defined, in the Apostolic College, the one who loves, the preeminent loving one, the antithesis of the Iscariot, who was hatred, as Peter was impetuosity, and Andrew meekness, the sons of Alphaeus holiness and wisdom joined to nobility of manners, and so forth. I, the loving disciple, now that I no longer have the Master and the Mother to love on the Earth, will go and spread love among the nations. Love will be my weapon and my doctrine. And be means of it I will defeat the demon, heathenism and will conquer many souls. I will thus continue Jesus and Mary, Who were perfect love on the Earth. »

647. On the Passage, the Assumption and Royalty of the Blessed Virgin.

18th April 1948.

[Mary says:]

« Did I die? Yes, if you call death the separation of the choice part of the spirit from the body. No, if by death you understand the separation of the vivifying soul from the body, the corruption of the flesh no longer vivified by the soul, and before that, the lugubrious sepulchre, and before all these things, the pangs of death.

How did I die, or better, how did I pass from the Earth to Heaven, first with My immortal part, then with the perishable one? As it was fair for Her Who did not become acquainted with the stain of sin.

That evening, the Sabbath rest had already begun, I was speaking to John. About Jesus and His things. The evening hour was full

of peace. The Sabbath had abated all noises of human works. And the hour was abating every voice of man and bird. Only the olivetrees around the house were rustling in the evening breeze, and a flight of angels seemed to graze the walls of the solitary house.

We were speaking of Jesus, of the Father, of the Kingdom of Heaven. To speak of Love and of the Kingdom of Love, is to become lit with the living fire, consuming the bonds of matter to let the spirit free for its mystic flights. And if the fire is contained within the limits fixed by God to preserve creatures on the Earth, at His service it is possible to live and burn, finding in the ardour not the consumption, but the completion of life. But when God removes the limits and gives freedom to the divine Fire to assail and attract the spirit to Itself without any measure, then the spirit, replying in turn without measure to the Love, detaches itself from matter and flies where the Love urges and invites it. And it is the end of the exile and the return to the Fatherland.

That evening, the incontrollable ardour, the measureless vitality of My spirit was joined by a sweet languor, by a mysterious sensation that matter was moving away from what surrounded it, as if My body, tired, were falling asleep, whilst My intellect, even livelier in its reasoning, was sinking, into the divine brightness.

John, the loving prudent witness of every action of Mine, since he had become My adoptive son, according to the will of My Only-Begotten Son, kindly convinced Me to rest on the little bed and he watched Me praying. The last sound I heard on the Earth was the murmur of the words of John, the virgin apostle. They were for Me like a lullaby of a mother near a cradle. And they accompanied My spirit in its last ecstasy, too sublime to be describe. They accompanied Me as far as Heaven.

John, the only witness of this sweet mystery, arranged Me by himself, enveloping Me in My white mantle, without changing My dress or veil, without any washing or embalming. The spirit of John, as is evident from his words of the second episode of this cycle that goes from the Pentecost to My Assumption, already knew that I would not decay, and it taught the Apostle what to do. And he, chaste, loving, prudent with regard to the mysteries of God and his remote companions, decided to keep the secret and to wait for the other servants of God, so that they could see Me again, and draw comfort and assistance from that sight for the pains and hardships of their mission. He waited, as if he were certain of their coming.

But the decree of God was different. Good as always for the Favourite. Just as usual for all the believers. He made the eyes of the former heavy with sleep, so that he might be spared the torture of seeing also My body abducted from him. He presented the believers with a further truth that would encourage them to believe in the resurrection of the flesh, in the reward of an eternal blissful

life granted to the just, in the most mighty and pleasant truths of the New Testament: My Immaculate Conception, My Divine virginal Maternity, in the divine and human Nature of My Son, true God and true Man, born not by human will but through divine nuptials and divine seed laid in My womb, and lastly, that they might believe that in Heaven there is My Heart of the Mother of all men, palpitating with anxious love for everybody, just people and sinners, eager to have you all with It in the blessed Fatherland for ever.

When I was taken out of the little house by the angels, had My spirit already come back to Me? No. My spirit was not to descend again on the Earth. It was, adoring, before the Throne of God. But when the Earth, the exile, the time and the place of the separation from My One and Trine Lord were left for ever, My spirit came back to shine in the centre of My soul, drawing the flesh from its sleep. So it is just to say that I ascended to Heaven in body and soul, not through My own capability, as it happened for Jesus, but through angelic help. I awoke from that mysterious and mystic sleep, I rose, I flew finally, because by now My flesh had achieved the perfection of glorified bodies. And I loved. I loved My Son, Whom I found again, and My Lord, One and Trine, I loved Him as is the destiny of all the eternal living beings. »

5th January 1944.

[Jesus says:]

« When Her last hour came, like a tired lily that, after exhaling all its scents, bends under the stars and closes its snow-white calyx, Mary, My Mother, lay on Her little bed and closed Her eyes on everything surrounding Her, to collect Her thoughts in a last serene contemplation of God.

Bending over Her rest, the angel of Mary was anxiously waiting for the climax of the ecstasy to separate that spirit from the flesh, for the time decreed by God, and to separate it for ever from the Earth, while the sweet inviting command of God was already descending from Heaven.

John, an earthly angel, bent, in his turn, over that mysterious rest, was watching the Mother Who was about to leave him. And when he saw that She had breathed Her last, he continued to watch Her, so that, not violated by profane curious eyes, She should remain, even beyond death, the Immaculate Spouse and Mother of God, so placid and beautiful in Her sleep.

A tradition says that only flowers were found in the urn of Mary, when it was opened by Thomas. It is a sheer legend. No sepulchre swallowed the corpse of Mary, because there never was a corpse of Mary, according to human sense, because Mary did not die as whoever lived dies.

By divine decree, She was only separated from Her spirit, and

Her most holy flesh once again joined the spirit that had preceded it. By inverting the habitual laws, according to which an ecstasy ends when the rapture ceases, that is, when the spirit returns to its normal state, it was Mary's body that went to join the spirit, after a long rest on the funereal bed.

Everything is possible to God. I came out of the Sepulchre with no other help than My own power. Mary came to Me, to God, to Heaven, without experiencing the sepulchre with its horror of lugubrious rottenness. It is one of the most refulgent miracles of God. Not the only one, really, if we remember Enoch and Elijah who, being dear to the Lord, were abducted from the Earth, without experiencing death, and translated elsewhere, to a place known only to God and to the celestial inhabitants of Heaven. They were just, but always nothing as compared with My Mother, inferior, in holiness, only to God.

That is why there are no relics of the body or of the sepulchre of Mary. Because Mary had no sepulchre, and Her body was brought to Heaven. »

8th and 15th July 1944.

[Mary says:]

« The conception of My Son was an ecstasy. A greater ecstasy to give birth to Him. The ecstasy of ecstasies My passage from the Earth to Heaven. Only during the Passion no ecstasy made My cruel suffering endurable.

The house, from which I was abducted to Heaven, was one of the countless generousities of Lazarus, for Jesus and His Mother. The little house of Gethsemane, near the place of His Ascension. It is useless to look for its remains. In the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, it was devastated, and its ruins were scattered in the course of ages. »

18th December 1943.

[Mary says:]

« As the birth of My Son was an ecstasy to Me, and from the rapture in God that seized Me in that hour, I came to Myself and to the Earth with My Child in My arms, so My improperly called "death" was a rapture in God.

Relying on the promise I had received on the bright morning of Pentecost, I thought that the approaching of the last coming of the Love, to abduct Me with Him, should manifest itself with an increase of the fire of love that always burnt in Me. And I was not wrong.

As far as I was concerned, the more time passed, the more My desire to blend with the Eternal Love increased. I was urged by the desire to join My Son and by the certainty that I could never do so

much for men as when I was at the foot of the Throne of God, praying and operating on their behalf. And with a motion more and more inflamed and rapid, I used to cry to Heaven with all the strength of My soul: "Come, Lord Jesus! Come, Eternal Love!".

The Eucharist, that was for Me like dew for a parched flower, was indeed life, but the more time passed the more it became insufficient to satisfy the irrepressible eagerness of My heart. It was no longer sufficient for Me to receive My Divine Creature in Me and carry Him within Me in the Sacred Species, as I had carried Him in My virginal body. My whole self wanted the God One and Trine, but not under the veils chosen by My Jesus to hide the ineffable mystery of the Faith, but as He was, is, and will be in the centre of Heaven. My Son Himself, in His Eucharistic transports, inflamed Me with embraces of infinite desire, and every time He came to Me, with the power of His love, He almost eradicated My soul at first, then He remained calling Me with infinite fondness: "Mother!", and I felt that He was anxious to have Me with Him.

I longed for nothing else. Even the desire to protect the newborn Church was no longer in Me, in the last days of My mortal life. Everything was cancelled by the desire to possess God, as I was convinced that one can do everything when one possesses Him.

Endeavour, o Christians, to arrive at such total love. Let all earthly things be of no value. Aim only at God. When you are rich in this poverty of desire, which is an immeasurable wealth, God will bend over your spirits, to teach them first, to take them later, and you will ascend with them to the Father, to the Son, to the Holy Spirit, to know them and love them for the blessed eternity and to possess their riches of graces for your brothers. Men are never so active for their brothers as when they are no longer among them, but they are lights reunited to the Divine Light.

The approach of the Eternal Love had the sign that I expected. Everything became devoid of light and colour, voice and presence in the brightness and the Voice that, descending from Heaven, open to My spiritual sight, were coming down upon Me to take My soul. People say that I would have rejoiced at being assisted, in that hour, by My Son. But My sweet Jesus was indeed present with the Father when the Love, that is the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Eternal Trinity, kissed Me for the third time in My life, with a kiss so powerfully divine that My soul exhaled, becoming lost in contemplation, like a drop of dew absorbed by the sun in the calyx of a lily. And I ascended with My spirit singing hosannas to the feet of the Three, Whom I had always worshipped.

Then, at the right moment, like a pearl in a setting of fire, assisted at first, then followed by the procession of the angelic spirits who had come to assist Me in My eternal celestial birth, expected by My Jesus even before the threshold of Heaven, and on its threshold by

My just earthly spouse, by the Kings and Patriarchs of My stock, by the first saints and martyrs, I entered as Queen, after so much grief and so much humility of the poor maid of God, into the kingdom of infinite delight. And Heaven closed again on the joy of having Me, of having its Queen, Whose flesh, the only one among all mortal flesh, was acquainted with glorification before the final resurrection and the last judgement. »

1st May 1946.

[Jesus says:]

« There is difference between the separation of the soul from the body, through real death, and the temporary separation of the spirit from the body and from the vivifying soul, through ecstasy or contemplative rapture. While the separation of the soul from the body brings about death, the ecstatic contemplation, that is, the temporary flight of the spirit outside the barriers of senses and matter, does not bring about death. And that because the soul does not become completely detached and separated from the body, but it does so only through its better part, that plunges into the fire of contemplation.

All men, as long as they live, have a soul within themselves, dead or alive as it may be, through sin or justice; but only the deep loving souls of God arrive at real contemplation.

This proves that the soul, that keeps the body alive while it is united to it - and this peculiarity applies to all men in the same way - has in itself a more noble part: the soul of the soul, or spirit of the spirit, which in just people is very strong, whereas in those who cease to love God and His Law, even if only through their tepidness and venial sins, it becomes weak, depriving the person of the capability to contemplate and know God and His eternal truths, as far as a human creature can do so, according to the degree of perfection achieved. The more a creature loves and serves God with all its strength and power, the more the nobler part of its spirit increases its capacity to know, to contemplate and penetrate the eternal truths.

Man, gifted with a rational soul, is a capacity that God fills with Himself. As Mary, after the Christ, was the most holy of all creatures, She was a capacity so full of God, of His graces, charity and mercy, as to overflow on the brothers in Christ of all ages and until the end of time.

She passed away submerged by the waves of love. Now, in Heaven, where She has become an ocean of love, She overflows Her waves of charity on Her sons faithful to Her and also on Her prodigal ones, for their universal salvation, as She is the universal Mother of all men. »

December 1943.

[Mary says:]

« My humility could not allow Me to think that so much glory was reserved for Me in Heaven. In My mind there was the almost certainty that My human flesh, made holy by carrying God, would not have experienced decay, because God is Life, and when He sates and fills a creature with Himself, this action of His is like an aroma that preserves from the corruption of death.

I had remained not only immaculate, not only I had been united to God with a chaste prolific embrace, but I was sated, even as far as My innermost recesses, with the emanations of the Divinity concealed in My womb and intent on being veiled with mortal flesh. But that the kindness of the Eternal Father had reserved for His maid the joy of feeling again the touch of My Son's hand on My body, His embrace, His kiss, and of hearing again His voice with My ears, of seeing His face with My eyes, I could not think that this would be granted to Me, neither did I wish it. It would have been sufficient if these beatitudes had been granted to My spirit, and that would have filled My ego with blissful happiness.

But, in witness of His first creative thought concerning man, whom He, the Creator, had destined to live, passing away without death, from the earthly Paradise to the celestial one, in the eternal Kingdom, God wanted Me, the Immaculate, in Heaven, in body and soul, as soon as My earthly life ended.

I am the certain witness of what God had thought and wanted for man: an innocent life and unaware of sin, a placid passage from this life to eternal Life, whereby, like one who passes over the threshold of a house to enter a palace, man with his complete being, made of a material body and a spiritual soul, would pass from the Earth to Paradise, increasing the perfection of his ego, given to him by God, with the complete perfection, both of the body and of the spirit, which was, in the divine mind, destined to every creature who had remained faithful to God and to Grace. Man would have reached this perfection in the full light that is in Heaven and fills it, coming from God, the eternal Sun Who illuminates it.

God placed Me, elevated in body and soul to the glory of Heaven, before the Patriarchs, the Prophets, the Saints, the Angels and the Martyrs and He said:

Here is the perfect work of the Creator. This is what I created in My truer image and likeness among all the sons of man, the fruit of a divine creative masterpiece, the wonder of the Universe that sees closed in one only being the divine, in the eternal spirit like God and like Him spiritual, intelligent, free, holy, and the material creature in the most holy and innocent body, to which every other living being, in the three kingdoms of creation, is compelled to bow. This is the witness of My love for man, for whom I wanted a perfect

organism and a blissful destiny of eternal life in My Kingdom. This is the witness that I have forgiven man whom, by will of the Trine Love, I granted to be reinstated and recreated in My eyes. This is the mystic stone of comparison, this is the link of junction between man and God, it is She Who takes the times back to the early days and gives My divine Eyes the joy of contemplating an Eve as I had created her, and now made even more beautiful and holy, because She is the Mother of My Word, and because She is the Martyr of the greatest forgiveness. For Her Immaculate Heart that never knew any stain, not even the lightest, I open the treasures of Heaven, and for Her head, that never knew pride, I make a wreath of My brightness and I crown Her, because She is most holy to Me, so that She may be your Queen".

There are no tears in Heaven. But in place of the joyful tears, that the spirits would have shed, if they were granted to weep - the liquid that trickles squeezed by an emotion - there was, after these divine words, a sparkling of lights, a changing of splendours into more vivid splendours, a burning of charitable fires in a more ardent fire, an unsurpassable and indescribable playing of celestial harmonies, which were joined by the voice of My Son, in praise of God the Father and of His Maid for ever blissful. »

The Reasons for the Work. Farewell to the Work.

[28th April 1947.]

Jesus says:

« The reasons that have induced Me to enlighten and dictate episodes and words of Mine to little John are, in addition to the joy of communicating an exact knowledge of Me to this loving victim-soul, manifold.

But the moving spirit of all of them is My love for the Church, both teaching and militant, and My desire to help souls in their ascent towards perfection. The knowledge of Me helps to ascend. My Word is Life.

I mention the main ones:

I. The reasons mentioned in dictation dated 18th January 1947 and which little John will put here integrally. This is the most important reason because you are perishing and I want to save you.

The most profound reason for the gift of this work is that in the present time, when modernism, condemned by My holy Vicar Pius X, becomes corrupted in more and more harmful doctrines, the Church, represented by My Vicar, may have further material to fight against those who deny:

- the supernaturalness of dogmas;
- the divinity of the Christ;
- the Truth of the Christ God and Man, real and perfect both in the faith and in the history that has been handed down on Him (Gospel, Acts of the Apostles, Apostolic Letters, tradition);
- the doctrine of Paul and John and of the councils of Nicaea, Ephesus and Chalcedon, as My true doctrine verbally taught by Me.

- My unlimited science, as it is divine and perfect;
- the divine origin of the dogmas of the Sacraments of the Church One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic;
- the universality and continuity, until the end of time, of the Gospel given by Me and for all men;
- the perfect nature, from the beginning, of My doctrine that has not been formed, as it is, through successive transformations, but was given as it is: the Doctrine of the Christ, of the time of Grace, of the Kingdom of Heaven and of the Kingdom of God in you, divine, perfect, immutable. The Gospel for all those thirsting for God.

To the red dragon with seven heads, ten horns and seven diadems on its head, which with its tail drags a third of the stars from the sky and drops them - and I solemnly tell you that they drop even lower than the earth - and persecutes the Woman; to the beasts of the sea and of the earth that many, too many worship, allured as they are by their appearance and prodigies, I ask you to oppose My Angel flying in the middle of the sky, holding the Eternal Gospel well open, also at the Pages so far closed, so that men, through its light, may be saved from the coils of the huge serpent with seven jaws, that wants to drown them in its darkness, and upon My return I may find again faith and charity in the hearts of those who persevere, and they may be more numerous than the work of Satan and of men allow one to hope they may be.

II. To rouse a keen love for the Gospel and for everything pertaining to the Christ in Priests and in laymen. First of all, renewed love for My Mother, in Whose prayers lies the secret of the salvation of the world. She, My Mother, is the Conqueress of the cursed Dragon. Assist Her power by means of your renewed love for Her and of your renewed faith and knowledge of what pertains to Her. Mary has given the Saviour to the world. The world will receive salvation again from Her.

III. To give spiritual masters and directors assistance in their ministry, by studying the different souls of the world in which I lived and the different methods used by Me to save them.

Because it would be foolish to have only one method with all the souls.

The way to attract to Perfection a just person who spontaneously tends to it, is different from that to be used with a believer in sin, and from that to be used with a Gentile. You have many of them also among you, if you succeed in judging, as your Master did, as Gentiles the poor people who have replaced the true God with the idols of power and arrogance, or of gold, or of lust, or with the idol of the pride of their knowledge. And different is the method to be used to save modern proselytes, that is those who have accepted the Christian idea, but not the Christian citizenship, as they belong to separated Churches. No one is to be despised, and these lost sheep less than everyone. Love them and try to lead them back to the Only Fold, so that the desire of the Shepherd Jesus may be fulfilled.

Some people, when reading this Work, will object: "It does not appear from the Gospel that Jesus was in touch with Romans and Greeks, and consequently we reject these pages". How many things do not appear from the Gospel, or can just be detected behind thick curtains of silence, drawn by the Evangelists on episodes, of which they did not approve, because of their unbreakable Jewish frame of mind! Do you think that you know everything I did?

I solemnly tell you that not even after reading and accepting this illustration of My public life will you know everything about Me. I would have killed My little John, in the fatigue of reporting all the days of My ministry and all the actions performed on each day, if I had made him acquainted with everything so that he might transmit everything to you! "Then there are other things done by Jesus, which, if written one by one, I think that the world would not be able to contain the books that should be written" says John. Apart from the hyperbole, I solemnly tell you that if all My single actions had to be written, all My particular lessons, My penances and prayers to save a soul, it would have taken the halls of one of your libraries, and one of the largest, to contain the books speaking of Me. And I also solemnly tell you that it would be much more advantageous for you to burn so much useless dusty poisonous science, to make room for My books, than to know so little of Me and worship so much that press that is almost always soiled with lust and heresy.

IV. To reinstate in their truth the figures of the Son of Man and of Mary, true children of Adam by flesh and blood, but of an innocent Adam. The children of the Man were to be like us, if our First Parents had not depreciated their perfect humanity - in the sense of man, that is of a creature in which there is the double nature, spiritual, in the image and likeness of God, and the material nature - as you know they did. Perfect senses, that is, subject to reason even in their great efficiency. In the senses I include both the moral and the corporal ones. Therefore total and perfect love both for Her spouse, to whom She is not attached by sensuality, but only by a tie of spiritual love, and for Her Son. Most loved. Loved with all the perfection of a perfect woman for the child born of Her. That is how Eve should have loved: like Mary: that is, not for what physical enjoyment her son was, but because that son was the son of the Creator and out of obedience accomplished to His order to multiply the human race.

And loved with all the ardour of a perfect believer who knows that that Son of Hers is not figuratively but really the Son of God. To those who consider Mary's love for Jesus too affectionate, I say that they should consider who Mary was: the Woman without sin and therefore without fault in Her love towards God, towards Her relatives, towards Her spouse, towards Her Son, towards Her neighbour; they should consider what the Mother saw in Me besides seeing the Son of Her womb, and finally that they should consider the nationality of Mary. Hebrew race, eastern race, and times very remote from the present ones. So the explanation of certain verbal amplifications, that may seem exaggerated to you, ensues from these elements. The

eastern and Hebrew styles are flowery and pompous also when commonly spoken. All the writings of that time and of that race prove it, and in the course of ages the eastern style has not changed very much.

As twenty centuries later you have to examine these pages, when the wickedness of life has killed so much love, would you expect Me to give you a Mary of Nazareth similar to the arid superficial woman of your days? Mary is what She is, and the sweet, pure, loving Girl of Israel, the Spouse of God, the Virgin Mother of God cannot be changed into an excessively morbidly exalted woman, or into a glacially selfish one of your days.

And I tell those, who consider Jesus' love for Mary too affectionate, to consider that in Jesus there was God, and that God One and Trine received His consolation by loving Mary, Who requited Him for the sorrow of the whole human race, and was the means by which God could glory again in His Creation that gives citizens to His Heavens. And finally, let them consider that every love becomes guilty when, and only when it causes disorder, that is, when it goes against the Will of God and the duty to be fulfilled.

Now consider: did Mary's love do that? Did My love do that? Did She keep Me, through selfish love, from doing all the Will of God? Through a disorderly love for My Mother, did I perhaps repudiate My mission? No. Both loves had but one desire: to accomplish the Will of God for the salvation of the world. And the Mother said all the farewells to Her Son, and the Son said all the farewells to His Mother, handing the Son to the cross of His public teaching and to the Cross of Calvary, handing the Mother to solitude and torture, so that She might be the Co-Redeemer, without taking into account our humanity that felt lacerated and our hearts that were broken with grief. Is that weakness? Is it sentimentalism? It is perfect love, o men, who do not know how to love and who no longer understand love and its voices!

And the purpose of this Work is also to clarify certain points that a number of circumstances has covered with darkness and they thus form dark zones in the brightness of the evangelic picture and points that seem a rupture and are only obscured points, between one episode and another, indecipherable points, and the ability to decipher them is the key to correctly understand certain situations that had arisen and certain strong manners that I had to have, so contrasting with My continuous exhortations to forgive, to be meek and humble, a certain rigidity towards obstinate, inconvertible opponents. You all ought to remember that God, after using all His mercy, for the sake of His own honour, can say also "Enough" to those who, as He is good, think it is right to take advantage of His forbearance and tempt Him. God is not to be derided. It is an old wise saying.

V. To have an exact knowledge of the complexity and duration of My long passion, that culminates in the sanguinary Passion accomplished in few hours, that had consumed Me in a daily torture that lasted for years and years, and that had increased more and more, and with the passion of My Mother, Whose heart was pierced by the sword of sorrow for the same length of time. And urge you, through this knowledge, to love us more.

VI. To show the power of My Word and its different effects according to whether the person receiving it belonged to the group of men of good will, or to that of those who had a sensual will, which is never righteous.

The Apostles and Judas. Here are the two opposed examples. The former, very imperfect, rough, ignorant, violent, but with good will. Judas, learned more than most of them, refined by living in the capital and in the Temple, but of evil will. Watch the evolution of the former in Good, their ascent. Watch the evolution of the latter in Evil, and his descent.

This evolution in perfection of the Eleven good ones should be watched above all by those who, through a visual mental fault, are accustomed to perverting the nature of the reality of saints, making of the man who reaches holiness by means of a hard, very hard struggle against heavy obscure powers,

an unnatural being without incentives and emotions, and therefore without merits. Because merit is really consequent on the victory over disorderly passions and temptations, a victory achieved through love for God and to attain the final aim: to enjoy God for ever. It should be watched by those who claim that a conversion should come only from God. God gives the means to be converted, but He does not do violence to the will of man, and if man does not want to be converted, in vain he has what serves other people to become converted.

Let those who examine the situation consider the manifold effects of My Word not only on the human man, but also on the spiritual man. Not only on the spiritual man, but also on the human man. My Word, when it is received with good will, transforms both, leading to external and internal perfection.

The apostles who through their ignorance and My humility treated the Son of Man with excessive familiarity - a good master among them, nothing more, a humble and patient master with whom it was permissible to take liberties at times excessive; but it was not irreverence on their part: it was ignorance, and it is to be excused - the apostles quarrelsome with one another, selfish, jealous of their love and of Mine, impatient with the people, somewhat proud of being "the Apostles", eager for stupendous capacities, which point them out to the crowds as gifted with an extraordinary power, slowly but continuously change into new men, bridling their passions first to imitate Me and make Me happy, then, as they became more and more acquainted with My true Ego, changing manners and love so much as to see Me, love Me and treat Me as the divine Lord. At the end of My life on the Earth, are they still perhaps the superficial merry companions of the early times? Are they, above all after the Resurrection, the friends who treat the Son of Man as a Friend? No, they are not. They are the ministers of the King, first. They are the priests of God, later. They are completely different and completely transformed.

This should be considered by those who will find the apostles' nature, which was as it is described, strong, and will judge it unnatural. I was not a difficult doctor and a proud king, I was not a master who judges other men unworthy of him. I was indulgent to people. I wanted to form using raw materials, and fill empty vases with all kinds of perfections, proving that God can do everything, He can raise a son of Abraham from a stone, a son of God, and from a nonentity a master to confuse masters proud of their science, which has very often lost the scent of Mine.

VII. Finally: to make you acquainted with the mystery of Judas, that mystery which is the fall of a spirit that God had favoured in an extraordinary manner. A mystery that is repeated too often and is the wound that aches in the Heart of your Jesus.

To let you know how people fall changing from servants and sons of God into demons and deicides, who kill the God in them by killing Grace, so that such knowledge may prevent you from setting foot on the paths from which one falls into the Abyss, and it may teach you how to behave when trying to hold back the imprudent lambs that push on towards the abyss. Apply your intelligence to study the horrible and yet common figure of Judas, a complex in which are agitated like snakes all the capital vices that you find and have to fight in this or that person. It is the most important lesson to be learned by you, because it is the one that will be more useful to you in your ministry of spiritual masters and directors. How many people, in every state of life, imitate Judas giving themselves to Satan and meeting eternal death!

Seven reasons, as seven are the parts:

I. The Hidden Life (from the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary to the death of Saint Joseph).

II. The first year of the Public Life.

III. The second year of the Public Life.

IV. The third year of the Public Life.

V. Preparation for the Passion (from Tebeth to Nisan, that is from the agony of Lazarus to the supper at Bethany).

VI. The Passion (from the farewell to Lazarus to My Burial and following days until dawn on Easter Sunday).

VII. From the Resurrection to Pentecost.

This division of the parts is to be kept as indicated above, because it is the right one.

And now? What do you say to your Master? You are not speaking to Me. But you are speaking in your hearts, and only if you may be able to do so, you speak to little John. But in neither of these two cases you speak with the justice that I should like to see in you. Because you speak to little John to grieve him, trampling on the charity for the Christian sister and the instrument of God. I truly tell you once again that to be an instrument of Mine is not a placid joy: it is continuous fatigue and effort, it is sorrow in everything, because the world gives the disciples of the Master what it gave the Master: sorrow; and at least priests, and in particular confreres, ought to help these little martyrs who proceed under their crosses... And because in your hearts, speaking to yourselves, you utter a complaint of pride, of envy, of incredulity and other things. But I will give you a reply to your complaints and to your scandalised surprise.

In the evening of the Last Supper, I said to the Eleven who loved Me: "When the Comforter comes, He will remind you of everything I told you". When I spoke I always bore in mind, in addition to those who were present, all those who would be My disciples in spirit, and with truth and a will to want. The Holy Spirit, Who already with His Grace instils the faculty of remembering God into you, freeing souls from the hebetude of the Original Sin and relieving them of the obscurities that, because of the sad inheritance of Adam, envelop the brightness of the spirits created by God to enjoy His sight and spiritual knowledge, completes His work of Master by "reminding" the hearts of those who are led by Him and who are the children of God, of what I said, and which constitutes the Gospel. To remind here means to enlighten the spirit of it. Because it is nothing to remember the words of the Gospel if its spirit is not understood.

And the spirit of the Gospel, which is love, can be made understood by the Love, that is, by the Holy Spirit, Who, as He has been the true Writer of the Gospel, is also its only Commentator, because only the Author of a work knows the spirit of it and understands it, even if he does not succeed in making its readers understand it. But where a human author fails, because every human perfection is rich in deficiencies, the Most Perfect and Wise Spirit succeeds. So only the Holy Spirit, the author of the Gospel, is also He Who remembers and comments and completes it in the inmost parts of the souls of God's children.

"The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send you in My Name, will teach you everything, will remind you of everything I told you". (John, 14:26).

"When that Spirit of Truth comes, He will teach you all the truth: because He will not speak by Himself, but will say everything He has heard and will announce you the future. He will glorify Me, because He will take what is Mine and will announce it to you. Everything the Father has is Mine; that is why I said that He will receive what is Mine and will announce it to you". (John 16:13-14-15).

Then if you object that, as the Holy Spirit is the true Author of the Gospel, one fails to understand why He did not remember what is mentioned in this work and what John makes one understand did happen, in the last words

that close his Gospel, I reply to you that the thoughts of God are different from those of men, and are always just and not liable to criticism.

Further: if you object that the revelation was closed with the last Apostle, and there was nothing further to add, because the same Apostle says in Revelation: "If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him every plague mentioned in the book" (22:18) and that can be understood for all the Revelation, the last completion of which is the Revelation by John, I reply to you that with this work no addition was made to revelation, but only the gaps, brought about by natural causes and by supernatural will, were filled in. And if I wanted to take pleasure in restoring the picture of My Divine Charity, as a restorer of mosaics does replacing the tesserae damaged or missing, reinstating the mosaic in its complete beauty, and I have decided to do it in this century in which Mankind is hurling itself towards the Abyss of darkness and horror, can you forbid Me from doing so?

Can you perhaps say that you do not need it, you whose spirits are dull, weak, deaf to the lights, voices and invitations from Above?

You ought really to bless Me for increasing with new lights the light that you have and that is no longer sufficient for you "to see" your Saviour. To see the Way, the Truth and the Life, and feel that spiritual emotion of the just of My time rise in you, attaining through this knowledge a renewal of your spirits in love, that would be your salvation, because it is an ascent towards perfection.

I do not say that you are "dead", but sleeping, drowsy. Like plants during their winter sleep. The divine Sun gives you its refulgence. Awake and bless the Sun that gives itself, receive it with joy so that It may warm you, from the surface to deep inside you, it may rouse you and cover you with flowers and fruits.

Rise. Come to My Gift.

"Take and eat. Take and drink" I said to the apostles.

"If you only knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you: 'give me a drink', you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water" I said to the Samaritan woman.

I say that also now: to doctors and to Samaritans as well. Because both extreme classes need it, and also those need it, who are between the two extremes. The former not to be underfed and deprived of strength also with regard to themselves, and of supernatural nourishment for those who languish with lack of knowledge of God, of the God-Man, of the Master and Saviour. The latter because souls need living water, when they perish far away from the springs. Those in the middle, between the former and the latter, the great mass of those who are not big sinners, and also of those who are static in not making any progress, through laziness, tepidness, because of a wrong concept of holiness, those who are scrupulous of not being damned, of being observant, of becoming entangled in a labyrinth of superficial practices, but dare not take a step on the steep, very steep road of heroism, so that from this work they may receive the initial incentive to come out of that immobility and set out on the heroic way.

I tell you these words. I offer you this food and this drink of living water. My Word is Life. And I want you in the Life, with Me. And I multiply My word to counterbalance the miasmata of Satan as they destroy the vital strength of the spirit.

Do not reject Me. I am anxious to give Myself to you, because I love you. And My anxiety is inextinguishable. I ardently wish to communicate Myself to you to make you ready for the banquet of the celestial nuptials. And you need Me in order not to languish, to dress yourselves with dresses adorned for the Wedding of the Lamb, for the great feast of God after overcoming the affliction in this desert full of snares, of brambles and snakes, which is the Earth, to pass through flames without suffering damage, to

tread on reptiles and have to take poisons without dying, as you have Me in you.

And I also say to you: "Take, do take this work and 'do not seal it', but read it and have it read 'because the time is close'" (John, Revelation, 22:10) and let those who are holy become holier" (ib. 22:11).

May the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ be with all those who in this book see an approach of Mine and urge it to be accomplished, to their defence, with the cry of Love: "Come, Lord Jesus!". »

And to me in particular then Jesus says:

« As introduction to the Work you will put the first chapter of the Gospel by John, from verse one to eighteen inclusive, integrally, as it is written. John wrote those words, as you have written all those related in the Work, from dictation of the Spirit of God. There is nothing to be added or to be taken away, as there was nothing to be added or taken away from the prayer of the Our Father and from My prayer after the Last Supper. Every word of these points is a divine gem and is not to be touched. There is only one thing to be done with regard to these points: ardently pray the Holy Spirit that He may enlighten them to you in all their beauty and wisdom.

When you arrive at the point where My public life begins, you will copy the first chapter of John, also integrally, from verse nineteen to verse twenty-eight inclusive and the third chapter of Luke from verse three to verse eighteen inclusive, one after the other, as if they were only one chapter. There is all the Precursor, an ascetic of few words and hard discipline, and there is nothing else to be said. Then you will put My Baptism and you will go on as I told you from time to time.

And your fatigue is over. Now love remains and the reward to be enjoyed.

My soul, and what should I say to you? With your spirit lost in Me you ask Me: "And now, Lord, what will You do with me, Your servant?"

I could say: "I will break the clay vase to extract its essence and take it where I am". And it would be the joy of both. But I need you for a short while, and a little more, here, to exhale your perfumes which are still the scent of the Christ dwelling in you. So I will say to you as I said to John: "If I want you to stay until I come to get you, what does it matter to you to remain?"

Peace to you, My little untiring voice. Peace to you. Peace and blessings. The Master says to you: "Thanks". The Lord says to you: "May you be blessed". Jesus, your Jesus, says to you: "I will always be with you because it is pleasant to Me to be with those who love Me".

My peace, little John. Come and rest on My Chest. »

And with these words also the suggestions for the drawing up of the work have come to an end and the last explanations have been given.

Viareggio, 28th April, 1947.

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