

THE SECOND YEAR OF THE PUBLIC LIFE

141. Instruction to the Disciples while Going towards Arimathea.

19th April 1945.

« My Lord, what shall we do with this man? » Peter asks Jesus pointing at a man, whose name is Joseph, and who has been following them since they left Emmaus. Joseph is now listening to the two sons of Alphaeus and to Simon, who are paying particular attention to him.

« I have told you. He is coming with us as far as Galilee. »

« And then? »

« And then he will be staying with us. You will see that that is what is going to happen. »

« Is he going to be a disciple, too? With that foul story about him? »

« Are you a Pharisee, too? »

« Not me! But... I think that the Pharisees are too keen on keeping an eye on us... »

« And they will cause us trouble if they see him with us. That is what you mean. So, we should allow a son of Abraham to be plunged into grief, because we are afraid of being annoyed. No, Simon Peter. It is a soul that can be lost or saved according to how its deep wound is healed. »

« But, are we not Your disciples?... »

Jesus looks at Peter and smiles sweetly. He then says: « One day, many months ago, I said to you: "Many more will come". The field is vast, very vast. Because of its vastness, the workers will never be sufficient... also because many, like Jonah, will die working hard. But you will always be My favoured ones » concludes Jesus, drawing gloomy Peter close to Himself and His promise cheers the apostle.

« So, he is coming with us. »

« Yes, until his heart is refreshed. He is deeply disillusioned by all the bitter hatred he has had to endure. He is indeed poisoned. »

Also James, John and Andrew have joined the Master and are listening to Him.

« You cannot appraise the enormous harm that a man can do another man by means of his hostile intolerance. I ask you to remember that your Master was always very benign towards those who were suffering from a spiritual disease. You think that My greatest miracles and My main virtue consist in the curing of bodies. No, My friends... Yes, you too, who are ahead of us and you, who are behind Me, come here. The road is wide and we can walk in a group. »

They all gather round Jesus Who continues: « My main deeds, the ones that bear the clearest witness to My nature and My mission, the ones upon which the Father looks with joy, are the healing of

hearts, whether they are freed from one or more capital vices, or relieved from grief. Hearts are discouraged by grief when they are convinced that they have been struck and abandoned by God. What is a soul that has lost the certainty of the help of God? It is a thin bearbire crawling in the dust, as it is no longer able to clutch at the idea that was its strength and its joy. It is horrible to live without hope. Life is beautiful, in its hardship, only because it receives such warmth from the Divine Sun. The aim of life is that Sun. The days of man may be dismal, wet with tears and smeared with blood. But the Sun will rise again. Then there will be no more grief, no separations, no harshness, no hatred, no misery or solitude in an enveloping fog. Instead there will be brightness and singing, serenity and peace, there will be God. God: the eternal Sun! See how gloomy the earth is when there is an eclipse. If man were compelled to say: "The sun is defunct" would he not feel as if he were to live for ever in a dark hypogeum, buried and dead before dying? But man knows that behind the planet that hides the sun and makes the world look dismal there is still God's bright sun. And the thought of being united to God during life is like that. If men hurt, steal, calumniate, God cures, grants, justifies. And He does so in full measure. Men may say: "God has rejected you". But a confident soul thinks, must think: "God is just and good. He knows all reasons and is benign. He is more benign than the most benign of men. He is infinitely so. Therefore He will not reject me if I lean my tear-stained face on His bosom and I say to Him: 'Father, I have but You. Your son is in anguish and depressed. Give me Your peace... I have been sent by God to gather those whom man has upset and Satan has overwhelmed and I save them. That is really My work. A miracle on a body is a manifestation of divine power. The redemption of souls is the work of Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Redeemer. I think, and I am not mistaken, that those who have been rehabilitated by Me in the eyes of God and in their own, will be My faithful disciples, the ones who with greater strength will be able to lead crowds of people to God saying: "Are you sinners? So am I. Are you depressed? So am I. Are you desperate? So was I. And yet you can see that the Messiah had mercy on my spiritual distress and He wanted me to be His priest. Because He is mercy and He wants the world to be convinced of that, and no man is more suitable to convince than he who has experienced such mercy in himself". Now I will put them on a par with My friends, and with those who have worshipped Me since I was born, that is, I will associate them with you and with the shepherds. Nay, I will set them alongside the shepherds, with those who have been cured, with those who without any special election, like you twelve, have followed My way and will follow it as long as they live. Isaac is near Arimathea, as requested by our

friend Joseph. I will take Isaac with Me, so that he may join Timoneus when the latter arrives. You may join them, Joseph, if you think that there is peace in Me and a purpose for a whole life. They will be good brothers to you. »

« O My Comfort! It is exactly as You say. My deep wounds, both as a man and as a believer, are being cured very quickly. I have been with You three days. And I feel that what was my torture only three days ago, is a dream that is fading away. I had that dream, but the more time elapses, the more its harsh details vanish before reality. During the past nights I have pondered over things. I have a good relative at Joppa. He was... the involuntary cause of my trouble, because it was through him that I met that woman. And that will tell You whether we were in a position to know whose daughter she was... True, she may have been the daughter of my father's first wife. But he was not the father. Her name was different and she came from far away. She became acquainted with my relative through business transactions. And that is how I met her. My relative was very fond of my business. I am going to make him an offer. The business would come to an end without a master. I am sure he will buy it, also because thereby he will not feel remorse for the trouble he caused me. I will then be self-sufficient and I will be able to follow You without any worry. I only ask You to grant me that man Isaac You mentioned. I am afraid of being all alone with my thoughts. They are still too sad... »

« I will let you have Isaac. He is a kind soul. Sorrow has perfected him. He has carried his cross for thirty years. He knows what it means to suffer... In the meantime we will go ahead. And you will join us at Nazareth. »

« Are we not stopping at Joseph's? »

« Joseph is probably in Jerusalem... The Sanhedrin is very busy... We will find out from Isaac. If he is there, we will take him our peace. If he is not there we will stop only one night, to rest. I am anxious to reach Galilee. There is a Mother Who is suffering. You must remember that there are people who are keen on distressing Her. I want to reassure Her. »

142. Instruction to the Apostles Going towards Samaria.

21st April 1945.

Jesus is with the twelve apostles. The region is still mountainous, but since the road is quite wide, they are all in a group and are speaking among themselves.

« But, now that we are all by ourselves, we can talk about it: why so much jealousy between the two groups? » asks Philip.

Jealousy It is nothing but pride! replies Judas of Alphaeus.

« No. I say that it is only a pretext to justify, somehow, their unjust

behaviour towards the Master. Under the cover of zeal for the Baptist, they succeed in driving Him away, without alienating the crowds too much » says Simon.

« I would unmask them. »

« Peter, we would do many things that He does not do. »

« Why does He not? »

« Because He knows it is better not to do so. All we have to do is to imitate Him. It is not for us to guide Him. And we must be happy about it. It is a great relief to have only to obey... »

« You are quite right, Simon » says Jesus, Who was walking ahead of them apparently pensive. « You are quite right. It is easier to obey than to command. It does not seem so, but it is. It is certainly easy when the spirit is good. And likewise it is difficult to command when the spirit is upright. Because a spirit that is not righteous, gives irrational orders and worse than irrational. Then it is easy to command. But... how more difficult it is to obey! When a man is responsible for a place or a group of people, he must always be charitable and fair, wise and humble, moderate and patient, firm but not obstinate. Oh! It is difficult!... For the time being you have but to obey. You must obey God and your Master. You, and you are not the only one, wonder why I do or do not do certain things, you wonder why God allows or does not allow such things. See, Peter, and all of you, My friends. One of the secrets of the perfect believer is not to set oneself as the interrogator of God. "Why do You do that?" a soul that is not completely formed asks God. And that soul seems to be taking the attitude of a wise adult before a little schoolboy and says: "That is not to be done. It is silly. It is wrong". Who is above God?

You now see that under the pretence of zeal for John I am being driven away. And you are scandalised. And you would like Me to put matters right by polemizing with those who maintain such principles. No, never. You have heard what the Baptist said through the mouths of his disciples: "He must grow greater, I must grow smaller". There is no regret in him, no clinging to his position. A saint is not attached to such things. He does not work to increase the number of his "own" followers. He has no followers of his own. He works to increase the believers in God. God alone is entitled to have followers. Therefore, as I do not regret that some people, in good or in bad faith, remain disciples of the Baptist, so he is not distressed, as you have heard, if some of his disciples come to Me. He disregards such numerical pettiness. He looks at Heaven. And I look at Heaven. Do not argue, therefore, among yourselves, whether it is fair or unfair that the Jews should accuse Me of snatching disciples from the Baptist, whether it is just or unjust to allow people to say that. Those are altercations of talkative women round the village fountain. Saints help one another, they

give and exchange spirits with unreserved ease, smiling at the idea of working for the Lord.

I have baptized, nay, I made you baptize, because the spirit is so dull, nowadays, that it is necessary to present piety, miracles and doctrine in a material form to it. Because of such spiritual dullness I will have to avail Myself of the help of material substances when I want to make you work miracles. But believe Me, the evidence of holiness is neither in the oil, nor in the water, nor in any other ceremony. The time is about to come when an impalpable, invisible thing, which materialists cannot conceive, will be the queen, the "returning queen", powerful and holy with every holy thing and in every holy thing. Through it man will become again the "son of God" and will work what God works, because he will have God with him: Grace. That is the returning queen. Then baptism will be a sacrament. Then man will speak and understand the language of God and will give life and Life, he will give power of science and of strength, then... oh! then! But you are not yet mature to learn what Grace will grant you. Please help its coming by continuously training yourselves and forget useless and mean things.

There is the boundary of Samaria. Do you think I ought to speak there? »

« Oh! » They are all more or less scandalised.

« I solemnly tell you that there are Samaritans everywhere, and if I should not speak where there is a Samaritan, I should not speak anywhere. Come therefore. I will not make any effort to speak. But I will not disdain to speak of God if I am asked. One year is over. The second is beginning. It is between the beginning and the end. At the beginning the Master was still predominant. Now the Saviour is being revealed. The end will see the face of the Redeemer. Let us go. The more a river approaches its estuary, the more it grows. I also am increasing the work of mercy because the end is approaching. »

« Are we going towards some big river after Galilee? Perhaps to the Nile? Or the Euphrates? » whisper some of the disciples.

« Perhaps we are going amongst the Gentiles... » reply others.

« Do not speak among yourselves. We are going towards "My" end. That is, towards the fulfilment of My mission. Listen carefully to what I say to you, because afterwards I will leave you and you will have to continue in My name. »

143. Photinai, the Samaritan Woman.

22nd April 1945.

« I will stop here. You go into town and buy what is necessary for our meal. We shall eat here. »

« Shall we all go? »

« Yes, John. You had better be all together. »

« And what about You? You will be left alone... They are Samaritans... »

« They will not be the worst enemies of Christ. Go. I will pray, while waiting for you. I will pray for you and for them »

The disciples reluctantly go away, and they turn round three or four times to look at Jesus, Who has sat down on a little wall, exposed to the sun, near the low broad edge of a well. It is a big well, so wide that it seems a cistern. In summer it is shaded by tall trees, which are now bare. It is not possible to see the water, but the little puddles and ring marks of wet pitchers on the ground near the well, are clear signs that water has been drawn. Jesus sits down and meditates, in His usual attitude, His elbows resting on His knees, His hands stretched out and joined, His body slightly bent forward and His head lowered. When He feels the mild warmth of the sun, He lets His mantle drop from His head and shoulders and holds it round His waist. He raises His head and smiles at a flight of wrangling sparrows quarrelling over a large crumb of bread, which someone has dropped near the well.

But the sparrows fly away when a woman arrives near the well. With her left hand she is holding an empty amphora by one of its handles, whilst her right hand with a gesture of surprise pushes aside her veil to see who the man is who is sitting there. Jesus smiles at the thirty-five/forty year old woman. She is tall, with a beautiful strongly marked figure. A Spanish type, we would say: a pale olive complexion, rather thick bright-red lips, dark eyes which are even exceedingly large, very dark eyebrows and hair, visible through her transparent veil. Also her rather plump features are typically oriental and slightly soft, as is customary with Arab women. Her dress is a multicoloured striped robe, which is held very tight round her waist and her plump sides and breast, and then falls to the ground in a kind of wavy fringe. She is wearing several rings on her rather plump dark fingers and bracelets on her wrists, which appear under her linen sleeves. Round her neck she wears a heavy necklace from which some medals are hanging; I should call them amulets because they are of all shapes. Heavy ear-rings hang down as far as her neck and shine under her veil.

« Peace be with you, woman. Will you give Me some water to drink? I have walked a long way and I am thirsty. »

« Are You not a Judaeen? And You ask me, a Samaritan woman, to give You a drink? What has happened? Have we been rehabilitated, or have you been routed? A great event must have taken place, if a Judaeen speaks kindly to a Samaritan woman. But I should say to You: "I will not give You anything, to punish in You all the insults the Jews have been heaping on us for centuries". »

« You are right. A great event has taken place. And because of it many things have changed and many more will change. God has granted a great gift to the world and through it many things have changed. If you knew the gift of God and Who is saying to you:

"Give Me a drink", perhaps you would have asked Him to give you a drink and He would have given you living water. »

« Living water is in the veins of the earth. It is in this well. But it is ours. » The woman's tone is derisory and arrogant.

« Water comes from God. As bounty comes from God. As life comes from God. Everything belongs to the One Only God, woman. And all men come from God: Samaritans and Judaeans. Is this not Jacob's well? And is not Jacob the head of our race? If later on an error divided us, that does not change our origin. »

« Of course, it was our error, was it not? » the woman asks aggressively.

« Neither ours nor yours. It was the error of one who had lost sight of Charity and Justice. I do not wish to offend you or your race. Why do you wish to strike an offensive attitude? »

« You are the first Judaeans whom I hear speak thus. The others... But reverting to the well, yes, it is Jacob's and its water is so plentiful and clear that we in Sychar prefer it to other fountains. But it is very deep. You have neither amphora nor bucket. How could You, therefore, draw living water for me? Are You greater than our holy Patriarch Jacob, who found this abundant vein for himself, his sons and his cattle and left it to us as his souvenir and gift? »

« You are right. But whoever drinks this water, will be thirsty again. I instead have a water and whoever drinks it will not be thirsty again. But it is only Mine. And I will give it to whoever asks Me for it. And I solemnly tell you that whoever has the water I give him, will always be satisfied and will never be thirsty again, because My water will be an unfailing eternal spring. »

« What? I do not understand. Are You a magician? How can a man become a well? A camel drinks and lays a supply of water in his big stomach. But he then consumes it and it does not last all his life. And You say that Your water lasts a whole lifetime? »

« Even longer: it will last until eternal life. In those who drink it, it will gush until eternal life and will give germs of eternal life, because it is a spring of health. »

« Give me some of that water, if You really have it. I get tired coming here. If I have it, I will not be thirsty any more and I will never be ill or become old. »

« Is that the only thing of which you get tired? Of nothing else? And you feel only the need of drawing water to drink and satisfy Your poor body? Think about it. There is something more important than your body. Your soul. Jacob did not procure only the

water of the earth for himself and his sons. He was anxious to be holy and to bestow holiness, the water of God. »

« You call us heathens... If what You say is true, we cannot be holy... » The woman's tone is no longer insolent and ironical and she is submissive and somewhat confused.

« Also a heathen can be virtuous. And God, Who is just, will reward him for the good he has done. It will not be a complete reward, but I can tell you that between a guilty believer and an innocent heathen, God looks at the latter with less severity. And if you know you are such, why do you not come to the True God? What is your name? »

« Photinai. »

« Well, tell me, Photinai, are you sorry that you cannot aspire to holiness because you are a heathen, as you say, or because you are in the haze of an old error, as I say? »

« Yes, I am sorry. »

« Well, then, why do you not live at least as a virtuous heathen? »

« Lord!... »

« Yes, can you deny it? Go and call your husband and come back here with him. »

« I have no husband. » The embarrassment of the woman increases.

« You have spoken the truth. You have no husband. But you have had five men and you have one with you now who is not your husband. Was that necessary? Also your religion condemns lewdness. You have the Decalogue, too. Why, then, Photinai, do you live thus? Are you not tired of the exertion of being flesh for everybody, instead of being the honest wife of one man only? Are you not afraid of the evening of your life, when you will be all alone with your memories and regrets? And with your fears? Yes, all those. Fear of God and of ghosts. Where are your children? »

The woman lowers her head completely and does not reply.

« You have none in this world. But their little souls, whom you prevented from seeing the day of their birth, are reproaching you. And they always will. Jewels... beautiful dresses... a splendid house... a bountiful table... But emptiness, and tears, and interior misery. You are forlorn, Photinai. And only through sincere repentance, through God's forgiveness and consequently through your children's forgiveness, you can become rich again. »

« Lord, I see that You are a prophet. And I am ashamed... »

« And when you were doing evil things, were you not ashamed of yourself before the Father Who is in Heaven? Do not weep out of dejection before the Man... Come here, Photinai. Come near Me. I will speak to you of God. Perhaps you did not know Him well. And that is why you have been so faulty. If you had known the True God well, you would not have degraded yourself so much. He

would have spoken to you and supported you... »

« Lord, our ancestors have worshipped on this mountain. You say that one must worship only in Jerusalem. But You said that there is only One God. Help me to see what I must do and where... »

« Woman, believe Me. Before long the Father will be worshipped neither on the mountain in Samaria nor in Jerusalem. You worship Him Whom you do not know. We worship Him Whom we know, because salvation comes from the Judaeans. I remind you of the Prophets. But the time will come, nay, it has already arrived, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, no longer according to the ancient rite, but to the new one, where there will be no sacrifice of animals consumed by fire. There will be the eternal sacrifice of the Immaculate Victim consumed by the Fire of Charity. It will be a spiritual cult in a spiritual Kingdom. And it will be understood by those who are able to worship in spirit and truth. God is Spirit. Those who worship Him must do so spiritually. »

« You speak holy words. I know, because we also know something, that the Messiah is about to come: the Messiah, He Who is called also "Christ". When He comes, He will teach us everything. Not far from here there is also one who is said to be His Precursor. And many go and listen to him. But he is so severe!... You are kind... and the souls of poor people are not afraid of You. I think that Christ will be good. They say that He is the King of Peace. Will it be long before He comes? »

« I have told you that His hour has already come. »

« How do You know? Are You perhaps one of His disciples? The Precursor has many disciples. Also Christ will have them. »

« I, Who am speaking to you, am Jesus Christ. »

« You!... Oh!... » The woman, who had sat down near Jesus, stands up and is about to run away.

« Woman, why are you running away? »

« Because I am struck with terror at being near You. You are holy. »

« I am the Saviour. I came here, although it was not necessary, because I knew that your soul was tired of wandering. You are disgusted with your food... I have come to give you a new food, which will remove your nausea and tiredness... Here are My disciples coming back with My food. But I have already been fed by giving you the first crumbs of your redemption. »

The disciples glance at the woman out of the corners of their eyes, more or less prudently, but no one speaks. She goes away forgetting about her amphora and the water.

« Here, Master » says Peter. « The people have treated us very well. Here is some cheese, fresh bread, olives and apples. Take what You want. It's a good job that woman left her amphora. We

shall draw water with it quicker than with our small flasks. We shall have a drink and then we shall fill them. And we shall not have to ask the Samaritans for anything else. Neither shall we have to go near their fountains. Are You not eating? I wanted to get some fish for You, but there was none. Perhaps You would have preferred it. You look tired and pale. »

« I have a food which is unknown to you. I will have some of it and it will restore Me considerably. »

The disciples look at one another inquisitively.

Jesus replies to their silent questions: « My food is to do the will of Him Who sent Me and to accomplish the work which He wants Me to complete. When a sower sows the seed, can he say that he has done everything and thus state that he can reap the harvest? Most certainly not. How much more there is still to be done before he may say: "My work is accomplished". And he cannot rest until that moment. Look at these little fields in the bright midday sunshine. Only a month ago, even less than a month ago, the soil was bare and dark because it was wet with rain. Look now. It looks as if it were covered by a light whitish veil, because of the many very pale-green corn stems, which have just come up and look even lighter because of the bright sunshine. That is the future crop and seeing it you say: "It will be harvest time in four months. The sowers will employ reapers, because if one man is quite sufficient to sow his field, many men are required to reap the harvest. And they are all happy. Both the man who sowed a small sack of corn and now must prepare his granaries to store the crop, and those who in a few days earn enough to live on for a few months". Also in the spiritual field those who reap what I have sown will rejoice with Me and like Me, because I will give them the wages and crops due to them. I will give them what to live on in My eternal Kingdom. You have but to reap. I have done the hardest work. And yet I say to you: "Come. Reap the harvest in My field. I am glad that you burden yourselves with the sheaves of My corn. When you have harvested all the corn that I, without ever tiring, have sown everywhere, then the will of God will be fulfilled and I will sit at the banquet in the Celestial Jerusalem". Here the Samaritans are coming with Photinai. Be kind to them. They are souls coming to God. »

144. With the People of Sychar.

23rd April 1945.

A group of Samaritan dignitaries are coming towards Jesus, led by Photinai. « God be with You, Rabbi. This woman has told us that You are a prophet and that You do not disdain speaking to us. We beg You to stay with us and not to refuse to speak to us,

because if it is true that we are cut off from Judah, that does not mean that only Judah is holy and that all the error is in Samaria. Also amongst us there are some just people. »

« I told her exactly the same. I will not impose Myself, neither will I reject those who seek Me. »

« You are just. The woman told us that You are Christ. Is that true? Reply to us in the name of God. »

« I am. The Messianic epoch has come. Israel is united by her King. And not only Israel. »

« But You will be the Messiah for those who... are not in error, as we are » remarks an imposing elderly man.

« Man, I see that you are their leader and I also see that you are honestly seeking the Truth. Now, listen to Me since you are learned in the holy scriptures. I was told what the Spirit said to Ezekiel, entrusting him with the prophetic mission: "Son of man, I send you to the people of Israel, to a nation of rebels, who have rebelled against Me... They are impudent and stubborn children... They may listen to you and then not keep your words, which are My words, because they are a rebellious house, but at least they will know that there is a prophet among them. Therefore, be not afraid of them, nor be afraid of their words, because they are unbelieving and rebellious... And you shall speak My words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear you. Do what I tell you, hear what I say to you, be not rebellious like them. Eat, therefore, whatever food I give you". And I came. I do not flatter Myself and I do not expect to be received as a triumphant victor. But since the will of God is My honey, here I am to fulfil it, and if you wish I will tell you the words which the Spirit said to Me. »

« How can the Eternal Father have thought of us? »

« Because He is love, My children. »

« Not all the Rabbis in Judah say so. »

« But that is what the Messiah of the Lord tells you. »

« It is written that the Messiah is to be born of a virgin in Judah. Of whom and where were You born? »

« In Bethlehem Ephrata, of Mary of the House of David, by means of a spiritual conception. I ask you to believe Me. » Jesus' beautiful voice is a declaration of triumphant joy in proclaiming His Mother's virginity.

« Your face is shining with a bright light. No, it is not possible for You to lie. The faces of the children of darkness are gloomy and their eyes are grim. You are bright; Your eyes are as bright as the morning star and Your words are true. Please come to Sychar and teach the children of this people. Then You will go away... and we will remember the Star that appeared in our sky... »

« Why would you not follow it? »

« How can we? » They are talking while walking towards the

town. « We are cut off. At least that is what they say. But we were born in this faith and we do not know whether it is right to abandon it. Further... well, I feel I can tell You. After all we have eyes to see and minds to think. When we pass through your country, on journeys or on business, not everything we see is so holy as to persuade us that God is with you Judaeans or with you Galileans. »

« I solemnly tell you that the remainder of Israel will be charged with not persuading and leading you back to God by means of good examples and charity, instead of offending and anathematising you. »

« How much wisdom there is in You. Have you all heard Him? »

They all nod assent whispering their admiration.

They have in the meantime reached the town and many people draw near while they walk towards a house.

« Listen, Rabbi. Since You are wise and good, please resolve a doubt of ours. A great deal of our future depends on it. As You are the Messiah and thus the Restorer of David's Kingdom, You must be happy to rejoin this severed limb to the body of the state. Are You not? »

« I am taking care not so much to reunite the severed parts of what is perishable and transient, as to lead back to God all the souls, and I am happy when I restore the Truth to a heart. But express your doubt. »

« Our fathers sinned. Since then the souls of Samaritans have been disliked by God. What benefit will we receive if we follow Good? We will always be like lepers in the eyes of God. »

« Your regret is the eternal dissatisfaction of all schismatics. Once again I will reply to you with Ezekiel: "All souls are Mine" says the Lord. "The soul of the father as well as the soul of the son. Only the soul that sins shall die. If a man is righteous, if he is not an idolator, if he does not fornicate, or steal or lend at an interest, if he has mercy both on the body and on the soul of his neighbour, he is righteous in My eyes and shall live a true life". And further on. "If a just man has a rebellious son, shall that son live because his father was a just man? He shall not live". And also: "If the son of a sinner is a righteous man, will he die like his father, because he is his son? No, he shall live eternal life because he was just". It would not be fair if one had to suffer for the iniquity of another. The soul that has sinned shall die. The soul that has not sinned shall not die. And if he who has sinned is repentant and comes to the Justice, behold, he shall have true life, too. The Lord God, the One and Only Lord, says: "I do not want the death of the sinner, but I want him to repent and live". That is why He sent Me, o wandering children: that you may have true life. I am the Life. Who believes in Me and in Him Who sent Me will have eternal life, even if up to the present moment he was a sinner. »

« Here we are at my house, Master. Do You not detest entering it? »

« I detest only sin. »

« Come in, then, and stay. We shall break our bread together and then, if it is not a burden to You, You will explain the word of God to us. That word has a different flavour when it is explained by You... and we are tortured by a doubt: we do not feel sure that we are right... »

« Everything would be appeased if you dared to come openly to the Truth. May God speak to your hearts. It is getting dark. Tomorrow, at the third hour I will speak to you at some length, if you wish so. Go now with the Mercy which is close to you. »

145. Evangelization at Sychar.

24th April 1945.

Jesus is speaking to a large crowd in the centre of a square. He has climbed on a stone bench near the fountain. The crowds are around Him. Also the Twelve are around Him... their faces are dismayed, or annoyed, or they clearly show disgust at certain contacts. Bartholomew and the Iscariot in particular clearly show their embarrassment and to be as far as possible from the Samaritans, the Iscariot is sitting astride the branch of a tree as if he wanted to dominate the scene, while Bartholomew is leaning against a door in a corner of the square. The prejudice is evident and clearly visible in all of them.

Jesus, on the contrary, has not changed His usual attitude in the least. Nay, I would say that He is endeavouring to prevent His majesty from frightening the people and at the same time He tries to let it shine to remove all doubts. He caresses two or three little ones and asks them their names, He takes an interest in an old man to whom He gives alms Himself, He replies to two or three questions, which are put to Him on private matters, not on general problems.

The first one is the request of a father whose daughter had eloped and is now begging to be forgiven.

« Forgive her at once. »

« But I suffered because of her, Master. And I still suffer. In less than a year I have grown ten years older. »

« Forgiveness will relieve you. »

« It is not possible. The wound is still there. »

« That is true. But in the wound there are two parts that hurt. One is the undeniable affront you received from your daughter. The other is the effort to cease loving her. Remove at least the latter. Forgiveness, which is the highest form of love, will remove it. You must consider, poor father, that your daughter was born of

you and is always entitled to your love. If you knew that she was suffering from a physical disease and that she would die, unless you cured her yourself, would you let her die? Most certainly not. Consider then that you, with your forgiveness can put an end to her trouble and bring her back to her wholesome instinct. Because you must realise that she was overwhelmed by the basest material instinct. »

« So You would advise me to forgive her? »

« You must. »

« How will I be able to see her move about the house, and not curse her for what she has done? »

« In that case you would not forgive her. Your forgiveness must not consist in opening once again the door of your house to her, but in reopening your heart. Be good, man. What? Shall we not have for our own child the patience we have for a restless steer? »

A woman, instead, asks Jesus whether she ought to marry her brother-in-law to give a father to her little orphans.

« Do you think he will be a real father to them? »

« Yes, Master, I do. They are three boys. It takes a man to guide them. »

« Marry him, then, and be a faithful wife to him, as you were to your first husband. »

The third man asks Him whether he will be doing the right thing or not by accepting an invitation to go to Antioch.

« Man, why do you want to go there? »

« Because I have not enough means here for myself and my large family. I met a Gentile who would employ me because he saw how skilful I am in my work and he would take on also my sons. But I would not like... the scruple of a Samaritan may seem strange to You, but there it is. I would not like to lose our faith. That man, You know, is a heathen! »

« So? Nothing contaminates unless one wants to be contaminated. Go to Antioch and be of the True God. He will guide you and you will be the benefactor of your master, who will acquire the knowledge of God through your honesty. »

He then begins speaking to the crowd.

« I have heard many of you and I have -perceived that each of your hearts is rent by a secret sorrow, a grief, of which you are not even aware. Your sorrow has been accumulating for centuries and neither the reasons expressed by you nor the insults hurled at you can dissolve it. On the contrary it becomes deeper and deeper and weighs like snow that becomes ice.

I am not one of you, neither am I one of those who accuse you. I am Justice and Wisdom. And once again I will quote Ezekiel to solve your case. He speaks of Samaria and Jerusalem in a prophetic style, and he says that they are daughters of one mother

and calls them Oholah and Oholibah. The first to fall into idolatry was the former, whose name is Oholah, because she was already deprived of the spiritual help from union with the Father of Heaven. Union with God is always salvation. She changed true wealth, true power, true wisdom with the poor wealth, power and wisdom of one who was inferior to God, who was even lower than she was, and she was seduced to such an extent as to become the slave of the way of living of her seducer. She wanted to be strong, and instead became weak. She wanted to be superior, and became inferior. She became insane because she was imprudent. It is not easy for one to get rid of an infection, when one has imprudently become infected by it. You may say: "Inferior? No. We were great". Yes, you were great, but how? At what cost? You know. How many people, also amongst women, become rich at the dreadful cost of their honour! They achieve something that may come to an end. They lose something that never ends: their reputation.

When Oholibah saw that Oholah's folly had brought her wealth, she wanted to imitate her and became more deranged than her sister, and was twice as guilty, because she had the True God with her and she should never have trodden on the strength that she received from that union. And a terrible severe punishment was inflicted on the twice crazy fornicatrix Oholibah, and a more severe punishment will be imposed. God will turn His back on her. He is already doing so, in order to go to those who do not belong to Judah. Neither can God be accused of being unfair, because He does not impose Himself. He opens His arms to everybody, He invites everybody, but if one says to Him: "Go away", He goes away. He goes to seek love elsewhere, to invite other people, until He finds someone who says to Him: "I will come". I therefore say to you that you can find relief from your torture, you must find it, by meditating on what I told you. Oholah, recover your consciousness. God is calling you.

The wisdom of man consists in acknowledging his faults, the wisdom of the spirit lies in loving the True God and His Truth. Do not look at Oholibah, or Phoenicia, or Egypt, or Greece. Look at God. That is the Fatherland of every righteous soul: Heaven. There are not many laws, but one only: God's. Through the law one achieves Life. Do not say: "We sinned", but say: "We do not want to sin any more". You have the proof that God still loves you and that He has sent His Word to say to you: "Come". I say to you: "Come". Have you been offended and proscribed? By whom? By Your own fellow creatures. But God is above them and He says to You: "Come". The day will come when you will rejoice because You were not in the Temple... Your hearts will rejoice at that. But souls will rejoice even more because God's forgiveness will already have descended upon the righteous hearts scattered

throughout Samaria. Prepare His coming. Come to the universal Saviour, o children of God, who have lost your way. »

« Some of us at least would come. But those on the other side do not want us. »

« And once again with the priest and prophet I say to you: "I am about to take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim and the tribes of Israel associated with him and I will join it to the stick of Judah and make them one stick... " Do not go to the Temple. Come to Me. I do not reject anyone. I am called the King dominating over everybody. I am the King of kings. I will purify all peoples if they wish to be purified. I will gather you together, o herds without shepherds or with idol-shepherds, because I am the Good Shepherd. I will give you one tabernacle only and I will place it in the midst of My believers. That tabernacle will be the source of life, the bread of life, it will be light, salvation, protection, wisdom. It will be everything, because it will be the Living One given as food to the dead to make them live, it will be God Whose holiness will overflow to sanctify. That is what I am and will be. The days of hatred, of incomprehension, of fear have come to an end. Come! People of Israel! People separated! People afflicted! People remote! You are a dear people, infinitely dear, because you are ill and weak, because you have been wounded by an arrow that has opened the veins of your souls and has let the vital union with your God escape. Come! Come to the bosom where you were born, come to the breast from which you received life. Kindness and warmth are still here for you. Come! Come to Life and to Salvation. »

146. Goodbye to the People of Sychar.

25th April 1945.

Jesus says to the Samaritans of Sychar: « Before leaving you, as I have other children to evangelize, I want to show you the shining paths of hope, and set you on them saying to you: you may go safely as the goal is certain. Today I will not quote the great Ezekiel; I will quote Jeremiah's favourite disciple, a most great Prophet.

Baruch speaks for you. Oh! He really takes your souls and speaks on behalf of them all to the Sublime God Who is in Heaven. Your souls. I do not mean only the souls of the Samaritans, but all your souls, o families of the chosen people who have fallen into manifold sins; and He takes also your souls, o Gentile peoples, who feel there is an unknown God among the many gods you worship, a God Whom your souls perceive to be the Only True God and Whom your dullness prevents you from seeking and knowing, as your souls would wish. At least a moral law was given to you, o Gentiles and idolaters, because you are men, and man has in

himself an essence that comes from God, and its name is spirit, which always speaks of and suggests nobility and urges to holy things in life. And you have compelled it to become the slave of your vicious flesh, infringing the human moral law that you had, thus becoming sinners, also from a human point of view and you lowered the concept of your faith and yourselves to a level of brutality that makes you inferior to animals. And yet listen. You all listen. The deeper your knowledge of the moral supernatural Law given to you by the True God, the more you will understand and, consequently, act accordingly.

He prays - and this is the prayer that is to be said by your hearts humiliated by a noble humility, which is not degradation or pusillanimity, but an exact knowledge of one's miserable conditions, as well as a holy desire to find means of improving them spiritually - Baruch thus prays: "Look down, Lord, from Your holy dwelling place, take heed of us and listen. Look at us, Lord and consider; the dead down in Sheol, whose breath has been taken from their bodies, are not the ones to give glory and due observance to the Lord; the person overcome with affliction, who goes his way bowed down and frail, with failing eyes and hungering soul, he is the one to give You glory, Lord, and due observance". And Baruch weeps humbly and every just soul should weep with him, seeing and calling by their true names the misfortunes that have turned a strong people into a sad, divided and subdued one: "We did not listen to Your voice and so You carried out what You had promised through Your servants the prophets... and behold the bones of our kings and of our ancestors have been dragged from their resting places and have been tossed out to the heat of the day and the frost of the night and people died in dreadful agony, from famine, sword and plague. And so because of the wickedness of the House of Israel and the House of Judah, You have reduced this Temple, where Your Name was invoked, to what it is today".

Oh! Children of the Father, do not say: "Both our Temple and yours have been rebuilt and are beautiful". No. A tree split by a thunderbolt from its top down to the roots will not survive. It may just vegetate in a miserable manner through an effort to live by means of the shoots coming from the roots, which are reluctant to die, but it will be barren brushwood, it will no longer be a healthy tree, laden with wholesome sweet fruit. The ruin that started with the separation, grows worse and worse, although the material structure does not appear to be damaged, on the contrary it looks beautiful and new. It crushes down the consciences that live in it. And then the hour will come when every supernatural flame will be extinguished and the Temple will be deprived of its very life, the Temple, an altar of precious metal, which can subsist

only if it is continuously smelted by the warmth of its ministers' faith and charity; and icy, dull, soiled, full of dead bodies, it will become putrefaction upon which foreign crows and the avalanche of divine punishment will rush to ruin it completely.

Pray, children of Israel, weeping with Me, your Saviour. May My voice support yours and reach up to the throne of God, as it is able to. Who prays with Christ, the Son of the Father, is heard by God, the Father of the Son. Let us say the old just prayer of Baruch: "And now, Almighty Lord, God of Israel, every soul in anguish, every troubled heart cries to You. Listen and have pity, o Lord. You are a Merciful God, have mercy on us for we have sinned in Your sight. You sit enthroned for ever, and shall we perish continually? Almighty Lord, God of Israel, hear the prayer of the dead of Israel and of their sons, who have sinned against You. They did not listen to the voice of the Lord their God, hence the disasters that have befallen us. Do not call to mind the misdeeds of our ancestors, but remember instead Your power and Your Name... Because we invoke Your Name and we turn from the wickedness of our ancestors, have mercy on us".

Pray thus and be truly converted, by returning to true wisdom, which is the wisdom of God. It can be found in the Book of God's commandments and in the Law that lasts for ever, and that I, the Messiah of God, have now come to bring to the poor of the world in its simple unchangeable form, announcing them the Gospel of the time of Redemption, of Forgiveness, of Love, of Peace. Who believes in that Word will reach eternal life.

I leave you, citizens of Sychar, who have been good to the Messiah of God. I leave you with My peace. »

« Stay a little longer. »

« Come back again. »

« No one will ever speak to us as You did. »

« May You be blessed, good Master. »

« Bless my little one. »

« Pray for me, since You are a Saint. »

« Allow me to keep one of Your fringes, as a blessing. »

« Remember Abel. »

« And me, Timothy. »

« And me, Jorai. »

« I will remember you all. Peace be with you. »

They go with Him for a few hundred yards out of town, and then they slowly go back...

147. Instruction to the Apostles and the Miracle of the Woman of Sychar.

26th April 1945.

Jesus is walking ahead of the apostles, alone, close to a hedge of prickly cactus, the leaves of which are shining in the sun and seem to be deriding all the other bare plants. One can see on them a few surviving fruits which age has coloured brick-red and an odd early flower pleasantly bright in its yellow-cinabar hue.

Behind Him, the apostles are whispering to one another, and I get the impression that they are not really speaking in praise of the Master. All of a sudden Jesus turns round and says: « Keep watching the wind and you will never sow, stare at the clouds and you will never reap. It is an old proverb and I follow it. And you can see that where you were afraid of ill winds and did not want to stop, I found a fertile soil and the possibility of sowing. And notwithstanding "your" clouds, which, may I tell you, you ought not to display where Mercy wants to show His sunshine, I am sure I have already harvested. »

« However, no one asked You for a miracle. Their faith in You is very odd! »

« And do you think, Thomas, that faith is evidenced only by requesting miracles? You are wrong. It is the very opposite. If a man wants a miracle to be able to believe, it means that without the tangible proof of the miracle, he would not believe. Who instead says: "I believe" in somebody else's word, shows the greatest faith. »

« So the Samaritans are better than we are! »

« I am not saying that. But in their state of spiritual disability they have shown a much greater capacity for understanding God than the believers in Palestine. You will find that very often in your lifetime, and I would ask you to remember this instance, so that you will know how to behave with the souls who turn to the faith in Christ. »

« But, Jesus, forgive me for telling You, I think that with all the hatred against You, it does You no good to give rise to new accusations. If the members of the Sanhedrin knew that You have... »

« You may very well say: "loved", because that is what I have done and I do, James. And since you are My cousin, you can understand that I can but love. I have shown to you that I always love also those who were against Me amongst My kinsfolk and countrymen. And should I not love those people who respected Me, although they did not know Me? The members of the Sanhedrin can do all the harm they like. But it will not be the thought of such future evil that will stop the effusion of My omnipresent and omnieffective love. In any case... even if I did... I would not prevent the Sanhedrin from finding accusations in their hatred. »

« But, Master, You are wasting Your time in an idolatrous country, whilst so many places in Israel are expecting You. You say that every hour is to be consecrated to the Lord. Are the hours spent here not lost? »

« The day spent in gathering the lost sheep is not lost. It is not lost, Philip. It is said: "A man multiplies offerings by keeping the Law... but by having mercy he offers a sacrifice". It is said: "Give the Most High as He has given to you, generously as your means can afford". I do that, My friend. And the time devoted to sacrifice is not wasted. I show mercy and I make use of the means I received by offering My work to God. Therefore be calm. In any case... Who wanted a request for a miracle to be convinced that the people in Sychar believe in Me, is now satisfied. That man is certainly following us for some reason. Let us stop. »

A man in fact is coming towards them. He seems to be bent under a large bundle that he is carrying on his shoulders. When he sees the group stop, he stops, too.

« He wants to harm us. He stopped because he saw that we noticed him. Oh! They are Samaritans! »

« Are you sure, Peter? »

« Of course I am! »

« Well, then. You all stay here. I will go and meet him. »

« Never, my Lord. If You go, I will come, too. »

« Come, then. »

Jesus walks towards the man. Peter jogs along beside Him, curious and hostile at the same time. When they are a few yards from the man, Jesus says: « What do you want, man? Whom are you looking for? »

« For You. »

« Why did you not look for Me when I was in town? »

« I did not dare... If You had rejected me in the presence of everybody, I would have suffered too much and would have been ashamed. »

« You could have called Me as soon as I was alone with My disciples. »

« I was hoping to reach You when You were alone, as Photinai did. I also have a grave reason for being alone with You... »

« What do you want? What are you carrying on your shoulders so heavily? »

« My wife. A spirit has taken possession of her and has turned her into a dead body and a dull intelligence. I have to feed her, dress her and carry her like a baby. It happened all of a sudden, without any disease... They call her the "possessed woman". It causes me much pain. And work. And expenses. Look. » The man lays on the ground his bundle containing an inert body enveloped in a mantle, as if it were a sack, and he uncovers the face of a woman, who is

still young. If she did not breathe, one would say that she was dead. Her eyes are closed, her mouth is half open... her face looks as if she had breathed her last.

Jesus bends over the poor woman lying on the ground, looks at her, looks at the man: « Do you think that I can? Why do you believe it? »

« Because You are Christ. »

« But you have not seen anything that proves it. »

« I heard Your word. That is enough. »

« Peter, do you hear him? What do you think I should do now, in the presence of such good faith? »

« Well Master You I As You wish, after all... » Peter is very embarrassed.

« Yes, I will do as I wish. Man, look. » Jesus takes the woman by the hand and says: « Go out of her. I want it. »

The woman, so far motionless, is shaken by a dreadful convulsion: at first she is silent, then she shouts and groans and finally bursts into a loud cry, during which she opens her eyes wide as if she were awaking from a nightmare. She then calms down and somewhat bewildered she looks around, staring first at Jesus, the Unknown Man smiling at her she then looks at the dust on the road where she is lying, she gazes at a tuft of grass that has grown on the edge of the road and on which the tiny white-red heads of daisies seem pearls about to open out in a halo of rays. She looks at the cactus hedge, at the deep blue sky, and looking round she sees her husband who full of anxiety is watching every movement of hers. She smiles and now, fully free, she jumps to her feet and seeks refuge on the chest of her husband, who caresses and embraces her, weeping.

« What is it? How am I here? Why? Who is that man? »

« He is Jesus, the Messiah. You were ill and He has cured you. Tell Him that you love Him. »

« Oh! Yes. Thank You... But what was the matter with me? My children... Simon... I do not remember the past, but I remember I have some children... »

Jesus says: « You need not remember the past. Always remember the present day. And be good. Goodbye. Be good and God will be with you. » And Jesus withdraws quickly, followed by the blessings of both of them.

When He reaches the others who remained behind, close to the hedge, He does not speak to them. But He addresses Peter: « So? You were sure that that man wanted to hurt Me, what are you going to say now? Simon, Simon! How much you still lack to be perfect! How much you all lack! With the exception of their well known idolatry, you have all the sins of those people and arrogance in judging over and above. Let us have our meal now. We

cannot reach before night the place I wanted to. We shall sleep in some barn, if we do not find anything better. »

The Twelve, with a sense of reproach in their hearts, sit down without speaking and take their food. It is a peaceful day and the sun shines on the country which slopes towards a plain in mild undulations.

After their meal they stop for a little while, until Jesus stands up and says: « Simon and Andrew, come with Me. I am going to see whether that house is a friendly one or not. » And He goes away while the others stay and are silent, until James of Alphaeus says to Judas Iscariot: « Is that woman coming here not the woman of Sychar? »

« Yes, she is. I know her by her dress. I wonder what she wants. »

« She will be wanting to go her way » replies Peter sulkily.

« No, she is looking in our direction, shielding her eyes with her hand. »

They watch her until she is near them and asks in a low voice: « Where is your Master? »

« He has gone away. Why do you want Him? »

« I need Him. »

« He does not waste His time with women » replies Peter curtly.

« I know. He doesn't with women. But I am the soul of a woman who needs Him. »

« Leave her alone » suggests Judas of Alphaeus. And he replies to Photinai: « Wait. He will soon be back. »

The woman withdraws to a little comer where the road bends and she remains still and silent, while no one pays attention to her. Jesus is soon back and Peter says: « Here is the Master. Tell Him what you want and be quick. »

The woman does not even reply to him, but goes towards Jesus and kneels down at His feet. She is silent.

« Photinai, what do you want from Me? »

« Your help, my Lord. I am so weak. And I do not want to sin any more. I have already told the man. But now that I am no longer a sinner, I know nothing. I do not know what good is. What shall I do? Please tell me. I am mud. But Your feet tread on the road to go towards souls. Trample on my mud, but come to my soul with Your advice. » She is weeping.

« You cannot follow Me, a lonely woman as you are. But if you really do not want to sin any more and you want to learn how not to sin, then go back to your house with a repentant mind and wait. The day will come, when amongst many more women who have also been redeemed, you will be able to be near your Redeemer and learn the science of Goodness. Go. Be not afraid. Persevere in your present will not to sin. Goodbye. »

The woman kisses the ground, stands up, retreats for a few yards, then goes away, towards Sychar...

148. Jesus Visits the Baptist near Ennon.

27th April 1945.

It is a clear moonlight night, so clear that the ground appears in all its details and the fields, covered with corn which has just come up, look like green-silver plush carpets, on which the country paths seem dark stripes, watched over by the tree trunks that are white on the moonlit side and completely dark on the other.

Jesus is walking steadfast and alone. He proceeds very fast along His way until He reaches a stream that is flowing down gurgling towards the plain in a north-east direction. He goes upstream as far as a lonely spot near a woody slope. He moves to one side, climbs up a steep path and arrives at a natural cave on the side of the hill.

He goes in and bends over a body that is lying on the ground and can be seen only indistinctly in the moonlight, which shines on the path outside, but does not illuminate the cave. He calls him: « John. »

The man awakes and sits up, still drowsy. But he soon realises Who is calling him and jumps to his feet, then prostrates himself saying: « How is it that my Lord came to me? »

« To make your heart and Mine happy. You wanted Me, John. Here I am. Get up. Let us go out into the moonlight and sit and talk on the rock near the grotto. »

John obeys, gets up and goes out. But when Jesus sits down, he kneels down in front of Christ. He is wearing a sheepskin, which hardly covers his very lean body, and he pushes back his long dishevelled hair, which had fallen over his eyes, to see the Son of God better.

The contrast between them is very strong. Jesus is pale and fairhaired, His hair is soft and tidy and His beard is trimmed round the lower part of His face. John is like a bush of very dark hairs, in which two deep set eyes can be seen: two feverish eyes, I would say, as they shine so much in their jet black setting.

« I have come to thank you. You have fulfilled and are fulfilling, with the perfection of Grace within you, your mission as My Precursor. When the hour comes, you will enter Heaven beside Me, because you will have deserved everything from God. And in the expectation, you will already be in the peace of the Lord, My beloved friend. »

« I will enter peace very soon, my Master and God, bless Your servant to strengthen him for his last trial. I am aware it is now near and that there is still one witness I have to bear: the witness of my blood. And You are aware more than I am, that my hour is about to arrive. The merciful bounty of Your Divine heart has brought You here, to fortify the last martyr of Israel and the first of the new era. Tell me only one thing: will I have to wait long for Your coming? »

« No, John. Not much longer than the time that elapsed between your birth and Mine. »

« May the Most High be blessed for that. Jesus... may I call You so? »

« You can, because of our blood and your holiness. The Name, which also sinners pronounce, can be pronounced by the holy one in Israel. It is salvation for them, let it be kindness to you. What do you want from Jesus, your Master and cousin? »

« I am about to die. As a father is anxious for his children, so I am anxious for my disciples. My disciples... You are a Master and You know how fondly we love them. My only fear in dying is that they may get lost like sheep without a shepherd. Will You please gather them. I give You back the three who are Yours and who have been perfect disciples while waiting for You. They, and Matthew in particular, really possess wisdom. I have some more and they will come to You. Allow me to entrust those three to You personally. They are the dearest. »

« And they are dear to Me. Do not worry, John. They shall not perish. Neither those three, nor the other true disciples of yours. I will collect your inheritance and look after it as the dearest treasure received from the perfect friend and servant of the Lord. »

John prostrates himself to the ground, and what seems impossible in such an austere personage, he bursts into tears sobbing out of spiritual joy.

Jesus lays a hand on his head: « Your joyful and humble tears are in unison with a song of long ago at the sound of which your little heart leapt out of joy. The song and your tears are the same hymn of praise to the Eternal Father, Who "has done great things, He that is Mighty, to humble souls". Also My Mother is about to intone once again the song that She sang then. But later, the greatest glory will come also to Her as to you after your martyrdom. I convey also Her greetings to you. You deserve all respect and comfort. Here it is only the hand of the Son of man, which is laid on your head, but Light and Love are descending from the open Heavens to bless you, John. »

« I do not deserve so much. I am Your servant. »

« You are My John. That day at the Jordan, I was the Messiah Who was being revealed; here, now, it is your cousin and God Who wishes to give you the viaticum of His love as God and as a relative. Get up, John. Let us kiss each other goodbye. »

« I do not deserve so much. I have longed so much for it, all my life. But I dare not do that to You. You are my God. »

« I am your Jesus. Goodbye. My soul will be near yours until peace comes. Live and die in peace for the sake of your disciples. That is all I can give you for the time being. But in Heaven I will

give you one hundredfold, because you have found grace in the eyes of God. »

Jesus has lifted him and embraced him, kissing him on his cheeks and being kissed by him. Then John kneels once again and Jesus lays both hands on his head and prays with His eyes turned to Heaven. He seems to be consecrating him. He is impressive. They are silent for some time. Then Jesus takes His leave with His kind salutation: « May peace be always with you » and He resumes the same road as before.

149. Jesus Teaches the Apostles.

28th April 1945.

« My Lord, why do You not rest during the night? Last night I got up and did not find You. Your place was empty. »

« Why were you looking for Me, Simon? »

« I wanted to give You my mantle. I was afraid You might feel cold in the limpid but very cold night. »

« And were you not cold? »

« In many years of misery I got accustomed to being badly dressed, badly fed and badly lodged... That valley of the dead!... How horrible! Just now it was not the case. But the next time we go to Jerusalem, because we will certainly go there, come, my Lord, to that place of death. There are so many unhappy people there... and their physical misery is not the worst... What most tortures and consumes them is their desperation... Do You not think, my Lord, that lepers are too harshly treated? »

The Iscariot replies to the Zealot, who is pleading the cause of his old companions, before Jesus does: « So you would leave them amongst the people? So much the worst for them if they are lepers! »

« That's all we need to make the Jews martyrs! How lovely it would be to have lepers walking in the streets with the soldiers and other things!... » exclaims Peter.

« I think it is a fair and wise step to keep them confined » remarks James of Alphaeus.

« Yes. But it should be done in a charitable manner. You do not realise what it is to be a leper. You cannot speak about them. If it is fair to take due care of our bodies, why are we not equally fair to the souls of lepers? Who speaks to them of God? And God only knows how much they need to think of God and of peace in their utter desolation! »

« Simon, you are right. I will go to them. Because it is just and to teach you all such mercy. So far I have cured the lepers that I met by chance. So far, that is, until I was driven out of Judaea. I addressed the great people in Judaea, as they are the most remote

and in the greatest need of redemption, in order to be of help to the Redeemer. As I am now convinced that such an attempt is quite useless, I am abandoning it. I will no longer address the mighty ones, but the lower and miserable people in Israel. And the lepers in the valley of the dead will be amongst them. I will not disappoint the faith that those, who have been evangelized by the grateful leper, have in Me. »

« How do You know, my Lord, that I did that? »

« As I know what friends and enemies, whose hearts I search, think of Me. »

« Goodness gracious! You really know everything about us, Master! » shouts Peter.

« Yes, I do. Also that you, and not only you, wanted to send Photinai away. Do you not know that you are not allowed to send soul away from good? Do you not know that to get to the heart of • town you must be most kind and merciful also towards those whom human society, which is not holy because it is not identified with God, calls and judges unworthy of mercy? But do not be upset because I know all that. Be sorry only that the sentiments of your hearts are not approved of by God and endeavour not to have them in future. I told you, the first year is over. In the new year I will proceed along My way with new forms. In the second year you must make progress, too. Otherwise it would be useless for Me to get tired evangelizing, and super-evangelizing you, My future priests. »

« Did You go and pray, Master? You promised to teach us Your prayers. Will You do that this year? »

« I will. But I want to teach you to be good. Goodness is already a prayer. But I will do it, John. »

« And will You teach us also to work miracles this year? » asks the Iscariot.

« Miracles are not taught. They are not the game of a juggler. A miracle comes from God. Who has grace in the eyes of God obtains it. If you learn to be good, you will have grace and obtain miracles. »

« But You are not answering our question. Simon asked You and John asked You, but You have not told us where You went last night. It could be dangerous to go out alone in a heathen country. »

« I went to make a righteous soul happy and since he is doomed to death, I went to collect his inheritance. »

« Did You? Was it a large one? »

« Yes, Peter, very large and of great value. The fruit of the work of a true just man. »

« But I have not seen anything in Your bag. Are they jewels which You are carrying on You? »

« Yes, jewels that are most dear to My heart. »

« Let us see them, Lord. »

« I will have them when the man doomed to death dies. For the time being he needs them, and I need them, leaving them where they are. »

« Has he invested them at an interest? »

« Do you think that money is the only valuable thing? It is the most useless and filthy thing on earth. It is only useful for material things, for crimes and for hell. Only rarely man makes use of it for a good purpose. »

« Well, if it is not money, what is it? »

« Three disciples formed by a saint. »

« You have been to the Baptist. Oh! Why? »

« Why!... You always have Me with you. And you all together are not worth a single finger nail of the Prophet. Was it not right that I should go to take God's blessing to the holy one in Israel to fortify him for his martyrdom? »

« But if he is holy he does not need to be fortified. He can manage by himself! »

« The day will come when "My" saints will be brought before judges and condemned to death. They will be saints, in the grace of God, comforted by faith, hope and charity. And yet I can already hear their cries, the cries of their souls: "Lord, help us in this hour!". Only with My help My saints will be strong in persecutions. »

« We are not the ones You are referring to, are we? Because I am utterly incapable of suffering. »

« That is true. You are not capable of suffering. But, Bartholomew, you have not been baptized yet. »

« Yes, I have. »

« With water. You still need another baptism. Then you will be able to suffer. »

« I am already old. »

« And when very old, you will be stronger than a young man. »

« But You will help us just the same, will You not? »

« I shall always be with you. »

« I will endeavour to get accustomed to suffering » says Bartholomew.

« I will always pray, from now on, to obtain this grace from You » says James of Alphaeus.

« I am old and all I ask for is to precede You and enter peace with You » says Simon Zealot.

« I... I do not know what I would like. Whether to precede You or to be near You and die together » says Judas of Alphaeus.

« I will be unhappy if I survive You. But I will be comforted by Preaching You to the people » states the Iscariot.

« I am of the same opinion as Your cousin » says Thomas.

« I, instead, am with Simon the Zealot » says James of Zebedee.

« And what about you, Philip? »

« Well... I say that I do not know what to think about it. The Eternal Father will give me what is best. »

« Oh! Keep quiet. You would think that the Master is to die soon! I do not want to think of His death! » exclaims Andrew.

« You are quite right, my dear brother. You are young and 'healthy, Jesus. You will have to bury us all, I mean the ones who are older than You. »

« What if they killed Me? »

« Let that never happen to You, but I will avenge you. »

« How? By a blood vengeance? »

« Well... also by that means, if You will allow me. Otherwise, by my profession of faith amongst peoples, I will confute the accusations moved against You. The world will love You because I will be indefatigable in preaching You. »

« That is true and that is what will happen. And what about you, John, and you, Matthew? »

« I must suffer and wait until I have washed my soul by suffering a great deal » says Matthew.

« And I... I do not know. I would like to die at once so that I would not see You suffer. I would like to be near You to comfort You in Your agony. I would like to live for a long time to serve You. I would like to die with You to enter Heaven with You. I would like everything, because I love You. And I think that I, the least of my brothers, will be able to do all that, if I know how to love You properly. Jesus, increase Your love! » says John.

« You mean: "Increase my love" » remarks the Iscariot.

« No. I say: "Increase Your Love". Because the more He will inflame us with His love, the more we shall love. »

Jesus draws the pure passionate John to Himself and kisses his forehead saying: « You have revealed a mystery of God about the sanctification of hearts. God effuses Himself to just souls, and the more they surrender to His love, the more He increases it and their holiness grows greater. That is the mysterious and ineffable work of God and of souls. It is accomplished in mystical silence, and its power, which cannot be described by human words, creates indescribable masterpieces of holiness. It is not a mistake, but a wise prayer, to ask God to increase His love in one's heart. »

150. Jesus at Nazareth. « Son, I Will Come with You. »

30th April 1945.

Jesus is alone. He is walking fast along the main road near Nazareth. He enters the village and directs His steps towards His house. When He is near it He sees His Mother. She is also going towards the house and Her nephew Simon is with Her, carrying a

bundle of firewood. Jesus calls Her: « Mother! »

Mary turns round exclaiming: « Oh! My Blessed Son! » and they both run to meet each other, while Simon drops the bundle to the ground and like Mary runs towards Jesus and greets Him wholeheartedly.

« Mother, I have come. Are You happy now? »

« So happy, Son. But... If You came only because I begged You, I tell You that it is not right for Me or for You to listen to the call of blood, rather than to Your mission. »

« No, Mother. I have come for other reasons as well. »

« Is it really true, Son? I thought, I wanted to believe that they were false rumours and that You were not hated so much... » There are tears in Mary's voice and in Her eyes.

« Do not weep, Mother. It grieves Me so much. I need Your smiles. »

« Yes, Son. That is true. You see so many harsh faces of enemies, that You need so much smiling love. But here, see? Here is She Who loves You on behalf of everybody... » Mary is leaning lightly on Her Son, Who embraces Her shoulders, and while walking slowly towards the house, She endeavours to smile, to expel all grief from Jesus' heart.

Simon has picked up his bundle and is walking beside Jesus.

« You are pale, Mother. Have they grieved You so much? Have You not been well? Have You tired Yourself excessively? »

« No, Son, no one has grieved Me. My only sorrow is that You are far from Me and they do not love You. Here everybody is good to Me. I will not even mention Mary and Alphaeus; You know what they are like. Also Simon, see how good he is. He is always like that. He has helped Me all these past months. He is now supplying Me with wood. He is so good. Also Joseph is. They are so thoughtful of their Mary. »

« May God bless you, Simon, and may He bless also Joseph. I forgive you for not loving Me yet as the Messiah. Oh! You will eventually love Me as Christ! But how could I forgive you for not loving Her? »

« It is fair and peaceful to love Mary, Jesus. You are loved, too... only, see, we are too much afraid for You. »

« Yes, you love Me with a human love. You will come to the other love. »

« You, too, Son, are pale looking and thin. »

« Yes, You look older. I can see that, too » remarks Simon.

They go into the house, and Simon, after laying the firewood in its place, withdraws discreetly.

« Son, now that we are alone, tell Me the truth. The whole truth. Why did they drive You away? » Mary speaks holding Her hands on Jesus' shoulders and staring at His thin face.

Jesus smiles kindly but sadly: « Because I tried to bring man back to honesty, justice and to the true religion. »

« But who accuses You? The people? »

« No, Mother, the Pharisees and the scribes, with the exception of a few just ones amongst them. »

« But what have You done to incur their accusations? »

« I told them the truth. Do You know that it is the biggest mistake with men? »

« What could they say to justify their accusations »

« They told lies. The ones You know and many more. »

« Tell Your Mother. Place Your sorrow, all Your sorrow on My bosom. A mother's bosom is accustomed to sorrow and is happy to consume it, to remove it from the heart of her son. Give Me Your sorrow, Jesus. Come here, as You were wont to do when a child, and leave all Your bitterness. »

Jesus sits on a little stool at His Mother's feet and tells Her all about the months spent in Judaea, without any grudge and without concealing anything.

Mary caresses His hair with a heroic smile on Her lips to fight back the tears shining in Her blue eyes.

Jesus mentions also the necessity of approaching women to redeem them and His grief at not being able to do so owing to the wickedness of men.

Mary nods assent and then She decides: « Son, You must not deny Me what I want. From now on I will come with You when You go away. I will come at any time, in any season, to any place. I will defend You from false accusations. My simple presence will cause the mud to fall off. And Mary will come with Me. She is so anxious to. That is what is needed near the Holy One, against the demon and against the world: a mother's heart. »

151. In Susanna's House in Cana. The Royal Officer.

1st May 1945.

Jesus is possibly going towards the lake. He certainly arrives at Cana and directs His steps towards Susanna's house. His cousins are with Him. While they are in the house and they rest and take some food, Jesus, to Whom His relatives and friends are listening as they should always do, teaches those good people in a very simple way. He also comforts the husband of Susanna, who appears to be ill. She is in fact absent and while I hear them talk continuously of how much she suffers, a well dressed man enters and prostrates himself at Jesus' feet.

« Who are you? What do you want? »

While the man is still sighing and weeping, the landlord pulls Jesus by the hem of His tunic and whispers: « He is an officer of the

Tetrarch. Don't trust him too much. »

« Speak up. What do you want from Me? »

« Master, I heard that You are back. I have been waiting for You as one waits for God. Come to Capernaum at once. My son is so ill that his hours are numbered. I saw John, Your disciple. He told me that You were coming here. Come, please come at once, before it is too late. »

« What? Can You, a servant of the persecutor of the Holy One in Israel, believe in Me? You do not believe in the Precursor of the Messiah. So, how can you believe in the Messiah? »

« That is true. We are guilty of incredulity and of cruelty. But have mercy on a father! I know Chuza. I have seen Johanna. I have seen her before and after the miracle. And I believed in You. »

« Quite! You are such an incredulous and wicked generation that you will not believe without signs and miracles. You lack the essential quality that is necessary to obtain a miracle. »

« It is true. It is all very true. But You can see... I believe in You now and I beg You: come to Capernaum at once! I will have a boat ready for You at Tiberias, so that You may come quicker. But please come before my child dies! » and he weeps desolately.

« I am not coming just now. But go to Capernaum. Your son is cured as from this moment and he will live. »

« May God bless You, my Lord. I believe You. But as I want all my household to welcome You when You come to Capernaum, come to my house. »

« I will come. Goodbye. Peace be with you. »

The man rushes out and soon after the trot of a horse can be heard.

« But is the boy really cured? » asks Susanna's husband.

« Is it possible for you to think that I tell lies? »

« No, my Lord. But You are here and the boy is there. »

« There is no barrier, no distance for My spirit. »

« Well, then, my Lord. You changed water into wine at my wedding, please change my tears into happy smiles. Cure my Susanna. »

« What will you give Me in exchange for that? »

« The amount of money You want. »

« I will not stain what is holy with Mammon's blood. I am asking your spirit what it will give Me. »

« Myself, if You wish so. »

« And if I asked, without any words, a great sacrifice? »

« My Lord, I ask You to grant physical health to my wife and the sanctification of us all. I don't think I can say that anything is too much to have that... »

« You are suffering agonies because of your wife. But if I restored her to health and I got her to become My disciple for ever, what

would you say? »

« That... You are entitled to do it and that... I will imitate Abraham in his readiness to the sacrifice. »

« You are right. Listen, everybody: the time of My Sacrifice is approaching. Like a course of water it is running fast and incessantly to the sea. I must accomplish what I have to do. And human hardness precludes so much of the field of My mission. My Mother and Mary of Alphaeus will come with Me when I go away amongst people that do not love Me yet or will never love Me. My wisdom knows that women will be able to help the Master in those precluded fields. I have come to redeem also women and in the future century, in My time, women will be seen serving the Lord and the servants of the Lord as priestesses. I have chosen My disciples. But to elect women who are not free, I must ask fathers and husbands to do it. Do you agree? »

« Lord, I love Susanna. And so far I have loved her more as a body than as a soul. But after Your teaching, something is already changed in me and I look at my wife as a soul besides as a body. A soul belongs to God and You are the Messiah, the Son of God. I cannot deny Your right on what belongs to God. If Susanna wants to follow You, I will not oppose her. I only beg You to work the miracle that will cure her body and my feelings... »

« Susanna is cured. In a few hours' time she will come here to tell you how happy she is. Let her soul follow its impulse without any mention of what I have just said. You will see that her soul will come to Me spontaneously as a flame tends upwards. But because of that, her love of a wife will not be stifled. On the contrary it will rise to the highest degree, which is to love each other with the better part: with your souls. »

« Susanna belongs to You, Lord. She was to die a very painful slow death. And once she was dead, I would have lost her for ever in this world. But as You say, I will still have her beside me, to lead me on to Your way. God gave me her, and God is taking her away from me. Blessed be the Most High in giving and in taking. »

152. In Zebedee's House. Salome Is Accepted as a Disciple.

2nd May 1945.

Jesus is in a house, which, from what the people living in it say, I understand to be the house of John and James. With Jesus, beside the two apostles, there are Peter and Andrew, Simon Zealot, the Iscariot and Matthew. I do not see the others.

James and John are most happy. They come and go from their mother to Jesus and viceversa, like butterflies which do not know which of two equally loved flowers they should prefer. Mary Salome, who is also most happy, caresses each time her big boys,

while Jesus smiles.

They must already have had their meal, because the table is still laid. But the two disciples at all costs want Jesus to eat some bunches of white grapes, which their mother has preserved and which must be as sweet as honey. What would they not give Jesus?

But Salome wants to give and receive something better than grapes and caresses. And after being lost in thought for a little while, looking at Jesus, then at Zebedee, she makes up her mind. She goes near Jesus Who is sitting with His back to the table, and kneels down before Him.

« What do you want, woman? »

« Master, You have decided that Your Mother, and the mother of James and Judas should come with You, and also Susanna is coming, and the great Johanna of Chuza will certainly come as well. If only one woman comes, all the others who venerate You, will come. I would like to be one of them. Take me, Jesus. I will serve You with all my love. »

« You have Zebedee to look after. Do you not love him any more? »

« Oh! Of course I love him. But I love You more. Oh! I do not mean that I love You as a man. I am sixty years old, I have been married for almost forty, and I have never seen any other man but my husband. I am not going to be crazy now that I am old. Neither is my love for my Zebedee going to end because of my old age. But You... I am not good at speaking. I am a poor woman. I will tell You as best I can. Thus: I love Zebedee with my constant inborn femininity. I love You with the spirit You have aroused in me with Your words and what James and John have told me. It is something completely different... but so beautiful. »

« It will never be so beautiful as the love of a very good husband. »

« Oh! No. It is much more beautiful. Oh! Don't take it amiss, Zebedee! I still love you with all my heart. But I love Him with something, which is still Mary, but it is no longer Mary, your poor wife, it is something more... Oh! I do not know how to tell you! »

Jesus smiles at the woman who does not wish to offend her husband, but cannot conceal her new great love. Also Zebedee smiles gravely, and goes near his wife, who, still on her knees, turns round to look at her husband and at Jesus alternately.

« Do you realise, Mary, that you will have to leave your home? And you are so proud of it! Your doves, your flowers... this vine that bears such sweet grapes of which you are so proud... your beehives, which are the most famous ones in the village... and you will no longer have your loom on which you have woven so much linen and so much woollen cloth for your dear ones... And what about your little nephews? What will you do without your little nephews? »

« Oh! My Lord! What do all these things matter: walls, doves, flowers, vines, beehives, looms, they are all good and dear things, but so insignificant as compared to You and to loving You?! My little nephews... well! Yes! I will feel sorry that I cannot put them to sleep on my lap or hear them call me... But You are worth more! Oh! You are worth more than all the things You mentioned! And if those things were taken all together and because of my weakness they were as dear or dearer than serving and following You, I would cast them aside, with the tears of a woman, to follow You with the smile of my soul. Take me, Master. John, James, will you tell Him... and you too, my husband. Be good. Help me. »

« All right. You will come with the others. I wanted you to meditate carefully on the past and the present, on what you leave and what you get. But come, Salome. You are mature to enter My family. »

« Oh! Mature! I am less than a child. But You will forgive my errors and hold me by the hand. You... because, coarse as I am, I will be much ashamed before Your Mother and before Johanna. I will be ashamed before everybody. Except You. Because You are the Good One and You understand, pity and forgive everything. »

153. Jesus Speaks to His Disciples of Women's Apostolate.

3rd May 1945.

« What is the matter with you, Peter? You look discontented » asks Jesus, Who is walking along a country path under almond trees in blossom, which announce to men that the worst season is over.

« I am thinking, Master. »

« You are thinking. I know. But you do not seem to be thinking of happy things! »

« As You know everything about us, You already know my thoughts. »

« Yes, I do. Also God the Father knows the needs of men, but He wants in man the intimacy that discloses his needs and asks for help. I can tell you that you are wrong in being vexed. »

« So my wife is not less dear to You? »

« Of course not, Peter. Why should she? There are many dwelling places of My Father in Heaven. And many are the tasks of men on the earth. And they are all blessed, provided they are fulfilled in a holy manner. Could I possibly say that all the women who do not imitate the Maries and Susanna are disliked by God? »

« Certainly not! Also my wife believes in the Master, but she does not follow the example of the other women » says Bartholomew.

« Neither does my wife nor my daughters. They are staying at home, but they are always ready to give us hospitality, as they did

yesterday » says Philip.

« I think my mother will do the same. She cannot leave everything... she is all by herself » says the Iscariot.

« It is true! I was sad because I thought mine was so... so little... oh! I cannot explain! »

« Do not criticise her, Peter! She is an honest woman » says Jesus.

« She is very shy. Her mother had them all under her thumb, both her daughter and her daughters-in-law » says Andrew.

« But she should have changed in all the years she has been with me! »

« Oh! Brother! You are not all that sweet-tempered yourself, you know. If a person is shy you are like a spoke in his wheel. My sister-in-law is very good and the best proof is that she has always tolerated with patience her mother and her bad temper, and you and your overbearance. »

They all laugh at Andrew's outspoken conclusion and at Peter's astonished face when he hears of his overbearance.

In addition Jesus laughs heartily. He then says: « The faithful women who do not feel like leaving their homes to follow Me are equally useful to Me by staying at home. If they all wanted to come with Me, I would have to ask some of them to remain. Now that some women are going to join us, I will also have to see to them. It would be neither decent nor wise for the women to be without a dwelling place while they move about. We can rest anywhere. A woman has different necessities from men, and needs a shelter. We can all sleep in one place. But they could not stay with us, both because of the respect due to them and because of their more delicate constitution. We must never tempt Providence and nature beyond their limits. Now, of every friendly house, where there is one of your women, I will make a shelter for their sisters. I will do that with your house, Peter, with yours, Philip, with yours, Bartholomew, and with yours, Judas. We cannot expect our women to travel around incessantly, as we do. Instead we shall have them waiting for us, at the meeting place, from which we shall move in the morning and go back in the evening. We shall give them instructions for the hours of rest and the world will no longer be able to grumble, if other unhappy women come to Me, neither shall I be prevented from listening to them. The mothers and wives that follow us will defend their sisters and Me against the slander of the world. You can see that I am making a quick trip to greet My friends or where I know that I will have friends. I am not doing that for Myself. I am doing that for the weaker disciples who by means of their weakness will support our strength and make it helpful to many more creatures. »

« You said that we are going to Caesarea now. Who is there? »

« Creatures seeking the True God are to be found everywhere.

Springtime is already announced by the pinkish-white almond blossoms. The cold days are over. In a few days' time I will decide upon the places where we shall stop and shelter the women disciples, and we shall start moving around again, to spread the word of God, without worrying about our sisters, without any fear of slander and both their patience and their kindness will be a lesson to you. The hour of rehabilitation of women is almost here. There will be a great flowering of holy virgins, wives and mothers in My Church. »

154. Jesus at Caesarea on Sea Speaks to the Galley-Slaves.

4th May 1945.

Jesus is in the centre of a beautiful wide square, from which a very wide road leads off, one which is almost an extension of the square as far as the seaside. A galley must have left the harbour only recently and it is taking to the open sea driven by the wind and by the oarsmen. Another one is manoeuvring to enter the harbour, because its sails are being furled and the oars are worked on one side only to veer round into a suitable position. The harbour cannot be seen from the square, but it must be nearby. On the sides of the square there are rows of large houses, the typical walls of which have almost no openings. There are no shops.

« Where are we going now? You wanted to come here, instead of going to the eastern side and this is the heathen district. Who do You think will listen to You here? » says Peter reproachfully.

« Let us go over there, to that comer towards the seaside. I will speak there. »

« You will be speaking to the waves. »

« Also the waves were created by God. »

They go. They are now just at the corner and they can see the harbour into which the galley they saw before is now slowly entering and is moored at its place. Some sailors are idling along the quays. Some fruit-sellers chance going towards the Roman boat to sell their goods. Nothing else.

Jesus, leaning with His back against the wall, really seems to be speaking to the waves of the sea. The apostles, not very happy with the situation, are all around Him, some standing, some sitting on stones scattered here and there, to be used as benches.

« Foolish is the man who, seeing that he is powerful, healthy and happy, says: "What do I need? Whom do I need? Nobody. I need nothing, I am self-sufficient; therefore God's decrees and moral laws mean nothing to me. My only law is to do what I can, without considering whether it is good or bad for other people". »

A vendor turns round on hearing the sonorous voice and comes near Jesus Who continues: « That is how a man and a woman

without wisdom and faith speak. But if that proves a more or less great power, it also evidences a relationship with Evil. »

Some men come off the galley and other boats and come towards Jesus.

« A man, not by words of mouth, but by deeds proves that he is related to God and to Virtue, when he considers that life is more changeable than the waves of the sea, which one moment are calm and soon after stormy. Likewise the power and wealth of today may turn into misery and incapacity tomorrow. Then what will a man do if he is bereft of union with God? How many on the galley were one day happy and mighty and are now slaves and considered criminals! Criminals: therefore twice slaves, of the human law, which is derided in vain because it exists and punishes its transgressors, and of Satan who for ever takes possession of criminals, who do not repent and hate their crimes. »

« Hail, Master! You are here!?! Do You know me? »

« May God come to you, Publius Quintilianus. See? I have come. »

« And You are here, in the Roman district. I was not hoping to see You again. But I am very happy to hear You. »

« And I am happy, too. Are there many men chained to the oars on that galley? »

« Yes, quite a large number. Mostly war prisoners. Are You interested in them? »

« I would like to approach that boat. »

« Come. Get away from here » he orders the few people who had come near and who draw back at once, mumbling rude remarks.

« You may leave them. I am accustomed to being pressed by crowds. »

« I can take You so far, not any farther. It's a military galley »

« It is enough. May God reward you. »

Jesus resumes speaking while the Roman, in his splendid uniform, seems to be mounting guard beside Him.

« Slaves by misfortune, that is, slaves only once. Slaves for a lifetime. But every tear that falls on their chains, every blow that strikes them writing pain on their flesh, files their handcuffs, adorns what does not die, opens to them the peace of God, Who is the friend of His poor unhappy children, and Who will give them as much joy as the pain they suffered here. »

Some men of the crew look out from the bulwarks of the galley and listen. None of the galley slaves are there, of course. But Jesus' Powerful voice certainly reaches them through the rowlock sockets and it spreads through the quiet air at low tide. Publius Quintilianus is called by a soldier and goes away.

« I want to tell these unhappy men who are loved by God, to be resigned to their misfortune, and to turn their pains into flames that will soon unfasten the chains of the galley and of their lives,

ending in a desire for God. Having endured the poor day, which is our life, a dark, stormy, fearful, painful day, they thus enter the day of God, a bright, serene, fearless and joyful day. You will enter the great peace, the infinite freedom of Paradise, o martyrs of a painful destiny, provided you are good in your suffering and you aspire to God. »

Publius Quintilianus comes back with other soldiers and he is followed by a litter carried by slaves, and the soldiers make room for it.

« Who is God? I am speaking to Gentiles who do not know who God is. I am speaking to the children of the peoples subdued who do not know who God is. In your forests, o Gauls, Iberians, Thracians, Germans, Celts, you have a sham god. A soul is naturally inclined to worship, because it remembers Heaven. But you cannot find the True God, Who put a soul into your bodies, a soul equal to the soul we people of Israel have, equal to the soul of the mighty Romans who have subdued you, a soul that has the same duties and the same rights to Good and to which the Good One, that is the true God will be faithful. Be equally faithful to Good. The god or gods that you have worshipped so far, learning his or their names on your mothers' knees; the god of whom you no longer think because you do not feel any comfort coming from him to relieve your suffering, the god that perhaps you hate and curse in your daily despair, is not the True God. The True God is Love and Piety. Were perhaps your gods like that? No, they were not. They were also hard, cruel, false, hypocrites, vicious, thieves. And now they have abandoned you, without the least comfort, which is the hope of being loved and the assurance of a rest after so much suffering. It is so because your gods do not exist. But God, the True God, Who is Love and Piety, and Who I can assure you exists, is He Who made the sky, the seas, the mountains, the forests, the plants, the flowers, the animals and man. He is the One Who inspires conquerors to treat the poor people of the world with mercy and love, as He is Mercy and Love.

O mighty masters, consider that you all come from the same origin. Do not act cruelly against those who by misfortune have come under your power, and be human also to those whom a crime has tied to the bench of a galley. Man sins many times. No man is without sins which are more or less secret. If you considered that, you would be really good to your brothers, who, not so lucky as you are, have been punished for crimes which you also have committed, without, however, being punished for them.

Human justice is such a doubtful thing in judging, that it would be dreadful if divine justice were like it. There are guilty people who do not appear to be so, whereas innocent people are considered guilty. Let us not ask why. It would be too grave an accusation

against unjust men who hate their fellow men! There are people who are really guilty, but have been led to perpetrate a crime by overbearing circumstances that somewhat extenuate their crime. Be therefore human, you who are in charge of galleys. Above human justice there is a much higher divine justice. The justice of the True God, Who created kings and slaves, rocks and grains of sand. He watches you; both you on the oars and you who are in charge of the crew; woe betide you if you are cruel without any reason. I, Jesus Christ, the Messiah of the True God can assure you: at your death He will tie you to an eternal galley, and will entrust the demons with a blood-stained lash and you will be tortured and struck exactly as you did. Because, if according to human law a criminal is to be punished, you must not overstep all limits. Remember that. A man who is powerful today may be miserable tomorrow. God only is eternal.

I would like to change your hearts, and above all I would like to untie your fetters, give you back your freedom and send you back to your fatherlands. But, My dear galley-slaves, you are My brothers, you cannot see My face, but your sorely wounded hearts are well known to Me; instead of the freedom and fatherlands, which I cannot give you now, while you are the poor slaves of mighty men, I will give you a greater freedom and Fatherland. For your sake I have become a prisoner Myself, far from My fatherland, I will redeem you by offering Myself in ransom, because you are not the disgrace of the world, as men call you, but the shame of man, who forgets the limits of the rigours of war and justice. I will make a new law for you on the earth and a pleasant abode for you in Heaven. Remember My Name, o children of God, who are weeping. It is the name of a Friend. Repeat A in your suffering. Be sure that, if you love Me, you will have Me, even if we never see one another on the earth. I am Jesus Christ, the Saviour, your Friend. I comfort you in the name of the True God. May peace come to you soon. »

A crowd of people, mainly Romans, have gathered round Jesus, Whose new ideas have astonished everybody.

« By Jove! You have made me ponder on new things, of which I had never thought before. I feel they are true... » Publius Quintilianus looks at Jesus, pensive and moved at the same time.

« It is so, My friend. If man used his brains, he would never go so far as to commit a crime. »

« By Jove, by Jove! Wonderful words! I must remember them! You said: "If man used his brains... »

«... he would never go so far as to commit a crime. »

« It is true. You are really a great man, You know? »

« Every man who wanted, could be as great as I am, if he were all one with God. »

The Roman continues his sequence of « by Joves » in increasing admiration.

Then Jesus says to him: « Can I give some solace to those galley-slaves? I have some money... some fruit, some comfort, that they may know that I love them. »

« Give me it. I can do that. On the other hand there is a lady over there who can do much. I will ask her. » Publius goes to the litter and speaks through the curtains that have been slightly drawn. He comes back. « I am authorised to do it. I will see to the distribution, so that the jailors may not take advantage of it. And it will be the only time a soldier of the Empire deals mercifully with war slaves. »

« The first, but not the only time. The day will come when there will be no slaves, and even before that My disciples will go among galley-men and slaves and call them brothers. »

A further sequence of « by Joves » can be heard in the calm air while Publius is waiting to have enough wine and fruit for the galley-slaves. Before going on board the galley he whispers near Jesus' ear: « Claudia Procula is in there. She would like to hear You again. In the meantime she wants to ask You something. Go and see her. »

Jesus goes towards the litter.

« Hail, Master. » The curtain is drawn a little, showing a beautiful woman about thirty years old.

« May the desire for wisdom come upon you. »

« You said that a soul remembers Heaven. Therefore, that thing which You say we have within us, is it eternal? »

« Yes, it is eternal. That is why it remembers God. It remembers the God Who created it. »

« What is the soul? »

« The soul is the true nobility of man. You are famous because you belong to the Claudi family. A man is even more so because he belongs to God. In your veins there is the blood of the Claudi, the mighty family, which, however, had a beginning and will come to an end. In man, because of his soul, there is the blood of God. Because a soul is the spiritual blood - as God is a Most Pure Spirit - of the Creator of man: of the Eternal, Almighty, Holy God. Because of the soul, which is in him and which is alive as long as it is united to God, man is eternal, powerful and holy. »

« I am a pagan. So I have no soul... »

« You do have it. But it has fallen into a state of lethargy. Wake it up to the Truth and to Life... »

« Goodbye, Master. »

« May Justice conquer you. Goodbye. »

« As you have seen, here also I had people listening to Me » says Jesus to the disciples.

« Yes, but with the exception of the Romans, who will have understood You? They are barbarians! »

« Who? All of them. Peace is with them and they will remember Me more than many others in Israel. Let us go to the house where they are offering us hospitality for our meal. »

« Master, that woman is the same one who spoke to me on the day that You cured the sick man. I saw her and I recognised her » says John.

« You can see, therefore, that even here there was someone waiting for us. But you do not seem to be very happy about it. I will have accomplished a great deal when I succeed in persuading you that I have come not only for the Jews, but for all the peoples, and I have prepared you for them all. And I tell you: remember everything of your Master. There is no event, however trifling it may seem, that may not be a lesson for you one day during your apostolate. »

No one replies and a sad smile of pity appears on Jesus' lips.

This morning He had such a smile also for me...

I was in a state of such deep depression that I began to weep over so many things, the tiredness of writing and writing with the firm belief that so much bounty of God and work of little John are utterly useless, not being the least. And weeping I invoked my Master, and when out of kindness He came exclusively for me, I told Him what worried me.

He shrugged His shoulders as if He wished to say: « Forget about the world and its nonsense » and then He caressed me saying: « So what? Would you not like to help Me any more? Does the world not want to know My words? Well, let us repeat them to each other, for My joy in mentioning them to a faithful heart, for yours in hearing them. The weariness of the apostolate!... More depressing than any other work! It deprives the serenest day of its light and the sweetest food of its sweetness. Everything becomes ashes and dirt, nausea and bitterness. But, My dear soul, these are the hours in which we take upon ourselves the weariness, the doubts, the misery of the worldly people who die because they do not possess what we have. And they are the hours in which we do more. I told You also last year. "To what advantage?" wonders the soul submerged by what submerges the world, that is, by the waves sent by Satan. And the world drowns. But the soul nailed to the cross with its God does not drown. It is in darkness for a moment and sinks under the nauseating wave of spiritual tiredness, then it emerges fresher and more beautiful. Your expression: "I am no longer good for anything" is the consequence of such tiredness. You would never be good for anything. But I am always I, and thus you will always be good for your task of mouthpiece. Of course, if I saw that My gift were hidden avariciously like a heavy most

valuable gem, or it were used imprudently, or out of indolence it were not protected by means of the safety precautions commanded by human wickedness in such cases, to guard the gift and the person through whom the gift is granted, I would say: "Enough of that". And this time without any possible recurrence. Enough for everybody, with the exception of My little soul, which today looks just a little flower in a downpour. And with such caresses can you doubt My love for you! Cheer up! You helped Me in wartime. Help Me again, now... There is so much to be done. »

And I calmed down under the caress of the long hand and of the very kind smile of My Jesus, so candid as when He is all for me.

155. Cure of the Little Roman Girl at Caesarea.

5th May 1945.

Jesus says:

« Little John, come with Me, as I have to make you write a lesson for the consecrated people of the present time. Watch and write. »

Jesus is still at Caesarea on Sea. He is no longer in the same square as yesterday, but further inland, from where the harbour and ships can still be seen. There are many warehouses and shops and as on the ground, in this open space, there are mats with various kinds of goods, I realise that it is near the market place, which was perhaps located near the harbour and warehouses, for the convenience of seamen and of the people buying goods brought by sea. There is a lot of shouting and bustling among the people. Jesus with Simon and His cousins, is waiting for the others who are buying the food that is needed. Some children look curiously at Jesus, Who caresses them lovingly while speaking to His apostles. Jesus says: « I am sorry to see dissatisfaction because I approach the Gentiles. But I can but do what I must do and be good to everybody. At least you three and John must endeavour to be good; the others will follow you and imitate you. »

« How can one be good to everybody? After all they despise and oppress us, they do not understand us, they are full of vices... » says James of Alphaeus apologetically.

« How can one do that? Are you happy that you were born of Alphaeus and Mary? »

« Of course I am. Why do You ask me? »

« And if God had asked you before you were conceived, would you have chosen to be born of them? »

« Certainly. But I do not understand. »

« If instead, you were born of a Gentile, and you heard someone accuse you of wanting to be born of a heathen father, what would you have said? »

« I would have said... I would have said: "It is no fault of mine. I

was born of him, but I might have been born of someone else". I would have said: "You are unfair in accusing me. If I do no harm, why do you hate me?". »

« Exactly, also these people, whom you despise because they are pagans, can say the same. It is no merit of yours, if you were born of Alphaeus, a true Israelite. You can only thank the Eternal Father, Who granted you a great gift, and out of gratitude and humility you can endeavour to take to the True God those who did not receive such a gift. One must be good. »

« It is difficult to love those whom we do not know. »

« No. It is not. Look. You, little fellow, come here. »

A little boy, about eight years old, who is playing in a corner with two other little lads, comes near Jesus. He is a strong boy, with very dark hair and a fair complexion.

« Who are you? »

« I am Lucius, Caius Lucius, of Caius Marius, a Roman, the son of the Decurion of the guards, who remained here after he was wounded. »

« And who are those? »

« They are Isaac and Toby. But we must not say, because they are not allowed to play with us. The Jews would hit them. »

« Why? »

« Because they are Jews and I am a Roman. They are forbidden to associate with us. »

« But you are playing with them. Why? »

« Because we are fond of one another. We always play together dice or jumping. But we have to hide. »

« And would you love Me? I am a Jew, too, and I am not a boy. Just imagine: I am a Master, something like a priest. »

« What do I care? If You love me, I will love You. And I love You because You love me. »

« How do you know? »

« Because You are good. Who is good, loves. »

« There you are, My friends. That is the secret to love: to be good. Then you love without considering to which faith other people belong. »

Arid Jesus, holding little Caius Lucius by the hand, goes and caresses the little Jewish children, who are frightened and hide in a passage way and He says to them: « Good children are angels. Angels have one fatherland only: Paradise. They have only one religion: the religion of the One God. They have only one Temple: the Heart of God. Like little angels, always love one another. »

« But if they see us they will hit us... »

Jesus shakes His head sadly but does not reply...

A tall shapely woman calls Lucius, who leaves Jesus saying: « My mother! » and shouts to the woman: « I have a big friend. He is a

Master!... »

The woman does not go away with her son, on the contrary, she comes near Jesus and asks Him: « Hail. Are You the Galilean who spoke at the harbour yesterday? »

« Yes, I am. »

« Wait for me, then. I'll be back in a moment » and she goes away with her little son.

In the meantime the other apostles have also arrived, with the exception of Matthew and John, and they ask: « Who was she? »

« A Roman, I think » reply Peter and the others.

« What did she want? »

« She told us to wait here. We shall soon find out. »

Some people have come near them in the meantime and are waiting curiously.

The woman comes back with other Romans. « So You are the Master? » asks one who looks like a servant of a rich family. After receiving an answer in the affirmative, he asks: « Would it upset You if You had to cure the little daughter of one of Claudia's friends? The child is choking to death and the doctor does not know the cause of it. She was all right last night. This morning she is in agony. »

« Let us go. »

They take a few steps along a street towards the place where they were yesterday and they arrive at a wide open main entrance of a house where Romans appear to be living.

« Just a moment. » The man rushes in and almost immediately looks out again and says: « Come in. »

But before Jesus can go in, a young ladylike woman comes out. Her extremely pitiful state is very obvious. She is holding in her arms a little child, only a few months old, completely inert, livid with suffocation. I would say that she is suffering from a lethal diphtheritis and is about to breathe her last. The woman clings to Jesus' chest like a shipwrecked person to a rock. Her tears prevent her from speaking.

Jesus takes the baby, whose very pale tiny hands with nails already blue are shaken by fits, and lifts her up. Her little head hangs down motionless. The mother, no longer a proud Roman in front of a Jew, has fallen at Jesus' feet, in the dust, sobbing, her face raised, her hair dishevelled, pulling at Jesus' tunic and mantle with her outstretched arms. Behind and round her there are Romans of the household and Jewish women of the town, looking at her.

Jesus wets His right hand forefinger with saliva, puts it into the little panting mouth, pressing it down the throat.

The child writhes and becomes darker in the face. The mother cries: « Don't! Don't! » and she writhes as if she were pierced by a

blade. The people are holding their breath.

Jesus pulls His finger out with a mass of putrid membranes. The child writhes no longer, cries for a few seconds, then calms down and smiles innocently, shaking her hands and moving her lips like a little bird, that chirps flapping its little wings while waiting to be fed.

« Take her, woman. Feed her. She is cured. »

The mother is so bewildered that she takes the child and still kneeling in the dust she kisses and caresses her and breast-feeds her. She seems to be out of her wits, as if she had forgotten everything except her child.

A Roman asks Jesus: « How did You do that? I am the Proconsul's doctor and I am clever. I tried to remove the obstruction, but it was too far down!... But You... so... »

« You are clever. But the True God is not with you. May He be blessed. Goodbye. » And Jesus is about to go away.

But a small group of Israelites feel they should interfere. « Why did You take the liberty of approaching foreigners? They are corrupted and unclean, and whoever approaches them, becomes such. »

They are three and Jesus stares at them severely and then says: « Are you not Haggai, the man from Azotus, who came here last Tishri to negotiate business with the merchant at the foundation of the old fountain? And are you not Joseph of Ramah, who came here to consult the Roman doctor, and you know, as well as I do, why? So? Do you not feel unclean? »

« A doctor is never a stranger. He cures bodies and all bodies are alike. »

« And souls are even more so. After all, what did I cure? The innocent body of a child and by doing so I hope to cure the souls of strangers, which are not innocent. Therefore both as a doctor and as the Messiah I can approach anybody. »

« No, You cannot. »

« No, Haggai? And why do you deal with the Roman merchant? »

« I only approach him through goods and money. »

« And as you do not touch his body, but only what was touched by his hands, you do not think that you are contaminated. Oh! How blind and cruel you all are!

Listen, everybody. In the very book of the Prophet, whose name this man bears, it is written: "Ask the priests this question on the Law: 'If a man carries consecrated meat in the fold of his gown and with this fold touches bread, broth, wine or food of any kind, does such food become holy?'. The priests answered: 'No, it does not'. Haggai then said: 'If a man made unclean by contact with a corpse touches any of this, does it become unclean?'. The priests answered: 'Yes, it does'."

By means of such shifty, false, inconsistent behaviour, you bar

and condemn Good and accept only what is profitable to you. Then there is no more indignation, no disgust, no horror. Provided no personal detriment is caused to you, you decide whether a thing is clean or unclean, whether it makes one clean or not. And how can you, liars as you are, state that what has been sanctified by contact with holy flesh or some holy thing, does not make holy what it touches; and what has touched an unclean thing can make unclean what it touches?

Do you not realise that you are belying yourselves, false ministers of a Law of Truth, exploiters of that very same Law, which you twist as if it were a hempen rope, when you are anxious to profit by it, you hypocritical Pharisees? Under religious pretexts you give vent to your human envious malice, entirely human, you desecrators of what belongs to God, revilers and enemies of the Messenger of God. I solemnly tell you that every action, every conclusion, every movement of yours is motivated by a complex shrewd mechanism, where the wheels, springs, weights and rods are your selfishness, your passions, your insincerity, your hatred, your anxiety to overwhelm people, your envy.

Shame! Greedy, trembling, spiteful, you live in the supercilious fear of being overcome by someone who may not belong to your own caste. You thus deserve to be like the one who frightens and irritates you! As Haggai says, of a heap of twenty measures you make one of ten, and of fifty barrels you make twenty, and you pocket all the difference, whereas to set an example to men and for the love to be given to God, you should add something of your own to the heap of the measures and to the number of the barrels, for the benefit of those who are hungry, instead of taking it away. You thus deserve to be made barren by a burning wind and by rust and hail stones, in all the deeds of your hands.

Who are those amongst you who come to Me? Those whom you consider dung and filth, who are so ignorant that they do not even know that there is a true God, they come to the One Who brings them that God, Who is present in His deeds and in His words. You, instead, have built a niche for yourselves and you stay in there, as arid and cold as idols awaiting incense and worship. And since you consider yourselves gods, you deem it useless to think of the True God, as one should think of Him, and you consider dangerous that other people, who are not like you, should dare what you do not dare. In fact you cannot dare, because you are idols and servants of the Idol. But he who dares, can do it, because not he, but God works in Him.

Go! Tell those who sent you to spy on Me, that I disdain merchants who do not feel contaminated if they sell goods or their fatherland or the Temple to those from whom they receive money. Tell them that I feel disgusted at the brutes, who worship only

their own flesh and blood, for the recovery of which they do not consider the contact with a foreign doctor to be contaminating. Tell them that the measure is the same for everybody and that there are not two measures. Tell them that I, the Messiah, the Just Admirable Counsellor, upon Whom the Spirit of the Lord shall rest with His seven gifts, Who will not judge by what appears to the eyes, but by the secrets of hearts, Who will not condemn according to what His ears hear, but by the spiritual voices He will hear in every man, Who will side with the humble and judge the poor with righteousness, the One Who I am, because that is Who I am, is already judging and smiting those who on the earth are nothing but earth. And the breath of My lip will slay the wicked and destroy their dens, but will be Life and Light, Freedom and Peace for those who desirous of justice and faith will come to My Holy Mountain to be sated with the Science of the Lord. That is Isaiah, is it not?

My people. Everything comes from Adam and Adam comes from My Father. Everything is therefore the work of the Father and it is My duty to gather all men together for the Father. And I bring them to You, o Holy, Eternal, Almighty Father. I shall lead the stray children back to You, after gathering them together by means of loving words, under My pastoral rod, which is like the one Moses raised against the deadly snakes. That You may have Your Kingdom and Your people. And I make no difference because in the depths of all men I see something that shines brighter than fire: a soul, a spark of Your Eternal Brightness. O My eternal desire! O My untiring will!

This is what I want and what I crave for. That the whole earth may sing Your Name. That mankind may call You Father. A Redemption that will save everybody. A fortified will that will make every man obedient to Your will. An eternal triumph that will fill Paradise with an everlasting hosanna... Oh! Multitude of Heavens! Behold, I see the smile of God... and that is the reward compensating all human harshness. »

The three men have fled in the hail of reproaches. All the others, both Romans and Jews, are gaping. The Roman woman, with her child, who has sucked her fill and is sleeping peacefully in her lap, is still where she was, almost at Jesus' feet, weeping, overwhelmed by maternal joy and spiritual emotion. Many are moved to tears by the last words of Jesus Who seems to be flashing with glory in His ecstasy.

And Jesus, lowering His eyes and returning with His spirit from Heaven back to the earth, sees the crowd and the mother... and passing by, after waving goodbye to everybody, He caresses her lightly, blessing her for her faith. And He walks away with His disciples, while the crowds, still amazed, remain where they

were...

(The young Roman woman, unless it is a casual resemblance, is one of the Roman women who were with Johanna of Chuza on the way to Calvary. As no one here called her by her name, I am not sure.)

156. Annaleah Devotes Herself to God as a Virgin.

6th May 1945.

Jesus with Peter, Andrew and John, knocks at the door of His house in Nazareth. The door is opened at once by His Mother, Whose face brightens with a beautiful smile on seeing Jesus.

« Welcome home, My Son! Since yesterday I have had with Me a pure dove waiting for You. She came from far away. The person who brought her here could not stay longer. As she asked for My advice, I told her what I could. But only You, My Son, are the Wisdom. You are welcome, too » She says to the disciples. « Come in and refresh yourselves. »

« Yes, stay here. I am going at once to see the girl who is waiting for Me. »

The three disciples are very curious, but show their curiosity in different ways. Peter stares intently in all directions, almost hoping to see through the walls. John looks as if he wanted to read on Mary's face the name of the unknown girl. Andrew, who on the other hand has blushed, stares intently at Jesus and both his eyes and his lips seem to be trembling with a silent entreaty.

Jesus pays no attention to any of them. While the three make up their minds and go into the kitchen, where Mary offers them some food in the warmth of the fireplace, Jesus draws the curtain that conceals the door opening on to the kitchen garden and goes out into it.

The mild sunshine makes more airy and dream-like all the blooming branches of the tall almond-tree. The only tree in blossom, the tallest in the kitchen garden, looks splendid in its silk white-pink dress, compared with the poverty of all the others: the pear-tree, the apple-tree, the fig-tree, the pomegranate, the vines which are still all barren, stately in its soft bright veil, which contrasts with the drab humility of the olive trees: it seems to have caught with its long branches a wispy cloud, lost in the blue field of the sky, and to have adorned itself with it to say to everybody: « The wedding of springtime is coming. Rejoice, plants and animals. It is the time for kisses with the winds, the bees, the flowers. It is the time for kisses under the tiles, or in the thick of woods, o little birds of God and snow-white sheep. Kisses today, offspring tomorrow, to perpetuate the work of our Creator God. »

Jesus with His arms folded on His chest, standing in the sun,

smiles at the serene gracefulness of His Mother's kitchen garden, with its bed of lilies recognizable from their first leaves, its still bare rose-bushes and silvery olive leaves, and many other families of flowers spread among the humble beds of legumes and vegetables, which are just becoming green. Clean, tidy and unassuming, it also seems to exhale the purity of perfect virginity.

« Son, come to My room. I will bring her to You, because she ran there when she heard so many voices. »

Jesus enters His Mother's room, the chaste, the most chaste little room, which heard the words of the angelical conversation and which exhales, even more than the kitchen garden, the virginal, angelical, holy essence of Her Who has lived in it for years and of the Archangel who venerated his Queen in it. Have thirty years gone by or did the meeting take place only yesterday? Also today a distaff holds its soft and almost silvery tuft of wool and the thread is on the spindle, folded embroidery is on the shelf near the door, between a parchment roll and a copper amphora in which there is a thick almond branch in bloom; also today the striped curtain, lowered on the mystery of the virginal dwelling, is moved by a gentle breeze, and the bed, neat in its corner, still has the genteel look of the bed of a girl who has just reached the threshold of youth. What will one dream or has dreamt of on the low pillow?...

The curtain is softly raised by Mary's hand; Jesus, Who was contemplating that abode of purity, standing with His back to the door, turns round.

« Here, My Son. I have brought her to You. She is a little lamb. You are her Shepherd » and Mary, Who has come in holding by the hand a slender brunette young girl, who blushes vehemently when she appears in Jesus' presence, quietly withdraws letting the curtain down.

« Peace to you, child. »

« Peace... Lord... » The girl, deeply moved, is speechless, but she kneels down and bows her head.

« Stand up. What do you want from Me? Do not be afraid... »

« I am not afraid... but... now that I am in front of You... after longing so much... what seemed easy and necessary to tell You... I cannot remember... it does not seem what it was... I am silly... forgive me, my Lord... »

« Do you want a grace for this world? Do you need a miracle? Have you souls to convert? No? What, then? Speak up! You had so much courage and now are losing heart? Do you not know that I am the One Who increases strength? Yes? You do? Well, then, speak as if I were a father for you. You are young. How old are you? »

« Sixteen years, my Lord. »

« Where have you come from? »

« From Jerusalem. »

« What is your name? »

« Annaleah... »

« The dear name of My grandmother and of many more holy women of Israel, and joined to it, to make one only, the name of the good, faithful, loving, meek wife of Jacob. It will be a good omen to you. You will be a model wife and mother. No? You are shaking your head? You are weeping? Have you been rejected? No? Your fiance perhaps died? Has no one proposed to you yet? »

The girl always shakes her head. Jesus takes a step forward, caresses her and forces her to raise her head and look at Him... Jesus' smile overcomes the girl's excitement. She takes heart: « My Lord, I could be a wife and a happy one, thanks to You. Do You not recognise me, my Lord? I am the girl who suffered from tuberculosis, the dying fiancee, whom You cured at Your John's request... After Your grace I... I have had another body: this healthy one in the place of the dying one I had before; and I have had another soul... I do not know. I did not feel the same... The joy of being cured, and consequently the certainty I could get married my regret in dying was that I could not get married - they only lasted for a few hours. And then... » The girl becomes franker and franker, she finds the words and the ideas that she had lost in the excitement of being alone with the Master... « ... And then I felt that I should not be only selfish, and say only: "Now I will be happy", but that I should think of something else, something that came to You and to God, Your Father and mine. Something that, although small, should express my gratitude. I gave the matter a lot of thought and when the following Sabbath I saw my fiance I said to him: "Listen, Samuel. Without the miracle I would have died in a few months' time and you would have lost me for ever. Now I would like to offer a sacrifice to God, with you, to say to God that I praise Him and thank Him". And Samuel, because he loves me, said at once: "Let us go to the Temple together and offer a sacrifice". But that was not what I wanted. I am a poor and common girl, my Lord. I know very little and I can do much less. But through Your hand, which You laid on my diseased breast, something had come not only into my corroded lungs, but also into my heart. It was health to my lungs, and wisdom to my heart. And I realised that the sacrifice of a lamb was not the sacrifice wanted by my soul that... that loved You. » The girl becomes silent, blushing after her profession of love.

« Go on without any fear. What did your soul want? »

« To sacrifice something worthy of You, the Son of God! And so... so I thought it should be something spiritual like what comes from God, that is, the sacrifice of postponing my wedding, for Your sake, my Saviour. A wedding, You know, is a great joy. When one

is in love it is a great thing! One longs to... is anxious to celebrate it!... But I was no longer the same person as a few days previously. I no longer wanted my wedding as the dearest thing... I told Samuel... and he understood me. He also wanted to be a nazirite for one year, starting on the day which was to be the day of our wedding, that is the day after the calends of Adar. In the meantime he has been looking for You, because he wanted to love and know Him Who had given him back his fiancée: You. And he found You, after many months, at the Clear Water. I came too... and Your word completed the change of my heart. Now my previous vow is no longer sufficient for me... Like that almond-tree out there, which in the warmer and warmer sunshine has revived after being dead for months and has blossomed and will leaf and then bear fruit, so I have continuously grown in the knowledge of what is better. The last time, when I was already sure of myself and of what I wanted - I have pondered on the matter all these past months - the last time I went to the Clear Water, You were no longer there... They had driven You away. I wept and prayed so much that the Most High heard me and persuaded my mother to send me here with a relative who was going to Tiberias to speak to the courtiers of the Tetrarch. The steward told me that I would find You here. I found Your Mother... and Her words, only listening to Her and being beside Her these two days, have completely matured the fruit of Your grace. » The girl has knelt down as if she were in front of an altar, her arms folded on her breast.

« All right. But what do you want exactly? What can I do for you? »

« Lord, I would like... I would like a great thing. And only You, the Donor of life and health, can give it to me, because I think that what You can give, You can also take away... I would like You to take the life You gave me, during the year of my vow, before it ends... »

« Why? Are you not grateful to God for the life you received? »

« So grateful! Infinitely! But for one thing only: because by living by His grace and by Your miracle I have understood what is best. »

« Which is? »

« Which is to live like angels. As Your Mother, my Lord... as You live... as Your John lives... The three lilies, the three white flames, the three beatitudes of the earth, my Lord. Yes. Because I think that it is a beatitude to possess God and God is possessed by the pure. I believe that who is pure is a Heaven with God in its centre and the angels around... Oh! My Lord! That is what I would like... Little have I heard of what You, Your Mother, the disciple and Isaac have said. Neither have I approached anyone else who could tell me Your words. But I feel as if my soul heard You all the time and You were its Master... I have told You everything, my Lord... »

« Annaleah, you are asking for very much and are giving very much... Daughter: you have understood God and the perfection to which a creature may rise to be like the Most Pure and to please the Most Pure. »

Jesus has laid His hands on the sides of the head of the darkhaired girl, who is kneeling in front of Him and speaks bending over her: « He Who was born of a Virgin - because He could but build His nest on a pile of lilies - is nauseated, My dear daughter, by the triple lechery of the world and He would be crushed by so much nausea if His Father, Who knows on what His Son lives, did not intervene with loving help to support My soul in anguish. The pure are My joy. You are giving Me what the world takes from Me through its unexhausted baseness. May the Father and you, dear girl, be blessed for that. Go happily. Something will intervene to make your vow an eternal one. Be one of the lilies scattered on the blood-stained ways of Christ. »

« Oh! my Lord... there is still one thing I would like... »

« Which? »

« Not to be present at Your death... I could not see Him die, Who is my Life. »

Jesus smiles kindly and with His hand He wipes the tears streaming down her little dark face. « Do not weep. Lilies are never in mourning. You shall smile with all the pearls of your angelical crown when you see the crowned King enter His Kingdom. Go. May the Spirit of the Lord teach you while I am away. I bless you with the fire of Eternal Love. »

Jesus looks out on to the kitchen garden and calls: « Mother! Here is a little daughter, she is all Yours. She is now happy. But immerse her in Your purity every time we go to the Holy City, that she may become snow of celestial petals spread on the throne of the Lamb. » And Jesus goes back to His disciples, while Mary caresses the girl and stays with her.

Peter, Andrew and John look at Him inquisitively. And Jesus' bright face tells them that He is happy. Peter cannot help asking: « To whom did You speak so long, my Master? And what have You heard to be so beaming with joy? »

« To a woman at the dawn of life, to her who will be the dawn of many more that will come. »

« Who? »

« The virgins. »

Andrew mumbles, in a low voice, to himself: « It is not her... »

« No. It is not she. But do not tire of praying, be good and patient. Every word of your prayer is like a call, a light in the dark and it supports and guides her. »

« But who is my brother waiting for? »

« For a soul, Peter. A great poverty that he wants to change into

a great wealth. »

« And where did Andrew find it, since he never goes about, he never speaks, and he is a helpless sort of chap? »

« On My way. Come with Me, Andrew. Let us go and see Alphaeus and bless Him amongst his many grandchildren. You wait for Me at James and Judas'. My Mother wants to be left alone all day. »

And while they go away, some here, some there, secrecy envelops the joy of the first girl consecrated to virginity for Christ's sake.

157. Instruction to the Women Disciples at Nazareth.

7th May 1945.

Jesus is still at Nazareth, at home. Rather, He is in the old carpenter's shop. The twelve apostles are with Him as well as Mary, Mary mother of James and Judas, Salome, Susanna, and, something new, Martha. A really sorrowful Martha, with clear signs of tears below her eyes. A Martha who is lost and frightened at being alone in the presence of other people and above all of the Lord's Mother. Mary endeavours to familiarise her with the other women and to relieve her of the feeling of uneasiness from which She sees she is suffering. But poor Martha's heart seems to be swelling more and more with Her caresses. She flushes and weeps alternately under her veil, which she has pulled very low over her sorrow and discomfort.

John comes in with James of Alphaeus. « She is not in, my Lord. She and her husband are the guests of a friend of hers. So the servants said » says John.

« She will certainly be very sorry. But she will always be able to see You and receive Your instructions » concludes James of Alphaeus.

« All right. The group of women disciples is not here as I expected it. But, you can see, Martha, Theophilus' daughter and Lazarus' sister, is present in the place of the absent Johanna. The disciples know who Martha is. So does My Mother. You, too, Mary, and perhaps also you, Salome, have already heard from your sons who Martha is, not so much as a woman according to the world, but as a creature in the eyes of God. And you, Martha, on the other hand, know who these women are, who consider you as their sister and will love you so much. You are their sister and daughter. And you are in great need of their love, My dear Martha, that you may enjoy the comfort of their kind fondness, which God does not condemn, but has given to man to support him in the weariness of life. And God has brought you here just when I had chosen to lay the foundation, I could say, to give you the canvas on which you will

embroider your perfection of disciples.

Disciple means to follow the discipline of the Master, of His doctrine. Therefore, in a wide meaning, all those who now and in future centuries will follow My doctrine, will be called disciples. And to avoid mentioning many names, saying: disciples of Jesus according to the teaching of Peter and Andrew, of James or John, of Simon or Philip, of Judas or Bartholomew, or of Thomas and Matthew, they will be called Christians by one word only, which will unite them all under one sign. But in the great mass of the followers of My discipline I have already selected the first and the second ones and the same will be done throughout centuries in My memory. As in the Temple, and even before, in Moses' days, there was a Pontiff, the priests, the Levites, those responsible for various services, offices and duties, the singers and so on, so in My new Temple, as large as the earth, which will last as long as the earth, there will be superiors and inferiors, all of them useful and loved by Me, and besides, there will be women, the new category, whom Israel has always despised, confining them to the virginal songs in the Temple or to the teaching of the virgins in the Temple. But nothing more.

Do not discuss whether that was fair or not. In the closed religion of Israel and in the days of Wrath it was fair. All the shame fell upon women, the origin of sin. In the universal religion of Christ and in the days of Forgiveness all that is changed. All the Grace was assembled in one Woman and She delivered it to the world, that it might be redeemed. Woman is therefore no longer the anger of God, but the help of God. And through the Woman, beloved by the Lord, all women can become disciples of the Lord, not only as the mass of followers, but as minor priestesses, assistants to the priests, to whom they can give so much help beside them and among the believers and non-believers, among those who will be brought to God not so much by the call of holy words as by the holy smile of one of My women disciples.

You have asked to follow Me, as men do. But, as far as you are concerned, it is too little for Me, if you only come, only listen and only practise. It would be your sanctification. A great thing. But not yet enough for Me. I am the Son of the Absolute One and I want the absolute for My beloved ones. I want everything, because I have given everything.

Further, not only I exist, there is also the world. This terrible thing, the world. It should be tremendous in holiness: a boundless holiness, in number and power, of the multitude of the children of God. Instead it is tremendous in wickedness. Its full iniquity is really unlimited owing to the number of its manifestations and the power of its vices. All sins are in the world, which is no longer a multitude of the children of God, but a multitude of the children of

Satan, and above all, the sin bearing the clearest sign of its paternity is most alive: hatred. The world hates. Who hates sees evil even in the most holy things, and wants other people to see evil, even if they do not see it. If you asked the world why I came, it would not say to you: "To do good and redeem". But it would say: "To corrupt and usurp". If you asked the world what it thinks of you who follow Me, it would not say: "You follow Him to become holy and give comfort to the Master, through holiness and purity". But it would say: "You follow Him because you have been seduced by the man".

Such is the world. And I am telling you also that, so that you may consider everything before showing yourselves to the world as the chosen women disciples, the founders of a family of future women disciples, the cooperators of the servants of the Lord. Take your hearts in your hands, and say to them, to those sensitive hearts of women, that you, and your hearts with you, will be scorned at, calumniated, spit at, trampled on by the world, by contempt, by falsehood, by the cruelty of the world. Ask your hearts whether they are capable of receiving all the wounds without shouting out of indignation, cursing those who wound it. Ask them whether they feel they can face the moral martyrdom of slander without going to the extent of hating the slanderers and the Cause for which they are calumniated. Ask them whether, sated and covered with the envy of the world, they will always be able to exhale love, whether poisoned with absinth they will be able to squeeze out honey, whether when suffering all tortures of incomprehension, of scorn, of malicious gossip, they will still be able to smile, pointing to Heaven, their goal, to which you wish to lead other people, out of womanly charity, which is motherly charity also in young girls, still motherly even if bestowed upon old people who could be your ancestors, but are spiritual babies just born and incapable of understanding and conducting themselves in the way, the life, the truth, the wisdom that I have come to bring, by giving Myself: Way, Life, Truth, divine Wisdom. I will love you just the same if you say to Me: "I have not the strength, my Lord, to challenge the whole world for You".

Yesterday a girl asked Me to immolate her, before the hour of her wedding strikes, because she feels that she loves Me, as God is to be loved; that is with her whole self, with the absolute perfection of giving herself. And I will do it. I have concealed the hour from her, that her soul may not tremble with fear, or her body more than her soul. Her death will be like the end of a flower, that closes its corolla in the evening, thinking it will reopen it the following day, but never opens it again, because the kiss of the night has sucked its life. And I will do it, according to her desire, by bringing forward her repose of death to a few days before Mine.

So that this first virgin of Mine may not be kept waiting in limbo, and I may find her immediately after My death...

Do not weep! I am the Redeemer... This holy girl did not ask to follow Me, but she did not limit herself to hosannas immediately after the miracle, but she worked the miracle as if it were money invested at an interest, and from human gratitude she passed to a supernatural one, from an earthly desire to a heavenly one, showing a maturity of spirit, which is superior to almost everybody else's I say "almost" because amongst you who are listening to Me, there are perfections that are equal and even greater. She did not ask to follow Me, nay she showed the desire to accomplish her evolution from a girl to an angel in the secrecy of her abode. And I love her so much that in the hours of disgust at what the world is, I will recall this kind creature, blessing the Father, Who wipes away My tears and perspiration of a Master in a world that does not want Me, by means of such flowers of love and purity.

But if you want, if you have the courage to remain the chosen women disciples, behold, I will point out to you the work you have to do to justify your presence and your election near Me and near the saints of the Lord. You can do so much amongst your fellow creatures and for the ministers of the Lord.

I have already mentioned it to Mary of Alphaeus many months ago. How great is the necessity of a woman near the altar of Christ! The infinite miseries of the world can be cured much more and much better by a woman than by a man, and then taken to man to be completely cured. Many hearts, particularly of females, will open to you, o women disciples. You must receive them as if they were dear children led astray, who are coming back to their father's house and dare not face their parent. You are the ones who will recomfort the culprit and placate the judge. Many will come to you seeking God. You will welcome them as if they were tired pilgrims, saying: "This is the house of the Lord, He will be here at once", and in the meantime you will envelop them with your love. A priest of Mine will come, if I do not.

A woman knows how to love. She was made to love. She degraded love into sensual lust, but true love, the gem of her soul, is still imprisoned in the depth of her heart: love devoid of foul sensual mud, made of angelical wings and perfumes, of pure flame and remembrances of God, of its origin from God and its creation by God. Woman: the masterpiece of goodness near the masterpiece of creation, which is man: "And now I will make Adam a helpmate that he may not feel alone", must not abandon the Adams. Take therefore that faculty of loving and make use of it in the love of Christ and for Christ amongst your neighbours. Be most charitable to repentant culprits. Tell them not to be afraid of God. Is it possible for you, mothers and sisters, not to be able to do that?

How often your little ones, your young brothers were ill and needed a doctor! And they were afraid. But with caresses and loving words you relieved them of their fear and they, no longer terrified as before, with their little hands held by yours, let the doctor cure them. Culprits are your sick brothers and children, who are afraid of the doctor's hand, and of his sentence... No, it must not be so. Since you know how good God is, tell them that God is good and no one must be afraid of Him. Even if He is frank and resolute in saying: "You shall not do it again", He will not reject who has already done it and has fallen ill. But He will cure him to restore him to health.

Be mothers and sisters to holy living people. They, too, need love. They will become tired and worn out in evangelizing. They will not be able to do all that is to be done. Help them, discreetly and diligently. Women know how to work at home, near tables and beds, at looms and everything that is needed for everyday life. The future of the Church will be a continuous flow of pilgrims to the places of God. Be their kind hotel-keepers, taking upon yourselves all the most humble work, so that the ministers of God may be free to continue the work of the Master.

Then difficult, sanguinary, cruel times will come. Christians, also the holy ones, will undergo hours of terror and weakness. Man is never very strong in suffering. Women, instead, as compared to men, enjoy the true kingliness of being able to suffer. Teach men, supporting them in the hours of fear, discouragement, tears, tiredness and bloodshed. In our History we have examples of wonderful women, who performed deeds of liberating daring. We have Judith, Jael. But believe Me, no one is greater, so far, than the mother who was eight times a martyr, seven times with each of her sons, and once herself, in the times of the Maccabees. Then there will be another one... And after Her, there will be countless numbers of heroines of sorrow and in sorrow, women who will be the solace of martyrs and martyrs themselves, who will be angels for those who are persecuted, silent priestesses who will preach God by their way of living, and who, with no other consecration but the one they received from the God-Love, will be consecrated and worthy of it.

Those are the outlines of your main duties. I will not be able to devote much time to you in particular. But you will be formed by listening to Me. And you will be formed even more under the perfect guidance of My Mother.

Yesterday this maternal hand (and Jesus takes Mary's hand in His own) brought Me the girl of whom I have spoken to you and who told Me that to listen to Her and be beside Her for a few hours had matured the fruit of the grace she had received and had carried it to perfection. It is not the first time that My Mother has worked

for Christ, Her Son. You and you, who are My disciples as well as cousins, know what Mary is for the formation of souls to God and you will be able to tell both those men and women who may be afraid that I have not prepared them for their mission or that they are still insufficiently prepared when I shall no longer be with you. My Mother will be with you now, when I am not amongst you, and later when I shall no longer be with you. She will remain with you, and with Her will remain the wisdom of all Her virtues. As from now you may follow all Her advice.

Yesterday evening, when we were alone, and I was sitting near Her, as I used to when I was a child, My head resting on Her shoulder, which is so soft and so strong, My Mother said to Me we had been talking of the girl who had left early in the afternoon, with enclosed in her virginal heart a sun, brighter than the one in the sky: her holy secret - She said to Me: "How lovely it is to be the Redeemer's Mother!" Yes, how lovely it is when the creature coming to the Redeemer is already a creature of God, a creature in whom there is only the stain of origin, that can only be washed away by Me. All the other small stains of human imperfection have been washed away by love.

But, My sweet Mother, Most Pure Guide of souls to Your Son, Holy Star of orientation, Kind Teacher of saints, Pious Foster Mother of the most little ones, Healthy Cure of sick people, not always such creatures who are not repugnant to holiness will be coming to You... But lepers, horrors, stench, a tangle of snakes and foul things, will creep to Your feet, o Queen of mankind, and will shout: "Have mercy! Succour us! Take us to Your Son!". And You will have to put this pure hand of Yours on their wounds, and bend with Your eyes of a heavenly dove on hellish deformities, inhale the stench of sin and not run away. Nay, You will have to press to Your heart those who have been mutilated by Satan, those abortions, that filth, and wash them with Your tears and bring them to Me... And then You will say: "How difficult it is to be the Redeemer's Mother!". But You will do it because You are the Mother... I kiss and bless these hands of Yours from which so many creatures will come to Me, and each of them will be a glory of Mine. But before Mine, it will be a glory of Yours, Holy Mother.

My dear women disciples, follow the example of My Teacher, of the Teacher of James and Judas, of everyone who wishes to be formed in Grace and Wisdom. Follow Her word. It is the same as Mine, but made sweeter. Nothing is to be added to it because it is the word of the Mother of Wisdom.

And you, My friends, endeavour to acquire the humbleness and firmness of women, and demolishing manly pride, do not despise the women disciples, but mitigate your strength, and I could say also your hardness and your intolerance, in contact with the kindness

of women. And above all, learn from them how to love, to believe and to suffer for the Lord, because I solemnly tell you that they, the weak ones, will become the strongest in faith, in love, in daring, in sacrificing themselves for their Master, Whom they love with their whole selves, without asking for anything, without pretending anything, satisfied only with loving to give Me solace and joy.

Go now to your homes, or to the houses where you are guests. I will stay with My Mother. God be with you. »

They all go away except Martha.

« Martha, you stay here. I have already spoken to your servant. Today it is not Bethany that is giving hospitality, but it is Jesus' little house. Come. You will eat beside Mary and sleep in the little room near Hers. The spirit of Joseph, our comfort, will comfort you while you are resting, and tomorrow you will go back to Bethany stronger and more sure of yourself, to prepare women disciples also there, while waiting for the one dearest to Me and to you. Do not doubt, Martha. I never promise in vain. But it takes time to turn a desert full of vipers into a heavenly thicket. The first work is not noticed. Nothing seems to have taken place. Instead the seed has already been sown. The seeds. All of them. And then tears will come, to act as rain that opens the seeds... And the good trees will come... Come! Weep no more! »

158. Jesus Speaks to Johanna of Chuza on the Lake.

8th May 1945.

Jesus is on the lake, in Peter's boat, behind two other boats; one is a common fishing boat, like that of Peter, the other is a slender expensive pleasure boat. It belongs to Johanna of Chuza. But the owner is not in her boat. She is at Jesus' feet, in Peter's humbler craft.

I would say that they met by chance somewhere on the flowery shore of Gennesaret, most beautiful in this first appearance of Palestinian springtime, which strews its clouds of blossoming almond-trees and lays the pearls of future flowers on pear and apple-trees, on pomegranates, quince-trees, on all the trees which are most fruitful and bear the most beautiful blossoms and fruit. When the boat keeps close to the shore exposed to the sun, one can already see millions of buds swelling on the branches, awaiting to blossom, while the petals of the early almond-trees flutter in the quiet air until they alight in the clear water. The shores, covered with the new grass, which looks like bright green silk, are studded with the golden eyes of buttercups, or radiate-star daisies, near which the beautiful, thin bluish forget-me-nots, stiff on their stems like little crowned queens, smile gently, as placid as

children's eyes, and they seem to be saying « yes, of course » to the sun, to the lake, to the other herbs, which are happy to bloom, under the sky-blue eyes of their Lord.

At the beginning of spring the lake has not yet the opulence that will turn it into a triumph the following months, it has not the luxurious pomp, which I would call sensual, of the many thousand rigid or supple roseries, in the form of tufts in gardens or veils against walls, of the many thousand corymbs of cytisi and acacias, of the thousands and thousands of groups of tuberose, of the thousands and thousands of waxed stars of citrus trees, of all the blending of hues, of strong, soft, inebriating perfumes, which form the environment and spur of human great desire for enjoyment that desecrates this corner of the earth, which is so pure, and is the lake of Tiberias, the place chosen centuries ago to be the theatre of the greatest number of miracles worked by our Lord Jesus.

Johanna looks at Jesus absorbed in the beauty of His Galilean lake and her face smiles reflecting, like a faithful mirror, His smile. They are speaking in the other boat. There is silence here. The only noise is the thud of the bare feet of Peter and Andrew, who are manoeuvring the boat, and the sigh of the water opened by the prow and whispering its pain to the sides of the boat, and then changing into laughter at the stern, when the wound heals and becomes a silvery wake that the sun causes to sparkle as if it were diamond dust.

At last Jesus ends His contemplation and turns His eyes towards Johanna. He smiles at her and asks her: « We are almost there, are we not? And you will be saying that your Master is not a very pleasant companion. I have not spoken one word to you. »

« But I have read them on Your face, Master, and I heard everything You said to these things which are around us. »

« Well, then, what was I saying? »

« Love, be pure, be good. Because you come from God, and nothing bad or impure has come out of His hands. »

« You have read right. »

« But, my Lord, the herbs will do that... Also the animals will do it. Man... Why will he not, although he is the most perfect? »

« Because Satan's tooth has pierced man only. He pretended to demolish the Creator through His greatest prodigy, most like Him. »

Johanna lowers her head in thought. She seems to be hesitating and weighing two opposite desires. Jesus is watching her. She then raises her head and says: « Would You mind approaching some friends of mine, who are pagans? You know... Chuza is a courtier... And the Tetrarch - and even more so the true mistress of the Court: Herodias, to whose will every desire of Herod yields, as it

is... fashionable, to show that they are more refined than any other Palestinian, to be protected by Rome by worshipping Rome and everything that is Roman - flirts with the Romans of the proconsular household... and almost imposes them on to us. Really I must say that the women are not worse than we are. Also amongst us, on these very shores, there are some women who have fallen very low. And what can we speak of, unless we speak of Herodias?... When I lost my child and I was ill, they were very good to me, although I did not seek them. And after, we have remained friends. But if You tell me that it is wrong, I will put an end to it. No? Thank You, my Lord. The day before yesterday I was with one of these friends. It was a friendly visit, as far as I was concerned, a duty call with regard to Chuza. It was an order of the Tetrarch who... would like to come back here but does not feel too safe and so... he enters into more interested relations with Rome, in order to be protected. Nay... please... You are a relative of the Baptist, are You not? Well, tell him not to be too trustful. He should never leave Samaria. On the contrary, if he does not mind, he should hide there for some time. The snake is going near the lamb and the lamb has a lot to be afraid of. Of everything. Let him be watchful, Master. But it must not be known that I said it. It would be the end of Chuza. »

« Do not worry, Johanna. I will inform the Baptist in such a way that no harm will be done. »

« Thank You, my Lord. I want to serve You... but by doing so, I would not like to harm my husband. Nay... I... will not always be able to come with You. Sometimes, I will have to stay, because he wants me to, and it is just... »

« You will stay, Johanna. I understand everything. Say no more, because it is not necessary. »

« But will You want me to be near You in the most dangerous hours for You? »

« Certainly, Johanna. »

« Oh! What a burden it was for me having to say that and actually giving voice to the words! But now I am relieved... »

« If you have faith in Me, you will always be relieved. But you were talking about a Roman lady friend... »

« Yes. She is a close friend of Claudia and I think she must be a relative of hers, too. And she would like to speak to You, or at least, listen to You. And she is not the only one. Now that You have cured Valeria's child, and the news travelled as quick as lightning, they are more anxious than ever. At the banquet the other evening, there was a lot of talking, in your favour and against You. Because some Herodians were present, as well as some Sadducees... although, if you asked them they would deny it... and there were also some women... rich... but... but not honest.

There was... I regret telling You because I know that You are a friend of her brother... but there was Mary of Magdala with her new friend and another woman, a Greek, I think, as dissolute as she. You know... among heathens, women are at table with men and that is very... very... What a nuisance! My friend was so kind as to choose my husband as my companion and that was a great relief. But the others... oh!... Well... They were talking about You, because Faustina's miracle caused a stir and if the Romans admired You as a great doctor or magician - forgive me, my Lord the Herodians and the Sadducees vomited venom on Your Name. And Mary! Oh Mary! How horrible!... She began sneering and then. No, I will not tell You. I wept all night over it... »

« Never mind. She will recover. »

« But she is all right, You know? »

« Her body is. All the rest is poisoned. She will recover. »

« You say so... The Roman women, You know what they are like... said: "We are not afraid of witchcraft, neither do we believe in lies. We want to judge by ourselves"; and after they said to me: "Could we not hear Him?" »

« Tell them that at the end of the month of Shebat I will be in your house. »

« I will tell them, my Lord. Do You think they will come to You? »

« There is a world to be rebuilt in them. First it is necessary to destroy, then to build. But it is not impossible. Johanna, there is your house and your garden. Work in it for your Master, as I told you. Goodbye, Johanna. The Lord be with you. I bless you in His name. »

The boat draws near to the shore. Johanna begs: « Are You really not coming? »

« Not now. I must revive the flames. In the absence of a few months, they have almost gone out. And time flies. »

The boat stops in the little bay which penetrates into Chuza's garden. Some servants rush to assist their mistress in getting off. Her boat arrives at the wharf after Peter's, and John, Matthew, the Iscariot and Philip come off it and get on board Peter's boat, which slowly departs and resumes its voyage to the opposite shore.

159. Jesus at Gherghesa. John's Disciples.

9th May 1945.

Jesus is speaking in a town which I have never seen before. At least, that is what I think, because all the towns are alike in style and it is difficult to tell one from the other at first sight. Also here a road coasts the lake and all the boats are on the shore. Large and small houses are set in a row on the other side of the road, but the

hills are much more distant and so the little town is on a charming plain which stretches along the eastern shores of the lake, protected from the winds by the range of hills, and warmed by the sun which here, more than in the other parts of the country, increases the blossoming of the trees.

I think that Jesus' sermon has already begun because He says: «... It is true. You say: "We will never abandon You because to abandon You is to abandon God". But, o people of Gherghesa, remember that nothing is more changeable than the human mind. I am convinced that at present that is what you really think. My word and the miracle that took place have encouraged you in that direction and at the present moment you are sincere in what you say. But I wish to remind you of one event, I could quote a thousand both remote and recent. I will mention only this one.

Joshua, the servant of the Lord, on the eve of death, gathered around him all the tribes with their elders, leaders, judges and scribes and he spoke to them in the presence of the Lord, reminding them of all the benefits gained from and prodigies worked by the Lord through His servant. And after enumerating all these things, he asked them to repudiate any god which was not the Lord or at least to be frank in their faith, choosing with sincerity either the True God or the gods of Mesopotamia and of the Amorites, so that there should be a clear separation between the sons of Abraham and the paganizing people.

An openly declared error is always better than a hypocritical profession and mixture of faiths, which is an insult to God and death to souls. And nothing is easier to maintain and more commonly met than such mixture. The appearance is good; the substance underneath it is not good. That state applies also nowadays. Those believers who mix the observance of the Law with what is forbidden by the Law, those miserable fellows who stagger like drunken people between loyalty to the Law and the profit of business and compromise with outlaws from whom they hope to receive some advantage, those priests or Scribes or Pharisees who no longer make the service of God the aim of their lives, but indulge in shrewd politics to triumph over other people and thus be able to do anything against more honest persons, because they are not the servants of God, but they serve a power which they know is strong and useful for their purposes, all those people are nothing but hypocrites who mix our God with false gods.

The people replied to Joshua: "Never let it be that we shall abandon the True God to serve false gods". Joshua told them what I have just told you about the holy jealousy of the Father, about His will to be loved exclusively, with our whole selves, about His justice in punishing those who are untruthful. Punishment! God

can punish just as He can reward us. It is not necessary to be dead to receive our reward or punishment. Consider, o people of Israel, whether God, after giving you so much, freeing you from the Pharaohs, leading you safely through the desert and the snares of enemies, allowing you to become a great and respected nation, full of glory, has not punished you once, twice, ten times, for your sins! Consider what you have become now! And I, Who see you throwing yourselves headlong into the most sacrilegious idolatry, I see also into which abyss you are about to fall because you always persevere in the same faults. And because of that I rebuke you, o people who are twice Mine, because I am your Redeemer and because I was born of you. My reproach is not hatred, it is not grudge, nor intolerance, it is love, even if it is severe.

Joshua then said: "You are witnesses: you have chosen the Lord" and they all replied: "Yes, we are". And Joshua, who was wise besides being brave, knowing how fleeting the will of man is, wrote in the book all the words of the Law and of the covenant and he put them in the temple, and also in the sanctuary of the Lord in Shechem, which contained the Tabernacle for the occasion, he set a great stone as witness and said: "This stone which has heard all your words to the Lord shall remain here as a witness so that you may not lie and deny the Lord your God".

A stone, no matter how great and hard it may be, can always be reduced to powder by man, by thunderbolt or by the erosion of water and time. But I am the Eternal Corner-Stone. And I cannot be destroyed. Do not lie to this Living Stone. Do not love it only because it works miracles. Love it because through it you will touch Heaven. I would like you to be more spiritual, more faithful to the Lord. I am not saying to Me. I am, only because I am the Voice of the Father. By trampling on Me, you wound Him Who sent Me. I am the mediator. He is everything. Take what I offer you and keep within yourselves what is holy so that you may reach God. Do not love the Man, love the Messiah of the Lord not because of the miracles He works, but because He wants to work in you the intimate and sublime miracle of your sanctification. »

Jesus blesses and directs His steps towards a house. He is almost at the door when He is stopped by a group of elderly men who greet Him respectfully saying: « May we ask You a question, Lord? We are disciples of John and as he always speaks of You and also because the fame of Your miracles reached us, we wish to make Your acquaintance. We have just listened to You and we have a question to ask You. »

« Ask it. If you are disciples of John, you are already on the path of justice. »

« You said, speaking of the idolatries which are common amongst believers, that there are people amongst us who come to compromise

between the Law and those who are out of the Law. But You also are a friend of theirs. We know that You do not disdain the Romans. So? »

« I do not deny it. But can you say that I do it to make a profit? Can you say that I caress them even to receive only their protection? »

« No, Master. And we are more than certain. But the world is not made only of us, who want to believe only in the evil that we see and not in the evil we are told about. Now tell us the convincing reason for approaching Gentiles, for our own guidance and to defend You in the event of someone slandering You in our presence. »

« It is evil to have contact when one does it for human purposes. It is not evil when one approaches them to take them to the Lord our God. That is what I do. If you were Gentiles, I could spend some time explaining to you how every man comes from One God only. But you are Jews and disciples of John. You are therefore the cream of Jews, and I need not explain that to you. You can therefore understand and believe that it is My duty, as the Word of God, to take His word to all men, the sons of the Universal Father. »

« But they are not His sons, they are pagans... »

« With regard to Grace they are not. Because of their erroneous faith, they are not. That is true. But until I redeem you, man, also a Jew, will have lost Grace, he will be deprived of it, because the Stain of Origin prevents the ineffable ray of Grace from descending into men's hearts. But with regard to creation, man is always a son. From Adam, the founder of the human family, descend both the Jews and the Romans and Adam is the son of the Father Who gave him His spiritual likeness. »

« That is true. Another question, Master. Why do John's disciples fast very sternly and Yours do not? We do not mean that You should not eat. Also the Prophet Daniel was holy in the eyes of God although he was a great man at the court in Babylon, and You are greater than he. But they... »

« What very often is not achieved by rigorism, is achieved by cordiality. There are people who would never come to the Master, and the Master must go to them. There are others who would go to the Master, but are ashamed of going amongst the crowd. The Master must go also to them. And since they say to Me: "Be my guest that I may know You" I go, bearing in mind, not the pleasure of a rich table, and of a conversation that sometimes is very painful for Me, but only and always the interest of God. That is as far as I am concerned. And as often at least one of the souls which I approach is converted to God, and every conversion is a wedding feast for My soul, a great feast in which all the angels in Heaven take part and which is blessed by the Eternal God, My disciples the friends of

Me-the Spouse, rejoice with the Spouse and Friend. Would you like to see My friends in pain while I rejoice? While I am with them? But the time will come when they will no longer have Me. And then they will fast. New methods for new times. Up to yesterday, in the days of the Baptist, there was the ash of Penance. Today, in My days, there is the sweet manna of Redemption, of Mercy, of Love. The old methods could not be engrafted into Mine, as My method could not have been used then, not even yesterday. Because Mercy was not yet on the earth. It is now. No longer the Prophet, but the Messiah, to Whom everything has been entrusted by God, is on the earth. Each day has what is useful to it. Nobody sews a new cloth on to an old garment, lest the new piece of cloth, particularly when being washed, should shrink and thus tear the old cloth and the hole would become bigger. Likewise no one puts new wine into old wineskins, otherwise the new wine would burst the wineskins, which cannot stand the effervescence of the new wine, and it would run out of the burst wineskins. But the old wine, which has already been decanted several times, is put into old wineskins, and the new wine into new ones. So that one force may be compensated by another equal one. The same happens now. The force of the new doctrine suggests new methods to divulge it. And I, Who am aware of it, make use of them. »

« Thank You, Lord. We are now happy. Pray for us. We are old wineskins. Will we be able to restrain Your force? »

« Yes, because the Baptist shaped you and because his prayers and Mine will make you capable of so much. Go with My peace and tell John that I bless him. »

« But... according to You, is it better for us to stay with the Baptist or with You? »

« As long as there is old wine, drink it, if its flavour is agreeable. Later... as the putrid water which is everywhere will disgust you, you will love the new wine. »

« Do You think that the Baptist will be recaptured? »

« Yes, most certainly. I have already sent him a warning. Go now. Enjoy your John as long as you can and make him happy. Afterwards you will love Me. And you will find it hard... also because no one who has become used to old wine will all of a sudden wish to have new wine. One says: "The old one was better". And in fact I will have a different flavour, which will seem sour to you. But you will relish its vital flavour day by day. Goodbye, friends. May God be with you. »

160. From Naphtali to Giscala. Meeting with Rabbi Gamaliel.

10th May 1945.

« Master! Master! Do You know who is ahead of us? There is rabbi Gamaliel! He is sitting with his servants, in a caravan, in the shade in a wood, sheltered from the winds! They are roasting a lamb. What are we going to do now? »

« What we were going to do, My friends. We will proceed along our way... »

« But Gamaliel is of the Temple. »

« Gamaliel is not wicked. Do not be afraid. I will go ahead. »

« Oh! I am coming too » say His cousins at the same time, as well as all the Galileans and Simon. Only the Iscariot, and to a lesser degree, Thomas, do not seem very anxious to proceed. But they follow the others.

They walk for a few yards along a mountainous road deep set between the wooded slopes of the mountain. The road then bends and opens on to a kind of tableland and crosses it, widening out, and soon after that it becomes once again narrow and winding under a roof of interwoven branches. In a sunny bare patch, which is however shaded by the first leaves of the wood, there are many people under a rich tent, while other people are busy in a comer turning the lamb on the fire.

There is no doubt about it! Gamaliel took very good care of himself. For one person travelling he set a crowd of servants in motion with I do not know how much luggage. He is now sitting in the centre of his tent: a cloth supported by four gilt poles, a kind of canopy under which there are low seats covered with cushions and a table the top of which rests on carved wooden legs. A very fine table-cloth is spread on the table and the servants are laying valuable dishes on it. Gamaliel looks like an idol. With his hands open on his knees, stiff and hieratic, he looks like a statue to me. The servants move round him like large butterflies. But he pays no attention to them. He is pondering, his eyelashes rather lowered on his severe eyes, and when he raises them, his deep very dark pensive eyes are displayed in all their severe beauty at the sides of a long thin nose and under the high rather bald forehead of an elderly man. His forehead is marked by three parallel wrinkles and by a large bluish vein which forms a V shaped angle in the centre of his right temple.

The noise of the oncoming people causes the servants to turn round. Gamaliel also looks round. He sees Jesus approaching ahead of everyone and he makes a gesture of surprise. He stands up and moves to the edge of the tent, but no farther. From there he bows low with his arms crossed on his chest. Jesus replies to him in the same way.

« You are here, Rabbi? » asks Gamaliel.

« I am here, rabbi » replies Jesus.

« May I ask You where You are going? »

« It is a pleasure for Me to tell you. I am coming from Naphtali and I am going to Giscala. »

« On foot? But it is a hard and long road along these mountains. You are tiring Yourself too much. »

« Believe Me. If I am welcomed and listened to, all tiredness disappears. »

« Well, then... allow me to be for once the one who will remove Your fatigue. The lamb is ready. We would have left the leavings to the birds because I never take them with me. You can see that it is no trouble for me to offer food to You and to Your followers. I am friendly to You, Jesus. I do not consider You inferior to me, but greater than I am. »

« I believe you. And I accept your hospitality. »

Gamaliel speaks to a servant who appears to be the highest in authority and who passes on the order. The tent is extended and more seats and dishes for Jesus' disciples are taken off the many mules.

They bring bowls to purify their fingers. Jesus performs the rite with the greatest courtliness, whereas the apostles, on whom Gamaliel is casting sharp sidelong glances, do so as well as they can, with the exception of Simon, Judas of Kerioth, Bartholomew and Matthew, who are more accustomed to Jewish refinements.

Jesus is beside Gamaliel who is alone on one side of the table. The Zealot is in front of Jesus. After the prayer of thanksgiving, which Gamaliel says with calm solemnity, the servants carve the lamb and divide it among the guests and they fill the cups with wine or water sweetened with honey, for those who prefer it.

« We have met by chance, Rabbi. I was never expecting to see You and on the way to Giscala. »

« I am going towards the whole world. »

« Yes, You are the indefatigable Prophet. John is the stationary one, You are the roaming One. »

« It is easier, therefore, for souls to find Me. »

« I would not say so. Your continuous moving about, disorientates them. »

« I disorientate My enemies. But those who want Me, because they love the Word of God, find Me. Not everybody can come to the Master. And the Master, Who wants everybody, goes to everybody, helping thus the good and warding off the conspiracies of those who hate Me. »

« Are You referring to me? I do not hate You. »

« Not to you. But since you are just and frank, you can say that I am speaking the truth. »

« Yes, it is so. But... see... The fact is that we old people do not understand You well. »

« Yes, old Israel does not understand Me well. That is her misfortune... and because of her will. »

« No, no. »

« Yes, rabbi. They are not willing to understand the Master. And who confines himself to that, does evil, but a comparative evil. Many instead deliberately misunderstand and distort My word to harm God. »

« God? He is above human snares. »

« Yes. But every soul that goes astray or is led astray, - and it is misleading to distort My word or My work, both with regard to oneself and to other people, - harms God in the soul which is lost. Every soul that is lost is a wound to God. »

Gamaliel lowers his head, and closing his eyes, he meditates. He then presses his forehead between his long thin fingers, in an involuntary gesture of pain. Jesus watches him. Gamaliel raises his head, opens his eyes, looks at Jesus and says: « But You know that I am not one of those. »

« I know. But you are one of the former. »

« Oh! It is true. But it is not true that I am not willing to understand You. The truth is that Your word stops on my mind and does not penetrate farther. My mind admires it as the word of a learned man and the spirit... »

« And the spirit cannot receive it, Gamaliel, because it is encumbered with too many things. And ruined things. A short while ago, coming here from Naphtali, I passed near a mountain, which juts out from the mountain chain. I was pleased to pass there to see the two beautiful lakes of Gennesaret and Merom, from high above, as eagles and the angels of the Lord see them, to say once again: "Thank You, Creator, for the beauty You grant us". Well, whilst the whole mountain is covered with flowers, green meadows, orchards, fields, woods, and the laurels smell sweet near the olive-trees, preparing the white host of thousands and thousands of flowers and also the strong oak-tree seems to become gentler as it dresses itself with wreaths of clematis and woodbine: over there, there is no flowering, no fertility, neither of man nor of nature. All the efforts of the winds, all the toil of men are frustrated because the Cyclopean ruins of ancient Hatzor encumber everything and between one large stone and another only nettles and bushes can grow and snakes can hide. Gamaliel... »

« I understand. We are ruins, too... I understand the parable, Jesus. But... I cannot... I cannot... do otherwise. The stones are too heavy. »

« One in Whom you believed said to you: "The stones shall vibrate hearing My last words". But why wait for the last words of

the Messiah? Will you not regret that you did not follow Me before? The last!... Sad words, like those of a friend who is dying, and to whom we have to listen, but too late. But My words are more important than the words of a friend. »

« You are right... But I cannot. I am waiting for that sign, that I may believe. »

« When a piece of ground is barren, a thunderbolt is not sufficient to till it. The soil will not receive it. But the stones that cover the soil will receive it. Endeavour at least to remove them, Gamaliel. Otherwise, if they are left where they are, in the depth of your heart, the sign will not lead you to believe. »

Gamaliel is silent, engrossed in thought. The meal is over.

Jesus stands up and says: « I thank You, My God, both for the meal and for the opportunity of speaking to a wise man. And thank you, Gamaliel. »

« Master, do not go away like that. I am afraid You are angry with me. »

« Oh! no! You must believe Me. »

« Then, do not go away. I am going to Hillel's tomb. Would You disdain coming with me? It will not take us long, because I have mules and donkeys for everybody. All we have to do is to take off their pack-saddles, which the servants will carry. And the hardest part of the road will be shortened for You. »

« I do not mind coming with you or going to Hillel's tomb. It is an honour. Let us go. »

Gamaliel gives the necessary instructions, and while they are all busy taking down the temporary dining-room, Jesus and Gamaliel mount two mules and they go ahead, one beside the other, along a quiet steep road, on which the ironshod hooves resound loudly.

Gamaliel is silent. Only twice he asks Jesus whether His saddle is comfortable. Jesus replies and then becomes quiet, engrossed in thought. So much so that He does not notice that Gamaliel, holding his mule back a little, lets Him go forward by a full neck, so that he may study every gesture of His. The eyes of the old rabbi are so keen in penetration that they look like the eyes of a hawk gazing at its prey. But Jesus is not aware of it. He proceeds calmly, following the undulant pace of His mount, He is pensive and yet He observes all the features of what is around Him. He stretches out a hand to pick a hanging bunch of golden cytusus, He smiles at two little birds which are building their nest in a thick juniper, He stops the mule to listen to a blackcap and, as a blessing, He nods assent to the anxious cry by which a wild dove urges her mate to work.

« You love herbs and animals very much, do You not? »

« Yes, very much. They are My living book. Man always has the foundations of faith in front of him. Genesis lives in nature. Now,

one who knows how to see, knows also how to believe. This flower, so sweet in its scent and in the substance of its pendulous corollas, and in such a contrast with this thorny juniper and with that furze, how could it have made itself by itself? And look: that robin redbreast, could it have made itself with that dried bloodstain on its soft throat? And those two doves, where and how have they been able to paint those onyx collars on the veil of their grey feathers? And over there, those two butterflies: a black one with large gold and ruby rings, while the other, with blue stripes, where have they found the gems and ribbons for their wings? And this stream? It is water. Agreed. But where did it come from? Which is the first source of the water-element? Oh! To look means to believe, if one knows how to look. »

« To look means to believe. We look too little at the living Genesis that is in front of us. »

« Too much science, Gamaliel. And too little love, and too little humility. »

Gamaliel sighs and shakes his head.

« Here. We have arrived, Jesus. Hillel is buried over there. Let us dismount and leave our mules here. A servant will take them. »

They dismount tying the two mules to a tree trunk and they turn their steps towards a burial ground which protrudes from the mountain near a large house completely closed up.

« I come here to meditate and prepare myself for the feasts of Israel » says Gamaliel pointing at the house.

« May Wisdom grant you all its light. »

« And here (and Gamaliel points at the sepulchre) to prepare myself to meet death. He was a just man. »

« He was a just man. I will be pleased to pray near his ashes. But, Gamaliel, Hillel must not teach you only to die. He must teach you to live. »

« How, Master? »

« "A man is great when he humbles himself" was his favourite saying... »

« How do You know if You have not met him? »

« I did meet him... in any case, even if I had never met Hillel, the rabbi, personally, I know his thought, because there is nothing I ignore of human thoughts. »

Gamaliel lowers his head and whispers:

« God only can say that. » « God and His Word. Because the Word knows the Thought and the Thought knows the Word, and loves Him, communicating with Him and granting Him all His treasures, to make Him participate in Himself. Love fastens the bonds and makes one Perfection of them. It is the Trinity that loves Itself, is divinely formed, generates, proceeds and is completed. Every holy thought was born in the Perfect Mind, and is reflected in the mind of the just

man. Can the Word therefore ignore the thoughts of the just, since they are the thoughts of the Thought? »

They pray near the closed sepulchre. They pray for a long time. The disciples and then the servants reach them, the former on horseback, the latter carrying the luggage. But they stop at the edge of the meadow, beyond which is the sepulchre. The prayer is over.

« Goodbye, Gamaliel. Ascend as Hillel did. »

« What do You mean? »

« Ascend. He is ahead of you because he knew how to believe more humbly than you. Peace be with you. »

161. The Grandson of Eli, a Pharisee of Capernaum, is Cured.

11th May 1945.

Jesus is about to arrive in Capernaum by boat. The sun is almost setting and the lake is sparkling with red and yellow hues.

While the two boats are manoeuvring to draw near the coast, John says: « I will go to the fountain and bring You some water for Your thirst. »

« The water is good here » exclaims Andrew.

« Yes, it is good. And your love makes it even better for Me. »

« I will take the fish home. The women will prepare them for supper. After, will You speak to us and to them? »

« Yes, Peter, I will. »

« It is more pleasant now to come back home. Heretofore we looked like so many nomads. But now, with the women, there is more order, more love. And then! When I see Your Mother, I no longer feel tired. I don't know... »

Jesus smiles and is quiet.

The boat grounds on the shingly shore. John and Andrew, who are wearing short undertunics, jump into the water and with the help of some young men they beach the boat and place a board as a wharf. Jesus is the first to come off, and He waits until the second boat is beached, in order to be together with all His disciples. Then, walking with slow steps they go towards the fountain. A natural fountain of spring water, that wells up just outside the village, and plentiful, cold and silvery runs into a stone basin. The water is so limpid that it induces people to drink it. John, who has run ahead with an amphora, is already back and he hands the dripping pitcher to Jesus, Who has a long drink.

« How thirsty You were, my Master! And I, foolishly, did not get any water. »

« It does not matter, John. It is all over » and He caresses him.

They are about to come back when they see Simon Peter arrive,

running as fast as he can. He had gone home to take his fish. « Master! Master! » he shouts panting. « The village is in turmoil, because the only grandchild of Eli, the Pharisee, is about to die from a snakebite. He had gone with the old man, and against his mother's wishes, to their olive-grove. Eli was overseeing some works, while the child was playing near the roots of an old olivetree. He put his hand into a hole, hoping to find a lizard, and he found a snake. The old man seems to have become distraught. The child's mother, who incidentally hates her father-in-law, quite rightly as it happens, is accusing him of being a murderer. The boy is getting colder and colder every moment. Although relatives, they did not love one another! And they could not have been more closely related! »

« Family grudge is never a good thing! »

« Well, Master, I say that the snakes did not love the snake: Eli. And they have killed the little snake. I am sorry that he saw me and he shouted after me: "Is the Master there?". And I am sorry for the little one. He was a nice boy and it is not his fault that he was the grandson of a Pharisee. »

« Of course, it is not his fault. »

They walk towards the village and they see a crowd of people, shouting and weeping, coming towards them, with the elderly Eli in front of them.

« He has found us! Let us go back! »

« Why? That old man is suffering. »

« That old man hates You, remember that. He is one of Your first and fiercest accusers at the Temple. »

« I remember that I am Mercy. »

Old Eli, unkempt and upset, with untidy garments, runs towards Jesus, his arms outstretched, and drops at His feet shouting: « Mercy! Mercy! Forgive me. Do not avenge Yourself on an innocent boy for my harshness. You are the only one who can save him! God, Your Father, has brought You here. I believe in You! I venerate You! I love You! Forgive me! I have been unfair! A liar! But I have been punished. These hours alone serve as a punishment. Help me! It's the boy! The only son of my dead son. And she is accusing me of killing him » and he weeps striking his head on the ground rhythmically.

« Come on! Do not cry like that. Do you want to die without having to look after your grandson any more? »

« He is dying! He is dying! Perhaps he is already dead. Let me die, too. Don't let me live in that empty house! Oh! My sad last days! »

« Eli, get up and let us go... »

« You... are You really coming? But do You know who I am? »

« An unhappy man. Let us go. »

The old man gets up and says: « I will go ahead, but run, run, be

quick! » And I he goes away, very quickly, because of the desperation piercing his heart.

« But, Lord, do You think that You will change him? Oh! what a wasted miracle! Let that little snake die! Also the old man will die broken-hearted... and there will be one less on Your way... God has seen to it... »

« Simon! To tell you the truth, you are now the snake. » Jesus severely repels Peter, who lowers his head, and He goes on.

Near the largest square in Capernaum there is a beautiful house before which the crowds are making a dreadful noise... Jesus turns His steps towards it and is about to arrive when the old man comes out from the wide open door, followed by a ruffled woman, who is holding in her arms a little agonizing child. The poison has already paralyzed his organs and death is near. The little wounded hand is hanging down with the mark of the bite at the root of his thumb. Eli does nothing but shout: « Jesus! Jesus! »

And Jesus, squeezed and overwhelmed by the crowds who hamper His movements, takes the little hand to His mouth, sucks the wound, then breathes on the waxen face and the glassy half closed eyes. He then straightens Himself up: « Here » He says, « the child will now wake up. Do not frighten him with your expressions which are so upset. He will already be afraid when he remembers the snake. »

In fact the boy, whose face colours up, opens his mouth in a big yawn, rubs his eyes, opens them and is surprised at being among so many people. He then remembers, and is about to run away, with such a sudden leap, that he would have fallen had Jesus not been ready to receive him in His arms.

« Good, good! What are you afraid of? Look how beautiful the sun is! Over there is the lake, your house, and your mother and grandfather are here. »

« And the snake? »

« It is no longer here. But I am. »

« You. Yes... » The child thinks... and then, in the innocent voice of truth, he says: « My grandfather used to tell me to say "cursed" to You. But I will not say it. I love You, I do. »

« I? I said that? The little one is raving. Do not believe him, Master. I have always respected You. » As fear passes away, the old nature comes to surface again.

« Words are and are not of value. I take them for what they are. Goodbye, little one, goodbye, woman, goodbye, Eli. Love one another and love Me, if you can. » Jesus turns round and goes toward the house where He lives.

« Why, Master, did You not work a striking miracle? You should have ordered the poison to go out of the little one. You should have shown Yourself as being God. Instead You sucked the poison like

any poor man. » Judas of Kerioth is not very happy. He wanted something sensational.

Also others are of the same opinion. « You should have crushed that enemy of Yours, with Your power. You heard him, eh! He became poisonous again at once... »

« His poison is of no importance. But you must consider that if I had done what you wanted Me to do, he would have said that I was helped by Beelzebub. His ruined soul can still acknowledge My power as a doctor. But no more. A miracle leads to faith only those who are already on that way. But in those without humility faith always proves that there is humility in a soul - it leads to blasphemy. It is better therefore to avoid that danger by having recourse to forms of human appearance. The incurable misery is the misery of the incredulous. No means will eliminate it because no miracle induces them to believe or to be good. It does not matter. I fulfil My task. They follow their ill fate. »

« Why did You do it, then? »

« Because I am Goodness and because no one may say that I was vindictive with My enemies and provocative with provokers. I am heaping coal on their heads. And they are handing it to Me that I may heap it. Be good, Judas of Simon. Endeavour not to behave as they do! And that is all. Let us go to My Mother. She will be happy to hear that I cured a child. »

162. Jesus in the House in Capernaum after the Miracle on Elisha.

13th May 1945.

From a vegetable garden, which is beginning to flourish in all its furrows, Jesus enters a very large kitchen where the two elder Maries (Mary of Clopas and Mary Salome) are cooking the supper.

« Peace to you! »

« Oh! Jesus! Master! » The two women turn round and greet Him, one holding in her hands a lovely fish, which she is gutting, the other still holding a pot full of vegetables, which are boiling, and which she has just removed from the fire to see whether they were cooked. Their kind withered faces, flushed by the fire and work, smile out of joy and seem to become younger and lovelier in their happiness.

« It will be ready in a moment, Jesus. Are You tired? You must be hungry » says aunt Mary, who has the familiarity of a relative and loves Jesus, I think, more than her own children.

« Not more than usual. But I will certainly eat with relish the good food that you and Mary have prepared for Me. And the others will do the same. Here they are coming. »

« Your Mother is upstairs. You know! Simon came... Oh! I am as

happy as a lark this evening! No. Not really because... You know when I would be as happy as a king. »

« Yes, I know. » Jesus draws His aunt close to Himself and kisses her forehead and then says: « I know your desire and your sinless envy of Salome. But the day will come when you will be able to say like her: "All my sons belong to Jesus". I am going to My Mother. »

He goes out, climbs the little outside staircase and goes on to the terrace, which covers a full half of the house, whereas the other half is taken up by a very large room, from which come out the strong voices of men, and at intervals, Mary's gentle voice, the limpid virginal voice of a girl, which years have not affected, the same voice that said: « I am the handmaid of the Lord » and which sang lullabies to Her Baby.

Jesus goes near noiselessly, smiling because He hears His Mother say: « My home is My Son. I do not suffer being away from Nazareth, except when He is away. But if He is near Me... oh! I need nothing else. And I am not afraid for My house... You are there... »

« Oh! Look, there is Jesus! » shouts Alphaeus of Sarah, who facing the door, is the first to see Jesus.

« Yes, here I am. Peace to you all. Mother! » He kisses His Mother on Her forehead and is kissed by Her. He then turns to the unexpected guests, who are His cousin Simon, Alphaeus of Sarah, Isaac the shepherd and one Joseph who was received by Jesus at Emmaus after the verdict of the Sanhedrin.

« We went to Nazareth and Alphaeus told us that we had to come here. We came. And Alphaeus wanted to come with us, and also Simon » explains Isaac.

« I could not believe I was coming » says Alphaeus.

« I also wanted to see You, stay a little time with You and with Mary » concludes Simon.

« And I am very happy to be with you. I did the right thing in not staying any longer as the people of Kedesh desired, where I arrived coming from Gherghesa to Merom and going round the other side of the lake. »

« Is that where You came from? »

« Yes, I visited the places where I had already been and even farther away. I went as far as Giscala. »

« What a long road! »

« But what a great harvest! Do you know, Isaac. We were the guests of rabbi Gamaliel. He was very kind to us. And then I met the synagogue leader of the Clear Water. He is coming, too. I entrust him to you. And then... and then I gained three disciples... » Jesus smiles frankly, blissfully.

« Who are they? »

« A little old man at Korazim. I helped him some time ago, and the poor man, who is a true Israelite without prejudice, to show Me his love, has worked his area, as a perfect ploughman works the soil. The other is a boy, five years old, perhaps a little more. Intelligent and brave. I spoke also to him the first time I was at Bethsaida and he remembered better than adults. The third is an old leper. I cured him near Korazim one evening a long time ago and then I left him. I have now found him again, announcing Me on the mountains in Naphtali. And to confirm his words he shows what is left of his hands, cured but partly impaired, and his feet, which have also been cured but are deformed, and yet he walks a long way. People realise how ill he was when they see what is left of him and they believe his words which are dressed with tears of gratitude. It was easy for Me to speak there, because there was one who had already made Me known and had led other people to believe in Me. And I was able to work many miracles. So much can be done by one who really believes... »

Alphaeus nods assent without speaking, continuously absentminded, while Simon lowers his head under the implicit reproach, and Isaac rejoices wholeheartedly because of the joy of his Master, Who is about to tell of the miracle worked shortly before on Eli's little grandchild.

But supper is ready, and the women, with Mary, prepare the table in the large room and take the dishes there and then withdraw downstairs. Only the men remain and Jesus offers, blesses and hands out the portions.

But only a few mouthfuls of food had been taken, when Susanna goes upstairs saying: « Eli has come with servants and many gifts. But he would like to speak to You. »

« I will come at once, or better still, tell him to come up. »

Susanna goes out and comes back shortly afterwards with old Eli and two servants who are carrying a large basket. Behind them the women, with the exception of the Most Holy Mary, are casting curious glances.

« God be with You, my benefactor » greets the Pharisee.

« And with you, Eli. Come in. What do you want? Is your grandson not well again? »

« Oh! He is very well. He is jumping in the kitchen garden like a little kid. Before I was so dumbfounded and bewildered that I failed to fulfil my duty. I wish to show You my gratitude and I beg You not to refuse the little I am offering You. A little food for You and Your friends. It is the produce of my fields. And... I would like... I would like to have You at my table tomorrow. To thank You once again and honour You, with my friends. Do not refuse, Master. I would understand that You do not love me and that if You cured Elisha, it was only for his sake, not mine. »

« Thank you. But no gifts were needed. »

« Every great and learned man accepts them. It's the custom. »

« And I do. But I accept very willingly one gift only, nay, I look for it. »

« Which is? If I can, I will give it to You. »

« Your hearts. Your thoughts. Give Me them. For your own good. »

« But I consecrate mine to You, blessed Jesus! Can You doubt it? Yes, I... I did You wrong. But now I have understood. I have also heard of the death of Doras, who offended You... Why are You smiling, Master? »

« I was remembering something. »

« I thought You did not believe what I was saying. »

« Oh! no. I know that you were moved by Doras' death. Even more than by this evening's miracle. But do not be afraid of God, if you have really understood, and if from now on you wish to be My friend. »

« I can see that You really are a prophet. It is true, I was more afraid... I was coming to You more out of fear of punishment like Doras', than because of the accident. And this evening I said: "There you are. The punishment has come. And it is even more severe because it did not strike the old oak in its own life, but in its love, in its joy for life, by striking the little oak, in which I rejoiced". I understood that it would have been just as it was for Doras... »

« You understood that it would have been just. But you did not believe yet in Him Who is good. »

« You are right. But it is no longer so. Now I have understood. So, are You coming to my house tomorrow? »

« Eli, I had decided to leave at dawn. But I will postpone My departure by one day, that you may not think that I despise you. I will be with you tomorrow. »

« Oh! You really are good. I will always remember it. »

« Goodbye, Eli. Thank you for everything. This fruit is beautiful, and the cheese must be as tasty as butter, and the wine certainly very good. But you could have given everything to the poor in My name. »

« There is something for them, if You wish so, at the bottom, under the rest. It was an offering for You. »

« Well, we will distribute it tomorrow together, before or after the meal, as you prefer. May the night be a peaceful one for you, Eli. »

« And for You. Goodbye » and he goes away with his servants.

Peter, who with all the mimicry of which he is capable, has pulled out the contents of the basket, to hand it back to the servants, puts the purse on the table in front of Jesus and says, as if he were concluding an internal speech: « And it will be the first time that the

old owl gives alms. »

« It is true » confirms Matthew. « I was greedy, but he surpassed me. He doubled his capital by usury. »

« Well... if he mends his ways... It's a good thing, is it not? » says Isaac.

« It certainly is a good thing. And it appears to be so » state Philip and Bartholomew.

« Old Eli a convert! Ah! Ah! » Peter laughs heartily.

Simon, the cousin, who has been pensive all the time, says: « Jesus, I would like... I would like to follow You. Not like these. But at least as the women do. Let me join my mother and Yours. They are all coming... I, I, a relative... I do not expect to have a place amongst the disciples. But at least... at least as a good friend... »

« May God bless you, my son! How long have I been waiting to hear you say that! » shouts Mary of Alphaeus.

« Come. I reject no one, neither do I force anyone. I do not even exact everything from everybody. I take what you can give Me. It is a good thing that the women are not always alone, when we go to places unknown to them. Thank you, brother. »

« I am going to tell Mary » says Simon's mother and she adds: « She is down in Her little room, praying. She will be happy. »

... It is rapidly growing dark. They light a lamp to go down the staircase which is already dark in twilight, and some go to the right, some to the left, to rest.

Jesus goes out, and walks to the shore of the lake. The village is quiet, the streets are deserted, there is no one on the shore or on the lake in the moonless night. There are only stars to be seen in the sky and the murmur of the surf to be heard on the shingly shore. Jesus goes on board the beached boat, sits down, lays one arm on the edge and rests His head on it. I do not know whether He is thinking or praying.

Matthew approaches Him very quietly: « Master, are You sleeping? » he asks in a low voice.

« No, I am thinking. Come here beside Me, since you are not sleeping. »

« I thought You were upset and I followed You. Are You not satisfied with Your day's work? You touched Eli's heart, You acquired Simon of Alphaeus as a disciple... »

« Matthew, you are not a simple man like Peter and John. You are astute and learned. Be also frank. Would you be happy because of those conquests? »

« But... Master... They are always better than I am and You told me, on that day, that You were very happy because of my conversion... »

« Yes. But you were really converted. And you were genuine in

your evolution towards Good. You came to Me without any elaboration of thought, you came through the will of your spirit. But Eli is not like that... neither is Simon. Only the surface of the former has been touched: the man-Eli is shocked. Not the spirit Eli. That is always the same. When the excitement caused by the miracles on Doras and his little grandchild is over, he will be the same Eli as yesterday and as always. Simon!... he, too, is nothing but a man. If he had seen Me insulted instead of honoured, he would have pitied Me, and as always, he would have left Me. This evening he heard that a little old man, a child, a leper can do what he, although a relative, cannot do; he saw the pride of a Pharisee bend before Me and he decided: "Also I". But those conversions brought about by the spur of human evaluations, are not the ones that make Me happy. On the contrary, they dishearten Me. Stay with Me, Matthew. It is not a moonlight night, but at least the stars are twinkling. In My heart this evening there is nothing but tears. Let your company be the star of your distressed Master... »

« Master, if I can... You can imagine! The trouble is that I am always a poor miserable man, a good for-nothing. I have sinned too much to be able to please You. I am not good at speaking. I do not yet know how to say the new, pure, holy words, now that I have left my old language of fraud and lust. And I am afraid I will never be able to speak to You and about You. »

« No, Matthew. You are a man, with all the painful experience of a man. You are the one, who, having tasted mud and tasting now the celestial honey, can tell the two flavours, and give their true analysis, and understand and make your fellow creatures understand now and later. And they will believe you, because you are the man, the poor man, who by his own will, becomes the just man dreamt of by God. Let Me, the Man-God, lean on you, the mankind I have loved to the extent of leaving Heaven for you, and dying for you. »

« No, not to die. Don't tell me that You are dying for me! »

« Not for you, Matthew, but for all the Matthews of the world and centuries. Embrace Me, Matthew, kiss your Christ, for yourself and for everybody. Relieve My tiredness of an unappreciated Redeemer. I relieved you of your tiredness of a sinner. Wipe away My tears, because My bitterness, Matthew, is that I have been so little understood. »

« Oh! Lord, Lord! Yes. Of course!... » and Matthew, sitting near the Master and clasping Him with one arm, comforts Him with his love...

163. Dinner in the House of Eli, the Pharisee of Capernaum.

14th May 1945.

Eli's house is very busy today. Servants and maidservants go and come and amongst them there is little Elisha, a lively little child. Then there are two stately personages and two more. I know the former two, as they are the ones who went with Eli to Matthew's house. I do not know the latter two, but I hear them being called Samuel and Joachim. Jesus comes last with the Iscariot.

After solemn reciprocal salutations, there is the question: « Only with this one? And the others? »

« The others are around the country. They will come in the evening. »

« Oh! I am sorry. I thought it was... True, last night I invited only You, meaning all the rest with You. Now I was afraid they might be offended, or... they might disdain to come to my house, owing to past light disagreements... eh! eh! » The old man laughs...

« Oh! no! My disciples do not nourish proud touchiness or incurable grudge. »

« Of course! of course! Very well. Let us go in then. »

The usual purification ceremony and then they go into the dining room, which opens on to a large yard, where the first roses bring a happy note.

Jesus caresses little Elisha, who is playing in the yard and who has only four little red marks on his hand from the past trouble. He does not even remember his past fear, but he remembers Jesus and he wants to kiss Him and be kissed by Him, with the spontaneity of children. With his little arms round Jesus' neck, he speaks to Him through His hair, confiding that when he is big he will go to Him and asks: « Do You want me? »

« I want everybody. Be good and you will come with Me. »

The little boy goes away bounding about.

They sit at the table and Eli wishes to be so perfect that he puts Jesus beside him and on the other side Judas, who is thus between Eli and Simon, as Jesus is between Eli and Uriah.

The meal begins. Their conversation at first is inconsequential. It then becomes interesting. And since wounds are sore and chains are heavy, the talk turns to the eternal topic of the enslavement of Palestine by Rome. I do not know whether it was done deliberately or without any evil purpose. I know that the five Pharisees complain of the new Roman abuses, as of a sacrilege, and they want to get Jesus interested in the discussion.

« You know! They want to pry into our income, down to the last coin. And as they have realised that we meet in the synagogue to speak about that and about them, now they are threatening to come in, without any respect. I am afraid they will enter also the

houses of priests, one of these days! » shouts Joachim.

« What do You say about that? Do You not feel disgusted? » asks Eli.

Jesus replies to the direct question: « As an Israelite yes, as a man no. »

« Why that distinction? I do not understand. Are You two in one? »

« No. But there is in Me flesh and blood: that is, the animal. And there is the spirit. The spirit of an Israelite, compliant with the Law, suffers because of such violations. The flesh and blood do not suffer, because I lack the goad that hurts you. »

« Which one? »

« Interest. You said that you meet in the synagogues to speak also of business without fear of intrusive ears. And you are afraid you will no longer be able to do so and consequently you are afraid you may not be able to conceal even a small coin from the tax-collectors and that you may be taxed exactly according to your assets. I possess nothing. I live on the charity of My neighbours and on My love for them. I have neither gold, nor fields, nor vineyards, nor houses, except My Mother's house in Nazareth, which is so small and poor as to be ignored by the tax-assessors. Consequently I am not afraid that they may find out that My statement of income is untrue and that I may be fined and punished. All I possess is the Word that God gave Me and that I give. But it is such a sublime thing that man has no means whatsoever to affect it. »

« But if You were in our position what would You do? »

« Well, do not take it amiss if I tell you quite frankly My opinion, which is in contrast to yours. I solemnly tell you that I would behave differently. »

« How? »

« Not offending against the holy truth. It is always a sublime virtue, even when it is applied to such human things as taxes. »

« But... then... ! How they would fleece us! But You are not considering that we own a lot and we would have to pay a lot! »

« You have said it. God has granted you a lot. In proportion you must give a lot. Why behave so badly, as unfortunately many do, so that poor people are taxed out of proportion? We are aware of the situation. How many taxes there are in Israel, our taxes, which are unjust! The great, who already have so much, benefit by them. Whereas they are the despair of poor people who have to pay them and have to starve to find the money. Love for our neighbour does not recommend that. We Israelites should be so thoughtful as to take upon us the burden of the poor. »

« You are saying that because You are poor, too. »

« No, Uriah. I am saying that because it is justice. Why has Rome been able to oppress us thus? Because we sinned and we are divided by hatred. The rich hate the poor, the poor hate the rich. Because

there is no justice and the enemy takes advantage of the situation and has subdued us. »

« You have mentioned various reasons... Are there any more? »

« I would not like to go against the truth by twisting the nature of a place consecrated to religion and making it a sure shelter for human things. »

« Are You reproaching us? »

« No. I am replying to you. Listen to your own consciences. You are masters and therefore... »

« I would say that it is time to rise, to rebel, to punish the invader and restore our kingdom. »

« True, true! You are right, Simon. But the Messiah is here. He must do it » replies Eli.

« But the Messiah, for the time being, forgive me, Jesus, is only Goodness. He advises everything, except to rebel. We will... »

« Listen, Simon. Remember the book of Kings. Saul was at Gilgal, the Philistines were at Michmash, the people were afraid and dispersed, the prophet Samuel was not coming. Saul decided to precede the servant of God and offer the sacrifice himself. Remember the answer that Samuel, on his arrival, gave to the imprudent Saul: "You have acted like a fool and you have not carried out the order that the Lord had commanded you. If you had not done that, now the Lord would have confirmed your sovereignty over Israel for ever. But now your sovereignty will not last". An untimely and proud action served neither the king nor the people. God knows the hour. Man does not. God knows the means, man does not. Leave things to God and deserve His help by means of holy behaviour. My Kingdom is not a kingdom of rebellion and ferocity. But it will be established. It is not a preserve for a few people. It will be universal. Blessed are those who will come to it, who are not led into error by My poor appearance, according to the spirit of the world, and who will see the Saviour in Me. Be not afraid. I shall be King. The King who came from Israel. The King who will extend His Kingdom all over Mankind. But you, masters of Israel, must not misunderstand My words and those of the Prophets who announce Me. No human kingdom, no matter how powerful it may be, is universal and eternal. The Prophets say that Mine will be such. That should enlighten you on the truth and spirituality of My Kingdom. I leave you. But I have a request to make to Eli. This is your purse. In a shelter of Simon of Jonas there are some poor people who have come from everywhere. Come with Me to give them the alms of love. Peace be with you all. »

« Stay a little longer » beg the Pharisees.

« I cannot. There are people, whose bodies and hearts are diseased, and they are waiting to be comforted. Tomorrow I will be going away. I want everyone to see Me leave without being disappointed. »

« Master, I... am old and tired. Please go in my name. You have Judas of Simon with You, and we know him well. Do it Yourself. God be with You. »

Jesus goes out with Judas who, as soon as they are in the square, says: « The old viper! What did he mean? »

« Forget about it! Or better still: just think that he wanted to praise you. »

Impossible, Master! Those mouths never praise who does good. I mean, never sincerely. And with regard to his coming!... It is because he loathes the poor and is afraid of their curses. He has tortured the poor people here so often. I can swear it without any fear. And therefore...

« Be good, Judas. Be good. Let God judge. »

164. Towards the Retreat on the Mountain before the Election of the Apostles.

15th May 1945.

The boats of Peter and John are sailing on the placid lake, followed by, I think, all the boats that exist on the shores of Tiberias, because they are so numerous, large and small, coming and going, endeavouring to reach and overtake the boat in which Jesus is and then forming a long line behind it. Prayers, entreaties, requests and outcries can be heard over the blue waves.

Jesus promises, replies and blesses. In His boat there is also Mary and the mother of James and Judas, whereas in the other boat there is Mary Salome with her son John and Susanna. « Yes, I will come back. I promise you. Be good. Remember My words, so that you may connect them with the ones I will tell you later. I will not be away long. Do not be selfish. I have come also for other people. Be good! You will hurt yourselves. Yes, I will pray for you. You will always have Me with you. The Lord be with you. Of course, I will remember your tears and you will be comforted. You must hope and have faith. »

And thus, blessing and promising while the boat is moving, they reach the shore. It is not Tiberias, but a tiny little village, a handful of poor, almost forlorn houses. Jesus and the disciples disembark and the boats handled by the servants and Zebedee go back. Also the other boats imitate them, but many of the people in them disembark and want to follow Jesus at all costs. Among them I can see Isaac with his two proteges: Joseph and Timoneus. I do not recognise anybody else amongst the many people of all ages, from youngsters to old people.

Jesus leaves the village, the few poorly dressed inhabitants of which remain quite indifferent. Jesus has given alms to them and then reaches the main road. He stops. « And now, let us part » He

says. « Mother, You with Mary and Salome will go to Nazareth. Susanna can go to Cana. I will soon come back. You know what is to be done. God be with you! »

But for His Mother He has a special greeting, a salutation all smiles and also when Mary kneels down, setting an example to the others, in order to be blessed, Jesus smiles most kindly. The women, with Alphaeus of Sarah and Simon, go towards their town.

Jesus addresses those who have stayed: « I leave you, but I am not sending you away. I leave you for a short time, as I am retiring with My disciples to those mountain gorges, which you can see over there. Who wishes to wait for Me, should do so here on this plain. Those who do not wish to wait, can go home. I am retiring to pray because I am on the eve of great events. Those who love the cause of the Father should pray, joining Me in spirit. Peace be with you, My children. Isaac, you know what you have to do. I bless you, My little shepherd. » Jesus smiles at emaciated Isaac, who is now the shepherd of men gathering round him.

Jesus is now walking away from the lake, turning His steps decidedly towards a gorge between the hills, which stretch in parallel lines, I would say, from the lake westward. A little but very noisy foamy stream runs down between one rocky rugged hill and the next one, which is so steep that it resembles a fjord. Above the stream there is the wild mountain with ugly looking plants, which have grown in all directions, wherever they could, in the crevices between stones. A very narrow steep path climbs up the more rugged hill. And Jesus takes it.

The disciples follow Him with difficulty, in single file, in dead silence. Only when Jesus stops to let them recover their breath, where the path, which looks like a scratch on the impervious mountain side, widens out, they look at one another without uttering a word. Their glances say: « But where is He taking us? », but they do not speak. They only look at one another more and more desolately as they see Jesus resume walking up the wild gorge, with its many caves, crevices and rocks, where it is very difficult to walk, also because of the bramble and thorny bushes, which catch their clothes on all sides, and scratch them and cause them to stumble and hurt their faces. Also the younger ones, laden with heavy sacks, have lost their good humour.

At last Jesus stops and says: « We shall stop here for a week in prayer, to prepare you for a great event. That is why I wanted to be isolated in this desert place, away from all roads and villages. The grottoes here have already been useful to men in the past. They will be useful also to you. The water here is cool and plentiful, whereas the earth is dry. We have enough bread and food for the time we shall be staying. Those who last year were with Me in the

desert, know how I lived there. This is a royal palace compared with that place, and the season, which is now mild, is not affected by the icy bitterness of frost or the burning heat of the sun. You may, therefore, stay here cheerfully. Perhaps we shall never again be all together like this and all alone. This retreat must unite you, making not twelve men of you, but one only institution.

Are you not saying anything? Are you not asking any questions? Lay on that rock the loads that you are carrying and throw down the valley the other load that you have in your hearts: your humanity.

I have brought you here to speak to your spirits, to nourish your spirits, to make you spiritual. I shall not speak many words. I have told you so many in approximately one year that I have been with you! Enough of that. If I should have to change you by means of words, I would have to keep you ten years... one hundred years, and you would still be imperfect. It is now time that I make use of you. And to make use of you, I must form you. I will have recourse to the great medicine, to the great weapon: to prayer. I have always prayed for you. But now I want you to pray by yourselves. I will not yet teach you My prayer. But I will tell you how to pray and what prayer is. It is the conversation of sons with the Father, of spirits with the Spirit, an open, warm, trustful, quiet and frank conversation. Prayer is everything: it is confession, knowledge of ourselves, repentance, a promise to ourselves and to God, a request to God, all done at the feet of the Father. And it cannot be done in a turmoil, among distractions, unless one is a giant in prayer. And even giants suffer from the clash with the noise of the world in their time of prayer. You are not giants, but pygmies. You are but infants in your spirits. You are deficient in your spirits. You will reach here the age of spiritual reason. The rest will come later.

In the morning, at midday and in the evening, we shall gather together to pray with the old words of Israel and to break our bread, then each of you will go back to his grotto, in front of God and of his soul, in front of what I told you in regard to your mission and to your capabilities. Weigh yourselves, listen to yourselves, make up your minds. I am telling you for the last time. And after you will have to be perfect, as much as you can, without tiredness and without your humanity. Then you will no longer be Simon of Jonah and Judas of Simon. No longer Andrew or John, Matthew or Thomas. But you will be My ministers.

Go. Each by himself. I shall be in that cave. I shall always be present. But do not come without a good reason. You must learn to do things by yourselves and be all by yourselves. Because I solemnly tell you that a year ago we were about to become acquainted with one another, and in two years' time we shall be parting. Woe betide you and Me if you have not learned to act by yourselves.

God be with you.

Judas, John, take the foodstuffs into My cave, that one. They must last and I will hand them out. »

« They are not enough!... » objects someone.

« They are sufficient not to die. A too full stomach makes the spirit dull. I want to elevate you and not make you dead weights. »

165. The Election of the Twelve Apostles.

16th May 1945.

It is dawning and the soft light whitens the mountains and seems to soften the wild mountain side. Only the gurgling sound of the foamy stream at the bottom of the valley can be heard, a sound which becomes a strange noise, when echoed by the mountain and its many caves. Where the disciples have rested, there is some gentle rustling among the leaves and the herbs: the first birds to awake, or the last night-birds returning to their hiding places. A group of hares or wild rabbits, gnawing at a low bush of blackberries, run away frightened by a falling stone. Then they go back cautiously, moving their ears in all directions to pick up every sound and when they see that everything is peaceful, they return to the bush. All the leaves and stones are wet with dew and in the wood there is a strong smell of moss, mint and marjoram.

A redbreast flies down to the edge of a cave, the roof of which is formed by a huge protruding stone and standing up straight on its very thin legs, ready to fly away, it moves its little head round, looks into the cave and at the ground, chirping inquisitively and... gluttonously, because of some bread crumbs on the ground. But it does not make up its mind to fly down until it sees that it has been preceded by a big blackbird, which proceeds hopping sideways and is extremely comical in its urchin-like attitude with its profile of an old notary, who wants only a pair of spectacles, to be the complete dignitary. The robin then flies down, hopping behind its daring fellow creature, which now and again thrusts its yellow beak into the moist ground, in archaeological research... for food and then proceeds further, after whistling, just like a real little rascal. The redbreast stuffs itself with the little bread crumbs and is amazed when it sees the blackbird, which had confidently gone into the silent cave, come out of it with a cheese-rind, which it knocks repeatedly against a stone to break it up and make a sumptuous meal of it. It goes back in again, has a look round, and not finding anything else, it whistles scoffingly and flies away to complete its song on the top of an oak-tree, in the blue morning sky. Also the robin flies away, because of a noise from the interior of the cave... and it perches on a thin bough that dangles loosely.

Jesus goes to the entrance of His cave and crumbles some bread,

calling the little birds very gently, by means of a modulated whistle, which is a very good imitation of the twittering of many birds. He then moves away, climbing higher up and resting against a rock in order not to frighten His little friends, which soon fly down: the robin being the first and then many more of various kinds. Jesus' stillness and also His look are such that after a short time many birds are hopping only a few inches from Him. I like to believe, also because of my own experience, that also the most distrustful animals go near people when their instinct tells them that they are not enemies but friends. The redbreast, which is now satisfied, flies to the top of the rock against which Jesus is leaning, it rests on a very thin branch of clematis, swings above Jesus' head and seems to be anxious to descend upon His fair hair or His shoulder. The meal is now over. The rising sun gilds the mountain tops and then the highest branches of the trees, whereas down below, the valley is still in the dim dawn light. The little birds, satisfied and full, fly towards the sun and sing at the top of their voices.

« And now let us go and wake up these other children of Mine » says Jesus, and He walks down, as His cave is the highest one, and He enters the various caves calling the sleeping apostles by their names.

Simon, Bartholomew, Philip, James and Andrew reply at once. Matthew, Peter and Thomas take a little longer to reply. And while Judas Thaddeus goes to meet Jesus as soon as he sees Him appear at the entrance of his grotto, as he is already ready and wide awake, the other cousin, the Iscariot and John are fast asleep, so much so that Jesus has to shake them on their beds, made with tree branches and leaves, in order to wake them up.

John, the last one to be called, is so sound asleep, that he does not realise Who is calling him, and in the haze of his interrupted sleep, he whispers: « Yes, mother, I am coming at once... » But he turns round on his other side.

Jesus smiles, sits on the rustic mattress made of foliage picked in the wood, He bends and kisses the cheek of John, who opens his eyes and is dumbfounded at seeing Jesus. He sits up and says: « Do you need me? Here I am. »

« No. I woke you up as I did the others. But you thought it was your mother. So I kissed you, as mothers do. »

John, half naked in his undertunic, because he used his tunic and mantle as bed covers, clasps Jesus' neck and lays his head between Jesus' shoulder and cheek saying: « Oh! You are much more than a mother! I left her for You, but I would not leave You for her! She bore me to the earth. You are bearing me to Heaven. Oh! I know! »

« What do you know more than the others? »

« What the Lord told me in this cave. See, I never came to You and

I think my companions said it was due to indifference and pride. But I am not concerned with what they think. I know that You know the truth. I was not coming to Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, but to what You are in the bosom of the Fire that is the eternal Love of the Most Holy Trinity, its Nature, its Essence, its Real Essence - oh! I cannot tell, however, what I have understood in this dark gloomy cavern that has become so full of light for me, in this cold grotto where I have been burnt by a featureless fire that has descended into the depth of my being and has inflamed me with a sweet martyrdom, in this silent cave, which has, however, sung celestial truths to me - but to what You are, the Second Person of the ineffable Mystery, which is God and which I penetrated because God has drawn me to Himself and I have always had Him with me. And I have poured all my desires, all my tears, all my requests on Your divine bosom, Word of God. Amongst the many words I have heard from You, there never was one so comprehensive as the one You told me here, You, God the Son, You, God like the Father, You, God like the Holy Spirit, You, centre of the Trinity... oh! perhaps I am blaspheming, but that is what I think, because if You were not the love of the Father and the love for the Father, then the Love, the Divine Love would be missing, and the Divinity would no longer be Trine and it would lack the most becoming attribute of God: His love! Oh! I have so much in here, but it is like water gurgling against a dam and cannot flow out... and I seem to be dying of it, so violent and sublime is the turmoil in my heart, since I have understood You... but I would not like to be freed of it for the whole world... Let me die of that love, my sweet God! » John smiles and weeps, panting, inflamed by his love, relaxing on Jesus' chest, as if he were exhausted by his ardour. And Jesus caresses him, burning with love Himself.

John composes himself and with deep humility he begs: « Do not tell the others what I told You. I am sure that they too have lived with God as I did during these past days. But leave the stone of silence on my secret. »

« Do not worry, John. No one will be aware of your wedding with the Love. Get dressed, come. We must leave. »

Jesus goes out on to the path where the others are already gathered. Their faces look more venerable and serene. The old ones look like patriarchs, the younger ones have a maturity and dignity, which were previously concealed by their youth. The Iscariot looks at Jesus with a shy smile on his face marked by tears. Jesus caresses him passing by. Peter... is silent. And his silence is so strange that it is more striking than any other change. He looks at Jesus attentively, but with a new dignity that makes his bald forehead look more spacious and his eyes more severe, whereas before they were full of gentle intelligence only. Jesus calls him

near Himself and keeps him there while waiting for John, who at last comes out. I could not say whether his face looks more pale or more flushed, it is certainly burning with a flame that does not change its colour, and yet is most obvious. They all look at him.

« Come here, John, near Me. And you, too, Andrew, and you, James of Zebedee. Then you, Simon, and you, Bartholomew, Philip, and you, My cousins, and Matthew. Judas of Simon here, in front of Me. Thomas, come here. Sit down. I must speak to you. »

They all sit down quietly, like good children, all engrossed in their internal world and yet paying attention to Jesus, as they never did before.

« Do you know what I have done to you? You all know. Your souls told your minds. But your souls, which were the queens these past days, have taught your minds two great virtues: humility and silence, the son of humility and prudence, which are the daughters of charity. Only eight days ago you would have come to proclaim your cleverness and your new knowledge, like clever children who are eager to astound people and overcome their rivals. Now you are silent. You have grown from children into adolescents and you are already aware that such a proclamation might humiliate a companion who was perhaps less helped by God, and therefore you do not speak.

You are also like pubescent girls. The holy reserve, concerning the change that revealed the nuptial mystery of souls with God, was born in you. These caves seemed cold, hostile and repulsive on the first day... now you are looking at them as if they were bright scented nuptial rooms. You have met God in them. Before you were aware of Him. But you did not know Him in the intimacy that blends two into one. Amongst you there are some who have been married for years, some who have had but a disappointing relationship with women, some who are chaste owing to various reasons. But the chaste ones now know what perfect love is, as the married ones know. Nay, I can say that nobody knows what perfect love is, as he who is unaware of carnal lusts. Because God reveals Himself in His fullness to the pure, both because He takes delight in giving Himself to those who are pure, as He, the Most Pure One, finds part of Himself in the creature free from lust, and because He wishes to compensate the creature for what it denies itself for His love.

I solemnly tell you that because of the love I have for you and of the wisdom I possess, if I did not have to accomplish the work of the Father, I would keep you here and be with you, isolated, as I am sure that I would soon make great saints of you, and you would no longer be subject to confusion, defections, failures, slackening, recurrences. But I cannot. I must go. And you must go. The world is waiting for us. The desecrated and desecrating world, which needs

teachers and redeemers, is waiting for us. I wanted you to know God, so that you may love Him more than you love the world, which with all its affections is not worth one single smile of God. I wanted to make it possible for you to meditate on what the world is and what God is, so that you may yearn for what is better. At present you are yearning only for God. Oh! I wish I could secure you in your yearning of the present moment! But the world is waiting for us. And we shall go to the world, which is waiting for us, for the sake of the holy Charity that by My order is sending you to the world as it sent Me. But I implore you! Lock in your hearts, like a pearl in a coffer, the treasure of the past days in which you have examined, cured, elevated, renovated and united yourselves to God. And keep and preserve these precious memories in your hearts, like the witness stones erected by the Patriarchs in remembrance of the alliance with God.

As from today you are no longer My favourite disciples, but the apostles, the chiefs of My Church. All the hierarchies of the Church, throughout centuries, shall descend from you, and will call you masters, having as their Master your God in His treble power, wisdom and charity. I have not chosen you because you are the most worthy, but for a number of reasons that you need not know now. I have chosen you in place of the shepherds who have been My disciples since I was born. Why did I do it? Because it was right to do so. Amongst you there are Galileans and Judaeans, learned and unlearned, rich and poor people. And that is because of the world, that it may not say that I have chosen one category only. But you will not be sufficient for everything there is to be done. Neither now, nor later.

Not all of you will remember a passage of the Book. I will remind you. Book 2 of Chronicles, Chapter 29, tells how Hezekiah, King of Judah, had the Temple purified, and after it was purified, he had sacrifices offered in atonement, for his kingdom, for the Temple and for the whole of Judah, and then the offerings of the single individuals began. But as the priests were not sufficient for the sacrifices, the levites, who are consecrated with a shorter rite than the priests, were summoned.

That is what I will do. You are the priests, who have been prepared by Me, the Eternal Pontiff, diligently and for a long time. But you will not suffice for the work, which is much more extensive than the sacrifice of the offerings of individuals to the Lord their God. I will therefore associate with you the disciples who will remain such, those who are waiting for us at the foot of the mountain, those who are already higher up, those who are spread all over Israel and that later will be spread all over the world. They will be entrusted with equal tasks, because the mission is only one, but their position will be different in the eyes of

the world. But not in the eyes of God, where there is justice, so that the obscure disciple, ignored by the apostles and by his brethren, who lives a holy life taking souls to God, will be greater than a known apostle, who has only the name of apostle and lowers his apostolic dignity for human purposes.

The task of the apostles and disciples will still be the same as the task of the priests and levites of Hezekiah: to perform the rites of the cult, to demolish idolatries, to purify hearts and places, to preach God and His Word. There is not a more holy task on the earth. Neither is there a dignity higher than yours. That is why I said to you: "Listen to yourselves and examine yourselves".

Woe betide the apostle who falls! He drags many disciples with him, and they drag a greater number of believers and the ruin grows larger and larger like a falling avalanche or a ring that expands on the lake when several stones are thrown in the same spot.

Will you all be perfect? No. Will the spirit of the present moment last? No. The world will throw its tentacles to choke your souls. That will be the victory of the world: to extinguish the light in the hearts of saints; the world, a son of Satan for five tenths, a servant of Satan, for three more tenths, indifferent to God for the remaining two tenths. Defend yourselves from yourselves, against yourselves, against the world, flesh and the demon. Above all, defend yourselves from yourselves. Stand on your guard, My children, against pride, sensuality, duplicity, tepidity, spiritual drowsiness and against avarice! When your inferior ego speaks and moans over alleged cruelty to it, hush it up by saying: "For a moment of hardship, which I give you now, I will procure for you, and for ever, the banquet of ecstasy that you enjoyed in the mountain cave at the end of the month of Shebat".

Let us go. Let us go and meet the others who in large numbers are awaiting My coming. And then I will go for a few hours to Tiberias and you, preaching Me, will go to wait for Me at the foot of the mountain that is on the road leading from Tiberias to the sea. I will come up there to preach. Take your bags and mantles. The retreat is over and the election has been made. »

17th May 1945.

Jesus says:

« You are not feeling well and I will leave you in peace. I only wish to point out to you how a sentence omitted or a word wrongly copied can alter everything. And you, My writer, are alive and can make the correction at once. So consider and try to understand how twenty centuries have deprived the Gospel, the apostolic Gospel, of parts that did no harm to the doctrine, but prevented it from being easily understood. This - if we go back to the origin we find that it is still the work of Disorder - explains many things

and lends itself to the children of Disorder for so many more things. And you can see how easy it is to make errors in copying... Little John, be good today. You are a broken flower. I will come later and mend your stalk. I need the tears of your wound today. God is with you. »

166. The First Sermon of Simon Zealot and John.

18th May 1945.

Jesus, half way down the mountain, finds many disciples and many more people, who by degrees have joined the disciples. They have come here urged by the need of a miracle, by the desire to hear Jesus' word, and have been guided here either by information of people or by the instinct of their souls. I think that the guardian angels of men have led them to the Son of God, as they were desirous of God. And I do not think I am telling an idle story. If we consider with what prompt and shrewd perseverance Satan led enemies to God and to His Word, every time his diabolical spirit could exhibit to men the semblance of a fault in Christ, it is admissable to think, rather than admissable it is indeed just to think also that the angels were no way inferior to demons and they led non-demoniacal spirits to Christ.

And Jesus does His utmost for all those who have been waiting for Him patiently and fearlessly and grants them miracles and the comfort of His word. How many miracles! As many as the flowers decorating the mountain crags. Some of the miracles are great, like the one for a boy who was rescued from a blazing straw-barn and was dreadfully burnt. The child was brought here on a stretcher, crying mournfully, a heap of scorched flesh under a linen cloth, with which he had been covered, so dreadful is the appearance of his burnt body. He is about to breathe his last. Jesus breathes over him and heals his burns that disappear completely, so much so that the boy gets up, absolutely naked, and runs happily towards his mother, who, weeping for joy, caresses his body now entirely cured, without any trace of burns. She kisses his eyes, which were expected to be burnt, and instead are bright and shining with joy. His hair is short, but not destroyed, as if the flames had acted as a razor and not as an instrument of destruction. Other miracles are minor, like the one in favour of a little elderly man, suffering from asthmatic spasms, who says: « Not for my own sake, but because I have to act as a father to my little orphan grandchildren and I cannot work the land with this disease here, in my throat, choking me... »

There is also an invisible but real miracle, brought about by Jesus' words: « Amongst you, there is one whose soul is weeping, but dare not say the words: "Have mercy on me!" My reply is: "Let

it be done as you wish. You have all My pity, that you may know that I am Mercy". In my turn, however, I say to you: "Be generous". Be generous with God. Break all ties with the past. You perceive God, so come to Him Whom you perceive, with a free heart and complete love. » I do not know to whom, among the crowd, these words are addressed.

Jesus says also: « These are My apostles. They are as many Christs, because I have elected them as such. Apply to them trustingly. They have learned from Me what is needed for your souls... » The apostles, thoroughly afraid, look at Jesus. But He smiles and goes on: «... and they will give your souls the light of stars and the refreshment of dew, to prevent you from languishing in darkness. And then I will come and give you perfect light and consolation and all wisdom to make you strong and happy by means of a supernatural strength and joy. Peace be with you, My children. I am expected by other people who are more unhappy and poorer than you are. But I will not leave you alone. I am leaving My apostles with you, which is the same as if I left the children of My love entrusted to the most amiable and reliable foster-mothers. »

Jesus waves His hand, blesses them and departs, pushing through the crowd, who do not want to let Him go, and just then He works the last miracle. An elderly partly-paralysed woman, brought here by her grandson, joyfully shakes her right arm, which before she could not move, and shouts: « He touched me lightly with His mantle, when passing by, and I am cured! I did not even ask for it, because I am old... But He felt pity also for my secret desire. And with His mantle, the hem of which hardly touched my useless arm, He cured me! Oh! What a great Son our holy David has! Glory be to his Messiah! But look! Look! Also my leg is moving like my arm... Oh! I feel as if I were only twenty years old! »

While many people rush towards the old woman, who is shouting her happiness at the top of her voice, Jesus can sneak away without being detained further. And the apostles follow Him.

When they are in a lonely place, almost down on the plain, they stop for a moment in an area of heathland, which stretches towards the lake. Jesus says: « I bless you! Go back to your work and continue it until I come back, as I told you. »

Peter, who has been quiet so far, bursts out: « But, my Lord, what have You done? Why did You say that we have everything that souls need? It is true that You have told us many things. But we are blockheads, at least I am, and... and of all You gave me, little is left, very little indeed. I am like one, who after a meal, still has in his stomach the heavy part of the food. The rest is no longer there. »

Jesus smiles frankly: « Where is the rest of the food, then? »

« Well... I don't know. I know that when I eat delicate food, after an hour I feel my stomach empty. But if I eat horse-radish, or lentils dressed with oil, eh! it takes a long time to get rid of them! »

« It does. But you can be sure that horse-radish and lentils, which seem to fill you more, are the less nourishing: it is meal that goes through with little benefit. Whereas the delicate dishes that you feel no longer, within an hour, are no longer in your stomach, but in your blood. When food has been digested it is no longer in one's stomach, but its juice is in the blood and is more useful. Now you and your companions think that nothing, or only a little, is left in you of what I told you. Perhaps you remember whatever is more pertinent to one's own nature: the violent the violent parts, the contemplative the contemplative parts, the affectionate the loving parts... But believe Me: everything is within you. Even if it seems to have gone. You have absorbed it. Your thoughts will wind off like a multicoloured thread showing you light or strong hues according to what you require. Be not afraid. Consider that I know and I would never send you if I knew that you were unable to do it. Goodbye, Peter. Cheer up! Smile! Have faith! A good act of faith in the Omnipresent Wisdom. Goodbye, everybody. The Lord is with you. » And He leaves them quickly, while they are still amazed and worried about what they have heard they must do.

« And yet we must obey » says Thomas.

« Yes... of course... Oh! poor me! I feel like running after Him... » grumbles Peter.

« No. Don't. To obey is to love Him » says James of Alphaeus.

« It is only reasonable and also according to holy prudence that we should start while He is still near us and can advise us if we make mistakes. We must help him » suggests the Zealot.

« That's true. Jesus is rather tired. We must relieve Him a little, as best we can. It is not enough to carry the bags, make the beds and prepare the food. Anyone can do that. But we must help Him in His mission, as He wants us to » confirms Bartholomew.

« It's all right for you, because you are a learned man. But I... I am almost completely ignorant... » moans James of Zebedee.

« O Lord! There are those who were up there. They are coming here! What shall we do? » exclaims Andrew.

And Matthew says: « Excuse me, if I, the most miserable one, give you my advice. Would it not be better to pray the Lord, instead of standing here complaining about things complaints cannot mend? Come on, Judas, you know the Scriptures so well, say for us all the prayer of Solomon to obtain Wisdom. Quick! Before they arrive here. »

And Thaddeus in his beautiful baritone voice begins: « God of my ancestors, Lord of mercy, Who by Your word have made all things... etc.... etc. » down to: «... all those were saved by Wisdom,

who pleased You, o Lord, from the beginning. » He finishes in time, just before the people arrive, and gather round them asking thousands of questions as to where the Master has gone, when He will come back, and a more difficult one to be answered, requesting: « How can they follow the Master, not with their legs, but with their souls, along the Way pointed out by Him? »

The apostles are embarrassed by the question. They look at one another and the Iscariot replies: « By following perfection » as if his reply explained everything!...

James of Alphaeus, who is more humble and quiet, becomes pensive, then says: « The perfection to which my companion refers is achieved by obeying the Law. Because the Law is justice and justice is perfection. »

But the crowd are not yet satisfied and one, who appears to be a leader, asks: « But we are like little children with regard to doing good. Children do not know yet the meaning of Good and Evil, they cannot tell one from the other. And on this way, which He points out to us, we are so inexperienced that neither are we able to distinguish between them. There was a way known to us, the old one, which we were taught at school. It is so difficult, long and frightening! Now, listening to His words, we feel that it is like that aqueduct we can see from here. Below, there is the road for animals and men, above, on the light arches, high up in the sun and in the blue sky, near the tallest branches rustling in the wind and resounding with the singing of birds, there is another road, as smooth, clean and clear, as the inferior one is rough, dirty and dark, there is a way for the gurgling limpid water, which is a blessing, because of the water that comes from God and is caressed by what is of God: rays of the sun and of the stars, new leaves, flowers and wings of swallows. We would like to climb up to that higher way, which is His way, but we do not know how to do so, because we are bound down here, under the weight of the old construction. What shall we do? »

The person who has spoken is a young man about twenty-five years old, dark, strong, with an intelligent mien. He does not seem to be a man of the people like the majority of the crowd present. He is leaning on an older man.

The Iscariot, tall as he is, sees him and whispers to his companions: « Quick, explain things properly. There is Hermas with Stephen, who is loved by Gamaliel! » And that is enough to embarrass the apostles completely.

At last the Zealot replies: « There would be no arch, if there was no foundation in the dark road. The latter is the matrix of the former, which rises from it and climbs towards the blue sky, of which you are desirous. The stones fixed in the ground and holding the weight without enjoying rays or flights are aware that they

are set there, because now and again a swallow, squeaking, flies down as far as the mud, and caresses the base of the arch, and a ray of the sun or of a star filters through to say how beautiful is the vault of heaven. Thus, in past centuries, a divine word of promise, a celestial ray of wisdom, descended now and again to caress the stones oppressed by divine wrath. Because the stones were necessary. They are not, were not and never will be useless. Time and the perfection of human knowledge have risen slowly on them and have reached the freedom of present days and the wisdom of supernatural knowledge.

I already see your objection, it is written on your face. It is the one we have all had, before we were able to understand that this is the New Doctrine, the Gospel preached to those who, because of a retarding process, have not become adults through the elevation of the stones of knowledge, but have grown darker and darker like a wall that sinks into a dark abyss.

In order to get out of this affliction of a supernatural darkness, we must bravely free the foundation stone from all the others laid on top of it. Do not be afraid to knock down the high wall that does not carry the pure lymph of the eternal spring. Go back to the foundation, which is not to be changed. It comes from God. It is immovable. But before rejecting the stones, because they are not all bad and useless, examine them one by one, at the sound of the word of God. If you hear that they are sound, keep them and use them again to rebuild. But if you hear in them the dissonant sound of human voice or the rending sound of a satanic voice - and you cannot be mistaken because if it is God's voice it is a sound of love, if it is a human voice it is a sensual sound, if it is a satanic voice it is a sound of hatred - then break the wicked stones into shivers. I say: break them into shivers, because it is charity not to leave behind germs or evil things, which may seduce the wayfarer and induce him to use them to his own disadvantage. Crush literally to smithereens all your deeds, writings, teachings and acts that were not good. It is better to be left with little, to rise by hardly one cubit with good stones, rather than by yards with wicked stones. -Sunbeams and swallows descend also to low walls, which hardly rise above the ground and the humble little flowers at the edge of the road easily reach the low stones to caress them. On the contrary, the proud useless rough stones that want to rise higher receive nothing but thorny caresses and poisonous embraces. Demolish in order to rebuild and to ascend, testing the goodness of Your old stones to the sound of the voice of God. »

« You are a good speaker, man. We must ascend! But how? We have told you that we are less than babies. Who will enable us to climb the steep column? We will test the stones to the sound of the voice of God. We will break up the ones that are not good. But

how can we ascend? We feel giddy only at the thought of it! » says Stephen.

John, who has been listening with his head lowered, smiling to himself, raises his head. His face is bright and he begins to speak:

« Brothers! The thought of ascending makes you feel giddy. It is true. But who told you that it is necessary to attack the ascent direct? Not only babies, but even adults cannot do it. Only angels can glide in the blue skies, because they are free from all material weight. And only heroes in holiness can do it amongst men.

We have a living being, who in this dejected world, is still a holy hero, like the ancient people who adorned Israel, when the Patriarchs were friends of God and the word of the eternal Code was the only one and was obeyed by every righteous creature. John, the Precursor teaches us how to attack the ascent direct. John is a man. But the Grace, which the Fire of God communicated to him, purifying him in his mother's womb, as the lips of the Prophet were cleansed by the Seraph, so that he might precede the Messiah without leaving the stench of original sin along the royal way of Christ, that Grace has given John the wings of an angel and Penance has made them grow, suppressing at the same time the human weight which his nature of a man born of a woman had retained. John, therefore, from the cavern where he preached penance, with his spirit married to Grace burning in his body, can ascend to the top of the arch beyond which is God, the Most High Lord our God, and dominating the past centuries, the present day and the future, with the voice of a prophet and the eye of an eagle that can stare at the eternal sun and recognise it, he can announce: "There is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world". And he can die after this sublime song, which will be sung not only in our limited time, but also in the endless Time in the eternal blessed Jerusalem, to applaud the Second Person, to invoke Him on human miseries, to sing hosannas in the eternal brightness.

But the Lamb of God, the Most Sweet Lamb Who left His bright abode in Heaven, where He is the Fire of God in an embrace of fire - oh! the eternal generation, of the Father Who conceives His Word through His unlimited and most holy thought, and absorbs Him producing an effusion of love, from which the Spirit of Love proceeds, the centre of Power and Wisdom - but the Lamb of God, Who left His most pure incorporeal form, to enclose His infinite purity, holiness and divine nature in mortal flesh, knows that we have not been cleansed by Grace, not yet, and knows that we could not ascend to the high summit, where God, One and Trine is, like the eagle, which is John. We are little sparrows living on roofs and on roads, we are swallows that fly in the sky but feed on insects, we are woodlarks who want to sing imitating the angels, but our

singing, when compared to theirs, is a dissonant high-pitched drone of cicadas in summer. The Sweet Lamb of God, Who came to take away the sin of the world, knows that. Because if He is no longer the Infinite Spirit of Heaven, having taken human flesh, His infinity is not diminished thereby and He knows everything because His wisdom is always infinite.

And so He teaches us His way. The way of love. He is the Love, which out of mercy for us, became flesh. And that Merciful Love created for us a way, which also little ones can ascend. And He is the first to ascend it, not because of His own need, but to teach us. Neither would He need to spread His wings to return to the Father. His spirit, I swear it to you, is closed down here, on the miserable earth, but it is always with the Father, because God can do everything, and He is God. But He goes ahead, leaving behind Him the perfume of His holiness, the gold and fire of His love. Look at His way. Oh! It does reach the summit of the arch! But how peaceful and safe it is! It is not straight: it is spiral. It is longer and the sacrifice of His merciful love is revealed by such length where He delays for the sake of us, the weak ones. It is longer, but better suited to our misery. The ascent to love, to God, is as simple as Love. But it is vast, because God is an abyss, which I would say is immeasurable if He did not bend across to be reached, to be kissed by the souls in love with Him (John speaks and weeps, smiling with his lips, in the ecstasy of revealing God). The simple way of love is long, because the Abyss, which is God, is limitless, and one could climb as much as one would like. But the Admirable Abyss calls our miserable abyss. It calls it by means of its light and says: "Come to Me!" Oh! The invitation of God! The invitation of the Father!

Listen! Listen! The kindest words are coming towards us from the Heavens left open, because Christ opened the gates wide and left the angels of Mercy and Forgiveness to keep them open, so that while men are waiting for the Grace, at least light, scents, songs and peace should flow down to attract the hearts of men in a holy manner. It is the voice of God Who is speaking. And the Voice says: "Your childhood? But it is your most valuable money! I would like you to become really little, so that you would have the humility, the sincerity and the love of children, the confident love of children for their fathers. Your inability? But that is My glory! Oh! Come. I do not even ask you to test the sound of the good and bad stones by yourselves. Give them to Me! I will pick them and You will do the rebuilding. The ascent to perfection? Oh! no, My little children. Join hands with My Son, your Brother now, and thus ascend beside Him...

To ascend! To come to You, Eternal Love! To achieve Your likeness, that is Love! To love! That is the secret!... To love! To give

oneself... To love! To suppress oneself... To love! To melt... The flesh? It is nothing. Sorrow? It is nothing. Time? It is nothing. Sin itself becomes nothing if I dissolve it in Your fire, o God! Only Love exists. Love! The Love that gave us the Incarnate God, will give us all forgiveness. And no one knows how to love better than children. And no one is loved more than a child.

O you, whom I do not know, who want to know what Good is, to distinguish it from Evil, to possess the blue sky, the celestial Sun, and everything that is supernatural joy, love and you will achieve it. Love Christ. You will die to the life of this world, but you will rise again in your spirit. With your new spirit, without any further need of stones, you will be for ever an inextinguishable fire. A flame rises. It needs neither steps nor wings to rise. Free your ego from every construction, put love into yourself. You will blaze up. Let that happen without any restriction. Nay, kindle the fire, throwing into it your past passions and knowledge. What is not good will be destroyed by the flames, what is already a noble metal will become pure. Cast yourself, brother, into the active joyful love of the Trinity. You will understand what now seems incomprehensible to you, because you will understand God, Who can be understood only by those who give themselves, without any limitation, to His sacrificing fire. You will be fixed, in the end, in God in a loving embrace, praying for me, the child of Christ, who dared to speak to you of Love. »

They are all dumbfounded: the apostles, the disciples, the believers... The man to whom the words were addressed is pale, while John's face is flushed, not so much because of the effort as because of his love.

Stephen at last shouts: « May you be blessed! But tell me, who are you? »

And John - his attitude reminds me so much of the Virgin at the Annunciation - replies in a low voice, bending as if he were adoring Him Whom he mentions: « I am John. You see in me the least of the servants of the Lord. »

« But who was your master before? »

« No one but God. Because I received my spiritual milk from John, the presanctified of God, now I eat the bread of Christ, the Word of God, and I drink God's fire that comes to me from Heaven. Glory be to the Lord! »

« Ah! I am not going to leave you! Neither you nor him, I will part from none of you. Take me with you! »

« When... Oh! But Peter is here, he is our chief » and John takes Peter, who is dumbfounded, and proclaims him « the first ».

And Peter collects himself and says: « Son, a considered reflection is required for a great mission. This man is our angel and he inflames us. But it is necessary to know whether the flame will

last in us. Measure yourself and then come to the Lord. We will open our hearts to you as to a most dear brother. In the meantime, if you wish to become better acquainted with our life, you may stay. The flocks of Christ may grow exceedingly so that the true lambs may be separated from the false rams, choosing among the perfect and imperfect ones. »

And the first apostolic revelation ends thus.

167. In the House of Johanna of Chuza. Jesus and the Roman Ladies.

19th May 1945.

Jesus comes off a boat at the wharf at Chuza's garden, helped by a boatman who had taken Him there. A gardener who has seen Him runs to open the gate which closes the entrance to the property on the lake side. It is a strong tall gate, which, however, is concealed by a very thick high hedge of laurel and box on the outer side, towards the lake, and by roses of all colours on the inner side, towards the house. The magnificent rose-bushes decorate the bronze laurel and box leaves, they creep through the branches and peep out on the other side, or they pass over the green barrier and let their flowery heads fall on the other side. Only the central part of the gate, across the avenue, is barren and is opened there to let through people going to or coming from the lake.

« Peace to this house and to you, Joanna. Where is your mistress »

« Over there, with her friends. I will call her at once. They have been waiting for You three days, because they were afraid of being late. »

Jesus smiles. The servant runs away to call Johanna. In the meantime Jesus walks slowly towards the place mentioned by the servant, admiring the wonderful garden, one could say the wonderful rosery, which Chuza had built for his wife. Magnificent early roses of all types, sizes and shapes are a blaze of colours in this sheltered inlet of the lake. There are other flower plants. But they are not yet in bloom and their number is minimal as compared to the quantity of rose-bushes.

Johanna arrives. She has not even laid down the basket half full of roses, nor the scissors she was using to cut them, and she runs thus, her arms stretched out, agile and beautiful in her wide dress of very thin woollen material, of a very light pink hue, the folds of which are held in place by silver filigree studs and buckles, decorated with sparkling pale garnets. On her dark wavy hair a mitre-shaped diadem, also in silver and garnets, hold a very light pink byssus veil, which hangs over her back, leaving uncovered her ears, adorned with earrings matching the diadem, her smiling

face and thin neck, round which she wears a shining necklace which is made like the rest of her precious ornaments.

She drops her basket at Jesus' feet and kneels down to kiss His tunic, among the roses spread on the ground.

« Peace to you, Johanna. I have come. »

« And I am happy. They have come, too. Oh! Now I seem to have done the wrong thing by organising this meeting! How will you manage to understand one another? They are heathens! » Johanna is somewhat worried.

Jesus smiles, and laying His hand on her head He says: « Be not afraid. We will understand one another very well. You have done the right thing "by organising this meeting". Our meeting will be full of blessings as your garden is full of roses. Now, pick up those poor roses which you dropped and let us go to your friends. »

« Oh! There is any amount of roses. I was picking them to pass the time and then my friends are so... so voluptuous. They love flowers as if they were... I do not know... »

« I love them, too! See, we have already found a subject on which we can understand one another. Come on! Let us pick up these wonderful roses... » and Jesus bends to set the example.

« Not You! Not You, my Lord! If You really want to... well... it's done. »

They walk as far as a bower made by multicoloured interlaced rose-bushes. Three Roman ladies are casting glances at them from the threshold: Plautina, Valeria and Lydia. The first and last ones are hesitant, but Valeria runs out and makes a curtsy saying: « Hail, Saviour of my little Fausta! »

« Peace and light to you and to your friends. »

The friends curtsy without speaking.

We already know Plautina. Tall, stately, with beautiful dark, rather authoritative eyes, under a smooth very white forehead, a perfect straight nose, a well shaped rather tumid mouth, a roundish well defined chin, she reminds me of some beautiful statues of Roman empresses. Heavy rings shine on her beautiful hands and large golden bracelets round her statuesque arms, on her wrists and above her elbows which appear pinkish white, smooth and perfect under her short draped sleeves.

Lydia, on the other hand, is fair-haired, thinner and younger. Her beauty is not the stately beauty of Plautina, but she possesses all the grace of feminine youth which is still a little unripe. And since we are on a pagan subject, I could say that if Plautina looks like the statue of an empress, Lydia could well be Diana or a gentle modest looking nymph.

Valeria, who is not in the desperate situation in which we saw her at Caesarea, appears in the beauty of a young mother, rather plumply shaped but still very young, with the quiet look of a

mother who is happy to breastfeed her own child and see it grow healthy. Rosy and brown, her smile is a quiet but very kind one.

I am under the impression that the two ladies are of a lower rank than Plautina, whom they respect as a queen, as is obvious also from their attitude.

« Were you attending to flowers? Go on, go on. We can talk also while you pick this beautiful work of the Creator, which flowers are, and while you arrange them in these precious vases with the ability of which Rome is mistress, to lengthen their lives, which unfortunately are too short... If we admire this bud, which is just opening its yellow pink petal in a lovely smile, how can we not be sorry to see it dying? Oh! How amazed the Jews would be if they heard Me speak thus! But also in a flower we feel there is something which is alive. And we regret to see its end. But plants are wiser than we are. They know that on every wound caused by cutting a stem a new shoot will grow and it will become a new rose. And so we must learn the lesson and make of our somewhat sensual love for flowers a spur to a higher thought. »

« Which one, Master? » asks Plautina, who is listening diligently and is intrigued by the refined thought of the Jewish Master.

« This one. That as a plant does not die as long as its roots are nourished by the soil, it does not die because its stems die, so mankind does not die because one being ends his earthly life. But new flowers are always born. And - a thought which is even higher and will make us bless the Creator - while a flower, once it is dead, will not come to life again, which is sad, man, when he is asleep in his last sleep, is not dead, but he lives a brighter life, drawing, through his better part, eternal life and splendour from the Creator Who formed him. Therefore, Valeria, if your little girl had died, you would not have lost her caresses. The kisses of your creature would have always come to your soul, because, although separated from you, she would not have forgotten your love. See how pleasant it is to have faith in eternal life? Where is your little one now? »

« In that covered cradle. I never parted from her before, because the love for my husband and for my daughter were the only interests of my life. But now that I know what it is to see her dying, I do not leave her even for a moment. »

Jesus goes towards a seat on which there is a kind of wooden cradle, covered by an expensive cover. He uncovers it and looks at the sleeping child, whom the fresher air awakes tenderly. Her little eyes seem surprised when they open and her lips part in an angel's smile, while her tiny hands, which heretofore were closed, are now open and anxious to get hold of Jesus' wavy hair. The twittering of a sparrow marks the progress of speech in her little mind. At last the great universal word trills: « Mummy! »

« Pick her up, pick her up » says Jesus Who moves to one side to let Valeria bend over the cradle.

« She will give You trouble! I will call a slave and have her taken into the garden. »

« Trouble? Oh! No! Children are never any trouble. They are always My friends. »

« Have You any children or grandchildren, Master? » asks Plautina, who watches how Jesus, smiling, teases the baby to make her laugh.

« No, I have neither children nor grandchildren. But I love children as I love flowers. Because they are pure and without malice. Nay, give Me your little one, woman. It is such a great joy for Me to press a little angel to My heart. » And He sits down holding the little baby, who watches Him and ruffles His beard and then finds something more interesting to do playing with the fringes of His mantle and with the cord of His tunic, to which she devotes a long mysterious speech.

Plautina says: « Our good and wise friend, one of the few who does not disdain us and does not become corrupt associating with us, will have told You that we were anxious to see You and hear You, to judge You for what You are, because Rome does not believe in idle stories.. Why are You smiling, Master? »

« I will tell you later. Go on. »

« Because Rome does not believe in idle stories and wants to judge with true knowledge and conscience before condemning and extolling. Your people exalt You and calumniate You to the same degree. Your deeds would convince one to exalt You. The words of many Jews would induce people to consider You little less than a criminal. Your words are solemn and wise like a philosopher's. Rome is very fond of philosophic doctrines and... I must admit it, our present philosophers do not have a satisfactory doctrine, also because their ways of living do not correspond to their doctrines. »

« They cannot have a way of living corresponding to their doctrine. »

« Because they are pagans, is that right? »

« No, because they are atheists. »

« Atheists? But they have their gods. »

« They do not even have those any more, woman. I remind you of the ancient philosophers, the greatest ones. They were heathens, too. However, consider how high was the moral tone of their lives! It was mingled with errors, because man is inclined to err. But when they were confronted with the greatest mysteries: life and death, when they had to face the dilemma of Honesty or Dishonesty, of Virtue or Vice, of Heroism or Cowardice and they considered that if they turned to evil, a great misfortune would befall their fatherland and their fellow citizens, then with a super effort of

will they rejected the tentacles of evil polyps and, holy and free, they chose Good, at all costs. That Good which is no one else but God. »

« You are God, so they say. Is that true? »

« I am the Son of the True God, I became flesh, but I still remain God. »

« But what is God? The greatest Master, if we look at You. »

« God is much more than a Master. Do not minimise the sublime idea of Divinity to a limitation of wisdom. »

« Wisdom is a deity. We have Minerva. She is the goddess of knowledge. »

« You have also Venus, the goddess of pleasure. Can you admit that a god, that is, a being superior to men, possesses, raised to the highest degree, all the horrible vices of mortals? Can you conceive that an eternal being has for all eternity the petty, mean, humiliating delights of those who have only one hour's time? And that the superior being makes them the scope of his life? Do you not consider what a desecrated heaven is the one you call Olympus, where the most acrid juices of mankind ferment? If you look at your heaven, what can you see? Lust, crime, hatred, war, thefts, crapulence, snares, revenge. If you wish to celebrate the feast of your gods, what do you do? You indulge in orgies. What cult do you give them? Where is the true chastity of the virgins consecrated to Vesta? On what divine code of law do your pontifices base their judgement? What words can your augurs read in the flight of birds or in the peal of thunder? And what answers can the bleeding entrails of sacrificed animals give to your haruspices? You said: "Rome does not believe in idle stories". Why does she believe, then, that twelve poor men, by sending a pig, a sheep and a bull round the fields and sacrificing them, can gain Ceres' favour, when you have an endless number of deities, one hating the other, and you believe in their revenges? No. God is something quite different. He is Eternal, One and Spiritual. »

« But You say that You are God and yet You are flesh. »

« There is an altar with no god in the fatherland of gods. Man's wisdom has devoted it to the unknown God. Because wise men, the true philosophers, have realised that there is something beyond the illustrated scenario created for the eternal children, that is for men whose souls are enveloped in the swaddling clothes of error. If those wise men - who realised that there is something beyond the false scenario, something really sublime and divine, which created everything that exists and from which comes all the good there is in the world - if those men wanted an altar to the unknown God, Whom they perceived to be the True God, how can you call god what is not god and how can you say that you know what you do not know? Learn, therefore, what God is, that you may know and

honour Him. God is the Being Who by His thought made everything from nothing. Can the tale of stones changing into men convince you and satisfy you? I solemnly tell you that there are men more hard and wicked than stones, and stones more useful than men. But is it not more pleasant for you, Valeria, to say, looking at your little baby: "She is the living will of God, created and formed by Him, gifted by Him with a second life which does not end, so that I will have my little Fausta for ever and ever, if I believe in the True God", rather than say: "This rosy flesh, this hair thinner than a spider's web, these clear eyes originate from a stone"? Or to say: "I am entirely like a she-wolf or a mare, and like an animal I mate, like an animal I procreate, like an animal I rear, and my daughter is the fruit of my beastly instinct and she is an animal like me, and tomorrow, when she is dead and I am dead, we shall be two carrions which will dissolve with a foul odour and will never see each other again"? Tell Me! Which of the two choices would your maternal heart prefer? »

« Certainly not the latter, my Lord! If I had known that Fausta was not a thing that could be dissolved for ever, my grief, when she was in agony, would not have been so violent. Because I would have said: "I have lost a pearl. But it still exists. And I will find it". »

« You are right. When I was coming towards you, your friend told me that she was amazed at your passion for flowers. And she was afraid that it might upset Me. But I reassured her saying to her: "I love flowers, too, so we will understand each other quite well". But I wish to bring you to love flowers, as I have brought Valeria to love her baby, of whom she will now take greater care, as she knows that Fausta has a soul, which is a particle of God enclosed in the body which her mother made for her; a particle which will not die and which her mother will find again in Heaven, if she believes in the True God.

The same applies to you. Look at this beautiful rose. The purple which adorns the imperial robe is not so magnificent as this petal, which is not only a pleasure to the eye because of its hue, but is also a joy to touch because of its smoothness and to smell because of its scent. And look at this one, and this one, and this one. The first one is like blood gushing from a heart, the second is like fresh fallen snow, the third one is pale gold, the last one is like the sweet face of this child smiling in My lap. And further: the first one is stiff on an almost thornless stem, the leaves of which are reddish as if they had been sprayed with blood, the second has only a few thorns, and its leaves are pale and dull on the stem, the third one is as flexible as a reed and its small leaves are as shiny as green wax, the stem of the last one is so thick with thorns, that it seems anxious to prevent all possible access to its rosy corolla. It looks like a

file with very sharp teeth.

Now consider this. Who made all that? How? When? Where? What was this place in the mists of time? It was nothing. It was an amorphous stirring of elements. One: God, said: "I want" and the elements separated and gathered in family groups. And another "I want" thundered and the elements arranged themselves, one with the other: the water between the lands; or one on the other: air and light on the formed planet. One more "I want" and plants were made. And then the stars, then animals and at last man. And God, to make man, His favourite creature, happy, granted him, as magnificent toys, flowers, stars and finally the joy of procreating not what dies, but what survives death, by the gift of God, and which is the soul. These roses are as many "wills" of the Father. His infinite power makes it clear in an infinite number of beautiful things.

My explanation is rather a difficult one because it clashes with the brazen resistance of your beliefs. But I hope, as it is our first meeting, that we have understood one another a little. Let your souls ponder on what I have told you. Have you any questions to ask? Ask them. I am here to clarify things. Ignorance is not a disgrace. It is disgraceful to persist in ignorance where there is someone willing to clarify doubts. »

And Jesus, as if He were the most experienced father, goes out holding the little child, who is taking her first steps and wants to go towards a jet of water swaying in the sunshine.

The ladies remain where they were, speaking to one another. And Johanna, hesitating between two desires, is standing on the threshold of the bower.

At last Lydia makes up her mind and followed by the others goes towards Jesus, Who is laughing because the little one is trying to catch the solar spectrum with her hand and grasps nothing but light, and she insists over and over again, babbling with her rosy lips.

« Master... I have not understood why You said that our masters cannot lead a good life because they are atheists. They believe in Olympus. But they believe... »

« They have but the outward appearance of belief. As long as they really believed, as the truly wise men believed in the Unknown God I mentioned to you, in that God Who satisfied their souls, even if He was nameless, even if inadvertently they did not want to, as long as they turned their thoughts to that Being, by far superior to the poor gods full of the faults of mankind, of the low faults of mankind, the gods that paganism created for itself, they somehow reflected God, by necessity. A soul is a mirror that reflects and an echo that repeats... »

« What, Master? »

« God. »

« It's a great word! »

« It is a great truth. »

Valeria, who is fascinated by the thought of immortality, asks: « Master, tell me where the soul of my child is. I will kiss that spot like a shrine and I will worship it, because it is part of God. »

« The soul! it is like this light that little Fausta wishes to grasp and cannot, because it is incorporeal. But it is there. You, I, your friends can see it. Likewise a soul can be seen in everything that differentiates man from animals. When your little one will tell you her first thoughts, you can say that such understanding is her soul which is revealing itself. When she will love you not by instinct, but with her reason, consider that that love is her soul. When she will grow beautiful beside you, not so much in her body as in virtue, consider that that beauty is her soul. And do not worship her soul, but God Who created it, God Who wishes every soul to be a throne for Him. »

« But where is this incorporeal and sublime thing: in one's heart? In one's brains? »

« It is in the whole of man. It contains you and is contained within you. When it leaves you, you become a corpse. When it is killed by a crime that man commits against himself, you are damned, separated from God for ever. »

« You therefore agree that the philosopher who said that we are "immortal" was right, although he was a heathen? » asks Plautina.

« I do not agree. I will go further. I say that it is an article of faith. The immortality of the soul, that is the immortality of the superior part of man is the most certain and most comforting mystery to believe. It is the one that assures us of where we come from, where we go, who we are, and it removes all the bitterness of every separation. »

Plautina is deeply absorbed in thought. Jesus watches her and is silent. At last she asks: « And have You a soul? »

Jesus replies: « Certainly. »

« But are You or are You not God? »

« I am God. I told you. But now I have taken the nature of Man. And do you know why? Because only by this sacrifice of Mine I was able to resolve the points which were insuperable for your reason, and after demolishing errors and freeing minds, I was able also to free souls from a slavery which I cannot explain to you just now. I therefore enclosed Wisdom and Holiness in a body. I spread Wisdom like seed on the ground and pollen to the winds. Holiness will flow, as from a precious broken amphora, on to the world in the hour of Grace and will sanctify men. Then the Unknown God will become known. »

« But You are already known. Who doubts Your power and Your

wisdom, is either wicked or a liar. »

« I am known. But this is only daybreak. Midday will be full of the knowledge of Me. »

« What will Your midday be like? A triumph? Shall I see it? »

« Truly, it will be a triumph. And you will be present. Because you loathe what you know and you crave for what you ignore. Your soul hungers. »

« That is true. I hunger for truth. »

« I am the Truth. »

« Then, give Yourself to me who am hungry. »

« All you have to do is to come to My table. My word is the bread of truth. »

« But what will our gods say if we abandon them? Will they not avenge themselves on us? » asks fearful Lydia.

« Woman: have you ever seen a foggy morning? The meadows are lost in the vapour that conceals them. Then the sun shines and the vapour is dissolved and the glistening meadows are more beautiful. The same applies to your gods, the fog of a poor human thought, which, ignoring God and needing to believe, because faith is a permanent necessity for man, created Olympus, a real non-existent idle story. And thus your gods, when the sun, that is, the True God, rises, will dissolve in your hearts without being able to do any harm. Because they do not exist. »

« We shall have to listen to You again... quite a lot... We are most definitely before the unknown. Everything You say is new to us. »

« But does it disgust you? Can you accept it? »

Plautina replies sure of herself: « No. It does not. I feel more proud of the little I know now, and which Caesar does not know, than I do of my name. »

« Well, then, persevere. I leave you with My peace. »

« What? Are You not staying, my Lord? » Johanna is desolate.

« No, I am not staying. I have a lot to do... »

« Oh! I wanted to speak to You about my trouble! »

Jesus, Who had begun to walk, after saying goodbye to the Roman ladies, turns round and says: « Come as far as the boat and You will tell Me what your pain is. »

And Johanna goes. And she says: « Chuza wants to send me to Jerusalem for some time and I am not happy about it. He is doing it because he does not want me to be confined any longer now that I am healthy... »

« You, too, are creating useless fogs for yourself! » says Jesus Who is stepping on to the boat. « If you considered that you can thus give Me hospitality or follow Me more easily, you would be happy and would say: "Bounty has seen to it". »

« Oh!... that is true, my Lord. I had not thought about that. »

« So, you can see! Be a good wife and obey. Obedience will give

you the reward of having Me as your guest at next Passover and the honour of helping Me to evangelize your friends. My peace be always with you. »

The boat sets out and it all ends.

168. Aglae in Mary's House at Nazareth.

20th May 1945. Pentecost.

Mary is working quietly at a piece of cloth. It is evening, all the doors are closed, a three flame lamp lights up the little room in Nazareth, particularly the table at which the Virgin is sat. The cloth, perhaps a bed sheet, hangs from the chest and from Her knees on to the floor, so that Mary, Who is wearing a dark blue dress, seems to emerge from a pile of snow. She is alone. She is sowing fast, Her head bent on Her work, and the light of the lamp causes the top part of Her hair to shine with pale gold tints. The rest of Her face is in half-light.

There is dead silence in the tidy room. No noise can be heard either from the road, deserted at night, or from the kitchen garden. The heavy door of the room where Mary works, where She takes Her meals and receives Her friends, and which opens on to the kitchen garden, is closed, so that not even the noise of the fountain water running into the basin can be heard. It is really the stillness of the night. I wonder what Mary is thinking of while Her hands are working swiftly...

There is a light tapping at the main door. Mary looks up and listens... The tapping has been so light that Mary must be thinking that it was caused by some night animal or by the wind and She bends Her head once again to Her work. But the knocking is repeated and more loudly. Mary stands up and goes to the door. Before opening She asks: « Who is knocking? »

A thin voice replies: « A woman. In the name of Jesus, have mercy on me. »

Mary opens the door at once holding the lamp up to see the pilgrim. She sees a heap of clothes, through which no one appears. A poor heap of clothes, stooping very low and saying: « Hail! My Lady! » and then once again: « In the name of Jesus, have mercy on me. »

« Come in and tell Me what you want. I do not know you. »

« Nobody and many know me. Vice knows me. And Holiness knows me. But now I need Piety to open Her arms to me. And You are Piety... » and she weeps.

« Come in, then... And tell me... You have said enough to make Me understand that you are unhappy... But I do not yet know who you are. Your name, sister... »

« Oh! no! Not sister! I cannot be Your sister... You are the Mother

of Good... I... I am Evil... » and she cries louder and louder under her mantle, which covers her completely.

Mary lays the lamp on a chair; she takes the hand of the unknown woman kneeling on the threshold and compels her to stand up.

Mary does not know her... but I do. She is the Veiled woman of the Clear Water.

She stands up, dejected, trembling, shaken by her sobs, and is still reluctant to go in. She says: « I am a heathen, my Lady. I am filth, for you Jews, even if I were holy. I am twice filth because I am a prostitute. »

« If you come to Me, if you look for My Son through Me, you can only be a repentant heart. This house welcomes those whose name is Sorrow » and She leads her in, closing the door, lays the lamp on the table, and asks her to sit down and says: « Speak. »

But the Veiled woman does not want to sit down; still stooping, she continues to weep. Mary is in front of her, kind and queenly. She waits, praying, for her to calm down. Her whole attitude tells me that She is praying, although nothing about Her takes the form of prayer: neither Her hands which are holding all the time the little hand of the Veiled woman, nor Her lips which are closed.

At last her weeping calms down. The Veiled woman dries her face with her veil and then says: « And yet I have not come from so far as to be unknown. It is the hour of my redemption and I must reveal myself... to show with how many wounds my heart is covered. And You are a mother... and His Mother... You will, therefore, have mercy on me. »

« Yes, My daughter. »

« Oh! yes! Call me daughter! I had a mother and I left her... I was later told that she died of a broken heart I had a father... he cursed me and he says to those in town: "I no longer have a daughter' » (she resumes crying more bitterly. Mary turns pale with anguish, but lays Her hand on her head to comfort her). The Veiled woman goes on: « No one will call me daughter any more!... Yes, caress me thus, as my mother used to do when I was pure and good... Let me kiss Your hand and wipe my tears with it. My tears alone will not cleanse me. How much have I wept when I realised! -Also before I used to weep, because it is horrible to be nothing but flesh, abused and insulted by man. But they were the tears of an ill-treated animal that hates and rebels against him who tortures and fouls it more and more... because I changed master, but I did not change bestiality... I have been weeping for eight months... because I have understood... I understood my misery and my depravity, I am covered and saturated with it and I feel disgusted... But my tears, although more and more conscious, do not yet cleanse me. They mix with my depravity and do not wash

it away. Oh! Mother! Wipe my tears and I shall be so cleansed as to be able to go near my Saviour! »

« Yes, My daughter, yes, I will. Sit down. Here, near Me. And speak calmly. Leave your burden here, on My knees of a Mother » and Mary sits down.

But the Veiled woman sinks to the ground at Her feet, as she wishes to speak to Her thus. She begins slowly: « I come from Syracuse... I am twentysix years old... I was the daughter of a steward, as you would call him, we say a procurator, of a wealthy Roman gentleman. I was an only daughter. My life was a happy one. We lived near the seaside, in a beautiful villa, where my father was the steward. Now and again the owner of the villa, or his wife or children would come. They treated us very well and were very good to me. The girls used to play with me... My mother was happy and... proud of me. I was beautiful... intelligent and I succeeded in everything... But I loved frivolous things more than good things. There is a great theatre at Syracuse. A great theatre... Beautiful... huge... It is used for games and plays... Mimers are widely employed in the comedies and tragedies which are performed there. They emphasize the meaning of the chorus by their silent dances. You do not know... but also by means of our hands or through the movements of our bodies we can express the feelings of a man agitated by a passion. Young boys and girls are trained as mimers in a special school. They must be as beautiful as gods and as agile as butterflies... I loved to go to a kind of high spot overlooking that place and see the mimers dance. I then imitated them on the flowery meadows, on the golden sands of my land, in the garden of the villa. I seemed an artistic statue, or a light blowing breeze, so clever I was in assuming statuesque postures or flying about almost without touching the ground. My wealthy friends admired me... my mother was proud of me... »

The Veiled woman speaks, remembers, sees and dreams of her past and weeps. Her sobs are like commas in her speech.

« One day... it was May... The whole of Syracuse was blooming with flowers. The celebrations were just over and I had gone into raptures over a dance performed in the theatre... The owners had taken me there with their daughters. I was fourteen years old... In that dance the mimers, who were to represent the springtime nymphs running to worship Ceres, danced crowned with roses and clad with roses... Only with roses because their dresses were very light veils, a cobweb spread with roses... While dancing they looked like winged Hebes, so light they glided about, while their magnificent bodies appeared through the ruffled strips of their flowery veils, flowing like wings behind them. I studied the dance... and one day... one day »...

The Veiled woman cries louder... She then composes herself.

« I was beautiful. I still am. Look. » She stands up throwing her veil behind her and letting her large mantle drop. And I am dumbfounded, because I see Aglae emerge from the discarded clothes. She is beautiful, also in her modest dress, in her simple plaited hair-style, without any jewels, without pompous garments. Her body is like a real flower, slender and perfect, with a beautiful light brown face and velvet eyes full of ardour.

She kneels down again in front of Mary. « I was beautiful, unfortunately. And I was crazy. On that day I put on veils, the daughters of our landlord helped me as they loved to see me dance... I got dressed on a strip of the golden beach, facing the blue sea. On the deserted beach there were white and yellow wild flowers, with the sharp scent of almonds, of vanilla, of clean human bodies. Waves of strong perfumes came also from the citrus gardens and the rose gardens in Syracuse gave off a scent, as well as the sea and the sand on the beach; the sun drew a smell from all things... something panicky that went to my head. I felt as if I were a nymph, too, and I was worshipping... whom? The fertile Earth? The fecundating Sun? I do not know. A heathen amongst heathens, I think I was worshipping Sense, my despotic king, whom I did not know I had, but who was more powerful than a god... I put on a wreath of roses picked in the garden... and I danced. I was enraptured by the light, the scents, by the pleasure of being young, agile and beautiful. I danced... and I was noticed. I saw I was being looked at. But I was not ashamed of appearing nude in the presence of two greedy eyes of a man. On the contrary, I took pleasure in dancing more lively. The satisfaction of being admired lent wings to my feet. And it was my ruin. Three days later I was left all by myself because the landlords left to go back to their patrician dwelling in Rome. But I did not stay at home... The two admiring eyes had revealed something else to me, beyond dancing... They had revealed sensuality and sex. »

Mary makes an involuntary gesture of disgust, which is noted by Aglae. « Oh! but You are pure! Perhaps I disgust You... »

« Speak, My daughter. It is better if you speak to Mary than to Him. Mary is a sea that washes... »

« Yes, it is better if I tell You. I thought that myself when I heard that He had a mother... Because before, seeing Him so different from every other man, the only thoroughly spiritual man - now I know there is the spirit and what it is - before I could not have said of what Your Son was made, as He was without sensuality although a man, and within myself I thought He had no mother, but He had descended upon the earth to save the horrible wretches of whom I am the worst.

Every day I went back to that place hoping to see the young handsome swarthy man... And after some time I saw him again...

He spoke to me. He said to me: "Come to Rome with me. I will take you to the imperial court, you will be the pearl of Rome". I replied: "Yes. I will be your faithful wife. Come and see my father". He laughed mockingly and kissed me. He said: "Not my wife. But you shall be the goddess and I your priest and I will reveal the secrets of life and pleasure to you". I was thoroughly infatuated, I was a young girl. But although a young girl, I knew what life is... I was shrewd, I was infatuated, but not yet depraved... and I was disgusted by his proposal. I tore myself away from his embrace and I ran home... But I did not speak to my mother about it... and I did not resist the desire to see him again... His kisses had made me more enthralled than ever... And I went back... I had hardly reached the deserted beach when he embraced me kissing me frenziedly, with a storm of kisses, with loving words, with questions: "Is there not everything in this love? Is this not sweeter than a bond? What else do you want? Can you live without this?"

Oh! Mother... I eloped the same evening with the filthy patrician... and I became a rag trampled on by his beastliness... I was not a goddess: but mud. Not a pearl: but trash. Life was not revealed to me, but the filth of life, the infamy, the disgust, the pain, the shame, the infinite misery of not even belonging to myself... And then... utter ruin. After six months of orgies, he became tired of me and passed on to fresh love affairs and I lived on the streets. I made the most of my dancing talent... I already knew that my mother had died of a broken heart and that I no longer had a home or a father... A dancing master accepted me in his academy. He perfected me... he enjoyed me... and he launched me into the corrupt Roman patriciate as a flower fully skilled in every sensual art. The already dirty flower fell into a cloaca. For ten years I fell lower and lower into the abyss. I was then brought here to delight Herod's leisure time and I was engaged here by a new master. Oh! No chained dog is more chained than one of us! And there is no dog trainer more brutal than the man who possesses a woman! Mother... You are trembling! I am filling You with horror! »

Mary has taken Her hand to Her heart, as if it had been wounded. But She replies: « No, not you. The Evil, which is such a powerful master on the earth, is horrifying Me. Go on, My poor creature. »

« He took me to Hebron... Was I free? Was I rich? Yes, I was, because I was not in jail and I was covered with jewels. No, I was not, because I could see only those whom he wanted and I had no right to myself.

One day a man, the "Man", Your Son, came to Hebron. The house was dear to Him. I realised it and I invited Him to enter. Shammai was not there... and from the window I had already heard words and seen a sight which had upset my heart. But I

swear to You, Mother, that it was not the flesh that drove me towards Your Jesus. It was something that He revealed to me that drove me to the door, defying the quips of the populace, to say to Him: "Come in". It was the soul that I then learned I had. He said to me: "My Name means: Saviour. I save those who are anxious to be saved. I save by teaching to be pure, to desire and accept sorrows with honour, to desire Good at all costs. I am the One Who seeks those who are lost and gives Life. I am Purity and Truth!". He told me that I also had a soul and that I had killed it by my way of living. But He did not curse me, neither did He mock me. And He never looked at me! The first man who did not strip me with his greedy eyes, because I lie under the terrible curse of attracting men... He told me that who looks for Him will find Him because He is where a doctor and a medicine are needed. And He went away. But His words were in here. And they have never come out. I used to say to myself: "His Name means Saviour", as if I were beginning to wish to be cured. I was left with His words and with His friends, the shepherds. And I took the first step by giving them alms and asking for their prayers... And then... I ran away...

Oh! It was a holy flight! I ran away from sin seeking the Saviour. I went about looking for Him. I was sure I would find Him because He had promised me. They sent me to a man whose name is John, thinking it was He. But it was not. A Jew sent me to the Clear Water. I lived selling the large quantity of gold I had. During the months when I wandered about I had to keep my face covered to avoid being captured and also because, really, Aglae was buried under that veil. The old Aglae was dead. Under the veil there was her wounded bloodless soul seeking its doctor. Many a time I was compelled to flee the sensuality of men who persecuted me, although I was so disguised in my attire. Also one of the friends of Your Son...

At the Clear Water I lived like an animal: poor but happy. And the dew and the river did not clean me as much as His words. Oh! Not one was lost! Once He forgave a murderer. I heard... and I was about to say: "Forgive me, too". Another time He spoke of lost innocence... Oh! How many tears of regret! Another time He cured a leper... and I was about to shout: "Cleanse me too, of my sin... -Another time He cured a madman, a Roman... and I wept... and He got someone to tell me that fatherlands pass away, but Heaven remains. One stormy night He sheltered me in His house... and later He asked the steward to give me hospitality and He told a child to say to me: "Do not weep"... Oh! His kindness! My misery! Both so great that I did not dare to take my misery to His feet... notwithstanding that one of His disciples during the night instructed me in the infinite mercy of Your Son. And then, when those who considered sinful the desire of a soul to be reborn, laid snares for

Him, my Saviour went away... and I waited for Him... But He was awaited also by the vengeance of those who are by far less worthy of looking at Him than I am. Because I, as a heathen, sinned against myself, whereas they, who already know God, sin against the Son of God... and they hit me and they have hurt me more with their accusations than with stones and they have wounded my soul more than my body, as they led me to despair.

Oh! What a dreadful struggle against myself! Worn out, bleeding, wounded, feverish, without my Doctor, homeless, without food, I looked behind me and in front of me... My past would say to me: "Come back", my present said: "Kill yourself", my future used to say: "Hope". I did hope... I did not commit suicide. I would, if He rejected me, because I do not want to be what I was!... I dragged myself to a village asking for shelter... But they recognised me. Like an animal I had to run away, here, there, always chased, always scorned at, always cursed, because I wanted to be honest and because I had disappointed those who, through me, wanted to strike Your Son. Following the river I came up to Galilee and I came here... You were not here... I went to Capernaum. You had just left. But an old man saw me. One of His enemies, who wanted me to bear witness against Your Son, and as I was weeping without reacting, he said to me: "Everything could change in your favour if you would become my lover and my accomplice in accusing the Rabbi of Nazareth. It is enough for you to say in the presence of my friends, that He was your lover... " I ran away like a person who sees a snake creep out of a flowery bush.

I thus understood that I can no longer go to Him... and I came to You. Here I am: tread on me, for I am mud. Here I am: reject me, for I am a sinner. Here I am: call me by my name: prostitute. I will accept anything from You. But, Mother, have mercy on me. Take my poor soiled soul and take it to Him. It is a crime to put my lust into Your hands. But only there it will be protected from the world that wants it and it will become penance. Tell me how I must behave. Tell me what I have to do. Tell me which means I must use to be no longer Aglae. What must I mutilate in myself? What must I tear away from myself that I may no longer be sin, or an allurements, that I may no longer have to be afraid of myself and of men? Shall I put out my eyes? Or burn my lips? Or cut my tongue? My eyes, lips and tongue have served me in evil deeds. I no longer want evil and I am willing to punish myself and them by sacrificing them. Or shall I tear off these greedy loins which have driven me to perverted love? Or these unappeasable viscera which I am afraid may be aroused afresh? Tell me, please tell me how can a woman forget she is a female and how can she make other people forget! »

Mary is upset. She weeps and suffers, but the only sign of Her

grief are the tears that fall on the repentant woman.

« I want to die only after I have been forgiven. I want to die remembering nothing but my Saviour. I want to die knowing that His wisdom is friendly to me... and I cannot go near Him because the world looks at Him and at me suspiciously to accuse us... » Aglae cries, prostrate with grief.

Mary stands up whispering: « How difficult it is to be redeemers! » She is almost breathless.

Aglae, who hears the whisper and understands Her gesture, moans: « See? You can see that You are disgusted, too. I will now go away. I am done for! »

« No, My daughter. You are not done for. No, you are beginning now. Listen, poor soul. I am not moaning because of you, but because of the cruel world. I will not let you go, but I will pick you up, a poor swallow tossed by the storm against the walls of My house. I will take you to Jesus and He will show you your way to redemption... »

« I no longer hope... The world is right. I cannot be forgiven. »

« You cannot by the world. You can by God. Let me speak to you in the name of the Supreme Love, Who gave Me a Son that I may give Him to the world. He took Me out of the blessed simplicity of my consecrated virginity so that the world might receive Forgiveness. He drew My blood not from My childbirth but from My heart by revealing to Me that My Creature is the Great Victim. Look at Me, daughter. There is a large wound in this heart. It has been groaning for over thirty years and it is becoming deeper and deeper and it consumes Me. Do you know its name? »

« Sorrow. »

« No. Love. It is love that bleeds Me so that My Son may not be the only one to save. It is love that sets Me on fire that I may purify those who dare not go to My Son. It is love that causes Me to weep that I may wash sinners. You wanted My caresses. I am giving you My tears that will already cleanse you and enable you to look at My Lord. Do not weep thus! You are not the only sinner who has come to the Lord and has left redeemed. Other women came, many more will come.

You are not sure that He can forgive you? But can you not see in everything that happened to you the mysterious will of Divine Goodness? Who brought you to Judaea? Who took you to John's house? Who placed you at the window that morning? Who lit a light to illuminate His words for you? Who made you understand that charity, when joined to the prayers of those who have been helped, obtains help from God? Who gave you the strength to run away from Shammai's house and to persevere during the first days until His arrival? Who led you on to His way? Who enabled you to live as a repentant sinner to cleanse your soul more and

more? Who gave you a martyr's soul, a believer's soul, a persevering and pure soul?

Do not shake your head. Do you think that only he is pure who has never known sensuality? Do you think that a soul can never again become virgin and beautiful? Oh! My daughter! Between the purity which is entirely a grace of the Lord and your heroic ascent to climb back to the summit of your lost purity, you must believe that yours is the greater. You are building it against sensuality, against need and habit. For Me it is a natural endowment, like breathing. You have to break off your thoughts, your feelings, your flesh, in order not to remember, not to desire, not to yield... I... Oh! Can a little child, a few hours old, have carnal desires? And does he have any merit thereby? The same applies to Me. I do not know what that tragic hunger is that made mankind a victim. I know but the most holy hunger for God. But you did not know it and you learned it by yourself. But you subdued the other hunger, the tragic and horrible one, for the sake of God, your only love at present. Smile, daughter of divine mercy! My Son is working in you what He told you at Hebron. He has already done that. You are already saved, because of your good will to be saved, because you have come to know of purity, of sorrow, of Good. Your soul has revived. Yes, you need His word saying to you in the name of God: "You are forgiven". I cannot say that. But I give you My kiss as a promise, as a beginning of forgiveness...

O Eternal Spirit, a little of You is always in Your Mary! Allow Her to pour forth Your Sanctifying Spirit on this creature who is weeping and hoping. For the sake of Our Son, o God of Love, save this woman who is expecting salvation from God. May the Grace, with which the Angel said that God has filled Me, may that Grace by a miracle rest upon her and support her until Jesus, the Blessed Saviour, the Supreme Priest, absolves her in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Spirit...

It is late, My daughter. You are tired and worn out. Come, Rest. You will go away tomorrow... I will send you to an honest family, because too many people come here now. And I will give you a dress like Mine and you will look like a Jewess. And as I will see My Son only in Judaea, because Passover is near and at the new moon of April we shall be in Bethany, I will speak to Him of you. Come to the house of Simon the Zealot. You will find Me there and I will take you to Him. »

Aglae is weeping again. But now she is at peace.

She is sitting on the floor. Also Mary has sat down again. And Aglae rests her head on Her knees and kisses Her hand... She then moans: « They will recognise me... »

« Oh! They will not. Do not be afraid. Your dress was too well known. But I will prepare you for your journey towards

Forgiveness and you will be like a virgin going to her wedding: you will be different and unknown to the people unaware of the rite. Come. There is a little room near Mine. Saints and pilgrims wishing to go to God have rested in it. It will shelter you, too. »

Aglae is about to pick up her large mantle and her veil.

« Leave them. They are the clothes of poor lost Aglae. But she no longer exists... and not even her dress is to remain. It experienced too much hatred... and hatred hurts as much as sin. »

They go out into the dark kitchen garden and then into Joseph's little room. Mary lights the little lamp on the shelf, caresses the repentant woman once again, closes the door and with her treble light she looks to see where She can take Aglae's torn mantle so that nobody may see it the following day.

169. The Sermon of the Mount: « You Are the Salt of the Earth. »

22nd May 1945.

Jesus is walking fast along a main road. He is alone. He is going towards a mountain, which rises near a main road running eastwards from the lake, and it begins to rise with a low mild elevation, which extends for a good distance, forming a tableland from which one can see all the lake and the town of Tiberias towards the south, as well as other towns, not quite so beautiful, stretching towards the north. There is then a crag and the mountain rises rather steeply up to a peak, and then slopes down and rises once again up to another peak, similar to the previous one, thus forming a kind of strange saddle.

Jesus begins climbing towards the tableland along a mule-track, which is still quite comfortable, and reaches a small village, the inhabitants of which work the tableland, where the corn is beginning to come to ear. He goes through the village and proceeds through the fields and meadows all strewn with flowers and rustling with crops.

The clear day displays all the beauty of the surrounding nature. Besides the lonely little mountain, towards which Jesus is going, to the north lies the imposing peak of Mount Hermon, the top of which looks like a huge pearl laid on a base of emeralds, so white is the peak covered with snow, whereas the woody slope is green. Beyond the lake, which is between the lake and Mount Hermon, the plain is green. Lake Merom is there, but cannot be seen from here. There are more mountains towards the lake of Tiberias on the north-west side and beyond the lake there is a lovely flat country and other mountains, the contours of which are softened by the distance. To the south, on the other side of the main road, I can see the hills, which I think conceal Nazareth. The more one climbs, the

wider the view. I cannot see what lies to the west, because the mountain acts as a wall.

Jesus meets first the apostle Philip, who seems to have been posted there as sentinel. « What, Master? You are here? We were expecting to meet You on the main road. I am waiting here for my companions who have gone to get some milk from the shepherds who pasture their flocks on these mountains. Down, on the road, there is Simon with Judas of Simon and Isaac, and... Oh! here... Come! Come! The Master is here! »

The apostles, who are coming down with flasks and containers, begin to run and the younger ones, of course, arrive first. The welcome they give the Master is really touching. At last they are all together and while Jesus smiles, they all want to speak and tell Him...

« But we were waiting for You on the road! »

« We were just thinking that You were not coming even today. »

« You know, there are many people. »

« Oh! We were embarrassed, there are some scribes and even some of Gamaliel's disciples... »

« That's right, my Lord! You left us just at the right moment! I have never been so afraid as I was just then. Don't play such a trick on me again! »

Peter complains and Jesus smiles and asks: « Did anything wrong happen to you? »

« Oh! no! On the contrary... Oh! Master! Don't You know that John gave a sermon?... It sounded as if You were speaking through him. I... we were all dumbfounded... That boy who only a year ago was able only to cast a net... oh! » Peter is still amazed and he shakes John who smiles but is silent. « Do you believe that it is possible that this boy spoke those words with these smiling lips? He sounded like Solomon. »

« Also Simon spoke very well, my Lord. He was really "the chief" » says John.

« No wonder! He took me and pushed me there! Who knows!... They say that I gave a good sermon. Perhaps I did. I don't know... because what with the surprise at John's words, what with the fear of speaking to so many people and causing You to cut a poor figure, I was bewildered... »

« Causing Me to cut a poor figure? But you were speaking and you would have cut a poor figure, Simon » teases Jesus.

« Oh! As far as I am concerned... I was not worried about myself. I did not want them to sneer at You and consider You a fool for choosing a blockhead as your apostle. »

Jesus sparkles with joy because of Peter's humility and love. But He only asks: « And what about the others? »

« Also the Zealot spoke very well. But he... we all know. But this

boy was the great surprise! Of course, since we retired to pray, the boy's soul seems to be in Heaven all the time. »

« That is true, very true. » They all confirm Peter's words. And they continue telling Jesus...

« You know? Among the disciples now there are two, who according to Judas of Simon, are very important. Judas is very active. Of course! He knows many of those... high up and knows how to deal with them. And he likes to speak... He speaks very well. But the people prefer to hear Simon, Your cousins and above all this boy. Yesterday a man said to me: "That young man speaks very well - he was referring to Judas - but I prefer you". Oh! poor fellow! He prefers me and I can hardly put a few words together!... But why did You come here? The meeting place was the road, and we have been there. »

« Because I knew I was going to find you here. Now listen. Go down and tell the others to come up, also the known disciples. The people are not to come today. I want to speak to you only. »

« In that case it is better to wait until evening. When the sun is about to set, the people spread among the nearby villages and they come back the following morning waiting for You. Otherwise... who will hold them back? »

« All right. Do that. I will wait for you up there, at the top. The nights are mild now and we can sleep in the open. »

« Wherever You wish, Master. Providing You are with us. »

The disciples go away and Jesus resumes climbing up to the top, which is the same one as I already saw last year in the vision for the end of the sermon of the Mount and the first meeting with Mary Magdalene. The view is now wider and is becoming brighter in the sunset.

Jesus sits on a rock and is recollected in meditation. And He remains thus until the shuffling of feet on the path warns Him that the apostles are back. It is getting dark, but the sun still shines on the mountain top, drawing scents from every herb and flower... There is a strong smell of wild lilies of the valley while the tall stems of narcissi shake their stars and buds as if they were asking for dew.

Jesus gets up and greets them: « Peace be with you. »

There are many disciples who come up with the apostles. Isaac leads them smiling. His smiling face is the thin face of an ascetic. They all gather round Jesus Who is greeting Judas Iscariot and Simon Zealot particularly.

« I wanted you all here with Me, to be for a few hours with you alone and speak only to you. I have something to tell you to prepare you for your mission. Let us take our food and then we shall speak, and while you are sleeping your souls will continue to relish the doctrine. »

They have their frugal meal and then form a circle round Jesus Who is sitting on a large stone. They are about one hundred, perhaps more, between disciples and apostles: a circle of attentive faces, which the flames of two fires light up oddly. Jesus speaks slowly, gesticulating quietly. His face looks paler, as it emerges from His dark blue tunic and also because it is lit up by the rays of the new moon, which illuminates the spot where He is, a small comma of a moon in the sky, a ray of light that caresses the Master of Heaven and earth.

« I wanted you here, aside, because you are My friends. I called you together after the first test of the Twelve, to widen the circle of My active disciples, and to hear from you your first reactions to being guided by those whom I am giving to you to continue My work. I know that everything went well. I supported with My prayer the souls of the apostles, who had come out of a praying retreat with a new strength in their minds and in their hearts. A strength that does not come from human effort, but from a complete reliance in God.

Those who have been most unmindful of themselves, have given most. It is difficult to be unmindful of oneself.

Man is made of recollections and the ones that raise their voice most are the memories of one's ego. You must distinguish between ego and ego. There is the spiritual ego of the soul that remembers God and its origin from God, and there is the inferior ego of the flesh that remembers its passions and the numberless exigencies concerning its whole being. They are so many voices as to form a choir, and unless the spirit is quite strong, they overcome the solitary voice of the spirit that remembers its nobility as child of God. It is therefore necessary - with the exception of this holy memory that should always be stimulated and kept green and bright - it is necessary to learn how to forget yourselves, in all the memories, the needs, the timid reflections of the human ego, in order to be perfect disciples.

In this first test of My Twelve, those who have given most are the ones who forgot themselves most. They forgot not only their past, but also their limited personality. They are the ones who no longer remembered what they were, and were so united to God as to be afraid of nothing. Why were some standoffish? Because they remembered their habitual scruples, their usual considerations and prejudice. Why were others laconic? Because they remembered their doctrinal inability and they were afraid of cutting a bad figure or causing Me to cut one. Why the showy ostentation of others? Because they remembered their usual pride, their desire to show off, to be applauded, to rise above the others, to be "someone". Finally, why the sudden revelation of a triumphal, rabbinic, persuasive, firm eloquence in others? Because they, and

they alone did remember God. Like those who so far have been humble and have endeavoured to pass unnoticed and at the right moment were able, all of a sudden, to assume the pre-eminent dignity conferred on them, and which they never wanted to exert before, lest they should presume too much. The first three groups remembered their inferior ego. The other group, the fourth, remembered their superior ego and were not afraid. They felt God with themselves and in themselves and were not afraid. Oh! holy boldness which comes from being with God!

Therefore now listen, both you apostles and you disciples. You apostles have already heard these concepts. But now you will understand them in greater depth. You disciples have never heard of them or you have only heard fragments of them. And you must engrave them on your hearts. Because I will make a wider and wider use of you, as Christ's flock is becoming more and more numerous. Because the world will attack you more and more violently, and its wolves will increase in number against Me, the Shepherd and against the flock and I want to put in your hands the weapons to defend both the Doctrine and My flock. What is sufficient for the herd is not sufficient for you, little shepherds. If the sheep are allowed to make mistakes, browsing in herbs which make the blood bitter or desires crazy, you are not allowed to make the same mistakes, leading a large herd to ruin. Because you must realise that where there is an idolatrous shepherd the sheep either die of poison or are devoured by wolves.

You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. But should you fail in your mission you would become a tasteless and useless salt. Nothing could give you flavour again, since God could not give you it, considering that it was given to you as a gift, and you have desalted it, by washing it in the insipid dirty water of mankind, by sweetening it by means of the corrupt sweetness of sensuality, thus mixing with the pure salt of God the corruption of pride, avarice, gluttony, lust, wrath, sloth, so that there is a grain of salt to seven times seven grains of each vice. Your salt, therefore, is but a mixture of stones in which the poor grain of lost salt cannot be found, a mixture of stones screeching under your teeth and leaving in your mouths the flavour of earth, that makes food disagreeable and disgusting. It is not even useful for inferior use, as the flavour of the seven vices would harm also every human employment. The salt then can only be spread and trodden on by the careless feet of the people. How many people will thus be able to tread heavily on the men of God! Because those chosen men will allow the careless people to trample on them, as they no longer are a substance employed to give the flavour of noble heavenly things, as they are nothing but corruption.

You are the light of the world. You are like this mountain top

which was the last to be kissed by the sun and the first to be silvered by the moon. Who is in a high place shines and can be seen because even the most dreamy eye looks now and again at high spots. I would say that the physical eye, which is said to be the mirror of the soul, reflects the yearning of the soul, a yearning often unnoticed but always alive as long as a man is not a demon, a yearning after heights where reason by instinct places the Most High. And searching for Heaven, at least some times in life the eye looks at heights.

I beg you to remember what we all have done, since our childhood, entering Jerusalem. Where do our eyes turn? To Mount Moriah, triumphantly crowned with the marbles and gold of the Temple. And where do we turn our eyes when we are in the enclosure of the Temple? We look at the precious domes shining in the sun. How much beauty there is in the sacred enclosure, spread in its halls, porches and yards! But what is up there strikes our eyes. I also beg you to remember what happens when we are on the way to some place. Where do we turn our eyes, almost to forget the length of the journey, the tedium, the tiredness, the heat, the dust of the road? They turn to the mountain tops, even if they are not very high, even if they are far away. And what a relief it is to see them appear if we are walking in a flat unvarying plain! Is there mud on the road? There is neatness up there. Is it sultry on the plain? It is cool up there. Is the view limited down here? It is wide up there. And only by looking at the mountain tops, we feel less the heat of the day, the mud is not so slippery, and walking is not so painful. If there is a town shining on the mountain top, no eye will refrain from admiring it. We could say that even a modest place becomes beautiful if placed, almost like an airy place, on a mountain top. That is why in the true and false religions, the temples were placed, when possible, on high spots, and if there was no hill or mountain, they built a stone pedestal, thus building with human labour the elevation on which to lay the temple. Why is that done? Because men want the temple to be seen so that its sight will remind mankind of God.

Likewise I said that you are lights. When in the evening you light a lamp in the house, where do you put it? In a hole under the oven? In the cave used as a cellar? Or do you close it in a chest? Or do you hide it under a bushel? No, you do not. Otherwise it would be useless lighting it. The light instead is placed on top of a shelf, or it is put on a lamp-stand, so that being high up, it may brighten up the whole room and illuminate the people living in it. And precisely because what is placed on a high place is to remind men of God and illuminate, it must be able to fulfil its task.

You must remember the True God. Thus you must ensure that you do not have within yourselves the sevenfold paganism. Otherwise

you would become profane high places with thickets sacred to this or to that god, and you would drag into your paganism those who look at you as the temples of God. You must bear the light of God. A dirty wick, a wick not nourished with oil, smokes and gives no light, it has a bad smell and does not illuminate. A lamp hidden behind a dirty quartz-crystal does not create the splendid gracefulness or the dazzling effects of light on the bright mineral. But it fades behind the veil of black smoke that makes the crystal cover dull.

The light of God shines where wills are zealous in removing daily the scum produced by work itself, with its contacts, reactions and disappointments. The light of God shines where the wick is immersed into plenty liquid of prayer and charity. The light of God multiplies into infinite splendid reflections, as many as the perfections of God, each of which excites in the saint a virtue practised heroically, if the servant of God keeps the unattackable quartz of his soul clear from the smoke of every soiling passion. The unattackable quartz. Unattackable! (Jesus thunders out in this conclusion and His voice resounds in the natural amphitheatre).

Only God has the right and the power to scratch that crystal, to write His Most Holy Name on it with the diamond of His will. That Name then becomes the ornament that emphasizes the brighter facets of supernatural beauty on the most pure quartz. But if the foolish servant of the Lord, losing control of himself and the sight of his mission, a completely and solely supernatural one, allows false ornaments and scratches, instead of engravings to be cut on his quartz, that is, mysterious and satanic figures made by the hot claw of Satan, then the wonderful lamp no longer retains its intact beauty, but it cracks and breaks and the fragments of the splintered crystal suffocate the flame, and even if it does not break, a tangle of marks of unmistakable nature forms on its surface and soot penetrates into them spoiling it.

Woe, three times woe, to the shepherds who lose charity, who refuse to climb day by day to take upwards their flocks that expect their ascent in order to ascend themselves. I will strike them down and remove them from their positions and I will put out their smoke altogether.

Woe, three times woe, to the masters, who reject Wisdom to become saturated with a science, which is often opposed and always proud, sometimes satanic, because it makes them men, whereas - listen and remember - if every man is destined to become like God, through the sanctification that makes man a son of God, a master, a priest should already have in this world the aspect of a son of God, and only such aspect. He should have the aspect of a creature entirely devoted to souls and to perfection. He should have such aspect to lead his disciples to God. Anathema to

the masters of a supernatural doctrine, who become idols of human knowledge.

Woe, seven times woe, to those among My priests who are dead to the spirit, who with their lack of savour and ill-living flesh live as miserable sluggish human beings. Their sleep is full of hallucinated apparitions of everything, except God One and Trine, and is full as well of all sorts of calculations, except the superhuman desire to increase the wealth of hearts and of God; they live a material, miserable dull life, dragging into their dead water those who follow them, believing that they are "Life". The curse of God on those who corrupt My little beloved flock. I shall not ask an account and I will not punish those who perish through your laziness, o negligent servants of the Lord, but I will ask you to account for every hour and all the time lost and all evil consequences and I will punish you.

Remember those words. And now go. I am climbing to the top. You may sleep. Tomorrow the Shepherd will open the pastures of Truth to His flock. »

170. The Sermon of the Mount. The Beatitudes (Part One).

24th May 1945.

Jesus speaks to the apostles allotting a place to each one, so that they may direct and watch over the crowd who are climbing up the mountain since the early hours in the morning, with sick people whom they carry in their arms or in stretchers or who have dragged themselves along on crutches. Among the people there are Stephen and Hermas.

The air is clear and rather chilly, but the sun soon softens the fresh mountain air, which on its turn, moderates the heat of the sun, drawing benefit from it, as it becomes pure and cool but not sharp.

The people sit on the stones scattered in the little valley between the two crests, but some wait for the sun to dry the grass, wet with dew, so that they may sit down on the earth. There is a huge crowd from all the districts in Palestine and the people are of all conditions. The apostles disappear in the multitude, but like bees that come and go from the meadows to the beehives, now and again they go back to the Master to inform Him, to ask for advice, and for the pleasure of being seen near Him.

Jesus climbs a little higher up than the meadow, which is at the bottom of the little valley, He leans against the rock and begins speaking.

« Many have asked Me, during a year of preaching: "You say that You are the Son of God, tell us what is Heaven, what is the Kingdom, what is God. Because our notions are hazy. We know

that there is Heaven with God and the angels. But no one has ever come to tell us what it is like, because it is closed to righteous people". They have also asked Me what the Kingdom is and what God is. And I have endeavoured to explain to you what the Kingdom is and what God is. I have striven not because it was difficult for Me to give an explanation, but because it is difficult for many reasons to get you to accept the truth that clashes, as far as the Kingdom is concerned, with a multitude of ideas, which have risen over the centuries and, as far as God is concerned, with the sublimity of His Nature.

Others have also asked Me: "All right. That is the Kingdom and that is God. But how do we achieve them?" Here again I have tried to explain to you patiently the true spirit of the Law of Sinai. Who abides by that spirit conquers Heaven. But to explain the Law of Sinai to you it is necessary to make you hear the loud thunder of the Lawgiver and of His Prophet, who, while promising blessings to obedient believers, threaten terrible punishments and maledictions to those who disobey. The Epiphany of Sinai was frightful and its dreadfulness is reflected in the entire Law, and has been reflected throughout centuries and in all souls.

But God is not only a Legislator... God is a Father. And a Father of immense goodness.

Probably, nay, certainly, your souls are not in a position to rise and contemplate the infinite perfections of God, and His goodness least of all, because goodness and love are the rarest virtues amongst men. The reason is that your souls are weakened by original sin, by passions, by your own sins, by your own selfishness and the selfishness of other people: the former closes your souls, the latter irritates them. Goodness! How sweet it is to be good, with no hatred, no envy, no pride! How sweet it is to have eyes that look only for love and hands that stretch out only in gestures of love, and lips that utter only words of love and a heart, above all a heart, that full only of love, urges eyes, hands and lips to acts of love!

The most learned amongst you know with which gifts God had enriched Adam, both for himself and for his descendants. Also the most ignorant amongst the children of Israel know that there is a soul in us. Only the poor heathens are unaware of this royal guest, of this vital breath and celestial light that sanctifies and gives life to our body. But the most learned know which gifts were given to man and to the soul of man.

God was not less munificent to the soul than to the flesh and blood of the creature made by Him with a little mud and His breath. As He gave the natural gifts of beauty and integrity, of intelligence and will power, and the capability of loving oneself and other people, He also gave moral gifts and the subjection of senses

to reason. Therefore the wicked captivity of senses and passions did not permeate the freedom and control of Adam and of his will, with which God had gifted him, thus he was free to love, free to wish, free to enjoy in justice, without what makes you slaves, causing you to feel the bite of the poison that Satan spread and which now overflows, carrying you out of the limpid river-bed on to the slimy fields and putrescent ponds, where the fever of carnal and moral senses fermentates. Because you must realise that also the concupiscence of thought is sensual. And they received supernatural gifts, that is, sanctifying Grace, a heavenly destiny, the vision of God.

Sanctifying Grace: the life of the soul. The most spiritual thing deposited in our spiritual soul. The Grace that makes us children of God, because it preserves us from the death of sin, and who is not dead "lives" in the house of the Father: Paradise; in My Kingdom: Heaven. What is this Grace that sanctifies and gives Life and Kingdom? Oh! Not many words are required! Grace is love. Grace is therefore God. It is God Who admiring Himself in the creature whom He created perfect, loves Himself, contemplates Himself, desires Himself, gives Himself what is His own to multiply it, to delight in the multiplication, to love Himself in the many others who are others Himself.

Oh! My children! Do not defraud God of this right of His! Do not deprive God of what belongs to Him! Do not disappoint God in His desire! Consider that He acts out of love. Even if you did not exist, He would still be Infinite, and His power would not diminish. But He, although He is complete in His infinite immeasurable measure, does not want anything for Himself and in Himself which He could not, because He is already Infinite - but for Creation, His creature. He wants to increase His love for all rational creatures contained in Creation, and therefore gives you His Grace: Love, that you may carry it in yourselves to the perfection of saints, and you may pour this treasure, taken from the treasure that God has given you with His Grace and increased by all the holy deeds in all your heroic lives of saints, into the infinite Ocean where God is: into Heaven.

You are divine reservoirs of Love! That is what you are, and no death is given to your being, because you are eternal, as God is, being like God. You shall be, and there will be no end to your being, because you are immortal like the holy spirits that supernourished you, returning to you enriched by their own merits. You live and nourish, you live and enrich, you live and form the most holy thing which is the Communion of the spirits, from God, the Most Perfect Spirit, down to the last born baby, who sucks his mother's breast for the first time.

Do not criticise Me in your hearts, o learned men! Do not say:

"He is crazy, He is a liar! Because He speaks foolishly saying that there is Grace in us, when Sin has deprived us of it. He lies stating that we are already one thing with God". Yes, there is sin and there is separation. But before the power of the Redeemer, Sin, the cruel separation between the Father and the children, will collapse like a wall shaken by a new Samson. I have already got hold of it and I am shaking it and it is about to fall and Satan is trembling with wrath and impotence, as he can avail nothing against My power and he realises that so much prey is being snatched from him and that it is becoming more difficult to drag man to sin. Because when I will have taken you to My Father, through Me, and you have been cleansed and strengthened by My Blood and sorrow, Grace will come back to you, lively and powerful and you will be triumphant, if you so wish. God does no violence to your thoughts or your sanctification. You are free. But He gives you back your strength. He gives you back your freedom from Satan's empire. It is up to you to take upon yourselves the infernal yoke or to put angelical wings on your souls. It depends on you, with Me as your brother to guide you and nourish you with an immortal food.

You may ask: "How can one conquer God and His Kingdom through a milder road than the harsh Sinai one?" There is no other road but that one. But let us look at it not from the point of view of a threat, but from the point of view of love. Let us not say: "Woe to me, if I do not do that!" trembling with fear of sinning, of not being able not to sin. But let us say: "How glad I will be if I do that!" and with the impulse of a supernatural joy, full of happiness, let us rush towards these beatitudes, brought about by compliance with the Law, as roses sprout from a thorny bush.

"How happy I will be if I am poor in spirit, because mine shall be the Kingdom of Heaven!

How happy I will be if I am gentle because I shall have the earth for my heritage!

How happy I will be if I mourn without rebelling, because I will be comforted!

How happy I will be if I hunger and thirst for justice more than I do for bread and wine to satisfy the flesh, because Justice will satisfy me!

How happy I will be if I am merciful, because I will have divine mercy shown me!

How happy I will be if I am pure in heart, because God will bend over my pure heart and I will see Him!

How happy I will be if I am peaceful in spirit, because God will call me His son, because love is in peace and God is Love Who loves whoever is like Him!

How happy I will be if I am persecuted in the cause of right, because God, my Father, to reward me for my earthly persecutions,

will give me the Kingdom of Heaven!

How happy I will be if I am abused and accused falsely for being Your son, o God! It must not cause me desolation but joy, as it will make me equal to Your best servants, to the Prophets, who were persecuted for the same reason and with whom I firmly believe I shall share the same great eternal reward in Heaven, which is mine!".

Let us look thus at the way of salvation: through the joy of saints.

"How happy I will be if I am poor in spirit".

Oh! Satanic thirst for wealth, to what frenzy you lead both rich and poor! The rich who live for their gold: the ill-famed idol of their ruined spirits. The poor who live hating the rich because of their gold, and even if they do not murder them physically, they curse the rich wishing them all sorts of evil. It is not enough not to do evil, one must not even wish to do it. He who curses wishing calamities and death is very like him who kills physically, because he wishes the death of the person he hates. I solemnly tell you that such a wish is like an action held back, it is like a foetus conceived in a womb and formed, but not yet ejected. A wicked desire corrupts and ruins man, because it lasts longer than a violent action and is deeper than the action itself.

If a rich man is poor in spirit he does not sin for the sake of his gold but he turns his gold into sanctification, because he turns it into love. Loved and blessed, he is like spring water that saves travellers in a desert, as he gives generously, without avarice, happy to be able to relieve desperate situations. If he is poor, he is happy in his poverty and eats his bread which is sweetened by the joy of being free from the thirst of gold, he sleeps free from nightmares and gets up well rested for his tranquil work, which is always light when done without greed or envy.

What makes man materially rich is gold, what makes him morally rich are his affections. Gold comprises not only money but also houses, fields, jewels, furniture, herds, everything, in other words, that which makes life wealthy materially. Affections include: blood or marriage ties, friendship, intellectual soundness, public offices. As you can see, if for the first group a poor man can say: "Oh! as far as I am concerned, providing I do not envy those who are rich, I am all right because I am poor, and thus I am settled by force of circumstances", with regard to the second group also a poor man must be careful, because also the poorest man can become sinfully rich in spirit. Who is immoderately attached to a thing, commits a sin.

You may say: "Are we then to hate the wealth that God granted us? Why then does He command us to love our fathers, mothers, wives, children and say: 'You shall love your neighbour as

yourself?' ". You must distinguish. We must love our fathers, mothers, wives and our neighbour, but in the degree indicated by God: "As ourselves". Whereas God is to be loved above everything and with our whole selves. We must not love God as we love the dearest people among our neighbours: because a woman suckled us or because she sleeps on our chest and procreates children for us, but we must love Him with our whole selves, that is, with all the ability to love that is in man: the love of a son, of a husband, of a friend and - do not be scandalised - the love of a father. Yes, we must have for the interests of God the same care that a father has for his children, for whom he lovingly protects his wealth and increases it, and he takes care of and is anxious for their physical growth and intellectual education and for their success in the world.

Love is not an evil and must not become an evil. The graces, which God grants us, are not evil and must not become so. They are love, granted out of love. We must make a loving use of such wealth granted to us by God in personal affections and in worldly goods. And only he who does not make an idol of such wealth but uses it to serve God in holiness, shows that he has no sinful attachment to it. One then practises that holy poverty in spirit that deprives itself of everything in order to be more free to conquer God, the Holy Supreme Wealth. To conquer God: that is to have the Kingdom of Heaven.

"How happy I will be if I am gentle".

This may seem to be in contrast with the facts of daily life. Those who are not lowly seem to be prominent and successful in their families, towns and countries. But is theirs a real triumph? No, it is not. It is fear that keeps apparently subdued those who are overwhelmed by the despot, but in actual fact it is nothing but a veil drawn over the rebellion seething against the tyrant. Irascible and overbearing people do not win the love of their relatives, of their own citizens or of their subjects. Neither are intellects or souls convinced to follow the doctrines of masters who impose themselves by stating: "I said so, thus it is". Such masters only create selftaught men seeking the key that can open the closed doors of a wisdom or of a science which they feel to be, and actually is the opposite of what is imposed on them.

Those priests who do not endeavour to conquer souls by means of a patient, humble and loving kindness, do not win any souls to God, but they look like armed warriors who start a fierce attack, such is their intolerant rashness in dealing with souls... Oh! poor souls! If they were holy they would not need you, o priests, to reach the Light. They would already have it within themselves. If they were just, they would not need you, o judges, to be put under the restraint of justice, as they would already have justice within

themselves. If they were healthy, they would not need a doctor. Be therefore gentle. Do not put souls to flight. Attract them through love. Because lowliness is love, as poverty in spirit is love.

If you are such you will have the Earth for your heritage and you will take this place to God, whereas before it belonged to Satan, because your lowliness, which besides love is also humility, will have overcome Hatred and Pride, expelling from souls the vile king of hatred and pride, and the world will belong to you, that is, to God, because you will be the just souls that will acknowledge God as the Absolute Master of creation, to Whom praise and blessing are due and everything else which belongs to Him.

"How happy I will be if I mourn without rebelling".

Sorrow is on the earth and sorrow wrings tears from men. Sorrow did not exist but man brought it on to the earth and because of his corrupt intellect he continuously strives to increase it in every possible way. Besides diseases and calamities ensuing from thunderbolts, storms, avalanches, earthquakes, man, in order to suffer and above all to make other people suffer - because we would like only other people to suffer, and not ourselves, the effects of means studied to make people suffer - man invents deadly weapons, which are more and more dreadful and moral hardships, which are more and more cunning. How many tears man wrings from his fellow man through the instigation of his secret king: Satan! And I solemnly tell you that those tears are not an impairment but a perfection of man.

Man is an absent-minded child, a thoughtless superficial child, a backward born child, until tears make him an adult, thoughtful, intelligent person. Only those who weep or have wept, know how to love and can understand. They know how to love their weeping brothers, how to understand them in their grief, how to help them with their goodness, which is fully aware how bitter it is to weep alone. And they know how to love God, because they have realised that everything is grief except God, because they have understood that sorrow can be soothed if tears are shed on God's heart and they have also realised that resigned tears, which do not cause faith to be lost or prayer to become barren and which loathe rebellion, such resigned tears change nature and instead of sorrow they become comfort.

Yes. Those who weep loving the Lord will be comforted.

"How happy I will be if I hunger and thirst for justice".

From the moment he is born to the moment he dies, man craves eagerly for food. He opens his mouth at his birth to get hold of his mother's nipple, he opens his lips to swallow some refreshment in the throes of death. He works to feed himself. He makes a huge nipple of the world from which he sucks insatiably for that which is perishable. But what is man? An animal? No, he is a son of God.

He is in exile for a few or many years. But his life does not come to an end when he changes his dwelling.

There is a life in life as there is a kernel in a nut. The shell is not the nut, but it is the kernel inside the shell that is the nut. If you sow a shell nothing will come up, but if you sow the shell with the kernel inside it, a big tree will grow. The same applies to man. It is not his flesh that becomes immortal, but his soul. And it is to be nourished to take it to immortality, to which the soul, out of love, will take the body in the blessed resurrection. Wisdom and Justice are the nourishment of the soul. They are taken as food and as drink and they strengthen and the more one takes of them, the more grows the holy eagerness to possess Wisdom and know Justice. But the day will come when the holy insatiable hunger of the soul will be satisfied. It will come. God will give Himself to His child, and will suckle him and the child destined for Paradise will be satisfied with the admirable Mother Who is God Himself, and man will never be hungry again but will rest happily on God's divine bosom. No human science is equal to this divine science. The curiosity of the mind can be gratified, but the necessities of the spirit cannot. Nay, the spirit is disgusted by the difference in taste and makes a wry mouth at the bitter nipple, preferring to suffer the pangs of hunger, rather than be filled with a food that does not come from God.

Be not afraid, o men thirsting or starving for God! Be faithful and you will be satisfied by Him Who loves you.

"How happy I will be if I am merciful".

Who amongst men can say: "I do not need mercy"? No one. Now, if in the Old Law it is written: "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth", why should we not say in the New Law: "Who has been merciful shall find mercy"? Everybody needs forgiveness.

Well, then: forgiveness is not achieved by formulae or by the form of a rite, which are external symbols granted to man's dull mentality, it is instead obtained through the internal rite of love, which is still mercy. If the sacrifice of a goat or a lamb and the offer of a few coins were prescribed, the reason is that every evil is founded on two roots: greed and pride. Greed is punished through the expense for the purchase of the offering, pride by the open confession of the rite: "I am making this sacrifice because I have sinned". It is also done to anticipate the times and the signs of the times, and in the blood which is shed is symbolised the Blood which will be shed to cancel the sins of men.

Blessed therefore are those who are merciful to those who are hungry, nude, homeless, to those who suffer from the greatest misery, which is to have a bad disposition, as it causes grief both to those who have it and to those who live with them. Be merciful. Forgive, bear with people, help them, teach them, support them.

Do not conceal yourselves in a crystal tower saying: "I am pure and I will not descend amongst sinners". Do not say- "I am rich and happy and I will not hear of other people's miseries". Remember that your richness, your health, your family wealth may vanish quicker than smoke blown away by a strong wind. And remember that crystal acts as a lense and consequently what may be unnoticed if you were mixed among the crowds, cannot be concealed if you place yourselves in a crystal tower where you are alone, isolated and illumined on all sides.

Mercy is necessary to offer a continuous, secret, holy sacrifice of expiation and to obtain mercy.

"How happy I will be if I am pure in heart".

God is purity. Paradise is the Kingdom of Purity. Nothing impure can enter Paradise where God is. Therefore, if you are impure, you will not be able to enter the Kingdom of God. Oh! But what a joy the Father grants to His children in advance! Who is pure has in this world an advance of Heaven because God bends over a pure soul and man from the earth can see his God. He is not familiar with the taste of human love, but relishes the flavour of divine love, to the point of being enraptured, and can say: "I am with You and You are in me, I therefore possess You and I recognise You as the most loving spouse of my soul". And believe Me, who has God enjoys substantial changes, of which he himself is unaware, and thus becomes holy, wise, strong; words embellish his lips and his actions acquire a strength that is not of the creature, but comes from God Who lives in it.

What is the life of those who see God? A beatitude. And do you wish to deprive yourselves of such a gift for the sake of fetid impurities?

"How happy I will be if I am peaceful in spirit".

Peace is one of God's characteristics. God is to be found only in peace. Because peace is love, whereas war is hatred. Satan is hatred. God is peace. No man can say that he is the son of God, neither can God call son a man who has an irascible soul always ready to stir up a storm. Not only. Neither can he be called the son of God who, although not a trouble-maker himself, by means of his own great peace does not help to calm the storms stirred up by other people. Who is peaceful propagates peace also without uttering any words. Master of himself and, I dare say, master of God, he divulges Him as a lamp spreads its light, as a thurible exhales its perfume, as a wineskin holds wine, and this sweet oil, which is the spirit of peace issuing from the children of God, gives light in the foggy gloominess of ill-feelings, and purifies the air from the miasmas of malice and calms the raging waves of quarrels.

Let God and men say that you are so.

"How happy I will be if I am persecuted in the cause of right".

Man has become so devilish that he hates good wherever it is, and he hates who is good, as if who is good, even when silent, accuses and reproaches him. In fact the goodness of one person makes the wickedness of a wicked person appear even more wicked... In fact the faith of a true believer makes the hypocrisy of a false believer appear more clearly. In fact, he who by his way of living continuously bears witness to justice can but be hated by the unjust. And then the unjust are pitiless towards the lovers of justice.

The same applies here as in wars. Man makes more progress in the satanic art of persecution than in the holy art of love. But he can persecute only what has a short life. What is eternal in man eludes the snare, nay, it achieves a more energetic vitality than persecution itself. Life escapes through the bleeding wounds or because of the privations that consume those who are persecuted. But the blood makes the purple of the future king and the privations are as many steps to ascend the thrones that the Father has prepared for His martyrs, for whom are reserved the royal seats in the Kingdom of Heaven.

How happy I will be if I am accused and abused falsely".

Strive to have your names written in the celestial books, where names are not written according to human falsehood, which is accustomed to praise those who less deserve praise, where, instead, with justice and love are written the deeds of good people in order to give them the reward promised to the blessed ones by God.

In the past, the Prophets were calumniated and abused. But when the gates of Heaven are opened, they will enter the City of God, like imposing kings, and the angels will bow singing out of joy. You, too, who have been abused and accused falsely for being the children of God, will have a heavenly triumph and when the time comes to an end and Paradise is full, then every tear will be dear to you, because through it you will have conquered the eternal glory, which I promise you in the name of the Father.

Go. I will speak to you again tomorrow. Only the sick people should remain that I may relieve them from their pains. Peace be with you and may the meditation on salvation lead you, through love, on to the road the end of which is Heaven. »

171. The Sermon of the Mount. The Beatitudes (Part Two).

25th May 1945. The Sermon of the Mount continues.

It is the same place and the same time. The crowd is larger. In a corner, near a path, there is a Roman, who seems anxious to hear but does not want to upset the crowd. I recognise him from his short tunic and the different style of his mantle. Stephen and Hermas are still there.

Jesus walks slowly to His place and resumes speaking.

« What I told you yesterday must not cause you to think that I have come to abolish the Law. No. But since I am the Man, and I understand the weakness of man, I wanted to encourage you to comply with it, turning your spiritual eyes not to the dark abyss, but to the bright Sublimity. Because if the fear of punishment can hold you back three times out of ten, the certainty of a reward will urge you seven times out of ten. Trust is therefore more efficacious than fear. And I want you to be fully and firmly confident, so that you accomplish not seven parts of good out of ten, but ten out of ten and thus gain the most holy prize of Heaven.

I will not change one iota of the Law. And Who gave it amongst the peals of thunder on Sinai? The Most High. Who is the Most High? God One and Trine. Where did He take it from? From His Thought. How did He give it? By His Word. Why did He give it? Out of His Love. You can thus see that the Trinity was present. And the Word, obedient as ever to the Thought and Love, spoke on behalf of the Thought and Love. Could I give Myself the lie? No, I could not.

But since I can do everything, I can complete the Law, make it divinely complete, not what men did throughout centuries, as they did not make it complete, but incomprehensible and impossible to be fulfilled. In fact they superimposed precepts and laws taken from their own thoughts, according to their own gain, and they thus lapidated and suffocated, sterilised and buried the most holy Law given by God. Can a tree survive if it is continuously struck by avalanches, rubble and floods? No, it will die. The Law dies in many hearts, suffocated by the avalanches of too many superstructures. I have come to remove them all, and after unearthing and reviving the Law, I will make it no longer a law, but a queen.

Queens promulgate laws. The laws are the work of queens, but they are not above queens. I instead make the Law a queen: I complete it, I crown it, putting on its top the wreath of the evangelic counsels. Before it was order. Now it is more than order. Before it was the necessary thing. Now it is more than the necessary thing: now it is perfection. Who weds it, as I present you with it, becomes immediately a king, because he has reached "perfection", because he has been not only obedient, but also heroic, that is, holy, as holiness is the sum of virtues carried to the greatest height attainable by a creature, heroically loved and practised through a complete detachment from every human desire and consideration.

I could say that he is a saint, whom love and desire prevent from seeing everything but God. As his attention is not distracted by inferior sights, his eyes and heart are fixed on the Most Holy Brightness, which is God and in which, since everything is in God, he can see his distressed brothers stretching out their hands suppliantly.

And without taking his eyes away from God, the saint devotes himself to his suppliant brothers. Against the flesh, against wealth, against comforts, he pursues his ideal: to serve. Is a saint poor or disabled? No, he is not. He has succeeded in achieving true wisdom and wealth. He therefore possesses everything. And he never tires because while it is true that he is always active, it is also true that he is continuously nourished. And while he understands the sorrows of the world, he feeds on the delights of Heaven. He is nourished by God and delights in God. He is a creature who has understood the meaning of life.

As you can see I neither change nor mutilate the Law, neither do I corrupt it by superimposing human fomenting theories. I complete it. The Law is what it is and shall be such until the last day: not one word will be changed, not one precept will be abolished. It is crowned with perfection. To reach salvation it is sufficient to accept it as it was given. To obtain immediate union with God it is necessary to live it according to My advice. But since heroes are an exception, I will speak to common souls, to the mass of souls, so that no one may say that I have made what is necessary unknown, in order to reach perfection. But of everything I tell you, remember this: he who takes the liberty of infringing one of the least of these commandments, will be considered one of the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. And he who will induce others to infringe them, will be considered one of the least both with regard to himself and to those whom he led to the infringement. He, instead, who through his life and deeds, rather than by words, has convinced others to abide by the Law, will be great in the Kingdom of Heaven and his greatness will be increased by each of those whom he has led to obey and thus sanctify themselves.

I know that what I am about to say will taste bitter to many tongues. But I cannot tell lies, even if the truth I am about to speak will procure Me many enemies.

I solemnly tell you that unless you create anew your justice, detaching it completely from the poor and unfairly defined justice which the Pharisees and Scribes have taught you; unless you are really more just than the Pharisees and Scribes, who think they are just because they increase the number of formulae without any substantial change of their spirits, you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Beware of false prophets and erring doctors. They come to you clad as lambs, and they are rapacious wolves; they come clad with holiness and they deride God; they say they love the truth and they feed on falsehood. Study them before following them.

Man has a tongue and speaks with it, he has eyes and sees with them, he has hands and makes signs with them. But he has something else which is a more truthful witness of his real being:

his deeds! And what are two hands joined in prayer, if a man is a thief and fornicator? And what are two eyes, which pretending to be inspired, roll in all directions, if after the farce, they greedily stare at a woman or an enemy, out of lust or for murder? And what is a tongue expert in whistling a false song of praise and in seducing by means of honeyed words, if behind your back it calumniates you and is capable of swearing falsely if only it could pass you off as a mean fellow? What is a tongue that says long hypocritical prayers and is then quick in killing the reputation of a neighbour or seducing his good faith? It is disgusting! And disgusting are untruthful hands and eyes. But the deeds of men, the true deeds, that is, his behaviour at home, in business, towards his neighbour and servants, are the things that testify: "This man is a servant of the Lord". Because holy deeds are the fruit of true religion.

A good tree does not bear bad fruit and a bad tree does not bear good fruit. Will these thorny bushes ever be able to give you tasty grapes? And those even more stinging thistles, will they ever be able to mature sweet figs for you? No, they will not. In actual fact you will be able to pick only a few sour blackberries from the former and uneatable fruits will come from the latter, which although flowers, are still thorny.

The man who is not just will be able to command respect by his appearance, and only by it. Also the downy thistle looks like a tuft of thin silvery threads adorned with diamonds by the dew. But if inadvertently you touch it, you find out that it is not a tuft, but a bundle of thorns, painful to man, harmful to sheep, so that shepherds uproot them from their pastures and bum them on the fire they light at night so that not even the seed may be spread. A just and provident step. I do not say to you: "Kill the false prophets and hypocritical believers". Nay, I say to you: "Leave the task to God". But I say to you: "Be careful, keep away from them that you may not be poisoned by their juices".

I told you yesterday how God is to be loved. I will insist on how our neighbour is to be loved.

Once it was said: "You shall love your friend and hate your enemy". No, not so. That was all right for the times when man did not have the comfort of God's smile. But now new times have come, when God has loved man so much as to send His Word to redeem him. Now the Word is speaking. And it is already an effusion of Grace. Later the Word will consummate the sacrifice of peace and redemption and there will be not only an effusion of Grace, but Grace will be given to every soul believing in Christ. It is therefore necessary to elevate the love for our neighbour to a perfection that unifies friend and enemy.

Have you been slandered? Love and forgive. Have you been struck? Love and offer the other cheek to him who smacked you,

considering that it is better that he gives vent to his wrath on you who can put up with it, rather than on somebody else who would take vengeance for the insult. Have you been robbed? Do not think: "This neighbour of mine is greedy", but charitably say: "This poor brother of mine is needy" and give him also your tunic if he has stolen your mantle. You will make it impossible for him to steal twice, because he will have no need to rob another person of his tunic. You may say: "It may be a vice and not a need". Well, give just the same. God will reward you for it and the wicked man will pay for it. But many times, and this should remind you of what I told you yesterday on lowliness, when he sees how he has been dealt with, his vice will drop from his heart and the sinner will redeem himself making amends for the theft by handing back what he had stolen.

Be generous towards those, who, being more honest, ask you for what they need, instead of robbing you. If the rich were really poor in spirit, as I explained yesterday, there would be no painful social inequalities, the cause of so many human and superhuman calamities. Always consider: "If I were in need, how would I feel if I were denied help?" and act according to the reply of your ego. Do to others what you would like done to yourself and do not do to others what you would not like done to yourself.

The old saying: "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth", which is not one of the ten commandments, but was added because man, devoid of Grace, is such a beast that he only understands vengeance, the old saying has been cancelled. It has indeed been cancelled by the new word: "Love him who hates you, pray for him who persecutes you, justify him who slanders you, bless him who curses you, help the one who harms you, be pacific with quarrelsome people, be compliant with bothersome persons, willingly help those who have recourse to you without practising usury, do not criticise, do not judge". You do not know the particular reason for men's actions. Be generous and merciful in all kinds of assistance. The more you give the more you will be given and a full pressed down measure will be poured by God on to the lap of him who has been generous. God will not give you only according to what you have given, but He will give you much more. Endeavour to love and be loved. Quarrels are more costly than friendly settlements and a good grace is like honey, the flavour of which lasts for a long time on one's tongue.

Love, love. Love friends and enemies, to be like your Father, Who allows the rain to fall on the good and the wicked and lets the sun shine on the just and unjust and will grant eternal sunshine and dew, and hellish fire and hail, when the good will be chosen, like selected ears of corn, amongst the sheaves of the harvest. It is not enough to love those who love you and from whom you expect

reciprocation. That is no merit: it is a joy and also naturally honest men can do it. Also the publicans and the gentiles do it. But you must love according to God and out of respect for God, Who is the Creator also of those who are your enemies or are not very fond of you. I want the perfection of love in you and I therefore say: "Be perfect as your Father, Who is in Heaven, is perfect".

So great is the precept of love for your neighbour, the perfecting of the precept of love for your neighbour, that I no longer say, as it was said: "Do not kill" because he who kills will be condemned by men. But I say to you: "Do not get angry" because a higher judgement is above you and takes into account immaterial actions. Who insults his brother will be condemned by the Sanhedrin. But who treats him as a madman, and consequently has harmed him, will be condemned by God. It is useless to make offers at the altar, unless you, for the sake of God, first sacrifice your ill-feelings in your hearts and you fulfil the most holy rite of forgiveness. Therefore, when you are about to make an offering to God and you remember that you have wronged your brother and you bear him a grudge because of a fault of his, leave your offer before the altar, make first the sacrifice of your self-esteem, by becoming reconciled to your brother, then come to the altar and only then your sacrifice will be holy. Full agreement is always the best business. The judgement of man is precarious and who stubbornly challenges it, may lose the cause and have to pay the opponent down to the last coin or languish in jail.

In everything turn your eyes to God. Ask yourselves: "Am I entitled to do what God does not do to me?". Because God is not so stubborn and implacable as you are. Woe to you if He were! No one would be saved. Let that consideration induce you to mild, humble, pitiful feeling. And then you will certainly receive a reward from God, both here and in the next world.

Here, in front of Me, there is also one who hates Me and dare not say to Me: "Cure me" because he knows that I am aware of his thoughts. But I say: "Let it be done as you wish. And as the scales fall from your eyes, so may ill-feelings and darkness fall from your heart".

You may all go with My peace. I will speak to you again tomorrow. »

The crowds disperse slowly, waiting perhaps for the cry of a miracle, which, however, is not heard.

Also the apostles and the first disciples, who remain on the mountain, ask: « Who was it? Has he not been cured? » and they insist with the Master, Who is standing, with folded arms, watching the crowd descending the mountain.

Jesus at first does not reply; He then says: « His eyes are cured, but his soul is not. It cannot be cured because it is full of hatred. »

« But who is it? That Roman, perhaps? »

« No. A poor wretch. »

« Why did You cure him, then? » asks Peter.

« Should I strike by lightning all the people like him? »

« Lord... I know that You do not want me to say: "yes", and so I will not say it... but that is what I think... and it is the same... »

« It is the same, Simon of Jonah. You should know then... Oh! How many hearts covered with scales of hatred there are around Me! Come. Let us go up there, to the top, to look from the height at our beautiful sea of Galilee. Only you and I. »

172. The Sermon of the Mount. The Beatitudes (Part Three).

26th May 1945. The Sermon of the Mount continues.

The same place and the same time. The people, with the exception of the Roman, are the same. Perhaps the crowd is larger because many people are standing at the beginning of the paths leading to the little valley.

Jesus is speaking:

« One of the errors easily made by man is to have lack of honesty towards himself. And since man is rarely sincere and honest, he has made some provision for himself in order to be compelled to go along the way he wants. This curb, which, after all, as he is a fiery horse, he soon slackens or gives a pull, as he wishes, and thus changes his gait; or he removes it completely and does as he likes, without considering what reproach he may receive from God, from men and from his own conscience. That bit is the oath. But no oath is necessary amongst honest people and God never taught you it. On the contrary He commanded you: "You shall not bear false witness", without any further addition. Because man ought to be frank without the need of anything except the loyalty of his word.

When in Deuteronomy mention is made of vows, also of the vows that are something which originated from a heart considered to be united to God, either through a feeling of need or a sentiment of gratitude, it is written: "Whatever passes your lips, you must keep to, and the vow that you have freely made with your own mouth to the Lord your God must be fulfilled". Mention is always made of the word given, without anything else but the word. Who feels the need of taking an oath is neither sure of himself nor of the opinion his neighbour has of him. And who makes other people take an oath testifies thereby that he distrusts the frankness and honesty of the swearer. As you can see, the habit of taking an oath is one of the consequences of man's moral dishonesty. And it is a shame for man. It is a double shame because man is not even faithful to the shameful thing which an oath is and by deriding God as easily as

he derides his neighbour, he swears falsely with the greatest ease and calmness.

Can there be a more contemptible man than a perjurer? A perjurer in fact convinces his neighbour to believe him, often by using a sacred formula, thus calling God to be his accomplice and to stand surety for him, or by invoking his dearest affections: his father, mother, wife, children, his dead relatives, his very life and most essential organs, to support his false statements. He thus deceives his neighbour. He is an impious person, a thief, a traitor, a murderer. Of whom? Of God, of course, because he contaminates the Truth with his disgraceful lies and jeers at Him, daring Him: "Strike me, give me the lie, if You can. You are there, I am here and I laugh at it". Of course, you may laugh, liars and gibbers! But the moment will come when you will not laugh and that will happen when He, to Whom all power is entrusted, will appear to you, dreadful in His majesty, and simply by His aspect will make you stand to attention and will strike you with the lightning of His eyes, before His voice hurls you to your eternal destiny branding you with His curse. He is a thief because he takes possession of a reputation which he does not deserve. His neighbour, impressed by his oath, grants it to him, and the serpent adorns himself with it, pretending to be what he is not. He is a traitor because by his oath he promises something which he does not want to keep. He is a murderer: he kills either the honour of his fellow man depriving him of his reputation through false witness or he kills his own soul because a perjurer is a vile sinner in the eyes of God, Who sees the truth, also when no one else sees it.

God cannot be deceived, neither by means of false words, nor by means of hypocritical deeds. He sees. He does not lose sight of each man for a moment. And there is no fortified stronghold or deep cellar which His eyes cannot penetrate. Also within you, God penetrates the stronghold which every man has round his heart. And He judges you not according to what you swear, but to what you do.

I will therefore substitute another order for the one given to you, when the oath enjoyed great favour to put a restraint on lies and on the easiness of failure to keep a promise. I do not say as the ancients said: "Do not swear falsely, but keep your oath", but I say to you: "Never swear". Neither by Heaven which is the throne of God, nor by the earth which is the stool of His feet, nor for Jerusalem and her Temple which are the City of the Great King and the House of the Lord our God.

Do not swear either by the graves of the deceased or by their souls. Graves are full of the dross of the inferior part of man, which is common also to animals, and with regard to their souls, leave them in their dwellings. Do not cause them to suffer or to be

struck with horror, if they are the souls of just people already in the foreknowledge of God. And although they are in such foreknowledge, which is partial knowledge, because they will not possess God in the fulness of His brightness until the moment of Redemption, they can but suffer seeing you sinners. And if they are not just, do not increase their torture by reminding them of their sin through yours. Leave the holy deceased in their peace, and the unholy ones in their pains. Do not deprive the former of anything, do not add anything to the latter. Why appeal to the dead? They cannot speak. The saints because charity prevents them from speaking: they would have to give you the lie too many times. The damned because hell does not open its gates and the damned only open their mouths to curse, and their voices are suffocated by the hatred of Satan and of the demons, because the damned are like demons.

Do not swear by the head of your father or of your mother, or by the head of your wife or of your innocent children. You have no right to do so. Are they perhaps money or merchandise? Are they a signature on a document? They are more and they are less than such things. They are blood and flesh of your own blood, man, but they are also free creatures and you cannot use them as slaves to guarantee your false statements. And they are less than your own signature, because you are intelligent, free and grown up, you are not interdicted, neither are you a child who does not know what he is doing and must be represented by his parents. You are a man gifted with reason and consequently responsible for your actions and you must act by yourself, employing, as a guarantee for your own deeds and words, your own honesty and your own frankness, the reputation that you enjoy with your neighbour, not the honesty, the frankness of your relatives and the reputation they enjoy. Are fathers responsible for their children? Yes, they are, but only as long as they are under age. After, everybody is responsible for himself. Not always just children are born of just parents, nor is it so that a holy woman is married to a holy man. Why then use the justice of a relative as a guarantee? Likewise, holy children may be born of a sinner, and as long as they are innocent, they are holy. Why then appeal to a pure soul for an impure act of yours, such as an oath which you wish to swear falsely?

Do not swear by your own head, your eyes, your tongue, your hands. You have no right to. Everything you have belongs to God. You are only the temporary guardians, the bankers of the moral or material treasures which God granted you. Why then make use of what does not belong to you? Can you add one hair to your head or change its colour? And if you cannot do that, why do you use your sight, your word, the freedom of your limbs to corroborate your oath? Do not challenge God. He could take you at your word and

dry up your eyes as He can dry up your orchards, or take your children away from you, or crush your houses to remind you that He is the Lord and you His subjects, and that who idolizes himself and thinks he is above God, challenging Him with his falsehood, is cursed.

Let your speech be simply: yes, it is; no, it is not. Nothing else. Any addition is suggested by the Evil one, who later will laugh at you, because you cannot remember everything and you will contradict yourself and you will be jeered at and recognised as a liar.

Be sincere, My children, both in your words and in your prayers. Do not behave like the hypocrites, who, when praying, love to stand in synagogues or in the corners of squares where they may be seen by people and praised as just and pious men, whereas, within their families, they are guilty towards God and towards their neighbour. Do you not consider that that is like a form of perjury? Why do you want to maintain as true what is not true in order to win a reputation which you do not deserve? An hypocritical prayer aims at saying: "I am truly a saint. I swear it in the presence of those who see me and cannot deny they saw me praying". Like a veil laid on existing wickedness, a prayer said for such purposes becomes blasphemy.

Let God proclaim you saints and live in such a way that your whole life may shout on your behalf: "Here is a servant of God". But you must be silent for your own sake. Do not allow your tongue to be urged by pride and thus become an object of scandal in the angels' eyes. It would be better for you to become mute at once if you do not have the power to control pride and tongue, and you proclaim yourselves just and pleasing to God. Leave that poor glory to proud and false people. Leave that fleeting reward to haughty and deceitful people! A poor reward! But that is what they want and they will not have any other, because you cannot have more than one. Either the true reward, the Heavenly one, which is eternal and just, or the sham one, the earthly one, which lasts as long as the life of man, and even less, and which is paid for, after this life, with a truly mortifying punishment, because it is an unjust reward.

Listen how you must pray with your lips and with your work and with your whole selves, urged by your hearts which do love God and feel He is your Father, but they always remember who the Creator is and what the creature is, and in the presence of God they are always full of reverential love, whether you are praying or are busy, whether you are walking or resting, earning or helping.

I said urged by your hearts. It is the first and essential feature. Because everything comes from your hearts and your minds: your words, your eyes, your deeds are like your hearts. A just man

draws good from his just heart and the more he draws the more he finds, because the good done creates more good, like blood that is renewed circulating in the veins and flows back to the heart enriched with new elements taken from the oxygen, which it had absorbed or from the food juices, which it had assimilated. Whereas a wicked man can draw but fraud and poison from his gloomy heart full of fraud and poison, which grow more and more because they are corroborated by accumulating sins, while the blessings of God accumulate in a good man. You may be sure that it is the exuberance of the heart that overflows from lips and reveals itself in deeds.

Make your hearts humble, pure, loving, trustful and sincere and love God with the chaste love of a virgin for her bridegroom. I solemnly tell you that each soul is a virgin married to the Eternal Lover, to God Our Lord; this world is the time of engagement during which the guardian angel of every man is the spiritual paranymp, and all the hours and contingencies of life are as many maids preparing the nuptial trousseau. The hour of death is the hour for the accomplished wedding when the introduction, embrace and union take place and the soul can raise the veil of the bridal dress and throw itself into the arms of God and the Spouse will not cause scandal by loving so.

But for the time being, o souls still victimised in the bonds of the engagement to God, when you wish to speak to the Spouse, withdraw to the peace of your abode, above all to the peace of your inner abodes and, angels of flesh helped by your guardian angels, speak to the King of angels. Speak to your Father in the secrecy of your hearts and of your inner rooms. Leave outside everything that belongs to the world: eagerness to be noted and to edify, and the scruples of long prayers full of words, of monotonous, tepid words lacking love.

For God's sake, get rid of standards in your prayers. There are really some people who waste many hours reciting a monologue only with their lips and which is a real soliloquy because not even the guardian angels listen to it; it is such a vain noise that they become absorbed in fervent prayer for the silly men guarded by them, in an effort to find a remedy. There are in fact some men who would not spend those hours in a different way, not even if God appeared to them saying: "The salvation of the world depends on your leaving such soulless manner of speech and going, shall we say, just to draw water from a well and pour it on to the ground for My sake and the sake of your fellow men". There are indeed many who believe that their monologue is more important than the kindness in receiving a visitor or the charity in helping a person in need. They are souls which have fallen into the idolatry of prayer.

Prayer is an act of love. And one can love praying or baking

bread, meditating or assisting a sick person, making a pilgrimage to the Temple or looking after the family, sacrificing a lamb or sacrificing one's desires, even the honest desire to concentrate on the Lord. It is sufficient for you to have your whole selves and all your actions impregnated with love. Be not afraid! The Father sees, understands, listens, grants. How many graces are granted for one single, true perfect sigh of love! How much wealth for an intimate sacrifice made with love. Do not be like the Gentiles. God does not need to be told what He has to do for your needs. The pagans may tell their idols, which cannot understand. But you cannot tell God, the True Spiritual God, Who is not only God and King, but also your Father and knows what you need, even before you ask Him.

Ask and it will be given to you, look and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you. Because whoever asks, will receive, whoever looks, will find and it will be opened to whomsoever knocks. When your child stretches his little hand towards you saying: "Father, I am hungry" do you perhaps give him a stone? Will you give him a snake if he asks for a fish? No, you will give him bread and fish, and caresses and blessings over and above, because it is pleasant for a father to nourish his son and see his happy smiles. If therefore you, whose hearts are imperfect, are capable of giving gifts to your children, out of a natural love that is common also to animals for their offspring, how much more will your Father, Who is in Heaven, grant to those who ask Him for the good and necessary things for their welfare. Do not be afraid to ask and do not be afraid not to receive!

However, I wish to warn you against an easy error: do not behave like those who are weak in their faith and in their love. Also amongst believers there are pagans whose poor religion is a mixture of superstition and faith, a building tampered with, into which all kinds of parasitic herbs have penetrated, so much so that it falls to pieces, and they, weak and pagans as they are, feel their faith is dying if they are not heard.

You ask. And you think it is fair to ask. And for that particular moment a certain grace may be right. But life does not end at that moment. And what is good today, may not be good tomorrow. You do not know that, because you know only the present, and that is a grace of God, too. But God knows also the future. And God to save you a greater pain does not hear your prayer.

During My year of public life more than once I heard hearts moaning: "How much I suffered then, when God did not hear me. But now I say: 'It was better thus, because that grace would have prevented me from reaching this hour of God'". I heard others say to Me: "Why, Lord, do You not hear me? You grant it to everybody but not to me?" And yet, although I was sorry to see them suffer, I

had to say: "I cannot", because to hear them would have meant hindering their flight to a perfect life.

Also the Father some times says: "I cannot". Not because He cannot satisfy the request immediately, but because He does not want to satisfy it in view of future consequences. Listen. A child is suffering from intestinal trouble. His mother calls a doctor and the doctor says: "He must fast to be cured". The child cries, yells, implores, seems to be languishing. The mother, always pitiful, joins her moaning to her son's. She thinks that the doctor's order is severe and hard. She feels that such fasting and crying may be detrimental to her son. But the doctor is inflexible. At last he says: "Woman, I know, you don't. Do you want to lose your son or do you want me to save him?". The mother shouts: "I want him to live". "In that case" says the doctor "I cannot let him have any food. It would kill him". Also the Father some times says so. You, pitiful mothers of your own ego, do not want to hear it weep because some grace has been denied. But God says: "I cannot. It would do you harm". The day will come, or eternity will come, when you will say: "Thank You, my God, for not listening to my foolishness!"

What I said with regard to prayers, I say with regard to fasting. When you fast, do not look sad, as hypocrites do, who on purpose disfigure their faces that the world may know and believe that they are fasting, even if it is not true. They also have received their reward with the praise of the world, and will not receive another one. Instead, when you fast, look happy, wash your faces thoroughly so that they may look fresh and smooth, put oil on your heads and scents on your hair and smile like one who has been well fed. Oh! Truly there is no food that nourishes as much as love does! And who fasts with a loving spirit, feeds on love! I solemnly tell you that even if the world calls you "vain" and "publicans", the Father will see your heroic secret and will give you a double reward. One for your fasting and the other for the sacrifice of not being praised for it.

And now go and feed your bodies, since your souls have been nourished. Those two poor people may stay here with us. They will be blessed guests who will give flavour to our bread. Peace be with you. »

And the two poor people stay. One is a very lean woman, the other a very old man. They are not together. Chance had joined them, as they were standing dejected in a corner, stretching out in vain their hands towards those who passed in front of them.

Jesus goes straight towards them since they dare not come forward and takes them by the hand leading them to the middle of the group of the apostles, under a kind of tent that Peter has put up in a corner and under which they perhaps take shelter at night

and they gather during the hot hours of the day. It is a shed formed by branches and... mantles. But it serves its purpose, although it is so low that Jesus and the Iscariot, the tallest of the lot, have to bend to enter.

« Here a father and a sister. Bring what we have. While taking our food we will hear their story. » And Jesus personally serves the two shy old souls and listens to their sorrowful stories. The old man is alone, after his daughter went far away with her husband and forgot her father. The woman is also alone, after a fever killed her husband and, in addition, she is ill.

« The world despises us because we are poor » says the old man. « I wander about begging for alms to scrape together some money to celebrate Passover. I am eighty years old. I have always kept Passover and this may be the last time. But I do not want to go to Abraham's bosom with any regret. As I forgive my daughter, so I hope to be forgiven. And I want to keep my Passover. »

« It is a long way, father. »

« The way to Heaven is even longer, if one is not present at the rite. »

« Are you going by yourself? And if you feel ill on the way? »

« The angel of God will close my eyes. »

Jesus caresses his white trembling head and asks the woman: « And what about you? »

« I am looking for work. If I were better fed I would get rid of my fever. And if I were cured I could work at the corn. »

« Do you think that food alone could cure you? »

« No, You could, too. But I am a poor thing, too poor to ask You for mercy. »

« And if I cured you, what would you like afterwards? »

« Nothing else. I would already have had more than I could hope for. »

Jesus smiles and hands her a piece of bread dipped into some water and vinegar, which I think is their drink. The woman eats it without speaking and Jesus continues smiling.

The meal is over. It was so frugal! The apostles and disciples look for a shady place along the slopes and among the thickets. Jesus remains under the tent. The old man is lying on the grass and tired as he was, has fallen asleep.

After a short time the woman, who had gone away looking for some shade where to rest, comes towards Jesus Who smiles at her to cheer her up. She comes forward looking shy, but happy, almost as far as the tent. She is then overcome by joy, she walks with a vigorous stride and falling flat on her face with a choked cry exclaims: « You have cured me! May You be blessed! At this time I used to shiver with fever, but I am not now... Oh! » and she kisses Jesus' feet.

« Are you sure that you have been cured? I did not tell you. It might be by chance... »

« Oh! no! Now I understand Your smile when You handed me the bread. Your virtue entered me with that morsel. I have nothing to give You in exchange, except my heart. Order Your maid, Lord, and she will obey You until she dies. »

« Yes. See that old man? He is all alone and he is just. You had a husband and death took him away. He had a daughter and selfishness took her away. And that is worse. And yet he does not curse. But it is not fair that he should go about alone in his last hours. Be a daughter to him. »

« Yes, my Lord. »

« Mind you, it means working for two. »

« I am strong now, and I will do it. »

« Go up there, then, to that cliff and tell the man who is resting there, the one wearing a grey tunic, to come to Me. »

The woman goes away quickly and comes back with Simon Zealot.

« Come, Simon, I want to speak to you. Woman, wait here. »

Jesus walks away for a few yards.

« Do you think that Lazarus would find it difficult to take on another worker? »

« Lazarus? I do not think that he even knows how many servants he has! One more, one less!... But who is it? »

« That woman. I cured her and... »

« That is enough, Master. If You cured her it means that You love her. What You love is sacred to Lazarus. I commit myself for him. » « That is true. What I love is sacred to Lazarus. You are right. And that is why Lazarus will become a saint, because by loving what I love he will love perfection. I want to join that old man to that woman and let that patriarch keep his last Passover in great joy. I am very fond of old holy people and I am happy if I can give them a serene sunset. »

« You love also children... »

« Yes, and sick people... »

« And those who weep... »

« And those who are alone... »

« Oh! My Master! Don't You realise that you are fond of everybody? Also of Your enemies? »

« I do not realise it, Simon. To love is My nature. There... the patriarch is waking up. Let us go and tell him that he will be keeping Passover with a daughter beside him, and without any more need for bread. »

They go back to the tent where the woman is waiting for them and the three of them go towards the old man who has sat up and is tying his sandals.

« What are you going to do, father? »

« I am going down to the valley. I hope to find some shelter for the night and tomorrow I will beg on the road and then down, down, in a month's time, if I am not dead, I will be in the Temple. »

« No. »

« Must I not?... Why! »

« Because God does not want it. You will not go alone. This woman will come with you. She will take you where I tell her and you will be made welcome for My sake. You will keep your Passover, but without any trouble. You have already carried your cross, father. Put it down now. All you have to do is to concentrate in prayer thanking the good Lord. »

« But why... why... I... I do not deserve so much... You... a daughter... It is more than if You gave me twenty years... And where, where are You sending me?... » The old man is weeping into his long beard.

« I am sending you to Lazarus of Theophilus. I do not know whether you know him. »

« Oh!... I come from the border of Syria and I remember Theophilus. But... Oh! Blessed Son of God, allow me to bless You! »

And Jesus, sitting on the grass, in front of the old man, does bend His head to let him impose solemnly his hands on it, thundering out in a very deep voice the old blessing: « May the Lord bless You and keep You. May the Lord let His face shine on You and be gracious to You. May the Lord uncover His face to You and bring You to peace. »

Jesus, Simon and the woman reply together: « Amen. »

173. The Sermon of the Mount. The Beatitudes (Part Four).

27th May 1945. The Sermon of the Mount continues.

The crowd is growing larger and larger as the days go by. There are men, women, old people, children, rich and poor alike. The couple, Stephen and Hermas, is always present, although not yet associated with the old disciples led by Isaac. And there is also the new couple formed yesterday: the old man and the woman. They are in the very front, near their Comforter and they look much more cheerful than yesterday. The old man, to make up for the many months or years during which he was neglected by his daughter, has laid his wrinkled hand on the knees of the woman and she is caressing it out of the inborn instinct of a morally sound woman to be maternal.

Jesus passes near them to climb up to His rustic pulpit, and while passing He caresses the head of the old man who looks at Him as if he already saw Him as God.

Peter says something to Jesus Who makes a gesture as if He wanted to say: « It does not matter. » But I do not understand what the apostle says. Peter remains near Jesus, and Judas Thaddeus and Matthew join him. The other apostles are scattered among the crowd.

« Peace be with you all!

Yesterday I spoke of prayer, of swearing, of fasting. Today I want to instruct you in other perfections. They are also prayer, trust, sincerity, love, religion.

The first thing I will speak to you of is the right use of riches, changed into as many treasures in Heaven by the good will of the faithful servant. The treasures of the earth do not last. But the treasures of Heaven are eternal. Are you fond of what is yours? Are you sorry to die because you will no longer be able to look after your property and you will have to leave it? In that case transfer them to Heaven. You may say: "What is of the earth will not enter Heaven and You have taught us that money is the filthiest thing on earth. How can we transpose them to Heaven?" No. You cannot take money, material as it is, into the Kingdom where everything is spiritual. But you can take the fruit of money.

When you give a banker your money, why do you do it? That he may make it bear interest. You do not deprive yourselves of it, not even temporarily, that he may give you back the same amount. But out of ten talents you want him to give you back ten plus one or even more. Then you are happy and you praise the banker. Otherwise you say: "He is honest, but he is a fool". And, if instead of ten plus one, he should give you nine, saying: "I lost the rest", you would denounce him and send him to prison. What is the fruit of money? Does the banker sow your money and water it to make it grow? No. The fruit is given by a skilful handling of business, so that by means of mortgage deeds and loans at interest, the money is increased by the premium rightly requested for the loan of the gold. Is it not so?

Now listen. God gives you earthly riches. To some people he grants a great deal, to some only as much as they need to live, and He says to you: "Now it is up to you. I have given them to you. Gain by these means an end as My love wishes for your own good. I have entrusted you with them, but not that you may turn them into evil. Make your wealth bear interest, for this real Fatherland, both because of the reputation I hold you in, and out of gratitude for My gifts".

And here is the method to gain this end.

Do not accumulate your treasures on the earth, living for them, being cruel for them, cursed by your neighbour and by God on account of them. It is not worth it. They are never safe in this world. Thieves can always rob you. Fire can always destroy your houses.

Diseases of plants and animals can exterminate herds and orchards. How many things undermine your property! Whether it is real estate and unassailable, such as houses and gold; whether its nature is liable to be damaged, such as all living things, vegetables and animals, or precious cloths, they can be ruined. Thunderbolts, fire and floods can destroy houses; thieves, blight, dry weather, rodents and insects can damage fields; catching diseases, fever, crippling, murrain can destroy cattle; moths and mice can ruin valuable pieces of cloth and precious pieces of furniture; oxidization can corrode vases, chandeliers and artistic gates; everything is subject to destruction.

But if you turn earthly welfare into supernatural good, then it becomes free from all damage by time, men and calamities. Store up your treasure in Heaven, where thieves cannot break in, and where no calamities occur. Work with merciful love for all the miseries of the earth. You may caress your money and kiss it if you wish so, you may rejoice at the plentiful crops, at the vineyards laden with grapes, at the countless number of olives which bend the branches of the olive-trees, and at your prolific sheep with turgid udders. You may rejoice at all that, but not in a sterile or human way. Rejoice with love and admiration, with supernatural delight and foresight.

"Thank You, my God, for this money, for these crops, plants, sheep and for this business! Thank you, sheep, plants, meadows, business, which serve me so well. May you all be blessed, because through Your goodness, o Eternal Father, and through yours, o things of mine, I can do so much good to those who are hungry, or are naked, homeless, sick, alone... Last year I did it for ten. This year - as I have more money, although I gave away much as alms, and the crops are more plentiful and the flocks larger - I will give twice, three times as much as last year. So that everybody, also those who have no wealth of their own, may partake of my joy and bless with me the Eternal Lord". That is the prayer of a just man. A prayer which joined to your deeds, transfers your wealth to Heaven, and not only keeps it eternally for you, but you will find it increased by the holy fruit of love.

Store your treasure in Heaven so that your heart may also be there, above and beyond the risk that not only your gold, your houses, fields and herds may suffer damage, but that your very heart may be attacked and robbed, corroded, burnt and killed by the spirit of the world. If you do that, you will have your treasure in your heart because you will have God within you until the blessed day when you will be in Him.

But in order not to diminish the fruit of charity, take care to be charitable in a supernatural spirit. What I said in regard to prayer and to fasting applies also to charity and to any other good action

you may do.

Keep the good you may do free from the violating sensation of the world, keep it immune from human praise. Do not profane the scented rose of your charity and of your good deeds, as it is a true censer of perfumes agreeable to the Lord. Good is profaned by a proud spirit, by the desire to be noted when doing good and by the quest for praise. The rose of charity is then dribbled and eaten away by the big slimy snails of satisfied pride and the censer is filled with the fetid straw of the litter on which the proud man basks like a well fed animal.

Oh! Those deeds of charity accomplished to be pointed out by people! It would be better, much better, if they had not been performed at all! Who does not do them, commits a sin of harshness. Who does them letting people know both the amount given and the name of the person to whom it was given, and begging for praise, commits a sin of pride by making the offer known, as he says: "See how much I can afford?", sins against charity because he humbles the beneficiary by making his name known, and commits a sin of spiritual avarice as he wants to store up human praises... It is straw, nothing but straw. Let God and His angels praise you.

When you give alms, do not have it trumpeted before you, to draw the attention of passersby and win their praise, as the hypocrites do, who want to be praised by men and thus give alms only where they can be seen by many people. They, too, have received their reward and will not have another one from God. Do not commit the same sin and do not be so presumptuous. But when you give alms, your left hand must not know what your right is doing, so secret and modest is your almsgiving and then forget about it. Do not linger admiring your deed, swelling with it like the toad that contemplates itself with its veiled eyes in the pond and sees also the clouds, trees and a chart near the bank reflected in the still water and when it sees that it is so small as compared to them, which are so large, it swells up with air until it bursts. Also your charity is nothing as compared to the Infinite, which is the Charity of God, and if you wanted to become like Him and make your small charity so big as to be equal to His, you would fill yourselves with the wind of pride and would end up by perishing.

Forget about it. Forget about the action itself. A light, a sweet voice will always be present with you and will make your day bright, sweet and happy. Because that light will be the smile of God, the honey will be the spiritual peace, which still comes from God, and the voice will be the voice of God, the Father Who will say to you: "Thank you". He sees the hidden evil and the concealed good and will give you a reward for them. I can... »

« Master, You give the lie to Your own words! » The sudden resentful remark comes from the centre of the crowd.

They all turn round in the direction of the voice. There is some confusion. Peter says: « I told You! Eh! When there is one of those over there... everything goes wrong! » Many people in the crowd hiss and grumble against the reviler.

Jesus is the only one who remains calm. He has folded His arms and is standing, tall as He is, on His rock, with the sun in front of Him, in His dark blue tunic.

The reviler, heedless of the reaction of the crowd, goes on: « You are a bad Master because You teach what You do not do and... »

« Be quiet! Go away! Shame! » shout the crowd. And again: « Go back to your Scribes! The Master is quite enough for us! Let the hypocrites go with the hypocrites! You false masters! Usurers!... » and they continue but Jesus thunders out: « Silence! Let him speak » and the crowds no longer shout but they whisper their insults glaring at him at the same time.

« Yes. You teach what You do not do. You told us that we should give alms without being seen, and yesterday in the presence of a whole crowd You said to two poor people: "Stay and I will appease your hunger". »

« I said: "Let the two poor people stay here. They will be the blessed guests who will give flavour to our bread". Nothing else. I did not say I wanted to satisfy their hunger. Which poor man has not at least some bread? It was My joy to extend to them our good friendship. »

« Of course! You are cunning and You can play the lamb!... »

The old man stands up, turns round and raising his walking stick he shouts: « Infernal tongue who are accusing the Holy One, do you think that you know everything and that you can accuse Him of what you know? As you do not know who God is and who He is Whom you are insulting, so you do not know His deeds. Only the angels and my overjoyed heart know. Listen, men, listen everybody and see whether Jesus is the liar and the proud man that this traitor to the Temple is saying. He... »

« Be quiet, Ishmael! Be quiet for My sake! If I made you happy, please make Me happy by being silent » Jesus begs him.

« I obey You, Holy Son. But let me say only this: the blessing of an old faithful Israelite is on Him Who assisted me in the name of God and God put that blessing on my lips for me and for Sarah, my new daughter. But there will be no blessing on your head. I will not curse you. I will not foul, with a curse, my mouth which must say to God: "Receive me". I did not do it to her who disowned me, and I have already received a divine reward for it. But there is One who will take the place of the Innocent you are accusing and of Ishmael, the friend of God, Who assists Him. »

A chorus of shouts closes the speech of the old man who sits down again, while a man sneaks away, followed by insults. The

crowds then shout to Jesus: « Go on, go on, Holy Master! We will listen only to You. Listen to us, not to those cursed birds of evil omen! They are jealous, because we love You more than we love them! But You are holy, they are wicked. Go on, speak to us. You can see that we have no other wish but to hear You. Our homes, our business? They are nothing, we left them to hear You. »

« Yes, I will speak to you. But do not be upset by what happened. Pray for those poor people. Forgive them as I do. Because if you forgive men their faults, also your Father Who is in Heaven will forgive you your sins. But if you bear men a grudge and do not forgive them, neither will your Father forgive you your shortcomings. And everybody needs to be forgiven.

I was saying to you that God will give you a reward, even if you do not ask to be rewarded for the good you have done. But do not do good to be rewarded, to have a security for tomorrow. Do not do good restricted within narrow limits by fear: "And after, will I have enough for myself? And should I have nothing, who will help me? Will I find anyone who will do what I did? And when I will no longer be able to give, will I still be loved?".

Look: I have mighty friends among rich people and I have friends amongst the poor people of the earth. And I solemnly tell you that the mighty ones are not the most loved. I go to them not for My own sake or profit. But because they can give Me much for those who have nothing. I am poor. I have nothing. I would like to have all the treasures in the world and change them into bread for those who are hungry, into homes for the homeless, into clothes for the naked and into medicines for the sick. You may say: "You can cure people". Yes, I can do that and other things. But I do not always find faith in men, and I cannot do what I would do and would like to do, if the hearts of men had faith in Me. I would like to help also those who have no faith. And as they do not ask the Son of man for miracles, I would like, as a man to man, to help them. But I have nothing. That is why I stretch out My hand to those who are rich and I ask them: "Give Me some alms, in the name of God". That is why I have high-placed friendships. Tomorrow, when I am no longer on the earth, there will still be poor people, but I shall not be there to work miracles for those who have faith, nor to give alms to lead to faith. But then My rich friends, who are in touch with Me, will have learned how to help, and My apostles, after their experience with Me, will have learned how to give alms out of love for their brothers. And the poor will always receive assistance.

Yesterday, I received from one who has nothing, more than all those who are rich have given Me. He is a friend, and as poor as I am. But he gave Me something which no money can buy, and which made Me happy, bringing back to Me so many serene hours

of My childhood and youth, when every evening the hands of a Just One were laid on My head and I went to rest with his blessing as the guardian of My sleep. Yesterday this poor friend of Mine made Me king with his blessing. You thus see that none of My rich friends has given Me what he gave Me. Therefore, be not afraid. Even if you no longer have the power of money, providing you have love and holiness, you can still assist who is poor, tired and distressed.

And I therefore say to you: do not worry too much because you are afraid of having too little. You will always have what is necessary. Do not worry too much about your future. Nobody knows how much future there is ahead of him. Do not worry about what you will eat to support yourselves in life or what clothes you will put on to keep your bodies warm. The life of your souls is by far more precious than your stomachs and your limbs, it is much more valuable than your food and your clothes, exactly as material life is more valuable than food and the body more precious than its clothes. And your Father knows. You ought to know, too. Look at the birds in the sky. They do not sow or reap or gather into barns, and yet they do not starve to death because the heavenly Father feeds them. And you men, the favourite creatures of the Father, are worth much more than they are.

Which of you, with all his talent, can add one single cubit to his height? If you cannot raise your height even by a span, how can you possibly change your future conditions, increasing your wealth, to ensure that you will live to a long and happy old age? Can you say to death: "You shall come for me when I want"? You cannot. Why, then, worry about your future? And why go to so much trouble lest you should be left without clothes? Think of the lilies growing in the fields: they do not work or spin, they do not buy any cloth from vendors, yet I assure you that not even Solomon in all his regalia was robed like one of them. Now if that is how God clothes the grass in the field, which is there today and will be thrown into the furnace tomorrow or used to feed the cattle and will thus end up in ash or dung, how much more He will see to you, His children?

Do not be of little faith. Do not worry about an uncertain future saying: "What shall I eat when I am old? What shall I drink? How will I clothe myself?". Leave such worries to the Gentiles, who do not have the lofty certainty of the divine paternity. You have it and you know that the Father is aware of your needs and loves you. Therefore trust Him. Seek first what is really necessary: faith, goodness, charity, humility, mercy, purity, justice, meekness, the three and four main virtues, and all the others as well, in order to be the friends of God, and have a right to His Kingdom. And I can assure you that all the rest will be given to

you as well, without having to ask for it. There is no rich man richer than a saint or any man safer than he is. God is with the saint and the saint is with God. He does not ask anything for his body, and God supplies what is necessary. But he works for his soul, and God gives Himself to him in this world, and Paradise in the next one.

So do not go to any trouble for what is not worth your trouble. Let your imperfections grieve you, not your scanty earthly means. Do not worry about tomorrow. Tomorrow will take care of itself, and you will take care of it when you live it. Why worry today? Is life not already quite full of yesterday's sad memories and of today's troubles, that we should feel the need to add the nightmares of tomorrow's uncertainties? Leave to each day its own trouble! There will always be in life more pains than we would wish, without adding the present pains to future ones! Always say the great word of God: "Today". You are His children, created to His likeness. So say with Him: "Today".

And today I give you My blessing. May it accompany you until the beginning of a new today: of tomorrow, that is when I will give you once again My peace in the name of God. »

174. The Sermon of the Mount. The Beatitudes (Part Five). Encounter with the Magdalene.

29th May 1945.

It is a glorious morning and the air is clearer than usual. Distances seem to be shortened and remote things seem to be seen through a magnifying lens so clear and neat are the least details. The crowds are getting ready to listen to the Master. Day by day the country is becoming more beautiful in its luxurious dress at the height of the springtime season, which in Palestine I think is at end of March and beginning of April, because later it has the look typical of summertime, with ripe crops and thick fully developed foliage.

The whole country is now in bloom. From the height of the mountain, which is adorned with its own flowers even in spots which would appear least suitable for blossom growth, one can see the flexuous corn undulating down in the plain, blown by the breeze making it look like sea-green waves, with a pale golden hue at the top of the ears now seeding in their bristly awns. The fruit trees, completely covered with petals stand straight above the crops undulating in the light breeze, and look like as many huge Powder-puffs or balls of white, pale pink, dark pink, bright red gauze. The olive-trees by contrast, in their dress of penitent ascetics seem to be praying and their prayers are already changing into a tentative snowfall of tiny white flowers.

The top of Mount Hermon is like pink alabaster and is kissed by the sun. Two diamond threads - they look like threads from here - run down from the alabaster top twinkling in an unbelievable fashion in the sun, and disappear into the green woods; they appear once again down in the valley where they form water-courses which flow towards Lake Merom, which cannot be seen from here. They then flow out with the beautiful waters of the Jordan and later drop into the light sapphire sea of Galilee, which twinkles like chips of precious stones set in and lit up by the sun. The sails moving on the lake, calm and splendid in its frame of gardens and wonderful countryside, seem driven by small light clouds sailing in the sea of the sky.

Nature really seems to be smiling in this early hour of a spring day.

And the crowds throng incessantly. They come up from all directions: old, healthy, sick, children and young couples who wish to start their married life with the blessing of God's word. There are beggars and wealthy people who call the apostles and give them offerings for those who are poor and they are so anxious to find a concealed place in which to do it that they seem to be going to confession. Thomas has taken one of the travelling bags and calmly pours all the money into it as if it were chicken-feed, and then takes it to the rock where Jesus is speaking, and he laughs happily saying: « Rejoice, Master! You have enough for everybody today! »

Jesus smiles and says: « And we shall start at once, so that those who are sad may be happy immediately. You and your companions will select the poor and sick people and bring them here. »

That takes a comparatively short time, although they have to listen to the cases of many people and it would have taken much longer without the practical help of Thomas, who, standing on a stone to be seen by everybody, shouts in his powerful voice: « All those suffering from physical trouble go to my right hand side, over there, in the shade. » The Iscariot follows his example as he, too, is gifted with an exceptionally powerful and beautiful voice, and he shouts: « And all those who think they are entitled to alms should come here near me. And make sure you are not telling lies because the eyes of the Master can read your hearts. »

The crowds start moving about to form three groups: those who are sick, those who are poor, and those who are anxious only to hear Jesus teaching.

But two people, and then three of the last group seem to be in need of something which is neither health nor money, but is more necessary than both: a woman and two men. They look at the apostles but dare not speak. The severe looking Simon Zealot passes by; also Peter passes by; he is busy speaking to a dozen little children to whom he promises some olives if they keep quiet

until the end of the sermon, and a thrashing if they disturb while the Master is speaking; the elderly grave Bartholomew passes by; Matthew and Philip pass carrying a cripple who would have to struggle too much to open his way through the crowd; also the cousins of the Lord pass by helping an almost blind beggar and a very old poor woman - I wonder how old she is - who weeps telling James all her troubles; James of Zebedee passes by holding in his arms a poor girl, who is certainly ill, and whom he has taken from her mother to ensure that she does not get hurt by the crowds, while the panting mother follows him; the last to pass by are Andrew and John, whom I would call the indivisible ones, because while John, in his serene simplicity of a holy child, is willing to go with his companions, Andrew, on account of his reservedness, prefers going with his old fishing companion and fellow disciple of the Baptist. They had stayed at the junction of the two main paths, to show people to their places, but there being no more pilgrims on the stony path of the mountain, the two have come together to go to the Master with the last offerings received.

Jesus is already bending over sick people and the hosannas of the crowds punctuate each miracle.

The woman, who appears to be completely distressed, dares to pull John's tunic, while he is speaking to Andrew and she smiles.

He bends and asks her: « What do you want, woman? »

« I would like to speak to the Master... »

« Are you not well? You are not poor... »

« I am well and I am not poor. But I need Him... because there are evils without any fever and there is misery without poverty and mine... mine... » and she weeps.

« Listen, Andrew. This woman is sick in heart and would like to speak to the Master. What shall we do? »

Andrew looks at the woman and says: « It is certainly something which is painful to tell... » The woman nods assent. Andrew goes on: « Do not weep... John, try and take her behind our shed. I will take the Master there. »

And John, smiling, begs people to let him pass, while Andrew goes in the opposite direction towards Jesus.

But they are noticed by two distressed men, and one of them stops John, and the other Andrew, and shortly afterwards they are both with John and the woman behind the shed of branches which is part of the tent.

Andrew reaches Jesus when the Latter is curing the cripple who raises his crutches like two trophies, as brisk as a skilled dancer, shouting his blessing. Andrew whispers: « Master, behind our shed there are three people weeping. But it is their hearts that ache and their grief cannot be made known... »

« All right. I still have this girl and this woman. Then I will come. »

Go and tell them to have faith. »

Andrew goes away while Jesus is bending over the little girl who is being held once again by her mother. « What is your name? » Jesus asks her.

« Mary. »

« And what is My name? »

« Jesus » replies the child.

« And Who am I? »

« The Messiah of the Lord Who has come to bring good to bodies and souls. »

« Who told you? »

« My mother and father who hope in you for my life. »

« Live and be good. »

The child, whose spine I think was affected by a disease, because although she is about seven years old, and perhaps older, she only moved her hands and was all enveloped in thick stiff bandages from her armpits down to her hips - they can be seen because her mother has lifted her dress to show them - remains as she was for a few minutes, then begins to slide down from her mother's lap on to the ground and runs towards Jesus Who is curing the woman, whose case I do not understand.

All the sick people have been satisfied and they are the ones who shout most in the crowd applauding « the Son of David, glory of God and ours. »

Jesus goes towards the shed.

Judas of Kerioth shouts: « Master! What about these? »

Jesus turns round and says: « Let them wait where they are. They will be comforted, too » and He walks fast to the back of the shed where the three people in anguish are with Andrew and John.

« The woman first. Come with Me into these hedges. Speak without any fear. »

« My Lord, my husband wants to leave me for a prostitute. I have five children and the last one is two years old... Great is my grief... and I am worried about my children... I do not know whether he will take them or leave them to me. He will certainly want the boys, at least the oldest one... And I who bore him will no longer have the joy of seeing him? And what will they think of their father and of me? They must think evil of one of us. And I would not like them to judge their father... »

« Do not weep. I am the Master of Life and of Death. Your husband will not marry that woman. Go in peace and continue to be good. »

« But... You will not kill him? Oh! Lord, I love him. »

Jesus smiles: « I will not kill anyone. But there is someone who will do his work. You must know that the demon is not greater than God. When you go back to your town you will find out that

someone killed that evil creature and in such a way that your husband will realise what he was doing and will love you again with revived love. »

The woman kisses the hand that Jesus had laid on her head and goes away.

One of the men comes: « I have a daughter, Lord. Unfortunately she went to Tiberias with some girl friends and it was as if she had taken some poison. When she came back to me she was like a mad woman. She wants to go away with a Greek man... and then... Why was she born? Her mother is heartbroken and perhaps will die of grief... I... only Your words, which I heard last winter, keep me from killing her. But, I tell You, my heart has already cursed her. »

« No. God, Who is a Father, only curses an accomplished and obstinate sin. What do you want from Me? »

« That You get her to mend her ways. »

« I do not know her and she will certainly not come to Me. »

« But You can change her heart also from far away! Do You know who sent me to You? Johanna of Chuza. She was leaving for Jerusalem when I went to her mansion to ask her whether she knew that wretched Greek. I was afraid she might not know him, because she is good, although she lives at Tiberias, but since Chuza has contacts with the Gentiles... She does not know him. But she said to me: "Go to Jesus. He called my soul back from very far away and He cured me, by that call, of my phthisis. He will cure also your daughter's heart. I will pray and you must have faith". I have faith. You can see it. Have mercy on me, Master. »

« Your daughter this evening will weep on her mother's knees asking to be forgiven. You must be as good as her mother and forgive her. The past is dead. »

« Yes, Master. As You wish and may You be blessed. »

He turns round to go away... but retraces his steps: « Forgive me, Master... But I am so afraid. Lust is such a demon! Give me a thread of Your tunic. I will put it in my daughter's pillow. The demon will not tempt her while she is asleep. »

Jesus smiles and shakes His head... but satisfies the man saying: « That your mind may be quieter. But you must believe that when God says: "I want it" the demon goes away without any further need. So keep this as a souvenir of Mine », and He gives him a small tuft from His fringe.

The third man comes: « Master, my father died. We thought he had some money. But we did not find any. That would not matter as my brothers and I are not short of bread. But I lived with my father as I am the eldest. The other two brothers are now accusing me of stealing the money and they want to sue me for theft. You can see my heart. I did not see one single coin. My father kept his Money in a coffer in a metal case. When he died we opened the coffer

but the case was no longer there. They say: "Last night, while we were sleeping, you took it". It is not true. Help me to restore peace and esteem among us. »

Jesus stares at him and smiles.

« Why are you smiling, Master? »

« Because your father is the guilty one, the guilt of a child who hides his toy lest someone should take it. »

« But he was not a miser. Believe me. He was charitable. »

« I know. But he was very old... It is the disease of old people... He wanted to preserve things for you, and out of too much love, he caused you to fall out with one another. But the case is buried at the foot of the cellar steps. I am telling you so that you may be aware that I know. While I am speaking to you, by pure chance, your younger brother, by striking the ground angrily, caused it to vibrate and so they discovered it and they are now embarrassed and sorry for blaming you. Go back home with a quiet mind and be good to them. Do not reproach them for their lack of esteem. »

« No, my Lord. I will not. But I am not going home, I am staying here to hear You. I will go tomorrow. »

« And if they take that money? »

« You say that we must not be greedy. I do not want to be so. It is enough for me if there is peace amongst us. On the other hand... I did not know how much money there was in the case and thus I will not suffer for any information contrary to the truth. And I consider that that money might have been lost... I will live now, as I lived before, should they deny me it. It is enough if they do not call me a thief. »

« You are well advanced on the way of God. Proceed and peace be with you. »

And also that man goes away happily.

Jesus goes back to the crowds, towards the poor people and gives them alms according to His own judgement. Everybody is now happy and Jesus can speak.

« Peace be with you.

I explain the ways of the Lord to you, that you may follow them. Could you follow the path that goes down on the right hand side, and at the same time follow the one on the left hand side? You could not. Because if you take one you must leave the other. Even if the two paths were close together you could not walk any length with one foot in one and one in the other. You would end up by being tired and making a mistake, even if there was a wager. But between the path of God and Satan's there is a great distance, which becomes greater and greater, just like the two paths that come out up here, but as they run down the valley they become farther and farther from each other, as one goes towards Capernaum and the other towards Ptolomais.

Such is life, it bestrides past and future, good and evil. Man is in the centre with his will power and free will; at the ends, on one side there is God and His Heaven, on the other side Satan and his Hell. Man can choose. Nobody forces him. Do not say to Me: "Satan tempts us" as an excuse for descending towards the low path. Also God tempts with His love, which is very strong, with His words, which are most holy, with His promises, which are most alluring! Why then should you allow yourselves to be tempted by one only of the two, by the most undeserving one to be listened to? Are God's words, promises, love not sufficient to counteract Satan's poison?

Consider that that is not to your favour. When a man is physically very healthy, he is not immune from contagion, but overcomes it quite easily. Whereas if a man is already ill and consequently weak, he will almost certainly die in the event of catching a new infection, and if he survives, he is more seriously ill than previously because his blood lacks the strength to kill the contagious germs completely. The same applies to the superior part. If a man is morally and spiritually healthy and strong, you may be sure that he is not free from temptations, but evil does not strike roots in him. When I hear anyone say to Me: "I approached this man and that one, I read this book and that one, I endeavoured to persuade this person and that one to do good, but in actual fact the evil which was in their minds and in their hearts, the evil which was in the book, entered my heart", I conclude: "Which proves that you had already created within yourself a suitable ground for penetration. Which proves that you are a weakling lacking in moral and spiritual strength. Because we must derive some good also from our enemies. By watching their errors we must learn not to fall into the same. An intelligent man does not become the laughing stock of the first doctrine he hears. A man saturated with a doctrine cannot make room in his mind for any other. This explains the difficulties met when one endeavours to convince those, who are persuaded of other doctrines, to follow the true Doctrine. But if you admit that you change your mind like a weathercock, I can see that you are thoroughly empty, that your spiritual stronghold is full of breaches, that the dam of your mind is leaking in hundreds of places, through which good water runs out and foul water runs in and you are so stupid and listless that you are not even aware of it and you do not see it. You are a wretch".

Of the two paths, therefore, choose the good one and proceed on it resisting to the allurements of senses, of the world, of science, of the demon. Leave half faiths, compromises, pacts with two people, one opposed to the other, to the men of the world. They, too, should avoid them, if they are honest. At least you, men of God, must shun them. You cannot have them either with God or with

Mammon. You must not have them with yourselves either, because they would be of no value. If your actions are a mixture of good and evil, they are of no value whatsoever. The entirely good ones would be cancelled by the bad ones. The evil ones would lead you straight into the Enemy's arms. Therefore do not indulge in them. Be loyal in your service. No one can serve two masters with two different minds. He will either love one and hate the other or viceversa. You cannot be both of God and of Mammon. The spirit of God cannot be conciliated with the spirit of the world. The former ascends, the latter descends. The former sanctifies, the latter corrupts. And if you are corrupt, how can you act with purity? Senses light up in corrupt people and other lusts follow senses.

You already know how Eve was corrupted and how Adam became corrupt through her. Satan kissed the woman's eyes and bewitched them, so that every aspect, so far pure, became impure for her and roused strange curiosities. Then Satan kissed her ears and opened them to the words of a new science: his own. Also Eve's mind wanted to know what was not necessary. Then Satan showed her eyes and mind, now awake to Evil, what previously they had not seen or understood, and everything in Eve became sharp and corrupt. And the Woman went to the Man, revealed her secret and persuaded Adam to taste of the new fruit, so beautiful to the eye and so strictly forbidden so far. And she kissed him and looked at him with mouth and eyes already fouled by Satan's gloomy disorder. And corruption penetrated Adam who saw, and through his eyes he craved for what was forbidden and he bit it with his helpmate and fell from such height into mud.

A corrupt person will draw another person to corruption, unless the latter is a saint in the true sense of the word.

Watch your eyes, men. Both the eyes of your bodies and the eyes of your minds. If they are corrupt, they can but corrupt all the rest. The eye is the light of the body. Your thought is the light of your heart. But if your eye is not pure - because since the organs are subject to thought, a corrupt thought will corrupt also senses everything in you will become obscure, and a seducing haze will create impure phantasms in you. Everything is pure in him who has a pure thought which causes a pure look, and the light of God descends as a master where there is no obstruction of senses. But if out of ill will you have accustomed your eyes to disorderly visions, everything will become darkness in you. In vain you will look at the most holy things. In the darkness they will be nothing but blackness and blackness will be the deeds accomplished by you.

Therefore, o children of God, defend yourselves against yourselves. Look after yourselves diligently against all temptations. There is no evil in being tempted. An athlete prepares himself for victory fighting. But it is evil to be overcome because

you are not prepared and you are negligent. I know that everything serves as a temptation. I know that defence is exhausting. I know that it is tiring to have to struggle. But think of what you will gain through these things. And for one hour of pleasure, whatever kind it may be, would you like to lose an eternity of peace? What does the pleasure of the flesh, of gold, of thoughts leave you? Nothing. What do you gain by rejecting them? Everything. I am speaking to sinners, because man is a sinner. Well, tell me the truth: after satisfying your senses, your pride, your greed, have you felt fresher, happier, safer? In the hour following your satisfaction, which is always the time of meditation, have you sincerely felt that you were happy? I have never tasted the bread of sensuality. But I will reply in your stead: "No. Languor, unhappiness, uncertainty, nausea, fear, restlessness: that was the juice squeezed out of the hour spent in pleasure".

But I beg you: while I say to you: "Never do that", I also say to you: "Do not be inflexible with those who make mistakes". Remember that you are all brothers, made of one flesh and one soul. Consider that there are many reasons why one is led to sin. Be merciful towards sinners and kindly help them and take them back to God, showing them that the path they have followed is full of dangers for the flesh, the mind and the spirit. Do that and you will receive a great reward... Because the Father Who is in Heaven is merciful to good people and He knows how to give you one hundredfold to one. Now I say to you... »

And here Jesus tells me that you must copy the vision dated 12th August 1944, from line 35 to the end, that is to the departure of Mary Magdalene.

12th August 1944.

Jesus says: « Look and write. It is the Gospel of Mercy that I give to everybody and in particular to those women who will recognise themselves in the sinner and whom I invite to follow her in her redemption. »

Jesus is standing on a rock and is speaking to a large crowd. It is a mountainous place. A lonely hill, between two valleys. The top of the hill is shaped like a yoke, or rather, like a camel's hump, so that a few yards from the top there is a natural amphitheatre where voices resound clearly as in a well-built concert hall.

The hill is all in flower. It must be summer. The crops down in the plain are beginning to ripen and are getting ready to be cut. The glacier of a high mountain in the north is shining in the sun. Directly below, to the east, the Sea of Galilee looks like a mirror broken into numberless fragments, each of which is a sapphire lit

up by the sun. Its blue-gold twinkling is dazzling and it reflects a few fluffy clouds in a very clear sky and the shadow of some swift sails. Beyond the lake of Gennesaret there is a vast extent of plain ground, which because of a light mist near the earth, caused perhaps by evaporation of dew - in fact it must be early morning as the grass on the mountain still has a few dewy diamonds glittering on its stems - looks like a continuation of the lake with an opal-like hue veined with green. Further back there is a chain of mountains, the side of which is so bizarre as to give the impression of clouds sketched on the clear sky.

Some of the people are sitting on the grass, some on large stones, some are standing. The apostolic college is not complete. I can see Peter and Andrew, John and James, and I can hear the other two being called Nathanael and Philip. Then there is one who is and is not one of the group. Perhaps he is the last one who arrived: they call him Simon. The others are not there, unless they are among the crowds and I cannot see them.

The sermon has already started. I understand that it is the Sermon of the Mount. But the Beatitudes have already been proclaimed. I would say that the sermon is drawing towards the close because Jesus says: « Do that and you will receive a great reward. Because the Father Who is in Heaven is merciful to good people and He knows how to give you one hundredfold to one. So I say to you... »

There is much excitement amongst the people who crowd round the path leading to the tableau. The people closest to Jesus turn their heads round. Everybody's attention is distracted. Jesus stops speaking and turns His eyes in the same direction as the others. He is serious and handsome in His dark blue tunic, His arms folded on His chest while the first rays of the sun rising above the eastern peak of the hill shine on His head.

« Make room, you plebeians » shouts the angry voice of a man. « Make room for the beauty who is passing... » and four dandies, smartly dressed, come forward, one of whom is certainly Roman, because he is wearing a Roman toga; they are carrying Mary of Magdala, still a great sinner, triumphantly on their hands, crossed to form a seat.

And she smiles with her beautiful mouth, throwing back her head and her golden hair, which is all plaits and curls held by precious hair-pins and a pale gold leaf strewn with pearls, which encircles the upper part of her forehead like a diadem, from which small light curls hang down to veil her splendid eyes, made larger and more seductive by a refined make-up. The diadem disappears behind her ears, under the mass of plaits at the back of her snowwhite completely bare neck. And her nakedness extends much farther than her neck. Her shoulders are bare down to her shoulderblades and her breast is even more so. Her dress is held on her

shoulders by two little gold chains. It is completely sleeveless. Her body is covered, so to say, by a veil the only purpose of which is to protect her skin from sunburn. The dress is of a very light fabric and when she throws herself back, out of affection, against one or the other of her lovers, she seems to be doing so completely nude. I am under the impression that the Roman is the one she prefers because she glances and smiles at him more frequently and rests her head on his shoulder.

« The desire of the goddess has been satisfied » says the Roman. « Rome has acted as a mount for the new Venus. Over there, there is the Apollo you wanted to see. Seduce Him, therefore... But leave some crumbs of your charm also to us. »

Mary laughs and with an agile provoking movement she jumps to the ground, showing her small feet shod in white sandals with golden buckles, as well as a good length of her leg. Then her dress covers her whole body. It is in fact a very wide one of snow-white wool as thin as a veil, held tight at the waist, very low, near her sides, by a large belt made of supple gold bosses. And she stands on the green tableland, where there is a vast amount of lilies of the valley and wild narcissi, like a flower of flesh, an impure flower, which has opened there by witchcraft.

She is more beautiful than ever. Her tiny purple lips seem a carnation opening on the whiteness of her perfect set of teeth. Her face and body would satisfy the most exacting painter or sculptor both because of her complexion and her figure. With her broad breast, her perfectly sized sides, her naturally supple slender waist, as compared with her sides and breast, she does look like a goddess, as the Roman said, a goddess sculptured in a light pinkish marble on the sides of which a fabric is draped and then hangs in the front in a mass of folds. Everything has been devised to please.

Jesus stares at her. And she defiantly resists His look while she smiles and twists lightly as the Roman tickles her, running on her bare shoulders and breast a lily picked among the grass. Mary with affected indignation, lifts her veil saying: « Have respect for my innocence » which causes the four to burst into a guffaw.

Jesus continues staring at her. As soon as the noise of the laughter fades away, Jesus resumes speaking, as if the apparition of the woman had kindled the flame of the sermon, which was losing intensity in its conclusion, and no longer looks at her. He looks instead at His audience who seem embarrassed and scandalised at the event.

Jesus says: « I told you to be faithful to the Law, to be humble and merciful, to love not only your brothers by the flesh but also those who are brothers because they were born, like you, of man. I told you that forgiveness is better than hostility, that compassion is better than stubbornness. But now I tell you that you must not

condemn unless you are free from the fault you wish to condemn. Do not behave like the Scribes and Pharisees who are severe with everybody except themselves, who call impure what is exterior and can only contaminate what is exterior and then they receive impurity in the very depths of their hearts.

God does not stay with the impure. Because impurity corrupts what is the property of God: souls, and in particular the souls of children who are angels spread over the earth. Woe to those who tear off their wings with the cruelty of devilish beasts and throw those flowers of Heaven into the mire, by letting them taste the flavour of material things! Woe... It would be better if they died struck by thunderbolts rather than commit such sin!

Woe to you, rich and fast living people! Because it is amongst you that the greatest impurity thrives and idleness and money are its bed and pillow! You are now sated. The food of concupiscence reaches your throats and chokes you. But you will be hungry. And your hunger will be terrible, insatiable and unappeasable for ever and ever. You are now rich. How much good you could do with your wealth! Instead you do so much harm both to yourselves and to other people. But you will experience a dreadful poverty on a day that will have no end. You now laugh. You think you are triumphing. But your tears will fill the ponds of Gehenna. And they will never cease.

Where does adultery nestle? Where does the corruption of young girls hide? Who has two or three licentious beds, in addition to his own matrimonial one, on which he squanders his money and wastes the strength of a healthy body given to him by God that he may work for his family and not to wear himself out through filthy unions which place him below unclean beasts? You heard that it was said: "You shall not commit adultery". But I tell you that he who looks at a woman lustfully, that she who wished to go with a man, has already committed adultery in his or her heart, simply by that. There is no reason which can justify fornication. None. Neither the abandonment nor the repudiation of a husband. Nor pity for the repudiated woman. You have one soul only. When it is joined to another soul by a pact of faithfulness, it must not lie. Otherwise the beautiful body for which you sin will go with you, o impure souls, into the inexhausted fire. Mutilate your body, rather than kill it for ever by damning it. Come to your moral senses, o rich men, verminous sinks of vice, so that you may not disgust Heaven... »

Mary, who at the beginning listened with a face which was a dream of allurements and irony, sneering now and again, at the end of the sermon becomes livid with rage. She realises that although Jesus does not look at her, He is speaking to her. She becomes more and more livid and rebellious and at last can resist no longer.

She spitefully envelops herself in her veil and followed by the glances of the crowds jeering at her and by Jesus' voice which pursues her, she runs down the slope of the mountain, leaving strips of her dress on the thistles and dogrose bushes growing on the edges of the path, laughing out of anger and mockery.

I see nothing else. But Jesus says: « You will see more. »

29th May 1945.

Jesus resumes: « You are indignant at what happened. For two days our shelter, which is well above the mud, has been upset by Satan's hiss. It is therefore no longer a shelter and we will leave it. But I wish to conclude this code of the "most perfect" in this wide and bright horizon. God really appears here in the majesty of the Creator and watching His marvels we can firmly believe that He and not Satan is the Master. The Evil One could not create even a blade of grass. But God can do everything. This should comfort us. But you are all already in the sun. And that is harmful. Spread out on the slopes where there is shade and it is cool. Have your meals, if you wish so. I will speak to you again on the same subject. Many things have delayed us. But do not be sorry about it. You are with God here. »

The crowds shout: « Yes, we are. With You » and they move under the thickets spread on the eastern side so that the slope of the hill and the tree branches shelter them from the sun, which is already too warm.

In the meantime Jesus tells Peter to take the tent down.

« Are we really going away? »

« Yes, we are. »

« Because she came?... »

« Yes, but do not tell anybody, especially the Zealot. He would be upset because of Lazarus. I cannot allow the word of God to be mocked at by heathens... »

« I see, I see... »

« Well, there is another thing you must understand. »

« Which, Master? »

« That it is necessary to be silent in certain cases. Please do not forget. You are so dear, but you are also so impulsive as to burst out into biting criticism. »

« I understand... You do not want for Lazarus and Simon... »

« And for others as well. »

« Do You think there will be any today? »

« Today, tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, always. It will always be necessary to watch the rashness of My Simon of Jonah. Go now and do what I told you. »

Peter goes away calling his companions to help him.

The Iscariot is pensive in a comer. Jesus calls him three times,

but he does not hear. At last he turns round: « Do You want me, Master? » he asks.

« Yes, go and take your food and help your companions. »

« I am not hungry. Neither are You. »

« Neither am I, but for different reasons. Are you upset, Judas? »

« No, Master. I'm tired... »

« We are now going to the lake and then to Judaea, Judas. To your mother's, as I promised you... »

Judas cheers up. « Are You really coming only with me? »

« Of course. Love Me, Judas. I would like My love to be such in you as to preserve you from all evil. »

« Master... I am a man. I am not an angel. At times I feel tired. Is it a sin to feel the need of sleep? »

« No, providing you sleep on My chest. Look over there how happy the people are and how beautiful the scenery is from here. Also Judaea must be lovely in springtime. »

« Most beautiful, Master. But spring, there, on the mountains, which are higher than here, is later. But there are beautiful flowers. The apple-orchards are magnificent. Mine, which is looked after by my mother, is one of the most beautiful ones. And when she moves about in it, with the doves following her to get some corn, believe me, it is a sight that soothes your heart. »

« I believe you. If My Mother is not too tired, I would like to take Her to see yours. They would love each other, because they are both good. »

Judas, drawn by this idea, cheers up and forgetting that « he was not hungry and he was tired » runs happily to his companions and tall as he is, he undoes the topmost knots without any trouble and eats his bread and olives, as happy as a child.

Jesus looks at him pitifully and then goes towards the apostles.

« Here is some bread, Master. And an egg. I got that rich man over there, the one wearing the red tunic, to give me it. I said to him: "You listen and you are hungry. He speaks and is exhausted. Give me one of your eggs. It will do Him much more good than it would do you". »

« Peter! »

« No, Lord. You are as pale as a baby sucking from an empty breast, and You are becoming as thin as a fish after the mating season. Let me see to it. I do not want to have to reproach myself. I will put it under these warm ashes of the faggots I burnt, and You will eat it. Don't You know it is... how many? most certainly weeks that we have been feeding on bread and olives and a little milk. H'm!... One could say that we are purging ourselves. And You eat less than everybody and speak for everybody. Here is the egg. Take it while it's warm, it will do You good. »

Jesus obeys and seeing that Peter is eating bread only, He asks:

« And what about you? Where are your olives? »

« Sss! I need them for after. I promised them. »

« To whom? »

« To some children. But if they are not quiet until the end, I will eat the olives and give them the stones, that is blows. »

« Very good indeed! »

« Ehi! I will never do that. But if we don't say so... I got so many blows myself, and if they had given me all the ones I deserved for all my pranks, I should have had ten times as many! But they do you good. I am like this because I got them. »

They all laugh at the apostle's sincerity.

« Master, I would like to remind You that today is Friday and that these people... I do not know whether they will be able to get food in time for tomorrow or reach their homes » says Bartholomew.

« That's true. It is Friday! » several of them say.

« It does not matter. God will provide. But we will tell them. »

Jesus stands up and goes to His new place, in the middle of the crowds spread in the thickets. « First of all I wish to remind you that this is Friday. I say that those who are afraid they cannot reach their homes in time and are not in a position to believe that God will provide food for His children tomorrow, should go away at once, so that they will not be still on the road at sunset. »

Of all the crowd there, about fifty people get up. All the others stay where they are.

Jesus smiles and begins to speak.

« You heard that in the old days it was said: "You shall not commit adultery". Those who among you have heard Me in other places know that I have spoken about that sin several times. Because, look, as far as I am concerned, it is a sin not for one person only, but for two or for three. I will make Myself clear. An adulterer sins with regard to himself, he sins with regard to his accomplice, and sins causing the betrayed wife or husband to sin, they may in fact be led to despair or to commit a crime. That with regard to the accomplished sin. But I will say more. I say: "Not only the accomplished sin, but the desire to accomplish it is already a sin". What is adultery? It is to crave for him, who is not ours, or for her, who is not ours. One begins to sin by wishing, continues by seduction, completes it by persuasion, crowns it by the deed.

How does one begin? Generally with an impure glance. And that is connected with what I said before. An impure eye sees what is concealed from a pure eye and through the eye thirst enters the throat, hunger enters the body and fever the blood. A carnal thirst, hunger, fever. Delirium begins. If the person looked at is honest, the delirious looker-on is left alone on tenterhooks, or will denigrate in revenge. If also the person looked at is dishonest, he 'will reply to the look and the descent into sin begins.

I therefore say to you: "If a man looks at a woman lustfully, he has already committed adultery with her because his thought has accomplished the deed of his desire". If your right eye should cause you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to be without one eye than to be thrown into the infernal darkness for ever. And if your right hand should cause you to sin, cut it off and throw it away, for it will do you less harm to lose one part of you than to have your whole body go to hell. It is true that it is written that deformed people cannot serve God in the Temple. But after this life, the deformed by birth who are holy and those who are deformed out of virtue, will become more beautiful than angels and will serve God, loving Him in the happiness of Heaven. It has also been said to you: "Anyone who divorces his wife, must give her a writ of dismissal". But that is to be condemned, for it does not come from God. God said to Adam: "This is the helpmate I made for you. Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and conquer it". And Adam, full of superior intelligence, because sin had not yet dimmed his reason made perfect by God, exclaimed: "This at last is bone from my bones, and flesh from my flesh. This is to be called woman, that is: another I, because this was taken from man. This is why a man leaves his father and mother and joins himself to his wife and the two become one body". And in an increased splendour of light the Eternal Light approved smiling Adam's word, which became the first indelible law. Now, if owing to the ever increasing hardness of man, the human lawgiver had to give a new law; if owing to the ever increasing inconstancy of man, the lawgiver had to put a restraint and say: "If you have dismissed her you cannot take her back", that does not cancel the first genuine law, passed in the Earthly Paradise and approved by God.

I say to you: "Whoever divorces his wife, except for the case of fornication, exposes her to adultery". Because what will the divorced woman do in ninety per cent of the cases? She will get married again. With what consequences? Oh! How much there is to be said about that! Do you not know that you can cause involuntary incests by such system? How many tears are shed because of lust. Yes: lust. There is no other name for it. Be frank. Everything can be overcome when the spirit is righteous. But everything is an excuse to satisfy sensuality when the spirit is lustful. Woman's frigidity, dullness, ineptitude for housework, shrewish tongue, love for luxury, everything can be overcome, also diseases and irascibility, if one loves holily. But as after some time one does not love as on the first day, what is more than possible is considered impossible and a poor woman is thrown on to the road and to perdition.

He who rejects her commits adultery. He who marries her after the divorce, commits adultery. Death only dissolves a marriage.

Remember that. And if your choice is an unhappy one bear the consequences as a cross, being both of you unhappy but holy, without making also the children unhappy, as they are innocent and suffer more because of such unfortunate situations. The love for your children should cause you to ponder one hundred times, also in the case of death of your partner. Oh! I wish you could be satisfied with what you already have had and to which God said: "Enough!" I wish you, widows and widowers, realised that death is not an attenuation but an elevation to the perfections of parents! To be a mother in the place of a dead mother. To be a father in the place of a deceased father. To be two souls in one and receive the love for the children from the cold lips of the dying partner and say: "Go in peace, without worrying for those who were born of you. I will continue to love them, on my own and on your behalf, I will love them twice and will be their father and mother and they will not suffer the unhappiness of orphans, neither will they feel the inborn jealousy that the children of a remarried consort experience with regard to him or her who takes the sacred place of mother or father called by God to a new abode".

My children, My sermon is drawing to its end, as the day is nearing its end while the sun is setting in the west. I want you to remember the words of this meeting on the mountain. Engrave them in your hearts. Read them over and over again and very often. Let them be your everlasting guidance. And above all be good to those who are weak. Do not judge that you may not be judged. Remember that the moment might come when God could remind you: "That is how you judged. So you knew that that was bad. You therefore committed a sin, knowing what you were doing. You must now pay for it".

Charity is an absolution. Be charitable to everybody and in everything. If God gives you much assistance to keep you good, do not be proud of it. But endeavour to climb the full length of the ladder of perfection and give a hand to those who are tired or unaware and to those who are easily disappointed. Why do you observe so diligently the splinter in your brother's eye if first you do not go to the trouble of taking the plank out of your own eye? How dare you say to your brother: "Let me take the splinter out of your eye" while the plank in your eye is blinding you? Son, do not be a hypocrite. Take the plank out of your own eye first and then you will be able to take the splinter out of your brother's eye, without ruining him.

As you avoid being uncharitable, avoid also being imprudent. I said to you: "Give a hand to those who are tired or unaware and to those who are easily disappointed". But if it is charity to teach the ignorant, to encourage the tired, to give new wings to those whose old ones are broken, it is imprudence to reveal the eternal truths to

those affected by satanism, who take possession of them to pretend they are prophets, to insinuate themselves among simple people, to corrupt, lead astray and sacrilegiously foul the things of God. Absolute respect, to be able to speak, to be silent, to ponder, to act, are the virtues of the true disciple in order to make proselytes and serve God. You are gifted with the faculty of reason and, if you are just, God will grant you all the light to make a better use of your reason. You must consider that the eternal truths are like pearls, and no one has ever seen pearls thrown in front of pigs, which prefer acorns and rank broth to precious pearls, which they could crush under their feet and then, furious at being mocked at, they would turn against you to tear you to pieces. Do not give dogs what is holy. That is for the present and the future.

I have told you much, My children. Listen to My words; he who listens to them and puts them into practice, can be compared to a thoughtful man, who wishing to build a house, chose a rocky place. He certainly worked hard to lay the foundations. He had to work with pick and stone chisel, he got callous hands and broke his back. But he was able to put lime in the fissures of the rock and lay bricks one close to the other, like the wall of a fortress, and the house was as solid as a mountain. The house was exposed to the inclemency of the weather and to downpours, the rain caused the rivers to overflow their banks, the winds whistled, the waves beat it, but the house resisted everything. Such is he who has a sound faith. Instead who listens superficially and does not strive to engrave My words in his heart, because he is aware that to do so he would have to work hard, suffer and extirpate too many things, is like a man who out of indolence and foolishness builds his house on sand. As soon as the inclement weather comes, the house quickly built, quickly collapses and the forlorn fool contemplates the rubble of the house and the ruin of his capital. And in that case the ruin can be repaired with expenses and work. But if the edifice of the spirit crashes, because it was badly built, there is no way to rebuild it. One cannot build in future life. Woe to those who present themselves there with rubble!

I have finished. I am now going down towards the lake and I bless you in the name of the One and Trine God. May peace be with you. »

But the crowds shout: « We are coming with You. Let us come. No one has words like Yours! » And they begin to follow Jesus Who goes down on the opposite side from which He came up and which is in the direction of Capernaum.

The descent is steeper but faster and they soon reach the foot of the mountain on a green flowery plain.

(Jesus says: « Enough for today. Tomorrow... »)

175. The Leper Cured at the Foot of the Mountain.

30th May 1945.

Amongst the many flowers which perfume the earth and delight our eyes, I see the horrible spectre of a revolting, corroded leper, completely covered with sores.

The crowds shout with fear and rush back to the lower slopes of the mountain. Some of them gather stones to throw at the rash man.

But Jesus turns round with His arms fully stretched out and shouts: « Peace! Stay where you are: be not afraid. Put the stones down. Have mercy on a poor brother. He is a son of God, too. »

The crowds obey, overwhelmed by the power of the Master, Who moves forward through the tall grass in bloom to a few steps from the leper, who, on his part, has understood that Jesus is protecting him, and has come nearer.

When he reaches Jesus, he prostrates himself, and the blooming grass envelops him like cool scented water. The flowers undulate and gather together, forming a veil over the miserable man concealed amongst them. Only the mournful voice that can be heard reminds people of the wretched creature lying there. It says: « Lord, if You want, You can cure me. Have mercy also on me! »

Jesus replies: « Raise your head and look at Me. A man who believes in Heaven must be able to look at it. And you do believe, because you are asking for a grace. »

The grass is shaken and opens out once again. Like the head of a shipwrecked person emerging from the sea, the head of the leper appears, stripped of hair and beard. His head is a skull not yet entirely deprived of all flesh.

And yet Jesus does not disdain touching that forehead with the tips of His fingers, where there are no sores on the skin. But the skin on that spot is ashen-grey, scaly, and lies between two putrid erosions, one of which has destroyed his scalp, and the other has opened a hole where his right eye was, so that I could not say whether the ball of his eye is still in the huge socket, which, between his temple and his nose, lays bare his cheek-bone and his nasal cartilage, full of corruption. And Jesus, holding the fingertips of His lovely hand there, says: « I want it. Be cleansed. »

And as if the man were not eaten away and covered with sores, but only covered with dirt on which cleansing waters were poured, the leprosy disappears at once. First the wounds heal; then his skin becomes clear, his right eye appears between fresh eyelids, his lips close round his yellowish teeth. Only his hair and beard are missing, that is, there are only scanty tufts of hair where previously there was only a tiny piece of wholesome skin.

The crowds shout in amazement. And their joyful shouts tell the man that he is cured. He lifts his hands, so far concealed by the

grass, he touches his eye, where the huge hole was; he touches his head, where the large sore showed the skull and feels his fresh skin. He stands up, looks at his chest, his hips... He is all wholesome and clean... He collapses once again on the flowery meadow weeping out of joy.

« Do not weep. Stand up and listen to Me. Go back to life according to the rite and do not tell anybody until you have accomplished it. Show yourself to the priest as soon as possible, make the offering prescribed by Moses as evidence of your miraculous cure. »

« It's for You that I should witness, my Lord! »

« You will witness for Me by loving My doctrine! Go. »

The crowd has come close once again and they congratulate the man miraculously healed, although from due distance. There are some people who feel they ought to give him some provisions for his journey and throw some coins to him. Others throw bread and foodstuffs, and a man, seeing that the leper's clothes are nothing but torn rags, through which his entire body is visible, takes his mantle off, ties it in a knot, as if it were a large handkerchief, and throws it to the leper who can thus cover himself decently. Another man, as charity is contagious when it is in common, cannot resist his desire to supply him with sandals, takes off his own and throws them to the leper.

« And what about you? » asks Jesus Who saw the gesture.

« Oh! I live nearby. I can walk barefooted. He has to go a long way. »

« May God bless you and all those who have helped our brother. Man: you will pray for them. »

« Yes, I will, I will pray for them and for You: that the world may have faith in You. »

« Goodbye. Go in peace. »

The man walks away a few yards, then turns round and shouts: « Can I tell the priest that You have cured me? »

« It is not necessary. Just say: "The Lord had mercy on me". It is the whole truth and nothing else is required. »

The people throng round the Master, forming a circle which does not want to open at any cost. But the sun has set and the Sabbath rest begins. The villages are far away. But the people do not pine for their villages, their food or anything else. But the apostles are worried about it and they tell Jesus. Also the elder disciples are worried. There are women and children, and while the night is mild and the grass of the meadow is soft, the stars are not bread, neither do stones become food.

Jesus is the only one who does not trouble. The people in the meantime eat the remnants of their food without any worry and Jesus points it out to His apostles: « I solemnly tell you that these people are worth more than you are! Look how thoughtlessly they

are finishing everything. I said to them: "Who cannot believe that God will provide food for His children tomorrow, may go away", and they stayed. God will not belie His Messiah and will not disappoint those who hope in Him. »

The apostles shrug their shoulders and do not show concern for anything else.

It is nightfall after a placid, beautiful red sunset and the silence of the country spreads over everything, after the last choir of birds. There is a light whispering of the wind and then the first mute flight of a night bird, the first star appears and a frog croaks.

The children are already asleep. The adults are talking among themselves and now and again someone goes to the Master asking for clarification of some point or other. So no one is surprised when a person, imposing by look, garments and age, is seen coming along a path between two corn fields. Some men are following him. Everybody turns round to look at him and they point him out to one another whispering. The whispering spreads from one group to another, it revives and fades away. The groups that are farther away come near drawn by curiosity.

The noble looking man reaches Jesus, Who is sat at the foot of a tree listening to some men, and bows down before Him. Jesus stands up at once and responds with equal respect to the salutation. The people present are watching attentively.

« I was up on the mountain and perhaps You thought that I did not have faith as I went away for fear of having to fast. But I went away for another reason. I wanted to be a brother among brothers, the eldest brother. I would like to speak to You aside. Can You listen to me? Although a scribe, I am not Your enemy. »

« Let us move away a little... » and they go into the corn field.

« I wanted to provide some food for the pilgrims and I came down to tell the baker to bake bread for a large crowd. You can see that I am at a legal distance, because these fields belong to me, and it is lawful to walk from here to the top on a Sabbath. It was my intention to come up tomorrow with my servants. But I found out that You are here with the crowd. I beg You to allow me to provide for the Sabbath. Otherwise I would be very sorry that I had to forego Your words for nothing. »

« For nothing, no, never, because the Father would have compensated you with His light. But I thank you and will not disappoint you. I only wish to point out that the crowd is very large. »

« I asked them to heat all the ovens, also the ones used to dry foodstuffs and I will succeed in having bread for everybody. »

« I did not mean that. I was referring to the quantity of bread... »

« That does not trouble me. Last year I had a good crop of corn. You have seen what the ears of corn are like this year. Let me do it. It will be the greatest protection for my fields. After all, Master...

You gave me such bread today... You really are the Bread of the spirit!... »

« Let it be done as you wish. Let us go and tell the pilgrims. »

« No. You said so. »

« Are you a scribe? »

« Yes, I am. »

« May the Lord take you where your heart deserves. »

« I understand what You mean but do not say. You mean: to the Truth. Because great are our errors... and our ill-will. »

« Who are you? »

« A son of God. Pray the Father for me. Goodbye. »

« Peace be with you. »

Jesus goes slowly back to His apostles while the man goes away with his servants.

« Who was he? What did he want? Did he say something unpleasant to You? Has he sick people? » Jesus is assailed with questions.

« I do not know who he is. Or rather, I know that he is goodhearted and that... »

« He is John, the scribe » says one of the crowd.

« Well, I know now, because you said so. He only wanted to be the servant of God with His children. Pray for him because tomorrow we shall all have food, thanks to his goodness. »

« He is really a just man » says one.

« Yes, indeed. I do not know how he can be the friend of others » remarks another one.

« He is swathed in scruples and rules like a baby, but he is not a bad man » concludes a third one.

« Do these fields belong to him? » ask many who are not from this part of the country.

« Yes, they do. I think that the leper was one of his servants or peasants. But he allowed him to stay around here and I think that he also fed him. »

The comments continue but Jesus does not pay attention to them. He calls the Twelve near Him and asks them: « And what should I say now in regard to your incredulity? Did the Father not put bread for all of us into the hands of one who, by caste, is an enemy of Mine? Oh! men of little faith!... Go into the soft hay and sleep. I am going to pray the Father that He may open your hearts and to thank Him for His kindness. Peace be with you. »

And He goes to the lower slopes of the mountain. He sits down and collects His thoughts in prayer. When He raises His eyes He sees the myriad of stars crowding the sky, when He lowers them, He sees the crowd of people sleeping on the meadows. Nothing else. But such is the joy in His heart that His face seems to become transfigured by a bright light...

176. The Sabbath after the Sermon. At the Foot of the Mountain.

1st June 1945.

Jesus has delayed somewhat up on the mountain during the night, so that at dawn He can be seen standing on the edge of an escarpment.

Peter, who sees Him, points Him out to his companions and they go up towards Him. « Master, why did You not come with us? » many of them ask.

« I needed to pray. »

« But You also need to rest very badly. »

« My friends, during the night a voice came from Heaven asking for prayers for the good and the wicked and also for Myself. »

« Why? Do You need it? »

« As much as anybody. My strength is nourished with prayer and My joy with doing what My Father wants. My Father told Me the names of two people and a sorrow for Myself. The three things He mentioned need prayer so much. » Jesus is very sad and He looks at His apostles with eyes which seem to be begging or asking for something. His eyes rest on one, then on another and at last on Judas Iscariot and Jesus stares at him.

The apostle notices it and asks: « Why do You look at me like that? »

« I was not looking at you. My eyes were contemplating something else... »

« That is? »

« The nature of a disciple. All the good and all the evil that a disciple can do and give to his Master. I was thinking of the disciples of the Prophets and of John. And I was thinking of My own. And I was praying for John, for the disciples and for Myself... »

« You are sad and tired this morning, Master. Tell those who love You what Your trouble is » begs James of Zebedee.

« Yes, tell us, and if there is anything we can do to relieve Your grief, We will do it » says His cousin Judas.

Peter speaks to Bartholomew and Philip, but I do not understand what they say.

Jesus replies: « Be good, endeavour to be good and faithful. That is the only relief. There is no other one, Peter. Have you understood? Forget your suspicion. Love Me and love one another, do not allow those who hate Me to seduce you, above all love the will of God. »

« Eh! If everything is within its control, also our errors are within it! » exclaims Thomas in a philosophical tone.

« Do you think so? But it is not so. But many people have woken up and are looking here. Let us go down and sanctify this holy day

with the word of God. »

They go down while the people who wake up are more and more numerous. The children, as merry as little sparrows, are already prattling, running and jumping in the meadows, getting wet with dew, so that a few blows begin to fly with consequent tears. Then the children run towards Jesus Who caresses them and begins to smile once again as if He reflected their innocent cheerfulness. A little girl wants to put a little bunch of flowers on His belt, flowers she picked in the meadow « because His tunic is more beautiful like that » she says and Jesus lets her do it, although the apostles grumble. But Jesus says: « You ought to be happy that they love Me! The dew removes the dust from flowers. The love of children removes all sadness from My heart. »

Jesus coming from the mountain arrives in the midst of the pilgrims at the same time as John, the scribe, who is coming from his house with many servants carrying baskets of bread, olives, cheese and a little lamb or little kid, whatever it may be, roasted for the Master. Everything is laid at His feet and He sees to the distribution giving everybody some bread, a slice of cheese and a handful of olives. But He gives a piece of the roasted lamb with bread to a mother who is still holding at her breast a plump baby who laughs showing his milk teeth, and He does likewise with two or three more people whom He thinks need special attention.

« But it's for You, Master » says the scribe.

« I will have some, do not worry. But see... if I know that many partake of your goodness, it will taste better to Me. »

The distribution is over and the people nibble at their bread, leaving some for later. Jesus also drinks some milk which the scribe wishes to pour for Him into a precious cup from a little flask held by a servant and which looks like a little pitcher.

« But You must satisfy me and give me the joy of hearing You » says John, the scribe, who is greeted by Hermas with equal respect and with greater respect by Stephen.

« I will not deny you that satisfaction. Come over here » and Jesus leans against the mountain and begins to speak.

« God's will has held us in this place because had we gone any further, after the distance we had walked, we would have infringed the precepts and caused scandal. And may that never happen until the New Pact is written. It is right to sanctify feast days and praise the Lord in places of prayer. But the whole creation can be a place of prayer if man can make it thus through his elevation to the Father. Noah's Ark adrift on the water was a place of prayer and likewise the belly of Jonah's whale. Places of prayer were the house of the Pharaoh when Joseph lived in it, and the tent of Holofernes for the chaste Judith. And was not the corrupt place where the prophet Daniel lived as a slave, so sacred to the Lord,

because of the holiness of His servant who so sanctified the place as to deserve the high prophecies of Christ and of the Antichrist, which are a key to present and future times? All the more reason this place is holy as with its hues and scents, with its pure air and rich crops, with its dewy pearls it speaks to us of God, the Father and Creator and says: "I believe. And you ought to believe because we bear witness to God". Let it therefore be our synagogue for this Sabbath and let us read the eternal pages on corollas and ears, with the sun as our lamp.

I mentioned Daniel. I said to you: "Let this place be our synagogue". That reminds us of the joyful "bless the Lord" of the three holy young men in the flames of the furnace: Heavens and waters, dew and frost, ice and snow, fire and colours, light and darkness, lightning and clouds, mountains and hills, all germinated things, birds, fish and animals, praise and bless the Lord with humble holy-hearted men. We can pray and deserve Heaven everywhere. We deserve it when we do the Father's will.

At daybreak they pointed out to Me that if everything is controlled by the will of God, also the errors of men are wanted by that will. That is an error and a widespread one. Can a father ever wish his son to be blameworthy? No, he cannot. And yet we see that in some families some sons become blameworthy, although they have a just father who points out to them the good to be done and the evil to be avoided. And no righteous person will accuse a father of urging his sons to do evil things.

God is the Father, men are the sons. God points out the good and says: "Behold, I put you in this situation for your own good". Also when the Evil One and the men who serve him bring misfortunes to men, God says: "Behold, this is how you must behave in this painful hour; by doing so, this misfortune will serve for an eternal good". He advises you, but does not force you. So if a man, knowing what the will of God is, prefers to do the very opposite, can we say that this very opposite is the will of God? We cannot.

Love God's will. Love it more than your own and follow it against the enticements and power of the world, of the flesh, of the demon. Also those things have a will. But I solemnly tell you that he who submits to such wills is most unhappy.

You call Me Messiah and Lord. You say you love Me and you praise Me. You follow Me and that seems love. But I solemnly tell you that not everyone amongst you will enter the Kingdom of Heaven with Me. Also amongst My earliest and latest disciples there are some who will not enter the Kingdom, because many will do their own will or the will of the flesh, of the world, of the demon, but not My Father's. Not those who say to Me: "Lord! Lord!" will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but those who do the will of My Father. They will be the only ones to enter the Kingdom

of God.

The day will come when I, Who am now speaking to you, after being the Shepherd, will be the Judge. Do not let the present appearance deceive you. Now My shepherd's staff gathers together all the scattered souls and kindly invites you to come to the pastures of Truth. Later the staff will be replaced by the sceptre of the Judge King and My power will be quite different. It will not be with kindness but with implacable justice that I will separate the sheep fed with Truth from those which mixed Truth and Error or fed only on error. I will do that a first time and then once again. And woe betide those who between the first and the second appearance before the Judge will not have purged themselves because they will not be able to purge themselves of their poisons. The third category will not purge itself. No pain could purge it. They wanted nothing but Error, so let them be in Error.

And yet among them there will be someone moaning: "What, Lord! Did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name did we not cast out demons and work many miracles?". And then I will say very clearly to them: "Yes, you dared to clothe yourselves with My name that you might appear what you are not. You wanted your satanism to be considered as living with Jesus. But you are accused by the fruit of your deeds. Where are the souls you saved? When were your prophecies fulfilled? What was the result of your exorcisms? Who was the accomplice of your deviations? Oh! My Enemy is really powerful! But not more than I am. He helped you only to plunder more souls, and thanks to you, the circle of those swept away by heresy, has widened. Yes, you have worked wonders, which apparently looked even greater than those of the true servants of God, who are not histrionics who astonish crowds, but are so humble and obedient as to amaze angels. My true servants, through their sacrifices do not create phantasms, but wipe them out of hearts; they do not impose themselves on men, but show God to souls of men. They do nothing but the will of the Father and lead others to do it, like a wave that pushes the wave preceding it and draws the one following it, without putting themselves on a throne and saying: 'Look'. My true servants do what I tell them, without thinking of anything else, and their deeds bear the sign of My unmistakable peace, kindness and order. I can therefore say to you: they are My servants, but I do not know you. Go away from me all of you, workers of iniquity".

That is what I will say. And it will be a dreadful word. Take care you do not deserve it and proceed along the safe, although painful way of obedience, towards the glory of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Enjoy your Sabbath rest praising God with your whole selves. Peace be with you. »

And Jesus blesses the crowds before they scatter seeking shade, one group speaking to another, commenting on the words they have just heard.

Jesus is left with His apostles and John, the scribe, who does not speak but is absorbed in deep meditation, watching every gesture of Jesus.

And the cycle of the Mount is over.

177. The Servant of the Centurion Is Cured.

2nd June 1945.

Jesus enters Capernaum coming from the country. Only the Twelve are with Him, nay, only eleven apostles, as John is not there. The usual greetings of the crowd form a vast range of expressions, from the entirely simple ones of children, to the rather shy ones of women, to the enraptured ones of people cured miraculously, and those which are either curious or ironical. There are enough to satisfy all tastes. And Jesus replies to everybody according to how He is greeted: caressing the little ones, blessing the women, smiling at those cured miraculously, and with deep respect for the others.

But this time the series is completed by the greeting of a centurion of the town, I think. He greets Him: « Hail, Master! » to which Jesus replies: « May God come to you. »

While the crowd draws close to see the outcome of the meeting, the centurion continues: « I have been waiting for You for several days. You do not recognise me as one of those who were listening to You on the Mount. I was wearing civilian clothes. Are You not asking me why I went there? »

« No, I am not, but what do you want from Me? »

« I have instructions to follow those who hold meetings, because too often Rome has had to regret having granted permission for apparently honest meetings. But seeing and listening to You, I thought of You as a... as a... I have a servant who is ill, Lord. He is lying in my house, in his bed, paralyzed by a disease of the bones and he suffers dreadfully. Our doctors cannot cure him. Your doctors refuse to come. I invited them to come because it is a disease caused by the corrupt air of this area and you know how to cure it with the herbs of the feversome soil of the shore where the water stagnates before being absorbed by the sand of the sea. I am very sorry because he is a faithful servant. »

« I will come and cure him. »

« No, my Lord. I am not asking You to go to all that trouble. I am a heathen, filth, as far as you are concerned. If the Jewish doctors are afraid of becoming contaminated by coming to my house, all the more reason it would contaminate You, Who are divine. I am

not worthy that You should enter under my roof, but if You say only one word here, my servant will be cured because You rule over everything. Now if I, who am subject to my authorities, the first being Caesar, for whom I must act, think and behave as I am told, can in turn order soldiers under me, and if I say to one: "Go", to another: "Come" and to a servant: "Do that", the first one will go where I send him, the other will come because I call him, and the third will do what I tell him, You, as You are Who You are, will be immediately obeyed by the disease, which will vanish. »

« But the disease is not a man... » objects Jesus.

« Neither are You a man, You are the Man. You can therefore give orders to elements and fevers, because everything is subject to Your power. »

Some elders of Capernaum take Jesus aside and say to Him: « He is a Roman, but listen to him because he is an honest man who respects and helps us. It was he who built our synagogue and he has given strict instructions to his soldiers not to gibe at us on Sabbaths. Grant him, therefore, the grace, for the sake of Your town, so that he may not be disappointed and irritated, and his fondness for us may not turn into hatred. »

And Jesus, after listening to them, turns round smiling at the centurion and says: « Go ahead and I will come after you. »

But the centurion says once again: « No, my Lord, I have told You: it would be a great honour if You entered under my roof, but I do not deserve so much; say only one word and my servant will be cured. »

« Let it be so. Go and have faith. This very moment the fever is leaving him and life is flowing back into his limbs. Endeavour to get Life to come also to your soul. Go. »

The centurion salutes, then bows and goes away.

Jesus watches him go away, then turns to the people present and says: « I solemnly tell you that I did not find so much faith in Israel. Oh! It is quite true! "The people that walked in darkness saw a great light; on those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone", and also "The Messiah will hoist His flag over the nations and gather them together". Oh! My Kingdom! They will really flow to you in immense numbers! More numerous than all the camels and dromedaries of Madian and Ephah, than those who bring the gold and incense of Sheba, more numerous than all the flocks of Kedar and the rams of Nebaioth, will be those who come to you and My heart will exult with joy seeing all the peoples of the sea and the wealth of the nations coming to Me. The islands are waiting for Me to adore Me, and the children of foreigners will build the walls of My Church, the gates of which will lie open continually to receive the kings and the wealth of the nations and sanctify them in Me. What Isaiah saw, will be accomplished! I tell

you that many will come from the east and the west and will sit with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven, whereas the children of the Kingdom will be thrown out into the dark, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth. »

« You therefore foretell that the gentiles will be equal to the children of Abraham? »

« Not equal, but greater. You can only regret that it is due to your fault. Not I, but the Prophets say so, and the signs already confirm it. Now some of you should go to the house of the centurion and ascertain that his servant is cured as the faith of the Roman deserved. Come. Perhaps in the house there are some sick people waiting for Me. »

Jesus with the apostles and a few more people turns His steps towards the usual house where He stays when in Capernaum, while most of the people, driven by curiosity, rush towards the centurion's house making a great noise.

178. Jesus Meets Three Men Who Want to Follow Him.

3rd June 1945.

I see Jesus turning His steps towards the lake with eleven apostles, as John is still absent. Many people press round Him: among them there are many who were on the Mount, mainly men, who have reached Him at Capernaum to hear His word once again. They would like to detain Him. But He says: « I belong to everybody. And there are many who are entitled to have Me. I will come back. You will join Me. But let Me go now. » He has difficulty in walking through the crowd who throng the little narrow street. The apostles push with their shoulders to make room for Him. But it is like pushing a spongy substance which immediately springs back again. They get angry, too, but to no avail.

They are already in sight of the lake, after a fierce struggle, when a middle-aged refined looking man goes near the Master and touches His shoulder to attract His attention.

Jesus turns round and stops, asking: « What do you want? »

« I am a scribe. But our precepts can in no way be compared to Your word and I am fascinated by it. Master, I do not want to leave You. I will follow You wherever You go. Which way are You going? »

« The way to Heaven. »

« I do not mean that. I am asking You where are You going now. In which houses will You stop after the present one, so that I may always find You? »

« Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head. The world is My home, wherever there are spirits to be taught, distress to be relieved, sinners

to be redeemed. »

« Everywhere, then. »

« You are right. Can you, a doctor in Israel, do what these simple men do for My sake? What are required here are: sacrifice, obedience, charity for everybody, a mind adaptive for everything and with everybody. Because compliance is alluring. Because he who wishes to cure must bend over all sores. Afterwards there will be the purity of Heaven. But here we are in mud and we have to pull out of the mud, on which we walk, the victims already submerged in it. We cannot lift our clothes and move to one side because the mud is deeper there. Purity must be within us. We must be sated with it so that nothing else can enter. Can you do all that? »

« At least let me try. »

« Try. I will pray that you may succeed. »

Jesus begins to walk again and His attention is drawn by two eyes staring at Him, the eyes of a tall strong young man who has stopped to let the train of followers pass, as he seems to be going in a different direction. Jesus says to him: « Follow Me. »

The young man starts, changes colour, blinks as if he were dazzled by light, then opens his mouth to speak but cannot find an immediate reply. At last he says: « I will follow You. But my father died at Korazim and I must bury him. Let me do that and then I will come. »

« Follow Me. Leave the dead to bury their dead. You have already been attracted by Life. On the other hand, you aspired to that. Do not weep over the gap which Life opened around you to make you a disciple. The maiming of affection is the root of the wings which are born of a man who has become a servant of the Truth. Leave corruption to its own fate. Rise towards the Kingdom of the incorrupt. You will find there also the incorruptible pearl of your father. God calls and passes by. Tomorrow you would no longer find your heart of today or God's invitation. Come. Go and announce the Kingdom of God. »

The man is leaning against a low wall and with his arms hanging by his sides: he is holding two bags, full of perfumes and bandages; his head is lowered in thought, wavering between two loves: for God and for his father.

Jesus waits and looks at him, he then gets hold of a little child, clasps him to His heart saying: « Say with Me: "I bless You, o Father, and I invoke Your light for those who weep in the haze of life. I bless You, o Father, and I invoke Your strength for those who are like a child in need of support. I bless You, o Father, and I invoke Your love that it may cause men to forget everything which is not Yourself, as they can find all good in You, both here and in Heaven, although they cannot believe it". » And the child, an innocent boy about four years old, repeats in his thin voice the

holy words with his hands held in prayer by the right hand of Jesus, Who holds them by their plump wrists as if they were two flower stems.

The man makes up his mind. He hands the two bundles to a companion and comes towards Jesus, Who puts down the child after blessing him, and embraces the young man, proceeding thus with him, to comfort him and support him in his effort.

Another man questions Him: « I would like to come with You, too. But before following You I would like to take leave of my relatives. Will You allow me? »

Jesus stares at him and replies: « There are too many roots in your human being. Uproot them and if you cannot, cut them off. One must come to God's service with spiritual freedom. He who gives himself, must have no ties. »

« Flesh and blood are always flesh and blood. I will slowly reach the freedom You refer to... »

« No, you would never reach it. God is as exacting as He is infinitely generous in rewarding. If you wish to be a disciple you must embrace your cross and follow Me. Otherwise one remains a simple believer. The way of the servant of God is not strewn with petals of roses. And it is absolute in its demands. No one who has put his hand to the plough to furrow the fields of hearts and spread there the seed of God's doctrine, can look back to see what he left, what he lost and what he could have had if he had followed another common way. Who does that is not fit for the Kingdom of God. Work upon yourself. Make a man of yourself and then come. Not now. »

They reach the shore. Jesus goes on board Peter's boat and whispers a few words to him. I see Jesus smile while Peter makes a gesture expressing amazement. But He does not say anything. Also the man who did not go to bury his father in order to follow Jesus, gets into the boat.

179. The Parable of the Sower.

4th June 1945.

Jesus says to me showing me the course of the Jordan, or rather, the mouth of the Jordan where it flows into Lake Tiberias, that is where the town of Bethsaida lies on the right bank of the river, with respect to those facing north: « The town nowadays no longer appears to be on the shore of the lake, but a little inland. And that puzzles scholars. The explanation is to be found in the earth which filled this part of the lake, as it was deposited there throughout twenty centuries by the river, by alluvia and landslides from the hills of Bethsaida. The town was then just at the mouth of the river, and in fact the smaller boats, particularly in seasons rich in

water, used to sail upstream, almost as far as Korazim; the river, however, was always used as a harbour and shelter for the boats of Bethsaida when the lake was very rough. I am not saying this for you, to whom it is of no interest, but for difficult doctors. And now go on. »

The boats of the apostles, after crossing the short stretch of the lake between Capernaum and Bethsaida, land in the latter town. Other boats have followed them and many people come off them to join the people of Bethsaida who have come to greet the Master. Jesus enters Peter's house where his wife is staying once again. I suppose she has preferred to be alone rather than live with her mother who continuously grumbles about her husband.

Outside the crowds claim Jesus at the top of their voices, which disturbs Peter very much, so much so that he goes up to the roof terrace and harangues the citizens telling them that they ought to have respect and manners. He would like to enjoy the company of his Master for a little while, in peace, now that he has Him in his house, whereas he has neither the time nor the pleasure to offer Him some water and honey among the many things he asked his wife to offer. And he grumbles...

Jesus looks at him smiling and shakes His head saying: « You would think that you never see Me and that we have just met by chance! »

« But it is so! When we are in the world are You and I ever together? Never in your life! Between You and me there is the world with its sick people, its distressed people, its listeners, its curious people, its slanderers, its enemies, and You and I are never together. Here instead You are with me, in my house, and they ought to understand that! » He is really upset.

« But I do not see the difference, Simon. My love is the same and My word is the same. Whether I tell you privately, or I tell everybody, what difference does it make? »

Peter then confesses his great grief: « The trouble is that I am a blockhead and my mind wanders easily. When You speak in a square, on a mountain, amongst a large crowd, I understand everything, but I do not know why, I remember nothing. I told also my companions and they say that I am right. Other people, I mean the people who listen to You, understand You and remember what You say. How often have we heard someone say: "I have no longer done that because You told us", or: "I came because once I heard You say so and so and I was impressed by it". We instead... hum! it's like a water course which passes by and does not stop. The river bank no longer has the water which has passed by. It is true that other water comes, a great deal of it, but it passes by, it passes by... And I am terrified at the thought that, if what You say will

come true, the moment will come when You will no longer be there to play the part of the river and... and I... What will I give to those who are thirsty if I cannot save even one drop of the great lot You give me? »

Also the others support Peter's moaning, complaining that they are left with nothing of what they hear, whilst they would like to remember everything to reply to those who ask them questions.

Jesus smiles and replies: « I do not think so. People are very satisfied also with you... »

« Certainly... of course! For all we do! Make room for You, by elbowing our way through the crowds, carry sick people, collect alms and say: "Yes, that is the Master!". Wonderful, isn't it? »

« Do not defame yourself too much, Simon. »

« I am not defaming myself. I know myself. »

« That is the most difficult wisdom. But I wish to relieve you of your great fear. When I speak and you cannot understand and remember everything, ask Me without any fear of boring or discouraging Me. We always have some hours of privacy, when you can open your hearts to Me. I give so much to so many. And what would I not give you whom I love so much that God could not love you more? You spoke of waves that pass by and nothing is left on the bank. The day will come when you will realise that every wave has deposited a seed and that a plant has grown from every seed. You will find in front of you flowers and plants for all occasions and you will be amazed at yourself saying: "What has the Lord done to me?" because you will then be redeemed from the slavery of sin and your present virtues will have reached a great height of perfection. »

« You say so, my Lord, and I rest upon Your word. »

« Now let us go to those who are waiting for us. Come. Peace to you, woman. I will be your guest this evening. »

They go out and Jesus directs His steps towards the lake to avoid being oppressed by the crowds. Peter is quick in moving the boat a few yards from the shore, so that Jesus' voice may be heard by everybody, but with a space between Him and those listening.

« Coming here from Capernaum I was thinking what I should tell you and I found an indication in the events of this morning.

You saw three men come to Me. One came spontaneously, the second because I urged him, the third came because of a sudden enthusiasm. And you also saw that I took only two of them. Why? Did I perhaps see a traitor in the third, one? No, in truth. But I saw that he was unprepared. To all appearance, this one here beside Me, the one who was going to bury his father, seemed more unprepared. Instead the most unprepared was the third one. This one was so prepared, without being aware of it, that he was able to make a really heroic sacrifice. Heroism in following God is always

evidence of strong spiritual Preparation. And that is the explanation of certain surprising events that take place around Me. Those who are most prepared to receive Christ, whichever their caste and education might be, come to Me with absolute promptitude and faith. Those who are less prepared examine Me as an exceptional man or they study Me with suspicion or curiosity, or they attack and defame Me accusing Me in various ways. The different ways of behaviour are proportional to the unpreparedness of spirits.

Among the chosen people it should be possible to find everywhere spirits ready to receive the Messiah in Whose expectation Patriarchs and Prophets were consumed by anxiety, the Messiah Who at last has come, preceded and accompanied by all the prophesied signs, the Messiah, Whose spiritual personality becomes clearer and clearer through the visible miracles worked on bodies and elements, and through the invisible ones worked on consciences which are converted and on Gentiles who turn to the True God. But it is not so. The promptitude in following the Messiah is strongly hindered by the children of that people and, what is sad to be said, it is more hindered the more one climbs to its higher classes. I am not saying this to scandalise you, but to induce you to pray and meditate. Why does that happen? Why do Gentiles and sinners proceed farther on My way? Why do they accept what I say and the others do not? Because the children of Israel are anchored, nay, they are stuck like pearl-oysters to the bank where they were born. Because they are sated, overwhelmed and obese with their wisdom and they cannot make room for Mine by throwing away what is superfluous to make room for what is necessary. The others do not suffer from such slavery. They are poor heathens or poor sinners, unimpeded like a boat which is adrift, they are poor people, who have no treasures of their own, but only heaps of errors or sins, of which they gladly strip themselves as soon as they understand what the Gospel is and they taste its fortifying honey, which is quite different from the nauseating mixture of their sins.

Listen, and perhaps you will understand better how the same action can bear different fruits.

A sower went out to sow. He owned many fields of various kinds. He had inherited some from his father, on which his carelessness had allowed thorny plants to proliferate. Other fields had been purchased by him: he had bought them from a neglectful man and he had left them as they were. In other fields there were many intersecting roads, as the man loved comfort and did not like to travel a long way when going from one place to another. Finally, there were some fields, the closest to his house, which he had looked after to have a pleasant sight in front of his house. They were free from stones, thorns, couch-grass and so on.

So the man took his sack of seed-corn of the best quality, and began to sow. The seed fell on the good soft soil, which had been ploughed, weeded, fertilized, in the fields near the house. It was spread in the fields with many roads and paths, which divided them into small portions, and caused also the fertile soil to be covered by ugly arid dust. Some of the seed fell on the fields where the foolishness of the man had allowed the thorny plants to proliferate. The plough had turned them upside down, it looked as if they were not there, but they were, because only fire, the radical destructor of weeds, prevents them from growing again. The last seed fell on the fields which he had recently bought and had left as they were, without ploughing them and without removing all the stones, which had sunk into the ground forming a hard pavement on which no plant could take root. After scattering all the seed, he went back home and said: "Very well! All I have to do is to wait for the harvest". And he was delighted because, as months went by, he saw the corn come up thick in the fields near the house and grow... oh! what a beautiful sea! and it turned gold and it sang hosannas to the sun, as one ear rubbed against another. The man said to himself: "All the fields are like these ones! Let us prepare sickles and granaries. How much bread! How much gold!" And he was delighted...

He cut the corn in the nearest fields and after that he went to the ones which he had inherited from his father and which he had left in a wild state. And he was taken aback. The corn had come up, because the fields were good and the soil cultivated by the father was rich and fertile. But its fertility had affected also the thorny plants which had been overturned but not destroyed. They had grown again and had formed a really thick ceiling of bramble, through which the corn had not been able to emerge, with the exception of a few ears, and it was completely suffocated.

The man said: "I neglected this place. But there was no bramble in the other fields, so it should be all right". And he went to the fields which he had purchased shortly before. His surprise and grief were greater. The thin withered corn leaves were strewn all over like dry hay. Nothing but dry hay. "How come?" moaned the man. "And yet there are no thorns here! And it was the same seed! And it had come up thick and beautiful. It can be seen by the well formed and numerous leaves. Why then did it all wither before coming into ear?" And with real regret he began to dig the ground to see whether there were any mole burrows or other pests. There were no insects or rodents. But how many stones! A stone-pit! The fields were literally paved with chips of stone and the scanty earth covering them was deceiving. Oh! if he had ploughed deep at the right time! Oh! if he had dug the ground before accepting the fields and buying them as good ones! Oh! if, after the mistake he had

made in buying what he had been offered without making sure of its goodness, if at least he had improved them by working hard! It was now too late and all regret was useless.

The man stood up, and, downhearted as he was, he went to the fields where he had built many roads for his comfort... and mad with grief he tore off his clothes. There was absolutely nothing there... The dark soil of the field was covered with a thin layer of white dust... The man collapsed to the ground moaning: "But why here? There are no stones, no bramble here, because these are our fields. My grandfather, my father and I have always owned them and in many many years we made them fertile. I built the roads, I have taken some of the earth away, but that could not make them so sterile..." He was still weeping when he received the answer to his grief from a swarm of birds which flew eagerly from the paths to the field and back to the paths in search of seeds... The field, which had been turned into a network of paths, on the edges of which the corn had fallen, had attracted many birds, which first had eaten the corn on the paths and then the seeds in the field, down to the last grain.

So the same seed, sown in all the fields, had yielded one hundred to one in some, sixty, thirty, nothing in others. Listen, anyone who has ears. The seed is the Word: the same for everybody. The places where the seed fell: your hearts. Meditate the parable and understand it. Peace be with you. »

He then turns towards Peter and says: « Go up the river as far as you can and stop on the other side. » And while the two boats sail a short distance up the river and then stop near the bank, Jesus sits down and asks the new disciple: « Who is left now at home? »

« My mother and the eldest brother, who has been married for five years. My sisters are in various parts of the region. My father was very good and my mother mourns his death broken-heartedly. » The young man stops all of a sudden, stifling heartfelt sobs.

Jesus grabs his hand and says: « I experienced that sorrow Myself and I saw My Mother weep. So I can understand... »

The rubbing of the boat on the pebbly river-bed causes the conversation to be interrupted to allow them to go ashore. The low hills of Bethsaida which almost reach down to the lake, have come to an end here, instead a plain rich in crops extends from this shore, on the other side of Bethsaida, northwards.

« Are we going to Merom? » asks Peter.

« No, let us take this path among the fields. »

The lovely and well kept fields show ears of corn still tender but well formed, all of the same height; and while lightly undulating in the cool northern breeze they look like another small lake, the sails of which are the trees growing here and there full of whistling birds.

« These fields are not like the ones of the parable » remarks Jesus' cousin James.

« Not really! The birds have not devastated them, there are no stones, no bramble. The corn is beautiful! In a month's time it will be golden... and in two it will be ready for the sickle and the granary » says Judas of Kerioth.

« Master... I remind You of what You said in my house. You spoke so well. But I am beginning to have ideas in my head which are as confused as those ruffled clouds up there... » says Peter.

« This evening I will explain it to you. Now we are in sight of Korazim. » And Jesus stares at the new disciple saying: « Much is given to those who give. And possessions do not deprive the gift of its merits. Take Me to the sepulchre of your family and to your mother's house. »

The young man kneels down, kissing Jesus' hand and weeping.

« Get up. Let us go. My spirit has perceived your weeping. I want to fortify you in your heroism through My love. »

« Isaac the Elder had told me how good You were. Isaac, You know? You cured his daughter. He was my apostle. But I see that Your kindness is much greater than I was told. »

« We shall call also on the Elder to thank him for giving Me a disciple. »

They reach Korazim and Isaac's house is the first one they find. The old man, who is on his way back home, when he sees Jesus with His apostles and the young man from Korazim among them, raises his arms, holding his walking stick in his hand, and is speechless and dumbfounded. Jesus smiles and His smile gives speech back to the old man.

« May God bless You, Master! Why so much honour to me? »

« To say to you: "Thanks". »

« But what for, my God? I have to say that word to You. Come in. Oh! I am sorry that my daughter is absent, assisting her mother-in-law. Because she got married, You know? I have received nothing but blessings after I met You! After she was cured that rich relative of ours came from far away, a widower, with the little ones needing a mother... Oh! But I have already told You all that! My head is old! Forgive me! »

« Your head is wise and forgets to be proud of the good it does for its Master. To forget the good done is wisdom. It shows humility and trust in God. »

« But I... I would not know... »

« And this disciple... have I not had him through you? »

« Oh!... But I have done nothing, You know? I only told him the truth... and I am happy that Elias is with You. » He turns towards Elias and says: « Your mother, after the first moment of astonishment, was relieved when she heard that you were with the Master.

The last honours rendered to your father were really solemn. He has not been long buried. »

« And what about my brother? »

« He is quiet... you know... he was rather upset by your absence... because of the village people... He still has that mentality... »

The young man turns to Jesus: « You said so. But I would not like him to be dead... Let him become alive as I am, and at Your service. »

The others do not understand and they look at one another inquisitively, but Jesus replies: « Do not despair, but persevere. » He blesses Isaac and goes away, notwithstanding they entreat Him to stay.

They stop first near the sepulchre and pray. After, through a still semibare vineyard, they go to Elias' house.

The meeting of the two brothers is rather a cold one. The elder feels offended and wants people to notice it. The younger feels guilty from a human point of view and does not react. But the arrival of their mother, who without saying anything prostrates herself and kisses the hem of Jesus' tunic brightens the atmosphere and their spirits. And they want to honour the Master. But Jesus does not accept anything, He only says: « Let your hearts be just, one towards the other, as just was he whom you are mourning. Do not give a human sense to what is super-human: death and the election to a mission. The soul of your just father was not upset seeing that this son was not present at the burial of his body, but it rested quietly on the certainty of Elias' future. Do not let worldly thoughts disturb the grace of the election. If the world was surprised at not seeing him near his father's coffin, the angels exulted seeing him beside the Messiah. Be just. And may that comfort you, mother. You brought him up wisely and he has been called by Wisdom. I bless you all. Peace be with you now and always. »

They go on the road which takes them back to the river, and from there to Bethsaida. Elias did not delay even for one moment on the threshold of his father's house. After kissing his mother goodbye, he followed the Master with the simplicity of a child who follows his real father.

180. Lesson to the Apostles in Peter's Kitchen and Announcement of the Baptist's Capture.

7th June 1945.

We are in Peter's kitchen once again. The meal must have been a hearty one because dishes with leavings of meat, fish, cheese, dried fruit and honey cakes are being piled up on a kind of cupboard, which reminds me of our Tuscan kneading troughs. Pitchers and chalices are still on the table.

Peter's wife must have worked miracles to satisfy her husband, and she must have worked all day. Now, tired but happy, she is in her little corner listening to what her husband and the others are saying. She watches her Simon, who, as far as she is concerned, must be a great man, even if he is somewhat exacting, and when she hears him speak new words, where before he could only talk of boats, nets, fish and money, she begins to blink as if she were dazzled by a bright light. Peter, both because of his joy in having Jesus at his table and because of the hearty meal he has had, is in the best of spirits this evening, and the future Peter, preaching to the crowds, is disclosed.

I do not know which remark of a companion originated the clearcut reply of Peter who says: « It will happen to them what happened to the founders of the Tower of Babel. Their own pride will provoke the collapse of their theories and they will be crushed. »

Andrew objects to his brother: « But God is Mercy. He will prevent the collapse to give them time to mend their ways. »

« Do not believe that. They will crown their pride with false accusations and persecutions. Oh! I can already see it. They will persecute us to disperse us as unpleasant witnesses. And since they attack the Truth by laying snares for it, God will take revenge and they will perish. »

« Will we have the strength to resist? » asks Thomas.

« Well... as for me, I would not have it. But I put my trust in Him » and Peter nods to the Master Who is listening and is silent, His head slightly inclined, as if He wished to hide His understanding countenance.

« I think that God will not put us to tests beyond our strength » says Matthew.

« Or He will at least increase our strength in proportion to the tests » concludes James of Alphaeus.

« He is already doing that. I was rich and powerful. If God had not decided to preserve me for a purpose of His, I would have surrendered myself to despair and perished when I was persecuted and an outcast. I would have acted harshly against myself... Instead a new wealth, which I had never possessed before, descended upon my desolation: the wealth of a conviction: "God exists". First... God... Yes, I believed, I was a faithful Israelite. But mine was a faith of formalism. And I thought that the reward of my faith was always inferior to my virtue. I took the liberty of debating with God because I felt that I was still something on the earth. Simon Peter is right. I, too, was building a tower of Babel by praising myself and satisfying my ego. When everything collapsed around me and I was like a worm crushed by the weight of all this human futility, then I no longer debated with God, but with myself, with my stupid self and I ended up by demolishing it.

And as I did so, making room for what I think is the God immanent in our earthly beings, I gained a new strength and wealth: the certainty that I was not alone and that God was watching over man defeated by men and by evil. »

« According to you, what is God, "the God immanent in our earthly beings" as you said? What do you mean? I do not understand you and I think it is a heresy. God is the One we know through the Law and the Prophets. There is no other God » says rather sternly Judas of Kerioth.

« If John was here he would tell you better than I can. But I will tell you as best I can. God is the One we know through the Law and the Prophets. That is true. But in what do we know Him? And how? »

Judas of Alphaeus exclaims: « Little and badly. The Prophets, who described Him for us, knew Him. The idea we have is a muddled one, as we can just see through a mound of explanations piled up by sects... »

« Sects? What do you mean? We have no sects. We are the children of the Law. We all are » the angry aggressive Iscariot says.

« The children of the laws. Not of the Law. There is a slight difference. Plural, not singular. In actual fact, we are the children of what we created, no longer of what God gave us » retorts Thaddeus.

« The laws derive from the Law » says the Iscariot.

« Also diseases originate in our bodies, but that does not mean that they are good » replies Thaddeus.

« But let me hear what this immanent God of Simon Zealot is. » The Iscariot, who cannot argue against the remark of Judas of Alphaeus, endeavours to take the discussion back to where it started.

Simon Zealot says: « Our senses need a term to catch an idea. Each of us, I am referring to us believers, believes, by the virtue of faith, in the Most High Lord and Creator, Eternal God, Who is in Heaven. But every being needs more than such bare, pure, incorporeal faith, which is fit and sufficient for the angels who see and love God spiritually, as they share with Him a spiritual nature and can see God. We have to create a "picture" of God for ourselves, which picture is made with the essential features that we ascribe to God, to give a name to His infinite absolute perfection. The more a soul concentrates, the more it succeeds in achieving an exact knowledge of God. That is what I say: the immanent God. I am not a philosopher. Perhaps I have applied the word wrongly. In short, I think that the immanent God is to feel, to perceive God in our spirits, to feel and perceive Him no longer as an abstract idea, but as a real presence, bestowing strength and a new peace upon us. »

« All right. But, to sum up, how did you feel Him? What is the difference

between feeling by faith and feeling by immanence? » asks the Iscariot somewhat ironically.

« God is safety, boy. When you perceive Him, as Simon says, by means of that word, which I do not understand literally, but I understand its spirit - and believe me, the trouble is that we understand only literally and we do not understand the spirit of God's words - it means that you are able to grasp the idea of the terrible majesty, but also of the most sweet paternity of God. It means that, should all the world judge and condemn you unjustly, you would feel that One only, He, the Eternal One, Who is your Father, does not judge you, but absolves and comforts you. It means that if all the world should hate you, you would feel over you a love greater than any this world can offer. It means that if you were isolated in jail or in a desert you would always hear One speak to you and say: "Be holy, that you may be like your Father". It means that for the true love for this Father and God, Whom at last you perceive as such, you accept, work, take and leave without any human consideration, as you are concerned only to return love for love and to copy God as much as possible in your actions » says Peter.

« You are proud! To copy God! You are not entitled to » declares the Iscariot.

« It is not pride. Love leads to obedience. To copy God seems to me a form of obedience because God said that He made us in His own image and likeness » replies Peter.

« He made us. We must not go higher up. »

« You are a poor wretch, my boy, if that is what you think! You are forgetting that we fell and that God wants to take us back to what we were. »

Jesus begins to speak: « Even more, Peter, Judas and you all. Even more than that. Adam's perfection was still susceptible of improvement through love, which would have made him a more precise image of his Creator. Adam without the stain of sin would have been a most shining mirror of God. That is why I say: "Be perfect as your Father Who is in Heaven is perfect". Like your Father. Therefore like God. Peter is quite right. And so is Simon. I ask you to remember their words and apply them to your souls. »

Peter's wife almost faints from joy on hearing her husband being praised thus. She weeps behind her veil: she is quiet but happy.

Peter blushes so much that he seems to be having a stroke of apoplexy. He remains dumb for a few moments, then says: « Well, then, give me my reward. The parable of this morning... »

Also the others join Peter saying: « Yes, You promised. Parables serve very well to make people understand the comparison. But we know that they have a higher meaning than the comparison.

Why do You speak to them in parables? »

« Because they are not to understand more than I explain. You are granted much more, because as My disciples, you must be acquainted with the mystery; and you are therefore given to understand the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. That is why I say to you: "Ask Me if you do not understand the spirit of the parable". You give everything and everything is given to you, so that you, in your turn, may give everything. You are giving everything to God: love, time, interests, freedom, lives. And God gives you everything to reward you and to enable you to give everything in the name of God to those who come after you. Thus, to him who has given will be given abundantly. But he who gave only partly or did not give at all, will be deprived also of what he has.

I speak to them in parables, so that, while seeing, they may see only what is illuminated by their will to adhere to God, and while listening, always through the same will of adherence, they may hear and understand. See! Many hear My word, few adhere to God. Their spirits lack good will. Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in them: "You will hear with your ears and will not understand, you will look with your eyes and will not see". Because this people is hardhearted; their ears are hard and their eyes are closed, so that they may not see and hear, that they may not understand with their hearts and convert, that I may cure them. But you are blessed because your eyes see and your ears hear, and because of your good will! I solemnly tell you that many Prophets and many just people were anxious to see what you see and they did not see it, and to hear what you hear and they did not hear it. They pined away with the desire to understand the mystery of the words, but as soon as the light of the prophecy went out, the words remained like burnt out coals, also for the holy man who had received them.

Only God reveals Himself. When His light fades out, as soon as the purpose of illuminating the mystery comes to its end, the inability to understand envelops the regal truth of the word received, like the bandages of a mummy. That is why I said to you this morning: "The day will come when you will find everything I have given you". Now you cannot remember. But later light will come upon you, not just for a moment, but for an inseparable union of the Eternal Spirit with yours, whereby your teaching concerning what pertains to the Kingdom of God will be infallible. And what applies to you, will apply also to your successors, if they live of God as of one bread only.

Now listen to the spirit of the parable.

We have four kinds of fields: the fertile ones, the thorny ones, the stony ones and the ones full of paths. We also have four types of spirits.

There are the honest spirits, the spirits of good will, prepared by their own will and by the work of an apostle, of a "true" apostle; because there are apostles who have the name but not the spirit of an apostle and they are more lethal for the will in formation, than birds, thorns and stones. They upset in such a way, through their intolerance, their haste, their reproaches and their threats, as to drive people away from God for ever. There are others who, on the contrary, through an excess of benignity, utterly out of place, cause the seed to rot in too soft a soil. Because of their lack of vigour, they kill the vigour of the souls they cure. But let us consider the true apostles, that is, the shining mirrors of God. They are paternal, merciful, patient, and at the same time they are strong, as their Lord is strong. Now: the souls prepared by them and by their own will can be compared to the fertile fields, free from stones and brambles, from couch-grass and darnel, in which the word of God thrives and every word, that is every seed, bears a bundle of ears, yielding in some places one hundred, in others sixty, thirty per cent. Are there any like that among those who follow Me? There certainly are. And they will be holy. They come from all castes and countries. And there are Gentiles among them and they will yield one hundred per cent because of their good will, only because of that, or because of their good will and that of an apostle or disciple who prepares them for Me.

The thorny fields are those in which thorny tangles of personal interests, which suffocate the good seed, have been allowed to grow by carelessness. You must watch yourselves all the time. Never say: "Oh! I am well formed, I have been sown, I can rest assured that I will bear seeds of eternal life". Watch yourselves; the struggle between Good and Evil is still on. Have you ever watched a colony of ants that install themselves in a house? There they are, near the fireplace. The housewife takes all foodstuff away from there and puts it on the table. They sniff the air and attack the table. The housewife puts the food in a cupboard and they get into the cupboard through the keyhole. The woman hangs her food supply from the ceiling, and they go a long way along walls and beams, down the rope and reach the food. The woman burns them, scalds them, poisons them. And thinking that she has destroyed them she is happy. But if she does not watch, what a surprise she gets! The new hatched ones come out and she has to start all over again. And that is what happens while you live; you must be careful and uproot the evil weeds as soon as they come up. Otherwise they will form a ceiling of brambles which suffocate the corn. Worldly cares, deceiving wealth form the tangle, suffocate the seed of God and prevent it from coming into ears.

And here are the fields full of stones. How many there are in Israel! They are the ones that belong to the "children of the laws"

as My cousin Judas quite rightly said. In them there is not the one Stone of Witness, nor the Stone of the Law. There is the quarry of poor petty human laws made by men. They are so many that with their weight they have broken also the Stone of the Law into chips. A disaster which does not allow the seed to take root. The root is no longer nourished because there is neither soil nor sap. The water stagnating on the stone pavement causes the seed to rot, the sun makes the stones hot and parches the little plants. Such are the spirits of those who put complicated human doctrines in place of the simple doctrine of God. They even receive My word with joy. At first it shakes and allures them. But later... They would need to be heroes and work hard to clean the field, their souls and minds of all rhetorical stones. The seed would then take root and bear long spikes. As it is... it bears nothing. The fear of human retaliation is enough. It is enough to say: "And after? What will the mighty ones do to me?" and the poor seed languishes without nourishment. It is enough for the whole quarry to stir with the vain sound of the hundreds of precepts, which have been put in place of the Precept, that man perishes with the seed received... Israel is full of them. That explains why the coming to God is in inverse ratio to human power.

The last are the dusty barren fields full of roads. Those of worldly selfish people. Their comfort is their law, enjoyment their aim. Their ambitions: to do no work, to slumber, to enjoy themselves, to feast... The spirit of the world is their king. The dust of worldliness covers the soil which becomes mouldy. Birds, that is dissipation, rush on to the thousand paths which have been built to make life easier. The spirit of the world, that is, of the Evil one, picks up and destroys all the seed that falls on this soil open to all sensuality and laxity...

Have you understood? Have you any questions to ask? No? In that case we can go and rest and tomorrow we will leave for Capernaum. There is one place to which I must go before starting on My journey to Jerusalem for Passover. »

« Shall we go through Arimathea again? » asks the Iscariot.

« I am not sure. It depends on... »

There is a loud knocking at the door.

« Who can it be at this time? » asks Peter getting up to open the door.

John comes in. He is most upset, covered in dust, and he has obviously been weeping.

« You are here! » they all shout. « What's the matter? »

Jesus, Who has stood up, says only: « Where is My Mother? »

And John, coming forward and kneeling at the feet of the Master, holding his arms as if he were asking for help, says: « Your Mother is well, but She is weeping as I am, as many others are, and

She begs You not to come following the Jordan on our side. That is why She sent me back, because Your cousin John has been captured... » And John weeps while everybody is bewildered.

Jesus turns very pale but does not become excited. He says only:

« Stand up and tell us. »

« I was going down with Your Mother and the other women. Isaac and Timoneus were also with us. We were three women and three men. I was carrying out Your instruction to take Mary to John... Ah! You knew it was their last farewell!... It was to be their last farewell... Because of the storm of a few days ago, we had to stop for a little while. But it was enough to make it impossible for John to see Mary... We arrived at noon and he was captured at daybreak... »

« Where? How? By whom? In his cave? » they all ask, they all want to know.

« He was betrayed!... They used Your name to betray him! »

« How horrible! Who did that? » they all shout.

And John shuddering, whispering in a low voice what not even the air should hear, states: « It was one of his disciples... »

The confusion is at its highest pitch. Some curse, some weep, some are petrified with astonishment.

John throws his arms round Jesus' neck and shouts: « I am afraid for You!... for You! The saints have their traitors who sell themselves for gold and for fear of the mighty ones, yearning for reward, obeying Satan. For thousands of things! Oh! Jesus! Jesus! How dreadful! My first master! My John who gave me to You! »

« It is all right! Do not worry! Nothing will happen to Me for the time being. »

« But later? What will happen later? I look at myself, at these... I am afraid of everybody, also of myself. Will one of us be Your traitor?... »

« Are you mad? And do you think that we would not tear him to pieces? » shouts Peter.

And the Iscariot: « Oh! You really are mad! It will never be I! But if I should feel so weak as to eventually become so, I would kill myself. Better than be the murderer of God. »

Jesus frees Himself from John's grip, shakes Judas violently saying: « Do not swear! Nothing can make you weak, unless you want! And if that should happen, make sure you weep for it, and do not commit another crime in addition to deicide. He becomes weak, who cuts off his vital link with God. » He then returns to John, who is weeping with his head on the table and he says: « Speak calmly. It grieves Me, too. He was of My blood and was My Precursor. »

« I only saw some of the disciples, who were dismayed and furious with the traitor. The others accompanied John towards his

prison to be near him at his death. »

« But he is not dead yet... the last time he managed to escape. » says the Zealot endeavouring to comfort John of whom he is very fond.

« He is not dead yet. But he will die » replies John.

« Yes, he will die. He knows as well as I do. Nothing and no one will save him this time. When? I do not know. I know that he will not come out of Herod's hand alive. »

« Yes, Herod. Listen. John went to the mountain gorge, between Mount Ebal and Gerizim, where we also passed coming back to Galilee, because the traitor said to him: "The Messiah is dying after being attacked by His enemies. He wants to see you to entrust a secret to you". And he went with the traitor and some other people. Herod's armed men were in the shade of the valley and they captured him. The others ran away and gave the news to the disciples who had remained near Hennon. They had just come when I arrived with Your Mother. And the dreadful thing is that he was one from our towns... and that the Pharisees of Capernaum are the leaders of the plot to catch him. They went to John saying that You had been their guest and that You were leaving from there to go to Judaea... he would not have left his refuge but for You... »

Dead silence follows John's report. Jesus looks bloodless, His deep blue eyes are dimmed. He is standing with his head bowed, His hand still on John's shoulder, and His hand is trembling lightly. No one dare speak. Jesus breaks the silence: « We shall go to Judaea following a different route. But I must go to Capernaum tomorrow. As early as possible. Rest now. I am going up to the olivegrove. I need to be alone. » And He goes out without saying anything else.

« He is certainly going to weep » whispers James of Alphaeus.

« Let us follow Him, brother » says Judas Thaddeus.

« No. Let Him weep. But let us go out quietly and keep watch. I fear tricks everywhere » replies the Zealot.

« Yes, let us go. We fishermen to the shore. If anybody comes from the lake we will see him. You go to the olive-grove. He is certainly in the usual place, near the walnut-tree. At dawn we will have the boats ready to go away early. Those snakes! Ehi! I did tell you! Tell me, boy? But... is His Mother really safe? »

« Oh! Yes! Also the shepherd disciples of John have gone with Her. Andrew... we will never see our John again! »

« Be quiet! It sounds like the song of the cuckoo... One precedes the other and... and... »

« By the Holy Ark! Be quiet! If you go on talking about misfortunes to the Master, I will start from you, letting your backs feel the weight of my oar! » shouts an enraged Peter. « You... » he then

says to those who are to go to the olive-grove: « Get some clubs, some big branches, you will find some in the wood-shed... and spread out, armed with them. The first one to come near Jesus to harm Him, kill him. »

« The disciples! We must be careful with the new ones! » exclaims Philip.

The new disciple feels hurt and asks: « Are you in doubt about me? He chose me and wanted me. »

« Not about you. I mean the scribes and Pharisees and their worshippers. That is where the trouble will come from, believe me. »

They go out, some towards the boats, some towards the olivetrees on the hills, and it all ends.

181. Parable of the Darnel.

8th June 1945.

A clear dawn causes the lake to sparkle like pearls and envelops the hills in a mist as light as a muslin veil, through which olive and walnut-trees, houses and the background of villages look prettier than usual. Boats are sailing smoothly and quietly towards Capernaum. All of a sudden Peter turns the tiller of the rudder, so abruptly that the boat heels to one side.

« What are you doing? » asks Andrew.

« There is the boat of an owl (1). It is leaving Capernaum now. My eyes are good and since yesterday evening I have the scent of a hound. I do not want them to see us. I am going back to the river. We will go on foot. »

Also the other boat has followed the manouevre, but James, who is holding the rudder, asks Peter: « Why are you doing that? »

« I will tell you later. Follow me. »

Jesus, Who is sitting astern, rouses when they are almost off the Jordan. « What are you doing, Simon? » He asks.

« We are getting off here. There is a jackal about. It is not possible to go to Capernaum today. I want to go and find out what is happening first. I will go with Simon and Nathanael. Three worthy people against three unworthy ones... if the unworthy ones are not more. »

« You must not see traps everywhere, now! Is that not the boat of Simon the Pharisee? »

« It is just that one. »

« He was not present at John's arrest. »

« I don't know. »

« He has always shown respect to Me. »

« I don't know. »

(1) The owl is considered the bird of evil-omen.

« You make Me appear a coward. »

« I don't know. »

Although Jesus does not feel like laughing, He cannot help smiling at Peter's holy obstinacy. « But, after all, we must go to Capernaum. If not today, later... »

« I told You that I am going first, to see... and if necessary... I will also go... it will be a bitter pill to swallow... but I will do it for Your sake... I will go... to the centurion and ask his protection... »

« No! It is not necessary! »

The boat grounds on the little desert shore opposite Bethsaida. They all go ashore.

« You two come with me. You too, Philip. You younger ones, stay here. We will not be long. »

Elias, the new disciple, begs Jesus: « Come to my house, Master. I will be so happy to give You hospitality... »

« Yes, I will come. Simon: you will meet Me at Elias' house. Goodbye, Simon. Go. But be good, wise and merciful. Come here that I may kiss you and bless you. »

Peter does not guarantee that he will be good, patient and merciful. He is silent and kisses Jesus while being kissed by Him. Also the Zealot, Bartholomew and Philip kiss Jesus goodbye and the two parties go in opposite directions.

They enter Korazim when it is broad daylight. All the stems twinkle with dewy gems. Birds are singing everywhere. The air is pure and cool, it seems to savour of milk, of a vegetable milk rather than animal milk. The scent of the corn coming into ears, of the almond-groves laden with fruit... is the scent I could smell in cool mornings in the rich fields in the Po Valley.

They soon reach Elias' house. Many people in Korazim already know that the Master has arrived, and while Jesus is about to enter the house, a mother rushes towards Him shouting: « Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on my daughter! » She is carrying in her arms a little girl, about ten years old, who is very thin and waxen, or yellowish rather than waxen.

« What is the matter with your daughter? »

« She is feverish. She caught a disease at the pastures along the Jordan. Because we are the shepherds of a rich man. Her father sent for me when she was taken ill. He has gone back to the mountains. But You know that with this kind of disease one cannot stay up in high places. But how can I stay here? Our master has allowed me so far. But I look after the wool and the litters. This is the busy season for shepherds. If I stay here we will be dismissed or separated. And if I go back to the Hermon I will see my daughter die. »

« Do you believe that I can cure her? »

« I have spoken to Daniel, Elisha' shepherd. He said to me: "Our

Child cures all diseases. Go to the Messiah". I have come from beyond Merom carrying her in my arms and looking for You. I was going to walk until I found You... »

« You need walk no farther, but go home, to your peaceful work. Your daughter is cured because that is what I want. Go in peace. »

The woman looks at her daughter and at Jesus. She is perhaps hoping to see her daughter become fat and rosy all at once. Also the girl stares at Jesus with her tired eyes wide open and smiles.

« Do not be afraid, woman. I am not deceiving you. Her fever has gone for ever. Day by day she will become a healthy girl. Let her go. She will no longer stagger neither will she feel tired. »

The mother puts the child down and she stands upright. She becomes more and more cheerful and at last she trills in her silvery voice: « Bless the Lord, mother! I am cured! I can feel it » and with the naivety of a little shepherd girl, she throws her arms round Jesus' neck and kisses Him. Her mother, reserved as her age demands, prostrates herself and kisses His tunic blessing the Lord.

« Go. Remember the gift of God and be good. Peace be with you. »

The crowds gather in Elias' little kitchen garden requesting Jesus to speak to them. And although He is not inclined to do so, sad as He is because of the Baptist's capture and the way it happened, He yields and begins to speak in the shade of the trees.

« As we are still in the lovely season when the corn bursts into ears, I wish to tell you a parable taken from the corn. Listen.

The Kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while the man and his servants were asleep, his enemy came and sowed darnel seeds among the wheat and went away. At first no one noticed anything. Winter came with rain and frost, the end of the month of Tebeth came and the corn sprouted. The tiny little green leaves which had just come up, looked all alike in their innocent early days. The months of Shebat and Adar came and the plants grew and the spikes seeded. They then saw that it was not all wheat, and that there was also darnel, twisted with its thin strong bearbines round the corn stalks.

The servants of the master went to his house and said: "Lord, what seed did you sow? Was it not selected seed, free from every other seed?".

"It was certainly so. I picked all the grains and they were all of the same quality. I would have noticed any other seed".

"If so, why has so much darnel grown among your corn?".

The landlord became pensive and said: "Some enemy has done that to harm me".

The servants then asked: "Do you want us to go into the field and free the corn from the darnel, weeding it out patiently? Tell us and we will do it".

But the master said: "No. Because you might weed out also the

corn and almost certainly you would damage the ears which are still tender. Let them both grow till the harvest. Then I will say to the reapers: 'Cut everything together, but before tying the sheaves, since the beards of the darnel are withered and friable, whereas the closed ears are stronger and harder, pick the darnel from the wheat and tie it into separate bundles. You will burn them and they will fertilize the soil. Take instead the good corn into the granaries and it will be used to bake good bread, to the great shame of my enemy who will have gained only to become despicable to God because of his envious malice' ".

Consider now how often and how plentifully the Enemy sows in your hearts. And you must understand that it is necessary to watch patiently and constantly to ensure that little darnel is mixed with the chosen wheat. The fate of the darnel is to be burnt. Do you wish to be burnt or to become citizens of the Kingdom? You say that you want to become citizens of the Kingdom. Well, endeavour to be so. The good God gives you the Word. The enemy is vigilant to make it harmful, because the flour of wheat if mixed with the flour of darnel makes a bitter bread, which is harmful to the stomach. If there is darnel in your souls, pick it with good will and throw it away, so that you may not be unworthy of God.

Go, My children. Peace be with you. »

The crowds slowly disperse. The eight apostles, Elias, his brother and mother, old Isaac, whose soul rejoices seeing his Saviour, stay in the kitchen garden.

« Gather round Me and listen. I will explain the full meaning of the parable to you, as it has two more meanings, besides what I told the crowd.

In the universal sense the purport of the parable is as follows: the field is the world. The good seed is the children of the Kingdom of God sown by God in the world, while they wait to reach their end and be cut by the Mower and be taken to the Master of the world Who will store them in His granaries. The subjects of the Evil one are the darnel, which has also been spread in the field of God for the purpose of causing grief to the Master of the world and damage to the corn of God. The enemy of God has sown them deliberately, through witchcraft, because the demon really perverts the nature of man making him a creature of his own and then sows it to lead astray other people whom he has not been able to enslave otherwise. The harvest, that is the tying of the sheaves and carrying them to the granaries, is the end of the world and that is accomplished by the angels. They are given instructions to gather together the creatures which have been cut, to separate the corn from the darnel, and as in the parable the darnel is burnt, so the damned will be burnt in the eternal fire, at the Last Judgement.

The Son of man will have all scandalmongers and performers of iniquity removed from His Kingdom. Because the Kingdom then will be on the earth and in Heaven and many sons of the Enemy will be mixed among the citizens of the Kingdom. And, as prophesied also by Prophets, they will reach the perfection of scandal and abomination in every ministry on the earth and will be of great annoyance to the children of the spirit. The corrupt will have already been driven out of the Kingdom of God in Heaven, because no corruption will enter Heaven. And now the angels of the Lord, brandishing their sickles among the group of the last harvest, will mow down and separate the corn from the darnel and will throw the latter into the burning furnace, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth. The just, instead, the chosen seed, will be taken to the eternal Jerusalem, where they will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of My Father and yours.

That is the universal sense. But there is another sense, which is the answer to the question which you have been asking yourselves many times and particularly since yesterday evening. Your question is: "Can there be traitors in the mass of disciples?" and your hearts tremble with horror and fear. Yes, there may be some. There are certainly some.

The Sower sows the good seed. In this case, instead of sowing, we could say that He "picks". Because the master, whether it is I or the Baptist, chose his disciples. How were they, therefore, led astray? No, I did not use the right word saying that the disciples are the "seed". You may misunderstand. I will call them "field". As many disciples as fields, chosen by the master to form the area of the Kingdom of God, the wealth of God. The master tires himself cultivating them so that they may yield one hundred per cent. He takes care of everything with patience, love, wisdom, working hard and perseveringly. He also sees their wicked inclinations, their barrenness and avidity, their stubbornness and weakness. But he hopes all the time, corroborating his hope through prayer and penance, because he wishes to lead them to perfection.

But the fields are open. They are not gardens enclosed in walls of protection, of which the only owner is the master, who is the only one who can go in. They are open. Placed as they are in the centre of the world, among the world, anyone can go near them and into them. Everybody and everything. Oh! darnel is not the only bad seed sown! Darnel could be the symbol of the bitter frivolity of the worldly spirit. But all the other seeds, scattered by the Enemy, come up in them. There are nettles, couch-grass, dodder, bearbines, and finally hemlock and poisonous herbs. Why? What are they?

Nettles: stinging untameable spirits which hurt through their excess of poison and cause so much trouble. Couch-grass: parasites

who wear out the master as they can only creep and suck, taking advantage of his work and injuring the willing ones, who would make much more profit if the master were not upset and distracted by the cares required by the couch-grass. The sluggish bearbines rise from the ground only by making use of the efforts of other people. Dodders: they are a torture on the already painful road of the master and a torment to the faithful disciples who follow him. They twist, pierce, tear to pieces, scratch, cause mistrust and pain. The poisonous ones: the criminal disciples, who go as far as betraying and killing as hemlock and other poisonous plants do. Have you noticed how beautiful they are with their little flowers which later become white, red, blue-violet berries? Who would say that the white or pinkish star-shaped corolla, with its little golden heart, or the many-coloured corals, so much like other little fruits which are the delight of birds and children, can cause death, once they are ripe? No one. And the innocent ones fall into the trap. They believe that everybody is as good as they are... they pick and die.

They believe that everybody is as good as they are! Oh! The truth that makes the master sublime and condemns his traitor! How? Does goodness not disarm wickedness? Does it not make ill-will harmless? No. It does not, because the man who has fallen a prey to the Enemy is indifferent to what is superior. And what is superior changes aspect, as far as he is concerned. Kindness becomes weakness on which is lawful to tread and it stimulates his ill-will as the scent of blood stimulates a beast to slaughter.

Also the master is always innocent... and he lets his traitor poison him, because he cannot possibly believe that a human being can murder an innocent person.

The enemies come into the fields of the Master, that is to His disciples. They are many and Satan is the first one. The others are his servants, that is, men, passions, the world and the flesh. The disciple who is more easily struck by them is the one who is not entirely close to the Master, but is between the Master and the world. He is not capable and does not want to part completely with the world, the flesh, passions and demons, to belong entirely to Him Who wants to take him to God. And the world, flesh, passions and the demon scatter their seed in him: gold, power, women, pride, the fear of an unfavourable opinion of the world, the spirit of utilitarianism. "The great ones are the strongest. I will serve them so that they will be friendly to me". And they become criminals and damned for such miserable things!...

Why does the Master, Who sees the imperfection of a disciple, not cast him away at once, even if He is not prepared to submit to the thought: "He will be My murderer"? That is what you are asking yourselves. Because it is useless to do so. If He did so he would not

avoid having him as an enemy, a double and more dangerous enemy, because of his anger and his sorrow at being found out or at being driven away. Yes, because of his sorrow. Because sometimes a bad disciple does not realise that he is such. The demon's action is so subtle that he is not aware of it. He becomes wicked without even suspecting that he is subject to such action. And because of his anger. He is enraged at being known for what he is, when he is aware of Satan's work and of his followers: the men who tempt weak people in their weak points, to remove from the world a saint who offends them, wicked as they are, when compared with his goodness. The saint then prays and trusts in God. "Let what You allow, be done" he says. He adds only the clause: "providing it serves Your purpose". The saint knows that the time will come when the wicked dandel will be rejected from the harvest. By whom? By God Himself Who does not allow more than what is useful to the triumph of His loving will. »

« If You maintain that Satan and his followers are always to be blamed... it seems to me that the responsibility of the disciple diminishes » says Matthew.

« Do not believe that. If there is Good there is also Evil and man is gifted with discernment and freedom. »

« You say that God does not allow more than what is useful to the triumph of His loving will. Therefore also such error is useful, if He allows it, and it serves the triumph of the divine will » says the Iscariot.

« And you infer, as Matthew does, that that justifies the disciple's crime. God created the lion without ferocity and the snake without poison, now one is ferocious and the other poisonous. That is why God separated them from man. Ponder over that and draw conclusions. Let us go to the house. The sun is already too warm. It looks as if there is going to be a storm. And you are tired because of the sleepless night. »

« The rooms in the house are high, large and cool. You will be able to rest » says Elias.

They go up the outside staircase. But only the apostles lie down on the mats to rest. Jesus goes out on to the terrace, a corner of which is shaded by a very tall oak-tree, and becomes engrossed in thought.

182. On His Way to Magdala Jesus Speaks to Some Shepherds.

9th June 1945.

Peter comes back only the following morning. And he is more calm than when he left, because he was made welcome at Capernaum and the town had been cleared of Eli and Joachim.

« They must have taken part in the plot. Because I asked some friends when they had left, and I understood that they had not come back after going to the Baptist as penitents. And I do not think that they will come back so soon, now that I mentioned that they were present at the arrest... There is much turmoil because of the Baptist's capture... I will ensure that the whole world knows about it... It is the best weapon we have. I met also Simon, the Pharisee... But if he really is what he appeared to me, I think he is favourably disposed towards us. He said to Me: "Tell the Master not to follow the Jordan along the western valley. The other side is safer" he said stressing the words. And he ended: "I have not seen you. I have not spoken to you. Don't forget. And mind what you do in mine, yours and everybody's interest. Tell the Master that I am a friend" and he kept looking up, as if he were speaking to the wind. They are always false, also when doing good things and... and I will say "strange", so that You will not reproach me. But... ehi!... but I went and I had a little chat with the centurion. Just... to ask: "Is your servant well?", and when I was told that he was, I said: "That is good! Make sure you keep him healthy because they are laying snares for the Master. The Baptist has already been captured... " and the Roman grasped the idea immediately. A cunning fellow he is! He replied: "Where there is a vexillum, there will be a guard for Him, and there will be someone reminding the Jews that no plot is allowed under the sign of Rome, death or the galley being the punishment". They are heathens, but I could have kissed him. I like people who understand and take action! So we can go. »

« Let us go. But all that was not necessary » says Jesus.

« It was... it was necessary indeed! »

Jesus says goodbye to the hospitable family and also to the new disciple, to whom He must have given some instructions.

They are alone once again: the Master with His apostles and they walk along the cool country, along a road which Jesus has taken much to Peter's surprise, as he wanted to take a different one. « We are going away from the lake... »

« We will still arrive in time for what I have to do. »

The apostles become silent and go towards a little village, a handful of houses, spread out in the country. A loud ding-dong of sheep-bells can be heard as the flocks are driven towards the pastures on the mountains.

When Jesus stops to let a large herd pass, the shepherds point Him out and gather together. They consult with one another but dare no more. Jesus puts an end to their doubts by walking through the herd, which has stopped to graze the thick grass. He goes straight to caress a little shepherd, who is standing towards the centre of the woolly bleating mass of sheep. He asks the boy:

« Are they yours? » Jesus knows very well that they are not the boy's, but He wants him to speak.

« No, Lord. I am with those men. And the herds belong to many owners. We are all together for fear of the bandits. »

« What is your name? »

« Zacharias, the son of Isaac. But my father died and I work as a servant because we are poor and my mother has three more sons younger than I am. »

« Has your father been long dead? »

« Three years, Lord... and since then I have never smiled because my mother always weeps and I have no one who caresses me any more... I am the first born and my father's death has made a man of me, while I was still a child... But I must not weep but earn some money... But it is so difficult! » Tears stream down his face which is too serious for his age.

The shepherds have drawn near and so have the apostles. A group of men in the midst of moving sheep.

« You are not fatherless, Zacharias. You have a holy Father in Heaven, Who always loves you, if you are good, and your father has not ceased loving you because he is in Abraham's bosom. You must believe that. And because of such faith you must endeavour to become better and better. » Jesus speaks kindly and caresses the boy.

A shepherd dares to ask: « You are the Messiah, are You not? »

« Yes, I am. How do you know? »

« I know that You are about in Palestine and I know that You speak holy words. That is why I recognised You. »

« Are you going far? »

« Up to the high mountains. The hot weather is coming... Will You not speak to us? Up there, where we are, only the winds speak, and sometimes the wolf speaks and it slaughters... as it happened to Zacharias' father. During the whole winter we were hoping to see You, but we never found You. »

« Let us go under the shade of that thicket and I will speak to you. » And Jesus goes ahead of them, holding the little shepherd by the hand and caressing with the other hand the little lambs which raise their heads, bleating.

The shepherds gather the flock under a coppice and while the sheep lie down ruminating or graze or rub themselves against tree trunks, Jesus speaks.

« You said: "Up there, where we are, only the winds speak, and sometimes the wolf speaks and slaughters". What happens up there, happens in men's hearts through the work of God, of men and of Satan. You may, therefore, have up there what you would have in any other place.

Do you know the Law well enough and its ten commandments?

And you, too, boy? In that case you know enough. If you faithfully practise what God commanded, you will be holy. Do not complain of being far from the world. That will preserve you from much corruption. And God is not far from you, but closer in that solitude, where you can hear His voice in the winds, which He created, in the herbs and in the water, whereas you would not hear it among men. Your flock teaches you a great virtue, nay many great virtues. It is meek and obedient. It is satisfied with little and is grateful for what it has. It loves and knows those who take care of it and love it. Do likewise saying: "God is our Shepherd and we are His sheep. He watches us. He protects us and grants us not what is the source of vice, but what is necessary to live". And keep wolves away from your hearts. Wicked men are wolves: they seduce you and incite you to evil actions by Satan's order and it is Satan himself who induces you to sin so that he may tear you to pieces.

Be watchful. You shepherds know the habits of wolves. They are as shrewd, as sheep are simple and innocent. They steal close to you, after watching from above the habits of the herd, they sneak closer through bushes and lie as still as stones to avoid drawing your attention. Do they not look like huge stones which have rolled down on to the meadows? Then, when they are sure that no one is watching, they spring and bite. That is how Satan behaves. He watches you to find out your weak points, he roams about you, he seems harmless and absent, concerned with something else, whereas he is watching you, and then he suddenly leaps to induce you to sin, and sometimes he is successful.

But close to you there are a doctor and a compassionate spirit. God and your angel. If you are wounded, if you have been taken ill, do not go away from them, as a dog which has become rabid does. On the contrary, while weeping shout to them: "Help!". God forgives those who repent and your angel is ready to implore God with you and for you.

Love one another and love this boy. Each of you must feel as if he were somehow the father of the orphan. The presence of a child amongst you should influence every action of yours through the holy restraint of respect for a child. And let your company make up for what death deprived him of. We must love our neighbour. This boy is the neighbour entrusted to you by God in a special manner. Teach him to be good, a faithful believer, honest and free from vices. He is worth much more than one of these sheep. Now, if you take care of the sheep because they belong to their owner, who would punish you if you should let them perish, how much more care you must take of this soul which God entrusts to you for Himself and for his dead father. His situation as an orphan is a sad one indeed. Do not make it more painful by taking advantage of him and vexing him because he is only a youngster. Remember

that God sees the deeds and tears of every man and takes everything into account, in order to reward or punish.

And you, My boy, remember that you are never alone. God sees you and so does the spirit of your father. When something upsets you and induces you to do wrong, say: "No, I do not want to be an orphan for ever and ever". You would be, if you damned your soul by sinning.

Be good. I bless you so that all goodness may be with you. If we were going the same way, I would continue to speak to you for a long time. But the sun is rising and you must go, and so do I. Your task is to protect the sheep from the heat, Mine to relieve men of another ardour, a more dreadful one, the passions of their hearts. Pray that they may consider Me as their Shepherd. Goodbye, Zacharias. Be good. Peace be with you. »

Jesus kisses the little shepherd and blesses him and while the flock moves slowly away, His eyes follow him. He then resumes His way.

« You said that we are going to relieve hearts of another ardour... Where are we going? » asks the Iscariot.

« For the time being as far as that shady spot, where the stream is. We will have something to eat there and then you will be told where we are going. »

Jesus says: « Insert here the vision of the second moment of Mary Magdalene's conversion, which you had last year, on the 12th of August 1944. »

183. Jesus at Magdala. He Meets with Mary Magdalene the Second Time.

12th August 1944.

The entire apostolic college is round Jesus. Sitting on the grass, in the cool shade of a thicket, near a stream, they are all eating bread and cheese and drinking the cool clear water of the stream. Their dusty sandals give to understand that they have walked a long way and perhaps the disciples wish but to rest on the long fresh grass.

But the Tireless Walker is not of the same mind. As soon as he deems that the hottest hour is over, He gets up, goes on to the road and looks... He then turns round and says: « Let us go. » Nothing else.

When they reach a crossroads, where four dusty roads meet, Jesus resolutely takes the one in a north-east direction.

« Are we going back to Capernaum? » asks Peter.

Jesus replies: « No. » Just: no.

« We are going to Tiberias, then » insists Peter, who is anxious to

know.

« Not there either. »

« But this road takes one to the Sea of Galilee... and Tiberias and Capernaum are there... »

« And there is also Magdala » says Jesus with a half-serious expression to satisfy Peter's curiosity.

« Magdala? Oh!... » Peter is somewhat scandalised, which makes me think that the town is ill-famed.

« Yes, to Magdala. Do you consider yourself too honest to enter that town? Peter, Peter!... For My sake you will have to enter not towns of pleasure but real brothels... Christ did not come to save those who are already saved, but those who are lost... and you shall be "Peter", or Rock, not Simon, for that purpose. Are you afraid of becoming contaminated? No! Not even this one, see (and He points at the very young John) will suffer any harm. Because he does not want, as you do not want, as your brother and John's brother do not want, as none of you, for the time being, wants. As long as one does not want, no harm is done. But one must not want resolutely and perseveringly. You will obtain will-power and perseverance from the Father, by praying with sincere intentions. Not all of you will be able to pray thus, in future... What are you saying, Judas? Do not be too self-confident. I, Who am the Christ, constantly pray to have strength against Satan. Are you better than I am? Pride is the opening through which Satan penetrates. Be vigilant and humble, Judas. Matthew, since you are familiar with this place, tell Me: is it better to go to the town this way, or is there another road? »

« It depends, Master. If You want to go to the area of Magdala where fishermen and poor people live, this is the road. But - I do not think this is the case but I am telling You to give You a complete answer - if You want to go where the rich people are, then in about one hundred yards, You have to leave this road and take another one, because their houses are approximately in this direction and it is necessary to go back... »

« We will go back because I want to go to the residential area of the wealthy people. What did you say, Judas? »

« Nothing, Master. It is the second time that You ask me in a very short time. But I have never spoken. »

« Not with your lips, no. But you have spoken, grumbling in your heart. You have grumbled with your guest: your heart. It is not necessary to have an interlocutor, in order to speak. We say many words to ourselves... But we must not moan or calumniate, not even with our own ego. »

The group proceeds in silence. The main road becomes a town street, paved with one handbreath wide square stones. The houses are more and more splendid and magnificent, surrounded by luxuriant

flourishing gardens and orchards. I am under the impression that the elegant Magdala was for the Palestinians a kind of place of pleasure like some towns around our lakes in Lombardy: Stresa, Gardone, Pallanza, Bellagio and so on. Among the rich Palestinians there are many Romans, who must have come from other places, such as Tiberias or Caesarea, possibly officials of the Governor or merchants who export to Rome the most beautiful products of the Palestinian colony.

Jesus proceeds, sure of Himself, as if He knew where to go. He follows the contour of the lake, which reflects the houses and gardens built on its limits.

A loud noise of crying people can be heard from a sumptuous house. It is the voices of women and children. The shrill voice of a woman shouts: « My son! My son! »

Jesus turns round and looks at His apostles. Judas steps forward. « No, not you » orders Jesus. « You, Matthew. Go and find out. »

Matthew goes and comes back: « A brawl, Master. A man is dying. A Jew. The man who wounded him, a Roman, has run away. His wife, mother and children have rushed to help him... But he is dying. »

« Let us go. »

« Master... Master... It happened in the house of a woman... who is not his wife. »

« Let us go. »

Through the wide open door they enter a large hall which opens on to a lovely garden. The house seems to be divided by this kind of covered peristyle, which is full of pots with green plants, statues and inlaid articles. It is a mixture of a hall and greenhouse. In a room, the door of which opens on to the hall, there are some women weeping. Jesus goes in confidently. But He does not pronounce His usual greeting.

Among the men present there is a merchant who obviously knows Jesus, because as soon as he sees Him, he says: « The Rabbi of Nazareth! » and greets Him respectfully.

« Joseph, what is the matter? »

« Master, a stab wound in his heart... He is dying. »

« Why? »

A grey-haired unkempt woman stands up - she was kneeling near the dying man holding his limp hand - and with distracted face and voice she shouts: « Because of her, because of her... She has turned him into a devil... Mother, wife, children no longer existed for him! Hell will have you, satan! »

Jesus looks up and His eyes follow the trembling accusing hand and in a corner, against the dark red wall, He sees Mary of Magdala, more immodest than ever, wearing, I would say, nothing

on half of her body, because she is half naked from the waist upwards, draped in a kind of hexagonal net decorated with little round objects which look like tiny pearls. But as she is in a halfflight, I cannot see her well.

Jesus lowers His eyes once again. Mary, lashed by His indifference, stands up, whereas before she seemed somewhat depressed, and strikes a defiant pose.

« Woman » says Jesus to the mother. « Do not curse. Tell Me. Why was your son in this house? »

« I told You. Because she infatuated him. She did. »

« Silence. So, he was in sin, too, because he is an adulterer and an unworthy father of these innocent children. He therefore deserves his punishment. In this life and in the next one there is no mercy for those who do not repent. But I feel sorry for your grief and for these innocent children. Is your house far? »

« About one hundred yards. »

« Lift the man and take him there. »

« It is not possible, Master » says Joseph, the merchant. « He is breathing his last. »

« Do as I tell you. »

They place a board under the body of the dying man and the procession slowly moves out. They cross the street and go into a shady garden. The women go on crying loudly.

As soon as they enter the garden, Jesus addresses the mother. « Can you forgive? If you forgive, God will forgive. We must be kind-hearted, to obtain grace. He has sinned and will sin again. It would be better for him to die, because, if he lives, he will fall into sin again and he will have to answer also for his ingratitude to God Who has saved him. But you and these innocent ones (and He points at the wife and children) would give yourselves up to despair. I have come to save, not to lose. Man, I tell you: stand up and be cured. »

The man begins to recover. He opens his eyes, sees his mother, wife and children and lowers his head shamefully.

« Son, son » says the mother. « You were dead, if He had not saved you. Come to your senses. Don't be infatuated for a... »

Jesus interrupts the old woman. « Be quiet, woman. Have mercy, as mercy was granted to you. Your house has been sanctified by a miracle, which is always the evidence of God's presence. That is why I could not work it where there was sin. You, at least, must endeavour to keep it such, even if he will not. Take care of him now. It is fair that he should suffer a little. Be good, woman. And you. And you little ones. Goodbye. » Jesus has laid His hand on the heads of the two women and of the children.

He then goes out passing in front of the Magdalene who followed the procession as far as the entrance of the house where she remained

leaning against a tree. Jesus slackens His pace as if He were waiting for His disciples, but I think He does so to give Mary a chance of making a gesture. But she does not.

The disciples reach Jesus and Peter cannot help muttering between his teeth an epithet appropriate to Mary, who, wishing to strike an attitude, bursts into a laugh of a weak triumph. But Jesus heard Peter's word and addresses him severely: « Peter. I do not insult. Do not insult. Pray for sinners. Nothing else. »

Mary stops her trilling laughter, lowers her head and runs away, like a gazelle, towards her house.

184. At Magdala in the House of Benjamin's Mother.

10th June 1945.

The miracle must have taken place only a short while ago, because the apostles are talking about it, and also some citizens are making comments, pointing at the Master, Who with a grave countenance goes straight to the outskirts of the town, where the poor people live.

He stops at a little house, from which a little boy comes bounding out followed by his mother. « Woman, will you let Me go into your kitchen garden and rest there until it cools down a little? »

« Go in, my Lord. Also into the kitchen, if You so wish. I will bring You some refreshments. »

« Do not trouble. It is quite enough for Me to stay in this peaceful garden. »

But the woman offers Him some water mixed with I do not know what and then she wanders round the kitchen garden, as if she were anxious to but dare not speak. She busies herself with her vegetables, but it is only a pretence. In actual fact she is paying attention to the Master, but the little boy annoys her because every time he catches a butterfly or an insect, he shouts and thus prevents her from hearing what Jesus says. She gets angry and gives him a little slap and... he shouts louder.

Jesus - Who was replying to the Zealot who had asked Him: « Do You think Mary is upset because of it? » saying: « Much more than you would think... » - turns round and calls the child, who runs towards Him and stops crying on His knees.

The woman shouts: « Benjamin Come here. Do not disturb the Master. »

But Jesus says: « No, leave him. He will be good and will leave you in peace. » He then says to the boy: « Do not cry. Your mummy did not hurt you. She only made you obey, or, she wanted to make you obey. Why did you shout when she wanted you to be quiet? Perhaps she is not feeling well, and your shouting was annoying her. »

The boy, with the incontrovertable frankness of children, which is the desperation of adults, immediately exclaims: «No, she is feeling all right. She wanted to hear what You were saying... She told me. But I wanted to come to You, so I was deliberately making a lot of noise, so that You would look at me. »

Everybody laughs and the woman blushes.

« Do not blush, woman. Come here. You wanted to hear Me speak? Why? »

« Because You are the Messiah. No one but You can be the Messiah, considering the miracle You have worked... And I was anxious to hear You. I never go out of Magdala because I have... a difficult husband and five children. The youngest is four months old... and You never come here. »

« I have come, and to your house, as you can see. »

« That is why I wanted to hear You. »

« Where is your husband? »

« At sea, my Lord. If he catches no fish, there is no food for us. I have but this little kitchen garden. Can it suffice for seven people? And yet that is what Zacchaeus would like... »

« Be patient, woman. Everybody has a cross. »

« Oh! No! Shameless women have but pleasure. You have seen the deeds of the shameless ones! They enjoy themselves and make other people suffer. They do not suffer the labour of childbirth neither do they break their backs working. Their hands do not blister digging, neither do they get spoiled washing clothes. They are beautiful and fresh looking. Eve's punishment does not affect them. Nay, they are our punishment, because... men... You know what I mean. »

« I understand. But, believe Me, they have a terrible cross, too. The most dreadful one, which is not visible: their conscience which reproaches them, the world that sneers at them, their blood that disowns them, God that curses them. They are not happy, believe Me. They do not suffer the labour of childbirth, they do not break their backs working, they do not ulcerate their hands toiling. But they feel broken just the same, and ashamed. Their hearts are one big sore. Do not envy their fresh look, their apparent serenity. It is a veil laid over a ruin that bites and gives no peace. Do not envy their sleep, you, a mother who dreams of her innocent children... Their pillows are covered with nightmares. And in future, in their old age, in their agony, they will have nothing but remorse and terror. »

« It is true... Forgive me... May I stay here? »

« Yes, stay. I will tell Benjamin a nice parable and those who are no longer children will apply it to themselves and to Mary of Magdala. Listen.

You doubt Mary's conversion to Good. There is no sign in her in

that direction. Brazen and impudent, conscious of her rank and power, she dared to defy the people and come to the very threshold of the house where they are weeping because of her. She laughed at Peter's reproach. She replied to My inviting look, by striking a proud attitude. Perhaps some of you, either for Lazarus' sake or for Mine, would have liked Me to speak to her directly, at some length, subduing her with My power, showing My strength as Messiah and Saviour. No. All that is not needed. I already said so many months ago in regard to another sinner. Souls must react by themselves. I pass and sow the seed. The seed works in secret. A soul is to be respected in this work. If the first seed does not take root, another must be sown, and a third one... and one must give up only when there is definite proof that it is useless to sow. And one prays. Prayer is like dew on the clods of earth: it keeps them soft and nourishes them, so that the seed can sprout. Is that not what you do, woman, with your vegetables?

Now listen to the parable of how God works in the hearts of men to establish His Kingdom there. Because every heart is a small kingdom of God on the earth. Later, after death, all these small kingdoms will agglomerate into one, immeasurable, holy eternal Kingdom of Heaven.

The Kingdom of God is created in men's hearts by the Divine Sower. He comes to his field - man belongs to God, because every man is initially His - and sows His seed. He then goes to other fields, to other hearts. Days follow the nights and nights the days. The days bring sunshine and rain, in our case rays of divine love and effusion of divine Wisdom speaking to the spirit. The nights bring stars and restful silence: in our case enlightening calls of God and silence for the soul so that it may collect its thoughts and meditate.

The seed, in this course of imperceptible but powerful influence, swells, splits, takes root, sprouts, grows. And all that happens without any help from man. The soil spontaneously produces grass from seeds, the herb becomes strong and supports the rising ear, the ear grows, swells, hardens, becomes golden and perfect when seeding. When it is ripe, the sower comes back and cuts it because the time of perfection has arrived for that seed. It cannot develop any further and so it is harvested.

My word does the same work in hearts. I am referring to the hearts which receive the seed. But it is a slow process. One must not spoil everything by being hasty. How troublesome it is for the little seed to split and take root! Such work is painful also for a hard wild heart. It must open itself, allow people to search it, accept new things and nourish them laboriously, appear different being covered with humble useful things, instead of the fascinating, pompous, useless, exuberant flourishing that covered

it previously. It must be satisfied with working humbly for the benefit of the divine Thought, without drawing other people's admiring attention. It must exert all its talent to grow and burst into ear. It must bum with love to become corn. And after overcoming all fears of human opinion, which are so grievous, after toiling, suffering and becoming attached to its new dress, it must be deprived of it by a cruel cut. It must give everything to receive everything. It must be divested to be clad again in Heaven with the stole of sainthood. The life of a sinner who becomes a saint is the longest, most heroic and glorious fight. I tell you.

You will realise from what I told you that it is fair that I should deal with Mary as I am doing. Did I behave differently with you, Matthew? »

« No, my Lord, You did not. »

« And tell Me the truth: what convinced you more, My patience or the bitter reproaches of the Pharisees? »

« Your patience, so much so that I am here. The Pharisees, by despising and anathematizing me, made me scornful, and out of contempt I did more harm than I had done so far. That is what happens. Sinners become more obstinate when they realise that they are treated as sinners. But when we are caressed instead of being insulted, we are dumbfounded and we weep... and when one weeps, the whole framework of sin collapses... One is left nude before Goodness and one implores it wholeheartedly to be re clothed by It. »

« You are right. Benjamin, did you like My story? Yes? Good. Where is your mother? »

James of Alphaeus replies: « She went out at the end of the parable and ran along that road. »

« She may have gone to the seaside to see whether her husband is coming » says Thomas.

« No. She has gone to her old mother's, to get the children. Mummy takes them there so that she can work » says the little boy, who is leaning familiarly on Jesus' knees.

« And she keeps you here, my little man? You must be a handsome evil-doer if she keeps you here all by yourself! » remarks Bartholomew.

« I am the eldest, and I help her... »

« You help her to gain Paradise, poor woman! How old are you? » asks Peter.

« In three years' time I will be a son of the Law » replies the urchin proudly.

« Can you read? » asks Thaddeus.

« Yes... but very slowly... because the teacher throws me out almost every day... »

« What did I say! » exclaims Bartholomew.

« But I behave like that because the teacher is old and ugly and says the same things all the time and makes you fall asleep! If he were like Him (and he points to Jesus) I would pay attention. Do You hit those who sleep or play? »

« I do not hit anybody. But I say to My pupils: "Pay attention for your own good and for My sake" » replies Jesus.

« Yes, that's all right! Out of love, not out of fear. »

« But if you are good, the teacher will love you. »

« Do You love only those who are good? You just said that You were patient with this man here, who was not good... » The child's logic is cogent.

« I am good with everybody. But when one becomes good, I love that one very much and I am very good, too. »

The boy is pensive... he then looks up and asks Matthew: « And what did you do to become good? »

« I loved Him. »

The boy becomes pensive again and then looking at the Twelve asks Jesus: « Are these ones all good? »

« Of course they are. »

« Are you sure? I sometimes behave as a good boy, but that is when... I am thinking of some big mischief. »

They all burst into laughter. Also the little fellow, who is in a confessing humour, laughs. Also Jesus laughs pressing him to His heart and kissing him.

The boy, who is now friendly with everybody, wants to play and says: « I will now tell You who is good » and he begins his selection. He looks at them all and goes straight to John and Andrew who are nearby and says: « You and you. Come here. » He then chooses the two Jameses and places them with the other two. He then takes Thaddeus. He is quite pensive in front of the Zealot and Bartholomew and says: « You are old, but good » and he joins them to the others. He examines Peter, who undergoes the examination, jokingly frowning at him, and finds him to be good. Also Matthew and Philip pass the examination. He says to Thomas: « You laugh too much. I am in earnest. Don't you know that my teacher says that he who always laughs, fails in the test? » After all, also Thomas passes his examination, but with low marks. The boy then goes back to Jesus.

« Hey, you urchin! I am here, too! I am not a tree. I am young and handsome. Why don't you examine me? » says the Iscariot.

« Because I don't like you. My mother says that when you don't like something, you must not touch it. You just leave it on the table, so that other people, who may like it, can take it. And she also says that if you are offered something which you do not like, You must not say: "I do not like it". But you say: "Thank you, but I am not hungry". And I do not hunger for you. »

« Why not? Look, if you say that I am good, I will give you this coin. »

« What am I going to do with it? What can I buy with a lie? Mummy says that the money which is the fruit of deceit, becomes straw. Once at my grandmother's, I got them to give me a didrachma by telling a lie because I wanted to buy some honey-cakes, and during the night it turned into straw. I put it in that hole over there, under the door, to take it the following morning, but I found a handful of straw in its place. »

« But how can you see that I am not good? What is wrong with me? Am I lame? Am I ugly looking? »

« No. But you frighten me. »

« Why? » asks the Iscariot going near him.

« I don't know. Leave me alone. Don't touch me or I will scratch you. »

« What a hedgehog! You are silly. » Judas gives a forced laugh.

« I am not silly. You are bad » and the boy takes shelter in the lap of Jesus, Who caresses him without speaking.

The apostles make fun of the situation which is not very pleasant to the Iscariot.

In the meantime the woman comes back with half a dozen people, and behind them, many more. They must be about fifty. All poor people.

« Would You speak to them? At least a few words. This is my husband's mother, these are my children. And that man over there is my husband. A word, Lord » implores the woman.

« Yes, I will speak. To thank you for your hospitality. »

The woman goes back into the house, where her suckling claims her and she sits on the threshold breastfeeding her baby.

« Listen. Here on My knees I have a little boy who has spoken very wisely. He said: "Everything that is obtained by deceit, becomes straw". His mother taught him that truth.

It is not a tale. It is an eternal truth. What is done dishonestly, is never successful. Because falsehood in words, deeds, and in religion is always a sign of alliance with Satan, the master of falsehood. Do not believe that the deeds worthy of achieving the Kingdom of Heaven are very noisy or showy. They are common, continuous deeds, but performed with a supernatural purpose of love. Love is the seed of the plant that sprouts in you and grows up as far as Heaven, and in its shade all the other virtues sprout. I will compare it to the tiny mustard seed. How small it is! It is one of the smallest seeds that man sows. But look how big and leafy it becomes when it has grown up and how much fruit it bears. Not one hundred per cent, but one hundred to one. The smallest. But the most diligent in working. How much profit it gives you.

Love is the same. If you enclose in your hearts a tiny seed of love

for your Most Holy God and for your neighbour, and if you accomplish your deeds guided by love, you will not fail in any of the precepts of the Decalogue. You will not lie to God by means of a false religion of practices but not of the spirit. You will not lie to your neighbour, behaving as ungrateful children, as adulterers, as too exacting husbands and wives, as thieves in business, as liars in life, as violent avengers towards your enemies. Look how many birds have taken shelter, in this warm hour of the day, among the branches of the trees in the garden. Before long, that mustard plant, which now is still very small, will be a real perch for birds. All the birds will come to the safe shade of those thick and comfortable trees and their little ones will learn to fly safely among those branches which are like steps and a net, which they can climb without falling. Such is love, the foundation of the Kingdom of God.

Love and you will be loved. Love and you will bear with one another. Love and you will not be cruel by wanting more than what is lawful from those who are under you. Love and sincerity to obtain the peace and glory of Heaven. Otherwise, as Benjamin said, every action of yours accomplished lying to love and to truth will turn into straw for your beds in hell. I will not say anything else to you. I will only say: always bear in mind the great precept of love and be faithful to God the Truth, to the truth in every word, deed and sentiment, because the truth is the daughter of God. Let the work of bringing yourselves to perfection be continuous, as the seed continuously grows until it is perfect. A silent, humble, patient work. You may rest assured that God sees your struggles and He will grant you a greater reward for overcoming your selfishness, for holding back a rude word, for satisfying a necessity without being ordered to do so, than if, fighting in a battle, you killed the enemy. The Kingdom of Heaven, which you will possess if You live as just people, is built with the little things of every day. With goodness, moderation, patience, with being satisfied with what one has, bearing with one another, and with love, love, love.

Be good. Live in peace, one with the other. Do not grumble. Do not judge. God will then be with you. I give you My peace as a blessing and thanksgiving for the faith you have in Me. »

Then Jesus turns to the woman saying: « May God bless you especially, because you are a holy wife and a holy mother. Persevere in virtue. Goodbye, Benjamin. Love the truth and obey Your mother. My blessing to you, to your little brothers and to you, mother. »

A man comes forward. He is embarrassed and stammers: « But, but... I am moved by what You say of my wife... I did not know... »

« Have you no eyes or intelligence? »

« Yes, I have. »

« Why do you not make use of them? Shall I clear them? »

« You have already done that, my Lord. But I love her, You know... The trouble is... that, that... one gets used... and... and... »

« And one thinks that it is quite all right to exact too much, because the other one is more gentle than we are... Do not do that any more. You are always in danger with your work. Be not afraid of storms if God is with you. But if there is Injustice in you, be much afraid. Have you understood? »

« More than You have said. I will do my best to obey You... I did not know... » and he looks at his wife as if he saw her for the first time.

Jesus blesses and goes out on to the little road. He resumes walking towards the country.

185. The Calming of the Storm.

30th January 1944.

[...] Now that everybody is asleep I am telling you my joy. I « saw » today's Gospel. Mind you, this morning when I read it, I said to myself: « This is an episode of the Gospel which I will never see, because it is not very suitable for a vision. » Instead, when I was not thinking about it, it came to fill me with joy. This is what I saw.

A sailing boat, not excessively large, nor very small, a fishing boat, on which five or six people can move comfortably, is ploughing the water of the beautiful deep blue lake of Gennesaret.

Jesus is sleeping in the stern. He is dressed in white as usual. He is resting His head on His left arm and under His arm and head He has placed His blue-grey mantle, which has been folded many times. He is sitting, not lying, on the bottom of the boat and His head is resting on the board that is at the very end of the stern. I do not know how sailors call it. He is sleeping peacefully. He is tired and calm.

Peter is at the rudder. Andrew is busy with the sails, John and two more people - I do not know who they are - are sorting out the ropes and nets in the bottom of the boat, as if they were preparing to catch during the night. I would say that the day is drawing to its end because the sun is already setting in the west. All the disciples have pulled their tunics up, gathering them round their waists by means of belts, in order to be free in their movements, passing from one part of the boat to another, stepping over oars, seats, baskets and nets, without being hindered by their clothes. None of them is wearing a mantle.

I see that the sky is clouding over and the sun is hiding behind huge storm clouds, which have suddenly appeared from behind the

top of a hill. The wind blows them fast towards the lake. The wind, for the time being, is high up, and the lake is still quiet, it is only becoming darker and its surface is no longer perfectly smooth. There are no waves as yet, but the water is beginning to ruffle.

Peter and Andrew watch the sky and the lake and are preparing to draw close to the shore. But the wind suddenly rages over the lake that in a few minutes surges foaming. The swelling waves clash one against the other, they strike the little boat, lifting it up, lowering it down, tossing it in all directions, thus preventing all manoeuvres of the rudder as the wind prevents manoeuvring the sail, which has to be lowered.

Jesus is sleeping. Neither the steps and excited voices of the disciples, nor the howling wind, nor the waves pounding on the sides of the boat and its prow, awake Him. His hair is blowing in the wind and drops of water reach Him. But He is sleeping. John runs from stem to stern and covers Him with his mantle, which he has taken from under a board. He covers Him with delicate love.

The storm rages more and more furiously. The lake is as black as if ink had been poured into it and is streaked by the foam of the waves. The boat lets in water and is driven farther and farther to the open sea by the wind. The disciples are perspiring in their efforts to manoeuvre the boat and baling out the water which the waves pour in. But to no avail. They are paddling in the water that reaches up to their knees and the boat is becoming heavier and heavier.

Peter loses his calm and patience. He hands the rudder over to his brother, staggers towards Jesus and shakes Him vigorously.

Jesus wakes up and raises His head.

« Save us, Master, we are going down! » Peter shouts to Him (he must shout to make himself heard).

Jesus stares at His disciple, looks at the others and then at the lake. « Do you believe that I can save you? »

« Quick, Master » shouts Peter, while a real mountain of water moves fast from the centre of the lake towards the poor little boat. It is so high and dreadful that it looks like a water spout. The disciples who see it coming kneel down and hang on to whatever they can, certain that it is the end.

Jesus gets up. He stands on the stem board: a white figure against the livid storm. He stretches His arms out towards the billow and says to the wind: « Stop and be quiet » and to the water: « Calm down. I want it. » And the billow dissolves into foam, which falls harmlessly with a last roar, which fades into a whisper, while the wind dies down changing into a whistle and then a sigh. And the sky becomes clear once again over the appeased lake, while hope and faith fill the hearts of the disciples.

I cannot describe Jesus' majesty. One must see it to understand

it. And I enjoy it inwardly because it is still present in my mind and I think of how placid was Jesus' sleep and how imperious was His command to the winds and the waves.

Jesus then says:

«I will not expound the Gospel in the same sense as everybody else does. I will elucidate the circumstances preceding the Gospel passage.

Why was I sleeping? Did I perhaps not know that there was going to be a storm? Yes, I knew. Only I knew. Why was I sleeping, then?

The apostles were men, Mary. They were full of good will, but still very much "men". Man thinks he is always capable of everything. When he is really capable of doing something he is full of haughtiness and attachment to his "ability". Peter, Andrew, James and John were good fishermen and consequently they thought they were unexcelled in handling a boat. As far as they were concerned I was a great "Rabbi", but a mere nothing as a sailor. Thus they thought I was unable to help them, and when on the boat to cross the Sea of Galilee, they begged Me to sit down because I was not capable of doing anything else. Also their love for Me was behind their attitude, as they did not want Me to do any material work. But their attachment to their own ability was greater than their love.

I do not impose Myself, Mary, except in exceptional cases. I generally leave you free and wait. On that day, tired as I was and being requested to rest, that is to let them act, clever as they were, I went to sleep. In My sleep there was mingled also the ascertainment of how man is "man" and wants to do things by himself without feeling that God asks but to help him. I saw in those "spiritual deaf men", in those "spiritual blind men", all the spiritual deaf and blind people, who throughout centuries would ruin themselves, because "they wanted to do by themselves", although I was bent over their needs awaiting to be asked to help them.

When Peter shouted: "Save us!", My bitterness dropped like a stone. I am not "man", I am the God-Man. I do not behave as you do. When someone rejects your advice or your help, and you see him in trouble, even if you are not so bad as to rejoice at it, you are uncharitable enough to look at him disdainfully and indifferently, without being moved by his shouts for help. Your attitude means: "When I wanted to help you, you did not want me? Well, help yourself now". But I am Jesus. I am the Saviour. And I save, Mary. I always save as soon as I am asked to.

The poor men might object: "In that case, why do You allow single or collective storms to break out?". If by My power I should

destroy Evil, you would consider yourselves the authors of Good, which in actual fact is a gift of Mine, and you would not remember Me any longer. You would never remember Me. My poor children, you are in need of sorrow to remember that you have a Father. As the prodigal son remembered he had a father when he was hungry.

Misfortunes persuade you of your nothingness, of your ignorance, which is the cause of so many errors, of your wickedness, the cause of so much mourning and grief, of your faults, the cause of the punishments which you inflict upon yourselves, as well as of My existence, of My power and of My goodness.

That is what today's Gospel teaches you. "Your" Gospel of the present time, my poor children. Call Me. Jesus does not sleep except when He is in anguish because He sees that He is not loved by you. Call Me and I will come. »

186. The Demoniacs of Gadara.

11th June 1945.

The vision « The calming of the storm » which you saw on 30th January 1944, is to be put here. Then the following vision.

Jesus, after crossing the lake from northwest to southeast, asks Peter to land near Hippos. Peter obeys without discussing and takes the boat down to the mouth of a little river, which is in flood because of the springtime rains and of the recent storm and flows into the lake through one of the wild rocky gorges common to this coastal area. The assistants - there is one in each boat - fasten the boats and are ordered to wait until evening to go back to Capernaum.

« And be as dumb as an ox » suggests Peter. « If they ask you where the Master is, reply without hesitation: "I don't know". And if anyone wants to know where He is going to, give the same reply. In any case it is the truth, for you don't know. »

They part and Jesus begins to ascend a steep path which climbs the almost upright cliff. The apostles follow Him along a very hard path up to the summit of the cliff which levels over to a tableland strewn with oak-trees under which there are many pigs pasturing.

« Stinking animals! » exclaims Bartholomew. « They prevent us from passing... »

« No, they do not. There is room for everybody » replies Jesus calmly.

In any case the swineherds, when they see the Israelites, endeavour to gather the pigs under the oak-trees, leaving the path free. And the apostles pass by, making endless grimaces, among the filth left by the grouting animals, which fat as they are, seem anxious to become even fatter.

Jesus passes without any fuss, saying to the swineherds: « May

God reward you for your kindness. »

The swineherds, poor people not much cleaner than their pigs but infinitely thinner, look at Him amazed and then whisper to one another. One of them says: « Is He perhaps not an Israelite? » And the others reply to him: « Don't you see that His tunic is fringed? »

The group of the apostles gather together, now that they can proceed in one group along a fairly wide path.

The view is beautiful. Only a few score of feet above the lake, it commands a view over the whole lake with the towns spread along its shores. Tiberias is splendid with its beautiful buildings on the opposite shore facing the apostles. Below this spot, at the foot of the basaltic cliff, the short beach looks like a green pillow, whereas on the opposite shore, from Tiberias to the mouth of the Jordan, there is a rather widespread marshy plain due to the river having difficulty in resuming its course after delaying in the placid lake. But the plain looks like a garden, because it is so thick with marsh flora, and is densely populated with colourful variegated water fowl, which seem bedecked with jewels. The birds rise from the thick grass and from the reed-thickets, they fly over the lake, they dive into it to steal a fish from its water, and they rise even more brilliant, because the water has brightened up their plumage, and then they fly back to the plain where the wind plays swaying its many-coloured flowers.

Up here, instead, there are woods of very tall oak-trees, under which the grass is soft and emerald-green, and beyond this strip of woods, on the other side of a large valley, the mountain climbs again, forming a very steep rocky summit, on which houses rise, built on terraces. I think that the mountain side and the walls of the houses are all one, for its caves are used as dwellings, in a mixture of a troglodyte and ordinary village. It is a village characteristic of structures on large rising terraces, so that the roof of the house on the terrace below is at the height of the ground entrance of the terrace above it. On the sides where the mountain is very steep, so steep that no house can be built there, there are caves, deep crevices and descents dropping down to the valley. In the season of downpours the descents must become as many whimsical little torrents. All kinds of blocks, which the floods have rolled down to the valley, form a chaotic pedestal for the little mountain which is so wild and steep, hunchbacked and overbearing that it looks like a squire who wants to be respected at all costs.

« Is that not Gamala? » asks the Zealot.

« Yes, it is Gamala. Do you know the town? » says Jesus.

« I was a fugitive there, one night, a long time ago. Then I was affected by leprosy and I did not come out of the sepulchres any more. »

« Did they pursue you so far? »

« I was coming from Syria, where I had gone seeking protection. But they discovered me and only my flight to this place saved me from being captured. Afterwards slowly and continuously threatened I went down as far as the desert of Tekoa and from there, suffering already from leprosy, to the Valley of the Dead. Leprosy saved me from my enemies... »

« These people are heathens, are they not? » asks the Iscariot.

« Almost everybody. Only a few Jews are here on business, and then there is a mixture of beliefs, or no beliefs at all. But they did not treat the fugitive badly. »

« These are places for bandits. What gorges! » exclaim many.

« Yes, but believe me, there are more bandits on the other side » says John who is still impressed by the capture of the Baptist.

« On the other side there are bandits also among those who enjoy the reputation of being just » concludes his brother.

Jesus begins to speak: « And yet we go near them without feeling disgusted. Whereas here you were making grimaces because you had to pass near some animals. »

« They are unclean... »

« A sinner is much more so. These animals are made like that, and it is not their fault if they are like that. Man instead is responsible for being unclean because of his sins. »

« Why, then, are they classified as unclean for us? » asks Philip.

« I have mentioned that once. In this commandment there is a supernatural reason and a natural one. The former reason is to teach the chosen people to live bearing in mind its election and the dignity of man, also in a common action like eating. A savage feeds on everything. It is enough for him to fill his stomach. A pagan, even if he is not a savage, also eats everything, without considering that overeating foments vices and inclinations which degrade man. Nay, pagans endeavour to arrive at this frenzy for pleasure, which is almost a religion for them. The more learned amongst you are aware of obscene celebrations in honour of their gods, which degenerate into lecherous orgies. A son of the people of God must be able to control himself, perfecting himself through obedience and prudence, bearing in mind his origin and his end: God and Heaven. The natural reason is not to stimulate the blood by means of food that causes a heat unbecoming of man, who is not forbidden also carnal love, but must always moderate it with the freshness of his soul tending to Heaven. Man must therefore make sure that the sentiment that joins him to his wife, in whom he must see a fellow creature like himself, not a female, is love, not sensuality. But the poor animals are neither guilty of being pigs nor of the effects that the flesh of pigs may cause in man's blood in the long run. And the swineherds are much less guilty. If they are

honest, what difference will there be, in the next life, between them and the scribe who is bent over his books but does not learn to be good? I solemnly tell you that we shall see swineherds among the just and scribes among the unjust. But what is ruining? »

They all move away from the side of the mountain because stones and earth are rolling down and bouncing on the slope and they all look around amazed.

« There, there! Over there! Two men completely naked... are coming towards us gesticulating. Mad... »

« Or demoniacs » replies Jesus to the Iscariot, who was the first to see the two demoniacs come towards Jesus.

They must have come out of some cave on the mountain side. They are howling. And one, who is running faster, rushes towards Jesus. He is running so fast and moving his arms up and down so much as if they were wings, that he looks like a strange ugly big bird stripped of its feathers. He collapses at Jesus' feet shouting: « You are here, Master of the world? What have I got to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Has the hour of our punishment already come? Why have You come to torture us before the time? » The other demoniac, both because his tongue is tied and because he is possessed by a demon who causes him to be dullwitted, does nothing but throw himself on the ground, face down, and weep. He then sits up, remains inert, playing with little stones and his bare feet. The demon continues to speak through the lips of the other man who writhes on the ground in a paroxysm of terror. I would say that he wants to react, whereas he can but worship, attracted and rejected at the same time by Jesus' power. He howls: « I entreat You in the name of God, stop tormenting me. Let me go. »

« Yes. But out of this man. Unclean spirit, go out of them and tell Me your name. »

« Legion is my name because we are many. We have possessed these men for years and through them we break bonds and chains, and there is no strength of man capable of holding them. They are a terror, because of us, and we make use of them to have You cursed. We revenge ourselves on them for Your anathema. We degrade man below a beast to mock at You and there is no wolf, jackal, hyaena, vulture or vampire like these which we possess. But don't cast us out. Hell is too horrid!... »

« Go out! In the name of Jesus, go out! » Jesus' voice thunders and His eyes fire splendour.

« At least let us go into the herd of pigs You met. »

« Go. »

With a beastly howl the demons part from the two wretched men and in a sudden whirlwind, which causes the oak-trees to sway like reeds, they run into the large herd of pigs that with real demoniac cries begin to run, as possessed beings, through the oak-trees,

pushing, wounding, biting one another and hurl themselves into the lake, when, after reaching the edge of the cliff, they have but the water below as a shelter. The swineherds are overwhelmed and dumbfounded and while they shout seized by fear, hundreds of animals fall headlong into the calm water in a succession of splashes, causing the water to surge and foam; they sink, refloat, showing in turn their round bellies or their pointed snouts with terrified eyes, and in the end get drowned. The swineherds run towards the town howling.

The apostles go towards the place of the disaster and come back saying: « Not one of them is saved! He has done them a bad turn. »

Jesus replies calmly: « It is better if two thousand pigs perish than one man. Give them some clothes. They cannot stay like that. »

The Zealot opens his bag and gives one of his tunics. Thomas gives another one. The two men are still somewhat stunned as if they were just awaking from a sound sleep full of nightmares.

« Give them some food. Let them go back to the normal life of men. »

Jesus watches them, while they eat the bread and olives given to them and they drink out of Peter's flask.

At last they speak: « Who are You? » asks one.

« Jesus of Nazareth. »

« We don't know You » says the other.

« Your souls know Me. Get up now and go home. »

« We have suffered very much, I think, but I cannot remember very well. Who is this man? » asks the one who spoke on behalf of the demon, and he points at his companion. « I do not know. He was with you. »

« Who are you? Why are you here? » he asks his companion.

The one who was dumb, and is still more inert, says: « I am Demetrius. Is this Sidon? »

« Sidon is on the sea, man. Here you are beyond the lake of Galilee. »

« Why am I here? »

Nobody can reply. Some people are arriving followed by the swineherds. They look frightened and curious. When they see the two men dressed and tidy, their astonishment increases.

« That is Mark of Josiah!... And that is the son of the heathen merchant!... »

« And He is the one who cured them and caused our pigs to perish, because they became mad when the demons entered them » say the swineherds.

« Lord, You are powerful, we admit it. But You have already caused us too much harm! A damage of many talents. Go away, please, lest Your power should bring the mountain down and hurl

it into the lake. Go away... »

« I will go. I do not impose Myself on anybody » and Jesus, without further discussion goes back the way He came.

The demoniac who spoke follows Him, behind the apostles. Farther back, at some distance, there are many citizens watching whether He is really leaving.

They go down the steep path back to the mouth of the little torrent, near the boats. The citizens remain on the terrace watching. The demoniac who has been cured goes down behind Jesus.

In the boats the assistants are terrified. They saw the pigs raining into the lake and are still contemplating their bodies which surface more and more numerous, more and more swollen, with their round bellies in the air and their stiff short legs like four pegs stuck into a huge fat bladder. « What happened? » they ask.

« We will tell you later. Loosen the boats and let us go... Where, my Lord? »

« To the gulf of Tarichea. »

The man who has followed them, now that he sees them getting into the boats, implores: « Take me with You, Lord. »

« No. Go home: your relatives are entitled to have you. Speak to them of the great things the Lord has done to you and tell them how He had mercy on you. This area is in need of faith. Light the flames of faith out of gratitude to the Lord. Go. Goodbye. »

« Comfort me at least with Your blessing, that the demon may not possess me again. »

« Be not afraid. If you do not want, he will not come. But I bless you. Go in peace. »

The boats depart from the shore westwards. Only then, when the boats are ploughing through the waters strewn with the swine victims, the inhabitants of the town, which did not want the Lord, withdraw from the terrace and go away.

187. Towards Jerusalem for the Second Passover. From Tarichea to Mount Tabor.

12th June 1945.

Jesus dismisses the boats saying: « I am not coming back » and followed by His apostles, and across the area, which appeared to be very fertile also from the opposite shore, He turns His steps towards a mountain, which appears towards the south-west.

The apostles are walking in silence, communicating with one another only by casting glances. In fact they are not enthusiastic for the journey across this beautiful but wild area, which is full of bog grass that gets entangled with their feet; of reeds that cause a drizzle of dew to fall on their heads from the edges of the leaves; of hazels that strike their faces with the hard canes of their dry

fruit; Of willow trees the fragile branches of which hang down everywhere tickling them; of treacherous patches of grass that seems to be growing on solid ground, whereas it conceals puddles of water into which their feet sink, they are in fact patches of foxtails and tares, growing in tiny pools and so thick as to conceal the element in which they have come up.

Jesus, instead, seems to be extremely happy in the midst of all that green and the thousand hues of all the flowers, which creep on the ground, or stand upright, or cling to other plants to climb up, forming thin festoons strewn with light convolvuli of a very delicate mallow pink, or forming delicate blue carpets for the thousand corollas of water myosotises, which open the perfect cups of white, pink, blue corollas among the large flat leaves of the water lilies. Jesus admires the tufts of the water reeds, as soft as silk and pearly with dew, and He bends joyfully to watch the delicate features of foxtails, which lay an emerald veil on the water. He stops ecstatically in front of the nests which the birds are building, flying happily to and fro, trilling, darting from branch to branch, working happily, with their beaks full of wisps of hay, of down of reeds, of flocks of wool picked on hedges, which had torn it from migrating sheep... He seems the happiest person in the world. Where is the world with its wickedness, falsehood, sorrows, snares? The world is beyond this green flowery oasis, where everything scents, shines, smiles, sings. This is the earth created by the Father and not desecrated by man and man can be forgotten here.

He wants to share His happiness with the others. But He does not find a favourable ground. The hearts of the apostles are tired and embittered by so much ill-will and they react against things and also against the Master by means of a stubborn silence, which is like the stillness of the air before a storm. Only His cousin James, the Zealot and John take an interest in what interests Jesus. All the others are... absent, if not hostile. Perhaps they are keeping quiet, not to grumble. But inwardly they must be speaking, and speaking too much.

It is a more lively exclamation of admiration before the living jewel of a kingfisher which flies down, taking a little silver fish to its mate, that makes them open their mouths.

Jesus says: « Can there be anything more gentle? »

Peter replies: « Perhaps not more gentle... but I can assure You that a boat is more comfortable. Here it is damp just the same, but we are not comfortable... »

« I would prefer the track for caravans to this... garden, if You wish to call it so, and I am in full agreement with Simon » says the Iscariot.

« It was you who did not want the caravan route » replies Jesus.

« Ehi! certainly... But I would not have given in to the Gherghesenes. I would have gone away from there, but I would have continued beyond the river to Gadara, Pella and down to the south » grumbles Bartholomew.

And his great friend Philip concludes: « The roads belong to everybody, after all, and we could have passed through them as well. »

« My friends! I am so anguished and disgusted... Do not increase My grief with your pettiness! Let Me seek some comfort in things which do not know how to hate... »

The reproach, kind in its sadness, moves the apostles.

« You are right, Master. We are not worthy of You. Forgive our foolishness. You can see the beautiful, because You are holy and You look with the eyes of Your heart. We are coarse flesh and can only perceive coarse flesh... But never mind. Believe me, even if we were in paradise, we would be sad without You. But with You... oh! it is always beautiful for our hearts. It is only our limbs that refuse » many of them whisper.

« We will soon be going out of here and will find a more comfortable ground, even if not so cool » promises Jesus.

« Where are we going exactly? » asks Peter.

« To give Passover to those who suffer. I have been wanting to do it for a long time. But I could not. I would have done it going back to Galilee. Now that they compel us to go along roads that we have not chosen, I am going to bless Jonah's poor friends. »

« We will be wasting a lot of time! Passover is near! There are always delays for various reasons. » Another chorus of complaints rises to the sky. I do not know how Jesus can be so patient...

Without reproaching anyone, He says: « Please, do not hinder Me! Endeavour to understand My need to love and to be loved. I have but this solace on the earth: to love and do the will of God. »

« And are we going from here? Was it not better to go from Nazareth? »

« If I had suggested that, you would have rebelled. No one will suspect that I am here... and I am doing it for you... because you are afraid. »

« Afraid? Ah! No! We are ready to fight for You. »

« Pray the Lord not to put you to the test. I know that you are quarrelsome, resentful, anxious to offend those who offend Me and to humble your neighbour. I know all that. But I do not know you to be brave. As far as I am concerned, I would have gone also by Myself and along the main road and nothing would have happened because it is not yet the time. But I feel sorry for you. But I have to obey My Mother, yes, also that and I do not want to upset Simon the Pharisee. I will not disgust them. But they will disgust Me. »

« And where do we go from here? I am not familiar with this area » says Thomas.

« We will reach Tabor, we will coast part of it and will go to Nain via Endor; from there to the plain of Esdraelon. Be not afraid!... Doras, the son of Doras, and Johanan are already in Jerusalem. »

« Oh! It will be beautiful! They say that from the summit, from a certain spot, one can see the Great Sea, the Sea of Rome. I like it so much! Will You take us to see it? » John begs with his kind childish face raised towards Jesus.

« Why do you like to see it so much? » asks Jesus caressing him.

« I do not know... Because it is huge and you cannot see its end... It makes me think of God... When we were up on Lebanon I saw the sea for the first time, because I had never been anywhere else, except along the Jordan or on our little sea... and I was moved so much that I wept. So much blue! So much water! And it never overflows!... What a wonderful thing! And the stars make paths of light on the sea... Oh! do not laugh at me! I looked at the golden way of the sun until I was dazzled, at the silvery way of the moon, until I could see nothing but whiteness and I saw them getting lost far far away. Those ways spoke to me. They said: "God is in that infinite distance and these are the ways of fire and purity, which a soul must follow to go to God. Come. Dive into the infinite, travelling on these two ways, and you will find the Infinite One". »

« You are a poet, John » says Thaddeus admiringly.

« I do not know whether this is poetry. I know that it inflames my heart. »

« But you have seen the sea also at Caesarea and at Ptolomais, and quite close, too. We were on the beach! I do not see the need to go all that way to see some more sea water. After all... we were born on the water... » remarks James of Zebedee.

« And we are in it also now, unfortunately! » exclaims Peter, who diverting his mind for a moment to listen to John, has not noticed a treacherous puddle and has got soaked... They all laugh, and he laughs too.

But John replies: « That is true. But from high above it is more beautiful. You see more and farther. You think that it is deeper and vaster... You wish... you dream... » and John is already dreaming... He looks in front of himself and smiles at his dream... He looks like a flesh-coloured rose spread with minute dew drops, so downy becomes his smooth clear skin of a young fair-haired man and as it gets sprinkled with a light perspiration it looks more like the petal of a rose.

« What do you wish? What are you dreaming? » Jesus asks His favourite disciple in a low voice and He looks like a father who questions a dear son speaking in his sleep. Jesus speaks to John's soul, questioning him so gently as not to spoil the dream of His loving

disciple.

« I wish to go on to the infinite sea... towards other lands beyond it. I wish to go and speak of You. I am dreaming... of going towards Rome, towards Greece, towards dark places to take the Light there... so that those living in darkness may get in touch with You and may live in communion with You, Light of the world... I am dreaming of a better world... to be bettered through the knowledge of You, that is, through the knowledge of the Love that makes people good, pure, heroic, of the Love that makes the world love and raise Your Name, Your Faith, Your Doctrine above hatred, sin, flesh, above the vices of the mind, above gold, above everything... and I dream of going with my brothers on the sea of God, on the road of light to take You... as Your Mother once brought You down to us from Heaven... I dream that I am a child, who knowing nothing but love, is happy also when facing trouble... and sings to comfort the adults who ponder too much, and moves forward... facing death smiling... towards glory with the humility of one who does not know what he is doing, but knows only that he is coming to You, Love... »

The apostles have not breathed during John's ecstatic confession... They remained still where they were, looking at the youngest one speaking with his eyes covered by his eyelids, like a veil thrown over the ardour rising from his heart, and looking at Jesus Who is enraptured finding Himself so completely in His disciple...

When John stops speaking, slightly bent forward - he reminds me of the gracefulness of the Virgin Mary at the Annunciation in Nazareth - Jesus kisses his forehead saying: « We shall go and contemplate the sea, to let you dream once again My future Kingdom in the world. »

« Lord... You said that afterwards we shall be going to Endor. Make me happy too... that I may get over the bitterness of that boy's judgement... » says the Iscariot.

« Oh! are you still thinking about that? » asks Jesus.

« Yes, always. I feel degraded in Your eyes and in the eyes of my companions. I think of what Your thoughts... »

« Why do you fret over trifles? I was not thinking of that trifle any longer, neither were the others. You are reminding us... You are a child accustomed only to being caressed and the word of a little boy seems the sentence of a judge to you. But you must not be afraid of that word, but of your actions and of God's judgement. But to convince you that you are as dear to Me as previously, as always, I tell you that I will satisfy you. What do you wish to see at Endor? It is a poor village among the rocks... »

« Take me there... and I will tell You. »

« All right. But mind it does not cause you to suffer afterwards... »

« If it cannot be painful for him to contemplate the sea, it cannot be harmful to me to see Endor. »

« To see?... But it is the desire of what one seeks to see in looking that can be harmful. But we shall go... »

And they resume the road towards Mount Tabor, the huge mass of which appears to be nearer and nearer, while the marshy aspect of the ground changes, as the soil becomes solid and dry and the vegetation thinner, making room for taller plants and bushes of clematis and blackberries, the new leaves and early flowers of which are a pleasant sight.

188. From Tabor to Endor in the Cave of the Necromancer. Encounter with Felix Who Becomes John.

13th June 1945.

Jesus and the apostles have passed Mount Tabor and left it behind them. They are now walking on a plain lying between that mountain and another one facing it, talking of the climb made by them all, although at the beginning the elder ones had not been too keen. But now they are happy they had gone up to the top. The journey is now easy because they are on a main road which is quite comfortable for walking. It is early in the morning because I am under the impression that they have spent the night on the slopes of the Tabor.

« That is Endor » says Jesus pointing to a poor village built on the first heights of the other mountain. « Do you really want to go there? »

« If You wish to make me happy... » responds the Iscariot.

« Let us go, then. »

« But is it a long way? » asks Bartholomew, who, because of his age, is not very keen on walking tours.

« Oh! no! But if you wish to stay... » says Jesus.

« Yes! You may stay. I will go with the Master » says Judas of Kerioth immediately.

« Listen, before making up my mind, I would like to know what there is to be seen... From the top of Mount Tabor we saw the sea and after the boy's speech I must admit that I saw it properly for the first time and I saw it as You see: with my heart. Here... I would like to know whether there is anything to learn, because in that case I will come even if it is tiresome... » says Peter.

« Do you hear that? You have not yet said what you intend doing. Be kind to your companions and tell us now » says Jesus invitingly.

« Did Saul not go to Endor to consult the necromancer? »

« Yes, he did. So? »

« Well, Master, I would like to go there and hear You speak of

Saul. »

« In that case I will come, too! » exclaims Peter full of enthusiasm.

« Let us go then. »

They walk fast along the last stretch of the main road, which they leave to follow a secondary road, which takes straight to Endor.

It is a poor village, as Jesus said. The houses cling to the slopes which, beyond the village become steeper. Poor people live in them. Most of them must be shepherds who pasture their flocks on the sides of the mountain and in the woods of old oak-trees. There are a few small fields of barley, or similar fodder grains, in favourable sites and some apple and fig-trees. There are only a few vines around the houses, decorating the walls, which are dark because the place is obviously a damp one.

« We will now ask where the place of the necromancer was » says Jesus. And He stops a woman who is coming back from the fountain with pitchers.

She looks at Him curiously, then replies impolitely: « I don't know. I have much more important things to worry about than such nonsense! » and she goes away.

Jesus turns to an old man who is carving a bit of wood.

« The necromancer?... Saul?... Who bothers about them now? But, wait... There is one here who has studied and perhaps he knows... Come with me. »

And the old man climbs laboriously up a stony lane to a very poor and shabby looking house. « He lives here. I will go in and call him. »

Peter, pointing at some poultry scratching about in a dirty yard, says: « This fellow is not an Israelite. » But he says no more because the old man comes back followed by a man blind in one eye who is as dirty and untidy as everything round his house.

The old man says: « See? This man says that it is over there beyond that dilapidated house. There is a path, a stream, a wood and some caves, the one at the top, where there are still traces of ruined walls on one side, is the one you are looking for. Is that right? »

« No. You have muddled everything. I will go with these strangers. » The man's voice is harsh and guttural, which increases everybody's feeling of uneasiness.

He starts walking. Peter, Philip and Thomas make repeated signs to Jesus to advise Him not to go. But Jesus does not pay attention. He walks with Judas behind the man, and the others follow Him... unwillingly.

« Are You an Israelite? » asks the man.

« Yes, I am. »

« I, too, or almost, although I do not look like one. But I lived a

long time abroad and I got into many habits, of which these fools here disapprove. I am better than the others. But they say that I am a demon, because I read a great deal, I breed poultry which I sell to the Romans and I can cure people by means of herbs. When young, because of a woman, I quarrelled with a Roman - I was at Cintium then - and I stabbed him. He died, I lost one eye and all my wealth and I was sentenced to life imprisonment. But I knew how to cure people, and I cured the daughter of one of the guards. I thus won his friendship and some freedom... I used it to escape. I acted badly, because the man certainly paid for my flight with his life. But freedom seems so beautiful when one is a prisoner... »

« Is it not really beautiful afterwards? »

« No. Jail, where one is alone, is better than being in contact with men who do not allow you to be alone and come around us to hate us... »

« Did you study philosophy? »

« I was a teacher at Cintium... I was a proselyte... »

« And now? »

« Now I am nothing. I live according to the reality of facts. And I hate, as I was and am still hated. »

« Who hates you? »

« Everybody. And God is the first. She was my wife... and God allowed her to be unfaithful to me and ruin me. I was free and respected, and God allowed me to become a convict serving a life sentence. God abandoned me, men were unfair. Both He and they destroyed me. There is nothing left here... » and he strikes his forehead and his chest. « Rather, here, in my head, there are my thoughts, my knowledge. It is in here that there is nothing » and he spits contemptuously.

« You are wrong. You have still two things there. »

« Which? »

« Remembrance and hatred. Remove them. Become really empty... and I will give you something new to put in there. »

« What? »

« Love. »

« Ah! Ah! You make me laugh. I have not laughed for thirty-five years, man. Since I had the proof that the woman was unfaithful to me with the Roman wine merchant. Love! Love to me! It is like me throwing jewels to my chickens! They would die of indigestion, unless they passed them out with their excrement. The same would happen to me. Your love would be a burden to me, if I could not digest it... »

« No, man! Do not say that! » Jesus lays His hand on the man's shoulder, He is deeply and openly distressed.

The man looks at Him with his only eye and what he sees on that most sweet and beautiful face causes him to be struck dumb and to

change his expression. From being sarcastic he becomes very serious and then really sad. He lowers his head and with a changed voice he asks: « Who are You? »

« Jesus of Nazareth. The Messiah. »

« You!!! »

« I. Did you not know about Me, since you read so much? »

« I knew... But I did not know that You were alive and... above all, I did not know this. I did not know that You are good to everybody... thus... also to murderers... Forgive me for what I said... about God and love... Now I understand why You want to give me love... Because without love the world is hell, and You, the Messiah want to make a paradise of it. »

« A paradise in every heart. Give Me the remembrance and the hatred that make you ill and let Me put love into your heart! »

« Oh! I wish I had known You before!... then... But when I killed, You were certainly not born yet... But later... when I was free, as free as a snake in a forest, I lived to poison people with my hatred. »

« But you did also some good. Did you not say that you cured people by means of herbs? »

« Yes. To be tolerated. But how many times I had to struggle against my desire to poison people by means of potions!... See? I took refuge here because... it is a place where the world is ignored and which the world ignores. A cursed place. In other places I hated and was hated and I was afraid of being recognised... But I am wicked. »

« You regret having harmed the prison- guard. Do you not see that there is still some goodness in you? You are not wicked... Your only trouble is that you have a large open wound, which nobody is curing... Your goodness runs out of it as blood from a wound. But if someone would cure your wound and heal it, My dear brother, goodness would increase in you, because it would no longer vanish as it forms... »

The man weeps with bent head trying to conceal his tears. Only Jesus Who is walking beside him notices them. He notices but does not say anything further.

They arrive at a cavern made of rubble and mountain caves. The man endeavours to steady his voice and says: « Here it is. You may go in. »

« Thank you, My friend. Be good. »

The man does not say anything and remains where he was, while Jesus with His apostles, passing over large stones which must have been part of very strong walls, upsetting green lizards and other ugly looking insects, enters a large smoky grotto, on the walls of which there are still graffiti signs of the zodiac and similar things. In a corner blackened by smoke there is a niche and under

it a hole which looks like a gully-hole for water. Bats hanging in disgusting bunches decorate the ceiling and an owl, upset by the light of a branch which James has lit to ensure they do not tread on scorpions or asps, complains flapping its wadded wings and closing its ugly eyes which cannot bear the light. It is perched in the niche, and the foul smell of dead mice, of weasels and birds in decomposition at its feet is mixed with the stench of dung and of the damp soil.

« It is really a lovely place! » says Peter. « Your Tabor and your sea were much better, my boy! » And then addressing Jesus: « Master, satisfy Judas at once because this is not... Antipa's royal hall! »

« Certainly. What is it that you want to know? » He asks Judas of Kerioth.

« Well... I would like to know whether and why Saul sinned coming here... I would like to know whether it is possible for a woman to evoke the dead. I would like to know whether... Oh! It is better if You speak. I will ask You questions. »

« It's a long story. At least let us go out there, in the sunshine, on the stones... We will get away from the dampness and the stench » begs Peter.

And Jesus agrees. They sit as best they can on the ruins of the walls.

« Saul's sin was only one of his sins. It was preceded and followed by many more. All of them grave. Double ingratitude towards Samuel who had anointed him king and who subsequently disappeared so as not to share with the king the admiration of the people. He was several times ungrateful to David who saved him from Goliath and spared him in the caves at Engedi and Hachilah. He was guilty of many acts of disobedience and of scandalising his people. He was guilty of grieving his benefactor Samuel by lacking in charity. He was guilty of jealousy, of making attempt on David's life, David being another benefactor of his, and finally, of the crime he committed here. »

« Against whom? He did not kill anyone here. »

« He killed his soul in here, he finished killing it. Why are you lowering your head? »

« I am thinking, Master. »

« You are thinking. I can see that. What are you thinking of? Why did you want to come? You must admit it was not out of mere curiosity of a scholar. »

« We always hear someone talk of magicians, necromancers, evoked spirits... I wanted to see whether I could discover anything... I would like to know how it is done... I think that since we are destined to amaze people in order to attract them, we should be, somehow, necromancers, too. You are You and You do things by means of Your power. But we must ask for power, for

help in order to perform exceptional deeds, which are necessary... »

« Are you mad? What are you saying? » shout many.

« Be quiet. Let him speak. He is not mad. »

« Yes, I thought that by coming here a little of the magic of gone by days would assume possession of me and make me greater. In Your interest, believe me. »

« I know that your present desire is a sincere one. But I will reply to you with eternal words, because they are words of the Bible and the Bible will exist as long as man exists. Believed or mocked at, employed to defend the truth or scorned at, it will always exist. It is written: "And Eve, seeing that the fruit of the tree was good to eat and pleasing to the eye, took it and ate it and gave some to her husband... Then their eyes were opened and they realised that they were naked and they made themselves loin-cloths... And God said: 'How did you realise that you were naked? Only because you ate of the forbidden fruit'. And He expelled them from the garden of delights". And in the book of Saul, it is written: "Samuel appearing said: 'Why have you disturbed me, conjuring me up? Why do you consult me when the Lord has abandoned you? The Lord will deal with you as I told you... because you did not obey the voice of the Lord' ". Son, do not stretch your hand towards the forbidden fruit. It is imprudent even to go near it. Do not be curious to know ultramundane things, lest its satanic poison should conquer you. Avoid the occult and what cannot be explained. One thing only is to be accepted with holy faith: God. But avoid what is not God and what cannot be explained by man's reason or cannot be done by man's power, so that the sources of wickedness may not be opened for you and you may realise that you are "naked". Naked: repellent in your humanity mixed with satanism. Why do you wish to amaze people by means of obscure prodigies? Amaze them through your holiness, which should be as bright as things coming from God. Do not be anxious to rend the veils which separate the living from the dead. Do not disturb the deceased. Listen to them, if they are wise, while they are on the earth, venerate them by obeying them also after their death. But do not upset their second life. Who does not obey the voice of the Lord, loses the Lord. And the Lord has forbidden occultism, necromancy, satanism in all its forms. What more do you wish to know than the Word already tells you? What more do you wish to perform than your goodness and My power enable you to perform? Do not crave for sin, but for holiness, son. Do not feel mortified. I am glad that you disclose your humanity. Many people, too many, like what you like. But the purpose of your desire: "to be powerful to attract people to Me" removes a heavy weight from that humanity and puts wings on it. But they are the wings of a night bird. No, My dear Judas. Put wings as bright as the sun, wings of

an angel on your spirit. By the simple breeze caused by flapping them you will attract hearts and will lead them in your wake to God. Can we go? »

« Yes, Master! I was wrong... »

« No. You have been an inquirer... The world will always be full of them. Come. Let us get away from the stench of this place. Let us go towards the sun! In a few days it will be Passover, and afterwards we will go to your mother's. I conjure her up for you: your honest home, your holy mother. How peaceful it is! »

As usual, the recollection of his mother and the Master's praise for her, cheer Judas.

They come out of the ruins and they begin to descend the path they had walked up previously. The man blind in one eye is still there.

« Are you still here? » asks Jesus pretending that He does not notice that his face is flushed because of the many tears he has shed.

« Yes, I am still here. I will follow You if You allow me. I have something to tell you... »

« Come with Me, then. What do you want to tell Me? »

« Jesus... I find that to have the strength to speak and to work the holy magic of changing myself, of conjuring up my dead soul as the necromancer evoked Samuel for Saul, I must pronounce Your Name, which is as sweet as Your eyes, and as holy as Your voice. You have given me a new life, but it lacks form and energy, like the life of a new-born baby after a difficult birth. It still struggles in the grip of wicked old habits. Help me to come out of my death. »

« Yes, My friend. »

« I... I have realised that there is still a little humanity in my heart. I am not entirely a beast, and I can still love and be loved, forgive and be forgiven. Your love, which is forgiveness, has taught me. Is it not so? »

« Yes, My friend. »

« Then... take me with You. I was Felix! What an irony! But give me a new name. That my past may be really dead. I will follow You like a stray dog, which finally finds a master. I will be Your slave, if You wish so. But do not leave me alone... »

« Yes, My friend. »

« What name will You give me? »

« A name dear to Me: John. Because you are grace granted by God. »

« Will You take me with You? »

« Yes, for the time being. Later you will follow Me with My disciples. But what about your house? »

« I have no house any longer. I will leave what I have to the poor.

Just give me love and bread. »

« Come. » Jesus turns round and calls His apostles. « I thank you, My friends, and you in particular, Judas. Through you, Judas, through you all, a soul is coming to God. Here is a new disciple. He is coming with us until we can entrust him to our brother disciples. Be happy because you have found a heart and bless God with Me. »

But the Twelve do not really look very happy. But out of obedience and kindness they welcome him.

« If You do not mind I will go ahead. You will find me at the door of my house. »

« Yes, go. »

The man runs away. He seems another man.

« And now that we are by ourselves I order you, and this is an order, to be kind to him and not to mention his past to anybody. I will immediately reject anyone who should speak or be uncharitable to our redeemed brother. Is that clear? And see how good the Lord is! We came here for a human purpose and He allows us to go away after achieving a supernatural deed. Oh! I rejoice because of the joy now in Heaven for the new convert. »

They reach the house. The man is there, on the threshold, wearing a clean dark tunic and a mantle to match it, a pair of new sandals and carrying a large haversack over his shoulder. He closes the door and then, what is strange in a man who might be considered hard-hearted, he takes a white hen, perhaps his pet, which squats tamely in his hands, he kisses it weeping and lays it down.

« Let us go... and forgive me. But my chicken always loved me... I used to speak to them and... they understood me... »

« I understand you, too... and I love you. So much. I will give you all the love that the world denied you in thirty-five years... »

« Oh! I know! I can feel it! That is why I am coming. But be indulgent to a man who... loves an animal which has been more faithful to him than men... »

« Yes... Forget your past. You will have so much to do! And, experienced as you are, you will do it very well. Simon, come here and you, too, Matthew. See? This man was more than a prisoner, he was a leper. And this one... a sinner. And they are very dear to Me, because they know how to understand poor hearts... Is that right? »

« Thanks to Your goodness, my Lord. But you may rest assured, my friend, that everything is cancelled by serving Him. Only peace remains » says the Zealot.

« Yes. Peace and a new youth take over from old vices and hatred. I was a tax collector. Now I am an apostle. The world is in front of us. And we know all about it. We are not absent-minded children who pass near the harmful fruit and the bending plant and do not see facts. We know. We can avoid evil and teach other people how to avoid it. And we can straighten up those who bend.

Because we know what a relief it is to be supported. And we know Who supports: Him » says Matthew.

« That's true! Quite true! You will help me. Thank you. I feel as if I were passing from a dark foul smelling place to the open in a flowery meadow... I felt something similar when I came out, at long last free, after twenty years of imprisonment and brutal work in the mines in Anatolia and I found myself - I escaped one stormy evening - on the top of a wild mountain, but in the open, in a place full of sunshine at dawn, and covered with scented woods... Freedom! But now it is better! Everything is more sublime! I had not been in chains for fifteen years. But hatred, fear and solitude were still like chains to me... But now they have been shaken off!... Here we are at the house of the old man who brought You to me. Ehi! Man! »

The old man rushes towards them and is dumbfounded seeing the fellow blind in one eye clean, wearing new clothes and smiling.

« Here, take this. It's the key of my house. I am going away, for good. I am grateful to you because you are my benefactor. You have given me a family. Do what you like with my property... and look after my chicken. Treat them well. A Roman comes every Sabbath and buys eggs... You will make a profit... Take care of my little hens... and may God reward you for it. »

The old man is astonished... He takes the key and stands openmouthed.

Jesus says: « Yes, do as he told you and I will be grateful to you, too. I bless you in the name of Jesus. »

« The Nazarene! You! Mercy! I have spoken to the Lord! Women! Men! The Messiah is here! »

He screams like an eagle and people rush from everywhere.

« Bless us! Bless us! » they shout. Some shout: « Stay here! » and others: « Where are You going? At least tell us where You are going. »

« To Nain. I cannot stay. »

« We will follow You. Do You mind? »

« Come. Peace and blessing to those who remain here. »

They go towards the main road and take it.

The man, who is walking near Jesus and can hardly carry his haversack, draws Peter's curiosity. « What have you got in there that is so heavy? » he asks.

« My clothes... and some books... My friends after and at the same time as the chicken. I could not part with them. But they are heavy. »

« Eh! Science is heavy! Of course! And who likes it, eh? »

« They prevented me from becoming mad. »

« Eh! You must be fond of them! What books are they? »

« Philosophy, history, Greek and Roman poetry... »

« Lovely, certainly lovely. But... do you think you will be able to carry them with you »

« Perhaps I will be able to part with them. But you cannot do everything at once, can you, Messiah? »

« Call Me Master. No, you cannot. But I will let you have a place where you will be able to keep your friends, your books. They may help you to discuss of God with the heathens. »

« Oh! How free Your thought is from all restrictions! »

Jesus smiles and Peter exclaims: « No wonder! He is Wisdom! »

« And Goodness, believe me. And are you learned? »

« Me? Oh! Most learned. I can tell an allice from a carp and my erudition ends there. I am a fisherman, my friend! » and Peter smiles humbly and frankly.

« You are an honest man. It is a science you learn by yourself. And a very difficult one to learn. I like you. »

« And I like you, too. Because you are sincere. Also when you accuse yourself. I forgive everything, I help everybody. But I am a ruthless enemy of false people. They make me sick. »

« You are right. A false man is a delinquent. »

« A delinquent. You are right. Say, would you mind giving me your sack for a little while? In any case, you may be sure that I will not run away with books... I think you are finding it difficult... »

« Twenty years in a mine breaks your back... But why do you want to toil? »

« Because the Master has taught us to love one another like brothers. Give them to me. And take my rags. My bag is not heavy... There is no history, no poetry in it. My history, my poetry and the other thing you mentioned, is He, my Jesus, our Jesus. »

189. The Son of the Widow of Nain.

14th June 1945.

Nain must have been a town of some importance in the days of Jesus. It is not a large town, but is well built, surrounded by its walls, lying on a low pleasant hill, an offshoot of the Little Hermon, commanding a very fertile plain which stretches towards the north-east.

One arrives here coming from Endor, after crossing a little river, which flows into the Jordan. But neither the Jordan nor its valley can be seen any longer, because they are concealed by hills which form an arch shaped like a question mark in the east.

Jesus follows a main road which links the lake region to the Hermon and its villages. Many inhabitants of Endor walk behind Him talking to one another animatedly.

Only a short distance separates the group of the apostles from the walls: about two hundred yards, at most. And as the main road

runs straight to one of the town gates, which is wide open because it is broad daylight, it is possible to see what is happening in the inner side of the walls. Thus Jesus, Who is speaking to the apostles and the new convert, sees a funeral coming towards them, with a great noise of weepers and similar eastern displays.

« Shall we go and see, Master? » ask many. And many of the inhabitants of Endor are already rushing to see.

« Yes, let us go » says Jesus condescendingly.

« Oh! It must be a boy. See how many flowers and ribbons there are on the bier » says Judas of Kerioth to John.

« Or it is probably a virgin. » replies John.

« No, it is certainly a young man, because of the shades they have used. And there is no myrtle either... » says Bartholomew.

The funeral comes out to the other side of the walls. It is not possible to see what there is on the bier, which is carried shoulder high by the bearers. One understands that there is a corpse, enveloped in bandages and covered by a sheet, only because of its outline and that it is the body of a fully grown person, because it is as long as the bier.

A veiled woman is walking beside it, weeping, supported by relatives or friends. The only sincere tears in all that farce of mourners. And when a bearer trips on a stone or rise in the ground or stumbles and causes the bier to shake, the mother moans: « Oh! no! Be careful! My boy has suffered so much! » and she raises her trembling hand to caress the edge of the bier. And as she is unable to do anything else, she kisses the veils and the ribbons, which blown by a gentle breeze lightly touch the immobile corpse.

Peter, sympathetic, his good keen eyes welling up with tears whispers: « She is the mother. » But he is not the only one whose eyes are shining with tears at the sight. Also the Zealot, Andrew, John, and even the ever merry Thomas have tears in their eyes. They are all deeply moved. Judas Iscariot whispers: « If it were I! Oh! Poor mother of mine... »

Jesus, the kindness of Whose eyes is so deep as to be unbearable, directs His steps towards the bier.

The mother, who is now sobbing louder because the funeral is about to turn towards the open sepulchre, pushes Him aside resolutely, when she sees that Jesus wants to touch the bier. I wonder what she is afraid of in her grief. She shouts: « He is mine! » and looks at Jesus with staring eyes.

« I know, mother. He is yours. »

« He is my only son! Why should he die, he was so good and dear, he was my joy, and I am a widow. Why? » The crowd of the hired mourners mourn more loudly, forming a chorus with the mother who continues: « Why he, and not I? It is not just that she who has borne a child, should see her offspring perish. The offspring must

live, otherwise why was my womb torn to give birth to a man?» and she strikes her abdomen wildly and desperately.

« Do not do that! Do not weep, mother. » Jesus takes her hands clenching them firmly in His left hand, while with His right one He touches the bier saying to the bearers: « Stop and put the bier down. »

The bearers obey and lower the little bed which rests on its four legs.

Jesus takes the sheet covering the dead boy and pulls it back uncovering the corpse.

The mother shouts her grief and the name of her son, I think: « Daniel! »

Jesus, still clenching the mother's hands in His, stands up, His eyes imposingly bright, the power of miracle shining majestically on His face, lowering His right hand, orders in the full strength of His voice: « Young man! I tell you: get up! »

The dead boy, enveloped in bandages as he is, sits up on the little bed and calls: « Mother! » He calls her with the stammering frightened voice of a terrified child.

« He is yours, woman. I give him to you in the name of God. Help him to get rid of the sudarium. And be happy. »

And Jesus makes the gesture of withdrawing. Impossible! The crowds rivet Him to the bier, on which the mother has thrown herself groping for the bandages, endeavouring to be quick, while the imploring childish moaning repeats: « Mother! Mother! »

The sudarium and bandages are undone and mother and son can embrace each other, and they do so without bothering about the sticky balms, which the mother removes from his dear face and hands, making use of the same bandages. As she has no clothes to put on him, she takes off her mantle and envelops him in it, caressing him all the time...

Jesus looks at her... he looks at the loving group, close together on the edge of the little bed, no longer a bier, and He weeps.

Judas Iscariot sees His tears and asks: « Why are You weeping, my Lord? »

Jesus turns His face towards him and says: « I am thinking of My Mother... »

The brief conversation draws the woman's attention to her Benefactor. She takes her son by the hand, she supports him because his limbs are still somewhat numb, and kneeling down she says: « You, too, my son. Bless this Holy man Who has restored you to life and to your mother » and she bends to kiss Jesus' tunic while the crowd sing hosannas to God and to His Messiah, Who by now is well known for what He is, because the apostles and the people of Endor have taken upon themselves to tell Who He is Who worked the miracle.

And the crowds exclaim: « Blessed be the God of Israel. Blessed be the Messiah, His Messenger! Blessed be Jesus, Son of David! A great Prophet is risen among us! God has really visited His people! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! »

At last Jesus can steal away and enter the town. The crowd follow and pursue Him, exulting in their love.

A man rushes towards Jesus and bows deeply to Him. « Please come and stay under my roof. »

« I cannot. Passover prevents Me from making any stop except those programmed. »

« In a few hours it will be sunset and this is Friday... »

« Exactly, that is why I must reach My halting place before sunset. I thank you just the same. But do not keep Me back. »

« I am the head of the synagogue. »

« So you mean that you are entitled to have Me. Man, if I had arrived here only one hour later, that woman would not have had her son restored to her. I am going where other unhappy people are waiting for Me. Do not be so selfish as to delay their joy. I will certainly come again and I will be with you in Nain for several days. Now let Me go. »

The man does not insist any more. He only says: « As You said. I will wait for You. »

« Yes. Peace to you and to the citizens of Nain. Also to you, people of Endor, peace and blessings. Go back to your homes. God has spoken to you through the miracle. Endeavour, through the power of love, to have all your hearts restored to Goodness. »

A last chorus of hosannas. Then the crowds let Jesus go and He crosses the town diagonally and goes out into the country, towards Esdraelon.

190. From Nain to Esdraelon. Jesus Stays at Micah's.

15th June 1945.

The sun is setting in a red sky when Jesus comes in view of Johanan's fields.

« Let us quicken our pace, My friends, before the sun sets. And you, Peter, go with your brother to inform our friends, Doras' men. »

« I will go indeed, also to see whether the son has really gone away. » Peter stresses the word « son ». And he goes away.

In the meantime Jesus proceeds at a slower pace, looking around to see whether any of Johanan's men are about. But He can only see the fertile fields, in which the ears of grain are already well formed.

At last, a face, wet with perspiration, appears among the vineleaves and an exclamation is heard: « Oh! Blessed Lord! » and the

peasant runs out of the vineyard and prostrates himself at Jesus' feet.

« Peace to you, Isaiah! »

« Oh! You remember also my name? »

« It is written in My heart. Stand up. Where are your companions? »

« Over there. In the apple-orchards. But I will tell them at once. You will be our guest, will You not? The master is not here and we can welcome You. In any case... what with the fear, what with the joy... it is better. Just imagine, he gave us a lamb this year and will allow us to go to the Temple! He has given us only six days... but we will run all the way... We will be in Jerusalem, too... Imagine!... And thanks to You. » The man is in his seventh heaven of delight because he has been treated as a man and as an Israelite.

« I have done nothing, as far as I know... » says Jesus smiling.

« Eh! no! You have done a great deal. Doras, and the fields of Doras, and these ones here, which are instead so beautiful this year... Johanan was informed of your visit, and he is not a fool. He is afraid and... and he is afraid. »

« Of what? »

« He is afraid that what happened to Doras may happen to him. Both with regard to his life and to his property. Have You seen Doras' fields? »

« I have come from Nain... »

« In that case You have not seen them. They are a complete ruin. (The man whispers that in a low but clear voice, like someone imparting a secret concerning something dreadful.) They are all ruined! There is no hay, no fodder, no fruit. Vines and orchards withered... Dead... everything is dead... like Sodom and Gomorrah... Come, I will show You. »

« It is not necessary. I am going to see those peasants... »

« But they are no longer here! Did You not know? Doras, the son of Doras, has scattered them or dismissed them, and the ones he sent to the other country places which belong to him, must not speak of You, or they will be lashed... Not to speak of You! That will be difficult! Also Johanan said so to us. »

« What did he say? »

« He said: "I am not so foolish as Doras and I will not say to you: 'I do not want you to speak of the Nazarene'. It would be useless, because you would do it just the same and I do not want to lose you by lashing you to death like untameable animals. On the contrary I say to you: 'Be good as the Nazarene certainly teaches you and tell Him that I treat you well'. I do not want to be cursed, too". Of course, he can see what these fields are like after You blessed them, and what the ones You cursed are like. Oh! Here are the ones who ploughed the field for me... » and the man runs to meet Peter and Andrew.

But Peter greets him briefly and proceeds on his way and begins to shout: « Oh! Master! There is no one left! They are all new faces. And everything is laid waste! He could very well do without any peasants here. It is worse than the Salt Sea!... »

« I know. Isaiah told Me. »

« But come and see! What a sight... »

Jesus pleases him after saying to Isaiah: « I will stay with you. Tell your companions. But do not go to any trouble. I have enough food. All we need is a barn to sleep in and your love. I will come back soon. »

The sight of Doras' fields is really distressing. Fields and meadows are dry and barren, vineyards are withered, the foliage and fruit of trees are completely destroyed by millions of insects of all kinds. Also the garden-orchard near the house looks like a desolate dying wood. The peasants wander to and fro uprooting weeds, crushing caterpillars, snails, earth-worms and the like, shaking branches under which they place basins full of water to drown little butterflies, aphides and other parasites which cover the leaves and eat away the plant until it dies. They endeavour to find a sign of life in the vine-shoots, which break like dry wood as soon as they are touched and some times fall off the main branch, as if the roots had been cut by a saw. The contrast with Johanan's fields, vineyards and orchards is most striking and the ruin of the cursed fields seems more impressive when compared to the fruitfulness of the others.

« The hand of the God of Sinai is a heavy one » whispers Simon the Zealot.

Jesus makes a gesture as if to say: « How right you are! » but He does not say anything. He only asks: « How did it happen? »

A peasant replies between his teeth: « Moles, locusts, worms... but go away! The steward is faithful to Doras... Don't cause us trouble... »

Jesus sighs and goes away.

Another peasant, who is bent under an apple-tree earthing it up, in the hope he may save it, says: « We will reach You tomorrow... when the steward goes to Jezreel for the prayer... we will come to Micah's house. »

Jesus makes the gesture of blessing and goes away.

When He goes back to the cross-road, all the peasants of Johanan are there and joyful and happy they surround their Messiah and take Him to their poor dwellings.

« Did You see, over there? »

« Yes, I did. Doras' peasants are coming tomorrow. »

« Of course, when the hyenas go to pray... We do that every Sabbath... and we speak of You, we tell what we heard from Jonah, from Isaac, who often comes to see us, and what we learned from

You in Tishri. We speak as best we can. Because it is impossible not to speak of You. And the more we suffer, the more we are forbidden, the more we speak of You. Those poor people... they drink the essence of life every Sabbath... But how many there are in this plain who are in need of knowing, of knowing You at least, and yet they cannot come here... »

« I will see to them as well. And may you be blessed for what you do. »

The sun is setting while Jesus enters a kitchen blackened by smoke. The Sabbath rest begins.

191. The Sabbath at Esdraelon. Little Jabez. The Parable of Rich Dives.

16th June 1945.

« Give Micah enough money so that tomorrow he may pay for what he borrowed today from the peasants of this area » says Jesus to the Iscariot, who usually handles the... common possessions. Then Jesus calls Andrew and John and sends them to two spots from which it is possible to see the road or the roads coming from Jezreel. He calls also Peter and Simon and sends them to meet the men of Doras with instructions to stop them at the boundary between the two estates. He then says to James and Judas: « Take the foodstuffs and come with Me. »

The peasants of Johanan, women, men and children follow them. The men are carrying two small amphoras, which, however, are not very small, and which must be full of wine. They are jars rather than amphoras and contain about ten litres each. (Please do not take my estimate as an article of faith). They go towards a thick vineyard, which is already all covered with new leaves, at the end of Johanan's property. Beyond it there is a large ditch which is kept full of water with, I wonder, how much work.

« See? Johanan quarrelled with Doras over this ditch. Johanan said: "It is your father's fault if everything is ruined. If he did not want to adore Him, he should have been afraid of Him instead of provoking Him". And Doras shouted like a demon: "It was this ditch that saved you. The insects did not cross it... And Johanan replied: "Why is all your property ruined, then, when previously your fields were the nicest ones in Esdraelon? It's God's punishment, believe me. You went beyond the limit. This water?... It has been here all the time and that is not what saved me". And Doras shouted again: "Which proves that Jesus is a demon". "He is a just man" Johanan shouted back. And they continued for some time, while they had breath. Later Johanan spent a lot of money to divert the torrent, to find other underground water sources, and to dig more ditches on the boundary line between him and his

relative, and he made them deeper and told us what we told You yesterday... After all, he is happy that it happened. He was so envious of Doras... He now hopes that he will be able to buy everything, because Doras will end up by selling everything at a very low price. »

Jesus benignly listens to all the confidential information, while waiting for Doras' poor peasants, who arrive without any delay and prostrate themselves on the ground as soon as they see Jesus in the shade of a tree.

« Peace to you, My friends. Come here. The synagogue is here today and I am your head of it. But first I wish to be the father of your family. Sit around Me, that I may give you some food. The Groom is with you today, and we will have a wedding banquet. »

And Jesus uncovers a basket, from which He takes some loaves of bread handing them to the amazed peasants of Doras. From another basket He takes the foodstuffs He has been able to find: cheese, cooked vegetables, and a little kid or lamb, cooked whole, which He divides among the unhappy men. He then pours out some wine and hands round a coarse chalice so that everybody may drink.

« Why all this? And what about them? » ask Doras' men pointing to Johanan's men.

« They have already had their share. »

« All this expense! How could You do that? »

« There are still some good people in Israe » replies Jesus smiling.

« But this is Sabbath... »

« Thank this man » says Jesus pointing at the man from Endor. « He got the lamb. It was easy to get the rest. »

The poor men devoured - it is the right word - the food, the like of which they had not tasted for a long time.

One of them, a rather elderly man, is pressing to his side a boy about ten years old; he eats and weeps.

« What is the matter, father?... » asks Jesus.

« It's because Your goodness is too great... »

The man from Endor says in his guttural voice: « That is true... and it makes you weep. But the tears are not bitter ones... »

« They are not bitter. That's true. And then... There is something I would like. My tears express also a desire. »

« What do you want, father? »

« See this child. He is my grandson. He was left to me after the landslide of last winter. Doras does not even know that he has come to me, because I have to let him live like a wild animal in the wood and I see him only on the Sabbath. If he finds out he will either drive him away or compel him to work... and this tender offspring of mine will be treated worse than a pack-animal. At Passover I am sending him to Jerusalem with Micah, to become a

son of the Law... and after?... He is my daughter's son... »

« Would you give him to Me, instead? Do not weep. I have many friends who are honest, holy and without any children. They will bring him up in a holy manner, in My Way... »

« Oh! Lord! That is what I have been wishing for since I heard of You. And I prayed that holy man Jonah to save my grandchild from this death, because he knows what it means to belong to this master... »

« Child, would you come with Me? »

« Yes, my Lord. And I will cause You no grief. »

« That is settled. »

« But... to whom do You wish to give him? » asks Peter pulling Jesus by the sleeve. « Also this one to Lazarus? »

« No, Simon. But there are so many without any children... »

« And I am one of them... » Peter's desire seems to make his face grow thinner.

« Simon. I have already told you. You are to be the "father" of all the children I will bequeath to you. But you are not to be bound by any child of your own. Do not be upset. You are too indispensable to your Master, Who cannot detach you from Himself because of an affection. I am exacting, Simon. I am more exacting than a very jealous husband. I love you most partially and I want you to be entirely Mine. »

« All right, my Lord... all right... Let it be done as You wish. » Poor Peter is really heroic in adhering to Jesus' will.

« He will be the son of My dawning Church. All right? He will belong to everybody and to nobody. He will be "our" child. He will follow us when distances will allow him to, or he will come to us and the shepherds will be his guardians, as in every child they love "their" Child Jesus. Come here, My child, what is your name? »

« Jabez of John and I am from Judah » says the boy without hesitating.

« Yes. We are Judaeans » confirms the old man. « I used to work in Doras' lands in Judaea, and my daughter got married to a man from that area. He worked in the woods near Arimathea and last winter... »

« I saw the disaster. »

« The boy was spared because that night he was far away with a relative... In actual fact the boy was appropriately named Jabez. I said to my daughter at once: "Why? Do you not remember the ancient tradition?". But her husband insisted in giving him that name, so he is Jabez (1). »

« "The child will call on the Lord and the Lord will bless him and

(1) Jabez was not considered a lucky name. See Chronicles I, 4, 9-10.

will extend his lands, and the hand of the Lord will be with him and will keep harm away from him". That is what the Lord will grant him to comfort you, father, and the souls of the dead, and to console the orphan.

And now that we have separated the needs of the body from those of the soul, by an act of love for the boy, listen to the parable that I have thought out for you.

There was once a very rich man. He wore the most beautiful garments, and in his purple and byssus clothes he used to strut about in squares and at home, respected by his citizens as the most powerful man in the country, and by his friends, who gratified his pride to gain benefits thereby. They feasted every day in his halls, where the multitude of his guests, all rich and none therefore needy, crowded flattering Dives. His banquets were famous for the copiousness of food and of choice wines.

In the same town there lived a beggar, a great beggar. He was great in his misery as the other was great in his wealth. But under the crust of the human misery of Lazarus, the beggar, there was hidden a treasure, which was even greater than Lazarus' misery and Dives' wealth. And it was Lazarus' true holiness. He had never infringed the Law, not even when urged by need, and above all he had complied with the precept of love for God and for his neighbour. He, as is wont with poor people, used to go near the doors of rich people to ask for alms, so that he would not starve to death. And every evening he would go to Dives' house, hoping to receive at least the crumbs of the pompous banquets which took place in the magnificent halls. He would lie in the street, near the door, and wait patiently.

But if Dives noticed him, he would have him driven away because that underfed body, covered with sores and ragged clothes, was too sad a sight for his guests. That is what Dives used to say. In actual fact, it was because the sight of so much misery and goodness was a continuous reproach to him. His well fed dogs, adorned with precious collars, were more pitiful than he was and they used to go near poor Lazarus and lick his sores, showing their great joy at being caressed by him. They even took the remnants of the bountiful tables to him, so that Lazarus survived malnutrition thanks to animals. If he had relied on man he would have died, because man did not even allow him to enter the halls, after the banquet, to pick up the crumbs which had fallen from the tables.

One day Lazarus died. No one on earth noticed it, no one mourned him. Nay, Dives rejoiced not seeing on that day or afterwards that misery which he called a "disgrace" near his door. But the angels noticed it in Heaven. And when he was about to breathe his last in his cold barren cave, the celestial cohorts were present and in a bright dazzling light they picked up his soul and singing hosannas

they took it to the bosom of Abraham.

Some time went by and Dives died. Oh! What a grand funeral! The whole town, already aware of his agony, crowded in the square, where his abode was, some to be noticed as friends of the great man, some out of curiosity, some to gain favour with the heirs, and they all joined in the mourning, and their cries rose to the sky and with their cries also the false praises of the "great, just benefactor" who had died.

Can the word of man change God's judgement? Can human apology cancel what is written in the book of Life? No, it cannot. What has been judged is judged and what has been written is written. And notwithstanding the grand funeral, the soul of Dives was buried in hell.

Then, in that horrible jail, eating and drinking fire and darkness, finding hatred and torture everywhere and in every moment of eternity, he raised his eyes to heaven. He raised his eyes to heaven which he saw in the brightness of lightning, in the fraction of a second, and the indescribable beauty of heaven remained present in his mind and tormented him in the midst of atrocious tortures. And he saw Abraham up there. Far, but bright, happy... and in his lap, bright and happy there was also Lazarus, poor Lazarus, once miserable, despised, revolting... and now? He was handsome in the light of God and of his holiness, full of God's love, admired not by men but by the angels of God.

Dives weeping cried: "Father Abraham, have mercy on me! Send Lazarus, as I cannot possibly hope that you will do it yourself, send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and touch my tongue with it, to cool it, for I am in agony in these flames which pierce me continuously and bum me!".

Abraham replied: "Remember, son, that you had all good things during your life, whereas Lazarus had all bad things. But he turned evil into good, whereas you did nothing but evil of all the good things. It is therefore just that now he should be comforted here and that you should suffer. In any case it is not possible to do it. Holy people are spread over the earth so that men may take advantage of them. But if notwithstanding all the opportunities, a man remains what he was - in your case: a demon - it is useless to make recourse to saints. We are now separated. Herbs are mixed when they are in the field. But when they are cut, the good ones are separated from the evil ones. That is what happens to you and to us. We were together on the earth and you rejected and tortured us in every possible way, you forgot us, acting against the law of charity. We are now divided. There is an abyss between you and us, and those who wish to cross it and come to you, cannot do it, neither can you, where you are, cross the dreadful abyss and come to us".

Dives, crying more loudly shouted: "Holy father, at least please send Lazarus to my father's house. I have five brothers. I have never understood what love is, not even among relatives. But now I understand what a terrible thing it is not to be loved. And since where I am there is hatred, in the fraction of a second, when my soul saw God, I understood what Love is. I do not want my brothers to suffer the pains which I am suffering. I am terrified because they are leading the same life as I did. Oh! send Lazarus to tell them where I am, and why I am here, and let them know that hell does exist, and it is dreadful, and that those who do not love God and their neighbour come to hell. Send him! So that they may provide in good time, and may not come here, to this place of eternal torture".

But Abraham replied: "Your brothers have Moses and the Prophets. They should listen to them".

And with a deep groan of a tormented soul Dives replied: "Oh! Father Abraham! They will be more impressed by a dead person... Listen to me! Have mercy!".

But Abraham said: "If they have not listened to Moses and the Prophets, they will not believe either one who has risen from the dead for one hour to speak words of Truth to them. In any case it is not fair that a blessed soul should leave my bosom to go and be insulted by the sons of the Enemy. The time of insults is over for such souls. They are now in peace by the order of God Who sees that it is useless to endeavour to convert those who do not even believe in the word of God and do not practice it".

That is the parable and its meaning is so clear that no clarification is required.

My Jonah lived here and really achieved the holiness of Lazarus, whose glorious position near God is made clear by the protection He grants to those who hope in Him. Jonah can come to you, as a friend and protector, and he will come if you are always good.

I would like, and I tell you now what I told him last spring, I would like to be able to help you all, also materially, but I cannot, and I am sorry for that. I can but point Heaven to you. I can only teach you the great wisdom of resignation and promise the future Kingdom to you. Do not hate, never, for any reason whatsoever. Hatred is strong in the world. But it always has a limit. Love has no limit of power or time. Love therefore, to possess love, as a defense and comfort on the earth, and as a reward in Heaven. It is better to be Lazarus than Dives, believe Me. Believe it and you will be blessed.

In the desolation of these fields you cannot hear one word of hatred, even if facts could have justified it. Do not misunderstand the miracle. I am Love and I would not have struck. But seeing

that Love could not bend cruel Dives, I abandoned him to Justice which avenged the martyr Jonah and his brothers. This is what the miracle teaches you. That Justice is always vigilant, also when It seems to be absent and that since God is the Master of creation, in pursuance of Justice, He can make use also of the least beings, such as caterpillars and ants, to punish the hearts of cruel and greedy people letting them die choked by a regurgitation of their own poison.

I bless you, now. And I will pray for you at every dawn. And you, father, do not worry about the little lamb you are entrusting to Me. I will bring him back now and again, that you may rejoice seeing him grow in wisdom and goodness in the way of the Lord. He will be your lamb of this poor Passover of yours, the most pleasing of all the lambs offered at the altar of Jehovah. Jabez, say goodbye to the old father and then come to your Saviour, to your Good Shepherd. Peace be with you! »

« Oh! Master! Good Master! How painful it is to leave you! »

« Yes, it is painful. But it is better if the steward does not find you here. I came here deliberately, to avoid punishments for you. Please obey for the sake of the Love Who advises you. »

The unhappy men rise with tears in their eyes, and go back to their cross. Jesus blesses them once again and then, holding the boy by the hand and with the man from Endor on the other side, He goes back to Micah's house along the same way He came.

Andrew and John join Him and the disciples after their watch.

192. From Esdraelon to Engannim Stopping at Megiddo.

17th June 1945.

« Is that the top of Mount Carmel, my Lord? » asks His cousin James.

« Yes, it is, brother. That is the chain of the Carmel and the highest peak is the one that gives the name to the chain. »

« The world must be beautiful also from there. Have You ever been up there? »

« Yes, once, by Myself, at the beginning of My mission. And at the foot of it I cured the first leper. But we will go there together, to commemorate Elijah... »

« Thank You, Jesus. You have understood me as usual. »

« And as usual I perfect you, James. »

« Why? »

« The reason is written in Heaven. »

« Would You not tell me, brother, since You can read what is written in Heaven? »

Jesus and James are walking one beside the other and only little Jabez, who is held by the hand by Jesus, can hear the confidential

conversation of the two cousins who smile looking at each other's eyes.

Jesus embraces James' shoulders with His arm to draw him closer to Himself and asks: « Do you really want to know? Well, I will tell you by means of a riddle, and when you find the answer you will be wise. Listen: "After assembling the false prophets on Mount Carmel, Elijah stepped out in front of all the people: 'How long' he said 'do you mean to hobble first on one leg then on the other? If the Lord is God, follow Him; if Baal, follow him'. The people did not reply. Elijah then said to the people: 'I, I alone, am left as a prophet of the Lord' and the only strength of the lonely prophet was his cry: 'Answer me, Lord, answer me, so that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and are winning back their hearts'. Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the holocaust". Guess, My brother. »

James is pensive with his head lowered and Jesus looks at him smiling. They walk for a few yards thus, then James asks: « Is it in connection with Elijah or with my future? »

« With your future, of course... »

James becomes thoughtful again and then whispers: « Am I perhaps destined to invite Israel to follow a way with sincerity? Am I destined to be the only one left in Israel? If so, do You mean that all the others will be persecuted and scattered and that... I will pray You for the conversion of this people... as if I were a priest... as if I were... a victim... But if it is so, Jesus, inflame me as from now... »

« You already are inflamed. But you will be carried away by Fire, like Elijah. That is why you and I will go, all alone on Mount Carmel to speak... »

« When? After Passover? »

« Yes, after a Passover. And then I will tell you many things... »

A lovely little river which flows towards the sea and is in flood because of the springtime rains and the thawing snow, prevents them from proceeding.

Peter runs towards them and says: « The bridge is further up, where the road from Ptolomais to Engannim passes. »

Jesus goes back submissively and crosses the little river by a strong stone bridge. Immediately afterwards they meet some little mountains and hills, but they are of little importance.

« Will we be at Engannim by evening? » asks Philip.

« Certainly... But... we have the boy now. Are you tired, Jabez? » Jesus asks fondly. « Be as frank as an angel. »

« A little, Lord. But I will do my best to walk. »

« This boy is very weak » says the man from Endor in his guttural voice.

« No wonder! » exclaims Peter. Considering the life he has been

leading for months! « Come here, I will carry you in my arms. »

« Oh! No, sir. Don't tire yourself. I am still able to walk. »

« Come, come here. You are certainly not heavy. You look like an underfed little bird » and Peter puts him astride his square shoulders, holding him by the legs.

They walk fast because the sun is now strong and urges them to reach the shady hills.

They stop in a village, the name of which I hear is Mageddo, to take some food and rest near a very cool fountain, which is also noisy because of the abundance of water that gushes out into a dark stone basin. But no one in the village takes an interest in the travellers, anonymous among many other more or less rich pilgrims, who on foot or riding donkeys or mules are going towards Jerusalem for Passover. There is already a holiday atmosphere and there are many boys among the travellers, exhilarated at the idea of the ceremony for their coming of age.

Two boys, of well-to-do families, who have come to play near the fountain while Jabez is there with Peter - who takes the boy with him everywhere attracting him with a thousand little things - ask the boy: « Are you going, also, to become a son of the Law? »

Jabez replies shyly: « Yes » almost hiding himself behind Peter.

« Is this man your father? Are you poor? »

« Yes, I am poor. »

The two boys, probably the sons of Pharisees, look him over ironically and curiously and then say: « One can see it. »

It can be seen, indeed... His tunic is really shabby! Perhaps the boy has grown, and although the hem of the tunic has been let down, the garment, a brown faded by inclement weather, hardly reaches half way down his thin legs. His little feet are badly shod in two shapeless sandals held together by strings which must torture his feet.

The boys, with the ruthless selfishness typical of many children and with the cruelty of ill-mannered urchins, say: « Oh! In that case you will not have a new suit of clothes for your feast! We instead!... Is that right Joachim? Mine is all red with mantle to match. His, instead, is sky blue and we will have sandals with silver buckles, a precious belt and a talet held by a pale gold leaf and... »

«... and a heart of stone, I would say! » bursts out Peter, who has finished cooling his feet and drawing water to fill all the flasks. « You are bad boys. The ceremony and your clothes are not worth a fig if your hearts are not good. I prefer my boy. Go away, you proud urchins! Go amongst the rich but respect the poor and the honest. Come, Jabez! This water is good for your tired feet. Come here that I may wash them. You will walk better afterwards. Look how these strings have hurt you! You must not walk any more. I will carry you in my arms until we reach Engannim. I will find a

shoemaker there and I will buy you a new pair of sandals. » And Peter washes and dries the little feet which had not received so many caresses for a long time.

The boy looks at him, hesitates, then bends over the man who is tying his sandals and embraces him with his emaciated arms saying: « How good you are! » and kisses his grey hair.

Peter is moved. He sits on the damp ground, as he is, takes the boy in his lap and says to him: « Call me "father" then. »

They form a tender group. Jesus and the others approach them.

But before the two parties meet, the two proud little fellows already mentioned who had remained there inquisitively, ask: « But is he not your father? »

« He is father and mother to me » replies Jabez without hesitation.

« Yes, dear! You are right: father and mother. And, my dear little gentlemen, I can assure that he will be properly dressed for the ceremony. He, too, will have a dress fit for a king, as red as fire and a belt as green as grass, and his talet will be as white as snow. »

And although the match is not a very harmonising one, it shocks the two conceited boys and drives them away.

« What are you doing, Simon, sitting on the wet ground? » asks Jesus smiling.

« Wet? Ah! yes. I am just noticing it. What am I doing? I am becoming a lamb again having innocence on my heart. Ah! Master. Well, let us go. But you must leave this boy in my hands. Afterwards I will surrender him. But he is mine until he becomes a true Israelite. »

« All right! And you will be his guardian, like an old father. Is that all right? Let us go, so that we shall be at Engannim before evening, without making the boy run too much. »

« I will carry him. My fishing net is heavier. He cannot walk with these broken soles. Come here. » And with his godson astride his shoulders Peter takes happily to the road again. The road is now more shady, through woods of various kinds of trees, gently ascending hills, from which one's eyes rove over the fertile plain of Esdraelon.

They are already near Engannim - which must be a beautiful little town supplied with water brought from the hills by means of an elevated aqueduct, probably a Roman work - when the noise of an oncoming military squad makes them take refuge on the edge of the road. The hooves of the horses resound on the road, which here, near the town, shows signs of a paving that appears through the dust gathered on it with rubble. The road has obviously never been swept with a besom.

« Hail, Master! How do You happen to be here? » shouts Publius Quintilianus dismounting from his horse, and going towards Jesus

with a broad smile, holding the horse by the reins. His soldiers slow down to keep pace with their superior.

« I am going to Jerusalem for Passover. »

« I am going, too. We are reinforcing the guard for the festivity, also because Pontius Pilate is coming to town, too, and Claudia is there. We are her runners. The roads are so insecure! The eagles drive jackals away » says the soldier laughing and looks at Jesus. He then continues in a low voice: « Double watch this year, to protect the back of filthy Antipas. There is a lot of ill-feeling because of the capture of the Prophet. Ill-feeling in Israel... and consequently dissatisfaction among us. But... we have already ensured that the High Priest and his stooges have been... benignly lectured... » and he ends in a low voice: « Go without any fear. All the claws have been retracted into the paws. Oh! They are afraid of us. If we only clear our throats, they take it for a roar. Will you speak at Jerusalem? Come near the Praetorium. Claudia speaks of You as of a great philosopher. That is a good thing because Claudia is the proconsul. » He looks around and sees Peter flushed, perspiring with his load. « And that boy? »

« An orphan I brought with Me. »

« But that man of Yours is working too hard! Boy, are you afraid to come on the horse with me for a few yards? I will keep you under my chlamys and I will go slow. I will hand you back to him when we are at the gate. »

The boy does not object, he is as mild as a lamb, and Publius lifts him up on to the saddle.

And while he is ordering his soldiers to go slow he sees also the man from Endor. He stares at him and says: « What! You here? »

« I am here. I have stopped selling eggs to the Romans. But the chicken are still there. I am now with the Master... »

« Good for you! You will have greater comfort. Goodbye. Hail, Master. I will wait for You at that group of trees. » And he spurs his horse.

« Do you know him? And does he know you? » many ask John of Endor.

« Yes, as his supplier of chicken. He did not know me before, but once I was summoned to the headquarters at Nain to fix the prices, and he was there. Since then he always spoke to me when I went to Caesarea to buy books or tools. He calls me Cyclops or Diogenes. He is not a bad fellow, and although I cannot bear Romans I have never offended him because he might be useful to me. »

« Did you hear that, Master? My speech to the centurion at Capernaum was a good thing. I feel more relaxed now » says Peter.

They reach the thicket in the shade of which the patrol has dismounted.

« I am handing the boy back to You. Have You orders, Master? »

« No, Publius. May God show Himself to you. »

« Hail », he mounts his horse and spurs it, followed by his men with a loud rattle of hooves and body-
armour.

They enter the town and Peter with his little friend goes to buy sandals.

« That man is dying for a son » says the Zealot, and he concludes: « He is right. »

« I will give you thousands. Now let us go and look for a place to rest, so that tomorrow we can start at
dawn. »

193. From Engannim to Shechem in Two Days.

18th June 1945.

Jesus goes on His way towards Jerusalem along roads which are more and more crowded with pilgrims. A heavy shower during the night has made the road somewhat muddy, but, on the other hand, it has removed dust and made the air clearer. The fields look like gardens diligently tended by skilled men.

They all walk fast because they are well rested after a night's sleep, and because the boy, with his new sandals, no longer suffers when walking: on the contrary, as he becomes more and more familiar, he chatters with this one and that one, and confidentially informs John that his father's name was also John and his mother's Mary, and that he therefore is very fond of John also. « But » he concludes, « I love you all, and in the Temple I will pray so much for you and for the Lord Jesus. »

It is moving to see how this group of men, most of whom have no children, are so paternal and full of attention for the youngest of Jesus' disciples. Even the countenance of the man from Endor softens when he forces the little one to swallow a beaten egg, or when he climbs up among the woods, which make the hills as well as the higher mountains green, to pick acidulous branches of shrubs or scented stems of wild fennel, which he takes to the boy to quench his thirst, without overburdening his stomach with water. He also draws his attention to the different aspects and sights of the country, which is split here by large valleys, at the bottom of which run main roads, to take his mind off the length of the journey.

The old teacher of Cintium, ruined by human wickedness, revives because of this boy, a wretch like himself, and the wrinkles of misfortune and bitterness smooth into a gentle smile. Jabez is already less shabby looking, because of his new sandals, and his face is not so sad, because I do not know which hand of an apostle has erased every trace of the wild life the boy led for so many months, sorting his hair so far ruffled and dusty and now made soft and tidy by a good wash. The man from Endor also is

quite different. He is still somewhat puzzled when he hears anyone call him John, but then he shakes his head and smiles pitying his bad memory. Day by day his countenance loses its habitual hardness and gains a gravity, which is quite serene. Of course these two wretched people who are reviving through Jesus' kindness, gravitate towards the Master in their love. Their companions are dear, but Jesus... When He looks at them or speaks just to them, the expression on their faces is a most happy one.

After crossing the large valley and then a beautiful green hill, one can still dimly see the plain of Esdraelon. This causes the child to sigh: « What will my old father be doing? » and with a very sad sigh and tears in his brown eyes he exclaims: « Oh! he is not so happy as I am... and he is so good! » and the lament of the child casts a sad veil over everybody. They begin to descend a very fertile valley, completely covered with cultivated fields and olive-groves. A light breeze causes the tiny flowers of vines and of the earlier olive-trees to fall like snow. The plain of Esdraelon is out of sight for good.

They stop for a meal and then resume the journey towards Jerusalem. But it must have rained heavily or the area is rich in underground water, because the meadows look like a marsh owing to the water that glitters among the thick grass and rises lapping on the banked road, which, however, is still very muddy. The adults pull their tunics up to prevent them from becoming soiled with mud, and Judas Thaddeus puts the boy on his shoulders to let him rest and to cross more quickly the flooded and perhaps unhealthy area.

Daylight is beginning to fade when, after walking along the edge of other hills and crossing a dry rocky valley, they enter a village situated on a raised rocky embankment. They push their way through the crowd of pilgrims and look for accommodation in a very rural type hotel: a large shed under which is spread much straw and nothing else. Small lamps lit here and there shed a glow on the supper of the pilgrim families, poor families, like the apostolic one, because most of the rich people have put up tents outside the village, disdaining contact with either the local people or the poor pilgrims.

Night and silence fall... The first to fall asleep is the boy, who, tired as he is, reclines his head on the lap of Peter, who lays him on the straw and covers him carefully.

Jesus gathers the adults in prayer and then each throws himself on the straw to rest after the long journey.

The day after: the apostolic group that left in the morning is about to enter Shechem in the evening, having passed through Samaria, a beautiful town, surrounded by walls, adorned with

splendid imposing buildings, around which are grouped some lovely tidy houses. I am under the impression that the town, like Tiberias, has been recently rebuilt with systems borrowed from Rome. Outside the walls, around the town, the land is very fruitful and well cultivated. The road from Samaria to Shechem winds down from terrace to terrace, in a series of walls supporting the earth, which reminds me of the Fiesoli hills. There is a splendid view of green mountains to the south and of a most beautiful plain westwards.

The road tends to descend to the valley, but it climbs now and again to cross other hills from the top of which one commands the land of Samaria with its lovely olive-groves, corn fields, vineyards, watched over from the hill crests by woods of oak and other forest trees, which must be protective against the winds that blowing through the gorges are inclined to create whirlwinds damaging to cultivations. This area reminds me very much of certain spots in our Apennines, around Mount Amiata, where one can contemplate at the same time the flat cultivations of cereals in the Maremma and the bright hills and majestic mountains that rise higher inland. I do not know what Samaria is like now. It was very beautiful in those days.

Now, between two high mountains, the highest in the area, one can see straight through a valley, in the middle of which there is the very fertile well-watered land of Shechem. It is here that Jesus and His disciples are caught up with by the joyful caravan of the Consul's court, on its way to Jerusalem for the festivity. There are slaves on foot and slaves on the wagons guarding the luggage... My God, how many items they carried with them in those days!!! And with the slaves there are wagons that are packed with all sorts of goods, even complete litters and travelling coaches: the four wheel wagons are very wide, well sprung, with tilt, under which the ladies are sheltered. And then many other carts and slaves...

A curtain is drawn, by the bejewelled hand of a lady and the severe profile of Plautina appears: she nods smiling but does not say anything. Valeria, whose little girl on her knees trills and smiles, greets people in the same fashion. The other wagon, which is even more stately, passes by but no curtain is drawn. But when it has gone by, the pinkish face of Lydia looks out from the rear, through the closed curtains and she nods, too. The caravan goes away...

« They travel in comfort! » says Peter who is tired and wet with perspiration. « But, if God helps us, the day after tomorrow evening we will be in Jerusalem. »

« No, Simon. I must make a detour and go towards the Jordan. »

« But why, my Lord? »

« Because of the boy. He is very sad, and it would be too sad for

him to see the mountain of the disaster. »

« But we will not see it! Or rather, we will see the other side... and I take it upon myself to divert his attention. John and I... His attention is easily distracted, poor little dove without a nest. To go towards the Jordan! Well! It is better this way. A straight road. Shorter. Safer. No. No. This one, this one. See? Also the Roman ladies are taking it. Along the sea and the river there is the risk of fever during the first summer rains. It is healthy here. In any case... When are we going to arrive if we lengthen the way? Consider how agitated Your Mother must be after that unpleasant business of the Baptist!... » Peter wins and Jesus agrees.

« In that case we will stop early and have a good rest and tomorrow we will leave at dawn to be at Gethsemane in the evening of the day after tomorrow. The day after Friday we will go to Bethany to see My Mother and we will leave John's books there, as they have been quite a burden for you, and we will find Isaac there and will entrust him with this poor brother of ours... »

« And the boy? Are You handing him over at once? »

Jesus smiles. « No. I am giving him to My Mother, Who will prepare him for "his" feast. And then we will keep him with us for Passover. But after we will have to leave him... Do not become too attached to him! Or rather: love him as if he were your own son, but with a supernatural spirit. As you can see he is weak and gets tired. I, too, would have liked to teach him Myself and bring him up nourished in Wisdom by Me. But I am the Untiring One and Jabez is too young and too weak to do the work we do. We will go through Judaea and will come back to Jerusalem for Pentecost, and then we will go... evangelizing... We shall find him again in our fatherland in summer. Here we are at the gate of Shechem. Go ahead with your brother and with Judas of Simon and look for accommodation. I will go to the market square and wait for you there. »

They part and Peter goes away looking for a shelter, while the others walk with difficulty in the streets crowded with people shouting and gesticulating, with donkeys, wagons, all going to Jerusalem for the oncoming Passover. The shouting, calling and cursing of people, added to the braying of donkeys cause a noise that resounds very loudly under the vaults, which link one house to another, a noise that resembles the rumble of certain shells when placed near one's ear. The echo travels from vault to vault where the shades become darker and the crowds, like an impetuous torrent, rush into the streets, insinuating themselves everywhere, looking for a roof, a square, a meadow wherein to pass the night...

Jesus, holding the child by the hand, leaning against a tree, is waiting for Peter in the square, which, for the occasion, is always

full of vendors.

« Let us hope that no one sees us and recognises us! » says the Iscariot.

« How can you recognise a grain of sand among the sands? » replies Thomas. « Don't you see the crowds? »

Peter comes back: « Outside the town there is a shed with some hay. I could not find anything else. »

« Neither shall we look for anything else. It is even too much for the Son of man. »

194. From Shechem to Beeroth.

19th June 1945.

As a river grows larger when new tributary streams flow into it, so the road from Shechem to Jerusalem is becoming gradually more and more crowded, as believers heading for the Holy City pour on to it along secondary roads from villages. A situation which is of great help to Peter in distracting the attention of the boy who is now passing near the hills where he was born and where his parents are buried under a landslide. The child is not aware of it.

After a long march interrupted - after Shiloh, on its steep hill, had been left behind to the left - by a pause to rest and take some food in a green valley resounding with pure crystal-clear waters, the pilgrims set forth again and cross a little calcareous mountain, which is rather barren, and on which the sun is blazing down mercilessly. They then begin to descend through a range of most beautiful vineyards, which with their festoons adorn the crags of the calcareous mountains. The area is most sunny.

Peter smiles significantly and makes a sign to Jesus, Who in turn smiles. The boy does not notice anything, engrossed as he is in listening to John of Endor who is speaking to him of other lands he has visited where the most sweet grapes grow that, however, are not so much used to make wine, as to make cakes, which are more delicious than honey cakes.

They are now climbing a very steep hill, because they have left the dusty crowded main road and have taken this short cut through woods. And when they reach the summit, they can distinctly see in the distance a huge bright light shining above an agglomeration, perhaps whitewashed houses.

« Jabez » calls Jesus « come here. Can you see that golden spot? It is the House of the Lord. There you will swear to obey the Law. But do you know it well? »

« My mother used to speak to me about it and my father taught me the precepts. I can read... and... and I think I know what "they" told me before they died... » The boy, who had come smiling

when Jesus called him, is now weeping with his head lowered and his trembling hand in Jesus' hand.

« Do not weep. Listen. Do you know where we are? This is Bethel. Holy Jacob dreamt of the angels here. Do you know? Do you remember? »

« Yes, Lord. He saw a ladder that from the earth reached up to Heaven and the angels went up and down, and my mother used to say that when one dies, if one has always been good, one sees the same thing and goes up that ladder to the House of God. My mother used to tell me many things... But now she does not tell me any more... I have them all in here and that is all I have of hers... » Tears stream down his little sad face.

« Do not weep like that! Listen, Jabez. I also have a Mother and Her name is Mary and She is holy and good and can tell many things. She is wiser than a teacher and more gentle and beautiful than an angel. We are going to see Her now. She will love you so much. And She will tell you many things. And then John's mother is with her and she is very good, too, and her name is Mary. And there is the mother of my brother Judas, and she is as sweet as a honey cake and her name is Mary, too. They will love you so much. Because you are a clever boy and for My sake, because I love you so much. And you will grow up with them and when you are big, you will be a holy man of God, like a doctor you will preach Jesus Who has given you a new mother here and Who will open the gates of Heaven to your dead mother and to your father, and will open them also to you when your hour comes. You will not even need to climb the long ladder of Heaven when you die. You will have climbed it during your lifetime, being a good disciple, and you will find yourself up there, at the gate of Paradise, and I will be there and I will say to you: "Come, My friend and son of Mary" and we shall be together. » Jesus' bright smile, while walking slightly bent to be closer to the raised face of the child who is walking beside Him with his hand held by Jesus, and the wonderful story wipe his tears and make him smile.

The boy, who is far from being dim of wit but is only stunned by grief and the hardships he has suffered, is interested in the story and asks: « You said that You will open the gates of Heaven. Are they not closed because of the great Sin? My mother used to say that no one could enter until forgiveness had come and the just were waiting for it in Limbo. »

« It is so. But preaching the word of God I will go to the Father and... having obtained forgiveness for you, I will say to Him: "Father, I have fulfilled Your will. Now I want My reward for My sacrifice. Let the just, who are waiting, come to Your Kingdom". And the Father will say to Me: "Let it be done as You wish". I will then come down and I will call all the just, and at the sound of My

voice Limbo will open its gates and the holy Patriarchs, the bright Prophets, the blessed women of Israel will come out rejoicing. And do you know how many children? There will be children of all ages, as many as the flowers in a flowery meadow! And they will follow Me singing and will ascend to the beautiful Paradise. »

« And will my mother be there? »

« Most certainly. »

« You did not say to me that she will be with You at the gate of Heaven when I am dead, too... »

« There is no need for her and for your father to be at that gate. Like bright angels they will fly continuously from Heaven down to the earth, from Jesus to their little Jabez, and when you are about to die, they will do what those two little birds over there, in that hedge, are doing. Can you see them? » And Jesus takes the boy in His arms to let him see better. « See how they are sitting on their little eggs. They are waiting for them to hatch, then they will spread their wings over the brood to protect them from all evils, and then, when they are grown and ready to fly, they will support them with their strong wings and will take them up, up, up... towards the sun. Your parents will do the same with you. »

« Will it be just like that? »

« Exactly like that. »

« But will You tell them to remember to come? »

« That is not necessary, because they love you, but I will tell them. »

« Oh! How I love You! » The child, who is still in Jesus' arms, presses against His neck and kisses Him with such joyful effusion that is really moving.

Jesus kisses him, too, and puts him down.

« Well! Let us go on. Towards the Holy City. We must arrive there tomorrow, towards evening. Why such a hurry? Can you tell me? Is it not the same if we arrive the day after tomorrow »

« No. It would not be the same. Because tomorrow is Parascève and after sunset one can walk only for six stadia. You are not allowed to go farther because the Sabbath and its rest have begun. »

« So one idles about on the Sabbath. »

« No. You pray the Most High Lord. »

« What is His name? »

« Adonai. But saints can pronounce His name. »

« Also good children. Tell Me if you know. »

« Jaave » (the boy pronounces it thus: a very soft G, which is almost a J, and a very long 'a').

« And why does one pray the Most High Lord on the Sabbath? »

« Because He told Moses, when He gave him the tables of the Law. »

« Oh! Did He? And what did He say? »

« He said that we must keep it holy. "For six days you shall labour, but on the seventh day you shall rest and make others rest, because that is what I did, too, after the creation". »

« What? Did the Lord rest? Did He become tired creating? And was it He Who created. How do you know? I know that God never tires. »

« He was not tired, because God does not walk and does not move His arms. But He did it, to teach Adam and us, and to have a day on which we think of Him. And He created everything, most certainly. The Book of the Lord tells us. »

« But was the Book written by Him? »

« No. But it is the Truth. And one must believe it unless one wants to go to Lucifer. »

« You said that God does not walk and does not move His arms. How did He create then? What is He like? A statue? »

« He is not an idol: He is God. And God is... God is... let me think and remember what my mother said, and even better than she did, that man that in Your name goes to visit the poor people at Esdraelon... My mother used to say, to make me understand God: "God is like my love for you. It has no body, but it exists". And that little man, but with such a gentle smile, would say: "God is an Eternal Spirit, One and Trine, and the Second Person became flesh for the sake of us, poor people, and His name is... " Oh! My Lord! Now that I think of it... it's You! » The child, dumbfounded, prostrates himself on the ground adoring.

They all run thinking that he has fallen, but Jesus with His finger on His lips beckons them to be silent and then says: « Stand up, Jabez. Children must not be afraid of Me! »

The boy looks up reverently and looks at Jesus with a changed expression, almost of fear.

But Jesus smiles and stretches out His hand saying: « You are a wise little Israelite. Let us continue the examination. Now that you have recognised Me, do you know whether the Book mentions Me? »

« Oh! Yes, Lord. From the beginning to now. Everything speaks of You. You are the promised Saviour. Now I understand why You will open the gates of Limbo. Oh! Lord! Lord! And do You love me so much? »

« Yes, Jabez. »

« No, no longer Jabez. Give me a new name that means that You loved me and saved me... »

« I will choose a name together with My Mother. All right? »

« But a name that means just that. And I will have it as from the day I become a son of the Law. »

« You will have it as from that day. »

They pass Bethel and rest in a little cool valley, rich in water, to take some food. Jabez is half stunned by the revelation and eats in silence, accepting with veneration every mouthful that Jesus hands to him. But he slowly takes heart again, and after playing happily on the green grass with John while the others are resting, he goes back to Jesus together with his smiling friend John, and the three chat together.

« You did not tell Me who speaks of Me in the Book. »

« The Prophets, Lord. And even before, the Book speaks of You when Adam was expelled, and... then to Jacob, Abraham and Moses... Oh!... My father told me that he went to John - not this one, the other John, the one of the Jordan - and he, the great Prophet, called You the Lamb... Oh! Now I understand the lamb of Moses... You are Passover! »

John teases him: « But which Prophet spoke best of Him? »

« Isaiah and Daniel. But I... I like Daniel more, now that I love You as my father. Can I say that? That I love You as I loved my father? Yes? Well, now I prefer Daniel. »

« Why? Who speaks most of the Christ is Isaiah. »

« Yes, but he speaks of the sorrows of the Christ. Daniel instead speaks of the beautiful angel and of Your coming. It is true... he also says that Christ will be sacrificed. But I think that the Lamb will be sacrificed with one single blow. Not as Isaiah and David say. I always wept when my mother read them and she did not read them any more. » He is almost weeping even now while caressing Jesus' hand.

« Forget about it for the time being. Listen. Do you know the precepts? »

« Yes, my Lord. I think I know them. I used to repeat them when I was in the wood, so that I would not forget them, also because I wanted to hear the words of my mother and my father. But now I will not weep any more (tears, however, are shining in his eyes) because I have You. »

John smiles and embraces Jesus saying: « The same words as mine! All those who are children in their hearts speak the same language. »

« Yes. Because their words come from one wisdom only. But now we ought to go, so that we can be in Beeroth very early. The number of the people is increasing and the weather looks threatening. There will be a rush for shelters. And I do not want you to be taken ill. »

John calls his companions and they set forth again towards Beeroth, across a plain which is not very well cultivated, but is not so barren as the little mountain they climbed after Shiloh.

195. From Beeroth to Jerusalem.

20th June 1945.

It is raining and Peter seems to me the opposite of Aeneas, because instead of carrying his father, he has little Jabez on his shoulders, completely covered by Peter's large mantle. The boy's little head emerges above the grey-haired head of Peter, who, with the boy's arms round his neck, dabbles in the puddles, laughing wholeheartedly.

« We might have been spared all this » grumbles the Iscariot, who is irritable because of the water pouring from the sky and splashing his clothes with mud.

« Eh! Many things could be spared! » replies John of Endor, staring at handsome Judas with his one good eye, which I think can see as well as two.

« What do you mean? »

« I mean that it is useless to expect the elements to have consideration for us, when we have none for our neighbour, and concerning matters that are by far more important than a few drops of water or a splash of mud. »

« That is true. But I like to be tidy and clean when I go to town. I have many friends there, and high up. »

« Then watch that you do not fall. »

« Are you teasing me? »

« Noooooh! But I am an old teacher and... an old pupil. I have been learning since I was born. First I learned to vegetate, then I observed life, then I became acquainted with the bitterness of life, I practised a useless justice, the justice of "man alone" against God and society. God punished me with remorse, society with fetters, so, after all, I was the victim of justice. At last, now, I have learned, I am learning how "to live". Now, since I am a teacher and a pupil, you will realise that it is natural for me to repeat the lessons. »

« But I am an apostle... »

« And I am a poor wretch, I know, and I should never take the liberty of teaching you. But, see, you never know what one may become. I thought I was going to die an honest and respected teacher in Cyprus and I became a murderer and a convict serving a life sentence. But when I raised a knife to take vengeance, and when I was dragging the fetters hating the universe, if anyone told me that I was to become a disciple of the Holy One, I would have doubted whether his mind was sound. And yet... Here I am! So, I may be able to give a good lesson also to you, an apostle. Because of my experience. Not because of my holiness, I would not dream of it. »

« That Roman was right in calling you Diogenes. »

« Of course. But Diogenes was looking for a man and could not

find one. I, luckier than he, found a snake where I thought there was a woman, and an adulterer where I thought I saw a friendly man, but after wandering about for many years, as I became insane through such experience, I have found the Man, the Holy One. »

« I know no other wisdom but Israel's. »

« If that is so, you already have the means for salvation. But now you have also the science, nay the wisdom of God. »

« It is the same thing. »

« Oh! no! It is like a foggy day compared to a sunny day. »

« Well! Are you anxious to teach me? I don't feel like it. »

« Let me speak! Once, I used to speak to children: they were absent-minded. Then I spoke to shadows, they cursed me. Then to chicken: they were better, far better than the first two groups. Now I speak to myself as I am not yet able to speak to God. Why do you want to stop me? I have but one eye, the mines ruined my life, I have suffered from heart trouble for years. At least let my mind be fruitful. »

« Jesus is God. »

« I know, and I believe it. More than you do. Because I have revived through His work, you have not. No matter how good He is, He is still God, and I, a poor wretch dare not treat Him with familiarity as you do. My soul speaks to Him... my lips dare not. My soul does, and I think that He perceives it weeping out of gratitude and repentant love. »

« That is true, John. I do perceive your soul. » Jesus comes into the conversation of the two. Judas blushes with shame, the man of Endor with joy. « I perceive your soul, that is true. And I perceive also the work of your mind. What you said is correct. When you have been formed in Me, your experience as a teacher and a diligent pupil will be of great help to you. Speak, do speak, also to yourself. »

« Once, Master, not long ago, you told me that it is wrong to speak to one's ego » remarks Judas insolently.

« That is true, I did. But that was because you were grumbling with your ego. This man is not grumbling, he is meditating, and for a good purpose. He is not doing anything wrong. »

« In brief, I am wrong! » Judas is aggressive.

« No, your heart is impatient. But the weather cannot be always good. Farmers want rain. It is charity to pray that it may rain. And also this is charity. But look, there is a beautiful rainbow forming an arch from Ataroth to Ramah. We are already beyond Ataroth, we have passed the large sad valley, and here the country is cultivated and pleasant under the sun, which is breaking through the clouds. When we are in Ramah we shall be thirty-six stadia from Jerusalem. We shall see the Holy City again after that hill,

which is the place of the horrid lewd crime committed by the men of Gibeah. What a terrible thing is the concupiscence of the flesh, Judas... »

Judas does not reply, instead he delays splashing angrily in the puddles.

« What's the matter with him, today? » asks Bartholomew.

« Be quiet, lest Simon of Jonah should hear you. Let us avoid all arguments... and do not let us upset Simon. He is so happy with his boy! »

« Yes, Master. But it is not right. I will tell him. »

« He is young, Nathanael. You were young, too... »

« Yes... but... He should not be lacking in respect towards You! » He raises his voice without wishing to do so.

Peter rushes towards them: « What's the matter? Who is lacking in respect? The new disciple? » and he looks at John of Endor, who has discreetly withdrawn when he understood that Jesus was correcting the apostle and is now speaking to James of Alphaeus and Simon Zealot.

« Not in the least. He is as respectful as a young girl. »

« Oh! Good! Otherwise... his only eye was in danger. Well... it must be Judas!... »

« Listen, Simon, could you not busy yourself with your little friend? You took him away from Me, and now you want to become engaged in a friendly conversation I am having with Nathanael. Do you not think that you want to do too many things? »

Jesus smiles so gently that Peter becomes uncertain about his own thoughts. He looks at Bartholomew... who, however, has raised his aquiline face and is scanning the sky... Peter's suspicion fades away.

Peter's attention is completely diverted by the apparition of the Holy City, which is now near, and is visible in all the beauty of its hills, olive-groves, houses, and above all of the Temple, a sight which must always have been a source of emotion and pride for Israelites. The warm April sun of Judaea has soon dried up the slabstones of the consular road. Puddles of water have disappeared completely. The apostles are tidying themselves on the side of the road, they let down the tunics which they had pulled up, they wash their muddy feet in a clear stream, they tidy their hair and drape their mantles. Also Jesus does that. I see them all doing it.

The entrance into Jerusalem must have been an important matter. To present oneself at the walls on these feast-days was like presenting oneself to a sovereign. The Holy City was the « real » queen of Israelites. I realise that this year, because I can notice the crowds and their behaviour on the consular road. The processions of the various families form here, the women in one group, the

men in another, the children in either, but all very serious and serene at the same time. Some fold up their old mantles and Pull out a new one from their travelling bags, or change sandals. Their gait then becomes solemn, it is already hieratic. In each group there is a soloist who gives the tone, and the hymns, the glorious old hymns of David, are intoned. And people look at one another more lovingly, as if they had been pacified by the sight of the House of the Lord and they look at the Holy House, a huge cube of marble surmounted by golden domes, placed like a pearl in the centre of the imposing enclosure of the Temple.

The apostolic procession is formed as follows: Jesus and Peter in front, with the boy between them; behind them Simon, the Iscariot and John; then Andrew, who has forced John of Endor to stay between him and James of Zebedee; in the fourth row the two cousins of the Lord and Matthew; last Thomas, Philip and Bartholomew. It is Jesus Who intones in His beautiful powerful voice of a light baritone, a mellow voice with refined tenor vibrations, and Judas Iscariot, a pure tenor, answers together with John, with his limpid voice typical of young people, the two baritone voices of Jesus' cousins and the almost bass voice of Thomas, whose baritone voice is so deep that it can hardly be classified as such. The others, who are not gifted with such beautiful voices, follow the chorus of the virtuosi singing in low voices. (The psalms are the known ones, called gradual psalms). Little Jabez, the voice of an angel among the strong voices of men, sings very well, probably because he knows Psalm CXXI better than the others: « How I rejoiced when they said to me: "We shall go to the house of the Lord". » His little face, which only a few days ago was so sad, is now bright with joy.

The walls are now close at hand. Here is the Gate of the Fish. And the overcrowded streets.

They go straight to the Temple to say the first prayer. And then peace in the peace of Gethsemane, then supper and rest.

The journey towards Jerusalem is over.

196. The Sabbath at Gethsemane.

21st June 1945.

The group has spent most of the Sabbath morning resting their tired bodies and cleaning their clothes which had become dusty and creased during the journey. There is so much inviting water in the spacious cisterns of Gethsemane, full of rain water, and in the foamy Kidron, now in flood, because of the recent downpours, where the water resounds against the stones like a symphony. And the apostles, one after the other, defying the low temperature of the water, plunge into it and then, clad from head to foot in fresh

clothes, their hair rather sleeked by the spray of the torrent, they draw water from the cisterns pouring it into large vats in which they have sorted out their clothes according to the colours.

« Well! Once they are soaked in there, it will be less troublesome for Mary to wash them. » (I suppose that Mary is the woman who stays at Gethsemane). « Only you, my dear little friend, cannot change. But tomorrow... » In fact the boy is wearing a clean robe, which has been taken from his little sack: so small that it would be quite sufficient for the garments of a doll! But the boy's little tunic is even more discoloured and torn than the other one and Peter looks at it with apprehension, whispering: « How can I possibly take him to town? I think I will cut one of my mantles in two, because a mantle... would cover him completely. »

Jesus, Who has heard this paternal soliloquy says: « It is better to let him rest now. This evening we are going to Bethany... »

« But I want to buy him a robe. I promised it. »

« You certainly will. But it is better to seek My Mother's advice. You know... women... have more experience in such purchases... and She will be happy to take care of the child... You will go together. »

Peter is enraptured to the seventh heaven of delight at the idea of going shopping with Mary. I do not know whether Jesus has expressed all His thoughts or whether He has held back some, those implying that His Mother's taste is more refined than Peter's and would thus avoid the clashing of atrocious hues. The fact is that He achieves His aim without mortifying Peter.

They scatter in the olive-grove, which is so beautiful on this serene April day. The rain of the past days seems to have silvered the olive-trees and sown flowers, so bright are the leaves in the sun and so numerous the little flowers at the foot of each tree. Birds are singing and flying everywhere. The town is lying over there, west of an onlooker.

It is not possible to see the crowds thronging inside, but one can see the caravans going towards the Gate of the Fish and to others, with names unknown to me, on this eastern side, and the travellers are swallowed by the town as it if were a hungry mouth.

Jesus is walking up and down watching Jabez who is playing with John and the younger ones. Also the Iscariot, who has got out of yesterday's huff is cheerful and plays. The elder ones watch and smile.

« What will Your Mother say of this child? » asks Bartholomew.

« I think She will say: "He is very thin" » says Thomas.

« Oh! no! She will say: "Poor child!" » replies Peter.

« Instead She will say to You: "I am glad that You love him" » objects Philip.

« His Mother would never have doubted it. But I don't think She

will say anything. She will press him to Her heart » says the Zealot.

« And You, Master, what do You think She will say? »

« She will do what you said. She will think many things, nay, all of them, and will say them in Her heart, and when kissing him She will only say: "May you be blessed" and She will take care of him as if he were a little bird fallen from its nest. One day, listen, She told Me of when She was a little girl. She was not yet three years old because She was not yet in the Temple, and Her heart was full of love, emanating, like flowers and olives pressed and crushed in a mill, all Her oils and perfumes. And in a rapture of love She said to Her mother that She wanted to be a virgin to please the Saviour more, but that She would have liked to be a sinner in order to be saved, and She almost wept, because Her mother could not understand Her and could not tell Her how it is possible to be "pure" and a "sinner" at the same time. Her father satisfied Her by bringing her a little sparrow, which he had saved when it was about to be drowned on the edge of a fountain. He explained the parable of the little bird, saying that God had saved her in advance and therefore She was to bless Him twice. And the little Virgin of God, the Most Great Virgin Mary, practised Her first spiritual maternity on behalf of the little bird, which She let free when it was strong enough. But the bird never left the kitchen garden in Nazareth, where flying and twittering, it comforted the sad house and the broken hearts of Anne and Joachim, when Mary was in the Temple. It died shortly before Anne breathed her last... It had fulfilled its duty... My Mother had dedicated Herself to virginity for love. But, since She was a perfect creature, maternity was in Her blood and spirit. Because woman is created to be a mother and it is an aberration, if she is deaf to such sentiment, which is love of second power... »

Also the others have come near slowly.

« What do You mean, Master, by love of second power? » asks Judas Thaddeus.

« My brother, there are many loves and various powers. There is the love of first power: the one given to God. Then there is the love of second power: the love of a mother or of a father, because if the previous one is entirely spiritual, this one is spiritual by two parts and carnal by one. It is true that human affection is mixed in it, but the superior sentiment prevails, because a father and mother, who are such in a wholesome and holy way, do not only feed and caress the body of their child, but they give also nourishment and love to the mind and the spirit of their creature. And what I am saying is so true, that those who devote themselves to children, even if only to educate them, end up by loving their pupils, as if they were of their own flesh. »

« In fact I was very fond of my pupils » says John of Endor.

« I understood that you must have been a good teacher by the way you deal with Jabez. »

The man of Endor bows and kisses Jesus' hand without speaking.

« Please go on with Your classification of loves » begs the Zealot.

« There is the love for one's wife: love of third power because it is made - I am always talking of wholesome and holy loves - half of spirit and half of flesh. A man, besides being the husband of his wife, is a teacher and a father to her; and a woman is an angel and a mother to her husband, besides being his wife. These are the three highest loves. »

« And the love for our neighbour? Are You not wrong? Or have You forgotten it? » asks the Iscariot. The others look at him dumbfounded and... furious because of his remarks.

But Jesus replies placidly: « No, Judas. Watch. God is to be loved because He is God, so no explanation is required to convince one to have such love. He is He Who is, that is Everything; and man: Nothing, who participates of Everything, because of the soul infused in him by Eternal God - without which soul man would be one of the many animals that live on the earth, or in water or in the air - he must adore Him from a sense of duty and to deserve to survive in Everything, that is to deserve to be part of the holy People of God in Heaven, a citizen of the Jerusalem which will know neither profanation nor destruction for ever.

The love of man, and particularly of woman, for their offspring, is indicated as an order in the words of God to Adam and Eve, after He had blessed them, seeing that He had made a "good thing", on a remote sixth day, the first sixth day of creation. God said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth..." I can see your tacit objection, and this is My reply to you: Since before sin everything in creation was regulated by and based on love, that multiplication of children would have been a holy, pure, powerful, perfect love. And God gave it as His first commandment to man: "Be fruitful and multiply". Therefore, love your children after Me. Love, as it is now, the present procreator of children, did not exist then. There was no malice nor the detestable thirst for sensuality. Man loved woman and woman loved man, naturally, not naturally according to nature as we understand it, or rather, as you men understand it, but according to the nature of children of God: supernaturally. Sweet were the days of love of the Two who were brothers, because born of one Father, and yet were husband and wife, who loved and looked at each other with the innocent eyes of twins in a cradle; and man felt the love of a father for his wife "bone from his bones and flesh from his flesh", what a son is for his father; and the woman experienced the joy of being a daughter, protected by a very high love, because she felt that she had in

herself something of the wonderful man who loved her, with innocence and angelical ardour, in the beautiful meadows in Eden!

Later, in the sequence of commands that God, smiling, gave to His beloved children, there comes what Adam himself, gifted by Grace with an intelligence inferior only to God's, decreed speaking of his wife and of every woman through Eve, a decree of the thought of God, which was clearly reflected by the spotless mirror of Adam's spirit, a flower in thought and in word: "Man will leave his father and his mother and will join himself to his wife and they will become one body".

If there had not been the three pillars of the three above mentioned loves, could there have been love for one's neighbour? No. It could not have existed. The love of God makes God a friend and teaches love. Who does not love God, Who is good, cannot certainly love his neighbour who in most cases is faulty. If there had been no conjugal love and paternity in the world, there could have been no neighbours, because a neighbour is the son of man. Are you convinced? »

« Yes, Master. I had not thought of that. »

« It is difficult indeed to go back to the sources. Man has been stuck in mud for thousands of years, and those sources are so high up on the summits! The first one, above all, is a source that comes from an immense height: God... But I will take you by the hand and lead you to the sources. I know where they are... »

« And the other loves? » ask together Simon Zealot and the man from Endor.

« The first one of the second series is the love for our neighbour. In actual fact it is the fourth in power. Then comes the love for science. Finally the love for work. »

« Is that all? »

« That is all. »

« But there are many more loves! » exclaims Judas of Kerioth.

« There are other hungers. But they are not loves. They are the negation of love. They deny God, they deny man. They cannot be love because they are negations and Negation is Hatred. »

« If I deny consent to evil, is that Hatred? » asks Judas Iscariot once again.

« Poor me! You are more captious than a scribe! Can you tell me what is the matter with you? Is the rarified air of Judaea affecting your nerves like a cramp? » exclaims Peter.

« No. I like to learn and to have many clear ideas. It is quite possible we may have to speak to scribes and I do not want to be short of arguments... »

« And do you think that in the moment of need you will be able to pull out the colour required from the sack where you stock all the rags? » asks Peter.

« Rags the words of the Master? You are swearing? »

« Don't pretend you are scandalized. They a-re not rags in His mouth; but once they have been mishandled by us they become rags. Try and give a piece of precious byssus to a boy... It will soon become a dirty torn rag. And that is what happens to us. Now if you expect to fish at the right moment the little rag you need, what with the rag, and what with its dirt... uhm! I do not know what you will be up to. »

« Don't worry. That is my business. »

« Oh! You may be sure that I will not worry! I have enough problems of my own. And then... ! I am happy providing you cause no harm to the Master. Because, in that case, I would mind also your business... »

« You can do that when I do anything wrong. But that will never happen, because I know how to behave... I am not ignorant... »

« Instead I am, I know. And because I am I do not stock any ballast, to flaunt it later, at the right moment. But I implore God and God will help me for the sake of His Messiah, of Whom I am the least and most faithful servant. »

« We are all faithful » replies Judas haughtily.

« Oh! You are bad! Why do you offend my father? He is old and he is good. You must not do that. You are bad and you frighten me » says Jabez with stern countenance, after being silent and listening carefully.

« And that makes two! » whispers James of Zebedee in a low voice, touching Andrew with his elbow.

Although he has spoken in a low voice, the Iscariot hears him.

« You can see, Master, whether the words of the silly boy of Magdala have left a trace » says Judas raging with anger.

« Would it not be more pleasant to continue listening to the lesson of the Master, instead of behaving like angry kids? » asks peaceful Thomas.

« Of course, Master. Tell us more about Your Mother. Her childhood is so bright! The very reflection of that brilliance makes our souls pure, and I, a poor sinner, need that light so badly! » exclaims Matthew.

« What shall I tell you? There are so many episodes, one more touching than the other... »

« Did She tell You about them? »

« Yes, some. But Joseph told Me many more, as the most beautiful stories he could tell a child, and also Alphaeus of Sarah, who was a few years older than My Mother, and was Her friend during the short period She was at Nazareth... »

« Oh! Please, tell us... » begs John,

They are all sitting in a circle in the shade of the olive-trees, with Jabez in the centre staring at Jesus as if he were listening to a

heavenly tale.

« I will tell you about the lesson on chastity that My Mother gave Her little friend and many more people a few days before entering the Temple. A girl in Nazareth, a relative of Sarah's, got married on that day and also Joachim and Anne had been invited to the wedding. Little Mary went with them, and with other children She was to spread loose flower petals on the bride's way. They say that She was most beautiful, as a child, and everybody contented for Her after the joyful arrival of the bride, It was not easy to see Mary every day, as She lived mostly at home, where She loved a little grotto more than any other place, and even nowadays She calls it "the grotto of Her nuptials". So when She appeared outside, fair-haired, rosy and kind, She was overwhelmed by caresses. They used to call Her "the Flower of Nazareth" or "the Pearl of Galilee" or also "the Peace of God" in remembrance of a huge rainbow, which suddenly appeared as soon as She was born. She was in fact all that, and much more. She is the Flower of Heaven and of creation, the Pearl of Paradise and the Peace of God... Yes, the Peace of God. I am the Peaceful One because I am the Son of the Father and the Son of Mary: the Infinite Peace and the Sweet Peace. On that day everybody wanted to kiss Her and take Her on their laps. And as She was averse to being kissed and touched, She said with kind gravity: "Please, do not rumple Me". They thought She was talking of Her linen dress, held tight to Her waist, to Her wrists and neck by a blue band, or of Her little wreath of blue flowers, with which Anne had adorned Her head to keep Her light curls in place, and they assured Her that they would not crease Her dress or the wreath. But, sure of Herself, a little three year old woman standing in the middle of a circle of adults, She said seriously: "I am not thinking of what can be mended. I am speaking of My soul. It belongs to God. And it does not wish to be touched but by God". They objected: "But we are kissing You, not Your soul". She replied: "My body is the temple of My soul and the Spirit is its priest. People are not allowed to enter the enclosure of priests. Please, do not enter the enclosure of God". Alphaeus, who was then about eight years old and was very fond of Her, was greatly impressed by that reply and the following day, seeing Her near Her little grotto, he asked Her: "Mary, when You are grown up, would You marry me?". He was still under the excitement of the nuptial feast at which he had been present. And She answered: "I am very fond of you. But I do not see you as a man. I will tell you a secret. I see only the soul of a living being. And I love it so much, with all My heart. But I see only God as the True Living Being' to Whom I will be able to give Myself". That is one of the episodes. »

« "The True Living Being"!!! That is a very deep word! » exclaims

Bartholomew.

And Jesus, humbly and smiling replies: « She was the Mother of Wisdom. »

« Was She?... But was She not three years old? »

« She was. I already lived in Her, as God was in Her, in His most perfect Unity and Trinity, since She was conceived. »

« Excuse me if I, a sinner, dare speak, but did Joachim and Anne know that She was the chosen Virgin? » asks Judas Iscariot.

« No, they did not know. »

« In that case, how could Joachim say that God had saved Her in advance? Does that not refer to Her privilege over sin? »

« Yes, it does. But Joachim spoke inspired by God, like all the prophets. He himself did not understand the sublime supernatural truth that the Spirit spoke through his lips. Because Joachim was just. So just as to deserve that paternity. And he was humble. There is no justice where there is pride. He was just and humble. He comforted his Daughter out of fatherly love. He taught Her through his wisdom of a priest, as he was such as a guardian of the Ark of God. As a Pontiff he consecrated Her with the sweetest title: "The Immaculate One". And the day will come when another grey haired Pontiff will say to the world: "She is the Immaculate Conception" and will give this truth to the world of believers, as a dogma which cannot be refuted, so that the Most Beautiful Virgin of God, crowned with stars, clad with the rays of the moon, which are not so pure as She is, brighter than all stars, the Queen of Creation and of God, may shine, fully revealed, in the world which in those days will be sinking deeper and deeper in the grey fog of heresies and vices. Because God-King has as His Queen, in His Kingdom, Mary. »

« So Joachim was a prophet? »

« He was a just man. His soul repeated like an echo what God said to his soul which was loved by God. »

« When are we going to this Mother, my Lord? » asks Jabez with eager eyes.

« This evening. What will you say to Her when you see Her? »

« "I greet You, Mother of the Saviour". Is that all right? »

« Very good » confirms Jesus caressing him.

« But are we going to the Temple today? » asks Philip.

« We shall go there before leaving for Bethany. And you will stay here and be a good boy. Will you not? »

« Yes, my Lord. »

The wife of Jonah, the caretaker of the olive-grove, who has come near very quietly says: « Why don't you take him. The boy is anxious to come... »

Jesus stares at her without saying anything.

The woman understands and says: « I see! I should still have a little

mantle of Mark. I will look for it » and she runs away.

Jabez pulls John's sleeve: « Will the teachers be severe? »

« Oh! no. Don't be afraid. In any case it is not today. In a few days' time, with His Mother, you will be more learned than a doctor » John comforts him.

The others hear and smile at Jabez' concern.

« But who will present him as if he were his father? » asks Matthew.

« Of course I will! Unless... the Master wishes to present him » says Peter.

« No, Simon. I will not present him. I leave that honour to you. »

« Thank You, Master. But... You will be there, too? »

« Certainly. We shall all be there. He is "our" boy... »

Mary of Jonah comes back with a dark violet mantle, which is still good. But what a shade! She says so herself: « Mark never wanted to wear it because he did not like the shade. »

No wonder! It is vile! And poor Jabez with his olive complexion looks ghastly in the violent violet shade. But he cannot see himself... and he is therefore happy to have the mantle in which he can drape himself like an adult.

« The meal is ready, Master. The woman has taken the lamb off the spit just now. »

« Let us go, then. »

And going down from the place where they were, they go into the large kitchen for their meal.

197. In the Temple at the Hour of the Offering.

22nd June 1945.

Peter is really stately while entering the enclosure of the Temple, acting as the father of Jabez, whom he is holding by the hand. He is walking so erect, that he looks even taller than he really is.

All the others are behind him, in a group. Jesus is last and is engaged in close conversation with John of Endor, who seems to be ashamed to enter the Temple.

Peter asks his protege: « Have you ever been here before? » and the boy replies: « When I was born, father. But I do not remember » which makes Peter laugh heartily. Also the others, when they are told by Peter, laugh and say gently and wittily: « Perhaps you were sleeping and so... » or « We are all like you. We do not remember when we came here when we were born. »

Also Jesus asks John of Endor the same question and gets a similar reply. In fact John says to Him: « We were proselytes and my mother carried me here in her arms, just at Passover, because I was born early in Adar and my mother, who came from Judaea, set out as soon as she was able to, to offer her son to the Lord in good

time. Perhaps too early, because she was taken ill and never recovered. I was under two years of age when I lost my mother. The first misfortune in my life. I was her first-born, I became her only child because of her disease, and she was very proud to die having complied with the Law. My father used to say to me: "She died a happy death because she had offered you to the Temple"... Poor mother! What did you offer? A future murderer... »

« John, do not say that. You were Felix then, now you are John. Bear in mind the great grace that God granted you, always remember that. Forget your past debasement... Did you not come back to the Temple again? »

« Oh! Yes. When I was twelve years old and always after that, as long as... I was able to... Later, when I could have come, I did not, because I told You that I worshipped only one thing: Hatred... And that is why I dare not proceed further here. I feel a stranger in the House of the Father... I have abandoned it for too long... »

« You are coming back to it led by the hand by Me Who am the Son of the Father. If I am taking you up to the altar, it means that I know that everything has been forgiven. »

John of Endor sobs deeply and says: « Thank You, my God. »

« Yes, thank the Most High. Can you not see that your mother, a true Israelite, had a prophetic spirit? You are the son sacred to the Lord and never ransomed. You are Mine, you belong to God, you are a disciple and thus a future priest of your Lord in the new era and in the new religion, which will be called after Me. I absolve you of everything, John. Proceed confidently towards the Holy. I solemnly tell you that among those who live in this enclosure there are many more guilty and less worthy than you to go near the altar... »

Peter in the meantime is busy showing the boy the most noteworthy things in the Temple, but he asks the more learned ones, particularly Bartholomew and Simon, to help him, because in the fulfilment of his duty as a father he feels more at ease with the elder ones.

They are near the treasury to make their offering when Joseph of Arimathea calls them. « You are here? When did you arrive? » he asks after greeting them.

« Yesterday evening. »

« And the Master? »

« He is over there, with a new disciple. He is coming. »

Joseph looks at the boy and asks Peter: « One of your grandsons? »

« No... yes... well: nothing by blood, a great deal by faith, everything by love. »

« I do not understand... »

« He is a little orphan... so nothing by blood. A disciple, therefore

a great deal by faith. A son... so everything by love. The Master took him... and I caress him. He is becoming of age in the next few days... »

« Already twelve years old? And so small? »

« Eh!... The Master will tell you... Joseph, you are good... one of the few good people in here... Tell me... would you help me in this matter? You know... I am presenting him as if he were my son. But I am a Galilean and I am a nasty leper... »

« A leper?! » exclaims Joseph inquisitively moving away in fright.

« Don't be afraid! I am a leper because I belong to Jesus! The most loathsome form of leprosy for those of the Temple, with a few exceptions. »

« No! Don't say that! »

« It's the truth and we must admit it... So I am afraid they will be cruel to the boy because of me and because of Jesus. In any case I do not know how much he knows of the Law, of the Halascia, the Haggadha and of the Midrasciots. Jesus says that he knows quite a lot... »

« Well, if Jesus says so! Don't be afraid! »

« Only to cause me trouble they would... »

« You are very fond of this little fellow! Do you keep him with you all the time? »

« I cannot!... I am always about... The boy is too young and delicate... »

« But I would willingly come with you... » says Jabez who has been reassured by Joseph's caresses.

Peter is bright with joy... But he says: « The Master says that we must not do that and we will not do it... But we shall meet now and again just the same... Joseph... will you help me? »

« Of course, I will! I will come with you. They will not do him an injustice in front of me. When? Oh! Master! Give me Your blessing! »

« Peace to you, Joseph. I am happy to see you and I am glad that you are in good health. »

« I am happy, too, Master, and also Your friends will be pleased to see You. Are You staying at Gethsemane? »

« I was there, but after the prayer I am going to Bethany. »

« To Lazarus'? »

« No, to Simon's. My Mother, the mother of My brothers and the mother of John and James are also there. Will you come and see Me? »

« Are You asking me? I will come with great joy and it is a great honour, for which I thank You. I will come with some friends... »

« Be careful, Joseph, with friends!... » suggests Simon Zealot.

« Oh! You already know them. Prudence teaches: "Do not let the air know". But when you see them you will understand that they are friends. »

« Well... »

« Master, Simon of Jonah was telling me about the ceremony for the little one. You arrived when I was asking when you intend having it. I want to be there, too. »

« On the Wednesday before Passover. I want him to keep Passover as a son of the Law. »

« Very good. That is settled. I will come and join you at Bethany. But I will come with my friends on Monday. »

« Agreed. »

« Master, I must leave You. Peace be with You. It is the hour of incense. »

« Goodbye, Joseph. Peace be with you. Come, Jabez. This is the most solemn hour of the day. There is another one in the morning. It is right that man should bless the Lord to be blessed during the day, in all his deeds. But in the evening it is more solemn. Light fades, work ends, night falls. The fading light reminds us of the fall into sin and in fact sinful deeds are generally accomplished during the night. Why? Because man, no longer engrossed in his work, can be more easily entrapped by the Evil One who avails himself of his allurements and nightmares. It is therefore right, after thanking God for protecting us during the day, that we should implore Him to deliver us from night phantasms and temptations. Night, sleep... the symbols of death. Blessed be those who after living with the blessing of the Lord go to sleep in a bright dawn and not in darkness. The priest who offers incense, does so on behalf of us all. He prays for all the people, in communion with God, and God entrusts him with the blessing for the whole people of His children. See how great the ministry of a priest is? »

« I would like... I would feel as if I were closer to my mummy... »

« If you are always a good disciple and a good son to Peter, you will become one. Come now. The trumpets are announcing that the time has come. Let us go and praise Yahweh with veneration. »

198. Jesus Meets His Mother at Bethany.

23rd June 1945.

Jesus is walking fast with His disciples towards Lazarus' town, along a shady road which links the Mount of Olives to Bethany. One could say that the green ramifications of the mountain stretch as far as the countryside of Bethany. Jesus is recognised even before entering the town and voluntary messengers run in all directions to inform people of His arrival. Thus Lazarus and Maximinus arrive running from one side, Isaac with Timoneus and Joseph from another, and the third group to arrive is Martha with Marcella, who lifts her veil to bend down and kiss Jesus' tunic. Immediately after Mary of Alphaeus and Mary Salome reach the

spot, they greet the Master and then embrace their sons. Little Jabez, still held by the hand by Jesus, is tossed about by so much rushing and watches everything dumbfounded. John of Endor, feeling like a stranger, withdraws to the end of the group and stands aside. Suddenly, in the lane leading to Simon's house, Jesus' Mother comes forward.

Jesus drops Jabez' hand and gently pushes His friends to one side, to hasten towards Her. The well known words resound in the air, like a solo of love above the whispering of the crowd: « Son! »; « Mother! » They kiss each other and in Mary's kiss there is the anguish of a mother who has been afraid for a long time and now that the terror, which had seized her, is dissolving, she feels the tiredness of the effort she made, and evaluates the risks He has run...

Jesus, Who understands, caresses Her saying: « Beside My angel I had Yours, Mother, watching over Me. No harm could have befallen Me. »

« May the Lord be praised for that. But I suffered so much! »

« I wanted to come sooner, but in order to obey You, I had to come a different way. But it was a good thing, because Your order, Mother, bore good fruit, as usual. »

« It was Your obedience, Son! »

« It was Your wise order, Mother... » They smile at each other like two lovers.

Is it possible that this Woman is the Mother of this Man? Where are the sixteen years of difference in age? The freshness and grace of Mary's face and of Her virginal body make Her a sister of Her Son Who is in the fullness of a handsome manliness.

« Are You not asking Me why it bore good fruit? » asks Jesus smiling all the time.

« I know that My Jesus conceals nothing from Me. »

« My dear Mother! » He kisses Her again...

People have kept away a few yards pretending not to be watching the scene. But I wager that there is not one of all the eyes that seem to be looking elsewhere that does not cast sidelong glances at the loving scene.

The one who is most keen in watching is Jabez, whom Jesus left when He ran to embrace His Mother, and who has been left all alone, because owing to the quick succession of questions and answers, everybody's attention was diverted from the poor boy... He looks, then bends his head, endeavours to restrain his tears... but he cannot and bursts out weeping, moaning: « Mummy! Mummy! »

Everybody turns round, Jesus and Mary are the first, and everybody endeavours to help or find out who the boy is. Mary of Alphaeus rushes towards him with Peter - they were together -

and they both ask: « Why are you crying »

But before Jabez can catch his breath and speak while shedding so many tears, Mary has run towards him and taken him in Her arms saying: « Yes, my little child, your Mother! Do not cry any more... and excuse Me if I did not see you before. My friends, here is My little son... » It is obvious that Jesus, in the few seconds while approaching the boy, must have said to Her: « He is a little orphan I brought with Me. » Mary realised the rest.

The boy is still weeping, but not so disconsolately, and as Mary is holding him in Her arms and kissing him, he ends up by smiling while his face is still wet with tears.

« Let me dry those tears of yours. You must not cry any more! Give Me a kiss... »

Jabez was expecting nothing but that and after being caressed by bearded men, he is overjoyed in kissing Mary's smooth cheek.

Jesus has been looking for John of Endor and when He sees him, He goes to get him in his remote comer. And while all the apostles are greeting Mary, Jesus comes towards Her, holding John of Endor by the hand and He says: « This is the other disciple, Mother. Your command gained these two sons for You. »

« It was Your obedience, Son » repeats Mary and She greets the man saying: « Peace to you. »

The man, the coarse restless man of Endor, who has changed so much since that morning when Judas' whim took Jesus to Endor, completely divests himself of his past while bowing to Mary. I think it is so, because his face, after bowing, looks really serene and truly « at peace ».

They all set out towards Simon's house: Mary with Jabez in Her arms, Jesus holding John of Endor by the hand, and then, around them and behind them, Lazarus and Martha, the apostles with Maximinus, Isaac, Joseph, and Timoneus.

They enter the house on the threshold of which Simon's old servant greets Jesus and his master with deep respect.

« Peace to you, Joseph, and to this house » says Jesus, lifting His hand to bless after laying it on the old servant's white head.

Lazarus and Martha, after their first expression of joy, are somewhat sad and Jesus asks them: « Why, My friends? »

« Because You are not staying with us and because everybody comes to You except the soul that we would like to be Yours. »

« Fortify your patience, your hope and your prayers. After all, I am with you. This house!... This house is but the nest from which the Son of man will fly every day to His dear friends, so close in space, but if we consider the situation in a supernatural way, infinitely closer in love. You are in My heart and I am in yours. Can we be closer than that? But we will be together this evening. Please sit at My table. »

« Oh! Poor me! And I am idling about! Come, Salome, there is a lot to be done! » The exclamation of Mary of Alphaeus makes everybody laugh while Jesus' good relative gets up immediately to her work.

Martha joins her: « Don't worry about the food, Mary. I will go and give the necessary instructions. Just lay the table. I will send you enough chairs and what is necessary. Come, Marcella. I will be back at once, Master. »

« I saw Joseph of Arimathea, Lazarus. He is coming here on Monday with some friends. »

« Oh! Well, You are my guest on that day! »

« Yes. He is coming to spend the day with us, but also to arrange a ceremony concerning Jabez. John: take the boy up to the terrace. He will enjoy himself there. »

John of Zebedee, who is always obedient, gets up at once and shortly afterwards the boy can be heard chattering and running about on the terrace that surrounds the house.

« The child » Jesus explains to His Mother, His friends, the women among whom there is also Martha, who has rushed back so that she would not miss one moment of joy near the Master, « is the grandson of one of Doras' peasants. I passed through Esdraelon... »

« Is it true that the fields are a complete ruin and that he wants to sell them? »

« They are a ruin. Whether he wants to sell them, I do not know. One of Johanan's men mentioned it to me. But I do not know whether it is certain. »

« If he should sell them... I would willingly buy them to have a refuge for You also in the middle of that nest of snakes. »

« I do not think that you will be successful. Johanan is ready to buy them. »

« We shall see... But go on. Who are the peasants? He scattered all the former servants. »

« Yes, he did. The present ones come from his land in Judaea, at least the old man, the boy's relative, does. The boy was kept in a wood, like a wild animal, so that Doras could not see him... and he had been there since last winter... »

« Oh! poor boy! But why? » The women are all moved.

« Because his father and mother were buried under the landslide near Emmaus. The whole family: father, mother and his little brothers. He survived because he was not at home. They took him to the old father. But what could a peasant of Doras do? Isaac, also in this case, you spoke of Me as a saviour. »

« Was that wrong? » asks Isaac humbly.

« You did the right thing. God wanted it. The old man gave me the boy, who is to become of age in the next few days. »

« Oh! poor little thing! So tiny at twelve years of age?! My Judas

was twice his size at that age... And Jesus? What a beautiful flower! » says Mary of Alphaeus.

And Salome: « Also my children were much stronger! »

Martha whispers: « He is really tiny! I thought he was not ten yet. »

« Eh! Hunger is a nasty thing. And he must have suffered from starvation since he was born. And now... What could the old man give him, if they are all dying of starvation there? » says Peter.

« Yes, he suffered a great deal. But he is good and intelligent. I took him to comfort both the old man and the boy. »

« Are you going to adopt him? » asks Lazarus.

« No. I cannot. »

« Well, I will take him. »

Peter sees his hopes vanish and he utters a really deep groan: « Lord! Everything to him? »

Jesus smiles: « Lazarus, you have already done so much and I am grateful to you. But I cannot entrust this child to you. He is "our" boy. He belongs to all of us. He is the joy of the apostles and of the Master. Besides, he would be brought up in luxury here. I want to make him a present of My royal mantle: "honest poverty". The poverty that the Son of man wanted for Himself, to be able to go near the greatest miseries without mortifying anybody. You have had a gift from Me also recently... »

« Ah! Yes! The old patriarch and his daughter. The woman is very active, the old man very good. »

« Where are they now? I mean: in which place? »

« They are here, in Bethany. Do You think I was going to send away the blessing You had sent me? The woman weaves linen. Light skilful hands are required for that job. Since the old man insists in working, I put him at the beehives. Yesterday he had a long golden beard, didn't he, sister? The bees swarmed and clung to his long beard and he was speaking to them as if they were his daughters. He is happy. »

« I am sure he is! May you be blessed! » says Jesus.

« Thank You, Master. But that boy will cost You a lot. You will allow me at least to... »

« I will see to his clothes for the ceremony » shouts Peter. They all laugh at his impulsive reaction.

« All right. But he will need other clothes. Simon, be good. I have no children either. Allow Martha and me to find some solace seeing to some little garments to be made for him. »

Peter, who has been thus besought, is moved at once and he says: « His clothes... yes... But his dress for Wednesday... I am going to get it. The Master promised me and He told me that I would be going with His Mother to buy it tomorrow. » Peter explains everything in detail lest there should be some unexpected change

to his disadvantage.

Jesus smiles and says: « Yes, Mother. Please go with Simon tomorrow. Otherwise he will die of heart-failure. You will give him some advice as to what he should choose. »

« I said: a red dress and a green sash. He will look lovely. Much better than the shade he has on now. »

« Red will be all right. Also Jesus was dressed in red. But I would say that a red sash would be better on a red dress, or at least it should be embroidered in red » says Mary gently.

« I was saying green because I see that Judas, who is swarthy, looks very smart with those green stripes on his red tunic. »

« But these are not green, my friend! » laughs Judas.

« No? What shade are they then? »

« This hue is called "agate vein". »

« How do you expect me to know that?! They look green to me. I saw that hue also on leaves... »

The Most Holy Virgin interrupts benignly: « Simon is right. It is the exact shade of leaves at the first rain in the month of Tisri... »

« That's it! And since leaves are green I was saying that it was green » concludes Peter happily. The Sweet Mother has settled also this small matter peacefully.

« Will you call the boy, please? » begs Mary. And the child arrives at once with John.

« What is your name? » asks Mary caressing him.

« It is... it was Jabez. But I am expecting a new one... »

« Are you? »

« Yes, Jabez wants a name meaning that I have saved him. You will find one for him, Mother. A name of love and of salvation. »

Mary is pensive... She then says: « Marjiam (Maarhgziam). You -ire the little star in the sea of those saved by Jesus. Do you like it? Thus it will remind you also of Me besides of Salvation. »

« It is beautiful » says the boy joyfully.

« But isn't it a woman's name? » asks Bartholomew.

« With "l" at the end instead of "m", when this tiny drop of Mankind is grown up, you can change his name into the name of a man. For the time being he has the name which his Mother has given him. Is that right? »

The boy says « yes » and Mary caresses him.

Her sister-in-law says to Her: « This wool is good » and she feels Jabez' mantle. « But its shade! What do You think? I would dye it very dark red. It will come out lovely. »

« We will do it tomorrow evening. Because he will have his new mantle. We cannot take it off him now. »

Martha says: « Would you come with me, my little boy? I will take you to a place near here, to see many things, then we will come back here... »

Jabez does not object. He never refuses... but he seems somewhat afraid to go with the woman who is almost unknown to him. He says shyly and gently: « Could John come with me? »

« Of course... »

They go away. And during their absence the various groups continue their conversations. They narrate, comment and sigh on human harshness. Isaac tells what he has been able to find out about the Baptist. Some say he is at Machaerus, some at Tiberias. His disciples have not yet come back...

« But did they not follow him? »

« Yes. But near Doco those who had captured him crossed the river with their prisoner and no one knows whether they went up to the lake or down to Machaerus. John, Matthias and Simeon are moving around to find out and they will certainly not abandon him. »

« And you, Isaac, will certainly not abandon this new disciple. He will stay with Me for the time being. I want him to celebrate Passover with Me. »

« I will celebrate it in Jerusalem, in Johanna's house. She saw me and offered a room for me and my companions. They are all coming this year. And we shall be there with Jonathan. »

« Also those from Lebanon? »

« Yes. Perhaps John's disciples will not be able to come. »

« Johanan's men are coming, did you know? »

« Are they? I will be at the door, near the priests offering sacrifices. I will see them and take them with me. »

« They will be arriving at the last moment. Their time is very limited. But they have a lamb. »

« I have one, too. A marvellous one. Lazarus gave me it. We will sacrifice this one and they can keep theirs for their journey back home. »

Martha comes back with John and the boy who is wearing a little white linen dress and a red overall. On his arm he is carrying a mantle which is also red.

« Do you remember them, Lazarus? See, things are always useful. »

They smile at each other.

Jesus says: « Thank you, Martha. »

« Oh! My Lord! I have a mania for keeping things. I inherited it from my mother. I still have many of my brother's robes. They are dear to me because they were handled by my mother. Now and again I take one to give it to a child. I will now give them to Marjiam. They are a little long for him, but they can be shortened. When Lazarus became of age, he did not want them any more... The typical passing fancy of a child... and he got his own way because my mother adored her Lazarus. »

She caresses her brother fondly and Lazarus takes her beautiful hand, kisses it and says: « And do you not? » They smile at each other.

« That is a gift of Providence » remark many.

« Yes, my whim has done a good turn. Perhaps I shall be forgiven because of that. »

Dinner is ready and everyone sits at his place...

... It is late in the night when Jesus can speak to His Mother in peace. They have gone up to the terrace, and sitting one beside the other, hand in hand, they speak and listen to each other. Jesus is the first to give an account of the things that happened. Then Mary says: « Son, after Your departure, immediately after, a woman came to Me... She was looking for You. A great misery. And a great redemption. But the poor creature needs to be forgiven by You so that she may persevere in her decision. I entrusted her to Susanna saying that she had been cured by You. That is true. I could have kept her with Me if our house were not like a sea-port, where all the boats come in... and many with evil intentions. And the woman is disgusted with the world by now. Do You want to know who she is? »

« She is a soul. But tell Me her name that I may receive her without any mistake. »

« She is Aglae. The Roman mime and sinner whom You began to save at Hebron, who looked for You and found You at the Clear Water and she has already suffered because of her revived honesty. How much she has suffered!... She told Me everything... How horrible!... »

« Her sin? »

« That... and I would say how much more: how horrible the world is. Oh! My Son! Do not trust the Pharisees in Capernaum! They wanted to use the unhappy creature to harm You. They would have used even her... »

« I know, Mother... Where is Aglae? »

« She will be coming with Susanna before Passover. »

« Very well. I will speak to her. I will be here every evening and with the exception of Passover evening, which I am reserving for the family, I will wait for her. All You need do is tell her to wait, if she comes. It is a great redemption, as You said. And such a spontaneous one! I solemnly tell You that in few hearts My seed took root with the same strength as it did in this unhappy soil. And later Andrew helped it to grow until it was fully formed. »

« She told Me. »

« Mother, what did You feel when that ruin approached You? »

« Disgust and joy. I seemed to be on the brink of a hellish abyss, and at the same time I felt as if I were being carried into the blue sky. You are God indeed, My Son, when You work such miracles! »

They remain silent, under the very bright stars and the pale light of the first quarter of the moon, which is tending to become full. Silent, loving each other and resting in each other's love.

199. Jesus Goes to the Lepers of Siloam and Ben Hinnom. The Power of Mary's Word.

24th June 1945.

The beautiful morning invites people to leave their homes and beds and go for a walk and the people living in the Zealot's house get up very early and like bees at sunrise, they go out to breathe the pure air in Lazarus' orchard round the hospitable house. They are soon joined by Lazarus' guests, that is, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, Andrew and James of Zebedee. The sun shines in joyfully through all the windows and wide open doors and illuminates the simple tidy rooms with a golden hue, which brightens the shades of clothes and enlivens the hues of hair and eyes.

Mary of Alphaeus and Salome are busy serving the men who enjoy a hearty appetite. Mary instead is watching one of Lazarus' servants who is sorting Marjiam's hair, cutting it with greater skill than his first barber ever did. « That will do for the time being » says the servant. « Later, when you have offered God the curls of your childhood, I will cut it shorter. The warm season is coming and you will feel better without any hair on your neck. And your hair will grow stronger. It is dry, weak and has been neglected. See, Mary? It needs some attention. I will now put some oil on it to keep it in place. Can you smell the lovely scent, my boy? It is oil which Martha uses. It is very good. Almond, palm and medulla of the finest quality with a rare essence. My mistress told me to keep this little jar for the boy. Oh! Here you are! You now look like the son of a king » and the servant, who is probably the barber of Lazarus' house, pats Marjiam on the cheek, greets Mary and goes away looking quite satisfied.

« Come and let Me dress you » says Mary to the boy who has on only a short tunic with short sleeves; I think it is a shirt or what was used in those days as a shirt. By its fine linen I gather that it must have belonged to Lazarus when a boy. Mary takes off the towel in which Marjiam was enveloped and puts on him a linen vest puckered round the neck and cuffs, and a red woollen robe with wide neck and sleeves. The shining snow-white linen protrudes from the neck-opening and the sleeves of the red dull cloth. Mary's skilful hands must have adjusted the length of the robe and of the sleeves during the night, and it now fits the boy, particularly when Mary girds his waist with a soft sash adorned with a woollen white and red tassel. The child no longer looks like the poor little creature of a few days earlier.

« Now go and play, but do not get dirty, while I get ready » says Mary, caressing him. And the boy bounds out happily, looking for his big friends.

Thomas is the first one to see him: « How lovely you are! Fit for a wedding! You make me cut a poor figure » says plump Thomas who is always merry and genial. And he takes him by the hand saying: « Let us go and see the women. They were looking for you to feed you. »

They go into the kitchen and Thomas causes the two Maries, who are bent over the kitchen-stove, to start, when he shouts in his loud voice: « There is a young man here looking for you » and laughing he introduces the boy who was hiding behind his robust back.

« Oh! dear! Come here that I may give you a kiss! Look, Salome, how lovely he is! » exclaims Mary of Alphaeus.

« He is, indeed! All he needs now is to become more robust. But I'll see to that. Come here, that I may kiss you, too » replies Salome.

« But Jesus is going to entrust him to the shepherds... » objects Thomas.

« Not on your life! My Jesus is mistaken here. What can you men do or pretend you can do? You are only good at quarrelling because, incidentally, you are rather quarrelsome... like little goats which are fond of one another and gore one another with their horns - at eating, speaking and you have a thousand needs and you claim the Master to pay all His attention to you... otherwise you become sulky... Children need mothers. Is that right? What is your name? »

« Marziam. »

« Of course! But blessed be my Mary! She could have given you an easier name! »

« It's almost like Hers! » exclaims Salome.

« Yes, but Hers is more simple. There aren't those letters in the centre of it... They are too many... »

The Iscariot, who has just come in, says: « She gave a name which is precise in its meaning, according to the genuine old language. »

« All right. But it is difficult, and I will take one letter away and say Marziam. It is easier and the world will not collapse because of that. Is that right, Simon? »

Peter, who is passing by the window speaking to John of Endor, looks in and asks: « What do you want? »

« I was saying that I shall call the boy Marziam. It is easier. »

« You are right, woman. If the Mother allows me, I will call him thus, too. But how wonderful you look! So do I, eh? Look! »

In fact he is perfectly tidy, his cheeks have been shaved, his hair cut, his beard trimmed and scented with oil, his clothes show no creases and his sandals are so clean that they look like new ones. I do not know what he has polished them with. The women admire

him and he laughs happily.

The boy has finished eating and goes out to meet his great friend, whom he always calls: « Father ».

And there is Jesus coming from Lazarus' house together with the latter. The boy runs towards Him and Jesus says: « Peace be with us, Marjiam. Let us exchange the kiss of peace. »

Lazarus, greeted by the boy, caresses him and gives him a sweet.

They all gather round Jesus. Also Mary, wearing a turquoise woollen dress on top of which a darker mantle is draped, comes towards Her Son smiling.

« We can go, then » says Jesus. « You, Simon, with My Mother and the boy, if you still wish to buy his robe, now that Lazarus has seen to it. »

« Of course I do! And then... I will be able to say that once I walked beside Your Mother. A great honour. »

« Go, then. Simon, you will take Me to your leper friends... »

« Really, Master? Then, if You do not mind, I will run ahead, to gather them... You will reach me. You know where they are... »

« All right, go. The others can do what they like. You are all free until Wednesday morning. At the third hour everybody is to be at the Golden Gate. »

« I am coming with You, Master » says John.

« Also I » says his brother James.

« And we, too » say the two cousins.

« I will come, too » says Matthew, and Andrew after him.

« And I? I would like to come, too... but if I go to do the shopping, I cannot come... » says Peter, pressed by two desires.

« It can be done. We shall go to the lepers first, while My Mother with the boy goes to the house of a friend in Ophel. We will reach Her later and you will go with Her, while the others and I go to Johanna's. We will meet at Gethsemane for our meal and towards sunset we will come back here. »

« If You allow me, I will go to see some friends... » says Judas Iscariot.

« I have already told you. Do what you like. »

« In that case, I will go to my relatives. Perhaps my father has already come. If he is there, I will bring him to see You » says Thomas.

« What about us two? What do you say, Philip? We could go and see Samuel. »

« Very good » Philip replies to Bartholomew.

« And what about you, John? » Jesus asks the man of Endor. « Do you prefer to remain here and sort out your books, or do you wish to come with Me? »

« Really, I would prefer to come with You... My books... I am already less fond of them. I prefer to read You, the Living Book. »

« Come, then. Goodbye, Lazarus... »

« I will come, too. My legs are a little better, and after we have seen the lepers, I will leave You and go to Gethsemane and wait for You there. »

« Let us go. Peace to you, women. »

They remain all together until they are near Jerusalem. Then they part, the Iscariot goes on his own and enters the town probably through the Gate near the Antonia Tower; Thomas, Philip and Nathanael walk for about ten more yards with Jesus and their companions and then enter the town through the suburb of Ophel, together with Mary and the boy.

« And now, let us go and see those unhappy people! » says Jesus, and turning His back to the town He goes towards a desolate place on the slope of a rocky hill which lies between the two roads from Jericho to Jerusalem. A strange place, similar to a flight of steps after the first slope, up which climbs a path, so that there is a drop of at least three yards from the first terrace to the path, and the same from the second one. It is an arid, dead... extremely sad place.

« Master » shouts Simon the Zealot « I am here. Stop where You are, that I may show You the way... » and the Zealot, who was leaning against a rock to be in the shade, comes forward and leads Jesus up the steps of a path leading towards Gethsemane, but separated from it by the road that from the Mount of Olives goes to Bethany.

« Here we are. I lived among the tombs of Siloam and my friends are here. Some of them. The others are at Ben Hinnom, but cannot come... They would have to cross the road and would be seen. »

« We shall go also to them. »

« Thank You! On their part and mine. »

« Are they many? »

« Winter has killed most of them. But here there are still five of those to whom I had spoken. They are waiting for You. There they are, on the edge of their prison... »

There are probably ten monsters. I say « probably », because if five, who are standing up, are clearly visible, the others, because of the greyish hue of their skin, the deformity of their faces and the fact that they hardly protrude from the stone barrier, cannot be counted accurately and they may be more than five or less. Among those standing up there is only one woman. One can tell only by her white dishevelled hair hanging coarse and dirty over her shoulders down to her waist. There is no other sign by which one could tell her sex, because the disease, which is in an advanced stage, has reduced her to a skeleton, destroying all feminine forms. Likewise among the men, only one still has traces of moustaches and beard. All the others have been depilated by the destructive disease.

They shout: « Jesus, our Saviour, have mercy on us! » and they stretch out their deformed or ulcerated hands. « Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us! »

« What do you want Me to do for you? » asks Jesus looking towards their misery.

« We want You to save us from sin and from this disease. »

« Your will and repentance will save you from sin... »

« But if You wish, You can cancel our sins. At least those, if You do not want to cure our bodies. »

« If I say to You: "Choose either one or the other", which one would you prefer? »

« God's forgiveness, Lord. To be less desolate. »

Jesus has a gesture of approval. He smiles brightly, raises His arms and shouts: « Let it be granted. I want it. »

Granted! The grace might be granted for their sins, or for their disease, or for both, and the five unhappy people remain uncertain. But the apostles have no uncertainty and they can but shout their hosannas when they see the leprosy disappear as fast as a flake of snow that falls on a fire. The five then understand that the full grace has been granted to them. Their shouting resounds like a cry of victory. They embrace one another and throw kisses at Jesus, as they cannot prostrate themselves at His feet. They then turn to their companions saying: « And you still refuse to believe? What miserable wretches are you? »

« Good! Be good! Your poor brothers need time to think. Say nothing to them. Faith is not imposed, it is preached with peace, kindness, patience and perseverance. That is what you will do after your purification, exactly as Simon did with you. After all, the miracle preaches by itself. You who have been cured, will go to the priest as soon as possible. You, who are still ill, wait for us this evening. We will bring you some food. Peace be with you. »

Jesus descends again on to the road followed by the blessings of everybody.

« And now let us go to Ben Hinnom » says Jesus.

« Master... I would like to come. But I realise that I cannot. I will go to Gethsemane » says Lazarus.

« Go, Lazarus. Peace be with you. »

While Lazarus is slowly walking away, the apostle John says: « Master, I will go with him. He walks with difficulty and the road is not very good. I will join You later at Ben Hinnom. »

« Yes, you may go. Let us go. »

They cross the Kidron, walk along the southern side of Mount Tophet and enter the little valley completely strewn with tombs and filth. There is not one tree or any shade from the sun, which blazes down on this southern side heating the stones of these new hellish terraces where the stinking smell of burning rubbish increases

the heat. And inside the sepulchres, similar to crematoria, there are poor bodies, which are wasting away... Siloam may be unpleasant in winter, damp as it is and facing north, but this place must be dreadful in summer...

Simon Zealot lets out a shout calling them, and first three lepers, then two, then one, and another one come, as best they can, to the prescribed limit. There are two women here, and one of them is holding by the hand a horrible looking boy whose face is particularly affected by leprosy. He is already blind... And there is a noble looking man, notwithstanding his miserable state. He speaks on behalf of everybody: « Blessed be the Messiah of the Lord, Who has come down to our Gehenna, to free from it those who hope in Him. Save us, o Lord, because we are perishing! Save us, Saviour! King of the House of David, King of Israel, have mercy on Your subjects. Oh! Shoot of the stock of Jesse, of Whom it is said that in Your time there will be no evil, stretch out Your hand and pick up the remains of Your people. Cast away this death from us, wipe our tears, because that is what is said of You. Call us, Lord, to Your delicious pastures, to Your fresh waters, for we are thirsty. Lead us to the eternal hills where there is no sin or sorrow. Have mercy, Lord... »

« Who are you? »

« John, one of the Temple. I was probably infected by a leper. As You can see, I caught the disease only recently. But these!... Some of them have been awaiting death for years, and this little girl came here even before she could walk. She does not know what is the creation of God. What she knows or what she remembers of the wonders of God are these tombs, this merciless sun and the stars at night. Have mercy on the guilty and the innocent ones, o Lord, our Saviour. » They have all knelt down stretching out their hands.

Jesus weeps at so much misery. He then opens His arms shouting: « Father, I want it: health, life, sight and salvation for them. » He remains with His arms stretched out praying intensely with all His spirit. He seems to become thinner and to rise in prayer, a flame of love, white and powerful in the powerful gold of the sun.

« Mummy, I can see! » is the first cry, which is answered by the shout of the mother who clasps her cured little girl to her heart; then the shouts of the others and of the apostles... The miracle has been worked.

« John, as you are a priest, you will lead your companions in the rite. Peace be with you. Towards evening we shall bring some food also to you. » He blesses and is about to go away.

But John, the leper, shouts: « I want to follow Your steps. Tell me what I must do, where I must go to preach You! »

« In this desolate barren land, which must turn to the Lord. Let

the town of Jerusalem be your field. Goodbye. »

« And now let us go to My Mother » He says to the apostles.

« But where is She? » ask many of them.

« In a house known to John. In the house of the girl who was cured last year. »

They enter the town, covering a good deal of the thickly populated suburb of Ophel until they reach a little white house.

With His usual kind salutation He enters the house, the door of which is half open and one can hear the sweet voice of Mary, the silvery voice of Annaleah and the thick voice of her mother. The girl prostrates herself adoring and her mother kneels down. Mary stands up.

They would like to keep the Master with His Mother. But Jesus promises to go back some other day, He blesses them and says goodbye. Peter goes away with Mary and is very happy. They are both holding the boy by his hands and they look like a happy family. Many people turn round to look at them. Jesus watches them go away smiling.

« Simon is happy! » exclaims the Zealot.

« Why are You smiling, Master? » asks James of Zebedee.

« Because I see a great promise in that group. »

« Which promise, Brother? What do You see? » asks Thaddeus.

« This is what I see: that I shall be able to go away with a peaceful mind, when the time comes. I need not be afraid for My Church. Then it will be small and slender like Marjiam. But My Mother will be there to hold it by the hand and to be its Mother; and there will be Peter as its father. In his honest rough hands I can place the hand of My dawning Church without any worry. He will give it the strength of his protection. My Mother the strength of Her love. And the Church will grow... like Marjiam... He is really the symbol-child! May God bless My Mother, My Peter and their child and ours! Now let us go to Johanna's. »

... And once again, in the evening, we are in the little house in Bethany. Many have already withdrawn, because they were tired. Peter is walking up and down the path, often looking up to the terrace where Jesus and Mary are sitting talking. John of Endor, instead, is speaking to the Zealot sitting under a pomegranate-tree in full blossom.

Mary has already spoken a great deal because I can hear Jesus say: « Everything You told Me is just and I will bear in mind its justice. And I say that also Your advice concerning Annaleah is right. It is a good sign that the man has accepted it so readily. It is true that the people high up in Jerusalem are dull-minded and envious, I could also say that they are filthy. But in the humble people there are pearls of unknown value. I am glad that Annaleah is happy. She belongs more to Heaven than to the earth, and perhaps

the man, who has now understood the concept of the spirit, realises that and he respects her almost religiously. His intention to go elsewhere, so that no human sentiment may upset the pure vow of his girl, proves it. »

« Yes, My Son. Man perceives the perfume of virgins... I remember Joseph. I did not know which words to use. He was not aware of My secret... And yet he helped Me to disclose it with the intuition of a saint. He had perceived the scent of My soul... Also John, see?... How peaceful he is! And everybody seeks him. Even Judas of Kerioth, although... No, Son. Judas has not changed. I know and You know. We do not speak because we do not want to start war. But even if we do not speak, we know... and even if we do not speak, the others realise... Oh! My Jesus! The younger apostles told Me today, at Gethsemane, the episode at Magdala and the other one of Sabbath morning... Innocent children speak... because they see through the eyes of their angels. But also old people have an idea... They are not wrong. He is an elusive being... Everything is elusive in him... and I am afraid of him and I have on My lips the same words of Benjamin at Magdala and of Marjiam at Gethsemane, because I feel the same disgust for Judas as children do. »

« Not everybody can be John!... »

« I do not pretend that! In that case, it would be paradise on the earth. But, see, You told Me about the other John... A man who killed... but I feel only sorry for him. Judas frightens Me. »

« Love him, Mother! Love him, for My sake! »

« Yes, Son, I will. But not even My love will serve. It will only make Me suffer and make him guilty. Oh! Why did he come to You? He upsets everybody, he offends Peter who deserves all respect. »

« Yes. Peter is very good. I would do anything for him, because he deserves it. »

« If he heard You, he would say with his good frank smile: "Ah! My Lord, that is not true!" And he would be right. »

« Why, Mother? » But Jesus smiles, because He has already understood.

« Because You are not satisfying him by giving him a son. He told Me all his hopes, his desires... and Your refusals. »

« And did he not tell You the reasons justifying them? »

« Yes, he did and he added: "It is true... but I am a man, a poor man. Jesus persists in seeing a great man in me. But I know that I am a poor fellow, and so... he could give me a child. I got married to have them... and I will die without any". And he said - pointing at the boy who, delighted because of the lovely dress bought by Peter, had kissed him, saying: "Beloved father" - he said: "See, when this little creature, whom only ten days ago I did not know, says that to me, I feel that I become softer than butter and sweeter

than honey and I weep, because... every day that goes by, takes this child away from me". »

Mary becomes silent, watching Jesus, studying His face, waiting for a word... But Jesus has placed His elbow on His knee, resting His head in His hand and is silent, looking at the green expanse of the orchard.

Mary takes His hand and caressing it She says: « Simon has this great desire... When I went with him, he did nothing but speak to Me about it, and his reasons are so good that... I could say nothing to keep him quiet. They are the same reasons that all women and mothers think of. The boy is not strong. If he were as strong as You were... oh! he could have faced the life of a disciple without any fear. But he is so thin!... He is very intelligent, very good... but nothing more. When a little dove is so delicate, you cannot throw it in the air to let it fly very early, as you do with strong ones. The shepherds are good... but they are still men. Children need women. Why do You not leave him with Simon? While You refuse him a son of his own, born of him, I understand the reason. A son is like an anchor. And Simon, who is destined to such a great task, cannot be hindered by anchors. But You must agree that he is to be the "father" of all the sons You will be leaving him. How can he be a father if he has had no training with a child? A father must be sweet. Simon is good, but not sweet. He is impulsive and intolerant. Only a little creature can teach him the fine art of being indulgent to whoever is weak... Consider Simon's destiny... He is Your successor after all! Oh! I must say that cruel word! But for all the sorrow it causes Me saying it, listen to Me. I would never advise You anything unless it were good. Marjiam... You want to make a perfect disciple of him... But he is only a boy. You... You will be going before he is a man. To whom then can You give him, to complete his formation, better than Simon? Finally, poor Simon, You know how much trouble he has had, with his mother in-law, also because of You. And yet he has not picked up a tiny part of his past, of his freedom of a year ago, to be left in peace by his mother-in-law, whom not even You have been able to change. And his poor wife? She is longing so much to love and be loved. Her mother... oh! Her husband? A dear domineering man... No affection is ever given to her without exacting too much... Poor woman!... Leave her the boy. Listen, Son. For the time being we will take him with us. I will come to Judaea, too. You will take Me to one of My companions of the Temple, who is almost a relative, because she is of the House of David. She lives at Bethzur. I will be pleased to see her, if she is still alive. Then, when we go back to Galilee, we will give him to Porphirea. When we are near Bethsaida, Peter will take him. When we come here, so far, the boy will stay with her. Ah! You are smiling now! So You are going to

please Your Mother. Thank You, My Jesus. »

« Yes, let it be done, as You wish. » Jesus stands up and calls out loud: « Simon of Jonas: come here. »

Peter starts and rushes down the steps. « What do You want, Master? »

« Come here, you usurper and corrupter! »

« Me? Why? What have I done, Lord? »

« You have corrupted My Mother. That is why you wanted to be alone. What shall I do with you? »

But Jesus smiles and Peter recovers confidence. « Oh! » he says. « You really frightened me! But now You are laughing... What do You want from me, Master? My life? I have but that, because You have taken everything... But if You want, I will give it to You. »

« I do not want to take anything from you. I want to give you something. But do not take advantage of your victory and do not disclose the secret to the others, you most artful fellow who defeats the Master by means of the weapon of His Mother's word. You will have the boy, but... »

Jesus can say no more, because Peter, who had knelt down, bounces to his feet and kisses the Master with such delight that he makes the words die on His lips.

« Thank Her, not Me. But remember that this must be of assistance to you, and not an impediment... »

« My Lord, You will not have to repent of the gift... Oh! Mary! May You be always blessed, You holy and good... » And Peter, who has fallen on his knees again, weeps, kissing Mary's hand...

200. Aglae Meets the Master.

25th June 1945.

Jesus goes back to the Zealot's house alone. It is getting dark and the evening is quiet and serene after so much sunshine. Jesus looks in at the kitchen door, says hallo and then goes upstairs, to meditate in the upper room, which has already been prepared for supper. He does not look very happy. He often sighs and walks to and fro in the large room, looking now and again at the surrounding country, which can be seen through the many doors of this large room, shaped like a cube above the ground floor. He goes out also and walks on the terrace making a tour of the house and He stops at the rear side looking at John of Endor who is kindly drawing water from a well and handing it to busy Salome. He looks, shakes His head and sighs.

The power of His glance draws the attention of John, who looks up and asks: « Master, do You want me? »

« No, I was only looking at you. »

« John is good. He helps me » says Salome.

« And God will reward him also for that help. »

After these words Jesus goes back into the room and sits down. He is so engrossed in thought that He does not notice the noisy chattering of many voices and the shuffling of many feet in the entrance corridor and then two light footsteps climbing the outside staircase and approaching the large room. Only when Mary calls Him He looks up.

« Son, Susanna has arrived in Jerusalem with her family and she brought Aglae here at once. Do You wish to listen to her while we are alone? »

« Yes, Mother. At once. And do not let anyone come up until it is all over. I hope to deal with her before the others come back. But please watch that there is no indiscreet curiosity... in no one... and particularly with regard to Judas of Simon. »

« I will watch carefully... »

Mary goes out and shortly afterwards comes back holding by the hand Aglae, who is no longer enveloped in her large grey mantle with her veil pulled over her face and is not wearing high heeled sandals with complicated buckles and strips, which she wore before. She is now dressed like a Jewess, with low flat very plain sandals, like Mary's, a dark blue dress on which her mantle is draped, and a white veil which she is wearing in the style of common Jewish women, that is, simply covering her head with one edge falling on her shoulders so that her face is only partially veiled. Her plain dress, identical with the one worn by most women and the fact that she was with other Galileans prevented her from being recognised.

She enters with her head lowered, blushing at every step, and I think that she would have knelt down on the threshold, if Mary had not kindly pulled her towards Jesus.

« Here, Son, Is the woman who has been looking for You for such a long time. Listen to her » says Mary when She is near Jesus and then withdraws, pulling the curtains over the wide open doors and closing the one which is near the staircase.

Aglae puts down the little bag she was carrying on her shoulder, then she kneels down at Jesus' feet and bursts into tears. She prostrates herself on the floor, her head resting on her arms crossed on the floor.

« Do not weep thus. This is not the time for tears. You should have wept when you were hateful to God. Not now that you love Him and are loved by Him. »

But Aglae continues to weep...

« Do you not believe that it is so? »

She manages to speak through her sobs: « I love Him, it is true, as best I can... But although I know and believe that God is Bounty I cannot possibly hope to be loved by Him. I have sinned too much...

Perhaps one day I will be loved... But I still have to weep so much... For the time being I am alone in my love. All alone... It is not the desperate solitude of past years. It is a solitude full of longing for God, so it is no longer hopeless... but it is so sad... »

« Aglae, how little you still know the Lord! This longing for Him is the proof that God is replying to your love, that He is your friend, Who calls you, invites you and wants you. God is incapable of remaining insensible to the desire of a creature, because He, the Lord and Creator of all creatures, excited that desire in that heart. He excited it because He loved with privileged love the soul that is now longing for Him. The desire of God always precedes the desire of the creature, because He is Most Perfect and therefore His love is by far more eager and ardent than the love of the creature. »

« But how can God love my filth? »

« Do not endeavour to understand with your intelligence. He is an abyss of mercy, which human intelligence cannot understand. But what the intelligence of man cannot understand, the intelligence of love, the love of the spirit does. It understands and confidently penetrates the mystery, which is God, and the mystery of the relationship of the soul with God. Enter, I tell you. Enter, because God wants it. »

« Oh! My Saviour! So I am really forgiven? I am really loved? Must I believe it? »

« Did I ever lie to you? »

« Oh! no, Lord! Everything You told me at Hebron came true. You saved me because Your Name is salvation. You looked for me, a poor lost soul. You gave me the life of this soul, which I was carrying dead within me. You told me that if I had looked for You I would find You. And it was true. You told me that You are wherever man needs a doctor and medicine. And it is true. Everything, everything You told poor Aglae, from the words on that morning in June, to the other words at the Clear Water... »

« So you must believe also these. »

« Yes, I believe, I do believe! But say to me: "I forgive you"! »

« I forgive you in the name of God and of Jesus. »

« Thank You... But now... What must I do? Tell me, My Saviour, what I must do to have Eternal Life. Man becomes corrupt only by looking at me... I cannot live in perpetual fear of being discovered and entrapped... During this journey I trembled every time a man looked at me... I do not want to sin any more neither do I want to cause others to sin. Tell me the road I must follow. I will follow it whatever it may be. You can see that I am strong also in privations... And even if I should die because of too many privations, I am not afraid. I will call death "my friend", because death will rid me of the dangers of the earth, and for ever. Speak, my Saviour. »

« Go to a desert place. »

« Where, my Lord? »

« Wherever you wish. Where your spirit will lead you. »

« Will my spirit, which is just formed, be capable of so much? »

« Yes, because God is leading you. »

« And who will speak to me of God again? »

« Your risen soul, for the time being... »

« Will I see You again? »

« Never again in this world. But before long I will have redeemed you completely and then I will come to your spirit to prepare you to ascend to God. »

« How will my complete redemption take place if I do not see You again? How will You give it to me? »

« By dying for all sinners. »

« Oh! no! You must not die! »

« To give men the Life I must give Myself to death. That is why I came as a human being. Do not weep... You will soon join Me where I shall be after My sacrifice and yours. »

« My Lord! Will I die for You, too? »

« Yes, but in a different way. Your flesh will die hour by hour and because your will wants that. It has been dying for almost one year. When it is completely dead, I will call you. »

« Will I have the strength to destroy my guilty flesh? »

« In your solitude where Satan will attack you with livid violence the more you become worthy of Heaven, you will find an apostle of Mine, once a sinner and later redeemed. »

« Not the blessed apostle who spoke to me of You? He could not have been a sinner because he is too honest. »

« Not that one. Another one. He will reach you at the right moment. He will tell you what you cannot know just now. Go in peace. The blessing of God be with you. »

Aglae, who has been kneeling all the time, bends to kiss the feet of the Lord. She dares no more. She then picks up her sack and turns it upside down. Some plain dresses, a little tinkling purse and an amphora of fine pink alabaster fall out of it.

Aglae puts the dresses into the sack, picks up the purse and says: « This is for the poor. It is what is left of my jewels. I kept only some coins for my journey... because, even if You had not told me, I intended going to a remote place. And this is for You. It is not so sweet as the perfume of Your holiness. But it is the best the earth can give. And I used it for the worst... Here. May God grant me to smell at least like this, in Your presence, in Heaven » and she removes the precious cap of the amphora and pours its contents on to the floor.

Waves of a strong scent of roses rise from the floor bricks, which become impregnated with the precious essence. Aglae puts away the empty amphora saying: « In remembrance of this hour » and she

bends again to kiss Jesus' feet. She then stands up, withdraws backwards, goes out, closes the door...

I hear her steps receding towards the staircase, her voice exchanging a few words with Mary, then the noise of her sandals going down the steps and then nothing else. There is nothing left of Aglae except the little purse at Jesus' feet and the very strong scent in all the room.

Jesus gets up... he picks up the purse, puts it in His bosom, goes towards an opening looking on to the road and smiles seeing the woman going away, all alone, in her Jewish mantle, towards Bethlehem. He makes a gesture of blessing and goes towards the terrace and calls: « Mother. »

Mary goes upstairs quickly: « You made her happy, My Son. She has gone, with strength and peace. »

« Yes, Mother. When Andrew comes in, send him to Me before anybody else. »

Some time goes by, then I hear the voices of the apostles, who have come back... Andrew goes upstairs: « Master, do You want me? »

« Yes, come here. No one will know, but it is only fair that I should tell you. Andrew, thank you in the name of God and of a soul. »

« Thanks? For what? »

« Can you not smell this perfume? It is a souvenir of the Veiled woman. She came. She is saved. »

Andrew turns as red as a cherry, he falls on his knees, and cannot find words... At last he says: « Now I am happy. Blessed be the Lord! »

« Yes, get up. Do not tell the others that she came. »

« I will be quiet, my Lord. »

« You may go. Listen: has Judas of Simon come yet? »

« Yes, he wanted to come with us, telling us... a lot of lies. Why does he do that, Lord? »

« Because he is a spoiled boy. Tell Me the truth: have you quarrelled? »

« No. My brother is too happy with his boy to be anxious to quarrel, and the others, You know... are more prudent. It is true, we are all disgusted, in our hearts. But after supper he is going away... Other friends... he says. Oh! and he despises prostitutes!... »

« Be good, Andrew. You must be happy, too, this evening... »

« Yes, Master. I also have a sweet, although invisible, paternity. I am going. »

After some time the apostles come upstairs in a group with the boy and John of Endor. The women follow them with dishes and lamps. The last to come are Lazarus and Simon. As soon as they enter the room, they exclaim: « Ah! it was coming from here!!! » and

they smell the air saturated with the scent of roses, although the doors are wide open.

« But who scented this room thus? Perhaps Martha? » many of them ask.

« My sister has not left the house, today, after our meal » replies Lazarus.

« Who then? An Assyrian Satrap? » asks Peter facetiously.

« The love of a redeemed woman » Jesus says gravely.

« She might have spared this useless exhibition of redemption and given the poor what she spent. There are so many of them, and they know that we always give. I have not even a small coin left » says the Iscariot angrily. « And we have to buy a lamb, rent a room for the Supper and... »

« But I offered you everything... » says Lazarus.

« That is not fair. The rite loses its beauty. The Law says: "You shall take a lamb for you and your household". It does not say: "You shall accept a lamb". »

Bartholomew turns round all of a sudden, he opens his mouth, but closes it at once. Peter turns crimson in the effort to keep quiet. But the Zealot, who is in his own house, feels he can speak and says: « Those are rabbinical quibbles... May I ask you to forget about them and have, instead, respect for my friend Lazarus. »

« Well done, Simon. » Peter will burst if he does not speak. « Very good! I think also that we are forgetting too much that only the Master is entitled to teach... » Peter has to make an heroic effort to say: « we are forgetting » instead of saying: « Judas is forgetting. »

« It is true... but... I am nervous... I am sorry, Master. »

« Yes. And I also will reply to you. Gratitude is a great virtue. I am grateful to Lazarus. As that redeemed woman was grateful to Me. I pour on Lazarus the perfume of My blessing, also on behalf of those, among My apostles, who are not capable of doing so, I, the head of you all. The woman poured at My feet the perfume of her joy for being saved. She acknowledged the King, she came to the King, before many others upon whom the King bestowed much more love than upon her. Let her do as she wishes without criticising her. She will not be able to be present at My acclamation, or at My unction. Her cross is already upon her shoulders. Peter, you asked whether an Assyrian Satrap had come here. I solemnly tell you that not even the incense of the Magi, so pure and precious, was sweeter or more precious than this. Its essence was mixed with tears and that is why it is so intense: humility supports love and makes it perfect. Let us sit down to our meal, My friends... »

And with the offering of the food, the vision ends.

201. Marjiam's Examination.

26th June 1945.

It must be Wednesday morning because the group of apostles and women, preceded by Jesus and Mary with the boy between them, is approaching the Gate of the Fish. Joseph of Arimathea, who went to meet them as he had promised, is also there. Jesus looks for Alexander, the soldier, but does not see him.

« He is not here today either... I wonder why... »

The crowd is so large that it is quite impossible to inquire of the soldiers, and in any case it might not be wise to do so, as the Jews are more intolerant than ever before festivities; they are also upset because of the capture of the Baptist and they accuse Pilate and his satellites of being accomplices. I realise that the situation is such because of the epithets which are exchanged during squabbles between soldiers and citizens at the Gate, where picturesque... rude insults crack every moment like fireworks.

The women from Galilee are scandalised and they envelop themselves closer in their mantles and veils. Mary blushes, but proceeds without hesitation, as straight as a palm tree, looking at Her Son, Who does not even attempt to make the overexcited Jews see reason or induce the soldiers to be merciful towards the Israelites. And as some rather unpleasant epithet is addressed to the Galilean group, Joseph of Arimathea moves forward towards Jesus and is recognised by the crowd who become silent out of respect for him.

At last the Gate of the Fish is behind them, and the great crowd of people, pouring into the town in waves, rushes along the streets, along with donkeys and herds...

« Master, we are here! » shouts Thomas, who is on the other side of the Gate with Philip and Bartholomew.

« Is Judas not here? », « Why are you here? » ask many.

« No. We came here at daybreak, because we were afraid that You might come earlier. But we have not seen him. I met him yesterday, he was with Sadoc, the scribe, you know, Joseph? The old, very lean man, with a wart under his eye. And there were other people with him... young people. I shouted to him: "Hallo, Judas". But he did not reply, pretending he did not know me. I said: "But what's the matter with him?" and I followed him for a few yards. He left Sadoc, in whose company he looked like a Levite, and went with the other men of his own age... who were certainly not Levites... And now he is not here... And he knew that we had decided to come here! »

Philip does not say anything. Bartholomew tightens his lips so much that they can no longer be seen, in an effort to stifle his opinion, which is rising from his heart.

« Very well! Let us go just the same! I will certainly not weep

because of his absence » says Peter.

« Let us wait for a little while. He may have been held up » says Jesus gravely.

They lean against the wall, on its shady side, the women in one group, the men in another.

They are all wearing their best clothes. Peter, especially, is really magnificent. He is showing off brand new snow-white headgear, adorned with a galloon embroidered in red and gold. He is wearing his best tunic, a very dark garnet-red, adorned with a new belt identical in style with the decoration of his headgear. A knife, like a dagger, with an engraved hilt and an open-work brass sheath, through which the blade shines, hangs from his belt. The others are also armed more or less in the same fashion. Only Jesus is without a weapon. He is wearing a pure white linen tunic and a fleur-de-lis blue mantle, which Mary has certainly woven for Him during the winter months. Marjiam's dress is pale red with a festoon in a darker hue round the neck, cuffs and hem. A similar galloon is embroidered round the waist and the hem of the mantle, which the boy is carrying on his arm and caresses happily. Now and again he raises his head and his little face looks half smiling and half worried... Also Peter has a little parcel in his hand and he holds it very carefully.

Some time goes by... but there is no sign of Judas.

« He did not deign... » grumbles Peter, and perhaps he would say something else, but John, the apostle, says: « Perhaps he is waiting for us at the Golden Gate... »

They go to the Temple. But Judas is not there.

Joseph of Arimathea loses patience. He says: « Let us go. »

Marjiam turns rather pale and kisses Mary saying: « Pray... pray for me! »

« Yes, My dear. Do not be afraid. You are so clever... »

Marjiam then clings to Peter. He presses Peter's hand nervously and as he still does not feel safe, he would like to take Jesus' hand.

« I am not coming, Marjiam. I am going to pray for you. I will see you later. »

« You are not coming? Why, Master? » asks Peter who is greatly surprised.

« Because it is better thus... » Jesus is very serious, I would say that He looks sad. And He concludes: « Joseph, who is a just man, can but approve of My decision »

In fact Joseph does not utter one word and his silence, with an eloquent sigh, confirms his agreement.

« Well, then... let us go... » Peter is somewhat distressed.

Marjiam then clings to John. And they set out, preceded by Joseph to whom people bow deeply showing their respect. Also Simon and Thomas go with them. The others remain with Jesus.

They enter the hall which Jesus also entered once. A young man, who is writing in a corner, springs to his feet on seeing Joseph and he bows so profoundly as almost to touch the floor.

« God be with you, Zacharias. Please call Asrael and Jacob at once. »

The young man goes out and comes back almost at once with two men who are rabbis, or members of the synagogue, or scribes, I do not know. Two sullen personages whose haughtiness subsides only in Joseph's presence. Eight other less imposing men follow them. They sit down leaving the postulants, Joseph of Arimathea included, standing.

« What do you want, Joseph? » asks the senior examiner.

« I wish to present to your wisdom this son of Abraham who has reached the age prescribed to come under the Law and comply with it by himself. »

« Is he a relative of yours? » and they look at one another amazed.

« We are all relatives in God. But the boy is an orphan, and this man, whose honesty I guarantee, has adopted him as he does not wish to be without descendants. »

« Who is the man? Let him reply himself. »

« Simon of Jonas, from Bethsaida in Galilee, married with no children, a fisherman for the world, a son of the Law for the Most High. »

« And you, a Galilean, are taking this paternity upon yourself? Why? »

« It is written in the Law that we must take care of orphans and widows. That is what I am doing. »

« Can he possibly know the Law so well as to deserve to... But, boy, tell me. Who are you? »

« Jabez Marjiam of John, from the country near Emmaus, I was born twelve years ago. »

« So you are a Judaeen. Is it lawful for a Galilean to take care of him? Let us look up the laws. »

« But what am I? A leper or am I cursed? » Peter begins to boil with anger.

« Be quiet, Simon, I will speak for him. I told you that I am standing surety for this man. I know him as if he were of my own household. Joseph the Elder would never propose anything against the Law or the laws. Please examine this child with justice and dispatch. The yard is full of children waiting to be examined. Please make haste, for everybody's sake. »

« But who can prove that the child is twelve years old and was redeemed from the Temple? »

« You can prove it looking up the documents. It is a piece of boring research, but can be done. Boy, did you tell me that you were the first-born? »

« Yes, sir. You will be able to see that, because I was consecrated to the Lord and redeemed with the prescribed offerings. »

« Let us look for these details then... » says Joseph.

« It is not necessary » reply coldly the two captious examiners. « Come here child. Say the Decalogue » and the boy replies without any hesitation. « Give me that roll, Jacob. Read, if you can. »

« Where, rabbi? »

« Wherever you wish. What comes first under your eyes » says Asrael.

« No. Here. Give it to me » says Jacob. He then unfolds the roll and says: « Here. »

« "He then said to them secretly: 'Bless the Lord of Heaven, utter His praise before all the living, because He has been merciful with you. It is right to keep the secret of a king, but it is also right to reveal... »

« That is enough, quite enough! What are these? » asks Jacob, showing the fringes of his mantle.

« The sacred fringes, sir: we wear them to remember the precepts of the Most High Lord. »

« Is it lawful for an Israelite to eat any meat?... » asks Asrael.

« No, sir. Only the ones which are declared clean. »

« Tell me the precepts... »

And the docile child begins the string of: « You shall not... »

« That is enough! As a Galilean, he knows even too much. Man, it is for you now to swear that the boy is of age. »

Peter, with the best grace of which he is still capable after so much rudeness: delivers his paternal speech: « As you have ascertained, my son, at the prescribed age, knows how to conduct himself, as he knows the Law, the precepts, habits, traditions, ceremonies, blessings, prayers. Therefore, as you have verified, both he and I can ask you to declare him of age. In actual fact, I should have stated that before; but the custom has been infringed here, and not by us Galileans, and the child was questioned before the father. But I say this to you: since you have judged him competent, from this moment I am no longer responsible for his actions, neither in the eyes of God nor of men. »

« Pass into the synagogue. »

The little procession passes into the synagogue, followed by the sullen looks of the rabbis, whom Peter has put in their place. While Marjiam is standing in front of the lecterns and lamps, they cut his hair, shortening it so that it covers his ears, whereas before it reached down to his shoulders. Peter then opens his little parcel and takes out of it a beautiful red woollen belt embroidered in gold-yellow and ties it round the boy's waist, and while the priests are tying little leather strips on his forehead and arm, Peter is busy fixing the sacred fringes on to the mantle which Marjiam has

handed over to him. And Peter is deeply moved when he intones the hymn praising the Lord!...

The ceremony is over. They slip out quickly and Peter says: « Thank goodness! I could not stand it any longer! What do you think, Joseph? They did not even fulfil the rite. It does not matter. You, my son, have Who will consecrate you... Let us go and get the lamb for the sacrifice of praise to the Lord. A little lamb, as dear as you are. And I thank you, Joseph! Say "thanks" to this great friend. If you had not been there, they would have thoroughly abused us. »

« Simon, I am glad I have been useful to a just man like you, and I beg you to come to my house in Bezetha for dinner. Of course, you will bring all the others. »

« Let us go and tell the Master. For me... it is too great an honour! » says Peter humbly, but he is beaming with joy.

They go through the yards and the halls once again to the yard of the women, where Marjiam's friends congratulate him. The men then go into the hall of the Israelites where Jesus is present with His disciples. They all join together in a dignified happy union, and while Peter goes to sacrifice the lamb, they all proceed through porches and yards to the first enclosure.

How happy is Peter with his boy, who is now a perfect Israelite! He is so happy that he does not notice the wrinkle that furrows Jesus' forehead. So happy that he does not notice the rather oppressive silence of his companions. It is only in the hall of Joseph's house - when the boy, who is asked the ritual question as to what he wants to do in future, replies: « I will be a fisherman like my father » - that Peter, weeping, remembers and understands...

« But... Judas has spoiled our feast with a drop of poison... And You are upset, Master... and that is why the others are sad. Forgive me if I did not notice it before... Ah! Judas!... »

I think that everybody's heart is sighing like Peter's. But Jesus, to remove the poison, strives to smile and says: « Do not worry, Simon. We miss only your wife... I was thinking also of her; she is so good and is always sacrificed. But she will soon have her joy, unexpected but so welcome. Let us think of the good that is in the world. Come. So Marjiam answered all the questions correctly? I knew he would... »

Joseph comes back into the hall after giving instructions to his servants. « I thank you all » he says « for making me feel young again with this ceremony and for the honour of having in my house the Master, His Mother, His relatives and you all, my dear fellow disciples. Come into the garden. It is cool and the flowers... » and it all ends.

202. At the Temple on the Eve of Passover.

27th June 1945.

It is the eve of Passover. Jesus is alone with His apostles, because the women have not joined the group, and He is waiting for Peter, who has taken the lamb of Passover to be sacrificed. While they are waiting and Jesus is speaking to Marjiam of Solomon, Judas crosses the large yard. He is with a group of young men speaking gesticulating ostentatiously and assuming an inspired attitude. He shakes his mantle continuously, then drapes it round himself posing skilfully. I do not think that Cicero looked so stately when delivering his orations...

« Look, Judas is over there! » says Thaddeus.

« He is with a group of saforim » remarks Philip.

And Thomas says: « I am going to hear what he is saying » and he runs away before Jesus may express a foreseeable « don't ».

Oh! Jesus' countenance! A countenance of suffering and of severe judgement. Marjiam who was looking at Him while He was speaking kindly and somewhat sadly of the great king of Israel, notices the sudden change, is almost frightened by it and shakes Jesus' hand to call Him back to His senses exclaiming: « Don't look! Don't look! Look at me, for I love You. »...

Thomas is successful in reaching Judas without being seen by him and follows him for a few steps. I do not know what he hears, but I know that he bursts into a sudden thundering exclamation which causes many people to turn round, and in particular Judas, who becomes livid with rage: « How many rabbis there are in Israel! I congratulate you, new light of wisdom! »

« I am not a flint-stone. I am a sponge. And I absorb. And when the desire of those starving for wisdom demands it, I squeeze out all my juices of life to give them... » Judas is pompous and contemptuous.

« You sound like a perfect echo. But an echo can only exist, if it is near the Voice. Otherwise it fades away, my friend. You seem to be going away from it. He is over there. Are you not coming? »

Judas changes colour, with the rancorous disgusting countenance of his worst moments. But he controls himself. He says: « Goodbye, my friends. Here I am with you, Thomas, my dear friend. Let us go to the Master at once. I did not know that He was here in the Temple. If I had known, I would have looked for Him » and he clasps Thomas' shoulders with his arm, as if he were very fond of him.

But Thomas, who is placid but not foolish, is not deceived by such protestations... and asks rather astutely: « What? Don't you know that it is Passover? And do you think that the Master is not faithful to the Law? »

« Oh! Never on your life! But last year He went about, and

spoke... I remember this very day. He attracted me by means of His royal authoritativeness... Now... He looks to me like one who has lost vigour. Don't you think so? »

« No, I don't. I think He looks like one who has lost esteem. »

« Yes, in His mission, you are quite right. »

« No. You have misunderstood. He has lost men's esteem. And you are one of those responsible for that. Shame on you! » Thomas no longer smiles. He is grave and his words lash Judas like a whip.

« Watch how you speak! » threatens the Iscariot.

« Watch how you behave. We are two Jews here, with no witnesses. And that is why I am speaking to you. And I say once again: "Shame on you!". And now be quiet. Don't feign tragedy and don't start lamenting, otherwise I will speak in front of everybody. There is the Master and your companions. Control yourself. »

« Peace to You, Master... »

« Peace to you, Judas of Simon. »

« It is a great pleasure for me to find You here... I would like to speak to You »

« Do so. »

« You know I wanted to tell You... Can You not listen to me aside? »

« You are among your companions. »

« But I wanted You only. »

« At Bethany I am alone with those who want Me and look for Me, but you do not look for Me. You avoid Me... »

« No, Master. You cannot say that. »

« Why did you offend Simon and Me yesterday, and Joseph of Arimathea, your companions and My Mother and the other women as well? »

« I did? But I did not see you! »

« You did not want to see us. Why did you not come, as we had arranged, to bless the Lord because of an innocent child who was being accepted by the Law? Tell Me! You did not even feel the need to inform us that you were not coming. »

« There is my father! » shouts Marjiam who sees Peter coming back with his lamb, which has been slaughtered, eviscerated and enveloped once again in its skin. « Oh! Micah and the others are with him! I am going, can I go and meet them and hear of my old father? »

« Yes, son, go » says Jesus caressing him. And touching John of Endor on his shoulder, he says to him:

« Please, go with him and... keep them there for a little while. » And He addresses Judas once again:

« Tell Me! I am waiting for your reply. »

« Master a sudden obligation... an unbreakable one... I was very sorry But... »

« But was there not one person in Jerusalem who could bring your justification, supposing you had one? And even that would have been a fault. I remind you that recently a man did not bury his father to follow Me, and that these brothers of Mine left their father's house, amongst imprecations, to follow Me, and that Simon and Thomas, and Andrew, James, John, Philip and Nathanael with them, left their families and Simon Cananean left his wealth to give it to Me and Matthew his sins to follow Me. And I could go on mentioning one hundred more names. There are people who leave their lives, their very lives, to follow Me to the Kingdom of Heaven. But since you are so selfish, at least be polite. You have no charity, at least be courtly. Since you like them, imitate the false Pharisees who betray Me, who betray us behaving like well-bred people. It was your duty to be free to be with us yesterday, so as not to offend Peter, for whom I demand respect from everybody. But if you had at least sent notice... »

« I made a mistake. But now I was coming to You on purpose, to tell You that for the same reason I cannot come tomorrow. You know... I have friends of my father and... »

« That is enough. Go with them. Goodbye. »

« Master... are You angry with me? You told me that You would act as my father... I am a reckless son, but a father forgives... »

« I forgive you. But go away. Do not keep your father's friends waiting, as I do not keep waiting the friends of holy Jonah. »

« When are You leaving Bethany? »

« At the end of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Goodbye. »

Jesus turns round and goes towards the peasants who are in an ecstasy over Marjiam who is so changed. He takes a few steps and then stops because of Thomas' remark: « By Jehovah! He wanted to see in You the authoritativeness of a King! He got what he wanted!... »

« I beg you all to forget the incident, as I am striving to forget it. I order you to make no mention of it to Simon of Jonah, John of Endor and the little one. For reasons which you can easily understand, it is better not to grieve or scandalise those three. And no word about it at Bethany, with the women. My Mother is there, do not forget it. »

« Do not be concerned, Master. »

« We will do all we can to make amends. »

« And to comfort You » they all say.

« Thank you... Oh! Peace to you all. Isaac found you. I am glad. Enjoy your Passover in peace. My shepherds will be as many good brothers to you. Isaac, before they go away, bring them to see Me. I want to bless them once again. Have you seen the boy? »

« Oh! Master! How well he is! He is already much healthier! We will tell the old man. He will be so happy. This just man has told us

that Jabez is now his son... It is a gift of Providence! We will tell him everything. »

« Also that I am a son of the Law. And that I am happy. And I always remember him. And he must not weep for me or for my mother. She is near me and she is near him like an angel and he will always have her, also in the hour of death, and if Jesus has already opened the gates of Heaven, well, then mummy will come to meet the old father and she will be more beautiful than an angel and will take him to Jesus. Jesus told me. Will you tell him? Will you be able to tell him properly? »

« Certainly, Jabez. »

« No. Now I am Marjiam. The Lord's Mother gave me that name. It is as if you said Her name. She loves me so much. She puts me to bed in the evening and She makes me say the prayers which She made Her Child say. And she wakes me up with a kiss, She dresses me and teaches me many things. Also Jesus does. But they teach me so gently that I learn without any difficulty. My Master!!! » The child presses against Jesus with an attitude of adoration and love that is really moving.

« Yes, tell him everything, also not to give up hope. This angel prays for him and I bless him. I bless you, too. Go. Peace be with you. »

The two groups part, each going its own way.

203. The « Our Father ».

28th June 1945.

Jesus comes out with His apostles from a house near the walls and I think that they are still in the Bezetha district, because to go outside the walls, one must pass again by Joseph's house, near the Gate, which I hear people call Herod's Gate. The town is semideserted in the placid moonlit evening. I understand that they have celebrated Passover in one of Lazarus' houses, which, however, is not the one of the Last Supper. They are, in fact, poles apart. One in the north, the other in the south of Jerusalem.

On the doorstep Jesus takes leave, with His usual kindness, of John of Endor, who is to take care of the women and whom He thanks for accepting that task. He kisses Marjiam, who has also come to the door and then sets out for Herod's Gate.

« Where are we going, Lord? »

« Come with Me. I am taking you to crown Passover with a rare longed for pearl. That is why I wanted to be alone with you. My apostles! Thank you, My friends, for your great love for Me. If you could see how it comforts Me, you would be amazed. See: I proceed among continuous frictions and disappointments. Disappointments for you. You must convince yourselves that I am never

disappointed, because I have not been granted the gift of ignoring... That is another reason why I advise you to agree to be guided by Me. If I allow this or that thing, do not hinder it. If I do not interfere to put an end to something, do not endeavour to do it yourselves. Each thing is to be done at the right moment. Trust Me, in everything. »

They are at the north-east corner of the circuit of the walls; they turn round it and proceed along the hill of Moriah to a point where they can cross the Kidron by a little bridge.

« Are we going to Gethsemane? » asks James of Alphaeus.

« No. Farther up. To the Mount of Olives. »

« Oh! It will be lovely! » says John.

« Also the boy would have liked it » whispers Peter.

« Oh! There will be many more opportunities for him to come here! He was tired. He is only a boy. I want to give you a great thing because the right moment has now come for you to have it. »

They climb up among the olive-trees, leaving Gethsemane on the right, until they reach the top of the mountain, where the leaves of the olive-trees are rustling in the wind.

Jesus stops and says: « Let us stop... My dear disciples who are to continue My work in future, come near Me. Many a time you have said to Me: "Teach us to pray as You pray. Teach us, as John taught his disciples, so that we may pray with the same words as our Master". And I always replied to you: "I will do that when I see in you the minimum sufficient preparation so that the prayer may not be a vain formula of human words, but a real conversation with the Father". That moment has now come. You now possess what is necessary to know the words worth being said to God. And I want to teach you them this evening, in peace and in our mutual love, in the peace and love of God and with God, because as true Israelites we have fulfilled the Passover precept and we have complied with God's commandment concerning love for God and our neighbour. One of you has suffered very much during the past days. He suffered undeservedly, also because of his effort to repress his indignation roused by the undeserved deed. Yes, Simon of Jonah, come here. Not one throb of your honest heart has been concealed from Me, neither has there been any grief that I have not shared with you. Both I and your companions... »

« But You, my Lord, have been offended more than I was! And that was for me a greater pain,... no... a more sensitive... no, not that... a more... more. Well: that Judas should have loathed to be present at my feast, has hurt me as a man. But to see You grieved and offended has hurt me in a different way and I suffered twice as much... I... I do not want to boast and show off by using Your words... But I must say, and if it is due to pride in me, tell me, I must say that I suffered with my soul... and it hurts more. »

« It is not pride, Simon. You suffered spiritually, because Simon of Jonah, a fisherman in Galilee, is changing into Peter of Jesus, the Master of the spirit, so that also His disciples are becoming active and wise in the spirit. It is for this progress of Yours in the life of the spirit, it is because of such progress of you all, that I want to teach you the prayer this evening. How much you have changed after the solitary retreat! »

« Everybody, Lord? » asks Bartholomew who sounds rather incredulous.

« I understand what you mean... But I am speaking to you eleven. Not to anyone else... »

« But what is the matter with Judas of Simon, Master? We do not understand him any more... He seemed so changed, but now, since we left the lake... » says Andrew desolately.

« Be quiet, brother. I have the key to the mystery! A little bit of Beelzebub has stuck to him. He went to look for it in the cave at Endor to astonish us... and he was served as he deserved! The Master said it on that day... At Gamala the demons rushed into the pigs. At Endor the demons came out of that poor wretch of John and went into him... We know that... we know... Let me tell them, Master! I have it here, in my throat, and if I do not say it, it will not come out and it will poison me... »

« Be good, Simon! »

« Yes, Master... and I would assure You that I will not be rude to him. But I say and think that since Judas is a vicious fellow - and we all know that - he is somewhat similar to a pig... and obviously demons willingly choose pigs when... changing their dwelling places. There it is: I have said it. »

« Do you think it is thus? » asks James of Zebedee.

« What else can it be! There is no other reason why he should be so intractable. He is worse now than he was at the Clear Water! And there one might have thought that the place and the season made him so nervous. But now... »

« There is another reason, Simon... »

« Tell us, Master. I will be happy to change my mind about my companion. »

« Judas is jealous. He is agitated because he is jealous. »

« Jealous? Of whom? He is not married, and even if he were, and went with women, I think that none of us would be rude to a fellow disciple... »

« He is jealous of Me. Just think: Judas changed after Endor and after Esdraelon. That is, when he saw that I was taking care of John and of Jabez. But now that John, above all, John, will be going away, as he will be leaving Me and staying with Isaac, you will see that Judas will become merry and good once again... »

« Well!... But You are not going to tell me that he is not possessed

by a little demon. And above all... No, I will say it! And above all You will not tell me that he has improved during these last months. I was jealous as well, last year... I would not have liked anybody except the six of us, the first six, do You remember? Now, now... Let me invoke God just this once as witness to what I am going to say. Now I say that the more the disciples increase in numbers around You, the happier I am. Oh! I would like to bring all men to You and I would also like to have all the necessary means to help those who are in need, so that misery may not hinder anyone from coming to You. God sees whether I am telling the truth. But why am I thus now? Because I let You change me. He... has not changed. On the contrary... Yes, Master... A little demon has possessed him... »

« Do not say that. Do not think that. Pray that he may be cured. Jealousy is a disease... »

« Of which one can be cured, beside You, if one wants to. Ah! I will put up with him, for Your sake... But, how difficult it is!... »

« I gave you a prize for that: the boy. And now I will teach you how to pray... »

« Oh! yes, Brother. Let us speak of that... and let us remember my namesake only as one who is in need of prayer. I think he has already had his punishment. He is not with us just now! » says Judas Thaddeus.

« Listen. When you pray, pray thus: "Our Father, Who are in Heaven, may Your name be held holy, Your Kingdom come on earth as it is in Heaven, and may Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us today our daily bread, forgive us our debts as we forgive those who are in debt to us, and do not put us to the test, but save us from the Evil One". »

Jesus has stood up to say the prayer and everybody has imitated Him, attentively and moved.

« Nothing else is required, My friends. Everything man needs for his spirit and his flesh and blood is contained in these words as in a golden ring. With this prayer you ask for what is useful to the former and the latter two. And if you do what you ask for, you will gain eternal life. It is so perfect a prayer that neither the storms of heresies nor the course of ages will undermine it. Christianity will be split by Satan's bite and many parts of My mystic body will be torn off and separated, forming independent cells in the vain desire to form a body as perfect as the mystical Body of Christ will be, which is the one formed by all the faithful believers united in the apostolic Church, the only true Church, as long as the earth exists. But those separated little cells, devoid of the gifts, which I will leave to the Mother Church to nourish My children, will always be denominated Christian, because of their worship of the Christ, and in their error they will always remember that they derive from the

Christ. Well, they will pray with this universal prayer as well. Remember it carefully. Meditate on it continuously. Practise it in your actions. You need nothing else to sanctify yourselves. If one were alone, in a heathen place, without churches, without books, one would already have all the knowledge to meditate on in this prayer and a church in his heart for this prayer. One would have a safe rule of sanctification.

"Our Father".

I call Him: "Father". Father of the Word, Father of the Incarnate. That is how I want you to call Him because you are all one with Me, if you remain in Me. Once man had to prostrate himself with his face on the ground to whisper, trembling with fear: "God!" He who does not believe in Me and in My word is still in such paralyzing fear... Watch the interior of the Temple. Not God, but the very remembrance of God is concealed from the eyes of the faithful by a treble veil. He who prays is separated by remoteness and veils, everything has been devised to say to him: "You are mud. He is Light. You are contemptible. He is Holy. You are a slave. He is King".

But now!... Stand up! Come near Me! I am the Eternal Priest. I can take you by the hand and say: "Come". I can grasp the veils and draw them, and thus throw open the inaccessible place closed so far. Closed? Why? Closed by Sin, yes. But even more closed by the dispirited thought of man. Why closed if God is Love, if God is father? I can, I must, I want to take you not into the dust, but into the azure; not far, but near; not as slaves, but as children on to the heart of God.

Say: "Father! Father!". And never tire repeating this word. Do you not know that every time you say it, Heaven shines because of God's joy? If you said with true love no other word but that one, you would be saying a prayer pleasing to the Lord. "Father! Father!" the little ones say to their fathers. It is the first word they say: "Mother, father". You are the little children of God. I begot you from the old man you were and whom I destroyed by means of My love to give birth to the new man, the Christian. Call, therefore, the Most Holy Father Who is in Heaven, with the first word that little children learn.

"May Your Name be held holy".

Oh! Name, which is holier and sweeter than any other name and which the fear of the guilty taught you to conceal under a different one. No, no longer Adonai. He is God. He is the God Who in an excess of love created Mankind. And Mankind, from now onwards, with lips cleansed by the purification that I am preparing, should call Him by His Name, awaiting to fully comprehend the true meaning of the Incomprehensible One, when the best children of Mankind, united to Him, will rise to the Kingdom that I have

come to establish.

“Your Kingdom come on earth as it is in Heaven”.

Desire its coming with all your strength. If it came, it would be the joy of the earth. The Kingdom of God in hearts, in families, among citizens and nations. Suffer, work, sacrifice yourselves for this Kingdom. Let the earth be a mirror reflecting the life of Heaven in each individual. It will happen. All this will happen one day. Centuries of tears and blood, of errors, persecutions, of darkness relieved by flashes of light radiating from the mystical Light of My Church will precede the moment in which the earth will possess the Kingdom of God. Oh! My Church: although a boat, it will never be sunk, as it is also a cliff unshakeable by breakers and will hold high the Light, My Light, the Light of God. And it will then be like the intense blazing of a star which, having reached the perfection of its existence, disintegrates, an immeasurable flower of the ethereal gardens, to breathe its existence and love at the feet of its Creator, in a rutilant throb. But it will most certainly come. And then there will be the perfect, blessed eternal Kingdom of Heaven.

“And may Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven”.

The submission of one's will to the will of another person can be accomplished only when one reaches perfect love for that creature. The submission of one's will to God's can be achieved only when one achieves possession of the theological virtues in a heroic degree. In Heaven, where everything is faultless, God's will is done. You, children of Heaven, must learn to do what is done in Heaven.

“Give us today our daily bread”.

When you are in Heaven, God alone will be your nourishment. Beatitude will be your food. But here, you still need bread and since you are the children of God, it is only fair to say: "Father, give us some bread". Are you afraid He will not hear you? Oh! no! Just think: If one of you has a friend and, if he finds out that he has no bread to offer another friend or relative, who has arrived in the middle of the night, goes to his friend saying: "Lend me three loaves, because a guest has arrived and I have nothing to give him to eat", can he possibly hear his friend answer him from inside the house: "Do not bother me, I have already bolted the door and my children are already sleeping beside me. I cannot get up and give you what you want"? No. If he has applied to a true friend and if he insists, he will receive what he asks for. He would receive it also if he applied to someone who was not a very good friend. He would be satisfied because of his insistence, as his friend, of whom he asked the favour, will hasten to give him what he wants, so that he may no longer be bothered.

But when you pray the Father, you do not turn to a friend of the

earth, but you apply to the Perfect Friend Who is the Father of Heaven. That is why I say to you: "Ask, and it will be given to you, search, and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to You". For the one who asks will receive, the one who searches always finds, the one who knocks will have the door opened to him. What father among you would hand his son a stone when he asked for bread? Or hand him a snake instead of a roasted fish? A father who did that to his own children would be a criminal. I have already told you and I will repeat it to convince you to be good and trustful. As a sound-minded person would not give a scorpion instead of an egg, with what greater bounty will God give you what you ask for! Because He is good, whereas you are more or less wicked. Ask, therefore, the Father for your bread with humble filial love.

"Forgive us our debts as we forgive those who are in debt to us"

There are material debts and spiritual ones. There are also moral debts. The money or the goods that one has received as a loan and must give back, are a material debt. Esteem extorted and not given back and love wanted and not returned are a moral debt. To obey God, from Whom one would exact much giving Him very little, and to love Him are a spiritual debt. He loves us and is to be loved, as a mother, a wife, a son, from whom so much is exacted, are to be loved. A selfish man wants to receive, but does not give. But an egoist is poles apart from Heaven. We are in debt to everybody. From God to a relative, from a relative to a friend, from a friend to our neighbour, to a servant, to a slave, because they are all beings like ourselves. Woe to him who does not forgive! He will not be forgiven. God, out of justice, cannot remit the debt of a man who is in debt to Him, the Most Holy One, if man does not forgive his fellow man.

"Do not put us to the test, but save us from the Evil One".

The man who did not feel the need to share the Passover supper with us, asked Me, less than a year ago: "What? You asked not to be tempted and to be helped against temptation?". There were only the two of us... and I replied. Later we were four, in a lonely area, and I replied once again. But still to no avail, because when dealing with an unyielding spirit it is necessary to open a breach by demolishing the evil fortress of his stubbornness. And I will, therefore, repeat it once, ten times, one hundred times until everything is accomplished.

But since you are not hardened by strange doctrines or by even stranger passions, I beg you to pray thus. Pray with humility that God may avert temptations from you. Oh! humility! To know oneself for what one is! Without losing heart, but to know oneself! Say: "I may give in, even if I do not think I could do it, because I

am but an imperfect judge of myself. Therefore, Father, if possible, deliver me from temptations by keeping me so close to You as not to allow the Evil One to harm me". Because, remember, it is not God Who tempts you to evil things, but it is the Evil One who tempts you. Pray the Father that He may support your weakness so that it may not be led into temptation by the Evil One.

I have told you everything, My beloved ones. This is My second Passover among You. Last year we shared only our bread and the lamb. This year I give you My prayer. I will have other gifts for My future Passovers amongst you, so that, when I shall have gone where the Father wants Me, you may have a remembrance of Me, the Lamb, at every feast of the Mosaic lamb.

Get up and let us go. We shall go back to town at dawn. Nay: tomorrow, you, Simon, and you, My brother (and He points at Judas), will go to fetch the women and the boy. You, Simon of Jonah, and you all, will stay with Me until they come back. Then we shall all go to Bethany together. »

And they go down to Gethsemane, where they enter the house to rest.

204. Jesus to the Gentiles: Faith Is Built as Your Temples.

29th June 1945.

In the peace of the Sabbath Jesus rests near a flax field in bloom belonging to Lazarus. Rather than « near » I should say that He is immersed in the tall flax, and sitting on the edge of a furrow He is engrossed in thought. Only an odd silent butterfly flutters near Him or a lizard rustles nearby, looking at Him with its jet-black eyes, raising its little triangular head with its light throbbing throat. There is nothing else. In the late afternoon also the least sigh of wind has become silent among the tall stalks.

From far away, perhaps from Lazarus' garden, the song of a woman can be heard and the joyful shouting of the boy who is playing with someone. Then one, two, three voices call: « Master! Jesus! »

Jesus rouses Himself and stands up. Although the fully grown flax is very tall, Jesus emerges a good height above the blue-green sea.

« There He is, John! » shouts the Zealot.

And John in turn calls: « Mother! The Master is here, in the flax field. »

And while Jesus approaches the path leading to the houses, Mary arrives.

« What do You want, Mother? »

« My Son, some Gentiles have come with some ladies. They say that they heard from Johanna that You were here. They also said

that they have been waiting for You all these past days near the Antonia... »

« Ah! I know! I will come at once. Where are they? »

« At Lazarus' house, in his garden. He is loved by the Romans and does not feel the repugnance towards them that we do. He let them go into the large garden with their carts, so that no one would be scandalised... »

« All right, Mother. They are Roman soldiers and ladies. I know. »

« And what do they want from You? »

« What many in Israel do not want: light. »

« But how and what do they believe You are? God perhaps? »

« Yes, in their way of thinking. It is easier for them to accept the idea of the incarnation of a god in mortal flesh, than it is for us. »

« So they believe in Your faith... »

« Not yet, Mother. I must destroy theirs, first. For the time being they consider Me a wise man, a philosopher, as they say. But both their desire to become acquainted with philosophical doctrines and their inclination to believe the incarnation of a god as possible, are of great help to Me in leading them to the true Faith. Believe Me, they are more ingenuous in their way of thinking, than many Israelites. »

« But are they sincere? It is rumoured that the Baptist... »

« No. Had it been for them, John would be free and safe. Nonrebellious people are left in peace. On the contrary I can assure You that for them to be a prophet - they say a philosopher because the loftiness of supernatural wisdom is still philosophy to them - is a guarantee of respect. Do not worry, Mother. No harm will come to Me from that end... »

« But the Pharisees... if they find out, what will they say about Lazarus also? You are You... and You are to bring the Word to the world. But Lazarus!... They already offend him so much... »

« But they cannot touch him. They know that he is protected by Rome. »

« I leave You, Son. Here is Maximinus, he will take You to the Gentiles » and Mary, Who had walked beside Jesus all the time, withdraws quickly, and goes towards the Zealot's house. Jesus on the other hand goes through a little iron door in the garden wall, into a distant part of the garden, where it actually becomes an orchard and precisely near the place where Lazarus will be buried later.

Lazarus also is there, but no one else. « Master, I took the liberty of giving them hospitality... »

« You did the right thing. Where are they? »

« Over there, in the shade of the boxes and laurels. As You can see they are at least five hundred steps from the house. »

« That is all right... May Light come to you all. »

« Hail, Master! » greets Quintilian, who is wearing civilian clothes.

The ladies stand up to greet Jesus. They are Plautina, Valeria and Lydia; there is also another elderly woman, but I do not know who she is or whether she is of the same rank as the others. They are all wearing very plain clothes without any sign of distinction.

« We were anxious to hear You, but You never came. I was on duty when You arrived. But I never saw You. »

« Neither have I seen at the Gate of the Fish a soldier, who was a friend of Mine. His name was Alexander... »

« Alexander? I am not sure whether he is the one I am thinking of. I know that some time ago, in order to calm the Jews, we had to remove a soldier who was guilty of... speaking to You. He is now at Antioch. But perhaps he will come here again. How boring they are... they want to rule even now that they are subject! One has to be clever to avoid greater trouble... They make life difficult for us, believe me... But You are good and wise. Will You speak to us? I may be leaving Palestine soon, and I would like to have something to remind me of You. »

« Yes, I will speak to you. I never disappoint anyone. What do you wish to know? »

Quintilian looks at the ladies inquisitively.

« Whatever You wish, Master » says Valeria.

Plautina stands up again and says: « I have been thinking a lot... there is so much I would like to know... everything, to be able to judge. But if I may ask, I would like to know how can a faith, Yours, for instance, be built on a ground which You said is devoid of true faith. You said that our beliefs are vain. So we have nothing. How can we achieve something? »

« I will take as an example something that you have. Your temples. Your really beautiful sacred buildings, the only imperfection of which is that they are dedicated to Nothing, can teach you how one can achieve faith and where to place it. Watch. Where are they built? Which place, if at all possible, is chosen for them? How are they built? The place is generally spacious, open and elevated. And when it is not spacious and open, it is made so by demolishing what encumbers and obstructs it. If it is not elevated, they increase its height by means of a stereobate more elevated than the normal three steps employed for temples placed on a natural elevation. They are generally surrounded by a sacred enclosure, formed by colonnades and porches inside which are enclosed the trees sacred to the gods, fountains and altars, statues and stelae and are usually preceded by a propylaeum beyond which is the altar where prayers to the deity are said. In front of it there is the place for the sacrifice, because the sacrifice precedes the prayer. Very often, and particularly in the more magnificent ones, a peristyle encircles them with a garland of precious

marbles. Inside there is the front vestibule, outside or inside the peristyle, the cell of the deity and the rear vestibule. Marbles, statues, pediments, acroteria and gables, all polished, precious and decorated, make the temple a most noble building also for the coarsest sight. Is it not so? »

« Yes, it is, Master. You have seen and studied them very well » confirms Plautina praising Jesus.

« But we know that He never left Palestine! » exclaims Quintilian.

« I never left Palestine to go to Rome or Athens. But I am acquainted with Greek and Roman architecture and I was present when the genius of man decorated the Parthenon because I am wherever there is life or a manifestation of life. Wherever a wise man meditates, a sculptor sculpts, a poet writes, a mother sings over a cradle, a man toils in fields, a doctor fights diseases, a living being breathes, an animal lives, a tree vegetates, I am there together with Him from Whom I come. In the rumble of the earthquake or in the peal of thunder, in the light of stars or in flood-tide and ebb-tide, in the flight of eagles or in the buzzing of mosquitoes, I am there with the Most High Creator. »

« So... You... You know everything. Both thoughts and deeds of men? » asks Quintilian again.

« Yes, I do. »

The Romans look at one another amazed. There is a long silence then Valeria timidly begs: « Expand on Your idea, Master, so that we may know what to do. »

« Yes. Faith is built as they build the temples of which you are so proud. They make space for the temple, they free it from obstructions, they elevate it. »

« But where is the temple in which one should put faith, the true deity? » asks Plautina.

« Faith, Plautina, is not a deity. It is a virtue. There are no deities in true faith. There is only One and True God. »

« So... He is up there, in His Olympus, all by Himself? And what does He do if He is alone? »

« He is Self-sufficient and takes care of everything in creation. I have just told you that God is present also in the buzzing of a mosquito. He does not get bored, do not worry. He is not a poor man, the master of an immense empire in which he feels he is hated and lives trembling with fear. He is Love and lives loving. His Life is continuous Love. He is Self-sufficient because He is infinite and most powerful, He is Perfection. So numerous are the things created that live because of His continuous will, that He has no time to grow weary. Tedium is the fruit of idleness and vice. In the Heaven of the True God there is neither idleness nor vice. Soon, in addition to angels which now serve Him, He will have a great crowd of just people rejoicing in Him and the crowd will grow

greater and greater with the future believers in the True God. » « Are the angels genii? » asks Lydia.

« No, they are spiritual beings like God Who created them. »

« What are genii, then? »

« As you imagine them, they are falsehood. They do not exist, as you imagine them. But owing to the instinctive need of men to search for the truth, you also have realised that man is not only flesh and that there is something immortal in his perishable body. And that is the consequence of the incentive of the soul, which is alive and present also in heathens, and suffers in them, as it is disappointed in its desires, because it is famished longing for the True God Whom it remembers, in the body in which it dwells and which is guided by a pagan mind. And the same applies to towns and nations. And thus you believe, you feel the need to believe in "genii". And thus you give yourselves an individual genius, a family, a town, a national genius. You have the "genius of Rome", the "genius of the emperor". And you worship them as lesser deities. Come to the true faith. You will become acquainted and friendly with your angel, whom you will venerate, but not worship. Only God is worshipped. »

« You said: "Incentive of the soul which is alive and present also in heathens, and suffers in them because it is disappointed". But from whom does the soul come? » asks Publius Quintilian.

« From God. He is the Creator. »

« But are we not born of woman through union with man? Also our gods are born thus. »

« Your gods do not exist. They are phantoms of your mind which needs to believe. Because such need is more peremptory than the need to breathe. Also he, who says he does not believe, does believe. He believes in something. The simple statement: "I do not believe in God" presupposes another faith. In oneself, perhaps, or in one's proud mind. But one always believes. It is like thinking. If you say: "I do not want to think", or: "I do not believe in God", by those two simple sentences you prove that you are thinking that you do not want to believe in Him Whom you know to exist and that you do not want to think. With regard to man, to express the concept correctly you must say: "Man, like all animals, is born through the union of male and female. But the soul, that is the thing which distinguishes the animal-man from the animal-brute, comes from God. He creates it as and when a man is procreated, or rather: when he is conceived in a womb and He infuses it in the body which otherwise would be only animal". »

« And have we got it? We pagans? According to Your fellow-countrymen it would not appear to be so... » says Quintilian ironically.

« Every man born of woman has it. »

« But You said that sin kills it. If so, how can it be alive in us sinners? » asks Plautina.

« You do not sin against faith, because you believe that you are in the Truth. When you become acquainted with the Truth and you persist in your error, then you will commit sin. Likewise, many things which are sinful for Israelites, are not so for you. Because no divine law forbids you. One sins when one consciously rebels against the order given by God and says: "I know that what I am doing is wrong. But I want to do it just the same". God is just. He cannot punish one who does the wrong thing thinking that he is doing the right one. He punishes those, who being able to tell Good from Evil, choose the latter and persist in it. »

« So we have a soul and it is alive and present in us? »

« Yes, it is so. »

« And it suffers? Do You really think that it remembers God? We do not remember the womb that bore us. We could not tell what its inside was like. If I have understood You correctly, the soul is spiritually born of God. Can it possibly remember Him if our body does not remember the long time it was in a womb? »

« The soul is not material, Plautina. An embryo is. In fact the soul is infused when the foetus is already formed (1). The soul is, like Clod, eternal and spiritual. It is eternal from the moment it is created, whereas God is the Most Perfect Eternal Being and thus has no beginning in time and will have no end. The soul, the lucid, intelligent, spiritual work of God, does remember. And it suffers, because it longs for God, the True God, from Whom it comes, and it hungers for God. That is why it spurs the torpid body to endeavour to approach God. »

« So we have a soul as those whom you call "the just people" of your nation have? Exactly the same? »

« No, Plautina. It depends on what you mean. If you mean according to its origin and nature, it is exactly the same as the souls of our saints. But if you refer to its formation, then I say that it is different. And if you mean according to the perfection reached before death, then it may be completely different. But that does not apply only to you heathens. Also a son of our people can be completely different from a saint, in future life. A soul is subjected to three phases. The first is creation. The second a new creation. The third is perfection. The first is common to all men. The second is peculiar to just people who through their will elevate their souls to a more

(1) Jesus' intent in speaking to the Roman ladies is not to specify the moment of the infusion of the soul into a body, but to prove the existence of the soul, its spiritual nature and divine origin, as opposed to the material nature and human origin of the body, and to clarify that He states that the soul is infused into the embryo when the latter is sufficiently formed to receive the soul, that lucid an intelligent as it is, has flashes of remembrance of its origin from God before being infused into a body.

complete revival, joining their good deeds to the perfection of God's work, whereby their souls are spiritually more perfect and form a connection link between the first and third ones. The third is peculiar to the blessed souls, or saints, if you prefer so, who have exceeded by a thousand degrees the initial stage of their souls, a stage suitable to man, and have transformed them into something suitable to rest in God. »

« How can we make room, clearance and elevation for our souls? »

« By demolishing the useless things you have in your "ego". Clear it of all wrong knowledge, and with the debris make the elevation for the sovereign temple. A soul is to be carried higher and higher, on the three steps. Oh! you Romans love symbols. Look at the three steps in a symbolic light. They can tell you their names: penance, patience, perseverance. Or: humility, purity, justice. Or: wisdom, generosity, mercy. Or, finally, the splendid trinomial: faith, hope, charity. Look also at the symbol of the ornate strong enclosure which encircles the area of the temple. You must surround your soul, the queen of the body, the temple of the Eternal Spirit, with a barrier which may protect it without obstructing light or oppressing it with ugly sights. An enclosure which must be safe and free from the love and desire of what is inferior: flesh and blood, and must aim at what is superior: the spirit. The chisel of freedom is your will power, which will smooth comers, and remove clefts, stains and flaws in the marble of your ego, so that it may be perfect round your souls. And at the same time, the enclosure protecting the temple is to be used by you as a merciful shelter for the more unhappy people who do not know what Charity is. The porches: they are the effusion of love, of piety, of your desire that more people may come to God, and are like the loving arms stretched like a veil over the cradle of an orphan. And beyond the enclosure: the most beautiful and most scented trees are a homage to the Creator. The trees, planted on a soil previously barren and subsequently cultivated symbolise all kinds of virtues and form the second living flowery enclosure around the sanctuary; and among the trees, that is among the virtues, there are the fountains, a further effusion of love and another purification before approaching the propylaeum near which one must sacrifice one's carnality and repudiate all forms of lust before ascending the altar. And then you may proceed further, to the altar and lay your offer on it and finally, crossing the vestibule, you may approach the cell, where God is. And what will the cell be like? Abundance of spiritual wealth, because you can never adorn God too much. Have you understood? You asked Me how Faith is built. I said to You: "Following the method employed to build temples". You can see that it is true. Is there anything else you wish to ask Me? »

« No, Master. I think that Flavia has written what You said. Claudia wants to know. Have you written everything? »

« I have written everything most accurately » replies the woman handing over the waxed tablets.

« The wax will last and it will be possible to read them. »

« It is wax. It is easily cancelled. Write everything in your hearts. It will never cancel. »

« Master, they are encumbered with vain temples. We are throwing Your words against them to demolish them. But it is a long task » says Plautina sighing. And she concludes: « Remember us in Your Heaven... »

« You may rest assured that I will. I leave you. I want you to know that your visit has been very dear to Me. Goodbye, Publius Quintilian. Remember Jesus of Nazareth. »

The ladies say goodbye and are the first to go away. Then Quintilian, who is somewhat pensive, leaves. Jesus watches them go away with Maximinus who leads them back to their wagons.

« What are You thinking of, Master? » asks Lazarus.

« That there are many unhappy people in the world. »

« And I am one of them. »

« Why, My dear friend? »

« Because everybody comes to You, except Mary. Is she the greatest ruin? »

Jesus looks at him and smiles.

« You are smiling? Are You not sorry that Mary cannot be converted? Are You not sorry that I am suffering? Martha has done nothing but weep since Monday evening. Who was that woman? Don't You know that for the whole day we hoped it was she? »

« I am smiling because you are an impatient child... And I am smiling because I think that you are wasting energy and tears. Had it been she, I would have rushed to tell you. »

« So it was not she? »

« Oh! Lazarus!... »

« You are right. Patience! Still patience!... Master, here are the jewels that You gave me to sell. They have become money for the poor. They were beautiful. Ladies' jewels. »

« They belonged to "that" woman. »

« I thought so. Ah! Had they been Mary's... But she!... I am losing hope, my Lord!... »

Jesus embraces him without speaking for a little while. He then says: « Please do not mention those jewels to anybody. She must disappear, without being admired or desired any longer, like a cloud driven elsewhere by the wind, without leaving any trace in the blue sky. »

« You may be sure, Master... and, in exchange, bring me Mary, our unhappy Mary... »

« Peace be with you, Lazarus. I will keep My promise. »

205. The Parable of the Prodigal Son.

30th June 1945.

« John of Endor, come here with Me. I must speak to you » says Jesus looking out of the door.

The man hastens towards Jesus leaving the boy to whom he was explaining something. « What do You want to tell me, Master? » he asks.

« Come upstairs with Me. »

They go up to the terrace and they sit down in the most sheltered part, because the sun is already strong, although it is still morning. Jesus runs His eyes over the cultivated country, where day by day the corn is becoming golden and fruit is ripening on trees. He seems to be wishing to derive some thought from that vegetable metamorphosis.

« Listen, John. I think that Isaac is coming today to bring Me Johanan's peasants before they leave. I told Lazarus to lend Isaac a wagon to quicken their return and thus avoid a delay which would cause them to be punished. And Lazarus has agreed, because he does everything I tell him. But I want something else from you. I have here a sum of money given to Me by a person for the poor of the Lord. Usually one of My apostles is responsible for keeping the money and giving alms. Generally it is Judas of Kerioth; sometimes one of the others. But Judas is not here. And I do not want the others to know what I want to do. I would not have told Judas either. You will do it, in My name... »

« I, my Lord?... I?... Oh! I am not worthy!... »

« You must accustom yourself to working in My name. Is that not why you came? »

« Yes, but I thought I had to work to rebuild my poor soul. »

« And I will give you the means. Against what did you sin? Against Mercy and Love. You demolished your soul by means of hatred. You will rebuild it through love and mercy. I will give you the material. I will make use of you especially for deeds of mercy and love. You are capable also of curing, and of speaking. So you are qualified to take care of physical and moral miseries and you are capable of doing it. You will start with this action. Here is the purse. You will give it to Micah and his friends. Divide it into equal parts. But divide it as I will tell you. Make ten parts and give four to Micah, one for himself and one each to Saul, Joel and Isaiah. Give the other six to Micah with instructions to give them to Jabez' old father, for himself and his companions. They will thus be able to have some comfort. »

« All right. But what shall I tell them to justify it? »

« Say: "This is to remind you to pray for a soul that is redeeming itself ". »

« But they may think that it is I! It is not fair! »

« Why? Do you not want to redeem yourself? »

« It is not fair that they should think that I am the donor. »

« Never mind, do as I tell you. »

« I will obey... but at least let me give something as well. In any case... now I do not need anything any more. I do not buy books and I have no poultry to feed. I am satisfied with very little. Take this, Master. I am keeping a minimum for my sandal expenses... » and from a purse attached to his belt he takes out some coins which he adds to Jesus' money.

« May God bless you for your mercy... John, before long we shall be parting, because you will be going with Isaac. »

« I am sorry about that, Master. But I will obey. »

« I am sorry as well to send you away. But I need itinerant disciples so badly. I am no longer sufficient. I will soon be sending the apostles and then the disciples. And you will do a lot of good. I will keep you for special missions. In the meantime you will become formed with Isaac. He is so good and the Spirit of God has really instructed him during his long disease. And he is the man who has always forgiven everything... On the other hand, the fact that we have to part does not mean that we shall never meet again. We shall often meet, and every time we are together, I will speak just for you, remember that... »

John bends very low, he hides his face in his hands, bursts into bitter tears and moans: « Oh! Then tell me at once something to persuade me that I have been forgiven... that I can serve God... If You knew how I see my soul, now that the smoke of hatred has vanished... and how I think of God... »

« I know, do not weep. Be humble, but do not be disheartened. Disheartenment is still pride. Be humble, that is all. Cheer up, do not weep... »

John of Endor slowly calms down...

When Jesus sees that he has become calm, He says: « Come, let us go under that thicket of apple-trees and gather our companions and the women. I will speak to everybody, but I will tell you how God loves you. »

They go down, assembling the others as they proceed, and they all sit down in a circle in the shade of the apple orchard. Also Lazarus, who was speaking to the Zealot, joins the company. They are about twenty people in all.

« Listen. It is a beautiful parable that will guide you with its light in many cases.

A man had two sons. The elder was a serious, affectionate, obedient worker. The younger was more intelligent than his brother who was actually somewhat dull and preferred to be guided rather than tire himself taking decisions by himself, but he was also rebellious, absent-minded, fond of luxury, pleasure loving, a

squanderer and idle. Intelligence is a great gift of God. But it is a gift to be used wisely. Otherwise it is like certain medicines that, when taken in the wrong way, kill instead of curing. His father, as it was his right and duty, used to recall him to a more sensible life. But it was all in vain, the only result was that he answered back and became more obstinate in his wicked ideas.

Finally one day, after a fiercer quarrel, the younger son said: "Give me my part of the estate. So I will no longer hear your reproaches and my brother's complaints. Let each have his own and no more about it". "Be careful" replied the father, "because you will soon be ruined. What will you do then? Consider that I will not be unfair to favour you and I will not take a farthing off your brother to give it to you". "I will not ask you for anything. You may be sure. Give me my part".

The father had the estate and valuables assessed, and since money and jewels were worth as much as the real estate, he gave the elder brother the fields and vineyards, the herds and olivetrees, and the younger one the money and jewels, which the young man changed immediately into money. And after doing that in a few days, he went to a distant country where he lived like a lord, squandering all his money on a life of debauchery, making people believe that he was the son of a king, because he was ashamed to admit that he was a countryman and thus he disowned his father. Banquets, friends, women, robes, wines, games... he led a loose life. He soon saw that his money was coming to an end and that poverty was in sight. And to make matters worse, the country experienced a severe famine, which compelled him to spend his last penny. He would have liked to go back to his father. But he was proud and decided not to. So he went to a wealthy man of the country, a friend of his in his happy days, and he begged him saying: "Take me among your servants, remembering the days when you enjoyed my wealth". See how foolish man is! He prefers the lash of a master rather than say to his father: "Forgive me. I made a mistake!". The young man had learned many useless things with his bright intelligence, but he did not want to learn the saying of Ecclesiasticus: "How ill-famed is he who deserts his father and how accursed of the Lord is whoever angers his mother". He was intelligent, but not wise.

The man to whom he had applied, in exchange for the grand time he had enjoyed with the foolish young man, sent him to look after his pigs, because it was a pagan country and there were many pigs. So he was sent to pasture the herds of pigs in the farm. Filthy, in rags, stinking and starving - food in fact was scarce for all the servants and particularly for the lowest ones and he, a foreign ridiculed herdsman of pigs was considered such - he saw the pigs glut themselves with acorns and sighed: "I wish I could fill my stomach

with this fruit! But they are too bitter! Not even starvation can make them palatable". And he wept remembering the sumptuous banquets when he acted the "grand seigneur" only a short while before, laughing, singing, dancing... and then he would think of the honest substantial meals at his far away home, of the portions his father used to make impartially for everybody, keeping for himself the smallest one, happy to see the healthy appetite of his sons... and he remembered the helpings his just father gave the servants and he sighed: "My father's servants, even the lowest, have plenty bread... and I am dying here of starvation... A long meditation, a long struggle to subdue his pride...

At last the day came, when his humility and wisdom revived and he got up and said: "I will go back to my father! This pride of mine is silly, as it deprives me of my freedom. And why? Why should I suffer in my body and even more in my heart when I can be forgiven and receive comfort? I will go back to my father. That is settled. And what shall I say to him? What has matured in my heart here, in this abjection, in this filth, suffering the pangs of hunger! I will say to him: 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and against you, I am no longer worthy of being called your son; treat me therefore as the least of your servants, but bear me to stay under your roof. That I may see you moving about... ' I cannot say to him: '... because I love you'. He would not believe me. But my behaviour will tell him and he will understand and before dying he will bless me once again... Oh! I hope so. Because my father loves me". And when he went back to town in the evening he gave up his job and begging along the way he went back home. And he saw his father's fields... and the house... and his father superintending the work... he was old, emaciated by grief but always kind and good... The guilty son seeing that ruin caused by him stopped frightened... but the father, looking round, saw him and ran to meet him, because he was still far away. And when he reached him, he threw his arms round his neck and kissed him. Only the father had recognised his son in the dejected beggar and he was the only one to be moved with love.

The son, clasped in his father's arms, with his head resting on his father's shoulder, whispered sobbing: "Father, let me throw myself at your feet". "No, son! Not at my feet. Rest on my heart, which has suffered so much because of your absence, and now needs to revive feeling your warmth on my chest". And the son, crying louder, said: "Oh! father! I have sinned against Heaven and against you, I am no longer worthy to be called son by you. But allow me to live among your servants, under your roof, seeing you, eating your bread, serving you, and you will be the breath of my life. Every time I take a morsel of bread, every time you breathe, my heart, which is so corrupt, will change and I will become

honest... "

But the father, embracing him all the time, led him towards the servants, who had gathered together watching in the distance and he said to them: "Quick, bring here the best robe, and basins of scented water, and wash him, spray him with scents, clothe him, put new sandals on his feet and a ring on his finger. Bring a fattened calf and kill it. And prepare a banquet. Because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life, he was lost and has been found. Now I want him to find once again the innocent love of a child, and my love and the celebration of the household for his return must give it to him. He must realise that he is always my dear last-born child, as he was in his childhood a long time ago, when he used to toddle beside me making me happy with his smile and his prattling". And the servants did so.

The elder son was out in the country and he did not know anything until his return. Coming towards the house in the evening, he saw that it was brightly lighted and he heard the sound of instruments and dancing coming from it. He called a servant who was bustling about and asked him: "What is happening?". And the servant replied: "Your brother has come back! Your father had the fattened calf killed because his son has come back to him safe and cured of his wickedness and he ordered a celebration. They are only waiting for you to start". But the first-born was angry because he thought that such a feast for his younger brother was unfair, as he was not only younger, but had been also wicked. And he did not want to go in, on the contrary he was about to walk away from the house.

But the father, informed of the situation, ran out and reached him and endeavoured to convince him, begging him not to spoil his joy. The elder brother replied to his father: "And you expect me not to be upset? You are unfair to your first-born and you hold him in contempt. I have served you since I was able to work, and I have done that for many years. I have never disobeyed an order of yours, not even a simple desire. I have always been near you, and I have loved you for two, to make you recover from the wound inflicted on you by my brother. And you have not given me even a lamb to have a feast with my friends. You are now honouring my brother and you have killed the best calf for him, who offended and abandoned you, and has been a lazy spendthrift, and has now come back because he was driven by starvation. It is really worth while being a hard honest worker! You should not have done that to me".

The father then, clasping him to his heart, said: "Son! Can you believe that I do not love you, because I do not celebrate your behaviour? Your deeds are holy by themselves, and the world praises you because of them. Your brother, instead, needs to be

rehabilitated both in the eyes of the world and in his own. And do you think that I do not love you because I give you no visible prize? But day and night, in every moment of my life, you are present to my heart, and I bless you every moment. You have the continuous reward of being always with me, and what is mine is yours. But it was fair to have a feast, a celebration for your brother who was dead and has come back to good life, was lost and has come back to our love". And the first-born yielded to his father's desire.

And that, My friends, is what happens in the House of the Father. And whoever feels that he is like the younger son of the parable, must believe that if he imitates him in going to the Father, the Father will say to him: "Not at My feet. But rest on My heart, which has suffered because of your absence and is now happy because you have come back". Who is in the situation of the first-born and without any fault against the Father, must not be jealous of the Father's joy, but must take part in it and love the redeemed brother.

That is all. You, John of Endor and you, Lazarus, please remain here. The others can go and set the tables. We shall not be long. » They all withdraw. When Jesus, Lazarus and John are alone, Jesus says to them: « That is what will happen to the dear soul you are awaiting, Lazarus, and that is what is happening to yours, John. God's bounty has no limit... »

... The apostles, together with Mary and the women, go towards the house, preceded by Marjiam who runs ahead frisking. But he soon comes back and takes Mary by the hand saying to Her: « Come with me. I have something to tell you, when we are alone. » And Mary follows him. They turn towards a well, situated in a corner of the little yard, and completely covered by a thick bower that from the ground climbs up towards the terrace forming an arch. Behind it, there is the Iscariot.

« Judas, what do you want? Go, Marjiam... Speak. What do you want? »

« I am guilty... I dare not go to the Master or face my companions... Help me... »

« I will help you. But do you not consider how much grief you cause? My Son wept because of you. And your companions suffered. But come. No one will say anything to you. And, if you can, do not commit the same sins again. It is shameful for a man and a sacrilege against the Word of God. »

« And will You forgive me, Mother? »

« I? I count for nothing as far as you are concerned, since you think you are so great. I am the least of the servants of the Lord. How can you worry about Me, if you feel no pity for My Son? »

« Because I have a mother as well, and if You forgive me, I will feel as if she did, too. »

« She does not know about this fault of yours. »

« But she made me swear I would be good to the Master. I am a perjurer. I can feel the soul of my mother reproaching me. »

« You feel that, do you? But do you not feel the lament and the reproach of the Father and of His Word? You are disgraceful, Judas! You cause grief to yourself and to those who love you. »

Mary is very grave and sad. She speaks without bitterness but with much gravity. Judas weeps.

« Do not weep. Improve yourself. Come » and She takes him by the hand and enters the kitchen.

Everybody is filled with astonishment. But Mary wards off any possible uncharitable remark. She says: « Judas has come back. Behave as the first-born did after his father's speech. John, go and tell Jesus. »

John of Zebedee runs away. Silence hangs heavy on the kitchen... Then Judas says: « Forgive me, all of you, and you, Simon, first of all. Your heart is so paternal. And I am an orphan, too. »

« Yes, I forgive you. Please, say no more about it. We are brothers... and I do not like these ups and downs of forgiveness and relapses. They humiliate both the offender and the forgiver. Here is Jesus. Go to Him. That's all. »

Judas goes away and Peter, not being able to do anything else, starts chopping wood with keen impetuosity...

206. The Parable of the Ten Virgins and the Parable of the Royal Wedding.

1st July 1945.

Jesus is speaking in the presence of Johanan's peasants, of Isaac and many disciples, of the women amongst whom there is the Blessed Virgin Mary and Martha, and of many people from Bethany. All the apostles are present. The boy, sitting in front of Jesus, does not miss one word. I think Jesus has just begun to speak because people are still arriving...

Jesus says: «... it is because of this sensation of fear that I realise is so sharp in you, that today I wish to tell you a sweet parable. Sweet for the men of good will, bitter for the others. But the latter can remove the bitterness. Let them become men of good will, and the reproach, provoked in their consciences by the parable, will no longer exist.

The Kingdom of Heaven is the house of the nuptials of God with souls. The moment a soul enters it, is the day of the nuptials.

Now listen. It is a custom with us that virgins escort the bridegroom when he arrives, to take him with lights and songs to the nuptial house together with his sweet bride. When the procession

leaves the house of the bride, who wearing a veil and deeply moved turns her steps to the place where she will be queen, that is, to a house which is not hers, but will become hers the moment she becomes one body with her husband, the procession of the virgins, who are generally friends of the bride, runs to meet the happy couple, forming a circle of lights around them.

Now it happened that in a town there was a wedding. While the bride and bridegroom were making merry with relatives and friends in the house of the bride, ten virgins went to their place, that is, to the hall in the groom's house, to be ready to go out and meet him when the sound of cymbals and songs warned them that the young couple had left the bride's house to come to the groom's. But the feast in the house of the nuptials was protracted and night fell. As you know, the virgins always keep their lamps lit, so that they do not waste time at the right moment. Now, of these ten virgins, five were wise and five were foolish, and all their lamps were lit and shining. The wise ones, full of wisdom, had provided themselves with small flasks full of oil, to fill up their lamps in the event they should have to wait longer than expected, whereas the foolish ones had only filled their little lamps.

One hour went by after the other. Cheerful conversation, tales and jokes made their waiting pleasant. But later they did not know what to say or what to do, and weary and tired, the ten girls sat down more comfortably and slowly fell asleep with their lamps lit and close to them. At midnight a cry was heard: "The bridegroom is coming, go and meet him!". The ten girls got up on hearing the order, took their veils and garlands, adorned themselves and ran to the shelf where the lamps were. The light of five of them was already fading... The wicks, no longer sustained with oil, which was finished, were smoky, their light was becoming fainter and fainter and they would go out at the least whiff of air, whereas the flames of the other five lamps, which had been refilled by the wise virgins before they fell asleep, were still bright and became even brighter when more oil was added to the lamps.

"Oh!" begged the foolish girls "give us some of your oil, otherwise our lamps will go out as soon as we move them. Yours are already so beautiful!... But the wise virgins replied: "The wind is blowing in the night outside and heavy drops of dew are falling. There is never enough oil to give a flame strong enough to withstand the wind and dampness. If we give you some, also our lights will begin to fade away. And the procession of the virgins would be really a sad one without the flickering flames of lamps! Go, run to the nearest vendor, beg, knock, make him get up to give you some oil". And the foolish girls, panting, creasing their veils, staining their dresses, losing their garlands while pushing one

another and running, followed the advice of their companions.

But while they were on their way to buy some oil, the bride and the bridegroom appeared at the end of the street. The five virgins with their lamps lit, ran to meet them and the young couple entered the house in the midst of them for the final ceremony, when the virgins at the end would escort the bride to the nuptial room. The door was closed behind them and those who were outside were left out. And that was the case of the five foolish bridesmaids, who at last arrived with the oil, but found the door closed and in vain they knocked, hurting their hands and moaning: "Lord, lord, open the door for us! We were in the wedding procession. We are the propitiatory virgins, chosen to bring honour and good luck to your wedding". But the bridegroom, leaving for a moment the closest guests whose leave he was taking while the bride was entering the nuptial room, from the upper part of the house said to them: "I tell you that I do not know you. I do not know who you are. I did not see you rejoicing around my beloved bride. You are usurpers. You are therefore left out of the nuptial house". And the five foolish girls, weeping, went away along the dark streets, with their useless lamps, their creased dresses and torn veils, while their garlands were practically destroyed or lost.

And now listen to the meaning of the parable. I told you at the beginning that the Kingdom of Heaven is the house of the nuptials of God with souls. All the faithful are called to the celestial wedding because God loves all His children. Sooner or later everybody arrives at the moment of the nuptials and it is a great fortune to arrive.

But listen further. You know how girls consider an honour and fortune to be invited as bridesmaids of the bride. Let us see whom the various people represent and you will understand better. The Bridegroom is God. The bride is the soul of a just person who, after the period of engagement in the house of the Father, that is under the protection of and in obedience to God's doctrine, living according to justice, is taken to the house of the Bridegroom for the wedding. The virgin-maids are the souls of the faithful, who following the example set by the bride - the fact that she was chosen by the Bridegroom because of her virtues means that she was a living example of holiness - endeavour to achieve the same honour by sanctifying themselves. They are in a white, clean, fresh dress, with white veils, crowned with flowers. They are holding lighted lamps in their hands. The lamps are very clean, and the wicks are nourished with the purest oil so that they may not be malodorous.

In a white dress. Justice steadily practised gives a white dress and the day will soon come when it will be most white, without even the most remote remembrance of stain, it will be of supernatural, angelical whiteness.

In a clean dress. One must keep the dress always clean through humility. It is so easy to dim the purity of the heart. And those whose hearts are not pure cannot see God. Humility is like water that washes. A humble man soon notices that he has darkened his robe, because his eyes are not dimmed by the fumes of pride and thus he runs to his Lord and says: "I have stained the purity of my heart. I weep at Your feet to be cleansed. Oh! my Sun, purify my heart through Your benign forgiveness and Your paternal love!"

In a fresh dress. Oh! the freshness of a heart! Children have it by gift of God. The just have it by gift of God and through their own will. Saints have it by gift of God and through their will elevated to heroism. But will a sinner, whose soul is torn, burnt, poisoned and disgraced, never be able to have a fresh robe? Oh! of course he will. He begins to have it the moment he looks at himself with disgust. He increases its freshness when he decides to change life. He brings it to perfection when through penance he washes, detoxicates, cures and recomposes his poor soul. And with the help of God, Who does not refuse assistance to anyone who asks Him for a holy help, and through his own will elevated to super-heroism because it is not necessary for him to protect what he has, but to rebuild what he destroyed and thus he must work twice, three times, seven times as much - and with untiring penance, relentless against his sinful ego, he will take his soul back to the freshness of a child's soul. A new freshness, made precious by experience which makes him the master of other people who were once like him, that is, sinners.

With white veils. Humility! I said: "When you pray or do penance, do not let the world see you". In the Wisdom Books it is written: "It is right to keep the secret of the King". Humility is the candid veil worn to defend the good we do and the good God grants us. We must not be proud of the privileged love granted to us by God, nor seek foolish human glory. The gift would be taken away at once. But from the depth of our hearts we must sing to our God: "My soul proclaims Your greatness, o Lord... because You have looked upon Your lowly handmaid". »

Jesus makes a short pause and casts a glance at His Mother, Who blushes under Her veil and bends forward as if She wanted to tidy the hair of the boy sitting at Her feet, but in actual fact to conceal her deep-felt remembrance...

« Crowned with flowers. A soul must weave its daily garland of virtuous deeds, because nothing withered or slovenly looking is to appear in the presence of the Most High. I said daily. Because a soul does not know when God-Bridegroom may appear and say: "Come". Therefore you must never tire renewing the garland. Be not afraid. Flowers wither. But the flowers of virtuous wreaths do not wither. God's angel, whom every man has at his side, picks up

these daily wreaths and takes them to Heaven. And they will be there the throne for the new blessed soul when it enters the nuptial house as the bride.

They have lighted lamps. They have them to honour the Bridegroom and to see the way. How refulgent faith is, and what a kind friend it is! It gives a flame as bright as a star, a flame that smiles because it is sure in its certainty, a flame that brightens also the instrument supporting it. Also the flesh of man nourished with faith seems to become brighter and more spiritual, even in this world, free from premature withering. Because he who believes holds on to God's words and commandments in order to possess God, his ultimate aim, and therefore he shuns corruption, is not perturbed or afraid, feels no remorse, is not compelled to make an effort to remember lies or to conceal evil deeds and remains young and handsome by means of the beautiful incorruptibility of saints: flesh and blood, mind and heart free from lust to contain the oil of faith, to give light without smoke. A constant will to feed that light for ever. Everyday life, with its disappointments, ascertainments, contacts, temptations, disagreements, tends to diminish faith. No! It must not happen. Go every day to the source of the sweet, sapiential oil of God. A lamp with little oil can be put out by the least puff of wind or by the heavy dew of the night. The night... The hour of darkness, of sin, of temptation comes for everybody. It is night for the soul. But if the soul is filled to the brim with faith, its flame cannot be put out by the wind of the world or by the fog of sensuality.

And finally vigilance, vigilance, vigilance. He who is unwarily trustful and says: "Oh! God will come on time, while my light is still on", and makes up his mind to go to sleep instead of keeping awake, and goes to sleep without providing what is necessary to get up and be ready at the first call, and he who waits until the last moment to procure the oil of faith or the strong wick of good will, runs the risk of being left out when the Bridegroom arrives. Be vigilant, therefore with prudence, perseverance, purity, confidence, so that you may be always ready for God's call, because you really do not know when He will come.

My dear disciples, I do not want you to be afraid of God, on the contrary I want you to have faith in His goodness. Both you who will remain here, and you who will be going away, must consider that, if you do what the wise virgins did, you will be invited not only to escort the Bridegroom, but like the virgin Esther, who became queen in the place of Vashti, you will be chosen and elected to be brides, as the Bridegroom "found more approval and favour with you than with anybody else". I bless you, who are about to go away. Take My words with you for yourselves and for your companions. May the peace of the Lord be always with you. »

Jesus goes near the peasants to say goodbye to them once more, but John of Endor whispers to him:
« Master, Judas is here now... »

« It does not matter. Take them to the wagon and do as I told you. »

The people at the meeting slowly go away. Many talk to Lazarus... And Lazarus turns towards Jesus, Who after leaving the peasants was going towards him, and says: « Master, before leaving us, speak to us again... It is the desire of the hearts of the people of Bethany. »

« Night is falling. But it is placid and serene. If you wish to gather on the mown hay, I will be speaking to you before leaving this friendly town. Or we can meet tomorrow, at dawn. Because the hour of farewell has come. »

« Later! This evening! » they all shout.

« As you wish. Go now. I will speak to you half way through the first watch »...

... and in fact, untiring, Jesus sets out towards the middle of a recently mown meadow, on which the withering hay forms a sweet smelling soft rug, while the sun sets and also its glow disappears and crickets begin their early uncertain solitary chirping. He is followed by the apostles, the Maries, Martha and Lazarus and their household, Isaac and his disciples, and I would say by all the people of Bethany. Among the servants there is the old man and the woman, the two who on the Mount of Beatitudes found comfort for the rest of their days.

Jesus stops to bless the patriarch, who kisses His hand weeping, and caresses the boy walking beside Jesus and says to him: « You are happy that you can follow Him all the time! Be good, be careful, son. You are very lucky! Very lucky, indeed! A crown is suspended over your head... You are blessed! »

When they are all settled, Jesus begins to speak.

« After the departure of our dear friends, who needed to be confirmed in the hope, nay, in the certainty that little knowledge is required to be admitted to the Kingdom, that only a minimum truth on which one's good will may work is sufficient, I will now speak to you, who are much happier than they are, because you enjoy much more material comfort and you have greater help from the Word. Only by thought I can extend My love to them. Here, My love reaches you also through My word. Therefore, you are to be treated both here on the earth and in Heaven with greater strength, because more will be asked of those to whom more was given. They, the poor friends who are going back to their prison, have the least welfare, and, on the contrary, the greatest sorrow. Therefore, there are only promises of benignity for them, because anything else would be superfluous. I solemnly tell you that their lives are penance and holiness, and nothing else is to be imposed

upon them. And I also solemnly tell you, that like wise virgins, they will not let their lamps go out until the hour they are called. Let them go out? No. The light of their lamps is the only good they possess. They cannot let it go out.

I solemnly tell you that as I am in the Father, so the poor are in God. That is why I, the Word of the Father, wanted to be born poor and to remain poor. Because amongst the poor I feel closer to the Father Who loves the least people and is loved by them with all their strength. The rich have many things. The poor have but God. The rich have friends. The poor are alone. The rich have many comforts. The poor have none. The rich have many distractions. The poor have but their work. Money makes everything easy for the rich. The poor have also the cross of having to be afraid of diseases and famine, because they mean starvation and death to them. But the poor have God. Their Friend. Their Comforter. He Who distracts them from their painful present by means of heavenly hope. He, to Whom man can say - and they know how to say it, because they are poor, humble, alone -: "Father, support us in Your mercy".

What I say on this land of Lazarus, a friend of Mine and a friend of God although he is so rich, may seem strange. But Lazarus is an exception amongst the rich. Lazarus has been successful in achieving that most difficult virtue to be found on the earth, and even more difficult to be practised when it is recommended by other people. The virtue of freedom from wealth. Lazarus is just. He does not feel offended. He cannot be offended because he knows that he is the rich-poor man, and thus My concealed reproach does not affect him. Lazarus is just. And he knows that the world of great people is as I say. I therefore speak and say: I solemnly tell you that it is much easier for a poor man to be in God than it is for a rich one; and in the Heaven of My Father and yours, many seats will be occupied by those who on the earth were despised because they were the least amongst men, like trodden dust.

The poor keep in their hearts the pearls of the words of God. They are their only treasure. Who has only one precious thing, watches over it. Who has many, is bored and absent-minded, proud and sensual. That is why he does not admire with humble loving eyes the treasure given by God, and confuses it with other treasures, only apparently precious, treasures which are the riches of the earth and he thinks: "It is only out of kindness that I accept the words of one who is like me fleshwise!" and by means of strong flavours of sensuality he blunts his capability of savouring what is supernatural. Strong flavours!... Yes, very spicy to disguise their stench and their putrid flavour...

But listen and you will understand better how worldly cares, riches and orgies prevent one from entering the Kingdom of

Heaven.

Once a king celebrated the wedding of his son. You can imagine the feast at the palace. He was the only son, and having reached the perfect age, he was getting married to his beloved bride. The father and king wanted the joy of his son to be surrounded with joy, as he was at last getting married to his dear fiancée. Among the many celebrations he gave a sumptuous dinner. And he prepared it in good time, watching every detail, to ensure it was magnificent and worthy the wedding of the king's son.

He sent out his servants early to tell friends and allies, as well as the mighty ones of his kingdom, that the wedding was to take place on a certain evening and that they were invited, and that they should come to form a worthy retinue to the king's son. But friends, allies and mighty ones of the kingdom did not accept the invitation.

The king then, doubting that the first servants had not spoken clearly, sent out some more, who should insist saying: "Please, do come! Everything is now ready. The tables are laid in the hall, rare wines have been brought from everywhere, oxen and fattened cattle are already in the kitchen to be cooked, women slaves are kneading flour to make cakes and crushing almonds in mortars to make the finest delicacies flavoured with rare spices. The most clever dancers and musicians have been engaged for the feast, Come, therefore, or all the preparations will be useless!"

But friends, allies and great ones of the kingdom either refused or said: "We have other things to do", or pretended to accept the invitation, but then they attended to their own matters, some to their fields, some to their business, some to even less noble affairs. And finally there were some who, bored with so much insistence, took the servant of the king and killed him to keep him quiet, as he insisted saying: "Do not refuse the king's invitation or you may find yourself in trouble". The servants went back to the king and reported the situations and the king flared up in a temper and sent his soldiers to punish the murderers of his servants and chastise those who had scorned his invitation, whilst he intended to reward those who had promised to come.

But at the fixed hour on the evening of the feast, no one came. The king was very angry, he called his servants and said to them: "On no account my son will be left without people who will give him a hearty welcome on the evening of his wedding. The banquet is ready, but the guests we invited are not worthy of it. And yet the nuptial banquet of my son is to take place. Go therefore to the squares, along the streets, stand at the crossroads, stop the passersby, gather together those who are standing there, and bring them all here. Let the hall be filled with joyful people".

The servants went. They went out along the streets, they spread

out on the squares, they stood at crossroads, they gathered as many people as they could find, both good and bad, rich and poor, and took them to the royal palace, and they gave each of them the means to be worthy to enter the hall of the nuptial banquet. Finally they led them into the hall, which was full of jubilant people, as the king desired.

But when the king went into the hall to see whether the feast could begin, he saw one man who, notwithstanding the assistance given to him by the servants, was not wearing a wedding garment. He asked him: "How did you get in here, without a wedding garment?". And the man did not know what to say, because he had no excuse. The king then called his servants and said to them: "take this man, bind him hand and foot and throw him out of my palace, into the dark and icy mud. He shall stay there weeping and grinding his teeth as he deserved through his ingratitude and because he offended me and my son more than me, by entering the banquet hall with a poor dirty garment, whereas nothing must enter it but what is worthy of it and of my son".

As you can see, worldly cares, avarice, sensuality, cruelty bring down the king's wrath on people and cause the children of such cares never to enter again the palace of the king. And you can also see how among those who were invited, for the sake of his son, some were punished.

How many there are nowadays in this land, to whom God has sent His Word! God has really invited the allies, the friends, the great ones of His people, through His servants, and He will invite them again, and more urgently, as the hour of My Wedding approaches.

But they will not accept the invitation, because they are false allies, false friends and they are great only by name, because they are base. (Jesus' voice is rising louder and louder and His eyes are flashing like two gems, in the light of the fire lit between Him and His audience, to give light in the moonless night; the moon is in fact waning and will rise later). Yes, they are base. And because of their baseness, they do not understand that it is their duty and an honour for them to accept the King's invitation. Pride, harshness, lust act like a wall in their hearts. And - wicked as they are! they hate Me and so they do not want to come to My wedding. They refuse to come. They prefer to be connected with filthy policy, with even filthier money and with the most filthy sensuality, rather than come to My wedding. They prefer shrewd calculations, conspiracies, underhand conspiracies, snares, crimes.

I condemn all that in the name of God. Consequently the voice which speaks and the feasts to which they are invited, are hated by them. Those who kill the servants of God are to be looked for among this people: the Prophets who have been the servants till

now; My disciples who are the servants from now onwards. The swindlers of God who say: "Yes, we will come", whereas inwardly they think: "Never on your life!" are to be selected among this people. All that is in Israel.

And the King of Heaven will send to gather at the crossroads those who are not friends, not great ones, not allies, but only people passing by, so that His Son may have a worthy wedding celebration. And through Me, through Me the Son and the servant of God, the gathering has already begun. They will come, whoever they are... And they have already come. And I help them to be clean and properly dressed for the wedding feast. But there will be someone, who for his own misfortune, will misuse also the munificence of God, Who gives him scents and regal garments to make him appear what he is not, that is, a rich and worthy person, and he will take abominable advantage of such bounty to seduce and make a profit... An individual with a wicked soul, embraced by the revolting octopus of all vices... and he will embezzle scents and garments to make an unlawful profit, as he will not use them for the wedding of the Son, but for his own wedding with Satan.

All that will happen. Because many are called but few are those, who knowing how to persevere in their vocation, are chosen. But it will also happen that those hyenas, who prefer putrid food to living nourishment, will be punished by being thrown out of the Banquet hall into the dark and mud of an eternal pond, in which Satan grins horribly at each triumph over a soul and where there is an eternal sound of desperate weeping of the mad people who followed Crime instead of following Bounty Who had called them.

Get up and let us go and rest. I bless you, citizens of Bethany. I bless you all and I give you My peace. And I particularly bless you, Lazarus, My friend, and you, Martha. I bless My old and new disciples, whom I will be sending into the world to invite people to the wedding of the King. Kneel down, that I may bless you all. Peter, say the prayer that I taught you, and say it here, standing beside Me, because that is how it is to be said by those who are destined by God for that task. »

They all kneel down on the hay, only Jesus and Peter remain standing. Jesus, tall as he is, is most handsome in His linen robe, and Peter, in his dark brown tunic, deeply moved, says the prayer, almost trembling, in a voice which although not beautiful is manly, going very slow for fear he might make a mistake: « Our Father... » The sobs of men and women can be heard...

Marjiam, kneeling just in front of Mary Who is holding his hands joined, is looking at Jesus with an angelical smile and says in a low voice: « Look, Mother, how lovely He is! And how lovely also my father is! I seem to be in Heaven... Will my mother be here, watching? »

And Mary, in a whisper ending in a kiss, replies: « Yes, My dear. She is here. And she is learning the prayer. »

« And what about me? Will I learn it? »

« She will whisper it to your soul while you sleep, and I will repeat it to you during the day. »

The boy bends back his little dark-haired head, resting it on Mary's breast, and remains thus while Jesus blesses with the solemn Mosaic blessing.

Then they all get up and go to their homes: only Lazarus follows Jesus, entering Simon's house with Him, to remain a little longer together. All the others come in as well. The Iscariot places himself in a semidark comer and looks mortified. He dare not go near Jesus with the others...

Lazarus congratulates Jesus. He says: « Oh! I am sorry to see You go away. But I am happier than I would have been, had I seen You go away the day before yesterday! »

« Why, Lazarus? »

« Because You looked so tired and sad... You did not speak, and You hardly ever smiled... Yesterday and today You have become once again my kind holy Master, and that makes me so happy... »

« I was so even if I was quiet... »

« You were. But You are serenity and word. That is what we want from You. We drink our strength at those sources. And now those sources seemed to be dried up. Our thirst was painful... You see that also the Gentiles are amazed, and they have come looking for them... »

"The Iscariot, whom John of Zebedee had approached, dares to speak: « Of course, they inquired also of me... Because I was very often at the Antonia, hoping to see You. »

« You knew where I was » replies Jesus briefly.

« I did. But I was hoping You would not disappoint those who were expecting You. Also the Romans were disappointed. I do not know why You behaved like that... »

« And you are asking Me? Are you not aware of the humours of the Sanhedrin, of the Pharisees, and of others as well, with regard to Me? »

« What? Were You afraid? »

« I was disgusted. Last year, when I was alone - all by Myself against the whole world, which did not even know whether I was a prophet - I bore evidence that I was not afraid. And you were a conquest of that audacity of Mine. I spoke openly against a whole world of howlers; I caused the voice of God to be heard by a people who had forgotten it; I cleansed the House of God of the material filth in it, without any hope of purifying it of the more serious moral filth nesting in it, because I am not unaware of the future of men. But I had to do My duty, because of My zeal for the House of

the Eternal Lord, which had been converted into a place where swindlers, usurers and thieves bawled, and I did it to rouse from their torpor those whom centuries of priests' carelessness had caused to fall into spiritual lethargy. It was a cry to gather My people and take it to God... This year I have come back... And I saw that the Temple is still the same... it is even worse. It is no longer a den of thieves, but a place of conspiracy, it will later become the centre of Crime, then a brothel and finally it will be destroyed by a power greater than Samson's, crushing a caste unworthy of being called holy. It is useless to speak in that place, where, I would remind you, I was forbidden to speak. Faithless people, whose poisoned leaders dare to forbid the Word of God to speak in His House! I was forbidden. I was silent for the sake of the least ones. It is not yet time to kill Me. Too many people are in need of Me, and My apostles are not yet strong enough to take on their arms My offspring: the World. Do not weep, Mother, forgive, good Mother, Your Son's need to tell those, who wish to or may deceive themselves, the truth that I know... I will be silent... But woe to those who cause God to be silent!... Mother, Marjiam, do not weep!... Please. Let no one weep. »

But in actual fact they are all weeping more or less bitterly.

Judas, as white as death in his striped red and yellow robe, dares still to speak, in a moaning ridiculous voice: « Believe me, Master, that I am amazed and grieved... I do not know what You mean... I know nothing... It is true that I have not seen anyone of the Temple. I have broken off contacts with everybody... But if You say so it must be true... »

« Judas!... You have not seen Sadoc either? »

Judas bends his head grumbling: « He is a friend. I met him as such, not as one of the Temple... »

Jesus does not reply to him. He turns to Isaac and John of Endor, whom He gives more advice concerning their work.

Meanwhile the women comfort Mary Who is weeping and the boy who is weeping seeing Mary weep.

Also Lazarus and the apostles are sad. But Jesus comes towards them. He is smiling kindly once again, and while embracing His Mother and caressing the child, He says: « And now I will say goodbye to you who are staying. Because we are leaving tomorrow at dawn. Goodbye, Lazarus. Goodbye, Maximinus. Joseph, I thank you for your kindness to My Mother and the women disciples, while waiting for Me. Thank you for everything. Lazarus, bless once again Martha in My name. I will come back soon. Come, Mother, to rest. And you, too, Mary and Salome, if you wish to come. »

« Of course we are coming! » say the two Maries.

« Well... to bed. Peace to everybody. God be with you. » He makes

a gesture of blessing and goes out holding the boy by the hand and embracing His Mother...

The stay in Bethany is over.

207. From Bethany to the Grotto of Bethlehem.

3rd July 1945.

Dawn has just begun to smile when Jesus leaves Bethany and turns His steps towards Bethlehem with His Mother, Mary of Alphaeus, Mary Salome, followed by the apostles and preceded by the boy, who finds reason to rejoice in everything he sees: the butterflies which awake, little birds that sing or peck on the path, flowers sparkling with dewy diamonds, a flock that comes into sight and in which there are many little bleating lambs. After crossing the torrent, which foams merrily amongst stones, south of Bethany, the group turns towards Bethlehem, along a road running between two ranges of hills, completely covered with green olive-trees and vineyards, and a few small fields in which the golden corn is almost ready for reaping. The valley is cool and the road quite comfortable.

Simon of Jonah comes forward, he reaches Jesus' group and asks: « Is this the road to Bethlehem? John says that the last time You took another road. »

« That is true » replies Jesus. « But that was because we were coming from Jerusalem. This one is shorter. At Rachel's sepulchre, which the women wish to see, we will part, as you decided some time ago. We will meet later at Bethzur, where My Mother wishes to stop. »

« Yes, we said so... But it would be so lovely if we were all there... particularly Your Mother... because, after all, She is the Queen of Bethlehem and of the Grotto, and She knows everything so well... If we heard the story from Her... it would be quite different, that's what I mean... »

Jesus smiles looking at Simon, who has kindly expressed his desire.

« Which grotto, father? » asks Marjiam.

« The Grotto where Jesus was born. »

« Oh! Lovely! I will come, too!... »

« It would be lovely indeed! » say Mary of Alphaeus and Salome.

« It would be beautiful!... It would mean going back to the time... when the world did not know You, that is true, but did not hate You yet... It would mean finding once again the love of simple people who could but love and believe, with humility and faith... And I would be able to lay aside this burden of bitterness which has been lying heavily on My heart since I learned that You are so hated, and I would lay it in Your manger... The kindness of Your

eyes, of Your breath, of Your childish smile must still be there... and they would caress My heart... It is so grieved!... » Mary is speaking slowly, in a low voice expressing desire and sadness.

« Then, we shall go there, Mother. You will lead us. You are the Teacher to-day and I am the Little Boy Who is learning. »

« Oh! Son! No! You are always the Master... »

« No, Mother. Simon of Jonah is quite right. In the land of Bethlehem You are the Queen. It is Your first castle. Mary, of the house of David, lead this little group to Your abode. »

The Iscariot is on the point of speaking, but he remains silent. Jesus, Who has noticed and understands, says: « If anyone does not wish to come, because he is tired or for any other reason, he is free to proceed to Bethzur. » But no one replies.

They proceed westwards, along the cool valley. The road then bends lightly to the north along a protruding hill and they thus reach the road which takes from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, near a cube-shaped building surmounted with a small dome, which is Rachel's tomb. They all go near it and pray reverently.

« Joseph and I stopped here... Everything is exactly the same as then. Only the season is different. It was a cold day in the month of Chislev. It had rained and the roads were muddy, then an ice-cold wind began to blow and perhaps during the night there was a frost. The roads had hardened, but furrowed by cart-wheels and crowded with people, they were like a sea crowded with boats and My little donkey had difficulty in proceeding... »

« And did You not, Mother? »

« Oh! I had You!... » and She looks at Him with a tender blissful face. She then resumes speaking: « It was getting dark and Joseph was very worried... a biting cold wind was blowing stronger and stronger... People were rushing towards Bethlehem, pushing one another and many took to abusing My little donkey because it was going so slowly in an effort to find suitable places for its hooves... It seemed to be aware that You were there... and that You were sleeping for the last time in the cradle of My bosom. It was cold... But I was warm. I could feel You coming... Coming? You could say: "Mother, I had been there nine months". Yes. But now it was as if You were coming from Heaven. Heaven was bending down over Me and I could see its brightness... I could see God inflamed with joy for Your oncoming birth and those flames pierced Me, burned Me, abstracted Me from everything... Cold... wind... crowds... it was all... nothing! I saw God... Now and again, with an effort, I would succeed in bringing My spirit back to the earth and I would smile at Joseph, who was afraid I might be cold and tired, and he led the little donkey lest it should stumble and he enveloped Me in a blanket lest I should get cold... But nothing could have happened to Me. I felt no jolts. I seemed to be moving along a starry path,

among snow-white clouds, supported by angels... And I smiled... First at You... I looked at You, through the barrier of the flesh, while You were sleeping, with Your little fists closed, in Your cradle of living roses, My lily-bud... Then I smiled at My spouse, who was so distressed, to encourage him... And then at the people who were not aware that they were already breathing the air of the Saviour...

We stopped near Rachel's tomb to let the donkey rest for a moment and to eat a little bread and some olives, the provisions of poor people. But I was not hungry. I could not be hungry... I was nourished with My joy... We took to the road again... Come. I will show you where we met the shepherd... Do not worry, I cannot go wrong. I am living that hour again and I can find every place because I see everything through a bright angelical light. Perhaps the angelical group is here once again, invisible to our bodies, but visible to our souls with its brightness, and everything is revealed and clear. They cannot be mistaken, and they are leading Me... for My joy and yours. Here: Elias came from that field into this one with his sheep, and Joseph asked him for some milk for Me. And we stopped over there, in that field, while he was drawing the warm nourishing milk and giving some advice to Joseph.

Come, come... Here is the path of the last little valley before Bethlehem. We took it because the main road was a confusion of people and horses, close to the town... There is Bethlehem! Oh! Dear land of My fathers, you gave Me the first kiss of My Son! You opened your-door, as good and fragrant as the bread of which you bear the name (1), to give the True Bread to the world dying of starvation! Like a mother, in whom there is still Rachel's maternal love, you embraced Me, o holy land of David's Bethlehem, first temple of the Saviour, of the morning Star born of Jacob to show Mankind the route to Heaven! Look how beautiful she is now in springtime! But she was beautiful also then, although fields and vineyards were bare! A thin veil of frost was sparkling on the bare branches, which looked as if they were covered with diamond dust, enveloped in a heavenly impalpable veil. The chimney of every house was smoking while supper was being prepared and the smoke, rising from terrace to terrace up to this brow, made the town look veiled as well... Everything was chaste, intimate, waiting... For You, Son! The earth perceived Your coming... And also the people of Bethlehem would have perceived You, because they are not bad, even if you do not believe so. They could not give us hospitality... The good honest homes in Bethlehem were crowded with insensitive proud people, who are always arrogant, and are so also nowadays, and they could not perceive You... How many

(1) Bethlehem according to common interpretation means: « house of bread ».

Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, scribes, Essenes there were! Oh! Their being dull at present is a consequence of their being hardhearted then. They closed their hearts to love for their poor sister that night... and they remained and still are in darkness. They rejected God then, by rejecting love for their neighbour.

Come. Let us go to the Grotto. It is useless to enter the town. The best friends of My Child are no longer there. Friendly Nature is quite sufficient to make a fire, with its stones, its stream, its wood. Nature perceived the coming of its Lord... There... come without hesitating... We go round here... There, over there are the ruins of David's Tower. Oh! it is dearer to Me than a royal palace! Blessed ruins! Blessed stream! Blessed tree because, as if by miracle, you allowed the wind to pull down so many of your branches so that we might find firewood and light a fire! »

Mary descends quickly towards the Grotto, She crosses the little stream on a board acting as a bridge, She runs in the open space before the ruins and falls on Her knees at the entrance of the Grotto, She bends and kisses the ground. All the others follow Her. They are touched... The boy, who has not left Her one moment, seems to be listening to a wonderful story and his little dark eyes drink in Mary's words and gestures without missing a single one.

Mary stands up and goes in saying: « Everything is exactly as then!... But then it was night... Joseph lit a lamp when I entered. Only then, dismounting from the little donkey I became aware of how tired and cold I was... An ox greeted us, I went near it, to feel its warmth and lean against the hay... Joseph laid the hay out here, where I am, to make a bed for Me, and he dried the hay for Me and for You, Son, at the fire he had lit in that corner... because he was as good as a father in his love of an angelical spouse... And holding each other's hand, like brother and sister lost in the darkness of night, we ate our bread and cheese, then he went over there to kindle the fire and he took off his mantle to close the entrance... In actual fact he put a veil before the glory of God descending from Heaven. You, My Jesus... and I lay on the hay, in the warmth of the two animals, enveloped in My mantle and covered with a woollen blanket... My dear spouse!... In that hour of anxiety when I was all alone before the mystery of My first maternity, an hour full of uncertainty for every woman, and in My case, in My only maternity, it was also full of the mystery of what it would be to see the Son of God emerge from mortal flesh, he, Joseph, was like a mother, an angel to Me... he was My comfort then and always afterwards... Then silence and sleep enveloped the Just man... so that he might not see what for Me was God's daily kiss...

And with regard to Me, after the interval of human necessities, there came immeasurable waves of ecstasy from a heavenly sea

and they raised Me higher and higher on their bright crests carrying Me up with them into an ocean of light, of joy, of peace, of love, until I was lost in the sea of God, of God's bosom... A voice from the earth whispered: "Are You sleeping, Mary?". Oh! it was so far away!... An echo, a remembrance of the earth!... And so faint it was that My soul did not stir, and I do not know how I replied, while I rose, I rose even higher into the depth of fire, of infinite beatitude, of foreknowledge of God... up to Him... Oh! were You born of Me that night, or was I born of the Trine brightness? Did I give You or did You absorb Me to generate Me? I do not know... And then the descent, from choir to choir, from star to star, from cloud to cloud, a sweet, slow, blissful, placid descent, like a flower carried high in the sky by an eagle and then dropped, descending slowly, on the wings of the air, made more beautiful by a drop of rain, by a tiny piece of rainbow stolen in the sky... alights on its native soil... My diadem: You! You on My heart...

Sitting here, after adoring You on My knees, I loved You. At last I could love You without the barrier of the flesh, and I moved from here to take You to the love of him, who, like Me, was worthy of being one of the first to love You. And here, between these two rustic columns, I offered You to the Father. And here You rested for the first time on Joseph's heart... Then I swaddled You and together we laid You here... And I lulled You while Joseph was drying hay at the fire and when it was warm he placed it on Your chest and then we both adored You, bending over You, as I am doing now, to inhale Your breath, contemplating the humiliation to which love can lead and shedding tears which are certainly shed also in Heaven for the unexhausted joy of seeing God. »

Mary, Who has been pacing to and fro while recalling the past, pointing out the places, panting with love, with bright tears shining in Her blue eyes and a smile of joy on Her lips, bends over Her Jesus, Who has sat on a huge stone listening to Her recollection, and kisses His head, weeping, adoring as She did then...

« And then the shepherds... they were in here, adoring with their good souls and with the deep sigh of the earth which entered with them, with their scent of humanity, of herds and hay; and outside there were the angels, everywhere, who adored with their love, with their songs which no human creature can repeat, and with the love of Heaven, with the air of Heaven which came in with them, which they brought in, in all their brightness... Your birth, Blessed Son!... »

Mary has knelt down beside Her Son and weeps emotionally with Her head resting on His knees. No one dare speak for some time. More or less moved they all look around as if they expected to see the scene painted among the cobwebs and rough stones...

Mary collects Herself and says: « Now, I told you of the infinitely

simple and infinitely great birth of My Son. With My woman's heart, not with the wisdom of a master. There is nothing else, because it was the greatest thing on the earth, concealed under very ordinary appearances. »

« But the day after? And then later? » many ask, amongst them the two Maries.

« The following day? Oh! very simple! I was the mother who nurses her baby, washes him and swaddles him, as every mother does. I used to warm the water of the stream on a fire lit out there, so that the smoke would not hurt His little blue eyes, and then in the most sheltered corner in an old tub I washed My Child and put fresh swaddling clothes on Him. I washed His napkins in the stream and hung them out in the sun... and then - and it was My greatest joy - I suckled Him and He sucked and became rosier and happier... On the first day, at the warmest hour of the day, I sat out there to see Him properly. The light glimmers in here, it does not come in direct and the lamp and the flame of the fire made things look strange. I went out there, in the sun... and I looked at the Incarnate Word. The Mother then became acquainted with Her Son and the handmaid of God with Her Lord. And I was a woman and a worshipper... Then Anna's house... the days near Your cradle, Your first steps, Your first word... But that happened later, in due course... And nothing, nothing was equal to the hour of Your birth... Only when I return to God I will find that fullness once again... »

« But... why set out at the last moment! How unwary of You! Why not wait? The decree provided for an extension for special cases such as birth or disease. Alphaeus said so... » says Mary of Alphaeus.

« Wait? Oh! no! That evening, when Joseph brought the news, You and I, Son, leapt for joy. It was the call... because You were to be born here, and nowhere else, as the Prophets had foretold, and that sudden decree was as if merciful Heaven wanted Joseph to erase even the memory of his suspicion. It was what I was waiting for, for You, for him, for the Judaic world and for the future world, for ever and ever. We decided. And we acted accordingly. Wait! Can the bride delay her nuptial dream? Why wait? »

« Well... anything might have happened... » says Mary of Alphaeus once again.

« I was not afraid of anything. I rested in God. »

« But did You know that everything would happen thus? »

« Nobody told Me. And I never thought of it, so much so that to encourage Joseph, I let him and you doubt that there was still time for the birth. But I knew, I really knew that the Light of the World was to be born during the feast of the Dedication. »

« And you, mother, why did you not go with Mary? And why did

father not think of it? After all you were both going to come here! Did we not all come? » asks Judas Thaddeus sternly.

« Your father had decided to come after the Dedication and he told his brother. But Joseph would not wait. »

« But at least you... » insists Thaddeus.

« Do not reproach her, Judas. By mutual consent we decided it was just to lay a veil on the mystery of this birth. »

« Did Joseph know that it was to take place with those signs? If You did not know, how could he have known? »

« We knew nothing, except that He was to be born. »

« So? »

« So divine Wisdom guided us, as it was right that it should. Jesus' birth and His presence in the world were to appear devoid of uncommon features, which might rouse Satan... And you are aware that the present bitter hatred of Bethlehem people towards the Messiah is a consequence of Christ's first epiphany. Demoniacal hatred made use of the revelation to cause bloodshed, and thereby intensify hatred. Are you satisfied, Simon of Jonah, who are speechless and almost breathless? »

« Yes, so much... so much that I seem to be out of this world, in a holier place than if I were beyond the Velarium of the Temple... So much... that now that I have seen You in this place and in the light of that night, I am afraid that I did behave with respect towards You, as if You were a great woman, but just a woman. Now... now I will not dare to call You: "Mary", as I did before. Heretofore You were the Mother of My Master. Now I have seen You on the crests of those heavenly waves, I have seen You as a Queen, and I, a poor wretch, prostrate myself, because I am a slave » and he throws himself on the ground kissing Mary's feet.

Jesus speaks now: « Simon, stand up. Come here, close to Me. » Peter goes to the left hand side of Jesus because Mary is on His right. « What are we now? » asks Jesus.

« We? Well, we are Jesus, Mary and Simon. »

« Very well. But how many are we? »

« Three, Master. »

« So we are a trinity. One day, in Heaven, the Divine Trinity had a thought: "It is now time that the Word should go to the world". And in a throb of love the Word came upon the earth. He parted therefore from the Father and the Holy Spirit. He came to work on the earth. The Two Who had remained in Heaven contemplated the deeds of the Word, remaining more united than ever to blend Thought and Love to assist the Word working on the earth. The day will come when an order will be issued from Heaven: "It is time for You to come back because everything has been accomplished", and then the Word will go back to Heaven, thus... (Jesus takes a step backwards leaving Mary and Peter where they

were) and from the heights of Heaven He will contemplate the deeds of the two who remained on the earth, who, by holy inspiration, will join together more than ever, to blend power and love to obtain the means of fulfilling the desire of the Word: "The redemption of the world through the perennial teaching of His Church". And the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit will form a chain with Their beams to tie more and more closely the two left on the earth: My Mother, love; you, power. You will certainly have to treat Mary as a queen, but not as if you were a slave. Do you not think so? »

« I think everything You wish. I am overwhelmed! I... the power? Oh! If I am to be the power I must definitely lean on Her! Oh! Mother of my Lord, never abandon me, never, never... »

« Do not be afraid. I will always hold you by the hand, as I used to do with My Child until He could walk by Himself. »

« And after that? »

« And after I will support you with My prayers. Cheer up, Simon. Never doubt God's power. I did not doubt it, neither did Joseph. You must not doubt it either. God gives us His help hour by hour, if we remain humble and faithful... Come out here, now, near the stream, in the shade of the good tree, which, if it were later in summer, would give you its apples in addition to its shade; come. We shall eat before going... Where, Son?" »

« To Jala. It is near. And tomorrow we shall go to Bethzur. »

They sit in the shade of the apple-tree and Mary leans against its robust trunk.

Bartholomew watches Her, so young and still heavenly moved by the recollection She made, while She accepts from Her Son the food which He has blessed and She smiles at Him with loving eyes, and he whispers: « "In His shade I am seated and His food is sweet to My taste". »

Judas Thaddeus replies to him: « It is true. She is sick with love. But we cannot say that She was awakened under an apple-tree. »

« Why not, brother? What do we know about the secrets of the King? » replies James of Alphaeus.

And Jesus smiling says: « The new Eve was conceived of the Thought at the foot of the paradisiacal apple-tree in order to put to flight the serpent and detoxicate the poisoned fruit by means of Her smile and Her tears. She became the tree of the redeeming fruit. Come, friends, and eat of it. Because to be nourished by its sweetness is to be nourished by the honey of God. »

« Master, please satisfy an old desire of mine for some clarification. Does the Song which we are reciting foresee Her? » asks Bartholomew in a low voice while Mary is looking after the boy and speaking to the women.

« The Book speaks of Her from its beginning and future books

will speak of Her until the word of man changes into the everlasting hosanna of God's eternal City » and Jesus turns towards the women.

« You can hear that He descends from David! What wisdom, what poetry! » says the Zealot speaking to his companions.

« Listen » joins in the conversation the Iscariot who is still in the mood of the previous day and speaks very little, although he endeavours to emulate the freedom he had before, « listen, I would like to understand why the Incarnation had to take place. Only God can speak in such a way as to defeat Satan. Only God can have the power of redeeming. And I do not doubt it. But I think that the Word might have lowered Himself less than He did by being born like every other man, submitting Himself to the miseries of childhood and so on. Could He not have appeared in human form, already adult, in the appearance of an adult? And if He really wanted a mother, could He not have chosen one, an adoptive one, as He did for a father? I think I asked Him once, but He did not reply at length, or I do not remember. »

« Ask Him! Since we are on the subject... » says Thomas.

« I won't. I upset Him and I feel as if I have not been forgiven yet. Ask Him on my behalf. »

« I beg your pardon! We accept everything without so many clarifications and you expect us to ask questions? It is not fair! » retorts James of Zebedee.

« What is not fair? » asks Jesus.

There is silence, then the Zealot speaks on behalf of everybody repeating Judas Iscariot's questions and the replies of the others.

« I do not bear a grudge. That is the first thing. I make the comments that I must make, I suffer and I forgive. That applies to him who is afraid, which is still the consequence of his perturbation. With regard to My real Incarnation I say: "It is just that it took place". In future many people will make mistakes concerning My Incarnation, ascribing to Me the erroneous forms that Judas would like Me to have taken. A man seemingly solid in body, but in reality fluent like a lighting effect, so that I would and would not be flesh. And Mary's maternity would and would not be a real maternity. I am really flesh and Mary is really the Mother of the Word Incarnate. If the hour of My birth was but an ecstasy, that is because She is the new Eve without the burden of sin and without the heritage of punishment. But I did not lower Myself by resting in Her. Was the manna enclosed in the Tabernacle perhaps humiliated? No, on the contrary it was honoured by being in that abode. Others will say that I, since I was not real flesh, did not suffer and did not die during My stay on the earth. Of course, since they cannot deny that I was here, they will deny My real Incarnation or My true Divinity. No, I am really One with the Father for

ever, and I am united to God as Flesh, because as a matter of fact it is possible that Love reached what is unreachable because of His Perfection, by becoming Flesh to save flesh. A reply to all these errors is given by My whole life, which shed blood from birth to death and was submitted to everything that is common to man, except sin. Yes, I was born of Her. For your welfare. You do not know how much Justice has been mitigated since the Woman has become its collaborator. Have I satisfied you, Judas? »

« Yes, Master. »

« Do likewise with Me. »

The Iscariot bends his head, is abashed and perhaps he is really touched by so much kindness.

The rest is protracted in the cool shade of the apple-tree. Some fall asleep, some doze. But Mary gets up and goes back into the Grotto and Jesus follows Her...

208. Going to Eliza's at Bethzur.

4th July 1945.

« We shall almost certainly find them if we go back on to the Hebron road for a little while. Please go in pairs looking for them on the mountain paths. From here to Solomon's Pools and thence to Bethzur. We will follow you. This is their pasture area » says the Lord to the Twelve and I understand that He is speaking of the shepherds.

The apostles are getting ready to go, each with his favourite companion and only the inseparable couple of John and Andrew do not get together because they both go to the Iscariot saying: « I will come with you » and Judas replies: « Yes, come, Andrew. It is better thus, John. You and I already know the shepherds. So it is better if you go with someone else. »

« Come with me, then, boy » says Peter leaving James of Zebedee, who without protesting goes with Thomas, while the Zealot joins Judas Thaddeus, James of Alphaeus goes with Matthew and the two inseparable Philip and Bartholomew remain together. The boy remains with Jesus and the Maries.

The road is cool and comfortable and runs among completely green mountains covered with forests and meadows. They meet herds going towards pastures in the faint light of dawn.

At the sound of every cattle-bell Jesus stops speaking and looks round, He then asks the shepherds whether Elias, the Bethlehemite shepherd, is in that area. I understand that by now Elias is called « the Bethlehemite ». Even if other shepherds are from Bethlehem, he is by right or by mockery « the Bethlehemite ». But no one knows where he is. They answer stopping their herds and ceasing to play their rustic flutes.

Almost every young man has one of those primeval cane flutes, which cause Marjiam to be thrown into ecstasies, until a good old man gives him his nephew's saying: « He will make himself another one », and Marjiam goes away happily with the instrument across his back, even if he does not know how to play it, at least for the time being.

« I would like so much to meet them! » exclaims Mary.

« We will certainly find them. In this season they are always near Hebron. »

The boy is interested in those shepherds who saw the Child Jesus and he asks Mary many questions and She explains everything patiently and kindly.

« But why did they punish them? They had done nothing but good! » asks the boy after hearing the story of their misfortunes.

« Because very often man makes mistakes, accusing innocent people of evil deeds that in actual fact were done by someone else. But as they have been good and have forgiven, Jesus loves them so much. We must always be able to forgive. »

« But all the children who were slaughtered, how could they have forgiven Herod? »

« They are little Martyrs, Marjiam, and martyrs are saints. They not only forgive their executioners, but they love them, because they open Heaven to them. »

« But are they in Heaven? »

« No, not just now. But they are in Limbo where they are the joy of Patriarchs and of the just. »

« Why? »

« Because when they arrived with their souls purple with blood, they said: "Here we are, we are the heralds of Christ the Saviour. Rejoice, you who are waiting, because He is already on the earth". And everybody loves them because they are the bearers of these good tidings. »

« My father told me that also Jesus' Word is good tidings. So when my father goes to Limbo after repeating it on the earth, and I also go there, will we be loved as well? »

« You will not go to Limbo, My dear little one. »

« Why? »

« Because Jesus will have already gone back to Heaven and will have opened it and all good people will go straight to Heaven when they die. »

« I will be good, I promise. And Simon of Jonah? He too, eh? Because I do not want to become an orphan a second time. »

« He will be there as well, you may be sure, but there are no orphans in Heaven. We have God. And God is everything. We are not orphans here either. Because the Father is always with us. »

« But Jesus in that lovely prayer, which You teach me by day and

my mother at night, says: "Our Father Who are in Heaven". We are not in Heaven yet. Therefore, how can we be with Him? »

« Because God is everywhere, son. He watches over the baby that is born and over the old man who is dying. The child who is born this moment, in the most remote part of the world, has God's love and eye with him and will have them until he dies. »

« Even if he is as bad as Doras? »

« Yes. »

« But can God, Who is so good, love Doras who is so bad and makes my old father weep? »

« He looks at him with disdain and sorrow. But if he should repent, He would say to him what the father of the parable said to his repentant son. You should pray that he may repent and... »

« Oh! no, Mother! I will pray that he may die!!! » says the child impetuously. Although his remark is not very... angelical, his impetuosity is so sincere that no one can help laughing.

Mary then resumes the sweet gravity of a Teacher: « No, My dear. You must not do that to a sinner. God would not listen to you and would look sternly at you as well. We must wish our neighbour the greatest welfare, even if our neighbour is very bad. Life is a good thing because it gives man the possibility of gaining merits in the eyes of God. »

« But if one is bad, one gains sins. »

« We pray that he may become good. »

The boy is pensive... but he does not like this sublime lesson and he concludes: « Doras will not become good even if I pray for him. He is too bad. Even if all the baby martyrs of Bethlehem should pray with me, he would not become good. You do not know... You do not know that one day he struck my old father with an iron rod, because he found him sitting during working hours? He was not able to stand because he was not feeling well... and he beat him and left him half dead, and then kicked him on his face... I saw him because I was hiding behind a hedge... I had gone there because no one had brought me any bread for two days and I was hungry... I had to run away so that he might not hear me, because I was crying seeing my father like that, with blood on his beard, lying on the ground, as if he were dead... I was weeping when I went to beg some bread... but that bread is still lying here... and it tastes of the blood and tears of my father and mine, and of all those who are tortured and who cannot love those who torture them. I would like to strike Doras that he may feel what a blow is, and I would like to leave him without any bread, that he may learn what it is to be hungry, and I would make him work in the sun, in mud, under the threats of the overseer, without food, that he may know what he gives the poor... I cannot love him because... because he kills my holy father, and I... if I had not found you, to whom would I have

belonged? »

The child, in a fit of pain, shouts and cries, trembling, deranged, striking with his closed fists the air, as he cannot strike the slavedriver. The women are amazed and touched and they endeavour to calm him. But he is really in a fit of grief and does not hear anything. He shouts: « I cannot, I cannot love and forgive him. I hate him, I hate him on behalf of everybody, I hate him, I hate him!... » He is in a pitiful and frightful state. It is the reaction of a creature who has suffered too much.

And Jesus says so: « That is Doras' gravest felony: to drive an innocent child to hate... »

He then takes the child in His arms and speaks to him: « Listen, Marjiam. Do you want to go one day with your mummy, your daddy, your little brother and the old father? »

« Yes... »

« Then you must not hate anybody. He who hates does not go to Heaven. You cannot pray for Doras just now? Well, do not pray, but do not hate. Do you know what you must do? You must never look back to think of the past... »

« But my father who suffers is not past... »

« That is true. But look, Marjiam, try and pray like this: "Our Father Who are in Heaven, please see to what is my wish... You will see that the Father will listen to you in the best possible way. Even if you killed Doras, what would you do? You would lose the love of God, Heaven, the company of your father and mother and you would not relieve of his troubles the old man whom you love. You are too little to be able to do it. But God can. Tell Him. Say to Him: "You know how much I love my old father and how I love all those who are unhappy. Will You please see to this matter, because You can do everything". What? Do you not want to preach the Gospel? But the Gospel teaches love and forgiveness! How can you say to one: "Do not hate. Forgive" if you cannot love and forgive! Leave things to good God and you will see how well He can arrange matters. Will you do that? »

« Yes, I will, because I love You. »

Jesus kisses the boy and lets him down.

The incident is over as well as their journey. There are three large basins excavated in the rocky mountain, a really grand work, and the surface of the most limpid water sparkles as well as the waterfall that from the first basin falls into the second larger one and then into the third one, which is really a little lake. Pipelines convey the water to distant towns. The whole mountain, from the spring to the basins and from the basins to the ground is most beautiful and fertile, thanks to the humidity of the soil in this area, and flowers more composite than wild ones, together with rare scented herbs, make the green sides of the mountain a

most pleasant and brilliant sight. One would think that man has planted garden flowers here together with scented herbs, which, in the heat of the sun, diffuse in the air their aromas of cinnamon, camphor, clove, lavender and other pleasantly pungent, fragrant, strong, sweet smells, in a wonderful blend of the finest earthly perfumes. I would say that it is a harmonious conglomeration of smells because it is really a poem of herbs and flowers in hues and fragrance.

All the apostles are sat in the shade of a tree covered with large white flowers, the name of which I do not know. They are huge pendulous bell-shaped flowers, of white enamel hue, which dangle at the least breath of wind, diffusing their fragrance at each undulation. I do not know the name of this tree. Its flowers remind me of a shrub that grows in Calabria, which the locals call « bottaro », but the trunk is quite different, as this is a tall tree, with a robust trunk, and not a shrub. Jesus calls them and they hasten towards Him.

« We found Joseph almost at once, he was coming back from a market. They will all be at Bethzur this evening. We gathered together, by shouting to one another, and we remained here in the cool shade » explains Peter.

« What a lovely place! It looks like a garden! We were discussing whether it is natural or not, and some insist it is, some that it isn't » says Thomas.

« The land of Judaea has such marvels » states the Iscariot, who is inevitably inclined to grow proud by everything, also by flowers and herbs.

« Yes, but... I think that if Johanna's garden at Tiberias were abandoned and it became wild, also Galilee would have the marvel of wonderful roses among ruins » retorts James of Zebedee.

« You are not wrong. This is the area where Solomon's gardens were, and they were famous, like his palaces, throughout the world of those days. Perhaps it was here that he dreamt of the Song of Songs, and he ascribed to the Holy City all the beautiful flowers that he had grown here » says Jesus.

« So I was right! » exclaims Thaddeus.

« Yes, you were. Do You know, Master? He was quoting Ecclesiastes, joining the idea of the gardens to the idea of the basins and he concluded by saying: "But he realised that everything is vanity and nothing lasts under the sun, except the Word of My Jesus" » says James, the other brother.

« I thank you. But let us thank also Solomon, whether the original flowers are his or not. The basins that nourish herbs and men are certainly his. May he be blessed for them. Now let us go over to that big ruffled rose-bush, which has formed a flowery tunnel from tree to tree. We will stop there. We are almost half way... »

... And they take to the road again about the ninth hour, when every tree casts a long shadow in this area, which is very well cultivated in every part. One gets the impression of walking through a botanic garden because all kinds of trees are represented: forest trees, fruit and ornamental ones. There are people working the land everywhere but they show no interest in the group passing by. On the other hand, it is not the only one, Other groups of Israelites are on their way back from the Passover celebration. The road is quite good although it is cut along the mountains, and the continuously varying landscape relieves travellers of the monotony of the journey. Streams and torrents form liquid silver commas and write words which they then sing in their many intersecting meanderings, which flow through forests or hide under caves from which they come out more beautiful. They seem to be playing with plants and stones like happy children.

Also Marjiam, who is cheerful once again, plays and tries to make music with his instrument to imitate birds. But the sounds he produces are not songs, but dissonant laments, which appear to be most unwelcome to the more difficult members of the group, that is to Bartholomew, because of his age, and to Judas of Kerioth, for many reasons. But no one complains openly and the boy whistles frisking about. Only twice he points at a village nestling in the forests and asks: « Is it mine? » and turns pale. But Simon, who keeps him close to himself, replies: « Your village is very far from here. Come, let us see if we can pick that beautiful flower and take it to Mary » and thus takes his mind off his worries.

The sun is beginning to set when Bethzur appears on its hill and almost at the same time on the secondary road they have taken to go there, they see the flocks of the shepherds and the shepherds who run to meet them. When Elias sees that Mary also is there, he lifts his arms in a gesture of surprise and remains thus, not believing his own eyes.

« Peace to you, Elias. It is I. We promised you, but it was not possible to meet in Jerusalem... Never mind. We are meeting now » says Mary kindly.

« Oh! Mother, Mother!... » Elias does not know what to say. At last he finds words: « Well, I am celebrating Passover now. It is just the same, or better still. »

« Of course, Elias. We sold well. We can kill a little lamb. Oh! Please be the guests of our poor table » beg Levi and Joseph.

« We are tired this evening. Tomorrow. Listen. Do you know a certain Eliza, the wife of Abraham of Samuel? »

« Yes. She lives in her house at Bethzur. But Abraham is dead and his sons died last year. The first one died of a disease in a few

hours, and no one knows of what he died. The other died of a slow death and nothing stopped his decline. We gave her the milk of a young goat, because the doctors said it was good for him. He drank a lot of it, as all the shepherds took it to her, because the poor mother had sent people to look for whoever had a young goat giving milk for the first time in the herd. But it was of no avail. When we came back to the plane the young man would not take any food. When we came back to Adar, he had been dead two months. »

« My poor friend! She was so fond of Me in the Temple... and she was somehow related to Me through our ancestors... She was good... She left to marry Abraham, to whom she had been promised since her childhood, two years before Me and I remember when she came to offer her first-born to the Lord. She sent for Me, not only for Me, but later she wanted Me to be alone with her for some time... And now she is alone... Oh! I must make haste to comfort her! You stay here. I will go with Elias and I will enter by Myself. Sorrow demands respect... »

« Not even I, Mother? »

« Of course, always. But the others... Not even you, My little one. It would be painful for you. Come, Jesus! »

« Wait for us on the village square. Look for a shelter for the night. Goodbye » orders Jesus.

And with only Elias for company, Jesus and Mary go as far as a large house, which is completely closed and silent. The shepherd knocks at the door with his stick. A maidservant looks out of a little window asking who it is. Mary moves forward saying: « Mary of Joachim and Her Son, from Nazareth. Tell your mistress. »

« It is useless. She does not want to see anybody. She is weeping her heart out. »

« Try. »

« No. I know how she drives me away if I try to take her mind off her worries. She does not want anyone, she will not see anyone or speak to anyone. She speaks only to the memory of her sons. »

« Go, woman. I order you to go. Say to her: "Little Mary of Nazareth is here, the one who was your daughter in the Temple... You will see that she will be wanting Me. »

The woman goes away shaking her head. Mary explains to Her Son and to the shepherd: « Eliza was much older than I was. She was waiting in the Temple for her fiance to come back from Egypt where he had gone on inheritance matters and so she remained there up to unusual age. She is almost ten years older than I am. The teachers used to entrust the little girls to the guidance of adult pupils... and she was My companion-teacher. She was good and... Here is the woman. »

In fact the servant thoroughly amazed rushes to open the door wide: « Come in, come in! » she says. And then in a low voice: « May

You be blessed for getting her out of that room. »

Elias takes his leave and Mary enters with Her Son.

« But this man, really... For pity's sake! He is the same age as Levi... »

« Let Him come in. He is My Son and will comfort her better than can. »

The woman shrugs her shoulders and precedes them through the long hall of a beautiful but sad house. Everything is clean, but everything seems dead...

A tall woman, walking bowed in dark clothes, comes forward in the dim light of the hall.

« Eliza! Dear! I am Mary! » says Mary running towards her and embracing her.

« Mary? You... I thought You were dead, too. I was told... when? I don't know... My head is empty... I was told that You died with many other mothers after the coming of the Magi. But who told me that You were the Mother of the Saviour? »

« The shepherds perhaps... »

« Oh! the shepherds! » The woman bursts into bitter tears. « Don't mention that name. It reminds me of the last hope for Levi's life... And yet... yes... a shepherd spoke to me of the Saviour and I killed my son taking him to the place where they said the Messiah was, near the Jordan. But there was nobody there... and my son arrived back in time to die... Fatigue, cold... I killed him... But I had no intention of being a murderer. I was told that He, the Messiah, cured diseases... and that is why I did it... Now my son accuses me of killing him... »

« No, Eliza. It is you that think so. Listen. I instead think that your son has taken Me by the hand saying: "Come to my dear mother. Take the Saviour to her. I am happier here than I would be on the earth. But she listens only to her weeping, and she cannot hear the words that I whisper to her with my kisses, poor mother, she is like a woman possessed by a demon who wants her to surrender to despair, because he wants us to be divided. If instead she resigns herself and believes that God does everything for a good purpose, we would be united for good, with our father and brother. Jesus can do it". And I came... with Him... Do you not wish to see Him?... » Mary has spoken holding the poor wretch in Her arms all the time, kissing her grey hair with unparalleled kindness.

« Oh! if it were true! But, why then did Daniel not come to You, to tell You to come sooner?... But who told me some time ago that You were dead? I don't remember... I don't remember... That is another reason why perhaps I waited too long to go to the Messiah. But they said that He, You, everybody had died at Bethlehem... »

« Never mind who said so. Come here, look, My Son is here. Come

to Him. Make your children and your Mary happy. Do you know that we suffer seeing you thus? » And She leads her towards Jesus Who is standing in a dark corner and only now comes forward, under a lamp that the maidservant has placed on top of a tall coffer.

The poor mother raises her head... and I now see that she is the Eliza who was also on Calvary with the pious women. Jesus stretches out His hands in a gesture of loving invitation. The poor wretch hesitates a moment, then she entrusts her own hands to His and finally, all of a sudden, she throws herself on to Jesus' chest, moaning: « Tell me, tell me that I am not guilty of Levi's death! Tell me that they are not lost for ever! Tell me that I will soon be with them!... »

« Yes, I will. Listen. They are now exulting because you are in My arms. I will soon be going to them, and what shall I tell them? That you are not resigning yourself to the Lord? Shall I tell them that? The women of Israel, the women of David, so strong, so wise, are to be given the lie by you? No. You are suffering, because you suffered all alone. Your grief and you. You and your grief. One cannot endure it thus. Are you no longer bearing in mind the words of hope for those whom death has taken away from us? "I mean to raise you from your graves and lead you back to the soil of Israel. And you will know that I am the Lord when I open your graves and raise you from your graves. When I put My spirit in you, you will live". The soil of Israel, for the just sleeping in the Lord, is the Kingdom of God. I will open it and give it to those who are waiting. »

« Also to my Daniel? And to my Levi?... He was so horrified at death!... He could not stand the idea of being far from his mother. That is why I wanted to die and be buried beside him... »

« But they were not there with their living parts. Only dead things were there and they could not hear you. They are in the place of expectation... »

« But does it really exist? Oh! Do not be scandalised at me. My memory has turned into tears! My head is full of the noise of the weeping and death-rattle of my sons. That death-rattle! That death-rattle. It has dissolved my brains. I have but that deathrattle in here... »

« And I will put the words of life there for you. I will sow the Life, because I am Life, where there is the din of death. Remember the great Judas Maccabee who wanted a sacrifice offered for the dead, rightly thinking that they are destined to rise again and that it is necessary to hasten their peace by means of suitable sacrifices. If Judas Maccabee had not been certain of their resurrection, would he have prayed and made people pray for the dead? As it is written, he thought that a great reward is set aside for those who

die piously, as your sons certainly did... See, you are saying yes? So do not despair. But pray devoutly for your dead ones, that their sins may be expiated before I go to them. Then, without waiting for a moment, they will come to Heaven with Me. Because I am the Way, the Truth and the Life and I lead, and I speak the Truth and I give Life to those who believe in My Truth and follow Me. Tell Me. Did your sons believe in the coming of the Messiah? »

« Of course, my Lord. I taught them to believe that. »

« And did Levi believe that if I wanted I could cure him? »

« Yes, My Lord. We hoped in You... but it was of no avail... and he died disheartened after hoping so much... » The woman resumes weeping again more calmly but more desolately in her calm than when she was agitated.

« Do not say that it was of no avail. He who believes in Me, even if he is dead, will live for ever... Night is falling, woman. I will join My apostles. I leave My Mother with you... »

« Oh! Will you please stay as well!... I am afraid that if You go away, my torture will begin again... The storm is just beginning to calm at the sound of Your words... »

« Do not be afraid! You have Mary with you. I will come again tomorrow. I have something to tell the shepherds. Can I tell them to approach your house?... »

« Oh! Yes. They used to come also last year for my son... Behind the house there is an orchard and a rustic yard. They can go there as they used to do then, to keep the flock together... »

« All right. I will come. Be good. Remember that Mary in the Temple was entrusted to You. I entrust Her to you as well tonight. »

« Yes, do not worry. I will look after Her... I will have to see to Her supper, to Her rest... For how long I have never thought of these things! Mary, will You sleep in my room, as Levi did when he was ill? I in my son's bed, You in mine. And I will feel as if I heard his light breathing again... He always held me by the hand... »

« Yes, Eliza. But before we shall speak of many things. »

« No. You are tired. You must sleep. »

« You, too... »

« Oh! I! I have not slept for months... I weep... and weep... I can do nothing else... »

« This evening, instead, we shall pray, and then we shall go to bed and you will sleep... We shall sleep holding each other's hand. You may go, Son, and pray for us... »

« I bless you. Peace to you and to this house! »

And Jesus goes away with the maidservant who is dumbfounded and keeps repeating: « What a miracle, my Lord! What a miracle! After so many months she has spoken, she has reasoned... Oh! what a wonderful thing!... They were saying that she would die insane... »

And I was sorry, because she is good. »

« Yes, she is good and that is why God will help her. Goodbye, woman. Peace also to you. »

Jesus goes out on to the almost dark street and it all ends.

209. Jesus in Eliza's House Speaks of Sorrow that Bears Fruit.

5th July 1945.

The news that Eliza has convinced herself that she should get rid of her tragic melancholy must have spread through the village, so much so that when Jesus, followed by His apostles and disciples goes towards the house, crossing the village, many people watch Him carefully. They also ask the various shepherds questions about Him, why He came, about those who are with Him, about the boy, the women, the medicine He gave Eliza to relieve her of the darkness of insanity so quickly as soon as He arrived, about what He is going to do or say... And who wishes to ask more questions, may do so...

The last question is: « Could we not come as well? » to which the shepherds reply: « That we do not know. You ought to ask the Master. Go and ask Him. »

« And if He should ill-treat us? »

« He does not ill-treat even sinners. Go. He will be pleased. »

A group of people, mainly elderly men and women, of the same age as Eliza, consult one another and then move forward approaching Jesus Who is speaking to Peter and Bartholomew, and rather hesitantly they call Him: « Master... »

« What do you want? » asks Bartholomew.

« To speak to the Master, to ask... »

« May peace come to you. What questions do you wish to ask Me? »

They take heart seeing Jesus smile and say: « We are all friends of Eliza, and of her house. We heard that she has been cured. We would like to see her and hear You. Can we come? »

« You can come certainly to hear Me. To see her, no, My dear friends. Mortify your friendship and also your curiosity. Because it is also curiosity. Have respect for a deep grief which is not to be disturbed. »

« But has she not recovered? »

« She is turning towards the Light. But when night comes to an end, is it suddenly midday? And when you light a fire, is the flame bright at once? The same applies to Eliza. And if a sudden gust of wind blows on the little starting flame, does it not put it out? Use discretion therefore. The woman is one big sore. Also friendship might irritate her because she needs rest, silence, and solitude, not tragic as yesterday's, but a resigned solitude to find herself once

again... »

« So, when shall we see her? »

« Sooner than you think, Because she is now on the path to health. But if you knew what it means to come out of that darkness! It is worse than death. And who comes out of it, after all, is ashamed of having been there and that the world should know. »

« Are you a doctor? »

« I am the Master. »

They have reached the house. Jesus speaks to the shepherds: « Go into the yard. Who wishes to come with you, may do so. But no one must make any noise or go beyond the yard. Will you watch as well » He says to the apostles, « that everybody complies. And you (He speaks to Salome and Mary of Alphaeus) watch that the boy does not make any noise. Goodbye. » And He knocks at the door while the others turn the corner along a narrow street and go where they were told.

The maidservant opens the door. Jesus goes in while the servant repeatedly bows to Him.

« Where is your mistress? »

« With Your Mother... and, just imagine! she has come down into the garden! How wonderful! How wonderful! And yesterday evening she came into the dining room... She was weeping, but she came. I would have liked her to take some food, instead of the usual drop of milk, but I was not successful! »

« She will take it. Do not insist. Be patient also in your love for your mistress. »

« Yes, my Saviour. I will do everything You tell me. »

I think, in fact, that if Jesus told the woman to do the strangest things, she would do them without discussing, because she is so convinced that Jesus is Jesus and that everything He does is right. In the meantime she takes Him into a large kitchen garden, full of fruit-trees and of flowers. But if the fruit-trees have begun by themselves to come into leaf and blossom, to set the fruit and make them grow, the poor flower plants, neglected for over a whole year, have become a miniature forest, which is so entangled that the weaker and lower plants are suffocated beneath the weight of the stronger ones. Flower-beds and paths no longer exist as they have become one chaotic tangle. There is some order only at the end of the garden where the maidservant has sown salads and legumes for her own use.

Mary is, with Eliza under a very ruffled pergola, the shoots and tendrils of which reach down to the ground. Jesus stops and looks at His young Mother, Who with most refined art awakes and directs Eliza's mind to things completely different from what up to yesterday were the thoughts of the afflicted woman.

The servant approaches her mistress and says: « The Saviour has

come. »

The women turn round and come towards Him, one with Her sweet smile, the other looking tired and bewildered.

« Peace be with you. This garden is beautiful... »

« It was beautiful... » says Eliza.

« And the soil is fertile. Look how much beautiful fruit is about to ripen! And how many flowers on the rose bushes! And over there? Are they lilies? »

« Yes, they are, round a fountain where my children used to play so much. But then it was tidy... Now everything is ruined here. And it no longer seems the garden of my sons. »

« In a few days it will be as it was before. I will help you. Is that right, Jesus? You will leave Me here for a few days with Eliza. We have so much to do... » says Mary.

« What You want, I want. »

Eliza looks at Him and whispers: « Thank You. »

Jesus caresses her white hair and then takes His leave to go to the shepherds.

The women remain in the garden, but shortly afterwards, when Jesus's voice greeting the people present is heard in the calm air, Eliza, as if she were attracted by an irresistible force, goes slowly up to a very tall hedge beyond which is the yard.

Jesus speaks first to the three shepherds. He is close to the hedge, and in front of Him there are the apostles and the citizens of Bethzur who followed Him. The Maries with the boy are sitting in a corner. Jesus says: « But are you bound by contract or can you free yourselves from your commitment any time? »

« Well, we are really free servants. But we do not think that it is right to leave him at once, now that the flocks demand so much attention and it is difficult to find shepherds. »

« No, it is not fair. But it is not necessary to do it at once. I am telling you in good time, so that you may provide in all fairness. I want you to be free. To join the disciples and help Me... »

« Oh! Master!... » The three men are thrown into ecstasies for joy. « But will we be able? » they ask.

« I have no doubt about it. So that is settled. As soon as you can do it, you will join Isaac. »

« Yes, Master. »

« You may go among the rest. I will speak a few words to the people. »

And leaving the shepherds He addresses the crowd.

« Peace be with you. Yesterday I heard two unfortunate persons speak. One at the dawn of life; the other at its decline: two souls bewailing their distress. And I wept in My heart with them, seeing how much sorrow there is on the earth, and how only God can relieve it. God! The exact knowledge of God, of His great infinite

bounty, of His constant presence, of His promises. I saw how one man can be tortured by another one and how death can drive him to desolation, on which Satan works to increase his grief and cause ruin. I then said to Myself: "The children of God must not suffer such tortures. Let us grant the knowledge of God to those who ignore it, let us give it once again to those who have forgotten it in the storm of sorrow". But I also saw that I am no longer sufficient by Myself for the infinite needs of My brothers. And I have decided to call many, in greater and greater numbers, so that all those who need the comfort of the knowledge of God may have it.

These twelve apostles are the first. As My representatives they can lead to Me, and therefore to comfort, all those who are bent under too heavy a burden of sorrow. I solemnly tell you: Come to Me, all of you who are afflicted, disgusted, broken-hearted, tired, and I will share your grief with you and give you peace. Come, through My apostles, disciples and women disciples, who are increasing every day with new people full of good will. You will find comfort in your grief, company in your solitude, the love of your brothers to make you forget the hatred of the world, you will find, above all, the supreme comforter, the perfect companion, the love of God. You will no longer doubt anything. You will no longer say: "Everything has come to an end for me!". But you will say: "Everything begins for me in a supernatural world, which abolishes distances and cancels separations", so that orphans will be reunited to their parents who have risen to Abraham's bosom, and fathers and mothers, wives and widows will find their lost children and husbands.

In this land of Judaea, still near Bethlehem of Naomi, I remind you that love relieves pain and gives joy. Consider, you who are weeping, Naomi's desolation when her house was left without men. Listen to the words of her down-hearted dismissal of Orpah and Ruth: "Go back, each of you, to her mother's house. May the Lord be kind to you as you have been to those who have died and to me... Listen to her weary insistence. She who once had been the beautiful Naomi and now was the tragic Naomi, crushed by grief, did not hope for anything else in life. She only wished to go and die in the place where she had been happy in the days of her youth with the love of her husband and the kisses of her children. She said: "Go, go. It is useless to come with me... I am as good as dead... My life is no longer here, but there, in the next world, where they are. Do not sacrifice your lives any longer beside a dying thing. Because I really am 'a thing'. I am indifferent to everything. God has taken everything away from me... I am bitter grief. And I would grieve you... and that would weigh sorely on my heart. And the Lord would ask me to account for that, He Who

has already struck me so hard, because it would be selfishness to keep you, alive, near me, dead. Go to your mothers... But Ruth stayed to support the sorrowful old woman.

Ruth had understood that there are sorrows which are always greater than one's own and that her grief of a young widow was lighter than the woman's who had lost her husband and two sons; as the grief of an orphan boy, who is compelled to live begging, without caresses, without good advice, is by far greater than the deep sorrow of a mother bereft of her children; likewise the keen regret of him who, for a number of reasons, goes as far as to hate mankind and see in every man an enemy whom he must fear and against whom he must defend himself, is even greater than other sorrows, because it involves not only flesh, blood and mentality, but the soul with its supernatural duties and rights and drives it to perdition. How many childless mothers there are in the world for motherless children! How many childless widows there are who could be compassionate towards solitary old aged people! How many there are, who, having been deprived of every love so that they may devote themselves entirely to the unhappy, could fight hatred with their need to love and thus give love to unhappy Mankind, which suffers more and more because it hates more and more!

Sorrow is a cross, but it is also a wing. Mourning divests to reclothe. Rise, you who are weeping! Open your eyes, get rid of nightmares, of darkness, of selfishness! Look... The world is the barren land where one weeps and dies. And the world shouts: "help" through the mouths of orphans, of sick, lonely, doubtful people, through the mouths of those who are made prisoners of hatred by treason or cruelty. Go among those who are shouting. Forget yourselves among those who are forgotten! Recover your health among those who are sick! Be hopeful among those who are despairing! The world is open to those willing to serve God in their neighbour and to gain Heaven: to be united to God and to those whom we mourn. The gymnasium is here. The triumph there. Come. Imitate Ruth in all your sorrows. Say with her: "I will be with you until I die". And even if those misfortunes, which consider themselves incurable, should reply to you: "Do not call me Naomi, call me Mara, for God has marred me bitterly" you must persist. And I solemnly tell you that those misfortunes one day, because of your persisting, will exclaim: "Blessed be the Lord Who relieved me of my bitterness, desolation and solitude, by means of a creature who knew how to make his sorrow bear good fruit. May God bless him because he is my saviour".

Remember that Ruth's kindness to Naomi gave the Messiah to the world, because the Messiah descends from David, as David descended from Jesse, Jesse from Obed, Obed from Boaz, Boaz

from Salmon, Salmon from Nahshon, Nahshon from Amminadab, Amminadab from Ram, Ram from Hezron, Hezron from Perez, and they populated the fields of Bethlehem preparing the ancestors of the Lord. Every good deed is the origin of great things, which you do not even imagine. And the effort man makes against his own selfishness can cause such a wave of love, capable of rising higher and higher, supporting in its limpidity him who caused it, until it lifts him to the feet of the altar, to the heart of God.

May God grant you peace. »

And Jesus, without going back into the garden through the little door built in the hedge, watches that no one goes near the hedge, from the other side of which comes a long weeping... Only when all the people of Bethzur have gone away, He departs with His apostles without disturbing those beneficial tears...

210. Towards Hebron. The World's Reasons and God's.

6th July 1945.

« I do not suppose you wish to make a pilgrimage to all the known places in Israel » says the Iscariot ironically. He is discussing in a group where there are Mary of Alphaeus and Salome together with Andrew and Thomas.

« Why not? Who forbids us? » asks Mary of Clopas.

« I do. My mother has been waiting for me for such a long time... »

« Well go to your mother. We will reach you later » says Salome and she seems to be adding mentally:
« No one will miss you. »

« Certainly not! I am going with the Master. Contrary to what had been arranged, Mary is not coming. And that should not have been done to me, because I was promised She would come. »

« She stopped at Bethzur for a good reason. That woman was really unhappy. »

« Jesus could have cured her at once, without making her recover by degrees. I do not know why He is no longer fond of working outstanding miracles. »

« He must have holy reasons for doing what He did » states Andrew calmly.

« Of course! And He thus loses proselytes. Our stay at Jerusalem, what a disappointment it was! The more there is need for highflown things, the more He crouches in the dark. I intended so much to see, to fight... »

« Excuse my question... But what did you want to see and with whom did you intend to fight? » asks Thomas.

« What? Who? But I wanted to see His miracles and then make head against those who say that He is a false prophet or possessed. Because that is what they say, see? They say that if Beelzebub does not support Him, He is a poor wretch. And since Beelzebub's

whimsical disposition is well known and we know that he delights in taking and leaving, as a leopard does with its prey, and that this mentality is justified by facts, I become impatient when I think that He does nothing. We are cutting a lovely figure! The apostles of a Master... Who does nothing but teach... that is undeniable, but nothing else. » Judas' abrupt pause after the word « Master » makes the others think he was about to say something nasty.

The women are horrified and Mary of Alphaeus, being a relative of Jesus', says frankly: « I am not surprised at that, but I am astonished that He puts up with you, boy! »

But Andrew, the ever meek Andrew, loses his temper and blushing, very much like his brother just this once, says furiously: « Go away! And you won't cut any more bad figures because of the Master! And who asked you to come? He called us. Not you. You had to insist several times to be accepted. You imposed yourself. I do not know who keeps me from reporting everything to the others... »

« One can never talk to you. They are right when they say you are quarrelsome and ignorant people... »

« Well, to tell you the truth, neither do I understand how you can say that the Master made a mistake. Neither did I know of the whimsical disposition of the Demon. Poor thing! He must certainly be odd. Had he been intelligent he would not have rebelled against God. But I will take note of that » teases Thomas to avert the approaching storm.

« Don't jest, because I am serious. Can you perhaps say that He attracted attention in Jerusalem? Also Lazarus said so... »

Thomas breaks into a hearty laugh. Then, still laughing, and his laughter has already disconcerted Judas, he says: « He has not done anything? Go and ask the lepers at Siloam and Hinnom. That is: you will not find anyone at Hinnom, because they were all cured. If you were not there, because you were in a hurry to go to... your friends, and consequently you do not know, that does not prevent the valleys of Jerusalem and many more places from resounding with the hosannas of the lepers cured » concludes seriously Thomas. And he continues sternly: « You suffer from bile trouble, my friend. And thus you taste bitter and see green everywhere. It must be a recurring disease with you. And believe me, it is not very pleasant to lie with one like you. You must change. I will not tell anybody anything, and if these good women will listen to me, they will be quiet as well, and so will Andrew. But you must change. You must not think that you have been disappointed because there is no disappointment. Neither are you necessary because the Master knows what to do by Himself. Don't you try to be the Master's master. And if for that poor woman of Eliza He acted thus, it means that that was the right thing to do. Let snakes

hiss and spit as they like. Don't go to the trouble of acting as broker between them and Him and above all do not think that you lower yourself by being with Him. Even if He did not cure even a cold in future, He is always powerful. His word is a continuous miracle. And set your mind at rest. We have no archers behind us! Don't worry, we will succeed in convincing the world that Jesus is Jesus. And be quiet, if Mary promised to come to your mother's, She will come. In the meantime we will go round this beautiful part of the country, it is our work! And why not? Let us make the women disciples happy by going to visit Abraham's tomb, his tree and Jesse's sepulchre and... what else did you say? »

« They say that this is the place where Adam lived and where Abel was killed... »

« The usual senseless tales! » grumbles Judas.

« In one hundred years' time they will say that also the Grotto of Bethlehem and many other things were a tale! But excuse me! You wanted to go to that stinking cave at Endor, which you must agree did not belong to a holy cycle; don't you think so? And they have come here where they say there is the blood and the ashes of saints. Endor brought us John and who knows... »

« What a handsome acquisition John is! » scoffs the Iscariot.

« His face isn't, no. But in his soul he may be better than we are. »

« What? With his past! »

« Be quiet. The Master said that we are not to remember it. »

« Lovely! If I did any such things, I wonder whether you would not remember them! »

« Goodbye, Judas. You had better be by yourself. You are too cross. I wish I knew what is the matter with you! »

« What is the matter with me, Thomas? The trouble is that I see that we are being neglected to the advantage of strange newcomers. And I see that everybody is preferred to me. And I also notice how He waits until I am away to teach you how to pray. And do you expect me to be happy with such a situation? »

« No, I don't. But may I point out that if you had come with us for the Passover Supper you would have been on the Mount of Olives as well with us, when the Master taught us the prayer. I do not see how we are neglected because of any strange newcomer. Are you referring to the poor innocent boy? Or because unhappy John is with us? »

« Because of both of them. Jesus hardly ever speaks to us now. Look at Him even now... He is loitering over there, talking and talking to the boy. He will have to wait a long time before He can put him among the disciples! And the other one will never be a disciple. He is too proud, too learned, too hardened, with bad tendencies. And yet: "John here, John there" »

« Father Abraham, help me to bear this in patience!!! And in what

do you think the Master prefers others to you? »

« Do you not see that even now? When it was time to leave Bethzur, after stopping to teach three shepherds who could have very well been taught by Isaac, whom does He leave with His mother? Me? you? No. He leaves Simon. An old man who can hardly speak!... »

« But the little he says is always said right » retorts Thomas, who is now alone because the women and Andrew have gone away and are walking fast in front of them as if they wished to get past a stretch of the road where the sun is very warm.

The two apostles have become so excited that they do not hear Jesus coming, because the noise of His footsteps is completely muffled by the dust of the road. But if He makes no noise, the two are shouting as loud as ten people and Jesus can hear. Behind Him there are Peter, Matthew, the two cousins of the Lord, Philip and Bartholomew and the two sons of Zebedee with Marjiam between them.

Jesus says: « You are right, Thomas. Simon speaks little, but the little he says is always right. His mind is placid and his heart honest. And above all he has a great good-will. That is why I left him with My Mother. He is a true reliable man and at the same time he knows how to live, he has suffered and is old. Therefore I am saying this because I suppose there is someone who thinks My choice was unfair - therefore he was the most suitable to remain. Judas, I could not allow My Mother to be left alone near a poor woman who is still ill. And it was just that I should leave Her. My Mother will complete the work that I started. But I could not leave Her with My brothers, or with Andrew, James or John, or with you. If you do not understand the reason, I do not know what to say... »

« Because She is Your Mother, She is young, beautiful, and people... »

« No! People will always have filth in their thoughts, on their lips and hands and particularly in their hearts, dishonest people who see their sentiments in everybody else; but I am not concerned with their mud. It falls off by itself, when it is dry. But I preferred Simon because he is old and he would not remind the desolate woman too much of her dead sons. You young men would have recalled them with your youth... Simon knows how to watch without being noticed, he never demands anything, he understands and can control himself. I could have taken Peter. Who would be better than he near My Mother? But he is still too impulsive. You know that I tell him openly, and he takes no offence. Peter is sincere, and he loves sincerity even to his own detriment. I could have taken Nathanael. But he has never been to Judaea before. Simon instead knows the country well and he will

be invaluable in bringing My Mother to Kerioth. He knows where your country house and the town one are and he will not... »

« But... Master!... But is Your Mother really coming to mine? »

« We said so. And when you say something, you do it. We shall proceed slowly, stopping to evangelize these villages. Do you not want Me to evangelize Your Judaea? »

« Of course, Master!... But I believed... I thought... »

« Above all you were causing yourself a lot of trouble through your own imagination. By the second phase of the moon of Sivan we shall all be at your mother's. We, that is also My Mother and Simon. For the time being She is evangelizing Bethzur, a Judaeon town, as Johanna is evangelizing Jerusalem with the assistance of a girl and a priest who was previously a leper, as Lazarus with Martha and old Ishmael are evangelizing Bethany, as Juttah is evangelized by Sarah and I am sure that your mother speaks of the Messiah at Kerioth, You cannot certainly say that I have left Judaea without voices. On the contrary, although it is more narrow-minded and stubborn than any other region, I have given it the sweetest voices, the voices of women, beside those of Isaac, a holy man, and of Lazarus, a friend of Mine. A woman knows how to use words with the subtle art of a woman, a mistress in leading souls to where she wants. Are you not speaking any more? Why are you almost weeping, you big moody boy? What is the use of poisoning yourself with shadows? Have you still any reason to be upset? Tell Me! Speak up... »

« I am bad... and You are so good. Your goodness always strikes me, because it is always so fresh and so new... I... I can never tell when I am going to find it on my way. »

« You are right. It is not possible for you to know. Because it is neither fresh nor new. It is eternal, Judas. It is omnipresent, Judas... Oh! We are near Hebron and Mary, Salome and Andrew are waving their hands to us. Let us go. They are speaking to some men. They must be asking where the historical places are. Your mother is becoming young again by this recollection, my dear brother! »

Judas Thaddeus smiles at his Cousin and Jesus smiles back.

« We are all becoming young! » says Peter. « I seem to be at school once again. But this is a lovely school! Much better than Elisha's, the grumbler. Do you remember him, Philip? What did we not do to him! Remember the story of the tribes? "Say the towns of the tribes!"; "You did not say them in chorus... Repeat them... "; "Simon, you look like a sleeping frog. You are left behind. Start all over again". O dear! My head was full of names of towns and villages of bygone days, and I knew nothing else. Instead here, one really learns! Do you know, Marjiam? One of these days your father will be going to sit his exams, now that he has

learned... »

They all laugh while going towards Andrew and the women.

211. Welcome Reception at Hebron.

7th July 1945.

They are all sitting in a circle in a thicket near Hebron and they are eating while speaking to one another. Judas, who is now sure that Mary will go to his mother's, is in the best of spirits and endeavours to erase the memory of his bad humour with his companions and the women, by showering his attention on them. He must have gone to the village to do the shopping and he says that he has found a great difference in it since last year. « The news of Jesus' preaching and miracles has reached this place. And the people have begun to ponder many things. Do You know, Master, that Doras has some property in this part of the country? Also Chuza's wife has some land on these mountains and a castle of her own, as marriage settlement. Obviously the ground has been prepared both by her and by Doras' peasants, because some of his men from Esdraelon must be here. He... Doras told them to be quiet. But they!... I don't think they would be silent even if he tortured them. The death of the old Pharisee greatly surprised everybody, You know? And the very good health of Johanna, who came here before Passover. Ah! Also Aglae's lover has served You. You know that she ran away shortly after we came here. And he played havoc among many innocent people to avenge himself. So that the people concluded by thinking of You as an avenger of the oppressed and they are now expecting You. I mean the better ones... »

« Avenger of the oppressed! I really am. But in a supernatural way. None of those who see Me with sceptre and axe in My hands as king and executioner according to the spirit of the earth, is right. I certainly came to free people from oppression. From the oppression of sin, which is the gravest, of illness, of desolation; from ignorance and selfishness. Many will learn that it is not fair to oppress people, simply because one has been placed by fate in a high position, and that, on the contrary, a high position should be used to raise up those who are down at the bottom. »

« Lazarus does that, also Johanna. But they are only two against hundreds... » says Philip disconsolately.

« Rivers are not as wide at their sources as they are at their estuaries. A few drops, a trickle of water, but later... There are rivers that look like seas at their mouths. »

« The Nile, eh? Your Mother told me of the time You went to Egypt. She always said to me: "A sea, believe Me, a green-blue sea. To see it in flood is a dream!" and She told me of the plants that seem to spring from the water and of all the greenery that seemed

to be left by the receding water... » says Mary of Alphaeus.

« Well, I tell you that, as the Nile at its source is a trickle of water and then becomes the giant it is, so the tiny trickle of great people who for the time being bend with love and out of love over the least of their brothers, will become a multitude later. For the time being Johanna, Lazarus, Martha, but how many later! » Jesus seems to be seeing those who will be merciful to their brothers and He smiles, enraptured in His vision.

Judas confides that the head of the synagogue wanted to come with him, but he did not dare to take a decision by himself: « Do you remember, John, how he drove us away last year? »

« I remember... But let us ask the Master. »

And when Jesus is questioned He says that they will go into Hebron. If the people want them, they will call them and they will stop; otherwise they will pass without pausing.

« So we will see also the Baptist's house. To whom does it belong now? »

« To whoever wants it, I think. Shammai went away and never came back. He took away servants and furniture. The citizens to avenge themselves of his abuse of power, knocked the enclosure wall down, and the house now belongs to anybody. At least the garden does. They gather there to venerate their Baptist. They say that Shammai was murdered. I do not know why... apparently because of women... »

« Certainly some filthy plot at court!... » whispers Nathanael through his beard.

They get up and go towards Hebron, towards the Baptist's house. When they are almost there, they see a serried group of citizens coming forward rather hesitatingly. They seem curious and embarrassed. But Jesus greets them smiling. They take heart, they open out and that severe person, the head of the synagogue, whom they had met in the previous year, emerges from the group.

« Peace to you! » greets Jesus instantly. « Will you allow us to stop in your town? I am here with all My favourite disciples and with some of their mothers. »

« Master, but do You not bear us, or me, a grudge? »

« Grudge? I do not know what it is, neither do I know why I should bear it. »

« Last year I offended You... »

« You offended an Unknown man, thinking it was your right to do so. Later you understood and you were sorry you had done it. But that is past. And as repentance cancels sin, so the present deletes the past. Now I am no longer Unknown to you. So what are your sentiments towards Me? »

« Of respect. Lord. Of... desire... »

« Desire? What do you want from Me? »

« To know You better than I do at present. »

« How? In what way? »

« Through Your word and Your deeds. We have received news about You, Your doctrine, Your power, and we were told that You were involved in the liberation of the Baptist. So You did not hate him, You did not try to oust our John!... He himself admitted that it was through You that he saw once again the valley of the holy Jordan. We went to him and spoke to him of You and he said to us: "You do not know what you have rejected. I should curse you, but I forgive you because He taught me to forgive and to be meek. But if you do not wish to be anathematised by the Lord and by me, love the Messiah. And have no doubts. This is his evidence: spirit of peace, perfect love, greatest wisdom, heavenly doctrine, absolute meekness, power over everything, total humility, angelical chastity. You cannot be wrong. When you breathe peace near a man Who says He is the Messiah, when you drink the love emanating from Him, when you pass from your darkness into Light, when you see sinners being redeemed and flesh being cured, then say: 'This is truly the Lamb of God!' ". We know that Your deeds are those mentioned by John. Therefore forgive us, love us, give us what the world expects from You. »

« That is why I am here. I have come from far away to give to the town of John also what I give every place that accepts Me. Tell Me what you wish from Me. »

« We also have sick people, and we are ignorant. We are ignorant particularly with regard to what is love and goodness. John, in his total love for God, has an iron hand and a fiery word and he wants to bend everybody as a giant bends a blade of grass. Many give way to dejection, because man is more sinful than holy. It is difficult to be saints!... You... they say that You raise, You do not bend, You do not cauterise, You use balms, You do not crush, You caress. We know that You are paternal with sinners and You are powerful against diseases, whichever they may be, also and above all the diseases of hearts. Our rabbis can no longer do that. »

« Bring Me your sick people and then gather in this garden, which has been abandoned and was desecrated by sin after it had been made a temple for the Grace that lived in it. »

The people of Hebron spread out in all directions as fast as swallows. Only the head of the synagogue remains and together with Jesus and the disciples he goes in beyond the enclosure of the garden, to the shade of a bower where entangled roses and vines have grown wild. The population is soon back. With them there is a paralytic in a litter, a blind young woman, a dumb boy and two sick people, whose trouble I do not know. The last two are walking supported by other people.

Jesus greets each sick person saying: « Peace to you. » Then He

asks the kind question: «What do you want Me to do for you?» followed by the chorus of lamentations, as each one wishes to tell his own story.

Jesus, Who was sitting, stands up and goes to the dumb boy, whose lips He wets with His saliva and utters the great word: «Open.» And He repeats it wetting the sealed eyelids of the woman with His finger moistened with saliva. He then stretches out His hand to the paralytic and says to him: «Rise!» and finally He imposes His hands on the two sick people saying: «Be cured, in the name of the Lord!» And the boy who previously mumbled, says distinctly: «Mummy!», while the young woman winks at the light with her unsealed eyelids, and with her fingers screens her eyes from the unknown sun, weeping and laughing, and looks again, with half open eyes, not being accustomed to the light, at the leaves, the earth, the people and particularly at Jesus. The paralytic comes boldly off the stretcher and his compassionate bearers lift it, empty as it is, to make the people afar understand that the grace has been granted, while the two sick people cry for joy and kneel down to venerate their Saviour.

The crowds are frantically shouting hosanna, Thomas, who is near Judas, looks at him so intensely and with such a clear expression, that Judas declares to him: «I was foolish, forgive me.»

When the shouting subsides, Jesus begins to speak.

«The Lord spoke to Joshua saying: "Speak to the children of Israel and say to them: Choose the cities of refuge of which I spoke to you through Moses, where a man who has killed accidentally, unwittingly, may find sanctuary and may thus avoid the wrath of the next of kin, the avenger of blood". And Hebron was one of those towns. It is also written: "And the elders of the town will not hand the innocent man over to him who wants to kill him, but they will receive him and assign him a place where to live and he will remain there until he appears for judgement and until the death of the high priest then in office; only then he may go back to his town and to his house".

That law already contemplates and prescribes merciful love towards our neighbour. God enacted that law because it is not legal to condemn without interrogating the accused, neither is it legal to kill in a fit of wrath. The same can be said with regard to moral crimes and accusations. It is not legal to accuse unless one knows, neither can one pass judgement without interrogating the accused. But nowadays a new series of sentences and accusations has been added to those already existing in respect of the usual sins or alleged offences: the ones moved against those who come in the name of God. In the past they were moved against the Prophets, now they are repeated against the Precursor of Christ and against Christ.

You are aware of it. Drawn by deception out of the land of Shechem, the Baptist is now awaiting death in Herod's prison, because he will never submit to falsehood or compromise, and his life may be crushed and his head cut off, but they will not be able to suppress his honesty or cut his soul off the Truth, which he has served faithfully in all its divine, supernatural and moral forms. And likewise Christ is persecuted with double and decuple fury, because He does not confine Himself to saying: "It is not lawful" to Herod, but He thunders the same "It is not lawful" wherever He finds sin or knows it is a sin, without excluding any class, in the name of God and for God's honour.

How can that happen? Are there no more servants of God in Israel? Yes, there are. But they are "idols".

In Jeremiah's letter to the exiles, the following is written among many other things. And I am drawing your attention to it because every word of the Book is a lesson that, as the Spirit had it written for a current event, refers to an event that will take place in the future. So it is written: "... When you enter Babylon you will see gods made of gold, silver, stone, wood... Be on your guard, do not imitate the foreigners, do not have any fear of their gods... Say in your hearts: 'Lord, it is You only that we must worship' ". And the letter describes the details of those idols whose tongues are made by a craftsman and they do not make use of them to reproach their false priests, who strip them of their gold to clothe prostitutes with it and later they remove the same gold, desecrated by the perspiration of prostitution, to reclothe the idol; idols that rust and woodworm can corrode and are clean and tidy only if man washes their faces and clothes them, whereas they can do nothing by themselves, although they have sceptre and axe in their hands. And the Prophet concludes: "Therefore be not afraid of them". And he continues: "Those gods are as useless as broken pots. Their eyes are full of the dust raised by the feet of those who enter the temple, and they close them tight, as in a sepulchre or like a man who has offended the king, because anyone can steal their precious robes. They cannot see the light of the lamps, so they are like temple beams, and the lamps serve only to blacken them with smoke, while owls, swallows and other birds fly over their heads and soil them with excrement, and cats nestle among their clothes and tear them. So you must not be afraid of them, they are dead things. Neither is their gold of any use to them, it is only a display, and if it is not polished, the idols do not shine, as they did not feel anything when they were made. Fire did not awake them. They were bought at fabulous prices. They are carried wherever man wants to take them because they are shamefully powerless... So why are they called gods? Because they are worshipped with offerings and a show of false ceremonies, which are not felt by those

who perform them, nor believed by those who see them. Whether they are treated badly or well, they are incapable of paying back either treatment, as they are incapable of electing or overthrowing a king, they can give neither wealth nor evil, they cannot save a man from death or deliver a weak man from an overbearing one. They feel no pity for widows and orphans. They are like the stones of the mountains"... The letter says more or less that.

Now, we also have idols, no more saints, in the ranks of the Lord. That is why Evil can rise against Good. The evil that soils with excrement the intellects and hearts of those who are no longer saints, and nestles among the false robes of goodness.

They can no longer speak the words of God. Of course! Their tongue is made by man and they speak the words of man, when they do not speak Satan's. And they can only foolishly reproach the innocent and the poor, but they are silent where they see the corruption of powerful people. Because they are all corrupt and they cannot accuse one another of the same crimes. They are greedy, not for the Lord, but for Mammon, and they work accepting the gold of lust and crime, bartering it, stealing it, seized with immoderate desire exceeding every limit and imagination. They are covered with dust, which rots on them and if they show clean faces, God sees their filthy hearts. They are corroded by the rust of hatred and the worm of sin and they cannot react to save themselves. They brandish maledictions as if they were sceptres and axes, but they do not know that they are cursed. Isolated in their thoughts and their hatred, like corpses in a sepulchre or prisoners in jail, they remain there, clinging to the bars lest somebody might take them away from there, because those dead people are still something: mummies, nothing else but mummies looking like human beings, while their bodies have turned into dry wood, and outside they would be old-fashioned articles in a world seeking Life, in need of Life as a child needs a mother's breast, a world that wants who can give it Life and not the stench of death.

They do live in the Temple and the smoke of the lamps, that is of honours, blackens them, but no light descends upon them; and all passions nestle in them like birds and cats, while the fire of their mission does not give them the mystical torture of being burnt by the fire of God. They are refractory to Love. The fire of Charity does not inflame them, as Charity does not clothe them with its golden brightness. The Charity of double form and double source: charity of God and of neighbour, the form; charity from God and from man, the source. Because God withdraws from a man who does not love, and thus the former source ceases; and man withdraws from a wicked man, and also the latter source ceases. Charity deprives a loveless man of everything. They allow

themselves to be bought at a cursed price, and to be led where it suits profit and power.

No. It is not right! No money can buy a conscience, particularly the conscience of a priest or a teacher. It is not right to acquiesce in the mighty things of the earth when they induce acts contrary to God's commandments. That is spiritual inability and it is written: "A eunuch is not to be admitted to the assembly of the Lord". Thus, if a man, impotent by nature, cannot belong to the people of God, can a spiritually impotent man be His minister? Because I solemnly tell you that many priests and masters are suffering from guilty spiritual barrenness, as they lack spiritual virility. Many. Too many!

Meditate. Observe. Compare. You will see that we have many idols, but few ministers of the Good which is God. That is why the sanctuary towns are no longer a sanctuary. Nothing is now respected in Israel and saints die because those who are not saints hate them.

But I invite you: "Come!". I call you in the name of your John who is languishing because he is a saint, who was struck because he precedes Me and because he endeavoured to remove the filth from the paths of the Lamb. Come to serve God. The time is near. Do not be unprepared for Redemption. Let the rain fall on the sown ground. Otherwise it will fall in vain. You people of Hebron must be the leaders! You lived here with Zacharias and Eliza: the holy people who deserved John from Heaven; and here John spread the scent of Grace by means of his true childish innocence and from the desert he sent you the anti-corrupting incense of his Grace, which has become a wonder of penance. Do not disappoint your John. He raised the love for our neighbour to an almost divine level, whereby he loves the last dweller on the desert, as he loves you, his fellow-citizens, and he certainly implores Salvation for you. And Salvation means to follow the Voice of the Lord and believe in His Word. And from this sacerdotal town come in a body to the service of God. I am passing and I call you. Do not be inferior to prostitutes, for whom one word of mercy is sufficient to persuade them to abandon their previous life and come on to the way of Good.

I was asked upon My arrival: "But do You not bear us a grudge?" Grudge? No, I have love for you! And I hope to see you in the multitude of My people, whom I lead to God, in the new exodus towards the true Promised Land: the Kingdom of God, beyond the Red Sea of sensuality and the deserts of sin, free from all kinds of slavery, to the eternal Land, which abounds in delight and is saturated with peace... Come! This is Love passing by. Whoever wishes can follow Him, because only good-will is required to be accepted by Him. »

Jesus has finished and there is wonder-struck silence. It seems that many are weighing, testing, enjoying and comparing the words they have heard.

While that is happening and Jesus, Who is tired and hot, sits down and speaks to John and Judas, a loud noise is heard coming from the other side of the garden enclosure. The shouts, at first confused, become clearer: « Is the Messiah there? Is He there? » and when they receive an affirmative reply, they bring forward a cripple who is so deformed that he looks like an S.

« Oh! it is Mashal! »

« But he is too crippled! What does he expect? »

« There is his mother, poor woman! »

« Master, her husband left her because of that freak of nature, her son, and she lives here of charity. But she is old and will not live very long... »

The freak of nature, he really is, is now before Jesus. It is not possible to see his face as he is so bent and twisted. He looks like the caricature of a man-chimpanzee, or of a humanised camel. His mother, a poor old wretch, does not even speak, she only moans: « Lord, Lord... I believe... »

Jesus lays His hands on the crooked shoulders of the man, who hardly reaches up to His waist, looks up to Heaven and thunders: « Rise and walk in the ways of the Lord » and the man gives a start and then springs up as straight as the most perfect man. His movement is so rapid that one would think that the springs holding him in that abnormal position, had suddenly broken. He now reaches up to Jesus' shoulders, he looks at Him, then falls on his knees, with his mother, kissing the feet of his Saviour.

What happens in the crowd is indescribable... And against His will, Jesus is compelled to stay in Hebron, because the people are ready to make barriers at the gates to prevent Him from going out.

He thus enters the house of the elderly head of the synagogue, who is so changed from last year...

212. At Juttah, Jesus Speaks in Isaac's House.

8th July 1945.

The whole population of Juttah has run to meet Jesus with the wild flowers picked on the mountain sides and the early fruits they cultivate, besides the smiles of the children and the blessings of the citizens. And before Jesus can set foot in the village, He is surrounded by the good people who, warned by Judas of Kerioth and by John, sent ahead as messengers, have rushed with what they found best to honour the Saviour, and above all with their love.

Jesus blesses with gestures and words both adults and young

people who press against Him kissing His tunic and hands, and lay sucklings on His arms so that He may bless them with a kiss. The first to do so is Sarah, who places against His heart the beautiful ten month old baby, whose name is Jesai.

Their love is so impetuous that it prevents progress. And yet it is like a rising wave. I think that Jesus proceeds carried more by that wave than by His own feet, and His heart is certainly carried very high, into the clear sky, by the joy of such love. His face shines with the brightness of the moments of greatest joy of Man-God. It is not the powerful magnetic looking face of the moments when He works miracles, nor the majestic face as when He discloses His continuous union with the Father, nor the severe one as when He condemns sin. They all sparkle with different lights, but the present one is the light of the hours of relaxation of His whole ego, assailed from so many sides, compelled to be always vigilant of every slightest gesture or word, both of His own or of others, surrounded by all the traps of the world that, like a malefic cobweb, throw their satanic threads around the Divine Butterfly of the Man-God, hoping to paralise His flight and imprison His spirit, so that He may not save the world; to gag His word, so that He may not instruct the supreme guilty ignorance of the earth; to tie His hands, the hands of the Eternal Priest, so that they may not sanctify men, depraved by demon and flesh; to dim His eyes, so that the perfection of His look may not attract hearts to Himself, His look in fact is a magnet, forgiveness, love, charm overwhelming every resistance that is not the resistance of a perfect satan.

Oh! Is the work of the enemies of the Christ still not always the same against the Christ? Science and Heresy, Hatred and Envy, the enemies of Mankind, who sprang from Mankind itself like poisoned branches from a good tree, do they not do all that, so that Mankind may die, as they hate it more than they hate the Christ, because they hate it in an active way, unchristianising it in order to deprive it of its joy, whereas they can bereave Jesus of nothing, as He is God, whilst they are dust? Yes, they do that.

But the Christ takes shelter in faithful hearts, whence He looks, speaks and blesses Mankind and then... and then He gives Himself to those hearts and they... and they touch Heaven with its blessedness, still remaining here, but burning their senses and organs, in their feelings and thoughts and in their souls, to the extent of being delightfully tortured in their whole being... Tears and smiles, groans and songs, exhaustion and dire urgency for life are our companions, more than companions they are our very being, because as bones are in the flesh and veins and nerves are under our skin and they all make one man, thus, likewise, all these burning things originating from the fact that Jesus gave Himself to us, are within us, in our poor humanity. And what are we in

those moments which could not last for ever, because if they lasted a few moments longer, we would die burnt and broken? We are no longer men. We are no longer the animals gifted with reason living on the earth. We are, we are, oh! Lord! Let me say it once, not out of pride, but to sing Your glories because Your glance burns me and makes me rave... We are then seraphim. And I am surprised that we do not emit flames and fierce heat perceptible by people and matter, as it happens in the apparitions of damned souls. Because if it is true that the fire of Hell is such that even the reflection emitted by a damned soul can set a piece of wood on fire and melt metals, what is Your fire like, o God, in Whom everything is infinite and perfect?

One does not die of fever, one does not burn because of it, one is not consumed by the fever of bodily diseases. You are our fever, Love! And by it we are burnt, we die, we are consumed and the fibres of our hearts, which cannot resist so much, are torn apart by it and for it. But I expressed myself badly, because love is delirium, love is a waterfall that shatters dams and descends knocking down everything that is not love, love is the thronging in the mind of sensations, which are all true and present, but no hand can write them down, as the mind is so fast in translating the feelings of the heart into thoughts. It is not true that one dies. One lives. Life is decupled. One lives a duplicated life: as a man and as a blessed soul: the life of the earth, and that of Heaven. Oh! I am sure of it: one achieves and exceeds the life without faults, without restrictions and limitations, that You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, You, God Creator, One and Trine, had given to Adam a prelude to the Life, after ascending to You, to be enjoyed in Heaven, following a placid transition from the Earthly Paradise to the Heavenly one, a transfer made in the loving arms of angels, like the sweet sleep and assumption of Mary into Heaven, to come to You!

One lives the true Life. Then one finds oneself here, and as I am doing now, one is amazed and ashamed of going so far and one says: « Lord, I am not worthy of so much. Forgive me, Lord » and one beats one's breast, because we are terrified at having been proud and a thicker veil is lowered over the splendour, because if it does not continue to blaze with overwhelming ardour, out of pity for our limitation, it gathers in the centre of our hearts, ready to blaze once again in a mighty way for another moment of blessedness wanted by God. The veil is lowered on the sanctuary where the fire, the light and love of God are burning... and exhausted and yet regenerated we resume going like... people inebriated with a strong sweet wine that does not dim reason but prevents us from having eyes and thoughts for what is not the Lord, You, my Jesus, ring linking our misery to divinity, means of redemption for our

sin, creator of blessedness for our souls, You, Son, Who with Your wounded hands put our hands in the spiritual ones of the Father and of the Spirit, that we may be in You, now and for ever. Amen.

But where have I been while Jesus inflames me, inflaming the people of Juttah with His loving glance? You may have noticed that I no longer speak of myself or I do so only seldom. How many things I could say. But the tiredness and physical weakness, which oppress me immediately after dictations, and spiritual modesty, which grows stronger and stronger the more I proceed, convince me and compel me to be silent. But today... I went too high and, we know, the air of the stratosphere makes one lose one's control... I went much higher than the stratosphere... and I could not control myself any more... And I think that if we always kept quiet - we who are caught in these vortices of love - we would end up by deflagrating like projectiles, or rather, like overheated or closed boilers. Forgive me, Father. And now let us go on.

Jesus enters Juttah and is led to the market square and then to the poor little house where Isaac languished for thirty years. They say to Him: « We come here to speak of You and to pray, as in a synagogue, the most true one. Because it is here that we became acquainted with You and here the prayers of a saint have asked You to come to us. Come in and see how we have arranged the place... »

The little house, which the previous year consisted only of three tiny rooms - the first one where Isaac, a sick man, begged, the second, a lumber room and the third, a kitchenette which opened on to the yard - is now one room only with benches in it for those who meet there. The few household implements of Isaac have been placed, like so many relics, in a little hut in the yard and the respectful people of Juttah have made the yard less dreary looking, as they have planted there some climbing plants, which now cover the rustic stockade with their flowers and form an incipient pergola, growing on a network of rope stretched out over the yard, at the height of the low roof.

Jesus praises them and says: « We can stop here. I only beg you to give hospitality to the women and the boy. »

« Oh! Master! That will never be needed! We will come here with You and You will speak to us, but You and Your friends are our guests. Grant us the blessing of giving You and the servants of God hospitality. We only regret that they are not as many as the houses... »

Jesus agrees and leaves the little house going towards that of Sarah who will not cede to anybody her right to entertain Jesus and His friends at a meal...

... Jesus is speaking in Isaac's house. The people crowd the room and the yard and throng also the square, and Jesus, in order to be heard by everybody, stands in the middle of the room, so that His

voice will carry both in the yard and in the square.

He must be dealing with a subject brought on by a question or an event. He says: «... But have no doubt. As Jeremiah says, they will find out at the test how sorrowful and bitter it is to abandon the Lord. Neither potash nor lye can remove the stains of certain crimes, My friends. Not even the fire of Hell can corrode that stain. It is indelible.

Also here we must acknowledge the justice of Jeremiah's words. Our great ones in Israel really look like the wild she-asses mentioned by the Prophet. They are accustomed to the desert of their hearts, because, believe Me, as long as one is with God, even if one is as poor as Job, even if one is alone, even if one is nude, one is never alone, poor or nude, one is never a desert, but they have rejected God in their hearts and thus they are an arid desert. Like wild she-asses they sniff in the air the smell of males, which in our case, because of their lust, are named power, money, as well as true and proper lechery, and they follow that smell, as far as crime. Yes. They follow it and will follow it even more so in future. They do not know that their hearts, not their feet, are exposed to the darts of God Who will avenge their crime. How confused kings, princes, priests and scribes will be, because they really said and still say to what is nothing, or worse, is sin: "You are my father. You have begotten me"!

I solemnly tell you that Moses in a fit of anger broke the Tables of the Law when he saw the people in idolatry. Later he climbed the mountain, prayed, adored and obtained grace. That happened centuries ago. But idolatry has not yet died in the hearts of men, and will never rest, on the contrary it will rise, like yeast in flour. Almost every man now has his own golden calf. The earth is a forest of idols, because every heart is an altar, but hardly ever there is God upon it. Who is not a slave of one evil passion, is slave of another and who has not one wicked desire, has another with a different name. Who has no greed for gold, has a greed for positions, who has no lust for the flesh, is an utter egoist. How many egos are worshipped in hearts like golden calves! The day, therefore, will come when they are struck and they will call the Lord and will hear Him reply: "Go to your gods. I do not know you". I do not know you! A dreadful word when uttered by God to man. God created the race of Men and He knows each individual. If He therefore says: "I do not know you" it means that by the power of His will He has erased that man from His memory. I do not know you! Is God too severe because of that verdict? No. Man cried to Heaven: "I do not know you", as faithfully as an echo...

Consider: man is obliged to acknowledge God out of gratitude and out of respect for his own intelligence.

Out of gratitude. God created man and granted him the ineffable

gift of life and provided him with the super-ineffable gift of Grace. When man lost Grace through his own fault, he heard a great promise being made to him: "I will give Grace back to you". It is God, the offended party, Who says so to the offender, as if He, God, were guilty and obliged to make amends. And God keeps His promise. Behold, I am here to give Grace to man. God has not confined Himself to giving only what is supernatural, but He has lowered His Spiritual Essence to provide for the coarse necessities of man's flesh and blood, and He gives the heat of the sun, the relief of water, corn, vines, all kinds of trees and all races of animals. Thus man received from God all the means of life. He is the Benefactor. Man must be grateful and show his gratitude by endeavouring to know Him.

Out of respect for one's own reason. A madman and an idiot are not grateful to those who cure them, because they do not understand the true value of the cure. And they hate those who wash them and feed them, who accompany them and put them to bed, who watch that they do not get hurt, because beastly as they are on account of their illness, they mistake cures for tortures. The man who fails in his duties towards God disgraces himself, a being gifted with reason. Only a fool or an idiot cannot tell his father from a stranger, a benefactor from an enemy. But an intelligent man knows his father and his benefactor and takes pleasure in knowing him better and better, also with regard to things of which he is unaware, as they happened before he was born or before he was helped by his father or benefactor. That is what you must do with the Lord to show that you are intelligent and not brutes.

But too many people in Israel are like those fools who do not know their father or their benefactor. Jeremiah asks: "Can a girl forget her ornaments and a bride her sash?" Oh! yes. Israel is made of such foolish girls, of such wanton brides who forget honest ornaments and sashes to put on tinsels of prostitutes; and this is found to happen more and more frequently, the more one climbs the classes that should be the teachers of the people. And God's reproach, with His wrath and regret, is addressed to them: "Why do you endeavour to prove that your behaviour is good to obtain love, whereas you teach the wickedness of your ways of living, and the blood of poor and innocent people was found on the hems of your garments?".

My friends, distance is good and evil. To be very far from the places where I am likely to speak is an evil, because it prevents you from hearing the words of Life. And you regret it. That is true. But it is good inasmuch that it keeps you away from the places where sin ferments, corruption boils and snares hiss to act against Me, hampering Me in My work, and against the hearts of people, by insinuating doubts and falsehood with regard to Me. But I

prefer you to be far away rather than corrupted. I will see to your formation. You know that God had provided before we were acquainted with one another, so that we might love one another. I was known before we met. Isaac was your announcer. I will send many Isaacs to speak My words to you. However, you must know that God can speak everywhere and privately to the spirit of man and instruct him in His doctrine.

Do not be afraid that by being alone you may be led into error. No. If you do not want, you will not be unfaithful to the Lord and to His Christ. On the other hand, he who just cannot stay away from the Messiah should know that the Messiah opens His heart and stretches out His arms to him and says: "Come". Come, whoever wishes to come. Stay here, whoever wishes to stay. But both the former and the latter should preach Christ by means of an honest life. Preach Him against the dishonesty which nestles in too many hearts. Preach Him against the levity of the numberless people who do not know how to persevere faithfully and forget their ornaments and sashes of souls called to the wedding with Christ. You said to Me in your happiness: "Since You came here, we have had neither sick nor dead people. Your blessing has protected us". Yes, health is a great thing. But make sure that My present coming makes you all wholesome spiritually, always and in everything. To that effect I bless you and I give My peace to you, to your children, to your fields, crops, homes, herds and orchards. Make a holy use of them, do not live for them, but by them, giving what is superfluous to those in need, and you will thus obtain an overflowing measure of the Father's blessings and a place in Heaven. You may go. I will stay here to pray... »

9th July.

I am reading again what I wrote yesterday, rewriting some incomprehensible words, out of pity for your eyes, Father. It is distressing to read it... it is so inferior to what I felt while describing my mood! And yet, to be helped to say what the Lord made me feel, lest I should describe it badly and also for my own relief because it is also painful, you know? - I invoked my St. John. I said to him: « You know these things very well. You experienced them. Help me. » And I was comforted by his presence, by his smile of an eternal good simple-minded man and by his caress. But now I feel that my poor word is so inferior to the feelings I experienced... All human things are straw, only the supernatural is gold. And a human being cannot even describe it.

213. At Kerieth, Jesus Speaks in the Synagogue.

9th July 1945.

The inside of the synagogue of Kerieth, the very spot where they laid on the ground Saul, who died after seeing the future glory of Christ. In this place, in a crowd of people from which Jesus and Judas emerge - they are the tallest and both their faces are shining, one out of love, the other for the joy of seeing that his town is always faithful to the Lord and is distinguishing itself by bestowing solemn honours upon the Master - there are the notables of Kerieth and a little farther away from Jesus the citizens, packed like seeds in a sack. The synagogue is so full that it is difficult to breathe, although the doors are open. And in order to pay homage to the Master and hear Him, they end up by making such confusion and so much noise that it is impossible to hear anything.

Jesus puts up with the situation and is silent. But the others become impatient, they gesticulate and shout: « Silence! » But their voices are lost in the hubbub, like a cry on a stormy beach.

Judas wastes no time. He climbs on to a tall bench and strikes the lamps, which are hanging in a cluster, one against the other. The hollow metal resounds and the chains rattle against one another, like musical instruments. The people become silent and at last it is possible to hear Jesus speak.

He says to the head of the synagogue: « Give Me the tenth roll from that shelf. » And once He has it, He opens it and hands it back to the head of the synagogue saying: « Read the fourth chapter of the story, the second Book of Maccabees. »

The head of the synagogue obeys and begins to read. And Onias' vicissitudes, Jason's errors and Menelaus' betrayals and thefts are presented for the consideration of those present. The chapter is over. The head of the synagogue looks at Jesus Who has been listening carefully.

Jesus nods that it is enough and then turns to the people: « In the town of My dearest disciple I will not speak the usual words to teach you. We shall be staying here for a few days and I want him to say them to you, because it is from here that I want to begin the direct contact, the continuous contact between apostles and people. That was decided in upper Galilee where it had a first bright success. But the humility of My disciples caused them to withdraw into the background, because they are afraid that they are not capable and that they would be usurping My place. No. They must do it, they will do well and help their Master. The true apostolic preaching is therefore to begin here, joining in one love only the Galilean Phoenician borders to the lands of Judah, the southern ones, bordering on the countries of the sun and sands. Because the Master is no longer sufficient for the needs of the crowds. And also

because it is right that the eaglets should leave their nests and make their first flights while the Sun is still with them and His strong wing can support them.

Therefore, during these days, I will be your friend and your comfort. They will be the word and will spread the seed that I gave them. Therefore I will not teach the public, but I will give you a privileged thing: a prophecy. I ask you to remember it for the future when the most dreadful event of Mankind will darken the sun and in the darkness your hearts may be led to judge erroneously. I do not want you to be led into error, because from the first moment you have been good to Me. I do not want the world to be in a position to say: "Kerioth was the enemy of Christ". I am just. I cannot allow criticism, whether spiteful against Me or fond of Me, to be able to accuse you of faults against Me, spurred by its feelings. As it is not possible to expect equal holiness in the children of a large family, so it is not possible to expect it in a large town. But it would be strongly against charity to say: "The whole family or the whole town is anathema" because of one wicked son or one bad citizen.

Listen therefore, then remember, be always faithful, and as I love you so much as to wish to defend you from an unfair accusation, so you must love those who are innocent. Always. Whoever they may be. Whatever their kindred may be with the guilty ones.

Now listen. The time will come when in Israel there will be informers of the treasury and of the country, who in the hope of making friends with foreigners, will speak ill of the true High Priest, accusing him of alliance with the enemies of Israel and of wicked deeds against the sons of God. And to reach their aim they are capable of committing crimes, laying the responsibility on the Innocent One. And the time will come, still in Israel, even more than at the times of Onias, when an infamous man, intriguing to become the Pontiff, will go to the mighty ones in Israel and will corrupt them with the gold of false words, which is even more infamous, and will twist the truth of facts, and he will not speak against crimes, on the contrary, pursuing his shameful object, he will do his best to corrupt customs to have a firmer grip on the souls deprived of God's friendship: everything to reach his aim. And he will succeed. Of course! Because if in the very abode on Mount Moriah there are no gymnasia of the impious Jason, in actual fact they are in the hearts of the inhabitants of the mountain, who for the sake of exemptions are willing to sell what is worth much more than a piece of ground, that is, their very conscience. The fruits of the old error can still be seen, and he who has eyes to see, can see what is happening over there, where there should be charity, purity, justice, goodness and deep holy religion. But if those fruits are already the cause of tremor, the fruits of their

seeds will cause not only tremor, but God's malediction.

And here is the true prophecy. I solemnly tell you that he who slyly achieved position and reliance, by means of long underhand tricks, will give into the hands of His enemies, in exchange for money the High Priest, the True High Priest. Deceived by protestations of love and pointed out to His executioners with an act of love, He, the True High Priest, will be killed without any regard to justice. What charges will be made against Christ, because I am speaking of Myself, to justify the right to kill Him? Which fate will be reserved for those who do that? A fate of immediate dreadful justice. Not an individual fate, but a collective one for the accomplices of the traitor. A more remote and even more dreadful fate than the destiny of the man whom remorse will drive to crown his demoniac soul by committing a final crime against himself. Because that one will end in a moment. This last punishment will be a long and frightful one. You will find it in the sentence: "... and His indignation was roused and he ordered Andronicus to be stripped of the purple and to be killed on the very spot where he had laid impious hands on Onias". Yes, the sacerdotal race will be struck in its sons as well as in the executioners. And you can read the destiny of the evil associated mass of people in the following words: "The voice of this blood cries to Me from the earth. Therefore you shall be accursed..." And they will be said by God to the whole people who did not guard the gift of Heaven. Because if it is true that I have come to redeem, woe to those who will be murderers, and will not be redeemed, amongst this people whose first redemption is My Word.

I have told you. Remember that. And when you hear them say that I am an evil-doer, say: "No. He warned us. And this is the sign, which is being fulfilled and He is the Victim killed for the sins of the world". »

The people leave the synagogue and gesticulating they all speak of the prophecy and of the esteem in which Jesus holds Judas. The people of Kerioth are elated at the honour conferred on them by the Messiah by choosing the town of an apostle, and precisely of the apostle of Kerioth to begin the apostolic teaching as well as at the gift of the prophecy. Although it is a sad one, it is a great honour to have received it with the loving words preceding it...

Jesus and the group of the apostles are the only ones to be left in the synagogue; they then go into the little garden between the synagogue and the house of the head of the synagogue. Judas has sat down and is weeping.

« Why are you weeping? I do not see any reason... » says the other Judas.

« Well. I almost feel like doing the same myself. Did you hear Him? We are to speak now... » says Peter.

« We have already done a little of that up on the mountain. And we will improve all the time. You and John did it successfully at once » says James of Zebedee to encourage them.

« I am the worst... but God will help me. Is that right, Master? » asks Andrew.

Jesus, Who was looking through some parchment rolls He had brought with Him, turns round and says:
« What were you saying? »

« That God will help me when I have to speak. I will try and repeat Your words as best I can. My brother is afraid and Judas is weeping. »

« Are you weeping? Why? » asks Jesus.

« Because I have really sinned. Andrew and Thomas can tell You. I have been running You down and You benefit me calling me "dearest disciple" and asking me to teach here... How much love!... »

« But did you not know that I loved you? »

« Yes. But... Thank You, Master. I will never grumble again; I am really darkness and You are the Light. »

The head of the synagogue comes back and invites them to his house, and while going there he says: « I am thinking of Your words. If I have understood You properly, as in Kerioth You found a favourite disciple, our Judas of Simon, so You prophesy You will find an unworthy one. I am sorry for that. Fortunately our Judas will make up for the other... »

« With my whole being » says Judas, who has collected himself.

Jesus does not speak, but He looks at His interlocutors and makes a gesture opening out His arms as if He wanted to say: « It is so. »

214. In Judas' House at Kerioth.

10th July 1945.

Jesus is about to sit down at the table with all His friends in Judas' beautiful house. And He says to Judas' mother, who has come from her country house to give proper hospitality to the Master: « No, mother, you must stay with us as well. We are like a family here. This is not the cold formal banquet for casual guests. I took your son, and I want you to take Me as a son, as I take you as a mother, because you are really worth it. Is that right, My friends, that thus we shall be happier and feel at home? »

The apostles and the two Maries nod wholeheartedly. And Judas' mother, her eyes bright with tears, sits between her son and the Master, in front of Whom there are the two Maries with Marjiam between them. The maidservant brings the food, which Jesus offers, blesses and then hands out, because Judas' mother is inflexible on that point. And He always hands out beginning from her, which moves the woman more and more and makes Judas proud

and pensive at the same time.

They talk about various subjects in which Jesus endeavours to get Judas' mother interested and He strives as well to make her become familiar with the two women disciples. Marjiam is helpful in this respect as he states that he is very fond also of Judas' mother: « Because her name is Mary like all good women. »

« And will you not love the one who is waiting for us on the lake, you little rascal? » asks Peter half-seriously.

« Oh! very much, if she is good. »

« You can be sure of that. Everybody says so, and I must say so as well, because if she has always been kind to her mother and to me, she must be really good. But her name is not Mary, son. She has a queer name, because her father called her after the thing that had brought him wealth and he called her Porphirea. Purple is beautiful and precious. My wife is not beautiful, but she is precious on account of her goodness. And I have been very fond of her because she is so peaceful, chaste and quiet. Three virtues... eh! not easily found! I eyed her carefully since she was a girl. When I came to Capernaum with fish I used to see her mending the nets, or at the fountain, or working silently in the kitchen garden and she wasn't an absent-minded butterfly fluttering here and there, neither was she a thoughtless little hen looking round at every crow of a cock. She never raised her head when she heard the voice of a man, and when I, in love with her goodness and her wonderful plaits, her only beauties, and... well, also moved to pity because she was treated like a slave at home... when I began to say hello to her - she was then sixteen years old - she hardly replied to me, she pulled her veil over her face and remained more indoors. Eh! It took a very long time to find out whether she considered me an ogre or not and before I could send my best man to her!... But I do not regret it. I could have travelled all over the world, but I would not have found another one like her. Am I right, Master, that she is good? »

« Yes, she is very good. And I am sure that Marjiam will love her even if her name is not Mary. Will you not, Marjiam? »

« Yes. Her name is "mummy" and mummies are good and are loved. »

Judas then tells what he did during the day. I understand that he went to inform his mother of their visit, and then he began to speak in the country near Kerieth together with Andrew. He then says: « But tomorrow I would like everybody to come. I do not want to be the only one to be noticed. As far as possible, we should go in twos, a Judaeon with a Galilean. For instance, John and I, Simon and Thomas. I wish the other Simon came! But you two (he points at Alphaeus' sons) can go together. I told everybody, also those who did not want to know, that you are the Master's cousins. And you two (he points at Philip and Bartholomew) can also go

together. I told them that Nathanael is a rabbi who came to follow the Master. That impresses people very favourably. And... you three will stay here. But as soon as the Zealot comes, we can form another couple. And then we will change round, because I want the people to meet everybody... » Judas is sprightly. « I spoke about the decalogue, Master, endeavouring especially to clarify those parts in which this area is more lacking... »

« Do not let your hand be too heavy, Judas, please. Always bear in mind that one achieves more by means of kindness than by intolerance and that you are a man as well. So examine yourself and consider how easy it is also for you to fall and how you become upset when you are reproached too frankly » says Jesus while Judas' mother bends her head blushing.

« Do not worry, Master. I am striving to imitate You in everything. But in the village, which we can see also through that door (the doors are open while they are eating and a beautiful view can be seen from this room which is upstairs) there is a sick man who would like to be cured. But he cannot be carried here. Could You come with me? »

« Tomorrow, Judas, tomorrow morning, definitely. And if there are more sick people tell Me or bring them here. »

« You really want to benefit my fatherland, Master? »

« Yes. So that no one may say that I have been unfair to those who did no harm to Me. I help also wicked people! So why not the good ones of Kerioth? I wish to leave an indelible remembrance of Me... »

« What? Are we not coming back here? »

« We will come back again, but... »

« Here is the Mother, the Mother with Simon! » trills the boy who sees Mary and Simon climbing the staircase leading up to the terrace where is the room.

They all stand up and go towards the two who have just arrived. There is the noise of exclamations, of greetings, of seats moved about. But nothing diverts Mary from greeting first Jesus and then Judas' mother, who has bowed down deeply, and whom Mary raises again embracing her as if she were a dear friend met after a long absence.

They go back into the room and Mary of Judas tells the maidservant to bring in fresh food for the new guests.

« Here, Son, Eliza's greetings » says Mary, handing a small parchment roll to Jesus Who unfolds it and reads it, then says: « I knew. I was sure. Thank You, Mother. On My behalf and on Eliza's. You really are the health of the sick! »

« I? You, Son. Not I. »

« You; and You are My greatest help. » He then turns to the apostles and women disciples and says: « Eliza writes: "Come back, my Peace. I want not only to love You, but to serve You". So

we have relieved a creature of her anguish and melancholy, and we have gained a disciple. Yes, we will go back. »

« She wishes to meet also the women disciples. She is recovering slowly, but without relapsing. Poor Eliza! She still undergoes moments of frightful bewilderment. Does she not, Simon? One day she wanted to try to come out with Me, but she saw a friend of Daniel's... and we had great difficulty in calming her weeping. But Simon is so clever! And since Eliza expressed the desire to return to the world, but the world of Bethzur is too full of memories for her, Simon suggested we should call Johanna. And he went to call her. After the feast she went back to Bether, to her magnificent rose-garden in Judaea. Simon says that he seemed to be dreaming, while crossing the hills covered with rose-bushes, that he was already in Paradise. She came at once. She is in a position to understand and pity a mother mourning her sons! Eliza has become very fond of her and I came away. Johanna wants to persuade her to leave Bethzur and go to her castle. And she will succeed because she is as sweet as a dove but as firm as a rock in her decisions. »

« We shall go to Bethzur on our way back and then we shall part. You women disciples will stay with Eliza and Johanna for some time. We will go through Judaea and we shall meet in Jerusalem for Pentecost »...

The Most Holy Virgin Mary and Mary, Judas' mother, are together. They are not in the town house, but in the country one. They are alone. The apostles are outside with Jesus, the women disciples and the boy are in the magnificent apple-orchard and their voices can be heard together with the noise of clothes beaten on washboards. They are perhaps doing the washing while the boy is playing.

Judas' mother, sitting in a dim-lit room beside Mary, is speaking to Her: « These peaceful days will be like a dream to me. Too short! Yes, too short! I know that we must not be selfish and that it is fair that You should go to that poor woman and to so many other unhappy people. But I wish I could!... I wish I could spare the time, or come with You!... But I cannot. I have no relatives apart from my son and I must look after the property of the family... »

« I understand... It is painful to part from one's son. We mothers would always like to be with our children. But we are giving them for a great cause, and we will not lose them. Not even death can take our sons away from us, if they and we are in grace in the eyes of God. But ours are still on the earth, even if by the will of God they are torn from our bosoms to be given to the world for its good. We can always join them and even the echo of their deeds is like a caress to our hearts, because their deeds are the scent of their souls. »

« What is Your Son to You, Woman? » asks Mary of Judas in a low voice.

And the Most Holy Mary replies promptly: « He is My joy. »

« Your joy!!!... » and then Judas' mother bursts into tears and lowers her head to hide them. She bows so low as to almost touch her knees with her forehead.

« Why are you weeping, my poor friend? Why? Tell Me. I am happy in My maternity, but I can understand also those mothers who are not happy... »

« Yes. Not happy! And I am one of them. Your Son is Your joy... Mine is my grief. At least he has been so. Now, since he has been with Your Son, I am not so worried. Oh! of all those who pray for Your holy Son, for His welfare and triumph, there is no one, after You, Blessed Woman, who prays so much as this unhappy mother who is speaking to You... Tell me the truth: what do You think of my son? We are two mothers, one facing the other, between us there is God. And we are speaking of our sons. It can be but easy for You to speak of Yours. I... I have to strive against myself to speak of mine. And yet, how much good, or how much grief, can come to me from this conversation! And even if it is grief, it will always be a relief to speak about it... That woman of Bethzur became almost insane when her sons died, did she not? But I swear it to You, sometimes I have thought and still think, looking at my Judas who is handsome, healthy, intelligent, but he is not good not virtuous, not righteous in his soul, not sound in his feelings, I often think that I would prefer to mourn him dead rather than know that he is disliked by God. But tell me, what do You think of my son? Be frank. This question has been tormenting my heart for over a year. But whom could I ask? The citizens? They did not yet know that the Messiah existed and that Judas wanted to go with Him. I knew. He told me when he came here after Passover, elated, violent, as usual, when he has a sudden fancy, and as usual, scornful of his mother's advice. His friends in Jerusalem? A holy prudence and a pious hope prevented me. I did not want to say: "Judas is following the Messiah" to those whom I cannot love because they are everything but saints. And I hoped that his fancy notion would vanish, like many others, like all of them, even at the cost of tears and desolation, as it happened in the case of more than one girl whom he fascinated here and elsewhere, but never married. Do you know that there are places where he will no longer go because he may receive a fair punishment? Also his being of the Temple was a whim. He does not know what he wants. Never. His father, may God forgive him, spoiled him. I never had any authority with the two men in my house. I could but weep and make amends with all kinds of humiliation... When Johanna died - and although no one told me, I know that she died of a broken

heart when Judas told her that he did not want to get married, after she had been waiting for all her youth, whereas everybody knew that in Jerusalem he had sent friends to a very rich woman who owned stores as far as Cyprus to enquire about her daughter - I had to shed many bitter tears, because of the reproaches of the dead girl's mother, as if I were an accomplice of my son. No. I am not. I have no authority over him. Last year, when the Master came here, I realised that He had understood... and I was about to speak. But it is painful, very painful for a mother to have to say:

"Be careful of my son. He is greedy, hard-hearted, vicious, proud and inconstant". And that is what he is. I am praying that Your Son, Who works so many miracles, may work one for my Judas... But tell me, please tell me, what do You think of him? »

Mary, Who has been silent all the time, with an expression of pitiful sorrow while listening to that maternal lament of which Her righteous soul cannot disapprove, says in a low voice: « Poor mother!... What do I think? Yes, your son is not the limpid soul of John, nor the meek Andrew, not the firm Matthew who wanted to change and did change... He is... inconstant, yes, he is. But we shall pray so hard for him, both you and I. Do not weep. Perhaps your motherly love, which would like to be proud of your son, makes you see him more perverted than he is... »

« No! No! I see right and I am so afraid. » The room is full of the weeping of Judas' mother and in the half-light Mary's white face has become even paler because of the maternal confession that sharpens all the suspicions of the Lord's Mother. But She controls Herself. She draws the unhappy mother to herself and caresses her while she, abandoning all reservedness, painfully and confusedly informs Mary of all the harshness, pretensions and violence of Judas and concludes: « I blush for him when I see I am the object of the loving attention of Your Son! I have not asked Him. But I am sure that besides doing it out of kindness, He wants to say to Judas by means of His loving attention: "Remember that this is how a mother is to be treated". Now, for the time being he appears to be good... Oh! If it were only true! Help me, help me with Your prayers, You Who are holy, so that my son may not be unworthy of the grace that God granted him! If he does not want to love me, if he cannot be grateful to me, who gave birth to him and brought him up, it does not matter. But let him really love Jesus; let him serve Him loyally and gratefully. But if that cannot be then... then may God take his life. I would rather have him in a sepulchre... at last I would have him because since he reached the age of reason he was hardly ever mine. Better dead than a bad apostle. Can I pray for that? What do You say? »

« Pray the Lord that He may do what is best. Do not weep any more. I have seen prostitutes and Gentiles at the feet of My Son,

and publicans and sinners with them. They all became lambs through His Grace. Hope, Mary, hope. The grief of mothers saves their sons, do you not know that?... »

And everything ends on that pitiful question.

215. The Lunatic Girl of Bethginna.

11th July 1945.

I do not see the return to Bethzur nor the rose-gardens of Bether, which I was so anxious to see. Jesus is alone with the apostles. Marjiam is not there either, as he has obviously been left with Our Lady and the woman-disciples. It is a very mountainous area, but also very rich in vegetation, with forests of conifers, or rather of pine-tree s, and the balsamic invigorating scent of resin spreads everywhere. And Jesus is walking across those green mountains, with His disciples, facing westwards.

I hear them talking about Eliza who seems to have changed considerably and has been convinced to follow Johanna to her estate in Bether, and they are speaking also of Johanna's kindness. They are also discussing the tour they are about to make, towards the fertile plains before the sea. And the names of past glories come to light again, giving rise to stories, questions, explanations and friendly discussions.

« When we reach the top of this mountain, I will show you all the areas in which you are interested. They may suggest you thoughts for your sermons to the crowds. »

« But how can we do that, my Lord? I am not capable » moans Andrew, and Peter and James join him. « We are the most unlucky ones. »

« Oh! In that case I am no better. If it was gold or silver, I could talk about it, but about these things... » says Thomas.

« And what about me? What was I? » asks Matthew.

« But you are not afraid of the public, you are capable of debating » replies Andrew.

« Yes, but on different matters... » retorts Matthew.

« Of course!... But... Well, you already know what I would like to say, so just imagine that I have already told you. The fact is that you are worth more than we are » says Peter.

« Listen, My dear. There is no need to be sublime. Simply say what you think, with your firm belief. Believe Me, when one is convinced, one can always persuade others » says Jesus.

But Judas of Kerieth implores: « Give us some hints. An idea put forth properly may be useful in many ways. I think these places have been left without one word about You. Because no one seems to know You. »

« The reason is that there is still a strong wind blowing from the

Moriah... It makes sterile... » replies Peter.

« It is because it has not been sown. But we will sow » retorts the Iscariot, who is sure of himself and happy after his first success.

They reach the top of the mountain. A wide panorama stretches out from there and it is beautiful to look at it standing in the shade of the thick trees which crown the top, so varied and sunny: overlapping chains stretching in every direction like petrified billows of an ocean lashed by opposite gales and then, as if in a calm gulf, everything subsides into an endless brightness showing a vast plain in which a little mountain rises, as solitary as a lighthouse at the entrance of a harbour.

« Look. That village spread along the crest, as if it wanted to enjoy all the sunshine, and where we will be stopping, is like the centre of a crown of historical places. Come here. There is (to the north) Jarmuth. Do you remember Joshua? The defeat of the kings who wanted to attack the camp of Israel, which was strengthened by the alliance with the Gibeonites. And near it there is Bethshemesh, the sacerdotal town in Judah where the Ark was returned by the Philistines with the gold votive offerings prescribed by the diviners and priests to the people to be freed from the calamities that had struck the guilty Philistines. And over there is Zorah, lying completely in the sun, Samson's fatherland, and a little to the east Timnath where he got married and where he performed many brave deeds and did so many foolish things. And there are Azekah and Shochoh, formerly Philistine camps. Farther down is Zanoah, one of the towns in Judah. Now turn round, here is the Valley of the Terebinth, where David fought Goliath. And over there is Makkedah, where Joshua defeated the Amorites. Turn round again. Can you see that solitary mountain in the middle of the plain, which once belonged to the Philistines? Gath is there, Goliath's fatherland and the place where David took refuge with Achish to escape from the mad rage of Saul, and where the wise king pretended he was mad because the world defends fools from wise people. Where the horizon opens out, there are the plains of the very fertile land of the Philistines. We will go through there, as far as Ramle. And now let us enter Bethginna. You, precisely you, Philip, who are looking at Me so imploringly, will go round the village, with Andrew. While you are walking about, we shall stop near the fountain or in the village square. »

« Oh! Lord! Don't send us alone. Please, come with us! » they beg.

« Go, I said. Obedience will be of more help to you than My mute presence. »

... And so Philip and Andrew go, at random, through the village, until they find a small hotel, an inn, rather than a hotel, and inside there are some brokers bargaining for lambs with some shepherds. They go in and stop disconcertedly in the middle of the

yard, which is surrounded by very rustic porches.

The hotel-keeper rushes towards them: « What do you want? Lodgings? »

They consult looking at each other, and they appear to be utterly dismayed. Probably they cannot remember even one word of what they had decided to say. Andrew is the first to regain control of himself and he replies: « Yes, lodgings for us and for the Rabbi of Israel. »

« Which rabbi? There are many of them! But they are wealthy gentlemen. They do not come to the villages of poor people to bring their wisdom to the poor. The poor have to go to them and we are lucky if they allow us to go near them! »

« There is only one Rabbi of Israel. And He has come to bring the Gospel to the poor, and the poorer and more sinful they are, the more He looks for them and approaches them » replies Andrew kindly.

« In that case He will not make much money! »

« He does not seek wealth. He is poor and good. When He can save a soul it is a full day for Him » replies once again Andrew.

« Oh! It is the first time that I hear that a rabbi is good and poor. The Baptist is poor but severe. All the others are severe and rich, as greedy as leeches. You over there, have you heard? Come here, you who travel round the world. These men say that there is a poor but good Master Who comes looking for poor people and sinners. »

« Ah! It must be the one who wears a white robe like an Essene. I saw him some time ago at Jericho » says one of the brokers.

« No. That one is by himself. It must be the one of whom Thomas told us, because he happened to speak about him with some shepherds on the Lebanon » replies a tall brawny shepherd.

« Indeed! And he would come as far as here, if he was on the Lebanon! For the sake of your eyes of a cat! » exclaims another one.

While the innkeeper is speaking and listening to his customers, the two apostles have remained standing in the middle of the yard like two poles.

At last one of the men says to them: « Ehi! You! Come here! Who is He? Where does that man you spoke of, come from? »

« He is Jesus of Joseph, from Nazareth » says Philip gravely and he looks as if he were expecting to be laughed at.

But Andrew adds: « He is the Messiah foretold. I implore you, for your own good, listen to Him. You have mentioned the Baptist. Well, I was with him, and he pointed to us Jesus Who was passing and said: "There is the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world". When Jesus descended into the Jordan to be baptised, the Heavens opened and a Voice cried out: "This is My beloved Son, My favour rests on Him" and the Love of God descended like a dove, shining over His head. »

« See? It is the Nazarene! But tell me, since you say you are His friends... »

« No, not His friends: we are His apostles, His disciples and we have been sent to announce that He is coming, so that those who are in need of salvation may go to Him » clarifies Andrew.

« All right. But tell me. Is He really as some say, that is, a holy man, holier than the Baptist, or is He a demon as others describe Him? You are always with Him, because if you are His disciples, you must be with Him, tell us frankly. Is it true that He is lewd and a guzzler? That He loves prostitutes and publicans. That He is a necromancer and He evokes spirits at night to find out the secrets of hearts? »

« Why do you ask these men such questions? Ask them instead whether it is true that He is good. They will take it amiss and they will go and tell the Master our evil reasoning and we will be cursed. One never knows!... Whether He is God or a demon, it is better to treat Him well. »

It is Philip who speaks now: « We can reply to you quite frankly because there is nothing wicked to be concealed. He, our Master, is the Saint of all saints. He spends His days teaching. He goes tirelessly from place to place seeking the hearts of men. He spends the night praying for us. He does not disdain the pleasures of the table and friendship, but not for His own advantage, but only to approach those who otherwise would be unapproachable. He does not repel publicans and prostitutes but only because He wants to redeem them. His way is traced out with miracles of redemption and miracles over diseases. Winds and seas obey Him. But He does not need anybody to work His prodigies, neither does He have to evoke spirits to know hearts. »

« How can He?... You said that winds and seas obey Him... But they are not endowed with reason. How can He give them orders? » asks the innkeeper.

« Tell me, man: according to you is it more difficult to give an order to the wind or the sea or to death? »

« By Jehovah! You cannot give orders to death! You can throw oil on the sea, you can hoist sails over it, or, more wisely, you can avoid going to sea. You can lock doors against the wind. But you cannot give an order to death. There is no oil capable of calming it. There is no sail which, hoisted on our little boat, can make it sail so fast as to leave death behind. And there are no locks for it. It comes in when it wants to, even if the doors have been locked. Oh! No one gives orders to that queen! »

« And yet our Master commands it. Not only when it is near. But also after it has come. A young man of Nain was about to be put into the dreadful mouth of his sepulchre, and He said to him: "I tell you: rise!" and the young man came back to life. Nain is not in the

country of the hyperboreans. You can go and see. »

« Just like that? In the presence of everybody? »

« On the road. In the presence of the-whole of Nain. »

The innkeeper and his customers look at one another in silence. Then the innkeeper says: « But He will do that only for His friends. »

« No, man. For all those who believe in Him and not for them only. He is Mercy on the earth, believe me. No one applies to Him in vain. Listen. Is there anyone amongst you who suffers from or weeps because of diseases in the family, doubts, remorse, temptations, ignorance? Go to Jesus, the Messiah of the Gospel. He is here today. He will be elsewhere tomorrow. The Grace of the Lord Who is passing should not be let pass in vain » says Philip who has become more and more sure of himself.

The innkeeper ruffles his hair, opens and closes his mouth, tortures the fringes of his belt... at last he exclaims: « I will try! I have a daughter. Up to last summer she was all right. Then she became a lunatic. She remains like a mute animal in a corner, she never moves from it and only with difficulty her mother can dress her and feed her. The doctors say that her brains have been burnt out by too much sunshine, others say that it is due to an ill-starred love. The people say she is possessed. How can that be, as she has never been away from here?! Where would she have got that demon? What does your Master say? That a demon can take also an innocent person? »

Philip replies without hesitation: « Yes, to torture the relatives and drive them to despair. »

« And... Can He cure lunatics? Should I hope? »

« You must believe » says Andrews promptly. And he tells them of the miracle of the Gerasenes and concludes: « If those who were a legion in the hearts of sinners fled thus, why should the one who forced his way into the heart of a young person not flee? I tell you, man: for those who hope in Him also what is impossible becomes as easy as breathing. I have seen the works of my Lord and I am a witness of His power. »

« Oh! in that case which of you is going to call Him? »

« I will go myself, man. I will soon be back. » And Andrew runs away while Philip remains speaking to them.

When Andrew sees Jesus standing in a lobby out of the merciless sun shining in every part of the square, he runs towards Him saying: « Come, Master. The daughter of the innkeeper is lunatic. Her father implores You to cure her. »

« Did he know Me? »

« No, Master. We have tried to make You known to him... »

« And you have succeeded. When one reaches the point of believing that I can cure an incurable disease, one is already well advanced in faith. And you were afraid that you did not know how to do it.

What -did you tell him? »

« I don't think I could tell You. We told him what we thought of You and of Your deeds. Above all we told him that You are Love and Mercy. The world has such wrong knowledge of You!!! »

« But you know Me well. And that is enough. »

They arrive at the small inn. All the customers are standing at the door, full of curiosity, and in the middle there is Philip with the innkeeper who keeps talking to himself.

When he sees Jesus, he runs to meet Him: « Master, Lord, Jesus... I... I believe so firmly that You are You, that You know everything, You see everything, You can do everything, I believe it so firmly that I say to You: Have mercy on my daughter although I have so many sins in my heart. Do not punish my daughter because I have been dishonest in my trade. I will no longer be grasping, I swear it. You can see my heart with its past and with its present thought. Forgive and have mercy on us, Master, and I will speak of You to everybody who comes here, to my house... » The man is on his knees.

Jesus says to him: « Stand up and persevere in your present sentiments. Take Me to your daughter. »

« She is in a stable, my Lord. The sultry weather makes her feel worse. And she will not come out. »

« It does not matter. I will go to her. It is not the sultry weather. It is the demon who perceives My coming. »

They go into the yard and then into a dark stable, followed by all the rest.

The girl, unkempt and lean, becomes agitated in the darkest corner and as soon as she sees Jesus, she shouts: « Back, go back! Do not disturb me. You are the Christ of the Lord, I am one struck by You. Leave me alone. Why do You always follow me? »

« Go out of this girl. Go. I want it. Give your prey back to God and be quiet! »

There is a heart-rending shout, a jerk, her body becomes flabby and collapses on to the straw... then she calmly, sadly asks questions expressing her amazement: « Where am I? Why am I here? Who are they? » and she invokes: « Mummy ». The young girl becomes shy when she realises that she is without veil and with a torn dress in the presence of many strangers.

« Oh! Eternal Lord! But she is cured... » and strange to be seen the innkeeper weeps like a child and tears stream down his ruddy cheeks... He is happy and he weeps and does not know what to do, except kiss Jesus' hands, while the mother of the girl also weeps, surrounded by her amazed little ones, and kisses her first-born now free from the demon.

All the people present shout in amazement and many more rush to see the miracle. The yard is full.

« Remain with us. Lord. It is getting dark. Rest under my roof. »

« Man, we are thirteen. »

« Even if you were three hundred it would not matter. I know what You mean. But the greedy dishonest Samuel is dead, Lord. Also my demon has fled. Now there is a new Samuel. And he will still be the innkeeper. But a holy one. Come, come with me, that I may pay you homage as a king, a god. Such as You are. Oh! blessed be the sun that brought You here today... »

216. In the Plain towards Ashkelon.

12th July 1945.

The sun is blazing down on the countryside and is scorching the ripe corn drawing a scent from it, which reminds one of the smell of bread. There is a vague smell in the air, the smell of sunshine, of laundry, of crops, of summer.

Because every season, I could say every month, and even every hour of the day has its smell, as each place has its own, if one has sharp senses and a keen spirit of observation. The smell of a winter day with a biting cold wind is quite different from the mellow smell of a foggy winter day, or of a snowy one. And how different is the smell of springtime that comes and announces itself by means of a scent, which is not a scent, and is very different from the smell of winter. One gets up in the morning and the air has a different smell: the first breath of springtime. And so forth for the smell of orchards in blossom, of gardens, of corn, down to the warm smell of vintage and then, as an intermezzo, the smell of earth after a storm...

And what about the hours? It would be foolish to say that the smell of dawn is like that of noon, or that the latter is like that of the evening or night. The first is fresh and virginal, the second is pleasant and jolly, the third is tired and saturated with all the smells exhaled by everything during the day; the last one, the night one, is calm and cosy, as if the Earth were a huge cradle taking in its little ones to rest.

And what about places? Oh! the smell of a seashore is so different at dawn and in the evening, at noon and at night, when the sea is stormy or calm, if the beach is pebbly or sandy! And the smell of seaweed, which appears after tides, and the sea seems to have opened its bowels to let us breathe the stench of its depths. That smell is so different from that of inland plains, which differs from that of hilly places, which is different from the smell of high mountains.

Such is the infinity of the Creator Who impressed a sign of light, or colour, or scent, or sound, or shape, or height on each of the infinite things that He created. O infinite beauty of the Universe, I

now only see you through the visions and the remembrance of what I saw, loving God and praying Him through His works and the joy I felt watching them, how vast, mighty, inexhaustible and ever fresh you are. You are never tired and never tire anyone. Nay, man is renewed watching you, o Universe of my Lord, he becomes better and purer, he is elevated and he forgets... Oh! I wish I could always contemplate you and forget the inferior part of men, loving them in and for their souls and leading them to God! And so, following Jesus, Who is going with His apostles across this plain full of crops, I digress once again allowing myself to be carried away by the joy of speaking of my God through His magnificent works. That is love, too, because one praises what one loves in a person or simply praises the person one loves. The same applies to creature and Creator. Who loves Him, praises Him, and the more one loves Him the more one praises Him for Himself and for His works. But I will now order my heart to be silent and I will follow Jesus, not as a worshipper, but as a faithful chronicler.

Jesus is walking through the fields. It is a hot day. The place is desert. There is not a soul in the fields. There are only ripe ears of corn and a few trees here and there. Sunshine, corn, birds, lizards, green tufts of grass, which is still in the calm of the air, are the only things to be seen around Jesus. On one side of the main road along which Jesus is walking - a dusty dazzling ribbon between the fields undulating with corn - there is a little village, on the other side a farm. Nothing else.

Everybody is hot and proceeds in silence. They have taken off their mantles but as they are wearing woollen tunics, however light they may be, they suffer the heat just the same. Only Jesus, His two cousins and the Iscariot are wearing linen or hempen clothes. Jesus' and the Iscariot's garments are of white linen, whereas those of Alphaeus' sons look thicker and heavier than linen and they are also dyed in a darker ivory shade, exactly the shade of unbleached hemp. The others are wearing their usual robes and are drying their perspiration with the linen cloth which covers their heads.

They reach a thicket of trees at a crossroads. They stop in the healthy shade and drink avidly out of their flasks.

« It is as warm as if it had been on the fire » grumbles Peter.

« I wish there was a little stream here! But there is absolutely nothing! » sighs Bartholomew. « I will have none left before long. »

« I think I would say that it is better to walk on the mountains » moans James of Zebedee, who is flushed with heat.

« A boat is the best of all. It is cool, restful, clean, ah! » Peter's heart flies back to his lake and his boat.

« You are right. But there are sinners on the mountains as well as on the plains. If they had not driven us away from the Clear Water

and had not persecuted us so closely, I would have come here between Tebeth and Shebat. But we shall soon be on the seaside. The air is cooled there by the open sea wind » says Jesus comforting them.

« Eh! We need it! We are like dying pikes here. But how can the corn be so beautiful when there is no water? » asks Peter.

« There is underground moisture which keeps the soil damp » explains Jesus.

« It would be better if it was above ground instead of under. What am I going to do with it, if it is down there? I have no roots! » says Peter impulsively and they all laugh.

Judas Thaddeus becomes serious and says: « The soil is as selfish as some souls, and it is equally arid. If they had allowed us to stop in that village and spend the Sabbath there, we would have enjoyed shade, water and rest. But they drove us away... »

« And we would have had food as well. Now we have not even that. And I am hungry. I wish there was some fruit! The fruit trees are all close to the houses. And who is going to pick it? If the people here are in the same mood as those over there... » says Thomas, pointing at the village they left behind, to the east.

« Take my portion of food. I am not very hungry » says the Zealot.

« You may take also Mine » says Jesus. « Those who feel more hungry, should eat. »

But when the food portions of Jesus, of the Zealot and of Nathanael are put together, they look very scanty, as one can tell from the dismayed looks of Thomas and the younger ones. But they nibble silently at their tiny portions.

The patient Zealot goes towards a spot where a row of green plants on the parched soil suggests the presence of moisture. There is in fact a trickle of water in the bottom of a ditch, just a trickle, which is bound to disappear before long. He shouts to his distant companions to come and refresh themselves, and they all rush there, and following the intermittent shade of a row of plants on the bank of the half dry brook, they are able to refresh their dusty feet, and wash their perspired faces. But first of all they fill their empty flasks and leave them in the water, in the shade, to keep them cool. They sit down at the foot of a tree and being tired they doze off.

Jesus looks at them lovingly and sympathetically and shakes His head. The Zealot, who has gone to drink once again, notices His gesture and asks Him: « What is the matter, Master? »

Jesus stands up, He goes towards the Zealot and clasping him with one arm He takes him towards another tree saying: « What is the matter? I grieve at your fatigue. If I were not sure of what I am doing to you, I could never set My mind at peace while causing you so much trouble. »

« Trouble? No, Master! It is a joy to us. Everything vanishes following You. We are all happy, believe me. There is no regret, there is no... »

« Be quiet, Simon. Humanity remonstrates also in good people. And from a human point of view, you are not wrong in remonstrating. I have taken you away from your homes, from your families, from your business and you came thinking that it was going to be quite different to follow Me... But your present remonstrations, your internal protest will calm down one day, and you will then realise that it was good to go through fog and mud, through dust and dog-days, persecuted, thirsty, without food, following a persecuted, hated, slandered Master... and worse still. Everything will seem beautiful to you then. Because your minds will be different, and you will see everything in a different light. And you will bless Me for leading you along My difficult way... »

« You are sad, Master. And the world justifies Your sadness, but we are no part of it. We are all happy... »

« All? Are you sure? »

« Are You of a different opinion? »

« Yes, Simon, I am. You are always happy. You have understood. Many others have not. See those who are sleeping? Do you know how many thoughts they are turning over in their minds also while sleeping? And all those among the disciples? Do you think they will be faithful until everything is accomplished? Look: let us play this old game that you certainly played when a boy (and Jesus picks a round fully ripe dandelion growing among the stones. He raises it gently to His mouth, blows and the dandelion dissolves into tiny umbrellas, which wander in the air with their little tufts on top of the tiny handles). See? Look... How many have fallen on My lap as if they were in love with Me? Count them... They are twentythree. They were at least three times as many. And the others? Look. Some are still wandering, some have fallen because of their weight, some, which are proud of their silvery plume, are haughtily rising higher, some are falling into the mud that we made with our flasks. Only... Look, look... Of the twenty-three that were on My lap, seven more have gone. That hornet flying by was enough to blow them away!... What were they afraid of? Or by what were they allured? Were they afraid of its sting? Or were they allured by its beautiful black and gold hues, or by its graceful appearance, its iridescent wings?... They have gone... Following a deceitful beauty. Simon, the same will happen to My disciples. Some will go because of their restlessness, some because of their inconstancy, their pride, their dullness, their frivolity, their lust for filth, some for fear, some because of their foolishness. Do you think that in the crucial hour of My mission I shall have beside Me all those who now say to Me: "I will come with You"? The tiny tufts of the

dandelion, which My Father created, were more than seventy... and now there are only seven left on My lap, because some more have been blown away by this puff of wind that has caused the thinner stems to flutter away... It will be like that. And I am thinking of how much you have to struggle to be loyal to Me... Come, Simon. Let us go and look at those dragonflies dancing over the water. Unless you prefer to have a rest. »

« No, Master. Your words have grieved me. But I hope that the cured leper, the persecuted man whom You have rehabilitated, the solitary whom You have gifted with company, the nostalgic man longing for love to whom You have opened Heaven and the world, may find and give love, I hope that that man will not abandon You... Master... what do You think of Judas? Last year You wept with me because of him. Then... I do not know... Master, never mind those two dragonflies, look at me, listen to me. I would not say this to anybody. I would not tell my companions, my friends. But I will tell You. I am not successful in loving Judas. I must admit it. He rejects my desire to love him. He does not hold me in contempt, on the contrary he is even too courtly with the old Zealot who he realises is more skilful than the others in knowing men. But it is the way he behaves. Do you think he is sincere? Tell me. »

Jesus is silent for a few moments as if He were enchanted by the two dragonflies that resting on the surface of the water form a tiny rainbow with their iridescent elytra, a precious rainbow as it attracts a curious midge, which is swallowed by one of the voracious insects, which, in turn, is immediately snatched and devoured together with the midge, by a toad or frog, lying in wait. Jesus stands up, as He had almost lain down to see the little tragedies of nature and says: « It is just like that. A dragonfly has strong jaws to feed on herbs and strong wings to catch gnats, and a frog has a large mouth to swallow dragonflies. Each has his own and makes use of it. Let us go, Simon. The others are waking up. »

« But You have not replied to me, Master. You did not want to. »

« I did! My old wise man, meditate and you will find... » And Jesus goes from the ditch towards His disciples who are waking up and looking for Him.

217. Jesus Is Master also of the Sabbath.

13th July 1945.

We are still in the same place, but the setting sun is more bearable.

« We must go and reach that house » says Jesus.

They set out and reach it. They ask for bread and refreshment. But the farmer drives them away rudely.

« Race of Philistines!-Vipers! They are always the same! They

were born of that stock and bear poisonous fruit » grumble the tired and hungry disciples. « May you be given tit for tat. »

« Why do you lack charity? The time of the law of retaliation is over. Come forward. It is not yet night and you are not dying of hunger. Offer this little sacrifice so that these souls may become hungry for Me » says Jesus exhorting them.

But the disciples go into a field and begin to pick the ears of corn, they rub them on the palms of their hands and eat them. I think they do it more out of spite than to satisfy their hunger.

« They are good, Master » shouts Peter. « Are You not having any? And they have a double flavour... I would like to eat up the whole field. »

« You are right! So they would repent for not giving us any bread » say the others while walking through the corn and eating with relish.

Jesus is walking alone on the dusty road. The Zealot and Bartholomew are five or six yards behind Him, speaking to each other.

There is another crossroads, where a secondary road crosses the main one, and a group of sulky Pharisees is standing there. They must be coming back from the Sabbath celebration in the village that can be seen at the end of the secondary road, a large flat town, which looks like a huge animal lying in its den.

Jesus sees the Pharisees, looks at them and smiling kindly greets them: « Peace be with you. »

Instead of replying to His greetings, one of the them asks arrogantly: « Who are You? »

« Jesus of Nazareth. »

« See, I told you it was Him » says another.

In the meantime Nathanael and Simon have come close to the Master, whereas the other apostles are coming towards the road, walking along the furrows. They are still chewing and have some corn in their hands.

The Pharisee who had spoken first, probably because he is the most important one, resumes speaking to Jesus, Who has stopped waiting to hear what they have to say: « Ah! So You are the famous Jesus of Nazareth? Why have You come so far? »

« Because also here there are souls to be saved. »

« We are quite sufficient for that. We know how to save our souls and those of our subjects. »

« If it is so, you are doing the right thing. But I have been sent to evangelize and save. »

« Sent! Sent! Who can prove it to us? Not Your deeds certainly! »

« Why do you say that? Are you not interested in your Life? »

« Of course! You are the one who administers death to those who do not adore You. So You want to kill the whole sacerdotal and

Pharisaic classes, and the class of scribes and many more, because they do not worship You and they never will. Never, do You understand? We, the chosen ones in Israel, will never worship You. Neither shall we love You. »

« I do not compel you to love Me and I say to you: "Worship God" because... »

« That is, You, because You are God, are You not? But we are not the horrible people of Galilee nor the foolish people of Judah who follow You forgetting our rabbis... »

« Do not be upset, man. I am not asking for anything. I am fulfilling My mission, I teach people to love God and I repeat the Decalogue to them, because it has been forgotten, and what is worse, it is badly applied. I want to give Life. Eternal Life. I do not wish anybody a bodily death and much less a spiritual one. The Life in which I asked you whether you were interested, is the life of your soul, because I love your soul, even if your soul does not love Me. And it grieves Me to see that you are killing it by off ending the Lord and despising His Messiah. »

The Pharisee becomes so excited that he seems to have fallen into a fit of convulsions: he disarranges his clothes, he tears his fringes, he takes off his headgear, he ruffles his hair and shouts: « Listen! Listen! Hear what He says to me, to Jonathan of Uziel, a direct descendant of Simon the Just. That I offend the Lord! I don't know who keeps me from cursing You, but... »

« It is fear that keeps you. But you may do it. You will not be burnt to ashes just the same. But you will be in due course, and then you will invoke Me. But between you and Me, there will then be a red stream: My Blood. »

« All right. But in the meantime, since You say that You are a saint, why do You allow certain things? Since You say that You are a Master, why do You not teach Your apostles before anybody else? Look at them, behind You!... They still have in their hands the instrument of their sin! Can You see them? They have picked corn and this is the Sabbath. They have picked ears of corn, which do not belong to them. They have infringed the Sabbath and they have stolen. »

« They were hungry. In the village where we arrived yesterday evening, we asked for bread and lodgings. They drove us away. Only an old woman gave us some of her bread and a handful of olives. May God give her one hundredfold, because she gave us everything she had, and she only asked for a blessing. We walked for a mile and then we stopped, complying with the law, and we drank the water of a stream. Then, at sunset, we went to that house... They rejected us. You can see that we were willing to obey the Law. »

« But you did not. It is not legal to do manual work on Sabbaths

and it is never legal to take what belongs to other people. My friends and I are scandalised. »

« But I am not. Have you not read how David at Nob took the consecrated bread of the Proposition for himself and his companions? The sacred loaves belonged to God, in His house, and by a perpetual order were to be kept for the priests. It is written: "They will belong to Aaron and his sons, who shall eat them in a holy place, because they are a most holy thing". And yet David took them for himself and his companions, because he was hungry. If, therefore, the holy king entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Proposition on a Sabbath, although it was not legal for him to eat it, and yet it was not imputed to him as a sin, because also after that event God continued to love him, how can you say that we have sinned if we pick on the soil of God the ears of corn that have grown and ripened through His will, the ears that belong also to birds, and you deny that men, the sons of the Father, may eat »,

« They asked for those loaves, they did not take them without asking. And that makes the difference. In any case it is not true that God did not impute that sin to David. God struck him very hard! »

« Not because of that. It was because of his lewdness, of the census, not because... »

« Oh! That's enough. It is not legal, and that is all. You have no right to do it and you shall not do it. Go away. We do not want you in our land. We do not need you. We do not know what to do with you. »

« We shall go. »

« And for ever, remember that. Let Jonathan of Uziel never find you again in his presence. Go! »

« Yes, we will go. But we will meet again. And then it will be Jonathan who wants to see Me to repeat his judgement, and to rid the world of Me for ever. But then it will be Heaven that will say to you: "It is not legal for you to do it", and that "it is not legal" will resound in your heart like the sound of a bugle-horn throughout your life and beyond. As on Sabbaths the priests in the Temple infringe the Sabbath rest but do not commit sin, so we, servants of the Lord, can attain love and help from the Most Holy Father, without thus committing sin, since man denies us his love. There is One here Who is by far greater than the Temple and can take anything He wants of what exists in creation, because God has made everything a footstool for the Word. And I take and give. And that applies both to the ears of corn of the Father, laid on the immense table of the Earth, and to the Word. I take and give. Both to the good and to the wicked. Because I am Mercy. But you do not know what is Mercy. If you knew what My being Mercy means,

you would also know that I want nothing but mercy. If you knew what Mercy is, you would not have condemned innocent people. But you do not know. You do not even know that I do not condemn you, you do not know that I will forgive you, nay, I will ask the Father to forgive you. Because I want mercy and not punishment. But you do not know. You do not want to know. And that is a greater sin than the one you impute to Me, it is greater than the one you say these innocent men have committed. You must know that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath and that the Son of man is master also of the Sabbath. Goodbye... »

He turns to His disciples: « Come. Let us go and look for a place where to lie down among the sands that are now near. The stars will keep us company and dew will refresh us. God, Who sent manna to Israel, will provide nourishment also for us, His poor faithful servants. » And Jesus leaves the rancorous group and goes away with His disciples, while night is falling with its first violet shadows...

They find at last a hedge of Indian figs, on the top leaves of which, bristling with thorns, are some fruit, which are beginning to ripen. Anything is good when one is hungry. And stinging themselves, they pick the ripest ones and proceed thus, until the fields become sandy dunes. The noise of the sea can be heard in the distance.

« Let us rest here. The sand is soft and warm. Tomorrow we will go to Ashkelon » says Jesus and tired as they are, they all lie down at the foot of a high dune.

218. Arrival at Ashkelon.

14th July 1945.

The fresh dawn breath wakes the sleeping apostles. They rise from their sand beds, where they slept close to a dune strewn with small tufts of dry grass, and they climb to the top. A large sandy coast appears before them, whereas a little farther away and a little closer to them there are beautiful well cultivated fields. The white stones of a dry torrent are conspicuous against the golden sand and their whiteness - the whiteness of dry bones - stretches as far as the sea, the surface of which glitters in the distance, rippled by the morning tide and a light mistral. They walk on the edge of the dune as far as the dry torrent, which they cross, and they resume walking across the dunes, which crumble under their feet and are so undulated that they seem a solid continuation of the sea.

They reach the shore-line, where they can walk faster, and while John is hypnotised by the boundless ocean beginning to shine in the rising sun, and he seems to be drinking in its beauty as his eyes

become bluer and bluer, Peter who is more practical, takes his sandals off, pulls up his tunic and paddles in the shallow water looking for little crabs or shells to suck. A beautiful sea town is about two miles away, stretched along the coast above a semilunar rocky barrier beyond which sands have been carried by storms and blown by winds. And the rocks of the barrier, now that the water recedes at low tide, appear here as well, compelling thus the apostles to walk on the dry sand in order not to cut their bare feet on the sharp rocks.

« Where is the entrance to the town, my Lord? I can only see a very solid wall from here. It is not possible to enter by sea. The town is in the inner-most spot of the gulf » says Philip.

« Come. I know where the entrance is. »

« Have You already been here? »

« Once when I was a child, but I would not remember. But I know where to go. »

« How strange! I have noticed that many a time... You never take the wrong road. Sometimes we make You go wrong. One would think that You have already been to the places we go to » remarks James of Zebedee.

Jesus smiles but does not reply. He walks confidently as far as a little rural suburb where market gardeners grow vegetables for the town. The fields and market gardens are tidy and well looked after and men and women are working in them, pouring water in the furrows, after drawing it laboriously from wells by hand, or in the old squeaky method by means of buckets pulled up by a poor blindfolded donkey walking round the well. But they do not say anything. Jesus greets them. « Peace be with you. » But if they are not hostile, they are certainly indifferent.

« My Lord, we are running the risk of dying of hunger here. They do not understand Your greetings. I will try now » says Thomas. And he opens conversation with the first market gardener he sees: « Are your vegetables expensive? »

« Not more than other market gardeners'. Dear or not dear, according to how thick a purse is. »

« Well said. But, as you can see, I am not dying of starvation. I am fat and rosy also without your vegetables. Which means that my purse is well stocked. Listen: we are thirteen and we have money to spend. What can you sell us? »

« Eggs, vegetables, early almonds, apples flabby by age, olives... Whatever you want. »

« Give me some eggs, apples and bread for everybody. »

« I have no bread. You will find it in town. »

« I am hungry now, not in an hour's time. I don't believe that you have no bread. »

« I have not got any. The women are making it. See that old man

over there? He always has plenty, because as he is closer to the road, pilgrims often ask him for it. Go to Ananiah and ask him. I will bring you the eggs now. But, mind you, they cost a coin a pair. »

« What a thief you are! Do your hens perhaps lay golden eggs? »

« No. But it is not pleasant to be in the middle of the stench of poultry, and one does not do it for nothing. In any case, you are Jews, are you not? So pay! »

« You can keep your eggs. And that's you paid! » and Thomas turns his back to him.

« Ehi! man! Come here. I will give you them for less. Three to a coin. »

« Not even four. You can eat them yourself and may they choke you. »

« Come here. Listen. How much are you prepared to give me? » The market gardener chases Thomas.

« Nothing. I don't want them any more. I wanted to have a snack before going to town. But it is better so. I will not lose my voice or my appetite before singing the king's stories and I will have a good meal at the hotel. »

« I will give you them for a didrachma a pair. »

« Ugh! You are worse than a horse-fly. Give me your eggs. And make sure they are new laid ones. Otherwise I will bring them back and I will make your snout yellower than it already is. » And Thomas comes away with at least two dozen eggs in the fold of his mantle. « See? From now on I will do the shopping in this land of thieves. I know how to deal with them. They are lousy with money when they come to purchase our goods for their women and our bracelets are never heavy enough and they haggle over prices for days. I will avenge myself. Now let us go and see that other nasty piece of work. Come, Peter. Here, John, take the eggs. »

They go to the old man whose market garden is near the main road, which from the north leads to the town running near the houses of the suburb. It is a fine well paved road, certainly Roman work. The eastern town gate is now quite near and beyond it one can see that the road proceeds straight and becomes really artistic, with a shady porch on each side, supported by marble columns, in the cool shade of which people walk leaving the middle of the road to donkeys, camels, dogs and horses.

« Hail! Will you sell us some bread? » asks Thomas.

The old man either does not hear or does not want to hear. In actual fact the squeaking of the water-wheel is such that it can cause confusion.

Peter loses his temper and shouts: « Stop your Samson! At least it will be able to catch its breath and not die under my eyes. And listen to us! »

The man stops the donkey and casts a side glance at his interlocuter, but Peter disarms him saying: « Eh! Is it not right to give the name of Samson to a donkey? If you are a Philistine, you should like it because it is an insult to Samson. If instead you come from Israel, you should like it because it reminds you of a defeat of the Philistines. So you can see... »

« I am a Philistine and am proud of it. »

« You are right. And I will be proud of you if you give us some bread. »

« But are you not a Judaeen? »

« I am a Christian. »

« What place is that? »

« It is not a place. It is a person. I belong to that person. »

« Are you His slave? »

« I am more free than any other man because who belongs to that person does not depend on anybody, except God. »

« Are you speaking the truth? Not even on Caesar? »

« Phew! What is Caesar as compared to Him Whom I follow, and to Whom I belong, and in Whose name I ask you to give me some bread? »

« But where is that powerful man? »

« That man over there, the One looking here and smiling. He is the Christ, the Messiah. Have you never heard of Him? »

« Yes, the king of Israel. Will He defeat Rome? »

« Rome? The whole world, also Hell. »

« And you are His generals? Dressed like that? Perhaps to evade the persecutions of the wicked Jews. »

« Well... it is, and it isn't. But give me some bread and while eating I will explain the situation to you. »

« Bread? But I will give you also water, and wine, and seats in the shade, for you and for your companion and for your Messiah. Call Him. »

And Peter rushes towards Jesus. « Come, come. He will give us what we want... that old Philistine. But I think he will assail You with questions... I told him Who You are... I more or less told him... But he is favourably disposed. »

They all go to the market garden where the man has already arranged benches round a coarse table under a thick vine pergola.

« Peace to you, Ananiah. May your ground be fertile because of your charity and may it bear you rich fruit. »

« Thank You. Peace to You. Sit down. Anibe! Nubi! Bring bread, wine and water at once » the old man orders two women who are certainly African, because one is absolutely black with thick lips and frizzly hair and the other is very dark but more of a European type. And the old man explains: « They are the daughters of my wife's slaves. She is dead and the slaves who came with her are

also dead. But the daughters are here. They come from the High and Low Nile. My wife came from there. It's forbidden, eh? But I don't care. I am not an Israelite and the women of inferior race are meek. »

« Are you not from Israel? »

« I am by force, because Israel oppresses us like a yoke. But... You are an Israelite and You will feel insulted at what I say?... »

« No. I am not offended. I would only like you to listen to the voice of God. »

« It does not speak to us. »

« That is what you say. I am speaking to you, and that is His voice. »

« But You are the King of Israel. »

The women who are arriving with bread, water and wine when they hear « king » being mentioned, stop dumbfounded looking at the smiling dignified young man, whom their master calls « king », and they are about to withdraw, almost creeping out of respect.

« Thank you, women. Peace to you, too. » Then, addressing the old man: « They are young... You may go on with your work. »

« No. The soil is wet and can wait. Speak to us a little. Anibe, unharness the donkey and take it to the stable. And you, Nubi, pour the last buckets of water and then... Are you stopping here, Lord? »

« Do not go to any further trouble. I only want to take some food and then I will go to Ashkelon. »

« It is no trouble. Go to town, but come back here in the evening. We will share our bread and salt. You two, hurry up. You see to the bread, you call Jetheo, tell him to kill a kid and prepare it for this evening. Go. » And the two women go away without speaking.

« So You are a king. But Your army? Herod is cruel in every possible way. He rebuilt Ashkelon. But for his own glory. And now!... But You know the disgraceful things of Israel better than I do. What will You do? »

« I have but the weapon that comes from God. »

« David's sword? »

« The sword of My word. »

« Oh! You have some hopes! It will become blunt against bronze hearts. »

« Do you think so? I am not aiming at a kingdom in this world. I am aiming at the Kingdom of Heaven on behalf of all of you. »

« Us all? Me, as well, a Philistine? And my slaves? »

« For everybody. You and them. And for the most uncivilised man in the centre of African forests. »

« Do You want to establish such a wide kingdom? Why do You call it of Heaven? You could call it: Kingdom of the Earth. »

« No, do not misunderstand me. My Kingdom is the Kingdom of

the True God. God is in Heaven. So it is the Kingdom of Heaven. Every man is a soul clad with a body and a soul can live but in Heaven. I want to cure your souls, remove their errors and hatred and lead them to God through goodness and love. »

« I like that very much. I do not go to Jerusalem, but I know that no one in Israel has spoken like that for ages. So You do not hate us? »

« I do not hate anyone. »

The old man is pensive... then he asks: « And have the two slaves got a soul the same as you people of Israel? »

« of course they have. They are not captured wild beasts. They are unhappy creatures. They deserve love. Do you love them? »

« I do not ill-treat them. I want them to obey, but I never use a lash and I feed them well. They say that an ill-fed animal will not work. But also an ill-fed man is bad business. And they were born in the house. I saw them when they were babies. They are the only ones who will be left, because I am very old, You know? Almost eighty. They and Jethéo are what is left of my old household. I am fond of them as I am of my property. They will close my eyes... »

« And then? »

« And then... Who knows! I don't know. They will go and work as maidservants and the house will fall to pieces. I am sorry. I made it wealthy by my work. This ground will be covered with sand again and become sterile... This vineyard... My wife and I planted it. And that rosery... It's Egyptian, Lord. I smell the perfume of my wife in it... It seems my son... the only son who is buried under it and is now dust... Sorrows... It is better to die young and not see all that and death which is approaching... »

« Your son is not dead, neither is your wife, their souls survive. Their flesh is dead. Death must not frighten you. Death is life for those who hope in the Lord and live righteously. Think about it... I am going to town. I will come back this evening and I will ask you to allow Me to sleep under that porch with My disciples. »

« No, my Lord. I have many empty rooms. I offer them to You. »

Judas puts some coins on the table.

« No. I don't want them. They are of this country that is hateful to you. But perhaps they are better than those who rule over us. Goodbye, my Lord. »

« Peace to you, Ananiah. »

The two slaves together with Jethéo, a brawny elderly peasant, have come to see Him leave. « Peace to you as well. Be good. Goodbye » and Jesus touches lightly Nubi's frizzy hair and the shiny straight hair of Anibe, He smiles at the man and departs.

Shortly afterwards they enter Ashkelon along the road of the double porch, which goes straight to the centre of the town. The town is an imitation of Rome, with fountains and basins, squares

in the style of the Forum, towers along the wall and Herod's name everywhere, which he obviously had placed to praise himself since the population of Ashkelon do not applaud him. The town is busy and becomes more so as the time passes and one approaches its centre, which is spacious and airy, with the sea as a bright background like a turquoise enclosed in the pink coral tongues of the houses spread in the deep arc of the coast. Rather than a gulf it is indeed a true arc, a section of a circle made very pale pink by the sunshine.

« Let us divide into four groups. I will go, nay I will let you go. Then I will make My choice. Go. After the ninth hour we will meet at the gate where we came in. Be wise and patient. » And Jesus looks at them going away and remains alone with Judas Iscariot who has stated that he will give nothing to the people here because they are worse than heathens. But when Judas hears that Jesus wishes to wander about in silence, he changes his mind and says: « Do You mind being alone? I would go with Matthew, James and Andrew as they are the least capable ones... »

« You may go. Goodbye. »

And Jesus all alone, wanders far and wide in the town, a seeming nonentity amongst busy people who pay no attention to Him. Only two or three children look at Him curiously and a woman provokingly dressed comes resolutely towards Him smiling alluringly. But Jesus looks at her so severely that she becomes purple, lowers her eyes and goes away. At the corner she turns round again, and as a man who watched the scene jeers at her biting, laughing at her defeat, she envelops herself in her mantle and runs away.

The children, instead, walk round Jesus, looking at Him and smiling in response to His smiles. One more daring than the others asks: « Who are You? »

« Jesus » He replies caressing him.

« What are You doing? »

« I am waiting for some friends. »

« From Ashkelon? »

« No, from My country and from Judaea. »

« Are You rich? I am. My father has a beautiful house and he makes carpets in it. Come and see. It is not far. »

And Jesus goes with the boy and they enter a long archway, which is a kind of covered road. At the other end they catch a glimpse of the sea, which is very bright in the sunshine and looks even more lively in the dim light of the archway.

They meet a haggard little girl who is weeping. « That is Dinah. She is poor, You know? My mother gives her food. Her mother cannot work any more. Her father died, at sea. In a storm while going from Gaza to the harbour of the Great River to take goods there

and to collect some. And as the goods belonged to my father and Dinah's father was one of our sailors, my mother now sees to them. But there are so many of them who have been left fatherless thus... What do You say? It must be dreadful to be orphans and poor. Here is my house. Don't tell my mother that I was in the street. I should have been at school. But I was expelled because I was making my companions laugh with this... » and he pulls out from his clothes a puppet carved in wood, set in a thin piece of wood, which is really very comical, with its slipper chin and its very queer nose.

Jesus' lips tremble as if He were on the point of smiling, but He controls Himself and says: « That is not your school teacher, is it? Or a relative? It is not right. »

« No. It's the head of the synagogue of the Jews. He is old and ugly and we always make fun of him. »

« That is not right either. He is certainly much older than you are and... »

« Oh! He is very old, he is almost humpbacked and blind, but he is so ugly looking!... It's no fault of mine, if he is so ugly! »

« No. But you are wrong in making fun of an old man. You will be ugly too, when you are old, because you will be bent with age; you will be bald, almost blind, you will need a stick to walk, your face will be like that one. So? Will you be happy if an ill-mannered boy makes fun of you? And why should you worry your master and disturb your companions? It is not right. If your father knew, he would punish you and your mother would be upset. I will not tell them anything. But you will give Me two things immediately: your promise that you will no longer commit such offences and that puppet. Who made it? »

« I did, Lord... » says the humiliated boy, who is now conscious of the gravity of his... misdeeds... And he goes on: « I like to carve wood very much! Sometimes I carve the flowers or the animals which are on the carpets. You know?... dragons, Sphynxes and other animals... »

« You may do that. There are so many beautiful things on the earth! So are you going to promise and will you give me that puppet? Otherwise we are no longer friends. I will keep it as a souvenir and I will pray for you. What is your name? »

« Alexander. And what will You give me? »

Jesus is embarrassed. He always has so little! But He remembers that He has a beautiful buckle on the collar of one of his tunics. He looks for it in His bag, finds it, takes it off and gives it to the boy. « And now let us go. But, mind you, even if I go away, I will know everything just the same. And if I know that you are a bad boy, I will come back here and tell your mother everything. » The agreement is made.

They enter the house. Beyond the hall there is a large yard on

three sides of which there are large rooms with the looms.

The maidservant who opened the door is amazed seeing the boy with a stranger and informs the landlady, a tall kind looking woman who comes immediately asking: « But has my son not been well? »

« No, woman. He brought Me here to see your looms. I am a stranger. »

« Do You wish to make some purchases? »

« No. I have no money. But I have friends who love beautiful things and have money. »

The woman looks curiously at the man who so candidly admits that he is poor and she says: « I thought You were a rich man. Your manners and aspect are those of a lord. »

« Instead I am only a Galilean rabbi: Jesus, the Nazarene. »

« We are in business and we are unprejudiced. Come and see. »

And she takes Him to see her looms where young women are working under her guidance. The rugs are really valuable both with regard to design and shade: they are deep, soft and look like flower beds in bloom or kaleidoscopes of gems. On others there are allegorical figures, such as hypogryphs, mermaids, dragons or heraldic gryphons like ours, intermingled with flowers.

Jesus admires them. « You are very clever. I am glad I have seen all this. And I am glad that you are a good woman. »

« How do you know? »

« It is written on your face and the boy told Me about Dinah. May God reward you for it. Even if you do not believe it, you are very close to the Truth, because there is charity in you. »

« Which truth? »

« The Most High Lord. He who loves his neighbour and practises charity both towards his family and his subjects, and extends it to unhappy people, has already Religion in himself. That is Dinah, is it not? »

« Yes. Her mother is dying. Later, I will take her, but not for the looms. She is too young and too delicate. Dinah, come to this gentleman. »

The little girl, with the sad look of unhappy children, approaches Jesus shyly.

Jesus caresses her and says: « Will you take Me to your mother? You would like her to be cured, would you not? Well, then, take Me to her. Goodbye, woman. And goodbye, Alexander. And be good. »

He goes out holding the girl's hand. « Are you alone? » He asks her.

« I have three little brothers. The last one never knew his father. »

« Do not weep. Can you believe that God can cure your mother? You know, do you not, that there is only one God Who loves the men that He created and especially good children? And that He can

do everything? »

« Yes, I know, Lord. My brother Tolme used to go to school and at school he was mixed with Jewish boys. That is why we know many things. I know that God exists and His name is Jehovah and that He punished us because the Philistines were bad to Him. The Jewish children always reproach us for that. But I was not there then, neither was my mother or my father. So why... » tears choke her words.

« Do not weep. God loves you, too, and He brought Me here, for you and for your mother. Do you know that the Israelites are expecting the Messiah Who is to come to establish the Kingdom of Heaven? The Kingdom of Jesus, the Redeemer and Saviour of the world? »

« I know, my Lord. And they threaten us saying: "Then there will be trouble for you". »

« And do you know what the Messiah will do? »

« He will make Israel a great country and will treat us very badly. »

« No. He will redeem the world, He will remove sin, He will teach people not to sin, He will love the poor, the sick, the afflicted, He will go to them, and He will teach the rich, the healthy, the happy to love them and He will tell everybody to be good to reach the blissful eternal life in Heaven. That is what He will do. And He will not oppress anybody. »

« And how will people know Him? »

« Because He will love everybody and will cure the sick people that believe in Him, He will redeem sinners and teach love. »

« Oh! I wish He came before my mother dies! How I would believe in Him! How I would pray Him! I would go and look for Him until I found Him and I would say to Him: "I am a poor girl without father and my mother is dying, I hope in You" and I am sure that, although I am a Philistine, He would hear me. » Her voice throbs with simple deep faith.

Jesus smiles looking at the poor girl walking beside Him. She cannot see His bright smile as she is looking ahead, towards the house which is now close at hand...

They arrive at a poor little house, at the end of a blind alley. « It's here, my Lord. Come in... » A small miserable room, a straw mattress with a worn out body on top of it, three little ones between three and ten years of age, sitting near the mattress. Misery and starvation are portrayed everywhere.

« Peace to you, woman. Do not get excited. Do not trouble yourself. I found your daughter and I know that you are not well. I have come. Would you like to be cured? »

In a small voice the woman replies: « Oh! My Lord!... It's the end for me!... » and she weeps.

« Your daughter believes that the Messiah could cure you. And

what about you? »

« Oh! I believe that, too. But where is the Messiah? »

« It is I, Who am speaking to you. » And Jesus, Who was bending over the mattress whispering His word to the poor woman, stands up and shouts: « I want it. Be cured. »

The children are almost afraid of His majesty, and the three amazed faces remain around their mother's pallet. Dinah presses her hands against her little breast. A light of hope, of beatitude shines on her face. She is so touched, that she is almost panting. Her mouth is open to utter a word which her heart is already whispering and when she sees that her mother, so far wan and exhausted, sits up, as if she were supported by a strength infused into her, and then stands up, with her eyes staring all the time at the Saviour, Dinah utters a cry of joy: « Mummy! ». The word filling her heart has been spoken!... And then another one: « Jesus! » And embracing her mother she compels her to kneel down saying: « Adore Him, adore Him! It is He, the prophesied Saviour of Whom Tolme's teacher spoke. »

« Worship the True God, be good, remember Me. Goodbye. » And He goes out quickly while the two happy women are still prostrated on the floor...

219. Teaching at Ashkelon.

15th July 1945.

The apostles arrive at the town gate in successive little groups, according to the directions of Jesus. The Master is not yet there. But He arrives soon, emerging from a little street running along the walls.

« The Master must have had good fortune » says Matthew. « Look how He is smiling. »

They meet and then all together go out of the gate and take to the main road again, a road lined with suburb market gardens.

Jesus asks them: « Well? How did it go with you? How did you do? »

« Very badly » the Iscariot and Bartholomew reply together.

« Why? What happened? »

« They almost stoned us. We had to run away. Let us go away from this place of barbarians. Let us go back to where people love us. I will not speak again here. Actually I had no intention of speaking. Then I allowed myself to be convinced and You did not stop me. And yet You know how things are... » The Iscariot is angry.

« But what happened to you? »

« Eh! I had joined Matthew, James and Andrew. We went to Judgement Square, because it is the meeting place of refined people

who have plenty time to listen to those who speak. We decided that Matthew should speak, being the most suitable one to talk to publicans and their clients. And he began by speaking to two men who were quarrelling over the ownership of a field involved in an intricate inheritance: "Do not hate each other for what is perishable and for what you cannot take with you in the next life. But love each other so that you may enjoy the eternal good which you can achieve by controlling your evil passions, without any other struggle, and thus win and possess Good". That is what you were saying, is that right? And when two or three people approached us, he continued: "Listen to the Truth that is teaching the world, so that the world may have peace. You can see that the world suffers because it entertains an excessive attachment for things that perish. The earth is not everything. There is also Heaven, and in Heaven there is God, as on the earth there is now His Messiah, Who sent us to inform you that the time of Mercy has come and that no sinner can say: 'I shall not be heard', because he who is really repentant is forgiven, heard, loved and invited to the Kingdom of God". Many people had already gathered together and some were listening respectfully, while some were asking questions, thus disturbing Matthew. I never reply to anybody, to avoid interrupting the speech. I speak and then I reply to any question at the end. Let them bear in mind what we want to tell them and be silent. But Matthew wanted to reply at once!... And they were asking us questions as well. But there were also some who sneered saying: "There is another madman! He certainly comes from that den of Israel. They are like weeds those Jews, they spread everywhere! They talk everlasting nonsense! They have God as their companion. Listen to them! God is on their sword edge and on their sharp tongues. Listen, listen. Now they are calling in question His Messiah. Some other raving lunatic who will torture us as always happened in the past. Let the plague catch Him and His race!". Then I lost my temper. I pulled Matthew back, as he was going on speaking, smiling as if they were paying homage to him, and I began to speak, taking Jeremiah as my starting point: "See how the waters rise from the North and become an overflowing torrent... Upon hearing the noise of the water, you will lose your strength; your pride, your hearts, your arms, your feelings, everything will collapse. Because the punishment of God for you, mischievous race, will have the roar of a waterfall, whereas it will be earthly armies and heavenly warriors to punish your stubbornness, attacking you by order of the Heads of the People of God. And you, the remains of the island of sin and door of Hell, will be exterminated! You have become arrogant because Herod has rebuilt your homes? But you will be shaved until you become hopelessly bald and you will be struck by all sorts of

punishments in your towns and villages, in your valleys and plains. The prophecy is not yet dead... " and I wanted to continue, but they rushed upon us and only because a heaven-sent caravan was passing along one of the streets, we managed to take shelter, as stones were already flying. They hit the camels and their drivers; there was an uproar and we made off. Afterwards we remained quietly in a little suburb yard. Ah! I will never come back here again... » « I beg your pardon, but you offended them! It's your fault! Now we understand why they were so hostile when they came to drive us away! » exclaims Nathanael. And he continues: « Listen, Master. We, that is Simon of Jonah, Philip and I had gone towards the tower overlooking the sea. There were some sailors and ship owners there, loading goods for Cyprus, Greece and other more distant places. And they were cursing the sun, the dust and their hard work, their Philistine destiny that implied that they were slaves of overbearing people, whereas they could have been kings. And they cursed the Prophets, the Temple and all of us. I wanted to go away, but Simon objected saying: "No, on the contrary, we must approach these sinners. The Master would do that, and we must do it as well". "Then, you can speak to them" said Philip and I. "And if I do not know what to say?" said Simon. "Then we will help you" we replied. Simon then, smiling, went towards two men who had sat down perspiring on a huge bale they could not lift on to the boat, and he said: "It's heavy, isn't it?". "It's not so much its weight, as the fact that we are tired. And we have to complete the loading, because that's what the owner wants. He wants to sail when the sea is calm, because this evening the sea will be rough and he must be beyond the rocks to be out of danger". "Rocks in the sea?". "Yes, over there, where the water foams, a nasty spot". "Currents, eh? Of course! The south wind blows round the promontory and collides with the current there... Are you a sailor?". "A fisherman, a fresh water fisherman. But water is always water and wind always wind. I have finished up in the water more than once myself and my catch went back into the lake. Our trade is a good one but can be also unpleasant. There is no place entirely bad and no race entirely cruel. With a little good will it is always possible to come to some agreement and one finds out that there are good people everywhere. Come on! I want to give you a hand" and Simon called Philip saying: "Come on, you will catch the load there, I will catch it here and these good people will lead us over there, to the boat, and down to the holds". The Philistines were rather unwilling, but then they allowed them to help. After putting the bale in its place, and others, which were on the bridge as well, Simon began to praise the boat, as he only knows how, and he praised the sea, the town that was so beautiful as seen from off shore and he took an interest in navigation and in foreign towns.

And they were all round him, thanking him and praising him... Until one asked him: "But where are you from? From the Nile area?". "No, from the sea of Galilee. But as you can see I am not a tiger". "That is true. Are you looking for a job?". "Yes". "I will take you on, if you wish. I can see that you are a clever sailor" said the owner. "I instead will take you". "Me? But did you not tell me that you want a job?". "That is true. My work is to take men to the Messiah of God. You are a man. So you are work for me". "But I am a Philistine!". "And what does that mean?". "It means that you hate us, that you have persecuted us from time immemorial. Your chiefs have always said so... The Prophets, eh? But now the Prophets are voices which no longer shout. Now there is only the great holy Jesus, He does not shout, but calls people with a friendly voice. He does not curse, He blesses. He does not cause misfortunes, but removes them. He does not hate and does not want anyone to hate. On the contrary He loves everybody and He wants us to love also our enemies. In His Kingdom there will no longer be winners and losers, free men and slaves, friends and enemies. There will no longer be such distinctions which hurt, which are the consequence of human wickedness; but there will be only His followers, that is people who live in love, in freedom, in the victory over everything which is burdensome or sorrowful. I beg you. Please believe my words and desire Him. The prophecies were written. But He is greater than the Prophets and prophecies are obliterated for those who love Him. See this beautiful town of yours? You would find it much more beautiful in Heaven, if You went so far as to love our Lord Jesus, the Christ of God". That is what Simon was saying and he was simple and inspired at the same time and everybody listened to him diligently and respectfully. Yes, respectfully. Then some citizens came out of a street shouting, and they were armed with clubs and stones and they saw us and they knew from our clothes that we were foreigners, and now I understand, they realised that we were of your race, Judas, and they thought that we were all of your kind. If those of the boat had not protected us we would have been in trouble! They lowered a lifeboat and took us away by sea and they let us ashore near the garden where we were at midday and from there we came here together with the people who cultivate flowers for the rich of the country. But, Judas, you have ruined everything! Is that the way to abuse people? »

« It is the truth. »

« But it is to be used discreetly. Peter did not tell lies, but he knew what to say » retorts Nathanael.

« Oh! me! I tried to put myself in the place of the Master, and I thought: "He would be so kind. And I as well... " » says Peter simply.

« I like strong attitudes. They are more regal. »

« Your usual idea! You are wrong, Judas. The Master has been endeavouring to correct that idea of yours for a year. But you will not yield to corrections. You are as obstinate in your error as those Philistines upon whom you rushed » says Simon the Zealot reproachfully.

« When did He ever correct me for that? In any case everybody has his own ways and makes use of them. »

The Zealot starts at those words and looks at Jesus, Who is silent and Who responds with a light smile of understanding to Simon's remindful glance.

« That is not a good reason » says James of Alphaeus calmly and continues: « We are here to correct ourselves before correcting others. The Master has been first our Master. And He would not have been our Master if He had not wanted us to change our habits and minds. »

« He was Master in wisdom... »

« He was? He is » says Thaddeus seriously.

« How much cavilling! All right, He is. »

« And He is our Master in everything else, not only in wisdom. His teaching applies to everything there is in us. He is perfect, we are imperfect. Let us endeavour therefore to become perfect » advises James of Alphaeus kindly.

« I don't think I committed a fault. The fault lies with that cursed race. They are all wicked. »

« No. You cannot say that » bursts out Thomas. « John went among the lowest class: the fishermen who were taking their catch to the market. And look at this damp sack. It is full of choice fish. They gave up their profit to give it to us. They were afraid that the morning catch might not be fresh by evening, so they went back to sea and they wanted us to go with them. We seemed to be on the take of Galilee and I can assure you that if the place reminded us of it, if also the boats full of keen faces reminded us, John reminded us much more. He seemed another Jesus. Words flowed from his smiling lips as sweet as honey and his face shone like another sun. How he resembled You, Master! I was moved. We were at sea for three hours, waiting for the nets, stretched out between floats, to become full of fish and they were three hours of utter happiness. Then they wanted to see You. But John said: "We will meet at Capernaum" as if he was saying: "We will meet in the square of your village". And yet they promised to come and they took due note. And we had to argue not to be laden with too much fish. They gave us the best ones. Let us go and cook them. We shall have a feast this evening, to make up for yesterday's fasting. »

« But what did you say to them » asks the Iscariot who is disconcerted.

« Nothing special. I spoke of Jesus » replies John.

« But the way you can speak of Him! Also John quoted the Prophets. But he turned them upside down » explains Thomas.

« Upside down? » asks the Iscariot nonplussed.

« Yes. You extracted harshness from the Prophets, he extracted sweetness. Because, after all, their severity is love, exclusive violent love, if you wish so, but it is still love for souls that they would like to be faithful to the Lord. I do not know whether you have ever considered that, as you were educated among the scribes. I have, although I am a goldsmith. Also gold is hammered and melted in a crucible, to make it more beautiful. Not out of hatred: but for love. That is how the Prophets dealt with souls. I understand it, probably because I am a goldsmith. He quoted Zechariah's prophecy concerning Hadrach and Damascus and when he came to the sentence: "Seeing this Ashkelon will be terrified, and Gaza will be seized with trembling, so will Ekron, at the ruin of her prospects. The king will vanish from Gaza", he began to explain how all that happened because man had abandoned God, and speaking of the coming of the Messiah, Who is loving forgiveness, he promised that from a poor royalty, such as the sons of the earth wish for their countries, the men who follow the Doctrine of the Messiah will succeed in attaining an eternal infinite royalty in Heaven. To say that, is nothing, but to hear it! I thought I was listening to music and that I was being carried away by angels. And thus the Prophets, who gave you a cudgelling, gave us delicious fish. »

Judas is disconcerted and remains silent.

« And what about you? » the Master asks His cousins and the Zealot.

« We went towards the shipyards, where the caulkers work. We also preferred to go amongst the poor people. But there were also some wealthy Philistines watching their boats being built. We did not know which of us should speak so we drew lots, as children do. Judas held up seven fingers, Simon two and I four. So it was for Judas to speak. And he did » explains James of Alphaeus.

« What did you say » they all ask.

« I openly made myself known for what I am, saying that I was asking them in their hospitality to be kind enough to listen to the word of a pilgrim who considered them as brothers, having the same origin and same end, and the hope, which although not common was full of love, to take them to the house of the Father and call them "brothers" for ever, in the great joy of Heaven. Then I said: "Zephaniah, our Prophet said: 'The region of the sea will be a place for shepherds... they will lead flocks there to pasture; among the house of Ashkelon they will rest at evening' " and I clarified my idea saying: "The Supreme Shepherd has come amongst you.

He is not armed with arrows, but with love. He stretches out His arms towards you and points out His holy pastures. He remembers the past only to pity men for the great harm they do and have done to themselves through hatred, like foolish children, while they could have relieved so much sorrow by loving one another, since they are brothers. This land" I said "will be the place of holy shepherds, the servants of the Supreme Shepherd who are already aware that they will have their richest pastures here and their best flocks; and their hearts, in their declining years, will be able to rest thinking of your hearts and the hearts of your children, more intimate than friendly homes, because Jesus Our Lord, will be their Master". They understood me. They asked me questions, nay, they asked us all questions. And Simon told them of his cure, my brother spoke to them of Your goodness towards the poor. And here is the proof. This fat purse for the poor we shall find on our way. The Prophets did not harm us either... »

Judas does not utter a single word.

« Well » says Jesus comfortingly, « Judas will do better next time. He thought he was doing the right thing by doing what he did. And as he acted for an honest purpose, he committed no sin. And I am equally satisfied with him. It is not easy to be an apostle. But one learns. I regret one thing only. That I did not have this money before and that I did not meet you. I needed it for a miserable family. »

« We can go back. It is still early... But, excuse me. Master. How did You come across it. What did You do? Just nothing? Did You not evangelize? »

« I? I walked. By means of My silence I said to a prostitute: "Abandon your sinful life". I met a boy, somewhat of a little rogue, and I evangelized him and we exchanged gifts. I gave him the buckle which Mary Salome had put on my tunic at Bethany, and he gave Me this work of his » and Jesus takes out from His tunic the caricatural puppet. They all look at it and laugh. « Then I went to see some beautiful carpets which a man makes in Ashkelon to sell them in Egypt and elsewhere... and I comforted a little fatherless girl and I cured her mother. And that is all. »

« And You think that is little? »

« Yes. Because there was also the need of some money, but I had none. »

« But let us go back... we did not upset anyone » says Thomas.

« And what about your fish? » says James of Zebedee jokingly.

« The fish? Well. You who are... anathematised, go to the old man who is giving us hospitality and start preparing. We will go to town. »

« Yes » says Jesus. « But I will show you the house from a distance. There will be many people. I will not come, because they would

keep Me. I do not wish to offend our host who is waiting for us, by declining his invitation. Rudeness is always against charity. »

The Iscariot lowers his head even more and becomes purple, such is the change of his colour, remembering how often he has committed that fault.

Jesus resumes: « You will go into the house and look for the little girl, she is the only girl there, so you cannot be mistaken. You will give her this purse and say to her: "God sends you this because you believed. It is for you, your mummy and your little brothers". Nothing else. And come back at once. Let us go. »

And the group breaks up as Jesus goes to town with John, Thomas and His cousins, whereas the others go towards the house of the Philistine market gardener.

220. Jesus at Magdalgad Incinerates a Pagan Idol.

16th July 1945.

Ashkelon and its market gardens are already but a memory. In the cool hours of a wonderful morning, Jesus and His disciples, turning their backs to the sea, direct their steps towards the low but beautiful green hills rising from the fertile plain. His apostles, who are both well rested and satisfied, are all in good fettle and speak of Ananiah, of his slaves, of Ashkelon, of the tumult in town when they went back to take the money to Dinah.

« It was my fate that I should be in straits because of the Philistines. After all, hatred and love have the same manifestations. And I, who had never suffered at the hands of Philistine hatred, was almost wounded by their love. They were on the point of capturing us to compel us to tell them the whereabouts of the Master, so elated were they because of the miracle. And how they shouted! Didn't they, John? The town was boiling like a pot. Those who were upset would not listen to reason and they were looking for the Jews to thrash them, those who had been benefited, or their friends, were endeavouring to persuade the former that a god had passed by. What a turmoil! They can talk it over for months. The trouble is that they talk with clubs rather than with their tongues. Well... it is up to them. They can do as they like » says Thomas.

« But... they are not bad... » remarks John.

« No. They are only blinded by so many things » replies the Zealot.

Jesus does not speak along a good stretch of the road. He then says: « Here, I will now go up to that village on the mountain, while you go on to Ashdod. Be careful. Be gentle, kind and patient. Even if they laugh at you, bear it in peace, as Matthew did yesterday, and God will help you. At sunset leave the town and go to the pond near Ashdod. We shall meet there. »

« But, my Lord, I will not let You go all alone! » exclaims the Iscariot. « These people are violent... It is not wise. »

« Do not be afraid for Me. Go, Judas, and be prudent yourself. Goodbye. Peace be with you. »

The Twelve go away but they are not very enthusiastic. Jesus looks at them depart and He takes the cool shady path up the hill. The hill is covered with olive, walnut and fig-trees and with well cultivated vineyards that are already promising good crops. On the plains there are little fields of cereals, while white-haired goats are grazing on the green grassy slopes.

Jesus arrives at the first houses of the village. He is about to enter when He meets a strange procession. There are women shouting, men howling an alternate lament and they are performing a kind of dance round a blindfolded billygoat, which they beat while proceeding. The knees of the animal are already bleeding after stumbling and falling on the stones of the path. Another group of people, who are also shouting and howling, are moving round a carved simulacrum, which is really very ugly and they hold up pans full of embers, which they keep alive by spraying resins and salt over them, at least I think that is what is happening, as the former smell of turpentine and the latter crackles like salt. Another group is gathered round a wizard, before whom they continuously bow, shouting:

« By your strength! » (men)

« You only can! » (women)

« Implore the god! » (men)

« Remove the witchcraft! » (women)

« Order the matrix! »

« Save the woman! »

And then all together, with a hellish howl, shout:

« Death to the sorceress! »

And they start all over again, with a variant:

« By your strength! »

« You only can! »

« Command the god! »

« To let us see! »

« Order the billygoat! »

« To show us the sorceress! »

And with another hellish cry:

« Who hates the house of Phara! »

Jesus stops a man of the last group, and kindly asks him: « What is happening? I am a foreigner... »

The procession has stopped for a moment to beat the billygoat, spray resins on the embers and take breath, and the man explains: « The wife of Phara, the great man of Magdalgad is dying in childbirth. Someone who hates her, has cast a spell on her. Her

womb has become strangulated and the child cannot come into the world. We are looking for the sorceress to kill her. Only that way Phara's wife can be saved, and if we do not find the sorceress we will sacrifice the billygoat to implore supreme mercy from goddess Matrix (I now realise that the monstrous puppet is a goddess)... »

« Stop. I can cure the woman and save her son. Tell the priest » says Jesus to the man and to two more who have approached Him.

« Are You a doctor? »

« More than a doctor. »

The three men elbow their way through the crowd and go to the idolatrous priest. They speak to him. The rumour spreads. The procession, which had set out again, stops.

The priest, imposing in his many coloured rags, nods to Jesus and orders: « Young man, come here! » And when Jesus is near him: « Is what You say true? Mind you, if what You say does not happen, we will infer that the spirit of the sorceress is embodied in You and we will kill You in her place. »

« What I said is true. Take Me to the woman at once and in the meantime give Me the billygoat. I need it. Remove the bandage from its head and bring it here. »

They do so. The poor stunned staggering bleeding animal is brought to Jesus Who caresses its thick black coat.

« Now you must obey Me in everything. Will you do that? »

« Yes! » shout the crowd.

« Let us go. Do not shout any more and stop burning resins. It is an order. »

They enter the village and along the main street they go to a house situated in the centre of an orchard. Shouting and crying can be heard through the wide open doors, and above all, the lugubrious dreadful laments of the woman who cannot give birth to her child.

They run to tell Phara, who looking wan and with ruffled hair comes forward together with two weeping women and some useless wizards who are burning incense and leaves on copper pans.

« Save my wife! »

« Save my daughter! »

« Save her, save her! » shout in turn the husband, an old woman and the crowd.

« I will save her and her boy as well, because it is a boy, a very healthy one, with two sweet eyes the hue of a ripe olive and dark hair on his head like this fleece. »

« How do You know? What? Can You see also inside a womb? »

« I see and penetrate everywhere. I know everything and I can do everything. I am God. »

If He had thrown a thunderbolt, the effect would not have been the same. They all throw themselves on the ground, as if they were dead.

« Stand up. Listen. I am the powerful God and I cannot bear other gods before Me. Light a fire and throw that statue on to it. »

The crowds rebel. They begin to doubt the mysterious « god » who orders the goddess to be burned. The priests are most indignant.

But Phara and his mother-in-law, who are interested in the woman's life, oppose the hostile crowd and since Phara is the great man in the village, the crowd checks its anger. But the man asks Him: « How can I believe that You are a god? Give me a sign and I will order them to do what You want. »

« Look. See the wounds of this billygoat? They are open, are they not? They are bleeding, are they not? And the animal is almost dead. Well, I do not want that... Now, look. »

The man bends, looks... and shouts: « There are no wounds! » and he throws himself on the ground begging: « My wife, my wife! »

But the priest of the procession threatens: « Watch, Phara! We do not know who He is! Dread the revenge of the gods! »

The man is seized with double fear: the gods, his wife... He asks: « Who are You? »

« I am He Who I am, in Heaven, on the earth. All power is subject to Me, every thought is known to Me. The dwellers of Heaven adore Me, those in Hell fear Me. And those who believe in Me will see all wonders being performed. »

« I believe! I believe... Your Name! »

« Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Lord. Burn that idol! I cannot bear gods in My presence. Put out those thuribles. Only My Fire is powerful and willing. Obey, or I will incinerate that vain idol, and I will go away without saving anyone. »

Jesus is awesome in His linen robe, from the shoulders of which hangs His blue mantle behind Him, His arm raised in a gesture of command, His face gleaming... They are afraid of Him, no one speaks... In the silence, the heart-rending exhausting cries of the suffering woman are distinctly heard. But they are still reluctant to obey. Jesus' face is becoming more and more awesome to human eyes. It is really a fire burning both matter and souls. And the copper pans are the first to suffer. The men holding them are compelled to throw them away as they can no longer stand their heat. And yet the coal seems to be out... Then the idol-bearers are forced to lay on the ground the 'litter which they were carrying shoulderhigh as the shafts are becoming carbonised, as if a mysterious flame burned them, and as soon as the litter is on the ground, the idol catches fire.

The crowds are terrorised and run away...

Jesus turns to Phara: « Can you really believe in My power? »

« I do believe. You are God. The God Jesus. »

« No. I am the Word of the Father, of Jehovah of Israel, and I have come in Flesh, Blood, Soul and Divinity to redeem the world and give men faith in the True God, the One, Trine God Who is in the Most High Heavens. I have come to give help and mercy to men, so that they may abandon Error and come to the Truth, which is the Only God of Moses and of the Prophets. Can you still believe? »

« Yes, I do. »

« I have come to bring the Way, Truth and Life to men, to demolish idols, to teach wisdom. Through Me the world will be redeemed, because I will die for love of the world and for the eternal salvation of men. Can you still believe? »

« Yes, I believe. »

« I have come to tell men, that if they believe in the True God, they will have eternal life in Heaven, near the Most High, Who is the Creator of every man, animal, plant and planet. Can you still believe? »

« Yes, I do believe. »

Jesus does not even enter the house. He only stretches out His arms towards the poor woman's room, with His hands open as in the resurrection of Lazarus, and He shouts: « Come out to the light to know the Divine Light and by order of the Light which is God! » A thundering order, echoed after a moment, by a cry of triumph having in its sound both wail and joy, and then the feeble weeping of a new-born baby, feeble but clear and growing more and more in strength.

« Your son is crying to greet the earth. Go to him and tell him, both now and later, that not the earth, but Heaven is his fatherland. Bring him up for Heaven, and that applies also to you. That is the Truth speaking to you. Those things (and He points at the copper pans, crumpled up on the ground like dry leaves, and now completely useless, and at the ashes marking the place of the idol's litter) are Falsehood that neither helps nor saves. Goodbye. » And He is about to go away.

But a woman rushes forth with a lively baby enveloped in linen swaddling clothes and she shouts: « It's a boy, Phara. He is beautiful and strong, His eyes are as dark as a ripe olive and his hair is darker and thinner than the hair of a little sacred goat. And your wife is resting blissfully. She no longer suffers, as if nothing had happened. It was all so sudden, when she was already dying... and after those words... »

Jesus smiles and as the man presents the baby to Him, He touches its head with the tips of His fingers. The people - with the exception of the priests who go away indignantly when they see Phara's defection - gather round them to see the baby and look at Jesus.

Phara would like to give Him gifts and money for the miracle. But Jesus kindly but resolutely says: « Nothing. A miracle can only be paid for by loyalty to God Who granted it. I will retain this billygoat as a remembrance of your town. » And He goes away with the billygoat, which trots along beside Him, as if Jesus were his owner, and now that it is cured, it looks happy and bleats for joy of being with one who does not strike it...

They go down the slopes of the hill and take the main road which leads to Ashdod...

When in the evening, near the shady pond, Jesus sees the apostles coming, their amazement is reciprocal, as they see Jesus with the ram and He sees them with the disappointed faces of those who have not done any business.

« A disaster, Master! They did not hit us, but they drove us out of town. We have been wandering about the country and we got some food but we had to pay highly for it. And yet we were kind... » they say desolately.

« It does not matter. We were driven away also at Hebron last year, but this time they honoured us. You must not lose heart. »

« And what about You, Master? And that goat? »

« I went to Magdalgad. I incinerated an idol and its thuribles, I made a baby boy come into the world, I preached the True God by means of miracles and I took this goat, destined to an idolatrous rite, as My reward. Poor thing, it was covered with wounds. »

« But now it is all right! It's a wonderful animal. »

« It is a sacred animal, destined to the idol... Yes, it is now sound. The first miracle I worked to convince them that I am the Powerful One, and not their piece of wood. »

« And what are You going to do with it? »

« I am taking it to Marjiam. A puppet yesterday, a goat today. It will make him happy. »

« Are You going to take it with You all the way to Bether? »

« Of course. I see nothing horrible about it. If I am the Shepherd, I can certainly have a ram. We will give it to the women. And they will go to Galilee with it. We will find a little she-goat. Simon, you will become the shepherd of little goats. It would be better if they were sheep... But there are more goats than lambs in the world... It is a symbol, My dear Peter. Remember that... By means of your sacrifice you will make many lambs of rams. Come. Let us go to that village among the orchards. We shall find lodgings either in the houses or on the sheaves which are already tied up in the fields. And tomorrow we will go to Jabneel. »

The apostles are surprised, grieved, disheartened. They are surprised at the miracles, grieved because they were not there, disheartened because of their inability, whereas Jesus can do everything.

He, instead, is So happy!... And He is successful in convincing them: « Nothing is useless. Not even defeat, because it serves to make you humble, whereas speech serves to make a name, Mine, resound and leave a remembrance in hearts. » And He is so persuasive and bright with joy that they also cheer up.

221. Lesson to the Apostles Going to Jabneel.

17th July 1945.

« Shall we go to Ekron from Jabneel? » ask some of the apostles while walking across a very fertile country, in which the corn is taking its final sleep in the bright sunshine that has ripened it. The mown fields resemble immense sad death beds, now that they are bereft of corn ears with loads of corn awaiting to be carried elsewhere.

But if the fields are barren, the orchards are a most pleasant sight, with the fruit about to ripen, changing colour from the green of the little hard ones to the soft yellowish, pinkish, waxy shiny shades of those that are more ripe. The figs open their very sweet caskets of flower-fruits, bursting their elastic skins to reveal, through whitish-green or violet cracks, a transparent jelly replete with tiny seeds, which are darker in colour than the pulp itself,

With each tiny wafting breeze the olive-trees shake, likewise, the oval-shaped fruits suspended on delicate stems amid the silver-green foliage. The dignified walnut trees sustain their firmstalked fruits, which swell within the plush of the husks, while the almond-trees are ripening their fruits as is evidenced by the velvety texture and changing colour of the individual nuts. Grapes in general are swelling while a few bunches, favourably placed, try to show the topaz or ruby of maturity. Day by day the cacti on the plain or lower hill sides are becoming a brighter sight with magnificent coloration on the seed clusters contained within and held skywards and ripened within the protection of the strong thorny leaves.

Isolated palm-trees and thick carob-trees remind one of nearby Africa and while the former click the castanets of their hard fanshaped leaves, the latter have dressed themselves in dark enamel and are standing haughtily stiff on their lovely foliage.

Tall agile goats, both white and black, all with long curved horns and soft keen eyes, feed on cacti and attack fleshy agaves, those huge brushes with hard thick leaves which, like open artichokes, shoot up from the centre of their hearts their gigantic seven branched stalk, resembling a cathedral candelabrum, with its sweet-smelling yellow-red flower blazing on top.

Africa and Europe have come together to cover the ground with most beautiful vegetation, and as soon as the apostolic group

leaves the plain to take a path that climbs up the hill literally covered with vineyards on this side facing the sea - a rocky calcareous slope where the grapes must be of immense value when their juice changes into julep - there appears the sea, my sea, the sea of John, the sea of God. It appears draped in its immense blue silk crepe and it speaks of distances, of infinity, of power, while it sings with the sky and the sun the trio of the creating glories. And the plain stretches out in its full undulated beauty with simulations of hills, only a few feet high, adjoining flat areas, with golden dunes stretching as far as towns and villages on the sea, white spots on the blue sea.

« How beautiful! How beautiful! » whispers John ecstatically.

« My Lord! The sea is the life of that boy. You must destine him for the sea. He seems to be seeing his bride when he sees the sea! » says Peter who does not discriminate much between sea and lake. And he smiles kindheartedly.

« He is already destined, Simon. You are all destined. »

« Oh! Good! And where are You sending me? »

« Oh! You!... »

« Tell me, be good! »

« To a place which is greater than your town and Mine and Magdala and Tiberias all put together. »

« I will get lost. »

« Do not be afraid. You will look like an ant on a large skeleton. But going to and fro untiringly you will bring the skeleton back to life. »

« I don't understand that at all... Tell me more clearly. »

« You will understand, you certainly will... » and Jesus smiles.

« And what about me? »

« And me? » They all want to know.

« This is what I will do. » And Jesus bends - they are on the gravelly bank of a torrent in the central part of which the water is still quite deep - and He picks up a handful of very fine gravel. He throws it into the air and it falls spreading in all directions. « There you are. Only this tiny stone is left in My hair. You will be scattered like that. »

« And You, brother, represent Palestine, don't You? » asks James of Alphaeus gravely.

« Yes, I do. »

« I would like to know who will be left in Palestine » asks James once again.

« Take this little stone. As a souvenir » and Jesus gives the little piece of gravel, which had remained entangled in His hair, to His cousin James and smiles.

« Could You not leave me in Palestine. I am the most suitable, because I am the coarsest, but I can still manage at home. Whereas

abroad!... » says Peter.

« On the contrary, you are the least suitable to remain here.

You are all prejudiced against the rest of the world and you think it is easier to evangelize in a country of believers rather than in a country of idolaters or Gentiles. It is instead the very opposite. If you considered what true Palestine offers us in its higher classes and also, although to a lesser degree, in its people, and if you bore in mind that here, in a place where the name of Palestine is hated and the name of God, in its true meaning, is unknown, we have certainly not been received any worse than in Judaea, in Galilee and in the Decapolis, your prejudices would vanish and you would realise that I am right when I say that it is easier to convince ignorant people of the True God, than those of the People of God, who are subtle guilty idolaters, and proudly believe they are perfect and wish to remain as they are.

How many gems, how many pearls I see where you can see land and sea only! The land of the multitudes which are not Palestine. The sea of Mankind which is not Palestine and which, as sea, desires only to receive searchers to give them those pearls, and as land, to be searched to allow those gems to be taken. There are treasures everywhere. But they are to be looked for. Every clod of earth may conceal a treasure and nourish a seed, every depth may hide a pearl. What? Would you perhaps expect the sea to make havoc in its depths by means of furious storms to detach pearlloysters from their beds and open them by the striking power of billows and thus offer them on the shore to lazy people who do not want to work, to cowards who do not want to run risks? Would you expect the earth to make trees out of grains of sand and give you fruit without any seed? No, My dear. Fatigue, work, courage are required. And above all, no prejudices.

You, I know, disapprove, some more some less, of this journey among the Philistines. Not even the glories, which this land reminds us of, the glories of Israel that speak from these fields, fecundated by Hebrew blood, shed to make Israel great, and from those towns torn one by one from the hands of those who possessed them, to crown Judah and make it a powerful nation, are capable of making you love this pilgrimage. And I will not say to you: not even the idea of preparing the ground to receive the Gospel and the hope of saving souls can convince you. I will not say that to you, among the many reasons which I present to your minds so that you may consider the justice of this trip. That thought is still too high for you. You will arrive at it one day. And then you will say: "We thought it was a whim, a pretext, we thought that the Master lacked love towards us by making us go so far, on a long painful journey, risking unpleasant situations. Instead it was love, it was foreseeing, it was to smooth our way, now that we no longer have Him

with us, and we feel more lost than ever. Because then we were like vine shoots which grow in all directions, but they know that the vine will nourish them and that nearby there is a strong pole to support them, now instead we are shoots which must form a pergola by themselves, being still nourished by the stump of the vine, but with no trunk on which to lean". That is what you will say and you will thank Me.

And after all!... Is it not lovely to go like this, dropping sparks of light, notes of heavenly music, celestial corollas, perfumes of truth, serving and praising God, on lands enveloped in darkness, in dumb hearts, on souls as sterile as deserts, to overcome the stench of Falsehood, and do that all together, thus, You and I, the Master and His apostles, with one only heart, one only desire, one only will? So that God may be known and loved. So that God may gather all peoples under His tent and everybody may be where He is. That is the hope, the desire, the hunger of God! And that is the hope, the desire, the hunger of souls, who are not of different races, but belong to one race only: the one created by God. And since they all are the sons of the One God, they have the same desires, the same hopes, the same hungers for Heaven, for Truth, for real Love...

Centuries of errors seem to have changed the instinct of souls. But it is not so. Errors envelop minds. Because minds are mingled with flesh and feel the effects of the poison with which Satan inoculated the animal man. And thus errors can envelop hearts because they are engrafted into the flesh as well, and feel the effect of the poison. The treble concupiscence bites senses, sentiments and thoughts. But the spirit is not engrafted into the flesh. It may be stunned by the blows which Satan and concupiscence deliver it. It may be almost blinded by the allurements of the flesh and by the sprays of boiling blood of the animal man, into whom it is infused. But it has not changed its longing for Heaven, for God. It cannot change. See the clear water of this torrent? It descended from the sky and it will go back to the sky through the evaporation of water caused by winds and sun. It descends and rises again. Elements are not consumed, they go back to their origin.

The spirit goes back to its origin. If this water here, among these stones, could speak, it would tell you that it longs to go back to the sky, to be blown by the winds along the fields of the firmament, a soft white cloud, or a pinkish one at dawn, or bright copper at sunset, or like a violet flower at twilight when stars begin to peep. It would tell you that it would like to act as a sieve for the stars peeping through the gaps of cirri to remind men of Heaven, or as a veil for the moon, so that she might not see the nocturnal ugly deeds on the earth, rather than be here, confined between banks, under the menace of becoming mud, compelled to see copulations

of water snakes and toads, while it is so fond of the solitary freedom of the atmosphere. Also spirits, if they dared to speak, would say the same thing: "Give us God! Give us the Truth!". But they do not say that, because they know that man is not aware of, does not understand or mocks the entreaties of the "great beggars", of the spirits who seek God to satisfy their terrible hunger: their hunger for the Truth.

The idolaters, the Romans, the atheists, the unhappy we meet on our way, and you will always meet, those who are despised in their desire for God, either through politics or family selfishness, or through heresies born of filthy hearts and spread throughout nations: they are all hungry! They are hungry! And I have mercy on them. And should I not have mercy on them, being He Who I am? If out of pity I provide food for men and sparrows, why should I not have mercy on the spirits, who have been prevented from being of the True God, and who stretch out the arms of their spirits shouting: "We are hungry!"? Do you think that they are wicked, or savages, or unable to go as far as love God's Religion and God Himself? You are wrong. They are spirits awaiting love and light.

This morning we were woken by the threatening bleating of the billygoat that wanted to drive away the big dog which had come to sniff Me. And you laughed seeing how the ram pointed its horns threateningly, after tearing the little rope by which it was tied to the tree, under which we slept, and with one bound it placed itself between Me and the dog, without considering that it might have been attacked and slaughtered by the Molossian hound in the uneven struggle to defend Me. Likewise, the peoples who seem wild rams to you, will go as far as to courageously defend the Faith of Christ, once they have learned that Christ is Love inviting them to follow Him. He invites them. He does. And you must help them to come.

Listen to a parable.

A man got married and his wife bore him many sons. But one of them was born deformed in his body and seemed to be of a different race. The man considered him a dishonour and did not love him, although the child was innocent. The boy was brought up amongst the lowest servants and was thoroughly neglected and thus he was considered an inferior being also by his brothers. His mother had died in giving birth to him and consequently she could not mitigate his father's harshness, or stop the mockery of his brothers, or correct the wrong ideas conceived in the primitive mind of the child, a little wild beast unwillingly tolerated in the house of the beloved sons.

And thus the boy became a man. His reason developed late but finally reached maturity and he understood that it was unfair for a son to be brought up in a stable, to be fed with a piece of bread and

clothed with rags, without ever receiving a kiss, or being spoken to or being invited to his father's house. And he suffered bitterly and would lament in his den: "Father! Father!". He ate his bread, but there was still a great hunger in his heart. He covered himself with his clothes, but he felt bitter cold in his heart. Some animals and some pitiful people of the village were friendly to him. But his heart was full of solitude. "Father! Father!"... The servants, his brothers, his fellow citizens heard him moan thus all the time, as if he were mad. And he was called the "madman".

At last one of the servants dared to go to him, when he had become almost an animal, and said to him: "Why do you not throw yourself at the feet of your father?". "I would, but I dare not..." "Why do you not come into the house?". "I am afraid". "But would you like to?". "Of course I would! Because that is what I hunger for, why I feel cold, and I feel as if I were in a desert. But I do not know how to live in my father's house". The good servant then began to teach him, to make him look more decent, to relieve him of his terror of being unpleasant to his father, saying: "Your father would like to have you, but he does not know whether you love him. You always avoid him... Relieve your father of the remorse of dealing too severely with you and of the grief of knowing that you are forlorn. Come. Your brothers also will no longer laugh at you because I told them of your grief".

And the poor son one evening was guided by the good servant to his father's house and he cried: "Father, I love you, let me come in!... And his father, who was now old and was sadly pondering on his past and his eternal future, started at that voice and said: "My sorrow is subsiding at last because in the voice of my deformed son I heard my own, and his love is the proof that he is blood of my blood and flesh of my flesh. Let him therefore come and take his place amongst his brothers and blessed be the good servant who made my family complete by bringing the rejected son among all the sons of his father".

That is the parable. But in applying it, you must bear in mind that the Father of the spiritually deformed sons, that is, God because schismatics, heretics, those who are separated, are spiritually deformed - was compelled to be severe by the voluntary deformities wanted by His sons. But His love never yielded. He is waiting for them. Take them to Him. It is your duty.

I taught you to say: "Our Father, give us this day our bread". But do you realise what "our" means? It does not mean yours, of you twelve. Not yours as disciples of the Christ. But yours as men. For all men. For the present and the future ones. For those who know God and for those who do not know Him. For those who love God and His Christ and for those who do not love Him or love Him badly.

I put on your lips a prayer for everybody. It is your ministry. You, who know God and His Christ and love Them, must pray for everybody. I told you that My prayer is a universal one, and will last as long as the world. And you must pray universally, joining your voices and your hearts of apostles and disciples of Jesus' Church to those of people belonging to other Churches, which may be Christian but not apostolic. And you must insist, because you are brothers, you in the house of the Father, they outside the house of the common Father, with their hunger, their homesickness, until they also, like you, are given the true "bread" which is the Christ of the Lord, which is administered on apostolic tables, not on any other where it is mixed with impure aliments. You are to insist until the Father says to those deformed brothers: "My grief is subsiding, because I heard the voice and the words of My OnlyBegotten First-Born in your voices. Blessed be those servants who have led you to the House of your Father in order to complete My Family". Servants of an Infinite God, you must put infinity in every intention of yours. Have you understood?

There is Jabneel. Once the Ark passed by here on its way to Ekron, which was not able to keep it and sent it back to BethShemesh. The Ark is going to Ekron once again. John, come with Me. All the others will remain in Jabneel. Meditate and be careful how you speak. Peace be with you. »

And Jesus goes away with John and the ram which, bleating, follows Him like a dog.

222. Towards Modin.

18th July 1945.

The hills after Jabneel, running from west to east with regard to the pole-star, rise in height and behind them many more can be seen rising higher and higher. The green and violet summits of the Judaeen mountains stand out in the distance, in the twilight. The day has rapidly come to its end, as is wont in southern regions. From the bright red sunset, in less than one hour it has passed to the first twinkling of stars and it seems impossible that the blazing sun has gone out so suddenly, deleting the blood-red sky with a thicker and thicker veil of red amethyst, which later becomes mallow and gradually changes colour becoming more and more transparent, showing an unreal sky, no longer blue, but pale green, which darkens into the greyish-blue hue of fresh oats, foreboding the indigo which will reign during the night, studded with diamonds like a royal mantle. And the first stars are already smiling in the east together with a little sickle of the moon at its first quarter. The earth is imparadised more and more in the light of the stars and in the silence of men. Now what does not sin is

singing: nightingales, gurgling waters, rustling leaves, chirping crickets, and toads which with the accompaniment of oboes sing to the dew. Perhaps also the stars are singing up there... as they are closer to the angels than we are. The heat is abating in the air of the night, damp with dew so pleasing to herbs, men and animals!

Jesus Who had waited at the foot of a hill for the apostles coming from Jabneel where John has gone to fetch them, is now speaking to the Iscariot, to whom He hands some purses of money with instructions on how to distribute it. Behind Him there is John, holding the billygoat. He is silent, between the Zealot and Bartholomew, who are talking of Jabneel where Andrew and Philip behaved so well. Farther back, there are all the others in a group, speaking loud and summarising their adventures in the Philistine region and openly expressing their joy for their return to Judaea for Pentecost in the very near future.

« Are we really going there soon? » asks Philip, who is very tired walking on the hot sand.

« That's what the Master said. You heard Him » replies James of Alphaeus.

« My brother certainly knows. But He seems lost in reverie. What they have done during these five days is a mystery » says James of Zebedee.

« Sure. I am dying to know. At least that as compensation for that... purgative at Jabneel. Five days during which we had to watch every word, every step and where we looked, to avoid getting into trouble » says Peter.

« However, we were successful. We are beginning to learn » says Matthew happily.

« To tell you the truth... I trembled with fear two or three times. That blessed boy of Judas of Simon!... Will he never learn to control himself? » says Philip.

« He will, when he is old. And yet, we may say that he does it for a good purpose. You heard Him? Also the Master said so. He does it out of zeal... » remarks Andrew to excuse him.

« Come off it! The Master said so because He is Goodness and Prudence. But I do not think He approves of Him » replies Peter.

« He does not tell lies » retorts Thaddeus.

« It is not a question of telling lies. But He knows how to reply most prudently, and we do not know how to do that, and He speaks the truth without breaking anybody's heart, without rousing anybody's indignation and without reproaching. Of course, He is He! » says Peter with a sigh.

They become silent while walking in the clearer and clearer moonlight. Then Peter says to James of Zebedee: « Try and call John. I do not know why he is avoiding us. »

« I can tell you at once: because he knows that we would torment

him in order to find out » replies Thomas.

« Of course! And he is staying with the two most prudent and wise ones » confirms Philip.

« Well, try just the same, James, be good » insists Peter.

And James, condescendingly, calls John three times: the latter does not hear, or pretends not to hear. Bartholomew instead turns round and James says to him: « Tell my brother to come here » and then to Peter: « But I don't think he will tell us. »

John goes obediently at once and asks: « What do you want? »

« We want to know whether we are going straight to Judaea from here » replies his brother.

« That is what the Master said. He was almost on the point of not coming back from Ekron and was going to send me to fetch you. Then He preferred to come as far as these last slopes... Because one can go to Judaea also from here. »

« By Modin? »

« By Modin. »

« It is not a safe road. Bandits wait for caravans along it and make sudden attacks on them » objects Thomas.

« Oh!... with Him!... Nothing can resist Him!... » replies John looking up to the sky enraptured in who knows what memories and smiling.

They all watch him and Peter says: « Tell me: are you perhaps reading a blissful story in the starry sky, with that look on your face? »

« Me? No... »

« Come off it! Also stones can see that you are miles away from the world. Tell me: what happened to you at Ekron? »

« Nothing, Simon. I can assure you. I would not be happy if anything unpleasant had happened. »

« Not unpleasant. On the contrary!... Come on! Speak up! »

« But I can tell you nothing more than what He has already told you. They were kind like people amazed at miracles. That's all. Exactly as He said. »

« No » and Peter shakes his head. « No. You are not good at telling lies. You are as clear as spring water. No. You change colour. I have known you since you were a boy. You will never be able to tell lies. You are unable because of your heart, of your thoughts, of your tongue, of your very skin that changes colour. That is why I am so fond of you and I have always loved you. Listen, come here, to your old Simon of Jonah, your old friend. You remember when you were a boy and I was already a man? How I used to fondle you. You wanted storie's and cork-boats "which never shipwreck", you used to say and which you needed to go far away... Also now you are going far away and you are leaving poor Simon ashore. And your little boat will never be wrecked. It is sailing full of flowers

like the ones you used to launch, when a child, at Bethsaida, on the river, so that the river would carry them to the lake and they would sail and sail... Do you remember? I love you, John. We all love you. You are our sail. You are our boat which does not wreck. We sail in your wake. Why don't you tell us of the miracle at Ekron? »

Peter has spoken clasping with one arm the waist of John, who endeavours to elude the question, saying: « Since you are our chief, why do you not speak to the crowds with the same persuasive strength as you are using with me? They need to be convinced, not I. »

« Because I feel more at ease with you. I love you, but I do not know them » says Peter excusing himself.

« And you do not love them. That's your mistake. Love them, even if you do not know them. Say to yourself: "They belong to our Father". You will then seem to know them and you will love them. You will see in them so many Johns... »

« That is easily said! As if asps and hedgehogs could be exchanged for you, my eternal boy. »

« Oh! no! I am like everybody else. »

« No, brother. Not like everybody. We, with the exception perhaps of Bartholomew, Andrew and the Zealot, would have told everybody what happened to us and made us happy. You are silent. But you must tell me, your elder brother. I am like a father to you » says James of Zebedee.

« God is my Father, Jesus my Brother, and Mary my Mother... »

« So blood counts for nothing with you? » shouts James anxiously.

« Do not be upset. I bless the blood and the womb that formed me: my father and mother; and I bless you, my brother of the same blood: the former because they begot me and brought me up enabling me to follow the Master, and you because you are following Him. Since my mother became a disciple, I love her in two ways: with my flesh and blood as a son; with my soul as her fellowdisciple. Oh! what a joy to be united in His love!... »

Jesus has come back after hearing James' excited voice and the last words clarify the situation to Him. « Leave John alone. It is quite useless to torment him. He is very much like My Mother. And he will not speak. »

« Well, You tell us, then » they all implore.

« Well, here it is. I took John with Me because he is the most suitable for what I wanted to do. I have been helped and he has been perfected. That is all. »

Peter, John's brother James, Thomas, the Iscariot look at one another, making wry mouths, disappointed as they are. And Judas Iscariot, not satisfied with being disappointed, says so: « Why perfect him, who is already the best? »

Jesus replies to him: « You said: "Everybody has his way and makes use of it". I have Mine. John has his, which is very like Mine. Mine cannot be perfected. His can. And I want that to be, because it is right that it should be so. And that is why I took him. Because I needed one who had that way and that soul. So let there be no bad mood and no curiosity. Let us go to Modin. The night is serene, cool and clear. We shall walk as long as it is moonlight, then we shall sleep until dawn. I will take the two Judas to venerate the tombs of the Maccabees, whose glorious name they bear. »

« Only the two of us with You! » exclaims the Iscariot happily.

« No. With everybody. But the visit to the tomb of the Maccabees is for you. That you may imitate them in a supernatural way, fighting and winning in a completely spiritual field. »

223. Jesus Speaks to Highwaymen.

19th July 1945.

« I will speak in the place where we are going » says the Lord while the group goes more and more into valleys that assail the mountain with hard narrow stony roads, and go up and downhill, losing horizons and reconquering them. Finally, going down a very steep slope, where only the billygoat is at ease, as Peter remarks, they reach a deep valley, where they can rest and take some food near a spring, which is very rich in water.

There are other people spread in the meadows and thickets having their meal, like Jesus and His apostles. It must be a well known resting place preferred by travellers, since it is sheltered from winds and there are soft meadows and plenty water. They are pilgrims who are going towards Jerusalem, travellers going perhaps to the Jordan, merchants of lambs destined to the Temple, shepherds with their flocks. Some are travelling on horseback, most of them on foot.

There is also a nuptial caravan in festive array, which has just arrived. Gold jewels shine through the veil covering the bride, a little older than a girl, in the company of two matron-like women sparkling with bracelets and necklaces, and of a man, perhaps the matchmaker, besides two servants. They arrived on donkeys adorned with ribbons and harness bells and they withdraw to eat in a comer, as if afraid that the glances of the people present might violate the young bride. The matchmaker or relative, whatever he may be, mounts guard in a threatening attitude while the women eat. The curiosity of the other people is greatly roused and in fact, with the excuse of asking for some salt, or a knife, or a drop of vinegar, there is always someone going here or there, to find out whether anyone knows who the bride is, where she is going, and

many other nice things of the kind...

There is in fact one who knows where she comes from, where she is going and is more than happy to tell everything he knows, also because he is prompted by another man who makes him more talkative by pouring out some very good wine for him. In a few moments also the most secret details of two families are disclosed, with information on the trousseau, which the bride is taking in the cases which are there, and on the wealth that is awaiting her in her husband's house and so on. They thus learn that the bride is the daughter of a rich merchant in Joppa, and is getting married to the son of a rich merchant in Jerusalem, and that the bridegroom has preceded her to adorn the nuptial house for her impending arrival and that the man who is accompanying her is a friend of the groom and also the son of a merchant, of Abraham, who deals in diamonds and gems, whereas the bridegroom is a gold-beater, and the bride's father is a merchant dealing in woollen and cotton cloths, carpets, curtains...

As the chatterbox is close to the apostolic group, Thomas hears him and asks: « Is the bridegroom perhaps Nathanael of Levi? »

« Yes, he is. Do you know him? »

« I know the father well, because I did business with him, I am a little less familiar with Nathanael. A wealthy marriage! »

« And a happy bride! She is covered with gold. Abraham, a relative of the bride's mother and father of the groom's friend, distinguished himself and so did the groom and his father. They say that the contents of those cases are worth many gold talents. »

« Good Lord! » exclaims Peter and he whistles a tune. He then says: « I am going to have a close look to see whether the main goods correspond to the rest » and he stands up, together with Thomas, and they both go for a short walk round the nuptial group. They watch the three women carefully, three heaps of cloth and veils, from which jewelled hands and wrists emerge and through which they can see ears and necks sparkling with jewels. They also watch the boastful matchmaker, who swaggers so much, as if he had to repel corsairs attacking the little virgin. He looks daggers also at the two apostles. But Thomas begs him to greet Nathanael of Levi on behalf of Thomas, called Didymus. And thus peace is made, so much so that while he is speaking, the bride manages to be admired, as she gets up in such a way that her mantle and veil fall off and she appears in all the gracefulness of her body and clothes showing her wealth worthy of an idol.

She must be fifteen years old, at most, and her eyes are very alert! She moves about mincingly notwithstanding the two matrons' disapproval of her affected ways: she unpins her plaits and then fastens them again by means of precious hairpins: she tightens her belt which is studded with gems: she unlaces, takes

off and puts on again her shoe-styled sandals, fastening them with gold buckles, and at the same time she displays her beautiful dark hair, her lovely hands and soft arms, a slender waist, well shaped breast and hips, her perfect feet and all her jewels which tinkle and glitter in the twilight or in the light of the flames of the first bonfires.

Peter and Thomas go back. Thomas says: « She is a beautiful girl. »

« She is a perfect coquette. It may be... but your friend Nathanael will soon find out that there is someone who keeps his bed warm for him, while he warms gold to beat it. And his friend is a perfect fool. He puts his bride in the right hands! » concludes Peter sitting down near his companions.

« I did not like that man who was encouraging that other fool over there to speak. When he had heard all he wanted to know, he went away up the mountain... This is a bad spot. And the weather is just right for highwaymen. Moonlight nights. Exhausting heat. Trees all covered with leaves. H'm! I don't like this place » grumbles Bartholomew. « It would have been better to go on. »

« And that imbecile who mentioned all the riches! And that other one who plays the hero and the watchman of shadows and cannot see real bodies!... Well, I will keep watch near the fire. Who is coming with me? » asks Peter.

« I am, Simon » replies the Zealot. « I can go without sleeping. »

Many of the people, particularly single travellers, have got up and gone away a few at a time. There are left the shepherds with their flocks, the nuptial group, the apostolic one and three lamb merchants, who are already sleeping. Also the bride is asleep with the matrons under a tent which the servants have put up. The apostles look for a place where to rest, while Jesus withdraws to pray. The shepherds light a bonfire in the centre of the clearing where are their flocks. Peter and Simon light another one near the path of the cliff where the man disappeared, the one who had roused Bartholomew's suspicion.

Time passes and those who are not snoring, are nodding. Jesus is praying. There is dead silence. Also the spring shining in the moonlight seems to be silent. The moon is now high in the sky and the clearing is brightly lit up, whereas the edges are shadowed by thick foliage.

A big sheep dog snarls. A herdsman raises his head. The dog stands up raising the hair on its back and pointing in an alert position. It even trembles in its deep excitement while its hollow snarling becomes louder and louder. Also Simon raises his head and shakes Peter who is dozing. A slight rustle can be heard in the wood.

« Let us go to the Master. We will bring Him with us » say the two

apostles. In the meantime the herdsman wakes up his companions. They are all listening noiselessly. Also Jesus has got up, before being called and is going towards the two apostles. They gather near their companions, that is, near the shepherds, whose dog is becoming more and more excited.

« Call those who are sleeping. Everybody. Tell them to come here, without making any noise, particularly the women and the servants with the coffers. Tell them that perhaps there are highwaymen about. But do not tell the women, only the men. » The apostles spread out obeying the Master Who says to the shepherds: « Put a lot of wood on the fire so that it will give a good light. » The shepherds obey, and as they look excited, Jesus says to them: « Do not be afraid. Not one flock of wool will be taken off you. »

The merchants arrive and whisper: « Oh! Our profits! » and they add a string of abuse against the Roman and Jewish governors who do not clear the world of robbers.

« Do not be afraid. You will not lose one single little coin » says Jesus comforting them.

The weeping women arrive and they are frightened, because the brave matchmaker, trembling with fear, is terrorising them moaning: « It will be our death! The robbers will kill us! »

« Do not be afraid. No one will touch you. They will not even look at you » says Jesus to comfort them and He takes the women to the centre of the little group of men and frightened animals.

The donkeys are braying, the dog is barking, the sheep are bleating, the women are sobbing and the men are cursing or swooning more than the women, a real cacophony caused by fear.

Jesus is calm, as if nothing had happened. The rustling in the wood can no longer be heard because of the uproar. But the presence of approaching robbers in the wood is evidenced by the noise of breaking branches and rolling stones. « Silence! » orders Jesus. And He orders it in such a way that everything becomes quiet.

Jesus leaves His place and goes towards the wood, at the edge of the clearing. He turns His back to the wood and begins to speak.

« The wicked craving for gold drives men to base feelings. Man makes himself known because of his hunger for gold more than anything else. Consider how much evil is caused by this metal through its alluring but useless brightness. I think that the air in Hell is of the same hue, so hellish is its nature since man became a sinner. The Creator had left it in the bowels of that huge lapislazuli which is the earth, created by His will, that it might be useful to man with its salts and an ornament to temples. But Satan, kissing Eve's eyes, and biting man's ego, gave the savour of witchcraft to the innocent metal. And since then man kills and sins for the sake of gold. Woman for its sake becomes a coquette and inclined

to carnal sin. Man for its sake becomes thief, usurper, homicide, harsh against his neighbour and his own soul, which he deprives of its true inheritance, to follow transient things, and he deprives it also of the eternal treasure for the sake of a few shining scales, which he will have to leave at his death.

You, who for the sake of gold, sin more or less lightly, or more or less gravely, and the more you sin, the more you laugh at what your mothers and teachers taught you, namely, that there is a reward or a punishment for actions done during life, will you not consider that because of that sin you will lose God's protection, eternal life and joy, and you will have in your hearts remorse and malediction, while fear will be your companion, fear of human punishment, which is nothing when compared to the fear, which you should have but you have not, of divine punishment? Will you not consider that you may have a dreadful end because of your misdeeds, if you have gone as far as being criminals; and an even more dreadful end, because it will be an everlasting one, if for the sake of gold, your misdeeds have not gone as far as shedding blood, but have despised the law of love and of respect for your neighbour, by denying assistance to those who are starving through your avarice, or stealing positions or money or defrauding by means of false weights, through your greed? No. You do not consider all that. You say: "It's all an idle story! And I have crushed such idle stories under the weight of my gold. And they no longer exist".

It is not an idle story. It is the truth. Do not say: "Well, when I am dead, that is the end of everything". No. That is the beginning. Next life is not an abyss without thought and without remembrance of the past you have lived or without longing for God, as you think the period of expectation of liberation by the Redeemer is. Next life is a happy expectation for the just, a patient expectation for the expiating, a dreadful expectation for the damned. For the first in Limbo, for the second in Purgatory, for the third in Hell. And while the expectation will end for the first when they enter Heaven after the Redeemer, it will be comforted for the second by a greater hope after that hour, whilst the dreadful certainty of eternal malediction will be confirmed for the third.

Think about it, you sinners. It is never too late to repent. Change the verdict which is being written in Heaven against you, by means of true repentance. Do not let Sheol be hell for you, but an expiating expectation, at least that, through your own will. Do not let it be darkness, but twilight, not torture, but nostalgia, not despair, but hope. Go. Do not endeavour to fight against God. He is the Strong and Good One. Do not insult the names of your relatives. Listen to the wail of that fountain, it is like the wail that breaks the hearts of your mothers knowing that you are

murderers. Listen to the howling of the wind in that gorge. It seems to be threatening and cursing. As your fathers curse you for the life you lead. Listen to remorse crying in your hearts. Why do you want to suffer whilst you could be peacefully satisfied with little on the earth and everything in Heaven? Grant peace to your spirits! Give peace to men who are afraid, who must be afraid of you as if you were as many wild beasts! Grant peace to yourselves, poor wretches! Raise your eyes to Heaven, detach your mouths from the poisonous food, purify your hands dripping with the blood of your brothers, purify your hearts.

I have faith in you. That is why I am speaking to you. Because if the whole world hates and fears you, I do not hate you or fear you. But I stretch out My hand to say to you: "Rise. Come. Become meek amongst men, men amongst men". I am so little afraid of you that now I say to everybody here: "Go back and rest. Bear your poor brothers no ill-will, but pray for them. I will remain here looking at them with loving eyes, and I swear that nothing will happen. Because love disarms the violent and satisfies the greedy. Blessed be Love, the true strength of the world, the unknown but powerful strength, the strength that is God". »

And addressing everybody Jesus says: « You may go now. Be not afraid. There are no longer evil-doers over there, but only dismayed men who are weeping. He who weeps does no harm. I wish to God they remained as they are now. It would be their redemption. »

224. Arrival at Bether.

20th July 1945.

The train of animals following the apostolic college has undergone a change. The billygoat is no longer there and in its place there is a sheep and two lambs. A fat sheep with turgid udder, two little lambs as cheerful as urchins. A tiny flock that looks less magic than the very dark billygoat, and makes everybody happy.

« I told you that we would have a little goat to make Marjiam a little happy shepherd. Instead of the little goat, since you will not hear of goats, we got sheep. And white ones, exactly as Peter wanted them. »

« Of course! I thought I was pulling Beelzebub behind me » says Peter.

« In fact, since it was with us, how many unpleasant things have happened. It was a spell following us » confirms the Iscariot angrily.

« A good spell, then. Because what harm has really befallen us? » says John calmly.

They all shout at him reproaching him for his blindness. « Didn't you see how they were mocked at Modin? » « And do you think my brother's fall was just nothing? He might have been ruined. If he had broken his legs or his back, how could we have carried him away from there? » « And do you think that last night's incident was a pleasant one? »

« I saw everything, I considered everything and I blessed the Lord because nothing wrong happened to us. Evil came towards us, but then it ran away, as usual, and the incidents have certainly served to leave seeds of goodness both at Modin and with the vinedressers, who came with the certainty that they would find at least one person wounded and with the remorse of having been without charity, and in fact they wanted to make amends; and the same happened last night with the robbers. They did no harm and we, that is Peter, got the sheep in exchange for the goat and as a present for their safety, and there is now a good deal of money for the poor because the merchants and the women gave us purses of money and offerings. And what is more important, they all received the word of Jesus. »

« John is right » say the Zealot and Judas Thaddeus. And the latter concludes: « Everything seems to be taking place through a clear foreknowledge of the future. It is odd that we should be there, and we were late, because of my fall, at the same time as the jewelled women, and the shepherds with large flocks, as well as the merchants lousy with money: all of whom were a wonderful prey for the robbers! Brother, tell me the truth. Did You know that all that was going to happen? » Thaddeus asks Jesus.

« I told you many a time that I can read the hearts of men, and when the Father does not dispose otherwise, I do not ignore what must happen. »

« Well, why do You at times make mistakes, such as going towards hostile Pharisees, or to towns that are completely hostile? » asks Judas Iscariot.

Jesus stares at him and then says calmly and slowly: « They are not mistakes. They are necessities of My mission. The sick need a doctor and the ignorant a master. Both the former and the latter at times reject doctor or master. But if they are good doctors and good masters, they continue to go to those who refuse them because it is their duty to go. And I go. You would like all resistance to collapse wherever I go. I could do that. But I do not use violence against anyone. I convince people. Coercion is to be used only in very exceptional cases and only when a spirit enlightened by God understands that it may serve to persuade that God exists, and is the strongest, or when many people are to be saved. »

« Like yesterday evening, eh? » asks Peter.

« Yesterday evening those robbers were afraid because they saw that we were wide awake and waiting for them » says the Iscariot with evident scorn.

« No. They were convinced by words » says Thomas.

« No. They would not dream of it! They are indeed tender souls that can be convinced by a couple of words, even if spoken by Jesus! I know what they are like when I was attacked with my family and many people of Bethsaida in the gorge of Adummim » replies Philip.

« Master, tell me. It's since yesterday that I wanted to ask You. Was it Your words or Your will to prevent anything from happening? » asks James of Zebedee.

Jesus smiles and is silent.

Matthew replies: « I think that it was His will to overcome the hardness of those hearts, which He almost paralysed in order to be able to speak and save them. »

« I say that, too. That is why He remained there by Himself, looking at the wood. He subdued them with His look, by means of His defenceless calm and by trusting them. He did not even have a stick in His hands!... » says Andrew.

« All right. That's what we say. That's what we think. But I want to hear it from the Master » says Peter.

There is a lively discussion, in which Jesus does not interfere. Some say that since Jesus has declared that He does not force anyone, He has not used coercion in the case of those robbers either. That is what Bartholomew states. The Iscariot instead, who is mildly supported by Thomas, declares that he cannot believe that the look of a man can do so much. Matthew retorts: « It can do that and much more. I was converted by His look even before He spoke to me. » The opposite opinions cause a lively discussion, as each stubbornly insists in his own. John, like Jesus, is silent and he smiles lowering his head to conceal his smile. Peter revives the discussion as none of the arguments of his companions convinces him. He thinks and says that the look of Jesus is different from the look of an ordinary man, and he wants to know whether it is because He is Jesus, the Messiah, or because He is always God.

Jesus speaks: « I solemnly tell you that not only I, but anyone who is united to God by means of faultless holiness, purity and faith will be able to do that and much more. The look of a child, if his spirit is united to God, can cause vain temples to collapse, without shaking them as Samson did, it can command wild beasts and men-beasts to be meek, it can repel death and defeat diseases of the spirit, and the word of a child, united to God and an instrument of God can also cure diseases, make the poison of snakes harmless, work all kinds of miracles. Because it is God Who works in Him. »

« Ah! I understand! » says Peter. And He stares at John. And after a long internal conversation with himself, he concludes in a loud voice: « Yes! You, Master, can do that, because You are God, and because You are Man united to God. And the same happens to those who go so far, or have gone so far as to be united to God. I understand! I really understand! »

« But are you not inquiring about the key to that union, or about the secret of that power? Not all men are successful in going so far, although they all have the same means to succeed. »

« Quite right! Where is the key to that strength which unites man to God and dominates matter? A prayer or secret words... »

« A short while ago Judas of Simon was blaming the billygoat for all the unpleasant incidents that happened to us. There are no spells connected with animals. Reject superstitions, which are also a form of idolatry and can cause misfortunes. And as there are no formulas to work witchcraft, so there are no secret words to work miracles. There is only love. As I said yesterday evening, love calms the violent and satisfies the greedy. Love: God. With God within you, fully possessed through perfect love, your eye will become a fire capable of burning every idol and knocking down their simulacra, and your word will become power. And your eye will become an arm that disarms. You cannot resist God, you cannot resist Love. Only the demon can resist it, because he is perfect Hatred, and his children can resist with him. The others, the weak people seized with passions, but who have not sold themselves voluntarily to the demon, cannot resist. Whatever their religion may be, or their indifference to any faith, whatever the level of their spiritual baseness, they are struck by Love, the great Winner. Endeavour to arrive there soon, and you will do what the children of God and the bearers of God do. »

Peter does not take his eyes off John; also the sons of Alphaeus, James and Andrew are lively and watchful.

« Well, then, my Lord » says James of Zebedee, « what has happened to my brother? You are speaking of him. He is the boy who works miracles! Is that it? Is it so? »

« What has he done? He turned a page of the book of Life, and he read and learned new mysteries. Nothing else. He preceded you, because he does not stop to consider every obstacle, to weigh every difficulty, to work out every profit. He no longer sees the earth. He sees the Light, and goes to it. Without stopping. But leave him alone. The souls burning with greater flames are not to be disturbed in their ardour which gladdens and burns. You must let them burn. It is utmost joy and utmost toil. God grants them moments of darkness because He knows that fierce heat kills delicate souls, when they are exposed to continuous sunshine. God grants silence and mystic dew to such delicate souls, as He grants it to wild

flowers. Let the athlete of love rest, when God allows him to rest. Imitate gymnasiarchs who grant their pupils due rest... When you arrive where he has already arrived, and beyond, because both you and he will go beyond that point, you will realise the need for respect, silence and dim light that souls feel when they become the prey of Love and its instrument. Do not think: "I will be glad to be known, and John is a fool, because the souls of our neighbours, like the souls of children, want to be attracted by wonders". No, when you are there, you will have the same desire for silence and dim light as John has now. And when I shall no longer be amongst you, remember that when you have to pronounce sentence on a conversion or on possible holiness, you must always use humility as your measure. If a man is still proud, do not believe that he is converted. And if pride reigns in a man, who may even be said to be a "saint", you may be sure that he is not a saint. He may quackishly and hypocritically play the saint and pretend he works wonders. But he is no saint. His appearance is hypocrisy, his wonders are satanism. Have you understood? »

« Yes, Master. »... They are all quiet and pensive. But if their lips are closed, it is possible to guess their thoughts by their countenance. A deep desire to know quivers like ether around them, emanating from them...

The Zealot endeavours to divert their attention and thus gain time to speak to them separately and advise them to be quiet. I think that the Zealot has taken that task upon himself in the apostolic group. He is the moderator, the adviser, the peacemaker of his companions, besides being one who understands the Master so well. He says: « We are already in Johanna's estate. That village in that little valley is Bether. The large building on that top is the castle where she was born. Can you smell this perfume in the air? It comes from the roseries which begin to give off scent in the morning sun. In the evening it is a powerful fragrance. But it is so beautiful to see them in the cool morning, covered with dew drops, like millions of diamonds thrown on to millions of opening corollas. When the sun sets they pick all the roses that are completely open. Come. I want to show you from a knoll the view of the roseries that overflow from the top, like a waterfall, down the crags on the other side. A cascade of flowers, which climbs back up again, like a wave, on two other hills. It is an amphitheatre, a lake of flowers. It is really wonderful. The road is steeper. But it is worth while climbing up, because from that spot one overlooks all this paradise. And we shall soon be at the castle. Johanna lives there in perfect freedom, amongst her peasants, who are the only guards of so much wealth. But they are so fond of their mistress, who has turned these valleys into a paradise of beauty and of peace, that they are worth much more than all Herod's guards.

Here, look, Master. Look, my friends » and he points at a semicircle of hills invaded with roses.

Wherever one's eyes rest, one can see roseries, under very tall trees, to shield them from winds, from excessive heat of the sun and hailstorms. There is sunshine and air also under this light roof, which is like a veil but is not oppressive, and is duly controlled by the gardeners, and the most beautiful roseries in the world grow there. There are thousands and thousands of all kinds of rose-bushes. There are miniature, low, tall, very tall plants. They grow in tufts, like cushions studded with flowers, at the foot of trees, on very green meadows, as hedges along paths, on the banks of streams, in circles around irrigation vats, spread over the whole park which comprises hills, or twined round tree trunks, or from tree to tree forming flowery festoons and garlands. It is really a dream. All sizes and shades are present blending beautifully, with the ivory hue of tea-roses close to the blood red of other corollas. The true roses, which like the cheek of a child, shade on the contours into white tinged with pink, reign as queens, also because of their number.

They are all struck by so much beauty.

« But what does she do with all this? » asks Philip.

« She enjoys it » replies Thomas.

« No. She extracts the essence and thus employs hundreds of servants and gardeners who work at the presses. The Romans make great use of it. Jonathan was telling me when he showed me the figures of the last crop. But there is Mary of Alphaeus with the boy. They have seen us and they are calling the others... »

In fact there are Johanna and the two Marias, who are preceded by Marjiam, who runs down towards Jesus and Peter, with his arms stretched out ready for an embrace. The women arrive as well and they prostrate themselves before Jesus.

« Peace to you all. Where is My Mother? »

« Among the roseries, Master, with Eliza. Oh! She is definitely cured! She can now face the world and follow You. Thanks for making use of me for that purpose. »

« Thanks to you, Johanna. You can see that it was useful to come to Judaea. Marjiam.: here are your presents. This lovely puppet and these beautiful sheep. Do you like them? »

The boy is breathless with joy. He leans towards Jesus Who has bent to give him the puppet and has remained thus to look at him in the face, and he clasps His neck, kissing Him with utmost ardour.

« And thus you will become as meek as the little sheep and then you will become a good shepherd for those who believe in Jesus. Is that right? »

Marjiam replies « Yes » in a choked voice, while his eyes shine

with joy.

« Now go and see Peter, because I am going to My Mother. I can see a strip of Her veil moving along a hedge of roses. »

And He runs to Mary embracing Her to His heart at a corner of a path. After a first kiss, Mary, still panting, explains: « Eliza is coming behind Me... I ran to kiss You, because it was not possible for Me not to kiss You... but I did not want to kiss You in front of her... She has changed a great deal... But her heart still aches in the presence of other people's joy, now denied to her for ever. Here she is coming. »

Eliza walks the last few yards with a rapid step and kneels down to kiss Jesus' tunic. She is no longer the tragic woman of Bethzur. She is an old austere lady, marked by sorrow that has left a deep trace on her countenance.

« May You be blessed, my Master, now and ever, for giving back to me what I had lost. »

« May a greater peace be with you, Eliza. I am happy to see you here. Stand up. »

« I am happy, too. I have so many things to tell You and to ask You, Lord. »

« We will have plenty time because I am staying here for a few days. Come, that I may introduce My disciples to you. »

« Oh!!! You have already understood what I wanted to tell You?! That I want to start a new life: Yours; and have a new family: Yours; and sons: Yours; as You told me speaking of Naomi, in my house, at Bethzur. I am the new Naomi through Your grace, my Lord. May You be blessed for it. I am no longer depressed and barren. I will still be a mother. And if Mary allows me, I will also be a mother to You, besides being a mother to the sons of Your doctrine. »

« Yes. You will be. Mary will not be jealous and I will love you so much that you will not regret coming with us. Let us go now to those who wish to tell you that they love you as brothers. » And Jesus takes her by the hand and leads her towards her new family.

The journey made while waiting for Pentecost is over.

225. The Paralytic at the Pool of Bethzatha.

21st July 1945.

Jesus is in Jerusalem, in fact quite near the Antonia. All the apostles are with Him, with the exception of the Iscariot. Many people are hurrying towards the Temple. They are all wearing their best clothes, both the apostles and the pilgrims, and I think therefore that it is Pentecost time. Among the people are many beggars, pitifully lamenting over their miseries and directing their steps towards the best places for seeking alms, near the gates

of the Temple, or at the crossroads from which people come towards the Temple. Jesus, while passing, gives alms to the poor wretches, who give meticulously every detail of their misery.

I am under the impression that Jesus has already been to the Temple, for I can hear the apostles talking of Gamaliel, who pretended not to see them, although Stephen, one of his pupils, had pointed out Jesus to him.

I can also hear Bartholomew asking his companions: « What did that scribe mean by saying: "A herd of rams for the slaughterhouse"? »

« He might have been talking of some business of his own » replies Thomas.

« No. He was pointing at us. I saw him clearly. In any case his next sentence confirmed the earlier remark. He said sarcastically: "Before long also the Lamb will be ready to be shorn and slaughtered". »

« Yes, I heard him, too » confirms Andrew.

« Of course! I am yearning to go back and ask the scribe's companion what he knows about Judas of Simon » says Peter.

« He knows nothing! This time Judas is not here because he is really ill. We know that for certain. Perhaps he really suffered too much during the trip we made. We are hardier. He always lived here, in comfort, and he tires easily » replies James of Alphaeus.

« Yes, we know. But that scribe said: "The chameleon is missing from the group". Does the chameleon not change colour any time it wants to? » asks Peter.

« Yes, Simon. But they were certainly referring to his clothes, which are always new. He is proud of them. He is young and we must bear with him... » remarks the Zealot to reconcile them.

« That is true, too. But!... What a queer expression! » concludes Peter.

« They are eternally threatening » says James of Zebedee.

« The trouble is that we know we are threatened and yet possibly imagine threats also where there are none... » points out Judas Thaddeus.

« And we see faults where they do not exist » ends Thomas.

« Of course! Suspicion is unpleasant... I wonder how Judas is today? In the meantime he is enjoying that paradise and those angels... I would not mind being ill myself, to enjoy those delights! » says Peter, to which Bartholomew adds: « Let us hope that he recovers soon. We must finish our trip, for the warm weather is at our heels. »

« Oh! He is well looked after, in any case... the Master will see to it, if necessary » assures Andrew.

« He had a very high temperature when we left him. I don't know how he got it, so... » says James of Zebedee. Matthew replies to

him: « Sure everybody gets it! Troubles just come. But it is nothing serious. The Master is not worried about it. If He had envisaged anything grave, He would not have left Johanna's castle. »

Jesus in fact is not at all anxious. He is speaking to Marjiam and John, walking ahead of the others and giving alms. He is obviously showing and explaining many things to the boy because I see Him pointing here and there. He is going towards the end of the Temple walls, towards the north-east corner. There are many people making for a place where there is a number of porches in the vicinity of a gate, which I hear being called « the Sheep Gate ».

« This is the Probatika, the Bethzatha pond. Now look at the water carefully. See how still it is? In a short while you will see that it stirs, swells, reaching up to that damp mark. Can you see it? It is the angel of the Lord who descends, the water perceives him and venerates him as best it can. He brings to the water the order to cure the man who is ready to jump into it. See the crowd? But the minds of many wander easily and thus they do not see the first motion of the water; or the stronger ones uncharitably push aside the weaker ones. One must never divert one's attention in the presence of the signs of God. We must ensure that our souls are always vigilant, because we never know when God may show Himself or send His Angel. And we must never be selfish, not even for health reasons. Very often these unhappy people lose the benefit of the Angel's visit, because they waste time quarrelling over whose turn it is or who is in greater need » Jesus patiently explains to Marjiam, who looks at Him with attentive gaze, keeping an eye at the same time on the water.

« Can one see the Angel? I would like to. »

« Levi, a shepherd, when he was about your age, saw him. You should look carefully as well, and be ready to praise him. »

The boy's mind is no longer diverted. He looks alternatively at the water and above it, he hears nothing else, and sees nothing else. Jesus in the meantime looks at the small group of invalids, blind people, cripples, paralytics, who are waiting. The apostles are also watching carefully. The sunshine causes play of light on the water and invades like a king the five porches encircling the pond.

« There, there! » trills Marjiam. « The water is rising, it is moving, it shines! How bright! The Angel! » and the boy kneels down.

In fact the water, in its motion in the pond, seems to be raised by a sudden huge wave swelling up to the edge of the pond, and it shines like a mirror in the sun. A dazzling flash for a moment.

A lame man is ready to dive into the water and he comes out, shortly afterwards, with his leg, previously contracted and marred by a large scar, completely cured. The others complain and quarrel with him, stating that after all he was not unable to work whereas

they are. And they continue arguing.

Jesus turns round and sees a paralytic lying in his little bed and weeping. He approaches him, bends over and caresses him asking: « Why are you weeping? »

« Master, nobody ever thinks of me. I stay here all the time, everybody is cured, except me. I have been lying on my back for thirty-eight years, I spent all I had, my relatives are dead, I am now a burden to a distant relation who carries me here in the morning and takes me back in the evening... But what a burden I am to him! Oh! I wish to die! »

« Do not grieve. You have had so much patience and faith. God will hear you. »

« I hope so... but one has fits of depression. You are good. But the others... Those who are cured, in order to thank God, could remain here to assist their poor brothers... »

« They should do that, in fact... Have no ill-feeling. They do not think of it. They are not malevolent. It is the joy of being cured that makes them selfish. Forgive them... »

« You are kind. You would not do that. When the water moves, I try to drag myself over there with my hands. But there is always someone who precedes me, and I cannot stay near the edge, because they would trample on me. And even if I stayed there, who would lower me into the water? If I had seen You before, I would have asked You... »

« Do you really want to be cured? Then, stand up! Take your bed and walk! » Jesus has stood up to give the order, and while rising He seems to have raised also the paralytic, who stands up on his feet, takes one, two, three steps, almost incredulously, behind Jesus Who is going away, and when he realises that he is really walking, he utters a cry that makes everybody turn round.

« But who are You? In the name of God, tell me! Are You perhaps the Angel of the Lord? »

« I am more than an angel. My name is Piety. Go in peace. »

People gather round them. They want to see, to speak, to be cured. But the guards of the Temple, who I think were also watching the pond, arrive, and they disperse the noisy gathering, threatening punishment.

The paralytic picks up his litter: two bars fitted with two pairs of small wheels and a piece of torn cloth nailed on them, and he happily goes away shouting to Jesus: « I will find You. I will not forget Your name or Your face. »

Jesus, mingling with the crowd, goes away in the opposite direction, towards the walls. But He has not yet gone through the last porch when He is caught up by an excited group of Jews, of the worst castes, who seem to be blown by a furious wind, and are all urged by the same desire to insult Jesus. They look, they search.

they scan people's faces. But they are not successful in finding out who it really is, and Jesus goes away, while they, disappointed as they are, following the information of the guards, rush at the poor but happy man who has just been cured and they reproach him saying: « Why are you taking this bed away? It is the Sabbath. You are not allowed. »

The man looks at them and says: « I know nothing. I know that He Who cured me said to me: "Take your bed and walk". That's all I know. »

« He must certainly be a demon because he ordered you to violate the Sabbath. What was he like? Who was he? A Judaeen? A Galilean? A Proselyte? »

« I don't know. He was here. He saw me weeping and He approached me. He spoke to me and He cured me. He went away holding a boy by the hand. I think it was His son, because He is old enough to have a son of that age. »

« A boy? Well it is not He!... What did He say His name is? Did you not ask Him? Don't tell lies! »

« He told me that His name is Piety. »

« You are a fool! That's not a name! »

The man shrugs his shoulders and goes away.

The others say: « It was certainly He. Hania and Zaccheus, the scribes, saw Him. »

« But He has no children! »

« And yet it is He. He was with His disciples. »

« Judas was not there. He is the one we know well. The others... might be anybody. »

« No. It was them. »

And they continue arguing while the porches become crowded once again with sick people...

Jesus enters the Temple again on another side, the western side, which faces the town. The apostles follow Him. Jesus looks around and at last sees him whom He is looking for: Jonathan, who, in turn, was looking for Jesus.

« He is better, Master. His temperature is going down. Your Mother says that She hopes to come by next Sabbath. »

« Thank you, Jonathan. You were punctual. »

« Not very, as Maximinus of Lazarus kept me. He is looking for You. He has gone to Solomon's porch. »

« I will go and meet him. Peace be with you, and take My peace to My Mother and the women disciples, and also to Judas. »

And Jesus walks fast towards Solomon's porch, where in fact He finds Maximinus.

« Lazarus heard that You are here. He wishes to see You to tell You something important. Will You come? »

« Of course, I will. And soon. You can tell him to wait for Me during

the week. »

Maximinus also goes away after a few more words.

« Let us go and pray again, since we came back so far » says Jesus and He directs His steps towards the hall of the Hebrews.

But when He is near it, He meets the cured paralytic, who has gone to thank the Lord. The happy man sees Jesus among the crowd, greets Him joyfully and tells Him what happened at the pond after He left. And he concludes: « Then a man, who was surprised to see me here and completely cured, told me who You are. You are the Messiah. Are You not? »

« I am. But also if you had been cured by the water or by any other power, you would still have the same duty towards God. That is, to make use of your health for good work. You are cured. Go, therefore, and resume your activity in life with good intentions. And do not sin any more, so that God may not have to punish you more severely. Goodbye. Go in peace. »

« I am old... I know nothing... But I would like to follow You and serve You. Do You want me? »

« I reject no one. Think about it before coming. And if you make up your mind, come. »

« Where? I do not know where You are going... »

« I move about the world. You will find My disciples everywhere and they will send you to Me. May the Lord enlighten you for the best... »

Jesus now goes to His place and prays...

I do not know whether the cured man has gone spontaneously to the Judaeans or the latter, being on the look out, have stopped him to find out whether the man, who was speaking to him, was the one who had cured him. I know that the man speaks to the Judaeans and then goes away, while they come towards the steps that Jesus must come down, to go through the other yards and go out of the Temple. When Jesus arrives they say to Him abruptly, without greeting Him: « So You continue to violate the Sabbath, notwithstanding You have been reprimanded so many times? And You expect to be respected as a messenger of God? »

« Messenger Much more: as Son. Because God is My Father. If you do not wish to respect Me, you may refrain from doing so. But I will not cease accomplishing My mission because of that. God does not cease operating for one moment. Even now My Father is operating, and I operate as well, because a good son does what his father does, and because I have come into the world to operate. »

People have approached them to listen to the debate. Among them, there are some who know Jesus, some who have been helped by Him, some who see Him for the first time. Some love Him, some hate Him, many are uncertain. The apostles form a group with the Master. Marjiam is almost frightened and looks as if he is

going to weep.

The Judaeans, a mixture of scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees, shout at the top of their voices that they are scandalised: « How dare You! Oh! He says He is the Son of God! What sacrilege! God is He Who is, and has no children! Call Gamaliel! Send for Sadoc! Gather the rabbis that they may hear and confute Him. »

« Do not become excited. Call them, and they will tell you, if it is true they know, that God is One and Trine: Father, Son and Holy Spirit and that the Word, that is the Son of Thought, has come, as prophesied, to save Israel and the world from Sin. I am the Word. I am the foretold Messiah. There is no sacrilege, therefore, if I say that the Father is My Father. You are upset because I work miracles and through them I attract crowds and convince them. You accuse Me of being a demon, because I work prodigies. But Beelzebub has been in the world for many centuries, and he truly does not lack devout worshippers... Why, then, does he not do what I do? »

The people whisper: « It is true! Very true! Nobody does what He does. »

Jesus continues: « I will tell you: it is because I know what he does not know and I can do what he cannot. If I accomplish deeds of God, it is because I am His Son. One can do by oneself only what one has seen being done by others. I, the Son, can only do what I have seen done by the Father, as I have been One with Him for ever, and I am like Him in nature and power. Everything the Father does, I do as well, as I am His Son. Neither Beelzebub nor anybody else can do what I do, because Beelzebub and the others do not know what I know. The Father loves Me, His Son, and He loves Me immensely as I love Him. He has therefore shown Me and still shows Me everything He does, so that I may do what He does, I on the earth, in this time of Grace, He in Heaven, even before Time existed on the earth. And He will show Me greater and greater deeds so that I may accomplish them and you may be amazed. His Thought is inexhaustible in depth. I imitate Him as I am inexhaustible in accomplishing what the Father thinks and, by thinking, wants. You do not yet know what Love creates inexhaustibly. We are Love. And there is not limit for Us, and there is nothing that cannot be applied to the three grades of man: the inferior, the superior, the spiritual grades. In fact as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, I, the Son, can likewise give life to whomsoever I wish, nay, because of the infinite love the Father has for His Son, I can not only give life to the inferior part but also to the superior one, by freeing the minds and hearts of men from mental errors and evil passions, and I can give life to the spiritual part by giving back to the spirit its freedom from sin, because the Father does not judge anybody, having left all judgement

to the Son, as the Son is He Who, through His own sacrifice, acquired Mankind to redeem it: and the Father does that according to justice, because it is just that He, Who has purchased with His own money, should be given what He purchased, so that everybody may honour the Son as they already honour the Father. You must know that if you separate the Father from the Son, or the Son from the Father, and you do not remember the Love, you do not love God as He is to be loved, that is, in truth and wisdom, and you commit a sin of heresy, because you worship One only, whilst They are three in an admirable Trinity. Thus, he who does not honour the Son, does not honour the Father either, because the Father, God, does not want only One of the Three Divine Persons to be worshipped, but He wants Them all, as a Whole, to be worshipped. He who does not honour the Son, does not honour the Father either, Who sent Him out of a perfect thought of love. He therefore denies that God can accomplish just deeds. I solemnly tell you that he who listens to My word and believes in Him Who sent Me, will have eternal life and will not be condemned, but will pass from death to life, because to believe in God and to accept My word means to infuse into oneself the Life that does not die. The hour is about to come, nay it has already come for many, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and whoever hears its vivifying sound in the depth of his heart, shall live. Scribe, what are you saying? »

« I am saying that the dead can no longer hear anything, and that You are mad. »

« Heaven will persuade you that it is not so, and that your knowledge is nothing as compared to God's. You have humanised supernatural things to such an extent, that you give words only an immediate and earthly meaning. You have taught the Haggadah according to fixed formulae, your formulae, without any effort to understand the allegories in their true meaning, and now, since your souls are tired of being urged by a human mentality, which crushes your spirits, you do not even believe what you teach. And that is the reason why you can no longer fight against occult powers. The death of which I am speaking is not the death of the flesh, but of the soul. People will come who will listen to My word with their ears, will accept it in their hearts, and will practise it. Even if their spirits are dead, they will receive life again, because My Word is Life that will be infused into them. And I can give it to whomsoever I wish, because in Me there is perfect Life. As the Father has in Himself perfect Life, so also the Son had from the Father, in Himself, perfect, complete, eternal, inexhaustible, transfusable Life. And with Life, the Father gave Me power to judge, because the Son of the Father is the Son of Man, and He can and must judge man. And do not be amazed at this first resurrection,

the spiritual one, which I work by My Word. You will see stronger ones, which will appear stronger to your dull senses, because I solemnly tell you that there is nothing greater than the invisible but real resurrection of a spirit. The hour will soon come when the voice of the Son of God will penetrate tombs and those who are in them will hear it. And those who did good actions will come out of them to go to the resurrection of eternal Life, and those who did evil deeds will go to the resurrection of eternal damnation. I do not say that I will do that by Myself, by My own will, but by the will of the Father joined to Mine. I speak and judge according to what I hear and My judgement is correct, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him Who sent Me.

I am not separated from the Father. I am in Him and He is in Me and I know His Thought and I express it in word and action.

What I testify on My own behalf cannot be accepted by your incredulous spirits, which refuse to see in Me anything but a man like yourselves. But there is another one who testifies on My behalf, whom you say you venerate as a great prophet. I know that his testimony is true. But although you say that you venerate him, you will not accept his testimony, because it differs from your thought, which is hostile to Me. You do not accept the testimony of the just man, of the last Prophet in Israel, because, with regard to what you do not like, you say that he is only a man and can be mistaken. You sent messengers to interrogate John, hoping he would say of Me what you wanted, what you think of Me, what you want to think of Me. But John gave his testimony to the truth and you could not accept it. Because the Prophet says that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, you are saying in the secret of your hearts, as you are afraid of the crowds, that the Prophet is insane, as Christ is. I, however, do not depend on the testimony of man, not even of the most holy one in Israel. I tell you: John was a lamp alight and shining, but only for a short time you wanted to enjoy the light that he gave. When his light was cast on Me, to make the Christ known for what He is, you allowed the lamp to be hidden under a bushel, and before that, you had built up a wall between the lamp and yourselves, in order not to see the Christ of the Lord in its light. I am grateful to John for his testimony, and the Father is grateful as well. And John will receive a great reward for his testimony, shining in Heaven also because of it, the first to shine like a sun, of all men up there, and he will shine like all those, who have been faithful to the Truth and hungry for God, will shine. But I have a greater testimony than John's. The testimony of My works. Because the works the Father has given Me to carry out, those works I accomplish and they testify that the Father has sent Me giving Me all power. And thus, the Father Who sent Me, bears witness to Me Himself.

You have never heard His Voice or seen His Face. But I have seen it and I see it, I have heard it and I hear it. His Word finds no home in you, because you do not believe in the One He sent. You study the Scriptures, believing that in their knowledge you have eternal Life. And do you not realise that the very Scriptures testify to Me? Why then do you continue to refuse to come to Me for life? I will tell you: it is because you refuse what is opposed to your inveterate ideas. You lack humility. You are incapable of saying: "I made a mistake. He, or this book is right, and I am wrong". That is what you have done with John, with the Scriptures, and that is what you are doing with the Word Who is speaking to you. You cannot see or understand, because you are enveloped with pride and deafened by your own voices.

Do you think that I am speaking to you because I want to be glorified by you? No, you must bear in mind that I neither seek nor accept glory from men. What I seek and want is your eternal salvation. That is the glory I seek. My glory as Saviour cannot exist unless I have souls that have been saved, and the greater their number, the greater My glory, which is to be given to Me by the souls saved and by the Father, the Most Pure Spirit. But you will not be saved. I know you for what you are. You have no love for God. You are without love. And that is the reason why you do not come to the Love speaking to you, and thus you will not enter the Kingdom of Love. You are not known there. The Father does not know you, because you do not know Me, Who am in the Father. You do not want to know Me. I have come in the name of My Father and you refuse to accept Me, whereas you are willing to accept anyone who comes in his own name, providing he says what is agreeable to you. You say that you are faithful souls. No, you are not. How can you believe, when you beg glory of one another, and you do not seek the glory of Heaven, which proceeds only from God? The glory of Heaven is Truth and not a matter of worldly interests which end here on the earth and attract only the vicious humanity of Adam's degraded children. I will not accuse you before the Father. You can be sure of that. There is already one who will accuse you: Moses in whom you hope. He will reproach you for not believing in him because you do not believe in Me, as he wrote about Me, but you do not acknowledge Me by what he wrote. You do not believe in the words of Moses, the great Prophet in whose name you swear. Thus, how can you believe in My words, in the words of the Son of Man, in whom you have no faith? From a human point of view that is logical. But here we are in a spiritual sphere and your souls are at stake. God scrutinises them in the light of My works and He compares your actions with what I have come to teach you. And God judges you.

I am going away. You will not see Me for a long time. But do not

consider that as a triumph of yours. On the contrary it is a punishment. Let us go. »

Jesus pushes His way through the crowd. Some of the people remain silent, some express their approval, but only in a whisper for fear of the Pharisees, and they go away.

226. Mary Has Sent for Martha at Magdala.

22nd July 1945.

Jesus in the company of the Zealot arrives at Lazarus' garden on a beautiful summer morning. It is still dawn and thus everything is cool and smiling.

The gardener, who has come to receive the Master, points out to Him the hem of a white tunic disappearing behind a hedge and says: « Lazarus is going to the jasmin pergolas and has taken some rolls to read. I will call him. »

« No, I will go, by Myself. »

Jesus walks fast along a path bordered with hedges in bloom. The grass close to the hedges deadens the noise of His steps and Jesus endeavours to walk on it, to reach Lazarus unexpectedly.

He in fact comes upon him, while standing, after laying the rolls on a marble table, he is praying in a loud voice: « Do not disappoint me, my Lord. Corroborate the ray of hope which has begun to shine in my heart. Grant me what I have asked You for thousands of times with my tears, what I have asked for by my actions, by forgiving, by my whole self. Give me it in exchange for my life. Grant me it in the name of Your Jesus, Who has promised me that peace. Can He possibly tell lies? Must I think that His promise was nothing but vain words? That His power is inferior to the sinful abyss which my sister is? Tell me, my Lord, that I may resign myself for Your sake... »

« Yes, I tell you! » says Jesus.

Lazarus springs round and cries: « Oh! my Lord. When did You arrive? » and he bends to kiss Jesus' tunic.

« Only a few minutes ago. »

« All alone? »

« With Simon Zealot. But I came here alone. I know that You have a great thing to tell Me. So tell Me. »

« No. Answer first the questions which I ask God. According to Your answer, I will tell You. »

« Tell Me, do tell Me, your great thing. You can tell Me... » and Jesus smiles stretching out His arms invitingly.

« Most High God! It is true? So You know that it is true?! » and Lazarus goes towards Jesus' arms to confide his great thing.

« Mary asked Martha to go to Magdala. And Martha left full of anxiety as she feared some misfortune... And I was left here, with

the same fear. But by the servant who accompanied her there, Martha has sent me a letter, which has filled me with hope. Look, I have it here, on my heart. I keep it here, because it is more valuable to me than a treasure. It is very short, only a few words, but I read them now and again, to make sure that they have really been written. Look... » and Lazarus takes from under his tunic a small roll tied with a violet ribbon and unfolds it. « See? Read it, read it. In a loud voice. If You read it, it will sound more certain to me. »

« "Lazarus, my brother. Peace and blessing to you. I arrived in a short time safe and sound. And my heart has no longer throbbed with fear of fresh misfortunes, because I saw that Mary, our Mary, is all right and... shall I tell you? She looks less disturbed than previously. She wept on my heart. She wept bitterly... And then, during the night, in the room where she had taken me, she asked me many things about the Master. That is all for the time being. But since I see Mary's face and I hear her words, I can say that hope has been raised in my heart. Pray, my dear brother, and hope. Oh! If it were true! I am remaining here a little longer because I feel that she wants me to be close to her, as if she wished to be defended from temptations. And that she wants to learn... What? What we already know. Jesus' infinite bounty. I told her about that woman who came to Bethany... I see that she is pensive, very pensive indeed... Jesus ought to be here. Pray and hope. The Lord be with you". » Jesus folds the roll and hands it back.

« Master... »

« I will go. Is it possible for you to tell Martha to come and meet Me at Capernaum in a fortnight's time, at most? »

« Yes, I can do that. And what about me? »

« You will stay here. I will send Martha here as well. »

« Why? »

« Because redemptions are deeply modest. And nothing causes more shame than the eye of a parent or of a brother. I also say to you: "Pray, pray, pray". »

Lazarus weeps on Jesus' chest... Then, when he recovers, he tells of his anxiety, of his depression... « For almost a year I have been hoping... and despairing... How long is the time taken by resurrection! ... » he exclaims.

Jesus lets him speak... until Lazarus realises he is failing in his duty of a host and he stands up to take Jesus into the house. To do so they pass near a thick jasmin hedge in full bloom, on the starshaped corollas of which, golden bees are humming.

« Ah! I was forgetting to tell You... The old patriarch You sent me, has gone back to Abraham's bosom. Maximinus found him here, with his head leaning against this hedge, as if he had fallen asleep near the beehives which he tended as if they were houses

full of golden children. That is what he used to call the bees. He seemed to understand them and to be understood by them. And on the patriarch sleeping in the peace of a clear conscience, when Maximinus found him, there was a precious veil of little golden bodies. The bees were lying on their friend. He was so good that he probably tasted of honey... And he was so honest that he was probably like an uncontaminated corolla for the bees... It grieved me. I would have liked to have him longer in my house. He was a just man... »

« Do not mourn his death. He is in peace, and from his peace he prays for you, who made his last days happy. Where is he buried? »

« At the end of the orchard. Still close to his beehives. Come and I will show You... »

And they go through a laurel grove towards the actively buzzing beehives.

23rd July, at 8 o'clock.

It is a very pale Judas who comes off the wagon with Our Lady and the women disciples, that is, the Maries, Johanna and Eliza.

... and thanks to the confusion I had in the house this morning I was not able to write while I was seeing, therefore, as it is now 6 o'clock p.m., I can only say that I understood and heard that Judas, now convalescent, is going back to Jesus, Who is at Gethsemane with Mary, Who cured him and with Johanna, who insists that the women and the convalescent should go back to Galilee in the wagon. And Jesus agrees and makes the boy get on it with them. Johanna instead is remaining for a few days in Jerusalem with Eliza, then Eliza will go to Bethzur and Johanna to Bether. I remember that Eliza said: « I have now the courage to go back there, because my life is no longer aimless. I will get my friends to love You. » And I remember that Johanna added: « And I will do that in my estate, while Chuza leaves me here. It will be serving You, although I would prefer to follow You. » I also remember that Judas said he never felt the desire for his mother, not even in the worst hours of his disease, because « Your Mother was a real mother to me, She was kind and loving and I will never forget it » he said. The rest of the words is confused, so I will not repeat them, because they would be my words and not those spoken by the people of the vision.

227. Marjiam Is Entrusted to Porphirea.

24th July 1945.

Jesus is on the lake of Galilee with His disciples. All the disciples are with Him, including Judas, who has quite recovered and whose countenance has become more gentle after his illness

and the attention he has received. There is also Marjiam, who is rather frightened as it is his first time out on the lake. He does not want to let it be seen, but every time the boat pitches more vigorously, he clings with one arm to the neck of the sheep, which shares his fear bleating pitifully, and with the other arm he grasps whatever he can, the mast, a bench, an oar, Peter's leg, or Andrew's, or the legs of the servants who move backwards and forwards manoeuvring the boat, and he closes his eyes, fearing perhaps that his last hour has come.

Pinching the boy's cheek, Peter now and again says to him: « You are not afraid, eh? A disciple must never be afraid... » The boy shakes his head in denial, but as both the wind and the lake are rising while they approach the mouth of the river, where the Jordan flows into the lake, he closes his eyes tighter and more frequently and at last - when the boat heels over, when struck on one side by a wave - he gives a scream of terror.

Some of the apostles laugh and some tease Peter remarking that he has become the father of a bad sailor, and some make fun of Marjiam who always says that he wants to go by sea and by land preaching Jesus, and then is afraid of sailing a few cables' lengths on the lake. But Marjiam defends himself saying: « Every man is afraid of what he does not know. I of water, Judas of death... »

I thus realise that Judas must have been afraid of dying and I am surprised that he does not react to the boy's remark. On the contrary he says: « You are right. Everyone is afraid of what one does not know. But we are about to arrive at Bethsaida, which is only a short distance away. And you are sure that you will find love there. I also would like to be at a short distance from the House of the Father and be sure of finding love there! » He says so with a tired sad expression.

« Are you not trusting God? » asks Andrew who is obviously amazed.

« No, I mistrust myself. During the days of my illness, when I was surrounded by so many pure good women, I felt so backward spiritually! How much I meditated! I would say to myself: "If they still work to improve themselves and earn Heaven, what must I do?" Because they feel that they are still sinners, whereas I thought that they were already saints. And what about me?... Will I ever succeed, Master? »

« With good will, one can do everything. »

« But my will is very unreliable. »

« The help of God will make up for what is missing. Your present humility is a result of your illness. You can thus see that God, through a painful incident, has provided for you something that you did not have. »

« That is true, Master. But those women! What perfect disciples

they are! I am not speaking of Your Mother. We all know about Her. I mean the others. Oh! They have really surpassed us! I was one of their first tests for their future ministry. But, believe me, Master, You may rely entirely on them. Eliza and I were looked after by them, and she has gone back to Bethzur with a completely changed soul and mentality and I... I hope to change, too, now that they have worked on me... » Judas, who is still physically not too strong, begins to weep. Jesus, Who is sitting beside him, lays His hand on his head, nodding to the others to be silent. Peter and Andrew are busy in the last landing manoeuvres and are silent: the Zealot, Matthew, Philip and Marjiam are certainly not anxious to speak, either because they are anxiously waiting to land, or because they are wise enough not to make any remark.

The boat sails up the Jordan and shortly afterwards grounds on the gravel bed. While the servants land to fasten the boat, anchoring it to a large stone by means of a rope, and to place a board as a landing-wharf and Peter and Andrew put on their long garments, the other boat makes the same manoeuvre and the other apostles land. Also Jesus and Judas step ashore while Peter puts a little tunic on the boy and tidies him up in order to present him in a decent state to his wife. They have all now disembarked, including the sheep.

« And now let us go » says Peter. He is really excited. He takes the boy by the hand. Also Marjiam is deeply moved, and in fact he forgets the sheep and John takes care of them. In a sudden fit of fear Marjiam asks: « But will she be wanting me? And will she really love me? »

Peter reassures him, but perhaps he is affected by the same fear and he says to Jesus: « Master, will You tell Porphirea? I don't think I could explain the situation to her properly. »

Jesus smiles and promises that He will see to it.

They soon arrive at the house following the river bank. Through the open door they can hear Porphirea doing her housework.

« Peace be with you! » says Jesus looking in at the kitchen door where the woman is tidying up her kitchenware.

« Master! Simon! » The woman runs and prostrates herself at the feet of Jesus and then at those of Peter. She then stands up, and while her face, which, if not beautiful, is certainly most amiable, blushes, she says: « I have been longing so much to see you! Are you all well? Come in! You must be tired... »

« No. We are coming from Nazareth, where we stayed for a few days and we stopped also at Cana. The boats were at Tiberias. You can see that we are not tired. We had a boy with us and Judas of Simon was rather weak after being ill. »

« A boy? Such a young disciple? »

« An orphan we picked up on our way. »

« Oh! dear! Come here my darling, let me kiss you! »

The boy, who was timidly half hidden behind Jesus, allows the woman, who has knelt down to be his height, to embrace and kiss him, and he shows no reluctance.

« Are You going to take him with You all the time, while he is so young? He will become tired... » The woman is so pitiful. She clasps the boy in her arms and holds her cheek against his.

« Actually I was thinking of something else. I was planning to entrust him to one of the women disciples, when we go away from Galilee, from the lake area... »

« And not to me, my Lord? I never had any children of my own. But I have had many nephews and I know how to deal with children. I am the disciple who is not good at speaking, who is not so healthy as to be able to follow You, as the other women disciples do... oh! You know! I may also be cowardly, if You think so. But You know how I am tied up. Did I say "tied up"? I am tied with two ropes each pulling me in opposite directions and I have not the courage to cut off either one or the other... Let me be of some little service to You, by being the mother disciple of this boy. I will teach him what the others teach many other people... To love You... »

Jesus lays His hand on her head and smiling says: « The boy was brought here because I knew he would find a mother and a father here. Here! Let us make up the family. » And Jesus puts Marjiam's hands into those of Peter, whose eyes are shining with tears, and those of Porphirea. « And bring this innocent boy up in a holy manner. »

Peter, of course, already knew, and he only wipes off a tear with the back of his hand. But his wife, who was not expecting so much, is left in mute amazement for a few moments. She then kneels down again saying: « Oh! My Lord. You took away my husband and left me almost a widow. Now You are giving me a son. You are giving back all the roses to my life, not only the ones You took, but also the ones I never had. May You be blessed! This boy will be dearer to me than if he had been the fruit of my own womb. Because he comes to me from You. » And she kisses Jesus' tunic and the boy and takes him on her lap... She is happy...

« Let us leave her to her love effusions says Jesus. You may remain as well, Simon. We are going to town to preach. We shall come back late this evening and ask you for food and a place to rest. »

And Jesus goes out with His disciples leaving the three in peace...

John says: « My Lord, Simon is happy today! »

« Do you want a child as well? »

« No. I would like a pair of wings to fly up to the gates of Heaven

and learn the language of the Light, to repeat it to men » and he smiles.

They settle the sheep at the end of the orchard, near the large room where the nets are stored, they give them some leaves, grass and water of the well, and then go towards the town centre.

228. Jesus Speaks at Bethsaida.

25th July 1945.

Jesus is speaking in Philip's house. Many people have gathered before it and Jesus is standing on the threshold, which is built on two high steps.

The news of Peter's adopted son, who has come with the miniature fortune of three little sheep, seeking the great wealth of a family, has spread like a drop of oil on a piece of cloth. They all speak about it, whispering comments, which correspond to their different ways of thinking.

Those who are sincere friends of Simon and Porphyrea, are glad to see them happy. Those who are malevolent say: « To make her accept him, he had to give the boy a dowry. » Good people say: « We shall all love this little boy, whom Jesus loves. » Ill-disposed people state: « Simon's generosity? Never on your life! He must have made a profit, otherwise!... »

Other greedy people comment: « I would have done that, too, if I had been given a boy with some sheep. Three sheep, do you realise that? A little flock. And they are beautiful! Supplies of milk and wool are guaranteed, and then they will have lambs to sell or to keep! It's a wealth! And the boy can serve and work... »

Others contradict them all: « Oh! What a shame! Expect payment for a good deed? Simon certainly never thought of that. As a fisherman with a modest income, we have always known him to be generous to the poor and particularly to children. It is only fair, now that he no longer earns anything by fishing and that his family is growing, that he should make a little profit in some other way. »

While they are all making their comments, putting into words the good or the evil hidden in their hearts, Jesus is listening and speaking to a man of Capernaum, who has come to see Him and tell Him to go as soon as possible, because the daughter of the head of the synagogue is dying and also because a lady has been going there for some days, in the company of a handmaid, looking for Him. Jesus promises to go the following morning. His decision grieves the people of Bethsaida, who would like to have Him in their town for a few more days.

« There are other people who need Me more than you do. So let Me go. In any case, I shall be in Galilee during the summer months

and I will be in Capernaum very often. So it will be easy for us to meet. A father and mother are in anguish and it is charity to help them. You approve of Simon's kindness towards the orphan. At least the good ones among you do. But only the opinions of good people are of value. You should not listen to the opinions of those who are not good, because they are always tinged with poison and falsehood. So, since you are good, you must approve of My goodness in going to comfort a father and a mother. And do not allow your approval to be fruitless, but let it urge you to active imitation.

The pages of the Scriptures tell us how much good can come from a good action. Let us remember Tobit. He deserved that an angel should protect his son Tobias and should teach him how to give sight back to his father. But how many charitable deeds just Tobit had performed without any thought of personal profit, notwithstanding the reproaches of his wife and the dangers to his life! And remember the words of the archangel: "Prayer and fasting were good things and almsgiving is worth more than mountains of gold treasures, because almsgiving saves from death, purges every kind of sin, makes people find mercy and eternal life... When you were praying and shedding tears and burying the dead... I offered your prayers to the Lord". I solemnly tell you that My Simon will exceed by far the virtues of old Tobit. He will remain as the guardian of your souls in My Life, after I have gone. He is now beginning his paternity of a soul, so that tomorrow he will be the holy father of all the souls faithful to Me.

Therefore do not complain. But if one day you should find on your way an orphan, like a bird fallen out of its nest, pick him up. It is not the mouthful of food shared with an orphan that impoverishes the table of the true sons. On the contrary it brings the blessing of God to that house. Do that because God is the father of orphans and He presents them to you Himself, so that you may help them by rebuilding for them the nest destroyed by death. And do that because it is prescribed by the Law given by God to Moses, who is our Legislator, just because while he was a defenceless baby, in a hostile land of idols, he found a merciful heart that knelt down to save him from death, rescuing him from the river, freeing him from persecutions, because God had destined that Israel should one day have her liberator. An act of piety thus obtained for Israel her leader. The repercussions of a good deed are like sound-waves, which spread very far from the spot of emission, or, if you prefer so, they are like gusts of wind, which carry far away the seed blown from fertile soil.

You may go now. Peace be with you. »

Jesus then says:

« You will put here the vision of the resurrection of Jairus' daughter, which you had on the 11th of March 1944. »

229. The Woman with a Haemorrhage and Jairus' Daughter.

11th March 1944.

This vision appears when I am praying, and I am tired and vexed, and thus in the worst condition to think about my things. But physical and mental tiredness and vexation vanished as soon as my Jesus appeared and I write.

Jesus is walking on a sunny dusty road that runs along the lake shore. He is making His way towards the village and is surrounded by a large crowd, which was certainly waiting for Him. The people throng round Him notwithstanding the fact that the apostles push with their arms and shoulders to make way for Him and raise their voices to persuade the crowd to make room.

But Jesus is not upset by so much confusion. As He is taller by a head than those around Him, He looks and smiles kindly at the crowds pressing round Him, He replies to their greetings, He caresses a few boys who succeed in creeping through the hedge of adults and thus get close to Him, He lays His hand on the heads of babies raised by their mothers above those who are nearer Jesus, so that He may touch them. And He continues to walk, slowly, patiently, in the midst of the shouting and continual pressure that would annoy any other person.

A man shouts: « Make way, make way. » It is a panting voice and it must be known to many as it is obviously the voice of an influential person, because the crowd opens out, albeit with some difficulty, such is the crush, to let a man about fifty years old pass. He is wearing a long loose garment and round his head he has a kind of white handkerchief, two flaps of which hang down along his cheeks and neck.

When he arrives before Jesus, he prostrates himself at His feet and says: « Oh! Master, why have You been away so long? My little girl is so ill. No one can cure her. You alone are her mother's hope and mine. Come, Master. I have been waiting for You with immense anxiety. Please come at once. My only daughter is dying... » and he weeps.

Jesus lays His hand on the head of the weeping man, who is bent and shaking with sobs, and replies to him: « Do not weep. Have faith. Your daughter will live. Let us go to her. Stand up. Let us go! » His final words sound like a command. Before He was the Comforter, now it is the Dominator who is speaking.

They set out. Jesus is walking beside the weeping father and is holding him by the hand. And when the poor man is convulsed

with deeper sobs, I see Jesus look at him and press his hand harder. He does not do anything else, but how much strength must flow into a soul that is dealt with thus by Jesus!

Previously James was where the father is now. But Jesus made him move to make room for the father. Peter is on the other side. John is beside Peter and they are both endeavouring to stem the crowds, as James and the Iscariot are doing on the other side, beside the weeping father. Some of the other apostles are in front, some behind Jesus. But it is an impossible task! Particularly the three who are behind, among whom I see Matthew, cannot hold back the living wall. But when they grumble too much or they almost insult the pushing crowds, Jesus looks back and says kindly: « Leave My little ones alone!... »

However, at a certain moment He turns round with an abrupt movement letting go the father's hand and He stops. Not only His head has turned round, but His whole body. He looks taller, because He has taken a kingly attitude. With a severe inquisitive countenance He scans the crowd. His eyes are flashing, not harshly, but majestically: « Who touched Me? » He asks.

Nobody replies.

« Who touched Me, I repeat » insists Jesus.

« Master » reply the disciples « Do You not see how the crowds are pressing round You on all sides? They are all touching You, notwithstanding our efforts. »

Jesus, while speaking, looks three or four times at a little woman, about forty years old, very poorly dressed and emaciated, who endeavours to disappear in the crowds and vanish completely. His eyes must be burning her. She realises that she cannot escape, comes back and throws herself at His feet, almost touching the dust of the road with her face, while her arms are stretched out not daring to touch Jesus.

« Forgive me! It was I. I was ill. I have been ill for twelve years! I was shunned by everybody. My husband deserted me. I spent everything I had so that I might not be considered a disgrace, and I might be able to live like everybody else. But no one was able to cure me. See, Master? I am old before my time. My strength has flown out of me with my incurable haemorrhage and my peace went with it. They told me that You are good. I was told by one whom You cured of leprosy and who, having been shunned himself for many years, did not loathe me. I did not dare to tell You before. Forgive me! I thought that if I only touched You, I would be cured. But I did not make You unclean. I hardly touched the hem of Your tunic, the hem that trails on the ground, on the dirt of the road... I am dirt myself... But now I am cured, may You be blessed! The moment I touched Your tunic, my complaint came to an end. I am like all other women. I will no longer be avoided by everybody.

My husband, my children and relatives will be able to stay with me and I will be able to caress them. I shall be useful in my house. Thank You, Jesus, my good Master. May You be blessed for ever! »

Jesus looks at her with infinite kindness. He smiles and says: « Go in peace, My daughter. Your faith has restored you to health. Be free from your complaint for ever. Be good and happy. Go. »

While He is still speaking a man arrives. I think he is a servant, and he addresses the father who has been waiting all the time, respectfully but anxiously, as if he were on tenterhooks. « Your daughter is dead. It is quite useless to bother the Master. Her soul departed and the women are already mourning her. Her mother has sent me to tell you and she asks you to come at once. »

The poor father utters a deep groan. He hides his face in his hands, pressing his forehead and eyes and bending his head as if he had been struck.

As Jesus is intent on listening and answering the woman, one would think that He has seen and heard nothing, instead He turns round and laying His hand on the bent shoulders of the poor father, He says: « Man, I told you: "Have faith". I repeat: "Have faith". Do not be afraid. Your girl will live. Let us go to her. » And He sets out, holding the dejected man close to Himself.

The crowds, seeing so much grief and being deeply affected by the recent miracle, are frightened and stop, they then part, allowing Jesus and His disciples to walk fast, and they follow in the wake of the passing Grace. They walk thus for about one hundred yards, perhaps more - I am not good at estimating - proceeding towards the centre of the town.

People are crammed in front of a respectable house, commenting in loud shrill voices on the event and replying to louder screams coming from the house through the wide open door. They are trilled piercing screams, apparently uttered monotonously by the shriller voice of a soloist, to whom a group of thin voices replies first and then is followed by another group of full voices. There is enough uproar to cause even healthy people to die.

Jesus orders His disciples to stop at the door, and He tells Peter, John and James to follow Him. He enters the house with them, holding the weeping father by the arm all the time. By holding him thus, He seems to be wishing to instil into him the certainty that He is there to make him happy. The women mourners (I would call them howlers), when they see the landlord and the Master, double their screams. They clap their hands, beat tambourines, strike triangles to accompany their lamentations.

« Be quiet » says Jesus. « There is no need to weep. The girl is not dead. She is sleeping. »

The women shout louder, some roll on the floor, some scratch themselves, and tear their hair (or they pretend to do so), to prove

that she is really dead. The musicians and friends of the family shake their heads at Jesus' illusion. They think that He is deceived. But He repeats: « Be silent! » so energetically that the turmoil, while not ceasing completely, becomes a whisper. And He passes by.

He goes into a little room. A dead girl is lying on a bed. She is thin, very pale, has already been dressed and her dark hair has already been set in order. Her mother is weeping on the right hand side of the bed and kisses the waxen little hand of the dead girl. Jesus... how handsome He is now! I have seldom seen Him thus! He approaches the bed solicitously. He seems to be sliding or flying across the floor, so fast He approaches the little bed. The three apostles stand with their backs to the door, which they have closed in the faces of curious onlookers. The father is standing at the foot of the bed.

Jesus goes to the left hand side and with His left hand He takes the lifeless left hand of the girl. Yes, I saw Him well. It is the left hand, both of Jesus and of the girl. He raises His right arm with open palm, to the height of His shoulder and then lowers it in the attitude of one who swears or gives an order. He says: « Little girl, I tell you: Get up! »

There is a moment when everybody is in suspense, except Jesus and the girl. The apostles stretch their necks to see better. The father and mother look at their child with eyes full of deep sorrow. After a moment a sigh raises the breast of the girl. A light hue tinges her waxen face and its deathly pallor fades away. The hint of a smile appears on her lips before her eyes open, as if she were having a beautiful dream. Jesus is still holding her hand. She gently opens her eyes and looks around as if she were awaking. She sees first the face of Jesus, Who is looking at her with His most beautiful eyes and smiling kindly to encourage her, and she smiles at Him.

« Get up » repeats Jesus. And He pushes aside with His hand the funeral ornaments spread on the bed and around it (flowers, veils etc. etc.) and helps her to get up and take her first steps, holding her by the hand.

« Give her something to eat, now » He commands. « She is cured. God has given her back to you. Thank Him for that. And do not tell anybody what happened. You know what happened to her. You believed and your faith deserved a miracle. The others did not have faith. It is quite useless to endeavour to convince them. God does not show Himself to those who deny a miracle. And you, My little girl, be good. Goodbye! Peace to this house. » And He goes out closing the door behind Him.

The vision ends.

I will tell you that the two points of it which made me joyful are

those in which Jesus looks among the crowd for the person that touched Him and above all when standing near the little dead girl He takes her by the hand and tells her to get up. Peace and assurance have come into me. It is impossible for One as Merciful and Powerful as He is, not to have mercy on us and not defeat the Evil that kills us.

Jesus for the time being makes no comment, neither does He say anything about the other things. He sees that I am almost dead but does not consider that it is the case that I should feel better this evening. Let it be done as He wishes. I am already happy enough to have His vision.

230. Jesus and Martha at Capernaum.

27th July 1945.

Jesus, hot and covered with dust, goes back to the house in Capernaum with Peter and John.

He has just entered the kitchen garden and is going towards the kitchen, when the landlord calls Him familiarly saying: « Jesus, that lady of whom I spoke to You at Bethsaida, has come again looking for You. I told her to wait and I took her to the room upstairs. »

« Thank you, Thomas. I will go to her at once. If the others come tell them to wait here. » And Jesus goes upstairs immediately, without even taking off His mantle.

On the terrace at the top of the staircase there is Marcella, Martha's maid. She is standing there alone. « Oh! Master. My mistress is inside. She has been waiting for You for so many days » says the woman kneeling down to worship Jesus.

« I rather thought that. I will go to her at once. May God bless you, Marcella. »

Jesus lifts the curtain protecting the room from the excessively bright sunshine, for although the sun is now setting, it is still very warm and the white houses in Capernaum seem to be ablaze in the red glare of a huge brazier. In the room, sitting near the window is Martha, enveloped in a mantle and covered with a veil. She is perhaps contemplating the part of the lake where a woody hill protrudes into the water forming a promontory. Perhaps she is only contemplating her own thoughts. She is certainly absorbed in thought and in fact she does not hear the light shuffling of the feet of Jesus who is walking towards her. And she starts when He calls her.

« Oh! Master! » she exclaims. And she falls on her knees, with outstretched arms, as if she were imploring help and then she bends so low as to touch the floor with her forehead, and she bursts into tears.

« What is the matter? Stand up. Why are you weeping so bitterly? Have you some misfortune to tell Me? You have? What is it? Do you know that I was at Bethany? You do? And I was told that there was good news. But now you are weeping... What happened? » and He compels her to stand up and makes her sit on a bench against the wall, while He sits in front of her. « Now, take off your veil and mantle, as I am doing. You must be suffocating under them. And I want to see the face of My dear Martha, who is so upset, so that I may disperse all the clouds perturbing it. »

Martha obeys, still weeping, and her flushed face and swollen eyes can now be seen.

« Well? I will help you. Mary sent for you. She wept very much, she wanted to know many things about Me, and you thought that that was a good sign, so much so that you wanted Me to come to complete the miracle. And I have come. And now?... »

« Now, nothing, Master! I was mistaken. Too keen a desire makes one see what does not exist... I made You come for nothing... Mary is worse than before... No! What am I saying? I am calumniating her, I am telling lies. She is not worse, because she does not want any more men around her. She is different, but still so bad. She seems to be mad... I no longer understand her... At least before I understood her. But now! Who can understand her? » and Martha weeps desolately.

« Now, calm down and tell Me what she does. Why is she bad? So, she does not want any more men around her. So I suppose that she leads a retired life at home. Is that so? It is? Good. That is very good. The fact that she wanted you to stay with her, as if she wanted to be defended against temptations - that is what you wrote - and the fact that she wanted to avoid temptations by shunning guilty acquaintances or what might lead to such relationship, are signs of good will. »

« Do You think so, Master? Do You really think that? »

« Of course I do. So why do you think that she is bad? Tell Me what she does... »

« Well. » Martha, who is somewhat encouraged by Jesus' certainty, speaks more calmly. « Well. Since I came here, Mary has never left the house or the garden, not even to go out on the lake in her boat. And her nurse told me that even before I came, she hardly ever went out. Apparently this change began at Passover. But before my arrival, some people used to come and see her and she did not always refuse to see them. Sometimes she gave instructions not to let anybody pass. And it appeared to be a standing order. But then she would go as far as striking the servants, motivated by unjust anger, if upon hearing the voices of visitors, she went to the hall and found out that they had already been sent away. However, she has not done that again, since I came. The first

night she said to me, and that is why I was so hopeful: » « Hold me back, if necessary tie me. But don't let me go out, don't let me see anybody but you and my nurse. Because I am not well and I want to recover. But those who come to me or want me to go to them, are like feverish marshes. And they make me grow worse. But their appearance is so handsome, so flowery and joyful, their fruit is so pleasant looking, that I cannot resist them, because I am a poor wretch. Your sister is weak, Martha. And some people take advantage of her weakness to make her do foul things, to which a part of me does not agree. The only part which is still left to me of my poor mother... " and she wept. And I did that. I did it kindly when she was reasonable; but I acted firmly when she looked like a wild beast in a cage. She never rebelled against me. On the contrary, when the worst moments of temptation are over, she comes and weeps at my feet, resting her head on my lap and she says: "Forgive me, forgive me!" and if I ask her: "For what, sister? You have not grieved me", she replies: "Because a little while ago, or yesterday evening, when you said to me: 'You are not going out from here', I hated and cursed you in my heart and I wished you would die". Is she not to be pitied, my Lord? Is she perhaps mad? Has her vices made her mad? I think that one of her lovers has given her a philtre to make her a slave of his lust and that its poison has gone to her brains... »

« No. It is not a question of philtres or madness. It is something quite different. But go on. »

« So she is respectful and obedient to me. And she has not illtreated the servants any more. But after the first evening, she has not asked anything else about You. And if I mention You, she changes the subject. But she sits for hours and hours on a rock where the belvedere is, looking at the lake, until she becomes dazzled, and every time a boat sails by she asks me: "Do you think it is the boat of the Galilean fishermen?" She never mentions Your Name or the names of the apostles. But I know that she thinks of You and of them in Peter's boat. And I realise that she thinks of You because sometimes in the evening, when we are walking in the garden or before going to bed, and I am doing needlework, while she does nothing, she says to me: "Is that how one must live according to the doctrine you follow?" And sometimes she weeps, sometimes she laughs sarcastically, like a mad person or a demon. On other occasions she lets down her hair, which is always arranged so artistically, and she makes two plaits, she puts on one of my dresses and then she comes to me, with her plaits behind her back or in front of her, modest and young looking in my high-necked dress, and also because of her plaits and countenance and she says to me: "Is that what Mary should be like?" and even then sometimes she weeps kissing her wonderful plaits, which are as

thick as her arms and reach down to her knees, the living gold which was my mother's pride, at times, instead, she laughs in her ghastly way or she says to me: "Look, I had rather do this and be done with it" and she ties her plaits round her neck and pulls them tight until her face becomes purple, as if she wanted to strangle herself. At times she pities or ill-treats herself, and that obviously happens when she feels the temptations of her flesh more fiercely. I have caught her striking her breast and scratching her face savagely or banging her head against a wall and when I asked her: "Why are you doing that?" she would look at me with a wild deranged expression saying: "To tear myself, my bowels, my head to pieces. Cursed harmful things must be destroyed. And I am destroying myself ". And if I speak to her of God's mercy, of You because I still speak to her of You, as if she were the most faithful of Your women disciples, and I swear to You that at times I am horrified at mentioning Your name in her presence - she replies: "There can be no mercy for me. I have gone beyond the limit". She is then seized by a fit of despair and shouts, beating herself till she draws blood: "Why have I this monster that tears me to pieces? And it gives me no peace. And it leads me to evil deeds by means of sweet singing voices, to which it then adds the cursing voices of my father and mother, of you and Lazarus, because you and Lazarus curse me, too, and Israel curses me and it makes me hear them to drive me mad... " When she says that, I reply to her: "Why are you worried about Israel, which is only a people, and you do not think of God? But since you trampled on everything without considering what you were doing, endeavour now to overcome everything and do not worry about worldly things, but care only for God, your father and mother. If you change your life, they will not curse you, but will stretch their arms out to you... " And she listens to me, pensive, astonished as if I were telling her an unreal story, and then she weeps... But does not reply. At times, instead she orders the servants to bring her wines and drugs and she eats and drinks those artificial nourishments and explains: "I do that to forget". Now, since she found out that You are here in the lake area, every time she sees me come to You, she says: "I will come sometime, too" and laughing in that manner which is an insult to herself, she concludes: "Thus the eye of God will fall also upon manure". But I do not want her to come. And now, when I want to come, I wait until she falls asleep, when she is exhausted with being angry, with drinking and weeping... with everything. Also today I ran away like that, so that I can go back at night before she awakes. That is my life... I no longer hope... » and she resumes weeping more bitterly than previously, as her tears are no longer restrained by the effort of speaking calmly.

« Do you remember, Martha, what I told you once? "Mary is ill".

You did not want to believe it. Now you can see it. You say that she is mad. She says herself that she is ill and suffers from a sinful fever. I say: she is ill because she is possessed by a demon. It is still a disease. And her incoherent behaviour, her fury, her tears, her affliction, her longing for Me are stages of her illness, which has come to a moment of crisis and has its most violent fluctuations. You are doing the right thing in being good to her and patient with her. You are right in speaking to her of Me. Do not be disgusted at mentioning My Name in her presence. Poor soul of My Mary! Her soul also was created by the Father and it is in no way different from all other souls, from yours, from Lazarus', from the souls of the apostles and disciples. Her soul also was included and foreseen to be amongst the souls for whom I became flesh in order to be their Redeemer. In actual fact I have come more for her than for you, Lazarus, the apostles and disciples. Poor soul of My Mary, who is suffering so much! Of My poor Mary who has been poisoned with seven poisons besides the first universal poison! Of My imprisoned Mary! But let her come to Me! Let her breathe the air I breathe, let her hear My voice and meet My glance!... She calls herself: "Manure"... Oh! My poor dear soul in whom the demon of pride is the weakest of the seven possessing her! Only because of that she will be saved! »

« And if she should find someone who may lead her astray once again, when she comes out? She is afraid of that herself... »

« And she will always be afraid of that, now that she has gone so far as to loathe vice. But be not afraid. When a soul already has the desire of coming to Good, and is held back only by the diabolic Enemy, who is aware that he is going to lose his prey, and by the personal enemy of one's ego, which reasons in a human way and judges itself in a human way, ascribing to God its own judgement to prevent the soul from controlling the human ego, then that soul is already strong enough against the attacks of vice and of vicious people. It has found the Polar Star and will no longer deviate. And do not say to her again: "You have not thought of God and You are instead thinking of Israel?" It is an implicit reproach. Do not do that. She has just come out of a fire. She is one big sore. Touch her lightly only with balms of kindness, of forgiveness and hope... Leave her free to come. You must tell her when you are thinking of coming, but do not say to her: "Come with me". On the contrary, if you understand that she wants to come, do not come yourself. Go back and wait for her at home. She will come back to you broken by Mercy. Because I must remove the wicked power that is holding her and for a few hours she will look like a woman whose veins have been cut or whose bones have been removed by a doctor. But later she will feel better. She will be dumbfounded. She will be in great need of caresses and silence. Assist her as if you

were her second guardian angel: without letting her perceive your presence. And if you see her weeping, let her weep. And if you hear her asking herself questions, leave her alone. And if you see her smile, and then become serious, and then smile once more in a different way, with a different look, with a different countenance, do not ask her questions, do not make her feel uneasy. She is suffering more now, ascending, than she did, descending. And she must ascend by herself, as she descended by herself. She could not bear you to look at her when she was descending, because your eyes were full of reproach. And she cannot bear you to look at her now that her sense of shame has been aroused at last. Then she was strong, because Satan, her master, was with her and a wicked strength supported her and she could challenge the world, and yet she could not bear to be seen by you in her sin. Now Satan is no longer her master. He is still a guest in her, but Mary's will is holding him by the throat. And she has not Me yet. That is why she is too weak. She cannot even bear your caressing sisterly eyes watching her confession to her Saviour. All her energy is employed and consumed in holding the septuple demon by the throat. For all the rest she is defenceless and unclothed. But I will reclothe her and fortify her. Go in peace, Martha. And tomorrow tell her tactfully that I shall be speaking near the torrent of the Fountain, here in Capernaum, after vesper. Go in peace. I bless you. »

Martha is still perplexed.

« Do not become incredulous, Martha » says Jesus Who is watching her.

« No, my Lord. But I was thinking... Oh! Give me something that I may give Mary, to give her a little strength... She is suffering so much... and I am so afraid that she may not be able to triumph over the demon! »

« You are a little girl! Mary has Me and you. Can she possibly not succeed? However, take this. Give Me your hand, which has never sinned, and has always been kind, merciful, active and pious. It has always made gestures of love and prayer. It has never been lazy or idle or corrupt. Now, I will hold it between My hands to make it even holier. Raise it against the demon and he will not endure it. And take this belt of Mine. Never part with it. And every time you see her, say to yourself: "The power of Jesus is stronger than this belt of Jesus and by it everything can be overcome: demons and monsters as well. I must not be afraid". Are you happy now? My peace be with you. Go in peace. »

Martha worships Him and goes out.

Jesus smiles when he sees her climb on to the wagon, which Marcella has called to the gate, and depart towards Magdala.

231. Two Blind Men and a Dumb Demoniac Cured.

28th July 1945.

Jesus then goes down into the kitchen, and when He sees that John is about to go to the fountain, instead of remaining in the warm smoky kitchen, He prefers to go with John. He thus leaves Peter to deal with the fish that Zebedee's servants have just brought in for the supper of the Master and His disciples.

They do not go to the spring well at the end of the village, but to the fountain in the square, the water of which still comes from the clear plentiful spring on the mountain side near the lake. In the square there are many people as is customary in Palestinian villages in the evening. Women with amphoras, boys playing, men discussing business or... local gossip. Also some Pharisees pass by, surrounded by servants or clients, on their way to their rich homes. Everybody moves aside to let them pass, paying their respect, but as soon as they have gone, many curse them wholeheartedly mentioning their most recent abuses and usury dealings.

Matthew is haranguing his old friends in a corner of the square and that causes the Pharisee Uriah to remark scornfully in a loud voice: « The famous conversions! But attachment to sin is still there as can be seen from lasting friendships. Ah! Ah! »

Matthew turns round and replies angrily: « They last in order to convert them. »

« There is no need for that! Your Master is quite sufficient. You had better stay away, lest you might be taken ill again, presuming that you have really been cured. »

Matthew becomes purple in the effort to control himself and not give him a piece of his mind, and he simply replies: « Do not be afraid, and have no hope. »

« What? »

« Don't be afraid that I may become once again Levi the publican, and have no hope that I may imitate you in order to lose these souls. I leave to you and to your friends to keep contemptuously aloof from other people. I imitate my Master and I approach sinners to lead them to Grace. »

Uriah would like to retort, but another Pharisee, old Eli, arrives and says to him: « Do not contaminate your purity and your tongue, my friend. Come with me » and walking arm-in-arm with him he takes him towards his house.

In the meantime the crowd, particularly children, have gathered round Jesus. Among the children there are Toby and Johanna, the little brother and sister, who one day, a long time ago, were quarrelling over some figs. They now say to Jesus, hanging on to His tall body to draw His attention: « Listen, listen. Also today we have been good, You know? We have never cried and we

have not teased each other, for Your sake. Will You give us a kiss? »

« So you have been good for My sake! What joy you give Me. Here is My kiss. And be even better tomorrow. »

And there is James, the little fellow who used to bring Matthew's purse to Jesus every Sabbath. He now says to Jesus: « Matthew does not give me anything now for the poor of the Lord, but I have put aside all the money they give me when I am good and I will give it to You now. Will you give it to the poor on account of my grandfather? »

« Of course I will. What is the matter with your grand-dad? »

« He cannot walk any more. He is so old and his legs will not support him. »

« Are you sorry for that? »

« Yes, I am, because he was my master when we went into the country. He told me many things. And he made me love the Lord. Also now he tells me of Job and he shows me the stars in the sky, but he does that from his chair... It was much nicer before. »

« I will come to your grand-dad tomorrow. Are you happy now? »

And James is replaced by Benjamin, not the boy from Magdala, but the one from Capernaum, the boy I saw in a vision a long time ago. When he arrives in the square with his mother and sees Jesus, he leaves his mother's hand and rushes through the crowd, shrieking like a swallow and when he arrives in front of Jesus, he embraces His knees saying: « I want a caress, too! »

Simon, the Pharisee, passes by at that moment and bows pompously to Jesus, Who responds to his salutation. The Pharisee stops and while the crowd draw aside as if frightened, Simon says: « And would You not caress me as well? » and he smiles lightly.

« I will caress anyone who asks Me. I congratulate you, Simon, on your very good health. I was told in Jerusalem that you were rather ill. »

« Yes, I was very ill. I wanted You, to be cured. »

« Did you believe that I could cure you? »

« I never doubted it. But I had to recover by myself, because You have been away for a long time. Where have You been? »

« In the border area of Israel. That is how I spent the days between Passover and Pentecost. »

« A very successful journey? I heard of the lepers at Hinnom and Siloam. Really wonderful. Only that? Certainly not. But we hear of You, through John, the priest. He who is not biassed believes in You and is happy. »

« And what about him who does not believe because he is biassed? What about him, my wise Simon? »

The Pharisee is somewhat upset... he cannot make up his mind, as while he does not wish to condemn his too many friends, who are prejudiced against Jesus, he does wish to deserve being praised

by Jesus. He decides on the latter alternative and says: « He who does not want to believe in You, notwithstanding all the proofs You give, is condemned. »

« And I wish nobody were... »

« Yes, You do. But we do not return to You the same measure of goodness that You have for us. Too many do not deserve You... Jesus, I would like You to be my guest tomorrow... »

« I cannot tomorrow. Let us make it in two days' time. Do you agree? »

« I always agree with You. I will have... some friends... and You will have to put up with them if... »

« I know. I will come with John. »

« John only? »

« The others have other tasks to attend to. Here they are, they are just coming back from the country. Peace to you, Simon. »

« God be with You, Jesus. »

The Pharisee goes away and Jesus joins His disciples.

They go back home for supper.

But while they are eating roast fish, some blind men arrive, who had already implored Jesus on the road. They now repeat their prayer: « Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us! »

« Go away! I told you to come tomorrow and let it be tomorrow. Let Him eat » says Peter reproachingly.

« No, Simon. Do not send them away. So much perseverance deserves a reward. You two, come forward » He then says to the blind men, who go in sounding the floor and walls with their sticks. « Do you believe that I can give your eyesight back to you? »

« Oh! Yes! Lord! We came because we are certain. »

Jesus gets up from the table, approaches them, lays His fingertips on the blind eyes, raises His head and prays: « Let it be done to you according to your faith. » He removes His hands, and the eyelids, so far motionless, begin to wink, because light strikes the revived pupils of one of the men, and the eyelids of the other become unsealed, whereas before they were sealed probably by neglected ulcers, and the palpebral edges are reshaped anew without the least fault, so that he can wink freely.

The two men fall on their knees.

« You may stand up and go. And mind you, do not let anybody know what I have done to you. Take the news of the grace to your relatives and friends in your villages. It is not necessary to do so here and it would not do your souls any good. Make sure that the faith of your souls does not suffer from any injury and now that you know what it is like to be able to see, ensure that your eyes do not get injured, so that you may not become blind again. »

The supper is over. They go up on the terrace where it is cool. The lake is shining in the moonlight.

Jesus sits on the edge of the low wall and lets His mind wander watching the silvery surface of the lake. The others are talking to one another in low voices, so as not to disturb Him. But they look at Him as if they were fascinated. In fact how handsome He is! The moon forms a halo around His head and illuminates His face, which is severe and serene at the same time, emphasising its tiniest details. He is sitting with His head lightly tilted backwards, leaning against the coarse vine branch, which climbs up there and then spreads out on the terrace. His deep blue eyes look like onyx in the night and seem to be pouring peaceful waves over everything. At times He looks up at the clear sky, strewn with stars, at times He looks down at the hills, and farther down, at the lake or He stares at a distant hazy point and His eyes seem to be smiling at something they only can see. His wavy hair is gently blown by a light breeze. He is sitting slightly sideways, touching the floor with one foot, while the other is a few inches off it, with His hands relaxing on His lap. His white robe emphasises His splendour, which becomes silvery in the moonlight, and His long white hands look more like old ivory emphasising the virile beauty of His tapering fingers. Also His face, with its high forehead, straight nose, lightly oval-shaped cheeks and its pale-copper beard, looks like old ivory without the pinkish nuance visible during the day on the upper part of His cheeks.

« Are You tired, Master? » asks Peter.

« No, I am not. »

« You look pale and pensive... »

« I was thinking. But I do not think I am paler than usual... The moonlight makes you all look pale as well. You will go to Korazim tomorrow and you may find some disciples there. Speak to them. And remember to be back here at vesper. I will be preaching near the torrent. »

« How lovely! We shall tell the people of Korazim. On our way back we met Martha and Marcella. Did they come here? » asks Andrew.

« Yes, they did. »

« There was a lot of talk at Magdala about Mary, who does not go out any more and has no more parties. We had a rest in the house of the same woman as last time. Benjamin told me that when he feels inclined to be naughty, he thinks of You and... »

«... and of me, You may as well say so, James » says the Iscariot.

« He did not say so. »

« But he meant it when he said: "I do not want to be handsome, but I want to be naughty" and he cast me a side glance. He cannot stand me... »

« A dislike of no importance, Judas. Forget about it » says Jesus.

« Yes, Master. But it is annoying that... »

« Is the Master there? » someone shouts from the street.

« Yes, He is. But what do you want now? Is the day not long enough for you? Is this a decent hour to disturb poor pilgrims' Come back tomorrow » orders Peter.

« The trouble is that we have a dumb demoniac with us. And he escaped three times on the way. Had it not been for that, we would have arrived earlier. Be good! Before long, when the moon is high in the sky, he will begin to howl louder and will frighten the village. Look how he is struggling already?! »

Jesus goes to the other side of the terrace and leans out over the low wall. The apostles do likewise. A row of faces bending over a crowd of people looking up at them. In the middle, moving about and howling like a chained bear or a wolf, there is a man with his wrists tied together so that he may not escape. He howls while moving about restlessly, as if he were looking for something on the ground. When he looks up and meets Jesus' eyes, he utters a beastly cry, an inarticulate howl, and tries to run away.

The crowds, almost all the adults of Capernaum are there, move aside frightened.

« Come, for goodness' sake! He is starting all over again... »

« I am coming at once. » And Jesus runs downstairs and goes in front of the poor wretch who is more agitated than ever.

« Go out of him. I want it. »

The howling fades into one word: « Peace! »

« Yes, peace. Peace to you now that you are freed. »

The crowd shout for wonder seeing the sudden change from fury to calm, from being possessed to freedom, from dumbness to speech.

« How did you know that I was here? »

« At Nazareth they said to us: "He is at Capernaum". This was confirmed at Capernaum by two men who said their eyes had been cured by You in this house. »

« That is true! It is very true! They told us as well... » many shout. And they remark: « Such things have never been seen in Israel before! »

« If He were not helped by Beelzebub He would not do them » sneer the Pharisees of Capernaum. Simon, however, is not amongst them.

« Help or not help. I have been cured and so were the blind men. You would not be able to do it, notwithstanding your great prayers » retorts the cured dumb demoniac and he kisses Jesus' robe. The Master does not reply to the Pharisees, He simply dismisses the crowd saying: « Peace be with you » and He asks the cured man and those who accompanied him to stay, and offers them hospitality in the room upstairs so that they may rest until the following morning.

Jesus says: « You will put here the Parable of the lost sheep, which you had on the 12th of August 1944. »

232. Parable of the Lost Sheep.

12th August 1944.

Jesus is speaking to the crowds. Standing on the wooded embankment of a little torrent, He is addressing a large crowd spread in a field where the corn has already been cut and the burnt stubbles are a distressing sight. It is evening. Night is falling, but the moon is already rising. Flocks of sheep are going back to the folds and the sound of cattle-bells mingles with the loud chirping of crickets and the high-pitched drone of cicadas. Jesus takes the passing flocks as a starting point.

He says: « Your Heavenly Father is like a solicitous shepherd. What does a good shepherd do? He looks for good pastures for his sheep, where there is no hemlock or other poisonous herbs, but there is plenty sweet clover, aromatic mint and bitter but wholesome chicory. He looks for places where beside good grass there is the cool shade of trees and the clear water of a stream and he ensures that there are no asps among the green grass. He does not prefer the richest pastures, because he knows that snakes and harmful herbs are quite common there and thus dangerous for his sheep. He prefers instead mountain pastures, where the dew keeps the grass clean and fresh and the strong sunshine keeps snakes away and the breezy air is light and healthy, not like the unhealthy air in the plains. The good shepherd watches his sheep one by one. He cures them when they are sick and if they get hurt he dresses their wounds. He reproaches the sheep that might be sick because they are too greedy for food and he calls to a different place the ones that might be harmed by staying too long in a damp spot or in the sunshine. And if one is unwilling to eat he looks for acidulous aromatic herbs suitable to whet its appetite and he feeds it with his own hands, speaking to it as if it were a friend. That is what the good Father Who is in Heaven does with His children wandering on the earth. His love is the staff that gathers them together, His voice is their guide, His Law is His pasture, Heaven His fold.

But one of his sheep left him. How fond of it he was! It was young, pure, white, like a cloud in an April sky. The shepherd used to look at it with so much love, thinking of how much good he could do for it and how much love he could receive from it. And it strayed. A tempter passed on the road that runs along the pasture. He does not wear a plain jacket, but has on a many-coloured robe. He does not have a leather belt with hatchet and knife hanging

from it, but he wears a golden belt, from which little bells hang, as sweet-sounding as the singing of a nightingale, and phials of inebriating scents... He does not carry a shepherd's staff as the good shepherd does, to gather the sheep together and defend them and should his staff not be sufficient, he is ready to defend them with his hatchet and knife and even with his life. But the tempter who is passing by, is holding in his hands a thurible sparkling with gems and from it smoke rises, which is stench and scent at the same time, and it bewilders as the sparkling of the fake jewels dazzles. He passes by singing and drops handfuls of salt, which shines on the dark road... Ninety-nine sheep look and remain where they are. The one hundredth, the youngest and dearest one, makes a leap and disappears behind the tempter. The shepherd calls it. But it does not come back. It runs faster than the wind to join the tempter who has just gone by, and to sustain itself while running it tastes some of the salt, which as soon as it is swallowed, causes a strange burning frenzy so that the poor sheep craves for cool water in the deep green shades of forests. And following the tempter it goes into the forests, and it climbs and descends and falls... once, twice, three times. And each time it feels round its neck the slimy embrace of reptiles, and being thirsty it drinks foul water and when it is hungry it eats herbs shining with revolting slobber.

And in the meantime what does the good shepherd do? He leaves the ninety-nine faithful ones in a safe place and he sets out and does not stop until he finds traces of the lost sheep. Since it does not come back to him, although he calls it in a loud voice begging the wind to carry his call to it, he goes to the sheep. And he sees it from afar, intoxicated in the coils of reptiles, so intoxicated that it does not feel nostalgia for the man who loves it, on the contrary it mocks him. And he is aware that it is guilty of entering, like a thief, the abode of other people, so guilty that it dare not look at him... And yet the good shepherd does not become tired... and he goes on looking for it all the time, following its traces and weeping when he loses them: strips of fleece; traces of its soul; traces of blood; various crimes; filth; proofs of its lust; but he goes on and reaches it. Ah! I found you, my beloved one. I reached you at last! How far have I walked for you, to take you back to the fold. Do not bend your dejected head. Your sin is buried in my heart. Nobody will know about it, except me, and I love you. I will defend you from the criticism of other people, I will shield you with my body to protect you against the stones of accusers. Come. Are you wounded? Oh! let me see your wounds. I know them. But I want you to show them to me with the confidence you had when you were pure, and you looked at me, your shepherd and your God, with innocent eyes. There they are. They have all the same name.

How deep they are! Who inflicted these very deep ones in the depth of your heart? It was the Tempter, I know. It is he who has neither staff nor hatchet, but he strikes more deeply with his poisonous bite, and after him, the false jewels of his thurible strike: the ones that seduced you by sparkling... and they were hellish sulphur brought to daylight to burn your heart. Look how many wounds! How much torn fleece, how much blood, how much bramble.

O my poor little disappointed soul! But tell me: if I forgive you, will you still love me? Tell me: if I stretch out my arms to you, will you come to them? Tell me: do you thirst for good love? Well: come and be born again. Come back to the holy pastures. Weep. Your tears and mine will wash the traces of your sin and in order to nourish you, because you are worn out by the evil which has burnt you, I open my chest and my veins and I say to you: "Feed on them, and live!" Come here that I may take you in my arms. We will walk faster to the safe holy pastures. You will forget everything of this miserable hour. And your ninety-nine good sisters will rejoice at your return, because I tell you, my little lost sheep, which I have looked for coming from far away, and I reached and saved, I tell you, there is more rejoicing among the good, for one who was lost and has been found, than for ninety-nine just who never left the fold. »

Jesus has never turned round to look at the road behind Him and on which Mary of Magdala has arrived in the dim light of the evening. She is most elegant, but at least she is dressed, and she is wearing a dark veil, which conceals her features and figure. But when Jesus continues His speech from the words: « I found you, my beloved one », Mary hides her hands under her veil and weeps, softly and continuously.

People cannot see her, because she is on this side of the embankment, which runs along the road. Only the moon, now high in the sky, and Jesus' spirit can see her...

And He says to me: « The comment is in the vision itself. But I shall speak to you again about it. Rest now, because it is time. I bless you, My faithful Mary. »

233. Comment on Three Episodes Connected with the Conversion of Mary of Magdala.

13th August 1944.

Jesus says:

« As from January, when I let you see the supper in the house of Simon, the leper, you and he who guides you, have wished to know more about Mary of Magdala and the words I spoke to her. Now, after seven months, I reveal those pages of the past to you, to make you happy and to give a rule to those who must learn to bend over

those women, who are lepers in their souls, and also to invite those poor wretches, who are suffocating in their sepulchres of vice, to come out of them.

God is good. He is good to everybody. He does not measure by means of human measures. He does not discriminate between mortal sins. Sin, whatever it may be, grieves Him. Repentance pleases Him and makes Him willing to forgive. Resistance to Grace makes Him inflexibly severe because Justice cannot forgive the unrepentant who will die as such, notwithstanding all the help given to them so that they might be converted. But the main cause of forty per cent, if not fifty per cent, of non-conversions is the negligence of those responsible for conversions, that is, a mistaken false zeal protecting real selfishness and pride, whereby one is happy in one's refuge, without having to descend into dirt to save a heart from it. "I am pure, I deserve respect. I will not go where there is filth and where they may fail to respect me".

But has he who speaks thus not read the Gospel where it is written that the Son of God came to call tax collectors and prostitutes beside the honest people, the only honest ones according to the old Law? Does he not think that pride is impurity of the mind, and lack of charity is impurity of the heart? Will you be despised? I was despised before you and more than you, and I was the Son of God. Will you have to wear your clean robe where there is filth? And did I not touch that filth with My hands to make it stand up and say to it: "Walk on this new way"? Do you not remember what I said to your first predecessors? "Whatever town or village you go into, ask for someone trustworthy and stay with him". So that the world may not grumble. Because the world is inclined to see evil in everything. But I added: "When you enter houses -'houses' I said, not 'house' - salute them saying: 'Peace to this house'. And if the house deserves it, peace will descend upon it, if it does not, your peace will come back to you". I said that to teach you that until there is a definite proof of unrepentance, you must have the same heart for everybody. And I completed My lesson by saying: "And if anyone does not welcome you and does not listen to your words, as you walk out of those houses or towns shake the dust from your feet". Sin is but dust, and God makes good souls, who have constantly loved Him, like smooth crystal cubes: it is enough to blow or shake the dust and it disappears without doing any harm.

Be really good. Be thoroughly united, with eternal Bounty in the middle of you, and no corruption will be able to foul you above the soles of your sandals which touch the ground. Souls are so high up! I mean the souls of those who are good and thoroughly united to God. Such souls are in Heaven. And no dust or filth can reach up there, not even when thrown angrily at the spirit of an apostle. They may strike your flesh, that is, they may wound you physically

or morally, persecuting you or offending you, because Evil hates Good. And so what? Was I not offended and wounded? Did they perhaps carve those blows and foul words into My Spirit? Did they upset Me? No, they did not. Like spittle on a mirror or a stone thrown against the juicy pulp of a fruit, they skidded without penetrating, or they penetrated only superficially, without damaging the kernel enclosed in the stone: on the contrary it fosters its germination because it is easier to sprout from a cracked core than from a whole one. Through death corn germinates and an apostle becomes active. Sometimes through physical death, or dying daily metaphorically, by crushing one's human ego. But that is not death: it is Life. The spirit triumphs over the death of humanity.

She (1) came to Me to satisfy the passing fancy of an idle woman who did not know how to while away the time, and although her ears were almost deafened by the false homage of those who lulled her singing to her sensuality in order to make her their slave, she heard the clear severe voice of Truth. Of the Truth that is not afraid of being despised or not understood and speaks looking at God. And like festive bells ringing together, all the voices mingled in the Word: voices went to sing in the open blue sky, spreading over valleys and hills, plains and lakes, to commemorate the glory of the Lord and His festivity.

Do you not remember the solemn festivity that in peace time made the day of the Lord so joyful? The big bell, with its resonant clapper, gave the first peal in the name of divine Law and seemed to be saying: "I am speaking in the name of God, Judge and King". The smaller bells then harmonised: "Who is good, merciful and patient", and the smallest bell, in a silvery angelical voice added: "Whose Love urges men to forgive and be indulgent, to teach men that forgiveness is more useful than wrath and compassion is greater than inflexibility".

Likewise, after recalling the Law, trampled on by the sinner, I made her hear the song of forgiveness. I shook the hope of forgiveness in the darkness of sin, like a green-blue silk scarf among dark shades, so that hope might put in its comforting words. Forgiveness! It is like dew on the parching thirst of sinners. Dew is not like hail, which strikes like a dart, bounces and without penetrating the soil kills flowers. Dew descends so lightly that even the most delicate flower does not perceive it resting on its silk petals. But it drinks its refreshing moisture. Dew settles near roots, on parched clods of earth and penetrates the soil... It is a moisture of tears, the tears of stars, the loving tears of mothers on their thirsty children, whom it nourishes together with their sweet

(1) «She» is Mary Magdalene. In order to understand the full meaning of the present Chapter and events referred to therein, please see Chapter 183.

bountiful milk. Oh! the mysteries of elements operating also when man rests or sins! Forgiveness is like such dew. It brings not only cleanliness, but also vital juices, taken not from elements, but from divine hearths.

And after the promise of forgiveness Wisdom speaks saying what is legal and what is not legal, and it reproaches and shakes, not out of harshness, but out of maternal anxiety to save. How often your hardness becomes more impenetrable and unyielding to Charity bending over you!... How often you run away while Charity speaks to you!... How often you scorn It! How often you hate It!... If Charity dealt with you as you deal with It, woe to your souls! Instead, see, It is the Untiring Walker who comes looking for you. And It reaches you even if you hide in the darkest of dens.

Why did I decide to go to that house? Why did I not work a miracle in it? To teach the apostles how to behave, defying prejudices and criticism in order to fulfil their duty, which is so high as to be free from the trifling things of the world.

Why did I say those words to Judas? The apostles were still very much men. All Christians are very much men, also the saints on the earth, although to a lesser degree. Some humanism survives also in perfect souls. But the apostles were not yet perfect. Their minds were pervaded with human reasoning. I lifted them up. But the weight of their humanity pulled them down again. To let them descend as little as possible I had to put something on their ascending way, which could stop their descent, something on which they could stop to meditate and rest and thus be able to ascend again to a higher level than previously. I had to bring forth something capable of convincing them that I was God, that is: introspection of their souls, victory over elements, miracles, transfiguration, resurrection, ubiquity. I was on the road to Emmaus when I was in the Last Supper room, and the time of My ubiquity, when discussed by the apostles and disciples, was one of the reasons which affected them most strongly, freeing them from their ties and urging them on to the way of Christ. Rather than to Judas, who was already brooding over death, I was speaking to the other eleven. I was compelled to make it very clear to them that I was God, not out of pride, but of necessity for their formation. I was God and Master. Those words define Me as such. I reveal Myself by means of an extra-human faculty and I teach a virtue: we must not talk evil things not even in our hearts. Because God sees, and God must see a pure heart to descend into it and dwell there.

Why did I not work the miracle in that house? To make everybody understand that the presence of God calls for a pure environment, out of respect for His sublime majesty. I did not work the miracle there, because I wanted to speak to her, not uttering words with My lips, but with a deeper word addressed to her sinful

soul and say: "See, poor wretch? You are so filthy that everything near you becomes foul. So foul, that God cannot act. You are filthier than he is. Because you are repeating Eve's sin and are offering your fruit to many Adams, by tempting them and taking them away from their Duty. You are a minister of Satan". But why do I not want her to be called "satan" by his dejected mother? Because no reason can justify insult and hatred. The first essential condition to have God with us is to bear no ill-will and to forgive. The second condition is to admit that we, or those who belong to us, are sinners as well. We must not see only other people's faults. The third condition is to remain grateful and faithful, after receiving grace, out of justice to the Eternal Father. Woe to those who after receiving grace are worse than dogs and do not remember their Benefactor, whereas animals do!

I did not say one word to Mary Magdalene. I looked at her for a moment, as if she were a statue, then I left her. I went back to the "living ones" whom I wanted to save. I treated her with seeming carelessness, as if she were dead, like or more than a lifeless sculptured piece of marble. But I did not utter a word or make a gesture that did not aim mainly at her poor soul, which I wanted to redeem. And the last words: "I do not insult. Do not insult. Pray for sinners. Nothing else", like a garland of flowers the ends of which are joined together, are to be joined to the first words spoken upon the mountain: "Forgiveness is more useful than wrath and compassion than inflexibility". And these have enclosed the poor wretch in a cool velvet circle, scented with goodness, making her feel how the loving service of God is different from the cruel slavery of Satan, how sweet is the heavenly perfume as compared to the stench of sin, and how relaxing it is to be loved holily as compared to being possessed satanically.

See how moderate is the will of the Lord. He does not exact immediate conversions. He does not claim the absolute from a heart. He can wait and be satisfied. And while He waits for the lost woman to find her way, for the mad woman to find reason, He is satisfied with what the dejected mother can give her. I ask her only: "Can you forgive?" How many more questions I should have asked her to make her worthy of the miracle, if I had behaved according to human standards! But I measure your strength in a divine way. It was already a great success if the poor deranged mother could really forgive. And that is all I ask her, at that moment. After giving her son back to her, I say to her: "Be holy and make your house holy". But while the pangs of grief derange her mind, I ask her but to forgive the culprit. You must not exact everything from those who shortly before were in Darkness. That mother was to come later to full light, with her daughter-in-law and the children. For the time being, it was necessary to let the

first dawning of Light reach her eyes blinded by tears: that is, forgiveness, the dawn of God's day.

Of the people present only one - I am not referring to Judas, I am speaking of the people gathered there, not of My disciples only one was not to come to the Light. There is always someone for whom the apostle toils in vain. But you must not lose heart because of such defeats. An apostle must not pretend to achieve everything. Struggling against him there are adverse powers, with many different names, and like tentacles of an octopus they grasp again the prey that he had snatched from them. But the apostle is still meritorious. Woe to the apostle who says: "I am not going there because I know that I shall not be able to convert anyone". He is an apostle of very little value. It is necessary to go even if only one in a thousand will be saved. His apostolic day will be as fruitful because of that one as it would be for a thousand, because he will have done everything in his power and that is what God rewards. You must also consider that where the apostle is not able to convert, because the person to be converted is too firmly gripped by Satan and the power of the apostle is inadequate to the effort, God may intervene. And then? Who is greater than God?

Another thing that the apostle must absolutely practise is love. Clear love. Not only the secret love for the hearts of brethren. That is enough for good brethren. But the apostle is a worker of God and he must not limit himself to prayer: he must act. Let him act with love, with great love. Rigour paralyses the apostle's work and hinders the motion of souls towards the Light. So: not rigour, but love. Love is the incombustible fabric that protects you against the blaze of wicked passions. Love is the saturation of preserving essences which prevent human-satanic putrefaction from entering you. To conquer a soul you must learn how to love. To conquer a soul you must induce it to love: to love Good and disown its petty sinful loves.

I wanted Mary's soul. And as in your case, My little John, I did not confine Myself to speaking from the Teacher's desk. I stooped looking for her in the paths of sin. I pursued her and persecuted her by means of My love. A kind persecution! I-Purity followed her where she was Impurity. I was not afraid of any scandal, neither with regard to Myself nor to others. I could not be scandalised, because I was Mercy; and Mercy weeps over sins but is not scandalised by them. Woe to the shepherd who is scandalised and entrenches himself behind the screen of scandal to abandon a soul! Do you not know that souls are more inclined than bodies to rise again and that the pitiful loving word saying: "Rise, sister, for your own good" often works a miracle? I was not afraid of other people's scandal. My behaviour was justified in the eyes of God, and was understood by good people. An evil-minded man fermenting

with wickedness, which evaporates from a corrupt heart, is of no importance. Such man finds faults also in God, and considers only himself perfect. I therefore paid no attention to such people.

The three phases of the salvation of a soul are:

To be thoroughly and strictly honest in order to be able to speak without any fear of being silenced. To be able to speak to a whole crowd so that our apostolic word, addressed to the crowds gathering round our mystical boat, may travel farther and farther, like circles of waves, until it reaches the miry shore, where those who are not interested in knowing the Truth are lying in the mud. That is the first task in order to break the hard crust of the soil and prepare it to receive the seed. It is the hardest task both for him who performs it and for him who receives it, because words, like a sharp ploughshare, must wound the listener in order to open his heart. And I solemnly tell you that the heart of a good apostle is hurt and bleeds because of the grief in having to wound in order to open. But that grief also is prolific. Through the blood and the tears of an apostle waste land becomes fertile.

The second quality: It is necessary to act also where one, less conscious of one's mission, would flee. The apostle must break his back in the effort to extirpate darnel, couch-grass and thorns in order to clear the soil and plough it and then let the power of God and His bounty shine on it like the sun. And at the same time, like a judge and a doctor, he must be severe and merciful, and remain firm in the period of waiting to give the souls time to surmount their crises, to meditate and make up their minds.

Third phase: As soon as a soul that has repented in silence, dares to come shyly towards an apostle, weeping and thinking of its faults, fearing to be driven away, the apostle's heart must be greater than the sea, more gentle than a mother's heart, more loving than a bride's, and he must open it completely to allow waves of tenderness to flow from it. If you have God, Who is Charity, within you, you will easily find charitable words to be spoken to souls. God will speak in you and on your behalf and like honey dripping from a honeycomb, like balm flowing from a phial, love will reach parched sickened lips; it will reach wounded souls and will be relief and medicine.

You doctors of souls, make sinners love you. Let them taste the flavour of Heavenly Charity and let them become so eager for it, as to seek no other food. Let them feel in your kindness such a relief, as to seek it for all their wounds. Your charity must free them from all fear, because, as the epistle which you have read today says: "To fear is to expect punishment, and anyone who is afraid is still imperfect in love". Neither is he perfect who causes people to be afraid. Do not say: "What have you done?" Do not say: "Go away". Do not say: "You cannot have relish for good love".

Say, instead, in My name: "Love and I will forgive you". Say: "Come, Jesus' arms are open". Say: "Enjoy this angelical Bread and this Word and forget the pitch of hell and Satan's sneers". Bear the weakness of other people. An apostle must bear his own and other people's weaknesses, with his own crosses and other people's. And while coming to Me, laden with wounded sheep, encourage the poor stray souls saying: "Everything is forgotten by now"; say: "Be not afraid of the Saviour. He came from Heaven for you, just for you. I am but a bridge to carry you to Him Who is waiting for you, on the other side of the river of penitential absolution, to lead you to His holy pastures, which begin here, on the earth, and continue in Heaven, in everlasting nutritious delightful Beauty".

Here is the comment. It is of little concern to you, sheep faithful to the Good Shepherd. But if in you, little bride, it increases confidence, in the Father (1) it will be greater light in His light as judge, and for many it will be no incentive to come to Good. But it will be the penetrating and nourishing dew of which I have spoken and which makes withered flowers stand upright again.

Raise your heads. Heaven is high above. Go in peace, Mary. The Lord is with you. »

(1) That is, the Spiritual Father of Maria Valtorta.

234. Martha Has Her Victory within Her Grasp.

29th July 1945.

Jesus is about to embark in the boat, at the dawn of a clear summer day which is spreading roses on the wrinkled silky surface of the lake, when Martha arrives with her maidservant. « Oh! Master! Listen to me, for God's sake » she says.

Jesus goes back on to the shore and says to the apostles: « Go and wait for Me at the torrent. In the meantime prepare everything for our trip towards Magedan. The Decapolis also is waiting for the word. Go. »

And while the boat moves away and takes to the open lake, Jesus walks beside Martha. Marcella respectfully follows them.

They thus move away from the village walking on the shore, which from a sandy stretch, strewn at lake level with sparse tufts of wild herbs, becomes completely covered with vegetation as it climbs up the hill sides, which are reflected in the lake.

When they reach a lonely spot, Jesus asks smiling: « What do you want to tell Me? »

« Oh! Master... Mary came home last night shortly after midnight. Oh! I was forgetting to tell You that while we were having lunch at midday, she said to me: "Would you mind lending me one

of your dresses and a mantle? They may be a little short. But I will leave the dress loose and hold the mantle down... " I replied to her: "You may take whatever you wish, my dear sister". My heart was throbbing because, shortly before, speaking to Marcella in the garden I had said to her: "At vesper we must be at Capernaum, because the Master is speaking to the crowds this evening" and I saw Mary start and change colour. She became restless, moving about all alone, like a person in pain or in a flutter, on the point of making a decision... but does not know which way to decide. After lunch she went into my room and took the most dark and modest dress I had, she tried it on and asked the nurse to let the hem down, as it was too short. She tried to do it herself, but weeping she confessed: "I am no longer good at sewing. I have forgotten everything useful and good... " and she threw her arms round my neck saying: "Pray for me". She went out about sunset... How much I prayed, that she might not meet anyone who would keep her from coming here, so that she might understand Your word and succeed in definitely strangling the monster enslaving her... Look: I put on Your belt, which I tied under my own, and when I felt my waist being oppressed by the hard stiff leather, to which it is not used, I would say: "He is stronger than anything". Then Marcella and I came by wagon, as it is quicker. I do not know whether You saw us in the crowd... But what an aching pain in my heart at not seeing Mary! I would say to myself: "She must have changed her mind. She has gone back home. Or... she has run away as she could no longer stand my control, although she had asked for it". I was listening to You and weeping under my veil. Your words seemed to be spoken just for her... and she did not hear them! That is what I was thinking as I did not see her. I went back home down-hearted. It is the truth. I disobeyed You because You had said to me: "If she comes, you stay at home and wait for her". But think of my heart, Master! It was my sister coming to You! How could I not be there to see her near You? And then... You said to me: "She will be broken" and I wanted to be near her to support her at once...

I was kneeling in my room weeping and praying and it was after midnight when she came in. She came in so softly that I heard her only when she threw herself upon me embracing me and saying: "Everything you say, my blessed sister, is true. Nay, it is much more so than you told me. His mercy is much greater. Oh! Martha! There is no further need for you to watch me! You will see that I am no longer cynical and miserable! You will no longer hear me say: 'I do not want to think!' Now I want to think. I know what to think of. Of Bounty Which became flesh. You were certainly praying for me, sister. And victory is already within your grasp: Your Mary, who no longer wants to sin and who is born to a new life.

Here she is. Look at her straight in the face. Because she is a new Mary, whose face has been washed by tears of hope and repentance. You can kiss me, my pure sister. There is no trace of shameful love affairs on my face. He said that He loves my soul. Because He was speaking to my soul and about my soul. I was the lost sheep. He said, listen if I am right. You know how the Saviour speaks... " and she repeated Your parable perfectly. Mary is so intelligent! Much more intelligent than I am. And she remembers. So I heard You twice; and if those words were holy and adorable on Your lips, on hers they were holy, adorable and loving because they were spoken by my sister, who had been found and had come back to the family fold. We were sitting on a mat on the floor, embracing each other, as we were wont to do when we were little girls in my mother's room or near the loom where she wove or embroidered her wonderful cloths. And we remained thus, no longer divided by sin, and my mother also seemed to be present in her spirit. We wept without any grief, on the contrary, with so much peace! We kissed each other happily... And then Mary, who was tired after her long walk, and was exhausted with emotion and so many feelings, fell asleep in my arms and with the help of the nurse I laid her on my bed... and I left her there to come here... » and Martha, thoroughly happy, kisses Jesus' hands.

« I also will tell you what Mary said to you: "Victory is already in your grasp". Go and be happy. Go in peace. Let your behaviour be kind and prudent with your reborn sister. Goodbye, Martha. Let Lazarus know, as he is worried. »

« Yes, Master. But when will Mary come with us women disciples? »

Jesus smiles and says: « The Creator created the universe in six days and rested on the seventh. »

« I understand. I must be patient... »

« Yes, patient. Do not sigh. That is a virtue as well. Peace to you, women. We shall meet soon » and Jesus leaves them and goes towards the place where the boat is waiting near the shore.

Jesus says: « Put here the vision of the supper in the house of Simon, the Pharisee, which you saw on January 21st, 1944. »

235. Mary Magdalene in the House of Simon, the Pharisee.

21st January 1944.

To comfort me in my complex suffering and make me forget the wickedness of men, my Jesus grants me this sweet contemplation.

I see a sumptuous hall. A many-branched candlestick is hanging in the centre and is completely lit. The hall is hung with beautiful tapestry; there are magnificent pieces of furniture and chairs inlaid

and decorated with ivory and precious metal leaves.

There is a large square table in the centre, consisting of four tables assembled together. The table has been laid for many guests (all men) and is covered with beautiful table-cloths and very expensive tableware. There are valuable amphorae and cups and many servants are moving round the table carrying dishes and pouring out wines. There is no one in the centre of the square. I can see the magnificent floor which reflects the lights of the oil chandelier. Around the table there are many couches, all occupied by the guests.

I appear to be in the half-dark corner at the end of the hall, near a door, which is wide open, although screened by a heavy piece of tapestry hanging from its architrave.

The landlord and the most important guests are on the opposite side, that is, the farthest side from the door. The landlord is elderly, wearing a wide white tunic tied round his waist by an embroidered belt. Round the collar, the cuffs and the hem of the tunic there are strips of embroidered work, which have been attached as if they were embroidered ribbons or strips. But I do not like his expression. It is malicious, cold, proud and greedy.

On the opposite side, facing him, there is my Jesus. I see Him sideways, almost from behind His back. He is wearing His usual white tunic, sandals, and His long hair is parted on His forehead.

I see that both He and all the guests are not sitting up to the table, as I thought one would on those couches, instead they are reclined parallelly. In the vision of the wedding at Cana I did not pay much attention to this detail. I saw that they were eating leaning on their left elbows, but they did not appear to be so reclined, probably because the couches were shorter and not so sumptuous. Those I see now are real beds, and look like modern Turkish divans.

John is near Jesus and since Jesus is leaning on His left elbow, like everybody else, John is between the table and Jesus' body, with his elbow at the height of the Master's groin, so that he does not hinder Him while eating, but if he wishes, he can lie confidentially on His chest.

There is no woman at the table. They are all talking and the landlord now and again addresses Jesus with evident affected condescension. It is obvious that he wants to show to Him and to all those present as well, that he has greatly honoured Him, a poor and rather hot-headed prophet, as many people consider Him, by inviting Him to his wealthy house... I see Jesus reply kindly and quietly. He smiles faintly at those who ask Him questions, but His smile becomes bright when John speaks to Him or even looks at Him.

I see the magnificent curtain covering the door-space being raised

and a young woman come in. She is beautiful, sumptuously dressed and her hair is splendidly arranged. The artistically interlaced locks of her very thick blond hair form a beautiful ornament on her head. Her hair is so bright and abundant that she seems to be wearing a golden helmet wrought in relief. If I should have to compare the dress she has on with the ones I have always seen the Blessed Virgin Mary wear, I would say that it is very peculiar and complicated. There are buckles on the shoulders, jewels to hold together the pleats at the top of the breast, little gold chains to outline the breast, and the belt is adorned with studs and gems. It is a provoking dress, which emphasises the features of her beautiful body. The veil on her head is so light that... it veils nothing: it is an additional charm and nothing else. Her sandals are very expensive ones, of red leather with gold buckles and strips interlaced round her ankles.

Everybody, except Jesus, turns round to look at her. John watches her for a moment, then looks at Jesus. The others stare at her with evident malicious avidity. But the woman does not look at them, neither does she pay attention to the whispering that has arisen at her entrance, or to the winking of the people present, with the exception of Jesus and His disciple. Jesus pretends He has seen nothing. He continues His conversation with the landlord.

The woman goes towards Jesus and kneels down at the feet of the Master. She lays on the floor a little vase, shaped like a potbellied amphora, takes off her veil after removing a long valuable pin, which fastened it to her hair, she removes rings from her fingers and lays everything on the couch near Jesus' feet. She then takes His feet in her hands, first the right one and then the left one, unlaces His sandals and lays them on the floor. She then kisses His feet bursting into tears, she rests her forehead on them, caresses them, while tears stream down her face like drops of rain, shining in the light of the chandelier and wetting those adorable feet.

Jesus turns His head round very slightly and slowly, and His deep eyes rest for a moment on the woman's reclined head. An absolving glance. He then looks again at the centre of the hall, leaving her free in her outburst.

But the others do not: they scoff, wink and sneer. The Pharisee sits up for a moment to have a better view and his eyes express desire, vexation and irony. He desires the woman, and that feeling is evident. He is vexed because she has come in so freely, which may cause the others to think that she is a habitual guest in the house. And he is ironical with regard to Jesus...

But the woman is not aware of anything. She continues to shed torrents of tears noiselessly. She weeps and now and again she sobs. She then lets her hair down, after removing the gold hairpins, which held up her complicated hairdress and she puts also the hairpins

near the rings and the long veil-pin. Her golden locks roll down her back. She takes them with both hands, brings them in front of her and rubs them on Jesus' wet feet, until she sees that they are dry. She dips her fingers into the little vase and takes out a yellowish highly scented ointment. A sweet-smelling perfume, a mixture of lily and tuberose, spreads throughout the hall. The woman uses it profusely, she spreads it, kissing and caressing His feet at the same time.

Jesus looks at her now and again with so much loving pity. John, who looked round in amazement when she burst into tears, cannot detach his eyes from Jesus and the woman and looks at them alternately.

The face of the Pharisee has become more and more sullen. I now hear the well known words of the Gospel and I hear them uttered in a tone and with a look, which cause the old resentful man to lower his head.

I hear the words absolving the woman, who goes away leaving her jewels at Jesus' feet. She has tied her veil round her head, thus gathering together her dishevelled hair as best she can. Jesus, while saying to her: « Go in peace », lays His hand on her reclined head for a moment. A very gentle gesture.

Jesus now says to me:

« What made the Pharisee and his companions lower their heads and is not mentioned in the Gospel, are the words that My spirit, in one glance darted at him and drove into his arid avid soul. I answered him much more than has been reported, because none of the thoughts of those men was concealed from Me. And he understood My mute language, which was more meaningful and reproachful than My words were.

I said to him: "No. Do not make wicked insinuations to justify yourself to yourself. I am not affected by lewdness as you are. She does not come to Me attracted by sensuality. I am not you or like those who are like you. She comes to Me because My countenance and My word, which she heard by chance, have enlightened her soul, which lust had left in utter darkness. And she comes because she wants to overcome her sensuality and she realises, poor creature, that she will never succeed by herself. She loves My spirit, nothing but My spirit, which she perceives is supernaturally good. After so much evil that she received from you all, who have taken advantage of her weakness for your own vices, rewarding her with your lashing scorn, she comes to Me, because she realises that she has found Goodness, Joy and Peace, which she sought in vain in the pomps and vanities of this wicked world. Cure the leprosy of your soul, o hypocritical Pharisee, that you may have the right view of things. Forsake pride of mind and lust

of flesh. Their leprosy is much more fetid than the leprosy of your bodies. My touch can cure you of the latter, because you beg Me to cure you, but I cannot cure you of the leprosy of your souls, because you do not wish to be cured, as you like it. But she wants to recover. And thus I cleanse her, and I free her from the chains of her slavery. The sinner is dead. She is still over there, in those ornaments that she is ashamed to offer Me that I may sanctify them, using them for the needs of My disciples and Mine and for the poor, whom I help by means of the surplus of other people, because I, the Master of the universe, possess nothing now that I am the Saviour of man. She is still here, in the perfume spread on My feet, the perfume that has been humiliated like her hair, on that part of My body that you disdained to refresh with the water of your well, notwithstanding I have walked so far to bring light to you also. The sinner is dead. And Mary is reborn, as beautiful as a modest girl, through her deep sorrow and her righteous love. She washed herself in her tears. And I solemnly tell you, o Pharisee, that between this young man who loves Me in the purity of his youth, and that woman who loves Me in the sincerity of repentance of a heart reborn to Grace, I make no difference. And to the Pure young man and the Repentant woman I entrust the task of understanding My thought as no one else can, as well as the task of rendering the last honours to My Body, and the first greetings (I am not taking into account My Mother's special greetings) when I will rise from the dead". That is what I wanted to tell the Pharisee by means of My countenance.

But I will draw your attention to something else: for your joy and the joy of many. Also at Bethany Mary repeated the gesture that marked the dawn of her redemption. There are personal gestures, which are repeated and are peculiar to a person like the person's style. They are unmistakable gestures. But, as it was fair, at Bethany the gesture was not humiliated so much and it was more confidential in its reverent adoration.

Mary has gone a long way since that dawn of her redemption. A very long way. Love, like a high wind, has blown her high up and far ahead. Love has burnt her like a fire, destroying her impure flesh and making a purified spirit her new master. And Mary, now different in her revived womanly dignity, as she is different in her clothing, which is now as simple as My Mother's, in her hair-style, her looks, her behaviour, her words, this new Mary has a new way to honour Me by means of the same gesture. She takes the last of her vases of perfume, which she kept for Me, and pours it on My feet and My head, without shedding any tears, with a happy countenance due to love and the certainty that she had been forgiven and saved. Mary can now touch My head and anoint Me. Repentance and love have cleansed her by means of the fire of

seraphim and she is a seraph.

Repeat that to yourself, Mary, My little "voice" and repeat it to souls. Go, tell the souls that dare not come to Me because they feel guilty. He who loves much is pardoned much. That is, He who loves Me. You, poor souls, do not know how much the Saviour loves you! Be not afraid of Me. Come. Confidently. Courageously. I open My Heart and My arms to you.

Always remember: "I make no difference between him who loves Me with his spotless purity and him who loves Me in the sincere contrition of a heart reborn to Grace". I am the Saviour. Always remember that.

Go in peace. I bless you. »

22nd January 1944.

I have been thinking all day of Jesus' dictation of yesterday evening and of what I saw and understood, even if it was not said.

In the meantime, by the way, I tell you that the conversation of the commensals, as far as I could understand, that is, the part addressed to Jesus, was about daily events: the Romans, the Law opposed by them, and then the mission of Jesus as Master of a new school. But under the seeming benevolence it was clear that they asked vicious and captious questions to embarrass Him. A difficult task, because Jesus in a few words gave the right and conclusive answer to each subject.

For instance, when they asked Him of which particular school or sect He had become the new master, He replied simply: « Of God's school. It is He Whom I follow in His holy Law and to Whose interests I devote Myself, ensuring that it may be renewed for these little ones (and He lovingly looked at John and in John at all honesthearted people) in all its essence, as it was on the day that the Lord God promulgated it on Sinai. I take men back to the Light of God. »

To the other question, as to what He thought of the abuse of power by Caesar, who had become the ruler of Palestine, He replied: « Caesar is what he is because that is what God wants. Remember the prophet Isaiah. Through divine inspiration, does he not call Asshur "the rod" of His anger? The rod that punishes the people of God, because it has become too detached from God and its outer appearance and spirit are hypocrisy? And does He not say that after using him as a punishment, He will destroy him because he will have abused his task, by becoming too proud and cruel? »

Those are the two replies that impressed me most.

Then this evening my Jesus says to me smiling:

« I should call you as I called Daniel. You are the woman of wishes and you are dear to Me because you want your God so much. And I could continue saying to you what was said to Daniel by My angel: "Be not afraid, because from the first day when you

applied your heart to understand and grieve in the presence of God, your prayers have been heard and they are the reason why I have come". But here it is not the angel who is speaking. I am speaking to you: Jesus.

Mary, I always come when "a heart is anxious to understand". I am not a hard severe God. I am Living Mercy. And I come faster than thought to those who apply to Me. And I went immediately to poor Mary of Magdala, so immersed in sin, with My spirit, as soon as I perceived that the desire to understand was rising in her. The desire to understand the light of God and her own state of darkness. And I became her Light.

I was speaking to many that day, but in actual fact I was speaking only for her. I saw but her who had approached us driven by the vehemence of her soul, which rebelled against the flesh enslaving it. I saw but her with her poor face in turmoil, her forced smile, which endeavoured to hide so much weeping of her heart, under the appearance of false confidence and joy, which were a challenge to the world and herself. I saw but her, more entangled in the bramble than the lost sheep of the parable and she was drowning in the disgust of her own life, a disgust brought to the surface like those deep waves that bring up the water of the bottom.

I did not say great words, neither did I touch any specific subject concerning her, a well known sinner, as I did not wish to mortify her, compelling her to run away, to be ashamed or to come to Me. I left her in peace... I let My word and My look descend into her, fermenting there to turn the impulse of a moment into her glorious holy future. I spoke by means of one of the most gentle parables: a beam of light and kindness flashing just for her. And that evening, while I was setting foot in the house of the proud rich Pharisee, where My word could not fermentate into future glory because it was killed by Pharisaic pride, I already knew that she would come after weeping bitterly in her room of vice and that she had already decided on her future in the light of her tears.

Both the flesh and the thoughts of the men were inflamed with lust when they saw her enter. Everybody looked at her lustfully, except the two "pure ones" present at the banquet: John and I. They all thought that she came because of one of her usual caprices, a true diabolic possession, which drove her to extemporaneous affairs. But Satan was already defeated. And when they all noticed that she did not look at them, they enviously thought that she had come for Me. Man always fouls also the purest things, when he is but flesh and blood. Only the pure have the right view because there is no sin in them upsetting their thoughts.

But there is no reason to be frightened because man does not understand, Mary. God understands. And that is enough for

Heaven. The glory that comes from men does not add an ounce to the glory that is the destiny of the blessed souls in Paradise. Always remember that. Poor Mary of Magdala was always wrongly judged in her good deeds. But she was not wrongly judged in her bad deeds because they were lustful mouthfuls offered to the insatiable hunger of lewd men. She was criticised and wrongly judged at Nain, in the house of the Pharisee and she was criticised and reproached at Bethany, in her own home.

But John, who says a great word, has the key to the last bit of criticism: "Judas... because he was a thief". I say: "The Pharisee and his friends because they were lewd". See? Lust for sensuality, greed for money raise their voices to criticise good deeds. Good people do not criticise. Never. They understand.

But, I would repeat it, the criticism of the world is of no importance. What matters is the judgement of God. »

236. The Harvest Is Rich but the Labourers Are Few. The Parable of the Treasure Hidden in the Field.

29th July 1945.

Jesus is on the road that comes from lake Merom towards the lake of Galilee. He is with the Zealot and Bartholomew near a modest little brook, which nevertheless nourishes many plants, and the trio seem to be waiting for the others who are about to arrive from two different directions.

It is a very warm day, and yet many people have followed the three groups that have been preaching in the country addressing those who are in good health and taking the sick to the Master. Many people who have been cured miraculously form a happy group sitting among the trees, and their joy is such that they do not even feel tired notwithstanding the heat, the dust, the dazzling light, which are a great trial for everybody else.

When the group led by Judas Thaddeus first arrives near Jesus, all those forming it or following it appear to be very tired. The last group to arrive is the one led by Peter and it comprises many people from Korazim and Bethsaida.

« We have finished, Master. But there ought to be many groups... You can see Yourself. It is not possible to walk far, because of the heat. So what can we do? The more we have to do, the more the world seems to be widening out, scattering villages and increasing distances. I never realised that Galilee was so large. We are in a corner of Galilee, just a corner, and yet we cannot evangelize it, so wide it is and so large the number of those who need You and want You » sighs Peter.

« It is not the world that is growing wider. It is the knowledge of our Master that is spreading » replies Thaddeus.

« Yes, it is true. Look how many people. Many have been following us since this morning. During the warmest hours we took shelter in a copse. But even now, when it is almost evening, it is painful to walk. And these poor people are much farther from their homes than we are. If our work keeps growing like this, I do not know what we shall do... » says James of Zebedee.

« The shepherds will be coming too, in Tishri » says Andrew to encourage them.

« Yes! Shepherds, disciples, how lovely! They are only good at saying: "Jesus is the Saviour. He is over there". Nothing else » replies Peter.

« At least people will know where to find Him. Instead now... ! if we come here, they rush here, and while they are coming here, we go there, and they have to run after us. Which is not very pleasant when there are children and sick people. »

Jesus speaks: « You are right, Peter. I feel sorry as well for these souls and this people. The fact that many of them may not find Me at a certain moment, may be the cause of irreparable misfortunes. Look how tired and bewildered are those who are not yet certain of My Truth and look how hungry are those who have already tasted My word and can no longer go without it, and no other word can satisfy them. They look like sheep without a shepherd, wandering about without finding anyone who may lead them and pasture them. I will see to them, but you must help Me, with all your spiritual, moral and physical strength. You will no longer have to go around in large groups, but in couples. And we will send also the best disciples two by two. Because the harvest is really rich. Oh! I will prepare you in summer for this great mission. By the month of Tammuz Isaac will join us with his best disciples. And I will prepare you. But even so you will not be enough. Because the harvest is really rich but the labourers are few. So pray the Lord of the harvest to send many labourers to His harvest. »

« Yes, my Lord. But that will not make much difference to the situation of those who seek You » says James of Alphaeus.

« Why, brother? »

« Because they are looking not only for doctrine and words of Life, but they want to be cured and to be assisted and helped in all their ailments and in the impairments that either Satan or life have brought to their inferior or superior parts. And only You can do that, because Yours is the Power. »

« Those who are one with Me will be able to do what I do and the poor will be helped in all their miseries. But you do not have as yet what is required to do that. Endeavour to overcome yourselves, to trample on your humanity and thus let your spirit triumph. Absorb not only My word, but the spirit of it, that is, sanctify yourselves through it and then you will be able to do everything.

And now let us go and speak to them, as they do not wish to go away unless I speak the word of God to them. Then we shall go back to Capernaum. There will be someone waiting for us there as well... »

« Lord, is it true that Mary of Magdala asked You to forgive her, in the Pharisee's house? »

« It is true, Thomas. »

« And did You forgive her? » asks Philip.

« I did. »

« You did the wrong thing! » exclaims Bartholomew.

« Why? She was sincerely repentant and deserved to be forgiven. »

« But You should not have forgiven her in that house, publicly... » says the Iscariot reproachingly.

« But I do not understand where I was wrong. »

« This is the point: You know who the Pharisees are, how full their heads are of cavils, how they watch You, slander and hate You. One of them in Capernaum was Your friend and that was Simon. And You called a prostitute into his house to desecrate it and cause scandal to Your friend Simon. »

« I did not call her. She came. She was not a prostitute. She repented. That throws a different light on the matter. If they were not overcome with nausea beforehand, when they approached her and desired her, also in My presence, now that she is no longer just flesh, but a soul, they should not feel disgust seeing her enter the house to kneel at My feet and accuse herself weeping, humiliating herself in humble public confession represented by her tears. Simon the Pharisee had his house sanctified by a great miracle: "the resurrection of a soul". Five days ago in the square in Capernaum he asked Me: "Is that the only miracle You worked?" and he replied himself: "Certainly not" showing his desire to see one. And I gave it to him. I chose him to be the witness, the middleman of this engagement of a soul with Grace. He ought to be proud of it. »

« Instead he is scandalised. Perhaps You have lost a friend. »

« I found a soul. It is worth losing a man with his friendship, the poor friendship of a man, to give a soul the friendship of God. »

« It is useless. We cannot get You to consider matters from a human point of view. We are on the earth, Master! Remember that. And the laws and the ideas of the world are in force. You act according to the method of Heaven, You live in the Heaven You have in Your heart, You see everything in the light of Heaven. Poor Master of Mine! How divinely unsuited You are to live among us wicked people! » exclaims Judas embracing Him. The apostle, who is amazed and desolate at the same time, concludes: « And I am sorry because, through too much perfection, You make enemies of too many people. »

« Do not be sorry, Judas. It is written that it must be thus. But how do you know that Simon is offended? »

« He did not say that he is offended. But he made Thomas and me understand that it should not have happened. You should not have invited her to his house, which only honest people enter. »

« Well! With regard to the honesty of the people going to Simon's house, let us drop the subject » says Peter.

And Matthew adds: « I could say that the perspiration of prostitutes poured several times on the floors, on the table and beyond them in the house of Simon, the Pharisee. »

« But not publicly » retorts Judas.

« No. Hypocrisy concealed it. »

« So you can see that there is a difference. »

« There is also a difference between a prostitute who goes in to say: "I am giving up my disgraceful sinful life" and one who goes in to say: "Here I am to commit sin with you" »

« Matthew is right » they all say.

« Of course, he is right. But they do not reason the way we do. We must come to a compromise with them, and adjust ourselves to their ways to have them friendly. »

« No, never, Judas. In truth, honesty, in moral behaviour there are neither adjustments nor compromises » thunders Jesus. And He concludes: « In any case I know that I acted rightly and for a good purpose. And that is enough. Let us go and dismiss those tired people. »

And He goes towards those who are spread under the trees, looking in His direction, anxiously waiting to hear Him.

« Peace to you all who have walked for miles and in dog days to come and hear the Gospel. I solemnly tell you that you are beginning to really understand what the Kingdom of God is, how precious its possession is and how blissful to belong to it. And labour is no longer burdensome for you, as it is for others, because you are ruled by your soul, which says to the flesh: "Rejoice because I am oppressing you. I am doing it for your own happiness. When you are joined to me again, after resurrection, you will love me for crushing you and you will see me as your second saviour". Do your souls not say that? Of course they do! You now base your actions on the teaching of the parables I spoke to you some time ago. But I will now give you further light to make you love more and more the Kingdom which awaits you and the value of which cannot be measured.

Listen: A man went by chance into a field to get some mould for his little kitchen garden and while he was digging with some difficulty the very hard soil, he came across a vein of precious metal. What did the man do then? He covered up with earth what he had discovered. He did not mind working a little more, because the

discovery justified the work. He then went home, he gathered together all his wealth consisting of money and valuables and he sold the latter to make more money. He then went to the owner of the field and said to him: "I like your field. How much do you want for it?" "I am not selling it" replied the owner. But the man offered larger and larger sums of money disproportionate to the value of the field, and at last he succeeded in convincing the owner who thought: "This man must be mad! And supposing he is, I am going to take advantage of the situation. I will accept the money he offers me. It is not a matter of money-grubbing, because he insists in offering me it. With that money I will be able to buy at least three more fields, and better ones as well". And he sold the field and was sure he had done very good business. But it was the other man who had done a wonderful deal because he gave away what could be stolen by thieves, or lost or used up, and he gained a treasure, which being real and natural, was inexhaustible. It was worth while sacrificing what he had, to make that purchase, although for some time he possessed nothing but the field, because in actual fact he possessed, and for ever, the treasure hidden in it.

You have understood all that and you behave like the man of the parable. Give up transient riches in order to possess the Kingdom of Heaven. Sell them or give them to the fools in the world and let them laugh at you because the world thinks it is foolish to do that. Do that, always behave like that, and your Father Who is in Heaven will rejoice giving you one day your seat in the Kingdom.

Go back to your homes before the Sabbath comes, and on the day of the Lord meditate on the parable of the treasure, which is the heavenly Kingdom. Peace be with you. »

The crowds slowly spread along the road and the country paths, while Jesus goes towards Capernaum as night is falling.

He arrives there at night. They noiselessly cross the silent town in the moonlight, which is the only light in the dark unevenly paved narrow streets. They silently enter the little kitchen garden near the house, as they think that everybody is in bed. Instead a lamp is lit in the kitchen and three shadows, made mobile by the flickering flame, are thrown on the white wall of the stone-oven.

« There is somebody waiting for You, Master. But it is not possible to go on like this! I will go and tell them that You are too tired. Go up on to the terrace in the meantime. »

« No, Simon. I am going into the kitchen. If Thomas kept these people here, there must be a good reason for it. »

In the meantime those inside the house have heard the whispering and Thomas, the landlord, comes to the door.

« Master, the usual lady is here. She has been waiting for you since yesterday evening, at sunset. She is with a servant » and he adds in a low voice: « She is very nervous. She weeps all the time... »

« All right. Tell her to come upstairs. Where did she sleep? »

« She did not want to sleep. Then she withdrew to my room for a few hours, at dawn. I let the servant sleep in one of your beds. »

« Very well. He can sleep there also tonight. And you will sleep in Mine. »

« No, Master. I shall sleep on some mats on the terrace. I shall sleep very well just the same. »

Jesus goes up to the terrace. Martha follows Him.

« Peace to you, Martha. »

A sob is her reply.

« Are you still weeping? Are you not happy? »

Martha shakes her head.

« But why? »...

There is a long pause full of sobs. At last she moans: « Mary has not come back for many nights. And we cannot find her. Neither I nor Marcella nor the nurse can find her... She went out after ordering the wagon to be ready for her. She was magnificently dressed... Oh! she would not put on my dress again! ... She was not half -nude - she has some such dresses as well - but it was still a very provoking one... And she took jewels and perfumes... and has not come back. She dismissed the servant when they reached the first houses in Capernaum saying: "I will come back in the company of other people". But she has not come back. She deceived us! Or she felt lonely, perhaps she was tempted... or something has happened to her... She has not come back... » And Martha falls on her knees, weeping, with her head reclined on her forearm, which is resting on a pile of empty sacks.

Jesus looks at her and like an overlord He says slowly and confidently: « Do not weep. Mary came to Me three evenings ago. She anointed My feet and left at My feet all her jewels. She thus consecrated herself, and for ever, and has become one of My disciples. Do not disparage her in your heart. She has excelled you. »

« But where is my sister then? » exclaims Martha looking up with a troubled face. « Why has she not come back home? Has she been assailed? Has she taken a boat and drowned herself? Or has a rejected lover carried her off? Oh! Mary! My Mary! I had found her and I have lost her at once! » Martha is really beside herself. She does not consider that those downstairs can hear her. Neither does she consider that Jesus can tell her where her sister is. She is in despair and does not ponder on anything.

Jesus takes her by the wrists and compels her to be still and to listen to Him, towering above her with His height and dominating her with His magnetic look. « That is enough! I want you to have faith in My words. I want you to be generous. Have you understood? » He does not let her go until Martha calms down a little. « Your sister has gone to savour her joy, and she has enveloped

herself in holy solitude because she is full of the supersensitive modesty of redeemed souls. I told you in advance. She cannot bear the kind but inquisitive look of relatives on her new dress of a bride of Grace. And what I say is always true. You must believe Me. »

« Yes, my Lord, I do. But my Mary has been too long a prey to the demon, He has recaptured her at once, he... »

« He is avenging himself on you for the prey he has lost for ever. Am I therefore to see that you, the strong woman, are becoming his prey through a foolish dismay for no reason whatsoever? Am I to see that because of her, who now believes in Me, you are going to lose the beautiful faith that I always saw in you? Martha! Look at Me carefully. Listen to Me. Do not listen to Satan. Do you not know that when he is compelled to give up a prey, because God has defeated him, he busies himself at once to find other victims, because he is an untiring torturer of human beings and an indefatigable thief of God's rights? Do you not know that the recovery of a soul is consolidated by the torture of another good faithful soul that resists the demon's attacks? Do you not know that nothing of what exists and happens in creation is uncontrolled, but everything follows an eternal law of subordination and consequence, whereby the deed of one person has very wide natural and supernatural repercussions? You are weeping here, you are tormented here by a horrible doubt, but you remain faithful to your Christ also in this hour of darkness. Not far from you, but in a place unknown to you, Mary feels that her last doubt on the infinity of forgiveness received is being dissipated and her weeping changes into smiles and her shadow into light. It is your torture that guided her where there is peace, where souls are regenerated near the immaculate Mother, Who is such Life that She was granted the privilege of giving birth to the Christ, Who is the Life. Your sister is with My Mother. Oh! she is not the first to furl sail in that peaceful harbour after the gentle ray of the living Star of Mary called her to Her loving bosom, out of silent but active love for Her Son! Your sister is at Nazareth. »

« But how did she go there if she does not know Your Mother, or Your house?... By herself... At night... Thus... Without means... Wearing that dress... Such a long way... How? »

« How? As a tired swallow flies back to its native nest, crossing seas and mountains, through storms, fog and hostile winds. As swallows fly to hibernating places. Instinct guides them, warmth invites them, the sun calls them. She also went to the ray inviting her... to the universal Mother. And we will see her come back happily at dawn... coming out for ever from darkness, with a Mother beside her, Mine, never to be an orphan again. Can you believe that? »

« Yes, my Lord. »

Martha looks as if she were charmed. Jesus in fact has been the dominator. Tall, upright, and yet lightly bent over Martha who was kneeling, He has spoken slowly, but incisively, as if He wished to transfuse Himself into the perturbed disciple. I have seldom seen Him so powerful, to persuade by means of His word a person listening to Him. But at the end, what light, what smile is on His face! Martha's face mirrors it with a smile and a milder light.

« And now go and rest. With My peace. »

Martha kisses His hands and goes downstairs in better spirits...

237. The Magdalene Is Accompanied by Mary among the Disciples.

30th July 1945.

« I think we are going to have a storm today, Master. Can You see those leaden clouds advancing from behind the Hermon? And look how the lake is ruffling ! And You can feel the gusts of the north wind alternating with wide warm Sirocco blasts. Whirlwinds: a sure sign of a storm. »

« In how long, Simon? »

« Before the first hour is over. See how the fishermen are hurrying back. They can hear the lake grumble and growl. It will soon be leaden as well, then it will become pitch-black and finally it will burst forth in all its fury. »

« But it looks so calm! » remarks Thomas incredulously.

« You are familiar with gold, and I with water. It will be as I say. It is not even a sudden storm. It is brewing with clear signs. The surface of the water is calm, only tiny ripples, as if it were nothing. But if you were out in a boat! You would hear thousands of knuckles striking the keel and shaking the boat in a strange way. The water is already bubbling underneath. Just wait for the sign from the sky and then you will see!... Let the north wind become knotted with Sirocco! And then!... Ehi! women! Take in what you have been hanging out and shelter your domestic animals. In a short while it will be raining in buckets. »

In fact the sky is becoming more and more greenish, with slateveins caused by the continuous flowing of clouds that seem to be erupted by great Hermon. They drive dawn back to where it came from, as if the hours were falling back towards night instead of proceeding towards midday. Only a sunbeam persists in shining through the barrier of dark clouds tinging the top of a hill southwest of Capernaum with an unreal yellow-green hue. The lake has changed from sky-blue to purple-blue and the foam of the first small broken waves looks oddly white against the dark water. There are no boats on the lake now. Fishermen hasten to beach their boats, to put away nets, baskets, sails and oars, while

peasants make haste to get their harvest in, they ensure that awnings are properly fastened to poles and they close the cattle in their stables; women rush to the well before the rain starts, or they gather together the children, who got up early, and push them into the houses, like brooding-hens aware of an oncoming hail-storm.

« Simon, come with Me. Call also Martha's servant and My brother James. Get a large piece of canvas. A strong large piece. There are two women on the road and we must go and meet them. »

Peter looks at Him curiously, but he obeys without wasting any time. On the way, while they are running southwards through the village, Simon asks: « But who are they? »

« My Mother and Mary of Magdala. »

The shock is such that Peter stops for a moment as if he were nailed to the ground and he exclaims: « Your Mother and Mary of Magdala?!?! Together?!?! » He then resumes running, as neither Jesus nor James nor the servant have stopped. But he repeats: « Your Mother and Mary of Magdala! Together!... Since when? »

« Since she is Mary of Jesus. Be quick, Simon, it is beginning to rain... »

Peter strives to keep up with his companions, who are taller and faster than he is. Clouds of dust now rise from the parched road, blown by a wind, which is becoming stronger and stronger every moment, ruffling the lake and raising breakers, which pound roaring on the shore. When it is possible to see the lake it looks like a huge cauldron boiling furiously. Waves three or four feet high rise in all directions, clashing, merging, swelling, then parting in opposite directions, seeking other waves to plunge into: a foaming duel of wave crests, of swelling masses of water, of roaring billows reaching the shore and lashing the houses closest to it. When houses conceal the view of the lake, the latter discloses its presence with a roar exceeding the howl of the wind that bends trees tearing off foliage and fruit: a deafening roar exceeding the rumble of prolonged threatening thunders, preceded by flashes of lightning, which are becoming more and more frequent and powerful.

« I wonder how frightened those women must be » mumbles Peter panting.

« Not My Mother. I do not know about the other. But if we do not hurry they will certainly get drenched. »

They have left Capernaum about one hundred yards behind, proceeding through clouds of dust and very heavy rain, a real downpour, which furrows obliquely the gloomy air so violently that the rain is pulverised and thus blinds them and takes away their breath, when they see two women running and seeking shelter under a large tree.

« There they are. Let us run! »

Although Peter's love for Mary lends wings to his feet, short-legged

as he is and not a very good runner, he arrives when Jesus and James have already covered the two women with a large piece of a sail.

« We cannot stop here. There is the danger of thunderbolts and in a short while the road will be a torrent. Let us go, Master. At least as far as the nearest house » says Peter out of breath.

They set out with the women in the middle of them, holding the canvas over their heads and backs. The first word that Jesus addresses to Mary, who is still wearing the dress she had on the evening of the banquet in Simon's house, with a mantle of the Blessed Virgin on her shoulders, is: « Are you afraid, Mary? »

Mary Magdalene, whose head is lowered under her veil and whose hair has become thoroughly dishevelled running in the rain, lowers her head even further, blushes and whispers: « No, my Lord. »

Also Our Lady has lost some hairpins and She looks like a little girl with her plaits hanging down her back. She smiles at Her Son Who is beside Her and speaks to Him through that smile.

« You are soaking, Mary » says James of Alphaeus touching Our Lady's veil and mantle.

« It does not matter. We are not getting wet now. Is that right, Mary? He has rescued us also from the rain » says Mary kindly to the Magdalene, of whose painful embarrassment She is fully aware. Mary nods assent.

« Your sister will be happy to see you. She is at Capernaum. She was looking for you » says Jesus.

Mary looks up for a moment and stares at Jesus with her beautiful eyes, while Jesus speaks to her with the simplicity He uses with the other women disciples. But she does not say anything. She is stifled by too many emotions.

Jesus concludes: « I am glad I kept her. I will let you go after I have blessed you. »

His last words are lost in the sharp crash of a nearby thunderbolt. The Magdalene is fear-struck for a moment. She covers her face with her hands, bends her head bursting into tears.

« Don't be afraid! » says Peter encouraging her. « It is over now. You must never be afraid when you are with Jesus. »

Also James, who is beside the Magdalene, says to her: « Do not weep. The houses are not far now. »

« I am not crying for fear... I am weeping because He said to me that He will bless me... I... I... » but she can say no more.

The Blessed Virgin intervenes in order to calm her saying: « Mary, you have already overcome your storm. Think no more about it. Now everything is serene and peaceful. Is that right, My Son? »

« Yes, Mother. It is all very true. Before long the sun will be shining,

and everything will look more beautiful, cleaner and fresher than yesterday. It will be the same with you, Mary. »

And His Blessed Mother, pressing the Magdalene's hand continues: « I shall repeat your words to Martha. I am glad that I can see her at once and tell her how her Mary is full of good will. »

Peter, paddling in the watery mud and bearing patiently with the deluge, comes out from under the canvas and runs towards a house to ask for shelter.

« No, Simon » says Jesus. « We all prefer to go home. Is that right? »

Everybody agrees and Peter goes back under the piece of sail.

Capernaum is like a desert. Wind, rain, thunder and lightning prevail there, together with hailstones, which are now striking houses and terraces sounding and bouncing. The lake is dreadfully impressive. The waves lash the houses near it, because the little beach has disappeared and the boats fastened near the houses seem to have sunk so full they are of water, which breakers keep pouring into them, while the water already in them overflows.

They run into the kitchen garden, which has become a huge puddle with rubbish floating on the muddy water, and then enter the kitchen where they are all gathered.

Martha gives a scream when she sees her sister held by the hand by Mary. She clasps her neck, but does not realise how wet she is, she kisses her and calls her: « Miri, Miri, my darling! » Perhaps that is the pet-name by which they called the Magdalene when she was a little girl.

Mary is weeping, with her head resting on her sister's shoulder, and covers Martha's dark dress with her thick golden hair, the only shining thing in the dark kitchen where a little fire of brushwood gives some light, while a little lamp hardly sheds any.

The apostles are dumbfounded and so are the landlord and his wife, who look into the kitchen upon hearing Martha's scream, and after a moment of understandable curiosity they withdraw discreetly.

When her effusions of loves have somewhat calmed down, Martha notices Jesus and Mary and realises that it is strange that they should be all together. She thus asks her sister, Our Lady and Jesus - I could not say whom she asks more insistently -: « But... how is it that you are all together? »

« The storm, Martha, was approaching. I went with Simon, James and your servant to meet the two pilgrims. »

Martha is so shocked that she does not consider the fact that Jesus was so certain in going to meet them and does not ask: « But... did You know? ». The question, however, is asked by Thomas, who gets no reply because Martha says to her sister: « But why were you with Mary? »

The Magdalene lowers her head.

Our Lady comes to her rescue taking her by the hand and saying: « She came to Me as a pilgrim goes to a place where she can be told which road to take to reach her destination. And she said to Me: "Teach me what I must do to belong to Jesus". And since she is animated by thorough good will, she understood that wisdom at once! And I found that she was ready to be taken by the hand and led to You, My Son, and to you, good Martha, and to you, brotherdisciples, and say to you: "Here is Your disciple and your sister, who will give but supernatural joys to her Lord and to her brothers". I ask you to believe Me and to love her as Jesus and I love her. »

The apostles then gather round her greeting their new sister. There is, of course, a certain amount of curiosity... But how could that be avoided?! After all... they are still men...

It is Peter's common sense that says: « That's all very well. You have assured her assistance and holy friendship. But we ought to consider that our Mother and sister are drenched to the skin... We are soaking, as well, to tell you the truth... But they are in a worse situation. Their hair is dripping water like willow trees after a storm and their clothes are wet and muddy. Let us light a fire, and get dresses for them and prepare some warm food... »

Everybody becomes busy: Martha takes the two drenched travellers into the room, the fire is kindled and the wet garments, veils and mantles are hung in front of it. I do not know what arrangements they are making in the room... I see that Martha, who has found once again her energy of a very good housekeeper, comes and goes solicitously, carrying basins and hot water, cups of hot milk, garments lent by the landlady, to assist the two Maries...

238. The Parable of the Fishermen.

31st July 1945.

They are all gathered in the large room upstairs. The violent storm has turned into unceasing rain, which at times becomes a drizzle and almost stops and then suddenly changes to a downpour. The lake is certainly not blue today, it is yellowish with streaks of foam when the wind blows or it rains heavily. The hills are all very wet, and tree branches are still bent, thoroughly soaked. A few branches, broken by the wind, are hanging loose and many leaves torn off by hail stones are carried away by little streams everywhere: yellowish water which pours leaves, stones, and earth from the hillsides into the lake. The light is dim, greenish.

In the room there are the Blessed Virgin Mary, Martha and the Magdalene, sitting near a window overlooking the hills, and there are also two women, whom I do not know. But I am under the impression

that they are already known to Jesus, Mary and the apostles, as they are apparently at ease. They certainly are more relaxed than the Magdalene is: she is sitting still, with her head lowered, between the Virgin Mary and Martha. They are now wearing their clothes, which have been dried by the fireplace and have been brushed to remove mud stains. No, I am wrong. The Blessed Virgin has put on Her dark blue woollen dress. But the Magdalene has borrowed a dress, which, tall and buxom as she is, is too short and tight for her and she endeavours to make up for the deficiency by enveloping herself in her sister's mantle. She has gathered her hair into two thick plaits, which she has somehow managed to tie in a knot on the nape of her neck, because it takes more than a few hairpins picked up there and then, to support the weight of her hair. In fact I have always noticed that the Magdalene, in addition to hairpins, uses a thin straw-coloured ribbon, which looks like a fine diadema and blends with her golden hair.

Jesus, the apostles and the landlord are on the other side of the room, some are sitting on stools, some on the window-sills. Martha's servant is not there. Peter and the other fishermen are watching the weather and making forecasts for the following day. Jesus listens or replies to this one and that one.

« If I had known about this, I would have told my mother to come. It is only fair that the woman should feel at home with her companions » says James of Zebedee casting sidelong glances at the women.

« Eh! If we had known!... But why didn't mother come with Mary? » Thaddeus asks his brother James.

« I don't know. I would like to know myself. »

« Is she perhaps not feeling well? »

« Mary would have told us. »

« I will ask Her » and Thaddeus goes towards the women.

I can hear Mary's clear voice reply: « She is well. But I did not want her to overwork herself in this heat. We ran away like two little girls, did we not, Mary? Mary came late in the evening, when it was dark and we left at dawn. I only said to Alphaeus: » « Here is the key. I shall be back soon. Tell Mary". And I came away. »

« We shall go back together, Mother. As soon as the weather is settled and Mary has a dress, we shall all go together through Galilee and we shall accompany our sisters to the safest road. So Porphirea, Susanna, and your wives and daughters, Philip and Bartholomew, will meet them. » His expression: « Will meet them », instead of saying: « will meet Mary » is really exquisite. And it is also a strong one. It demolishes every prejudice and mental reservation of the apostles concerning the Magdalene. His words impose her, overcoming their reluctance, her shame, everything.

Martha's face shines with joy, Mary Magdalene blushes and her countenance is imploring, grateful, upset; what can I say?... The Most Holy Mother smiles kindly.

« Where shall we go first, Master? »

« To Bethsaida. Afterwards we shall go to Nazareth via Magdala, Tiberias and Cana. From Nazareth we shall proceed to Bethlehem in Galilee via Japhia and Shimron and then to Sicaminon and Caesarea... » Jesus is interrupted by an outburst of weeping of the Magdalene. He raises His head, looks at her and then continues as nothing had happened: « At Caesarea you will find your wagon. That is the instruction I gave the servant and you will go to Bethany. We shall meet later, at the Feast of the Tabernacles. »

Mary Magdalene collects herself at once, she does not reply to her sister's questions, but she goes out of the room and probably withdraws to the kitchen for a little while.

« Jesus, Mary suffers on hearing that she has to come to certain towns. We must understand her... I am saying this more for the disciples than for You » remarks Martha humbly and worriedly.

« That is true, Martha. But it must be so. If she does not face the world at once and does not overcome public opinion, which is a dreadful torturer, her heroic conversion will be paralysed. She must do that at once and in our company. »

« While she is with us no one will say anything to her. I can assure you, Martha, also on behalf of all my companions » promises Peter.

« Of course! We shall treat her as a sister. That is what Mary said she is and that is what she will be for us » confirms Thaddeus.

« After all!... We are all sinners and the world did not spare us either. So we can understand her struggle » says the Zealot.

« I understand her more than anyone else. It is very meritorious to live where we sinned. People know who we are!... It is a torture. But it is justice and glory to resist there. Precisely because the power of God is manifest in us, we spur others to turn, without even uttering words » says Matthew.

« You can see, Martha, that your sister is understood and loved by everybody. And she will be loved and understood more and more. She will be a reference mark for so many guilty and fearful souls. She is a great strength also for good people. Because after shaking off the last fetters of her humanity Mary will be a fire burning with love. She has only given a different course to the exuberance of her feelings. She has raised her powerful faculty to love to a supernatural level. And she will work wonders there. I can assure you. She is still upset now. But you will see her become calmer and stronger in her new life as days go by. In Simon's house I said: "She is pardoned much because she loves much". I now solemnly tell you that she will be forgiven everything, because she will love her God with all her strength, her soul, her thought, her

blood, her flesh, to the extent of holocaust. »

« She is lucky to deserve such words! I wish I deserved them, too » sighs Andrew.

« You? But you deserve them already! Come here, my fisherman. I want to tell you a parable that seems to have been thought up just for you. »

« Just a moment, Master. I am going to call Mary. She is so anxious to become acquainted with Your doctrine!... »

While Martha goes out the others arrange their seats so as to form a semicircle round Jesus. The two sisters come back and sit once again near the Blessed Virgin.

Jesus begins to speak: « Some fishermen took to the open sea and cast their net and after due time they hauled it on board. They were doing their work with considerable difficulty according to the instructions of a master, who had entrusted them with the task of supplying his town with choice fish, and had said to them: "Do not bother to bring ashore unwholesome or inferior quality fish. Throw them back into the sea. Other fishermen will catch them and as they work for another master, they will take them to his town, because they consume there what is harmful and thus makes the town of my enemy more and more horrible. Nothing unhealthy is to enter my beautiful, bright, holy town".

Thus, after hauling the net on board the fishermen began their selection work. It was a good catch and the fish differed in appearance, size and colour. Some looked beautiful but their flesh was full of bones and tasted unpleasant; their bellies were full of mud, worms and rotten seaweed, which accentuated the bad taste of the fish. Others instead were ugly looking, like the sinister faces of criminals or resembled nightmare monsters, but the fishermen knew that their flesh was exquisite. Others were so insignificant that no one paid any attention to them. The fishermen continued their work until the baskets were all full of choice fish and only cheap fish were left in the net. "That is enough. The baskets are full. Let us throw the rest into the sea" said many of the fishermen.

But one of them, who had spoken very little, whilst the others had either exalted or derided every fish they happened to handle, went on searching in the net and among the cheap fish he found two or three that he placed on top of the baskets. "What are you doing?" the others asked him. "The baskets are full of beautiful fish. You are now spoiling them by placing that poor fish on top of them. You seem to consider them as the most beautiful of the lot". "Leave me alone. I know this kind of fish and I know how delicious it is".

That is the parable, which ends with the blessing of the master for the patient, skilful, silent fisherman who was able to select the

best fish in the great mass of them. Listen now to its application.

The master of the beautiful, bright holy town is the Lord. The city is the Kingdom of Heaven. The fishermen: My disciples. The fish of the sea: mankind, where every kind of people are present. The good fish: the saints.

The master of the dreadful town is Satan. The horrible town: Hell. His fishermen: the world, flesh, wicked passions embodied in Satan's servants, both spiritual, that is demons, and human, that is men, who corrupt their fellow men. The bad fish: mankind unworthy of the Kingdom of Heaven: damned souls.

Among the fishermen of souls for the City of God there will always be those who emulate the skill of the patient fisherman, who perseveres in his search just in those strata of mankind where his less patient companions pick only what appears to be good at first sight. And unfortunately there will be also some fishermen, who, being too absent-minded and talkative - attention and silence are required for the selection work in order to hear the voices of souls and supernatural indications - will not see the good fish and will lose them. And there will be some who through excessive intolerance will reject souls because their exterior aspect is not perfect, whilst they are excellent with regard to the rest.

What does it matter, if one of the fish you catch for Me shows signs of past struggles and mutilations due to many causes, if they do not injure his spirit? What does it matter to you, if one of them was wounded in freeing himself from the Enemy and presents himself with such wounds, if his interior clearly shows his will to belong to God? Tried souls are reliable souls. More reliable than those souls that are like children protected by swaddling clothes, cradles and mothers, and sleep peacefully after being fed, or smile happily, but who later on in life, when they become of age and can reason and have to face the vicissitudes of life, may be the cause of unpleasant surprises because of their moral deviations.

I wish to remind you of the parable of the prodigal son. And you will hear many more because I will always endeavour to teach you right judgement in examining consciences and in selecting the best method to guide consciences, which are individual and therefore each has its own special way of feeling and reacting to temptations and to your teaching. Do not think that it is easy to select souls. Far from it! It takes a spiritual eye shining with divine light and it takes an intellect infused with divine Wisdom, and possession of virtues in heroic degree, first of all charity. It is necessary to be able to concentrate on meditation because each soul is an obscure text to be read and meditated. And continuous union with God is required, forgetting all selfish interests. One must live for souls and for God, and be able to overcome prejudices, resentments, aversion. It is necessary to be as kind as a father and as hard as a

warrior. Kind to give advice and to encourage. Hard to be able to say: "That is not allowed and you shall not do it". Or: "It is right to do that and you shall do it". Because - and you must consider this carefully - many souls will be thrown into the ponds of hell. But not only the souls of sinners. There will be also the souls of evangelical fishermen: of those who will have failed in their ministry, contributing thus to the loss of many souls.

The day will come, the last day of the earth, the first of the completed and eternal Jerusalem, when the angels, like the fishermen of the parable, will separate the just from the wicked and at the inexorable command of the Judge, the good will pass into Heaven and the wicked into the eternal fire. And then the truth will be made known concerning the fishermen and the fish, hypocrisy will collapse and the people of God will appear as they are, with their leaders and those saved by the leaders. We shall then see that many, who were outwardly insignificant and ill-treated, are the brightest ones in Heaven, and that the quiet patient fishermen are the ones who have done most and now shine with as many gems as the souls they saved.

I have told you the parable and explained it. »

« And my brother?!... Oh! but... » Peter looks at him... and then at the Magdalene...

« No, Simon. I have no merit there. It was all the Master's work » says Andrew frankly.

« So, are the other fishermen, Satan's I mean, going to get the remnants? » asks Philip.

« They endeavour to take the best, the souls capable of the greatest prodigy of Grace, and they make use of the same men to do so, beside their own temptations. There are so many in the world who for a mess of pottage sell their birthright! »

« Master, the other day You said that there are many who allow themselves to be seduced by the allurements of the world. Are they those who fish for Satan? » asks James of Alphaeus.

« Yes, My brother. In that parable man allowed himself to be seduced by much money, which could give him much pleasure, losing thus every right to the Treasury of the Kingdom. But I solemnly tell you that out of one hundred men only one third can resist the temptation of gold or other enticements, and of that third only half can do it heroically. The world is dying suffocated because it voluntarily overburdens itself with the ties of sin. It is better to be devoid of everything rather than possess mean and illusive riches. Endeavour to imitate wise jewellers, who, when they are informed that a very rare pearl has been found, do not bother to keep so many small jewels in their safes, but they get rid of everything to buy the wonderful pearl. »

« Why then do You say that there is a difference in the missions »

with which You entrust those who follow You, and You say that we have to consider those missions as a gift of God? Should we not forgo them as well, because they are but crumbs compared to the Kingdom of Heaven » says Bartholomew.

« Not crumbs: they are means. They would be crumbs, or better still, they would be dirty straw, if they became man's aim in life. Those who busy themselves to obtain a position with a human profit, turn that position, even if it is a holy one, into dirty straw. You must instead accept it obediently, as a joyful duty and a complete holocaust, and you will turn it into a very rare pearl. A mission is a holocaust if fulfilled unreservedly, it is martyrdom and a glory. It drips tears, perspiration, blood, but forms a crown of eternal royalty. »

« You can really answer all questions! »

« Have you understood? Do you understand what I say by means of comparisons taken from every day life, but enlightened by a supernatural light that explains their eternal meaning? »

« Yes, Master, we do. »

« Remember then the method to teach crowds. Because that is one of the secrets of scribes and rabbis: to remember. I solemnly tell you that each of you, imbued with the wisdom that ensures the possession of the Kingdom of Heaven, is like the father of a family who takes from his treasury what is necessary for his family, making use of old and new things, for one only purpose, which is the welfare of his children. It is no longer raining. Let us leave the women in peace and go to old Tobit who is about to open his spiritual eyes on the dawn of next life. Peace to you, women. »

239. Marjiam Teaches Mary Magdalene the « Our Father ».

1st August 1945.

The sky is once again clear over the Sea of Galilee. Now that the rain has washed away the dust, everything seems more beautiful than before the storm. The air is perfectly clear and looking at the sky you get the impression that it is higher up and lighter... a transparent veil stretched between the earth and the splendour of Paradise. The lake reflects the deep blue of the sky and its turquoise water is a quiet charming sight.

It is dawning. Jesus with His Mother, Martha and Mary Magdalene embarks in Peter's boat. In addition to Peter and Andrew, also the Zealot, Philip and Bartholomew are with Him. Matthew, Thomas, Jesus' cousins, the Iscariot are instead in the other boat with James and John. They are sailing towards Bethsaida, a short voyage favoured by a fair wind. The crossing lasts only a few minutes.

When they are about to arrive, Jesus says to Bartholomew and to

his inseparable companion Philip: « You will go and inform your womenfolk. I am coming to your houses today. » And He stares at them meaningfully.

« We will, Master. Are You not granting me or Philip the pleasure of having You as our guest? »

« We are staying only until sunset and I do not wish to deprive Simon Peter of the joy of Marjiam's company. »

The boat rubs against the shore and stops. They disembark and Philip and Bartholomew part from their companions to go to the village.

« Where are those two going? » Peter asks the Master Who was the first to disembark and is now beside him.

« To inform their women. »

« Then, I will go and tell Porphirea, too. »

« It is not necessary. Porphirea is so kind that it is not necessary to prepare her in any way. Her heart can give but kindness. »

Peter's face shines with joy on hearing the praise of his wife and does not say anything else.

In the meantime also the women have disembarked, on a plank placed for them as a wharf, and they go towards Simon's house.

Marjiam, who is taking his sheep out to browse on the fresh grass on the lower hillsides of Bethsaida, is the first to see them and he announces them with a cry of joy running to embrace Jesus, Who has bent to kiss him. He then goes to Peter. Also Porphirea, whose hands are covered with flour, arrives and bows, greeting them.

« Peace to you, Porphirea. You were not expecting us so soon, were you? But I was anxious to bring My Mother to you, together with two women disciples, as well as My blessing. My Mother was anxious to see the boy again. There he is in Her arms. And the women disciples wanted to meet you... this is Simon's wife: the good and silent disciple, more active in her obedience than many others. And these are Martha and Mary from Bethany. Two sisters. Love one another. »

« Those You bring to me are dearer to me than my own blood, Master. Come. My house is more beautiful every time You set foot in it. »

Mary approaches Porphirea smiling and embraces her saying: « I see that you are really a loving mother. The boy is already much better and is happy. Thank you. »

« Oh! Woman blessed above every other woman! I know that it was because of You that I had the joy of being called mother. And You must know that I will never grieve You by not living up to that privilege. Come in, with the sisters... »

Marjiam looks at the Magdalene curiously. Many thoughts must be crossing his mind. At last he says: « But... you were not at

Bethany... »

« No, I was not. But I shall always be there from now on » says the Magdalene blushing and smiling faintly. She caresses the boy saying: « Even if we have just met, do you love me? »

« Yes, because you are good. You have wept, have you not? That is why you are good. And your name is Mary, isn't it? Also my mother's name was Mary and she was good. Every woman, whose name is Mary, is good. But » he concludes, not to offend Porphirea and Martha, « but also many of those with other names are good. What was your mother's name? »

« Eucheria... and she was so good » and two large tears stream down the face of Mary of Magdala.

« Are you weeping because she is dead? » asks the boy, and he caresses her beautiful hands, which she has crossed on her dark dress, which is obviously one of Martha's adapted for her, because its hem has been let down. And he adds: « You must not weep. You know, we are not alone. Our mothers are always near us. Jesus says so. And they are like guardian angels. Jesus says that also. And if we are good, they will come and meet us when we die and we go up to God in our mother's arms. It is true, you know? He said so! »

Mary Magdala clasps her little consoler in her arms and kisses him saying: « Then pray that I may become good. »

« But are you not already? Only those who are good go with Jesus... And if one is not completely good, one becomes good, in order to become a disciple of Jesus. Because you cannot teach what you do not know. We cannot say: "Forgive" if we do not forgive first. Neither can we say: "You must love your neighbour" if we do not love him first. Do you know Jesus' prayer? »

« No, I don't. »

« Of course, you have been with Him only a short time. It is so beautiful, you know? It mentions all these things. Listen how beautiful it is. » And Marjiam slowly says the « Our Father » with deep sentiment and faith.

« How well you know it! » says Mary of Magdala admiringly.

« My mother taught me it by night and Jesus' Mother by day. If you wish so, I will teach you it. Do you wish to come with me? The sheep are bleating. They are hungry. I am going to take them to the pasture. Come with me. I will teach you how to pray and you will become thoroughly good » and he takes her by the hand.

« But I do not know whether the Master wants... »

« Go, by all means, Mary. You have an innocent child as a friend and some little lambs... You may go, tranquilly... »

Mary of Magdala goes out with the boy and she can be seen going away preceded by the three sheep. Jesus is looking on... and the others, too.

« My poor sister! » exclaims Martha.

« Do not pity her. She is a flower straightening its stem after a storm. Can you hear her?... She is laughing... Innocence is always a consolation. »

240. Jesus Is the Powerful Lover. The Parable of the Lost Drachma.

2nd August 1945.

The boat is sailing along the coast from Capernaum to Magdala.

Mary of Magdala is for the first time in her wonted posture of a convert: she is sat on the bottom boards at the feet of Jesus, Who, instead, is sitting sternly on a little bench. The Magdalene's face is today quite different from what it looked like yesterday; it is not yet the radiant countenance of the Magdalene running to meet her Jesus every time He goes to Bethany, but it is already free from fear and terror and her eyes, which were as downcast as they had previously been impudent, are now serious but confident, and in her dignified gravity there is now and again a sparkle of delight when she listens to Jesus speaking to the apostles or to His Mother and Martha.

They are talking of the kindness of Porphirea, who is so simple and loving, of the hearty reception of Salome and of Bartholomew's and Philip's women. Philip says: « If my daughters were not still so young, and their mother were not so adverse to letting them wander about, they would follow You, too, Master. »

« Let their souls follow Me. That is also holy love. Philip, listen. Your elder daughter is about to be betrothed, is she not? »

« Yes, Master. A worthy wedding and a very good groom. Is that right, Bartholomew? »

« Yes, that is true. I can guarantee that because I know the family. I could not accept to be the man proposing the deal, but I would have done it willingly, knowing for certain that a holy family was being formed, had I not been obliged to be near the Master. »

« But the girl asked Me to tell you to forget about it. »

« Does she not like the groom? She is wrong. Young people are mad. I hope she will change her mind. There is no reason to refuse a very good match. Unless... No, it's not possible! » says Philip.

« Unless what? Go on, Philip » urges Jesus.

« Unless she loves another man. But it is not possible! She is never out of the house and at home she leads a sequestered way of life. It is not possible! »

« Philip, there are lovers who enter also the most private of houses; who know how to speak to those they love notwithstanding all the barriers and close watching; those who overcome every objection of widowhood, or youth, although well protected,

or... other kinds of obstacles, and take the girls or women they want. And there are also lovers who cannot be refused. Because they are overbearing in their desire, and alluring in overcoming every resistance, even the demon's. Your daughter loves one of those. And the most powerful one. »

« But who? One of Herod's court? »

« That is not powerful! »

« One... one of the Proconsul's household, a Roman patrician? I will never allow that. The pure blood of Israel will have no contact with impure blood. Even if I should kill my daughter. Don't smile, Master. I am in agony! »

« Because you are like a restive horse. You see shadows where there is nothing but light. Do not be upset. Also the Proconsul is but a servant and his patrician friends are servants and Caesar is a servant. »

« You must be joking, Master! You wanted to frighten me. There is no one greater than Caesar and there is no greater master than he is. »

« I am, Philip. »

« You? You want to marry my daughter?! »

« No. Her soul. I am the lover who enters the most secluded houses and hearts locked with seven keys. It is I Who know how to speak notwithstanding barriers and close watching. It is I Who demolish obstacles and take what I want to take: pure people and sinners, virgins and widowers, people free from vices and slaves of vices. And I give everyone a new, unique, regenerated, beatified, eternally young soul. My wedding. And no one can refuse to give Me My kind preys: no father, no mother, no children, not even Satan. Whether I speak to the soul of a young girl, like your daughter, or to the soul of a sinner immersed in sin and held by Satan with seven chains, that soul will come to Me. And no one or nothing can snatch it from Me. No wealth, power or joy of the world can give the perfect delight that those enjoy who get married to My Poverty, to My Mortification. They are bare of all poor wealth, and clad with all celestial Good. They are cheerful with the serenity of belonging to God, to God alone... They are the masters of the earth and of Heaven. They dominate the former and conquer the latter. »

« But that never happened in our Law! » exclaims Bartholomew.

« Divest yourself of the old man, Nathanael. When I saw you for the first time I greeted you saying that you were a perfect Israelite without guile. But be now of Christ, not of Israel. And be so without deception and without ties. Clothe yourself with this new mentality. Otherwise you will not be able to understand the many beautiful aspects of the redemption that I came to bring to all mankind. »

Philip intervenes saying: « And You say that my daughter has been called by You. And what will she do now? I will certainly not oppose her. But I wish to know, also to help her, in what her call consists... »

« In bringing the lilies of a virginal love into the garden of Christ. There will be so many such virgins in future centuries!... So many!... Scented flowerbeds to counterbalance the sinks of vice. Praying souls counterbalancing blasphemers and atheists. They assist mankind in all its misfortunes and are the joy of God. »

Mary of Magdala moves her lips to ask a question, and in doing so she still blushes, but she looks freer and easier than in past days: « And we... the ruins that You are building up, what shall we become? »

« What your virgin sisters are... »

« Oh! It cannot be! We have trampled on too much mud and... and... it is not possible. »

« Mary, Mary! Jesus never forgives by halves. He told you that He had forgiven you. And so it is. You, and all those who sinned like you and whom My love forgives and weds, will smell sweet, will pray, love, and comfort. As you are aware of evil and capable of curing it wherever it is, your souls are martyrs in the eyes of God. You are therefore as dear as virgins. »

« Martyrs? In what, Master? »

« Against yourselves and recollections of your past and through thirst for love and expiation. »

« Must I believe that?... » The Magdalene looks at everybody in the boat, asking them to confirm her rising hope.

« Ask Simon. I spoke of you and of sinners in general, in a starry night, in your garden. And all your brothers can tell you whether My voice has sung the wonders of Mercy and of conversion for all those who have been redeemed. »

« Also the boy has spoken to me about it, in his angelical voice. I came back from his lesson with a refreshed soul. He made me understand You better than my sister did, so much so that I felt more confident in having to face Magdala. Now, after what You told me, I feel my strength growing. I scandalised the world. But I swear to You, my Lord, that the world looking at me now will understand what Your power is like. »

Jesus lays His hand on her head for a moment, while the Most Holy Virgin smiles at her as only She can smile: heavenly.

There is Magdala, lying on the coast of the lake, with the rising sun in front of it, and mount Arbela behind it, protecting it from winds, and the narrow wild steep rocky valley through which a little torrent flows into the lake. The steep coast extends westwards: a beautiful charming austere sight.

« Master » shouts John from the other boat, « there is the valley of

our retreat... » and his face shines as if the sun were burning within him.

« Yes, our valley. You have recognised it. »

« It is impossible to forget the places where we became acquainted with God » replies John.

« In that case I will always remember this lake. Because it was here that I met You. Do you know, Martha, that one morning I saw the Master here?... »

« Yes, and we nearly all went to the bottom, both you and we. Woman, I can assure you that your oarsmen were not worth a farthing » says Peter, who is manoeuvring to get ashore.

« Neither the oarsmen nor those with them were worth anything... But it was the first time we met, and that is of great worth. Then I saw You upon the mountain, then at Magdala and later at Capernaum... And every time we met, so many chains were broken... But Capernaum was the best place. You freed me there... »

They land where the others have already come off the other boat. They enter the town.

The simple or... malicious curiosity of the Magdala people must be a torture for the Magdalene. But she bears it heroically following the Master Who is walking ahead, among His disciples, while the women are behind them. There is much whispering and irony. All those who formerly feigned to respect Mary, for fear of reprisals, while she was the overbearing mistress of Magdala, now that they see her humble and chaste and realise she has parted for good from her powerful friends, they take the liberty of insulting and reviling her.

Martha, who is suffering as much as she is, asks her: « Do you wish to go home? »

« No, I am not leaving the Master. And I am not inviting Him to my house, until it is purified and every trace of the past has been removed. »

« But you are suffering, sister! »

« I deserved it. » And she must be really suffering. Her flushed face is beaded with sweat not due to the warm weather.

They cross the whole of Magdala going towards the poor quarters, as far as the house where they stopped the last time. The woman is dumbfounded when looking up from her washboard to see who is greeting her, she finds Jesus facing her along with the well known lady of Magdala, who is no longer pompously dressed and adorned with jewels. On the contrary she is wearing a light linen veil, a periwinkle violet dress, which is high-necked and certainly does not belong to her, because it is too tight and has been adapted for her. She is enveloped in a heavy mantle, which must be a torture in that warm weather.

« Will you allow Me to remain in your house and speak to those who are following Me? » That is, to the whole of Magdala, because the whole population has followed the apostolic group.

« Why ask me, my Lord? My house is Yours. » And she busies herself bringing seats and benches for the women and the apostles. When passing near the Magdalene she bows like a slave.

« Peace to you, sister » replies the Magdalene. And the poor woman is so shocked that she drops the bench she was carrying. But she does not say one word. The scene makes me think that Mary of Magdala probably treated her subjects rather haughtily. The poor woman is utterly astonished when she is asked how the children are, where they are, and whether her husband has had good hauls.

« They are well... They are at school or with my mother. The little one is sleeping in his cradle. My husband has had good catches of fish and will bring you the tithes due to you... »

« That is no longer necessary. Use them for the children. Can I see the baby? »

« Come... »

People have crowded the street.

Jesus begins to speak:

« A woman had ten drachmas in her purse. But she made a movement and the purse fell from her breast; it opened and the coins rolled on the floor. She picked them up with the help of her next door neighbours who were with her, and she counted them. They were only nine. The tenth could not be found. As it was almost evening and it was getting dark, the woman lit a lamp, placed it on the floor and she began to sweep the floor with a broom to see whether it had rolled far from the spot where it had fallen. But the drachma could not be found. Her friends left her, as they were tired searching for it. The woman then shifted a heavy chest, a cabinet, and she removed amphoras and pitchers from a niche in the wall. But the drachma could not be found. She then began to crawl on all fours and searched in the sweepings, piled up against the door, in case the drachma had rolled out of the house and become mixed with vegetable refuse. And at last she found the drachma, which was soiled and almost buried under the sweepings. The jubilant woman picked it up, washed it and dried it. It was now more beautiful than beforehand. And she showed it to her neighbours whom she called again at the top of her voice, those who had gone away after helping her in the early search, and she said to them: "Here you are! See? You advised me not to bother any more. But I insisted and I found the lost drachma. Rejoice therefore with me because I have not suffered the loss of one of my treasures".

Also your Master, and His apostles as well, behave like the

woman of the parable. He knows that a movement may cause a treasure to fall. Every soul is a treasure and Satan, who hates God, provokes false movements to make poor souls fall. There are Some who in falling stop near the purse, that is they do not go too far from the Law of God, Who gathers them and protects them by means of His commandments. Some go farther away, that is, they go farther away from God and His Law. Some, finally, roll as far as the sweepings, dirt and mud. And they would end up by burning in the eternal fire, as rubbish is burnt in suitable places. The Master knows and He looks untiringly for lost coins. He looks for them everywhere, with love. They are His treasures. And He never tires and He loathes nothing. He rummages, searches, shifts, sweeps until He finds what He is looking for. And once He has found it, He washes the recovered souls with His forgiveness and calls all His friends: the whole Paradise and all the good people of the earth and says to them: "Rejoice with Me because I have found what was lost and it is now more beautiful than beforehand because My forgiveness has made it new."

I solemnly tell you, there is much rejoicing among the angels of God and the good people of the earth over a repentant sinner. And I solemnly tell you that there is nothing more beautiful than tears of repentance. I solemnly tell you that only demons cannot rejoice over such a conversion, which is a triumph of God. And I tell you that the way a man welcomes the conversion of a sinner is the measure of his own goodness and his union with God.

Peace be with you. »

The crowds understand the lesson and look at the Magdalene, who has come to sit on the threshold holding the baby in her arms, perhaps to strike a posture. The crowds disperse slowly and only the landlady is left with her mother who has just arrived with the children. Benjamin is not there, he is still at school.

241. Knowledge Is not Corruption if it Is Religion.

3rd August 1945.

When the boat moors in the little harbour of Tiberias, many idlers walking near the little pier come to see who has arrived. There are people of all ranks and nationalities. Thus the long many-coloured Jewish tunics, the dark heads and imposing beards of Israelities mix with the short, sleeveless, white woollen garments and the clean shaven short-haired heads of sturdy Romans and with the even scantier garments covering the agile effeminate bodies of Greeks. The latter seem to have absorbed the skilful art of their remote fatherland even in posing, and look like statues of gods descended upon the earth in mortal bodies, enveloped as they are in white tunics, with classic faces adorned

with curly scented hair and arms laden with bracelets, which their affected movements cause to shine.

Many women of pleasure are mingled with the Romans and Greeks, who do not hesitate to show their love affairs in squares and streets, whereas Palestinians refrain from this, although many gaily indulge in free love with ladies of leisure at home. This clearly appears to be the case because courtesans call several Jews familiarly by their names, among them being a Pharisee adorned with ribbons, notwithstanding the fact that the Jews give the women ugly looks.

Jesus moves towards that part of the town where the more elegant people gather together. These people are mainly Romans and Greeks with a few courtiers of Herod's and some rich merchants from the Phoenician coast, presumably from Sidon and Tyre, as they are talking of those towns and emporia and ships. The external porches of the Thermal baths are full of such elegant idle people who kill time discussing petty topics, such as the favourite discobolus or the most agile and smartest athlete in Graeco-Roman wrestling. Or they chatter of fashion and banquets and make appointments for pleasure trips inviting to them the most beautiful courtesans or the perfumed curly-haired ladies who come out from the Thermal baths or other buildings, pouring into this hall-like artistic marmoreal centre of Tiberias.

The passing group is bound to rouse intense curiosity that becomes really morbid when someone recognises Jesus, having seen Him at Caesarea and there is also someone who recognises the Magdalene although she is completely enveloped in her mantle, with her veil lowered over her forehead and cheeks, so that little of her face can be seen, as she is walking with her head bent.

« It's the Nazarene Who cured Valeria's daughter » says a Roman.

« I would love to see a miracle » another Roman replies to him.

« I would like to hear Him speak. They say He is a great philosopher. Shall we ask Him to speak? » asks a Greek.

« Don't interfere, Theodate. His head is in the clouds and He talks accordingly. A tragedian would like Him for a satire » replies another Greek.

« Don't become impatient, Aristobolus. He is apparently descending from the clouds and is discussing sound arguments. See how many lovely young women He has got with Him » exclaims a Roman jokingly.

« But that is Mary of Magdala! » shouts a Greek, who then calls: « Lucius! Cornelius! Titus! Look: Mary is over there! »

« It's not her! Mary like that? Are you drunk? »

« It is Mary, I am telling you. She cannot deceive me, even if she is so disguised. »

Romans and Greeks crowd round the apostolic group, which is

crossing the square adorned with arcades and fountains. Some women join the curious men and it is a woman who goes almost under Mary's face to see her properly and is dumbfounded when she sees that it is Mary.

She asks her: « What are you doing in this guise? » and laughs mockingly.

Mary stops, straightens herself, raises one hand and uncovers her face throwing her veil back. It is Mary of Magdala, the powerful lady against whatever is despicable and mistress of her own feelings, who appears. « It is I, yes » she says in her beautiful voice while her beautiful eyes are flashing. « It is I. And I am revealing myself, so that you may not think that I am ashamed of being with these holy people. »

« Oh! Mary with holy people! Come away. Do not degrade yourself! » exclaims the woman.

« I have been degraded up till now. But not now. »

« Are you mad? Or is it a whim.? » she replies.

A Roman winking and joking says: « Come with me. I am more handsome and merrier than that moustached hired mourner who mortifies life and makes a funeral of it. Life is beautiful! A triumph. A joyful orgy! Come. I will excell everybody in making you happy » and the swarthy young man whose foxlike face is rather handsome, endeavours to touch her.

« Go away! Don't touch me. You spoke the truth: the life you lead is an orgy. And a most shameful one. I loathe it. »

« Oh! But up till recently it was your kind of life » replies the Greek.

« She is playing the virgin now! » sneers a Herodian.

« You will ruin those holy people! The Nazarene will lose His halo with you. Come with us » insists a Roman.

« You had better come with me and follow Him. Stop being animals and become at least men. »

A chorus of laughter and mockery is their reply.

Only an elderly Roman says: « Respect the woman. She is free to do what she likes. I will defend her. »

« Listen to the demagogue! Did last night's wine upset you? » asks a young man.

« No. He is hypochondriac because his back is aching » replies another.

« Go to the Nazarene and ask Him to scratch it for you. »

« I will go and ask Him to scratch off the filth I picked up being with you » replies the elder.

« Oh! Crispus has become corrupt at the age of sixty » say many laughing, while they form a circle round him.

But the man named Crispus is not worried at being scorned and he begins to walk behind the Magdalene and they reach Jesus Who

has stopped in the shade of a beautiful building which occupies two sides of the square with porticoes and benches.

And Jesus has already come to grips with a scribe who reproaches Him for being in Tiberias with such company.

« And why are you here? So far with regard to Tiberias. And I tell you also that there are souls to be saved in Tiberias as well, nay, more here than anywhere else » replies Jesus.

« They cannot be saved: they are Gentiles, heathens, sinners. »

« I came for sinners. To make the True God known to everybody. To everybody. I came also for you. »

« I do not need masters or redeemers. I am pure and learned. »

« I wish you were learned enough to understand your own condition! »

« And You to know how prejudicial is to You the company of a prostitute. »

« I forgive you also on her behalf. In her humility she has cancelled her sin. You have doubled yours in your pride. »

« I have no sins. »

« You have the capital one. You are loveless. »

The scribe says: « Raca! » and goes away.

« It is my fault, Master! » says the Magdalene. And seeing the pale face on the Blessed Virgin she moans: « Forgive me. I am causing Your Son to be insulted. I will withdraw... »

« No. You shall stay where you are. I want it » says Jesus in an incisive voice. His eyes flash with majesty and there is such authority emanating from His whole person that it is almost impossible to look at Him! He then adds more kindly: « Stay where you are. If anyone cannot bear being near you, let him go away, by himself. »

And Jesus resumes walking towards the western part of the town.

« Master! » calls the stout elderly Roman who defended the Magdalene.

Jesus turns round.

« They call You Master, and I call You thus as well. I was anxious to hear You speak. I am part philosopher and part worldly sinner. But perhaps You could make an honest person of me. »

Jesus stares at him saying: « I am leaving the town where base human animality reigns and mockery is sovereign. » And He resumes walking.

The man follows Him with difficulty and perspiring, because Jesus is striding and he is bulky and rather old and weighed down by vices. Peter looks back and tells Jesus.

« Let him walk. Do not bother about him. »

Shortly afterwards the Iscariot says: « But that man is following us. It is not right! »

« Why? Out of pity or is there another reason? »

« Pity him? No. Because farther back there is the scribe and other Jews following us. »

« Leave them alone. It would have been better if you had pitied him instead of pitying yourself. »

« You, Master. »

« No: yourself, Judas. Be frank in acknowledging your feelings and confessing them. »

« I really pity the elder as well. It is difficult, You know, to keep up with You! » says Peter perspiring.

« It is always difficult to follow Perfection, Simon. »

The man follows them without tiring, endeavouring to stay near the women, to whom, however, he does not speak.

The Magdalene is weeping silently under her veil.

« Do not weep, Mary » says Our Lady comforting her and taking her by the hand. « Later the world will respect you. The first days are the most painful ones. »

« Oh! It is not for my own sake! It is because of Him! I would never forgive myself if I were the cause of trouble for Him. Did You hear what the scribe said? I am prejudicial to Him. »

« Poor daughter! Do you not know that such words have been hissing around Him like so many snakes long before you thought of coming to Him? Simon told Me that they accused Him of that even last year, because He cured a woman leper, once a sinner, whom He saw only when He worked the miracle and never again, and was older than I am, and I am His Mother. Do you not know that He had to come away from the Clear Water because a poor sister of yours had gone there to be redeemed? How can they accuse Him if He is without sin? By telling lies. And where do they find them? In His mission among men. His good deed is used as evidence of His sin. Whatever My Son should do, they would always consider it a sin. If He retired to a hermitage, He would be guilty of neglecting the people of God. If He comes among the people, He is guilty of doing that. He is always guilty, as far as they are concerned. »

« Then, they are hatefully wicked! »

« No. They are stubbornly blind to the Light. My Jesus is the Eternal Misunderstood One. And He will be more and more so. »

« And does that not grieve You? You seem so serene to me. »

« Be quiet. I feel as if My heart were wrapped in burning thorns. And every time I breathe I am pierced by them. But He must not know! I strive to appear serene, in order to support Him by My serenity. If His Mother does not console Him, where is My Jesus going to find comfort? On which breast can He recline His head without being wounded or calumniated by doing so? It is only fair that I, forgetting the thorns that rend My heart and the tears that I drink in My hours of solitude, should lay a soft loving mantle, a

smile, at any cost, to leave Him quieter... quieter, until... until the wave of hatred will be such that nothing will be of any avail. Not even the love of His Mother... » Two tears stream down Mary's pale face.

The two sisters, deeply moved, look at Her. « But we are here and we love Him. Then the apostles... » says Martha to comfort Her.

« Yes, you are here. And He has the apostles... They are still much inferior to their task... And My grief is deeper because I know that He is aware of everything... »

« So He knows that I am willing to obey, even to the extent of immolating myself, if necessary? » asks the Magdalene.

« He does. You are a great joy for Him on His hard way. »

« Oh! Mother! » and the Magdalene takes Mary's hand and kisses it effusively.

Tiberias ends at the vegetable gardens of the suburbs. Beyond them there is the dusty road that leads to Cana; on one side there are orchards, on the other meadows and fields parched by the summer sun.

Jesus proceeds into an orchard to rest in the shade of thick trees. The women reach Him first and then the panting Roman arrives; he is utterly exhausted. He remains a little aside, does not speak, but watches.

« Let us take some food while we are resting » says Jesus. « There is a well over there and a peasant near it. Go and ask him to let us have some water. »

John and Thaddeus go. They come back with a pitcher dripping water, followed by the peasant who offers some wonderful figs.

« May God reward you with good health and a rich harvest. »

« May God protect You. You are the Master, are You not? »

« I am. »

« Will You be speaking here? »

« There is no one here who wants Me to speak. »

« I do, Master. I wish it more that I wish water which is so good when one is thirsty » shouts the Roman.

« Are you thirsty? »

« Yes, very. I have followed You from town. »

« Fountains of cool water are not lacking in Tiberias. »

« Do not misunderstand me, Master, or feign to misinterpret me. I followed You to hear You speak. »

« Why? »

« I do not know why or how. It happened seeing her (and he points at the Magdalene). I do not know. Something said to me: "He will tell you what you do not yet know". And I came. »

« Give the man some water and figs. That he may refreshen his body. »

« And what about my mind? »

« Minds are refreshed by the Truth. »

« That is why I followed You. I looked for the truth in human knowledge. I found corruption. Even in the best doctrines there is something which is not good. I have become so disheartened that I am disgusted and a disgusting man without any other future but the hour I live. »

Jesus stares at him while eating the bread and figs that the apostles have brought Him.

The meal is soon over.

Jesus, still sitting, begins to speak as if He were just giving a simple lesson to His apostles. Also the peasant remains nearby.

« Many are those who look for the Truth throughout their lives, without reaching it. They look like fools who are anxious to see and yet hold bronze blinkers before their eyes and they grope searching convulsively so that they go farther and farther away from the Truth, or they hide it by throwing on it various things that their foolish search shifts and causes to fall. Nothing but that can happen to them, because they look for the Truth where the Truth cannot be. To find the Truth you must join intellect to love and look at things not only with wise eyes, but with good eyes. Because bounty is worth more than wisdom. He who loves will always find a path leading to the Truth.

To love does not mean to take delight in the flesh or for the flesh. That is not love. It is sensuality. Love is affection from soul to soul, from superior part to superior part, so that man does not see in his companion a slave, but the mother of his children, and nothing else, that is, the half that forms with man a whole, capable of procreating life or more lives; that is, the companion who is the mother and sister and daughter of man, who is weaker than a newborn baby or stronger than a lion, according to circumstances, and who as mother, sister and daughter is to be loved with confident protective respect. Whatever is not what I say, is not love. It is vice. It does not lead upwards, but downwards: not to the Light, but to Darkness; not to the stars, but to filth. You must love your woman to be able to love your neighbour. And you must love your neighbour to know how to love God. And the way to the Truth is found.

That is where the Truth is, o men who are looking for it. The Truth is God. That is where the key to understand knowledge is to be found. The faultless doctrine is God's doctrine. How can man answer all his questions if God is not with him to give him the answers? Who can disclose the mysteries of creation, only and simply those mysteries, but our Supreme Maker, Who made creation? Who can understand the living marvel, which is man, the being in whom the animal perfection is united to the immortal perfection, which is the soul, whereby we are gods, if our souls are alive,

that is free from those actions which would abase a brute, and which, however, man commits and of which he is proud?

O men, searching for the Truth, I will repeat Job's words to you: "If you would learn more, ask the cattle, seek information from the birds of the air. The creeping things of the earth will give you lessons, and the fishes of the sea will tell you all". Yes, the earth, this verdant flowery earth, the fruit swelling on trees, the proliferating birds, the winds blowing clouds, the sun that for centuries and millennia has risen unerringly, everything speaks of God, everything explains God, everything reveals and discovers God.

If Science is not based on God, it becomes error and does not elevate but abases. Knowledge is not corruption if it is religion. He whose knowledge is based on God will not fall, because he is conscious of his dignity and believes in his eternal future. But you must look for the real God, not for phantoms that are not gods, but mere frenzies of men still enveloped in spiritual ignorance so that there is not even the shadow of wisdom in their religions or the shadow of truth in their faith.

Every age is capable of becoming wise. Nay, once again in Job it is written: "At dusk a noonday light will rise for you and when you think your end has come, you will rise like the morning star. You will be full of confidence because of the hope waiting for you".

Good will is sufficient to find the Truth, which sooner or later will be found. But once it has been found, woe to those who do not follow it, but imitate the obstinate people of Israel, who, although already in possession of the thread to find God, that is, everything written in the Book about Me, will not surrender to the Truth, nay they hate it, amassing in their minds and hearts the barrenness of hatred and formulae. And they do not know that because of excessive weight the earth will open under their steps, which they think are the steps of triumphers, whereas they are the steps of slaves of formalism, of hatred, of selfishness. And they will be swallowed up and will be thrown headlong into the abyss where those go who are consciously guilty of a paganism that is more guilty than the heathenism that people have adopted by themselves in order to have a religion on which to base their behaviour.

As I do not reject those who repent amongst the children of Israel, so I do not reject those idolaters who believe in what they were given to believe and who inwardly implore: "Give us the Truth".

I have spoken to you. Let us rest now under these green trees, if this man will allow us. We shall go to Cana in the evening. »

« Lord, I am leaving You. But as I do not wish to desecrate the

wisdom that You have given me, I will leave Tiberias this evening, I am going away from this country. I will retire to the coast of Lucania with my servant. I have a house there. You have given me much. I realise that You cannot give more to the old Epicurean. But what You have given me is enough to enable me to build up my mind. And... pray Your God for old Crispus. He was Your only listener in Tiberias. Pray that I may hear You again, before Libitina (1) clasps me, so that, through the capability which I think I will be able to create within me, I may understand You and the Truth better. Hail, Master. » And he salutes in the Roman way.

When he passes near the women who are sitting a little aside, he bows to Mary of Magdala and says: « Thank you, Mary. It was a good thing that I knew you. You have given the searched for treasure to your old feast companion. If I arrive where you already are, I will owe you that. Goodbye. » And He goes away.

The Magdalene presses her hands against her heart and her face shows wonder and radiance. Then, she drags herself on her knees before Jesus. « Oh! Lord! So it is true that I may lead people to Good? Oh! My Lord. That is too kind of You! » And bending until her face touches the grass, she kisses Jesus' feet and wets them once again with tears: the tears of gratitude of the great lover of Madgala.

(1) Ancient Roman goddess of sepultures, whose name was used by Latin poets as synonymous with death.

242. In the House at Cana.

4th August 1945.

In the house at Cana the rejoicing for Jesus' arrival is little less than it was at the miraculous wedding. There are no players, no guests, the house is not adorned with flowers and evergreens, there are no tables laid for many guests, nor any steward near the sideboards and the stone jars, full of wine. But love excels everything and it is given in the right form and measure, that is, not to the guest, Who is probably also a distant relation, but still a man, but to the Master Guest Whose true Nature is known and acknowledged and Whose Word is venerated as something divine. The hearts in Cana, therefore, love with their whole selves the Great Friend, Who appeared in His linen tunic at the garden entrance, in the green of the garden and the red of the sunset, beautifying everything with His presence, communicating His peace not only to the hearts to whom He addresses His greeting, but also to things.

And it really seems that a veil of solemn joyful peace is laid out wherever He turns His blue eyes. Purity and peace flow from His

eyes, wisdom from His lips and love from His heart. What I am about to say may seem impossible to the reader of these pages. And yet, the same place, which before Jesus' coming was an ordinary place, or a busy place excluding the possibility of peace, which supposedly should be free from work bustling, is ennobled as soon as He appears there, and the bustling becomes orderly and does not bar the possibility of supernatural thoughts mingled with manual labour. I do not know whether I have made myself clear.

Jesus is never sullen, not even when He is more disgusted with something that has happened, but is always majestically dignified and communicates such supernatural dignity to the place in which He moves. Jesus is never a jolly fellow or a complainer laughing coarsely or looking hypochondriac, not even in the moments of greatest delight or deepest depression. His smile is inimitable. No painter will ever be able to reproduce it. It is like a light emanating from His heart, a bright light in the hours of greatest joy because a soul has been redeemed or approaches Perfection: I would say a rosy smile, when He approves of the spontaneous deeds of His friends or disciples and enjoys their company; a blue angelical smile, to remain in the field of hues, when He bends over children to listen to them, teach them and then bless them; a smile mitigated by piety when He looks at the miseries of the flesh or the spirit; finally a divine smile, when He speaks of His Father or Mother, or looks at or listens to His Most Pure Mother.

I have never seen Him hypochondriac, not even in the hours of bitter torment. During the torture of being betrayed, during the anguish when He sweated blood, and the spasm of His passion, if melancholy overwhelmed the sweet refulgence of His smile, it was not sufficient to cancel the peace, which is like a diadem shining with heavenly gems on His smooth forehead and enlightening His divine person. Neither have I ever seen Him indulge in immoderate merriment. He is not averse to a hearty laugh, when the case demands it, but He immediately resumes His noble serenity. But when He laughs, He prodigiously looks younger, to the extent of looking like a twenty year old man and the world seems to blossom through His lovely, hearty, loud, melodious laughter. Neither can I say that I have seen Him do things hurriedly. Whether He moves or speaks, He does so calmly, without, however, being sluggish or listless. It is probably because, tall as He is, He can stride, without running, to go a long way and He can likewise reach at distant things without having to stand up to do so. Even the way He moves is certainly gentlemanly and majestic.

And what about His voice? Well: I have heard Him speak for almost two years, and yet at times I lose the thread of His speech as I become so engrossed in studying His voice. And Jesus, very kindly and patiently, repeats what He said and He looks at me

with His smile of the good Master to ensure that nothing is missing in His dictation because of my delight in enjoying and listening to His voice and studying its tone and charm. But after two years I am not in a position to say precisely what the tone is. I definitely exclude the bass tone and also the light tenor tone. But I am always doubtful whether it is a powerful tenor voice or a perfect baritone voice with a very wide vocal range. I would say that it is the latter because His voice at times takes bronze-like notes, mellow and so deep, particularly when He speaks to a sinner, to lead him back to Grace or He points out human deviations to crowds. But when He analyses or condemns forbidden things or He shows the hypocrisy of men, the bronze notes of His voices become clearer; and they are as sharp as the peal of thunder when He imposes the Truth or His will and they vibrate like a sheet of gold struck with a crystal hammer when He sings the praises of Mercy or exalts the work of God; but the timbre of His voice is a most loving one when He speaks to or about His Mother. Jesus' voice is then really imbued with love: the reverent love of a son, and the love of God Who praises His most perfect work. And He uses the same tone, although not so strongly, when speaking to His favourites, to converts and to children. And His voice never tires, not even in very long speeches, because it colours and completes His thoughts and words, emphasising their power or kindness, according to the case.

And at times I remain still, with the pen in my hand, listening, and I then realise that He has gone too far ahead, and that it is impossible to catch up with Him... and I remain still, and Jesus kindly repeats the words. He does the same when I am interrupted, to teach me to patiently endure bothersome things or people, and I make Him understand how « bothersome » they are when they deprive me of the beatitude of listening to Jesus...

Now, at Cana, He is thanking Susanna for the hospitality granted to Aglae. They are by themselves under a pergola laden with grapes which are already ripening. All the others are in the kitchen, refreshing themselves.

« The woman was very good, Master. She certainly was not a burden to us. She helped me every time I did the washing, when we cleaned the house at Passover, as if she were a servant, and I can assure You that she worked like a slave to help me finish our clothes for Passover. She was prudent and withdrew every time someone came to the house; and she endeavoured not to be alone even with my husband. She hardly spoke in the presence of the family and took little food. She got up every morning to tidy herself before the men woke and I always found the fire lit and the house cleaned. But when we were alone she would ask me about You and begged me to teach her the psalms of our religion. She used

to say: "That I may pray as the Master prays". Has she finished to suffer now? Because she did suffer very much. She was afraid of everything and sighed and wept a great deal. Is she happy now? »

« Yes, supernaturally happy and free from fear. She is in peace. And I thank you for the good you did to her. »

« Oh! My Lord. What good? I treated her with love in Your name, because that is all I can do. She was a poor sister. I realised that. And I loved her, out of gratitude to the Most High Who has kept me in His grace. »

« And you have done more than if you had preached in the Bel Nidras. Now you have another one here. Did you recognise her? »

« Who does not know her here? »

« Nobody, that is true. But you and the district here do not know the second Mary, the one who will always be faithful to her vocation. Always. I ask you to believe it. »

« You say so. You know. I believe. »

« Say also: "I love". I know that it is more difficult to pity and forgive one of our own people, who has sinned, than one who has the excuse of being a pagan. But if our regret in seeing family apostasies was keen, let our pity and forgiveness be keener. I have forgiven Israel everything » concludes Jesus, stressing the last words.

« And I will forgive, as far as I am concerned. Because I think a disciple should do what the Master does. »

« You are in the truth and God rejoices because of that. Let us go with the others. It is getting dark. It will be pleasant to rest in the peace of the night. »

« Will You not speak to us, Master? »

« I do not know yet. »

They go into the kitchen where food and drinks have been prepared for supper.

Susanna moves forward and blushing slightly she says: « Will my sisters come upstairs with me? We must lay the tables because afterwards we must prepare beds for the men. I could do it by myself. But it would take me longer. »

« I am coming, too, Susanna » says the Blessed Virgin.

« No, we are enough and it will help us to become acquainted with one another, work does help to fraternise. »

They go out together while Jesus, after drinking some water flavoured with some syrup - I do not know what it is - goes and sits with His Mother, the apostles and the men of the house, in the cool shade of the pergola, leaving the servants and the elderly landlady free to finish preparing the food.

The voices of the three women disciples laying the tables can be heard from the room upstairs. Susanna tells of the miracle which was worked at her wedding and Mary of Magdala replies: « To

change water into wine is a great thing, but to change a sinner into a woman disciple is even greater. God grant I become like that wine: that I may be of the best. »

« Have no doubt about it. He changes everything in a perfect way. There was one here, and a heathen in addition, whose sentiments and faith He changed. Can you doubt that the same will not happen to you, who are already an Israelite? »

« One? Young? »

« Young. Beautiful. »

« And where is she now? » asks Martha.

« Only the Master knows. »

« Ah! Well, she is the one of whom I spoke to you. Jesus was with Lazarus that evening and he heard the words which were spoken concerning her. What a sweet scent there was in that room! Lazarus' garments were imbued with it for several days. And yet Jesus said that the heart of the convert excelled it with the perfume of her repentance. I wonder where she has gone. I think to some solitary place... »

« She is lonely, and she was a stranger. I am here, and I am known. She expiates in solitude, I... living in the world, amongst those who know me. I do not envy her destiny, as I am with the Master. But I hope I will be able to imitate her one day, by being without anything that may distract me from Him. »

« Would you leave Him? »

« No. But He says that He will go away. My soul will then follow Him. I can defy the world with Him. Without Him I would be afraid of the world. I shall put a desert between me and the world. »

« And what about Lazarus and me? What shall we do? »

« What you did in your grief. You will love each other and will love me. And without blushing... Because you will then be alone, but you will know that I am with the Lord. And I will love you in the Lord. »

« Mary is strong and well determined in her decisions » comments Peter who has heard.

And the Zealot replies: « She is a straight blade like her father. She has her mother's features, but her father's unyielding spirit. »

And the lady with the unyielding spirit is running down the stairs to tell her companions that supper is ready.

The country fades away in the serene moonless night. Only the faint light of stars shows the dark masses of trees and the white ones of houses. Nothing else. Some night birds are fluttering silently round Susanna's house, in search of flies, skimming past the people sitting on the terrace round a lamp, which throws a faint yellowish light on the faces of those who are gathered round Jesus. Martha, who must be terrified of bats, gives a scream every time a

big noctule skims past her. Jesus instead is busy with the moths attracted by the lamp and with His long arm He endeavours to keep them away from the flame.

« They are both very stupid animals » says Thomas. « The former mistake us for bluebottles, the latter mistake the flame for the sun and get burnt. They have not even got a shadow of brains. »

« They are animals. Do you expect them to reason? » asks the Iscariot.

« No. But I would like them to have instinct at least. »

« It is not possible for them to have it. I am talking of moths. Because they die after their first trial. Instinct awakes and develops through painful surprising experience » comments James of Alphaeus.

« And what about bats? They should have it because they live for years. They are stupid, that's all » retorts Thomas.

« No, Thomas. Not more than men. Many times men also look like stupid bats. They fly, or rather they flutter, like drunk men, round things that can only cause grief. Here you are: My brother has struck one down with his mantle. Give Me it » says Jesus.

James of Zebedee, at whose feet the stunned bat has fallen and is now tossing clumsily on the floor, picks it up with two fingers by one of its membranous wings and holding it out, like a dirty rag, lays it on Jesus' lap.

« Here is the unwary animal. Let us leave it alone and you will see that it will recover, but it will not change its habits. »

« An unusual rescue, Master. I would have killed it » says the Iscariot.

« No. Why? It has a life, too, and is keen on it » replies Jesus.

« I don't think so. It either does not know it has a life or is not keen on it. It endangers it! »

« Oh! Judas! Judas! How severe you would be with sinners, with men. Also men know that they have one life and another one and they do not hesitate to endanger both one and the other. »

« Have we got two lives? »

« The life of the body and the life of the soul, you know that. »

« Ah! I thought You were referring to reincarnation. Some people believe in it. »

« There is no reincarnation. But there are two lives. And yet man endangers both of them. If you were God how would you judge men, who are gifted with reason besides instinct? » «

Severely. Unless it were a person of unsound mind. »

« Would you not take into account the circumstances that make people morally insane? »

« No, I would not. »

« So you would have no mercy on anyone who knows God and is acquainted with the Law, and yet sins. »

« I would have no mercy. Because man must be able to control himself. »

« He should be able. »

« He must, Master. It is an unpardonable disgrace that an adult should commit certain sins, particularly when nothing forces him. »

« Which sins according to you? »

« The sins of sensuality first. One degrades oneself irreparably... » Mary of Magdala lowers her head... Judas goes on: «... and one corrupts others as well, because a kind of ferment exhales from the bodies of impure people and it upsets even the pure and urges them to imitate the impure... »

While the Magdalene lowers her head further, Peter says: « Hey, there! Don't be so severe! The first to be guilty of such unpardonable disgrace was Eve, and you are not going to tell me that she was corrupted by the impure ferment exhaling from a lascivious person. In any case I would like you to know that, as far as I am concerned, I am in no way upset even if I sit near a lustful person. It's his business... »

« One is always infected by being near. If the body is not, the soul is, and that is worse. »

« You seem a Pharisee! Excuse me, in that case one should lock oneself up in a crystal tower and stay there, sealed up. »

« But do not believe, Simon, that it would help you. Temptations are more dreadful in loneliness » says the Zealot.

« Oh! Well! They would be like dreams. No harm » replies Peter.

« No harm? Don't you know that temptations lead to cogitations, cogitations to compromise to satisfy somehow one's aroused instinct, and then compromise opens the way to refinement of sin in which sensuality is joined to thought? » asks the Iscariot.

« I know nothing about all that, my dear Judas. Perhaps because I have never cogitated, as you say, on certain things. But I think that we have gone very far from bats and that it is a good job that you are not God. Otherwise you would be all alone in Paradise, with your severity. What do You say, Master? »

« I say that it is wise not to be too absolute because the angels of the Lord listen to the words of men and record them in the eternal books and it might not be pleasant one day to be told: "Let it be done to you according to your own judgement". I say that if God sent Me it means that He wants to forgive all the sins of which man repents, as He knows how weak man is, because of Satan. Judas, tell Me: do you agree that Satan may take possession of a soul so as to force coercion on it, which may diminish the gravity of sin in the eyes of God? »

« I do not. Satan can impair but the inferior part. »

« You are blaspheming, Judas of Simon » exclaim almost together

the Zealot and Bartholomew.

« Why? In what way? »

« You are giving the lie to God and the Book. We read in it that Lucifer impaired also the superior part, and God, through His Word, has told us many times » Bartholomew replies.

« It is also said that man has free will. Which means that Satan cannot do violence to man's mind and feelings. Even God does not do it. »

« No, God does not, because He is Order and Loyalty. But Satan does, because he is Disorder and Hatred » insists the Zealot.

« Hatred is not the sentiment opposed to loyalty. You are wrong. »

« I am right, because if God is Loyalty and therefore does not fail to keep His word to leave man free in his actions, the demon cannot belie such word, as he never promised free will to man. But it is true that he is Hatred and therefore attacks God and man, assailing the intellectual freedom of man, in addition to his body, reducing such freedom of thought to slavery in possessed people, whereby man does things, which he would not do, if he were free from Satan » maintains the Zealot.

« I do not agree. »

« What about possessed people, then? You are denying the evidence of facts » shouts Judas Thaddeus.

« Possessed people are deaf, or dumb or insane. They are not lustful. »

« Is that the only vice you have in mind? » asks Thomas ironically.

« It is the most common one and the lowest. »

« Ah! I thought it was the one you are better acquainted with » says Thomas laughing.

Judas jumps to his feet as if he wanted to react. But he controls himself and goes downstairs and then walks away through the fields.

There is silence... Then Andrew says: « His idea is not completely mistaken. In fact one would say that Satan takes possession only of senses: sight, hearing, speech and brains. But then, Master, how can certain wicked actions be explained? Are they not possessions? Doras, for example?... »

« Doras, as you say, in order not to be uncharitable towards anybody, and may God reward you for that, or Mary, as we all know, and she is the first to know, after the clear uncharitable hints by Judas, are those who are more completely possessed by Satan, who extends his power over the three great powers of man. They are the most oppressive and subtle possessions, from which only those can free themselves who are so little degraded in their souls as to be still able to understand the invitation of the Light. Doras was not lustful. But even so he would not come to the

Redeemer. And that is where the difference lies. That is, whilst in the case of lunatic, dumb, deaf, blind people possessed by the demon, their relatives endeavour and do the necessary to bring them to Me, in the case of those whose spirits are possessed, only their spirits can seek freedom. That is why they are forgiven as well as freed. Because it was their will to begin opposition to the demon's possession. And now let us go and rest. Mary, since you know what it is to be caught, pray for those who lend themselves intermittently to the Enemy's action, committing sin and causing grief. »

« Yes, my Master. I will. And without any ill-feeling. »

« Peace to everybody. Let us drop here the cause of so much discussing. There is darkness with darkness, outside, in the night. But we are going inside to sleep under the protection of the angels. »

And He lays on a bench the bat, which makes its first attempts to fly away, and He withdraws with the apostles to the room upstairs, while the women with the landlord and landlady go downstairs.

243. John Repeats the Speech Made by Jesus on Mount Tabor.

5th August 1945.

They are all climbing the cool short cuts leading to Nazareth. The Galilean hillsides seem to have been created that very morning, because the recent storm has washed them so thoroughly and the dew keeps them shiny and fresh, so that they are all bright in the early sunshine. The air is so clear that all the details of the more or less distant mountains are visible and there is a deep sensation of freshness and liveliness.

When they reach the top of a hill they delight in admiring the sight of a lake, which is most beautiful in the pure morning light. They all admire it, as does Jesus. But Mary Magdalene soon turns her eyes in a different direction looking for something. Her eyes rest on the mountain tops lying northwest, but she does not seem to find what she is looking for.

Susanna, who is beside her, asks: « What are you looking for? »

« I would like to recognise the mountain where I met the Master. »

« Ask Him. »

« Oh! It is not worth disturbing Him. He is speaking to Judas of Kerioth. »

« What a man Judas is! » whispers Susanna. She does not say anything else, but... the rest is clearly understood.

« That mountain is certainly not along this road. But I will take you there some time, Martha. It was dawn, just like now, and there

were so many flowers... And so many people... Oh! Martha! And I had the audacity to appear in front of everybody in that shameful dress and with those friends... No, you cannot be offended at Judas' words. I deserved them. I deserved every one of them. And the present suffering is my expiation. Everybody remembers and everybody is right in telling me the truth. And I must be silent. Oh! If one only pondered before sinning! Who offends me now is my best friend, because he helps me to expiate. »

« But that does not mean the he has not done wrong. Mother, is Your Son really pleased with that man? »

« We must pray very much for him. So He says. »

John leaves the apostles to come and help the women at a difficult passage, where their sandals slip as the path is strewn with smooth stones, like reddish slates, and with glossy hard grass, which is very dangerous as the foot has no grip on it. The Zealot imitates John and the women pass over the difficult spot leaning on them.

« This is rather a difficult road. But there is no dust and no travellers on it. And it is shorter » says the Zealot.

« I know it, Simon » says Mary. « I came to that little village half way up the hill, with My nephews when Jesus was driven out of Nazareth » says the Blessed Virgin with a sigh.

« But the world is beautiful from here. There is the Tabor over there, and the Hermon, and to the north the mountains of Arbela, and over there, in the back, the great Hermon. It is a pity that the sea is not visible as it is from Tabor » says John.

« Have you been there? »

« Yes, with the Master. »

« John, through his love for the infinite, obtained a great joy for us, because on the top of the mountain Jesus spoke of God so ecstatically that we had never heard the like before. And after receiving so much, we obtained a great conversion. You will meet the man too, Mary. And your spirit will be fortified more than it already is. We found a man hardened with hatred, brutalised by remorse and Jesus turned him into a man who, I am sure, will become a great disciple. Like you, Mary. Because, you can be sure that what I tell you is the truth, we sinners are more yielding to Good, which envelops us, because we feel the need to be forgiven even by ourselves » says the Zealot.

« That is true. But it is very kind of you to say "we sinners". You were a poor wretch, not a sinner. »

« We are all sinners, some more some less, and he who thinks he is less a sinner, is the most likely to become one, if he is not already so. We are all sinners. But the big sinners who repent are the ones who know how to be as absolute in Good as they were in evil. »

« Your comforting words are a great relief to me. You have

always been a father to the children of Theophilus. »

« And like a father I rejoice because the three of you are Jesus' friends. »

« Where did you find that disciple who was a big sinner? »

« At Endor, Mary. Simon wishes to ascribe the merit of so many beautiful things to my desire to contemplate the sea. But if John the elder came to Jesus it is no merit of the silly young John. It is the merit of Judas of Simon » says Zebedee's son smiling.

« Did he convert him? » asks Martha doubtfully.

« No. But he wanted to go to Endor and... »

« Yes, to see the cave of the sorceress... Judas of Simon is a very strange type... One must take him as he is... Of course!... And John of Endor led us to the cave and then remained with us. But, my dear son, the merit is still yours, because without your desire for the infinite we would not have gone that way and Judas would not have desired to go on that strange research. »

« I would like to know what Jesus said on Mount Tabor... as I would like to recognise the mountain where I saw Him » sighs Mary Magdalene.

« The mountain is the one where the sun seems to be rising, because of the sparkling of a pond there, which collects the spring water and herds make use of it. We were farther up where the top seems to be split like a huge two-pronged-fork attempting to pierce the clouds and take them somewhere else. With regard to Jesus' speech, I think John can repeat it for you. »

« Oh! Simon! Is it possible for a boy to repeat the words of God? »

« No, it isn't for a boy. It is for you. Try. To please your sisters and me, as I love you. »

John blushes very much when he begins to repeat the speech of Jesus.

« He said: "Here is the infinite page on which currents write the word: I 'believe'. Think of the chaos of the Universe before the Creator decided to order the elements and arrange them into a wonderful association, which has given man the earth and what it contains and has adorned the firmament with stars and planets. Nothing existed: neither as amorphous chaos, nor as ordered system.

God made it. First He made the elements. Because they are necessary, although at times they seem to be harmful. But always remember this: there is no small drop of dew, no matter how small it be, which does not have a good reason for existing, there is no insect, however small and insignificant it may be, which does not have its good reason for being. And likewise there is no monstrous mountain vomiting from its bowels fire and incandescent lapilli, which does not have its good reason for existing. And there is no cyclone without a reason. And passing from things to

people, there is no event, no tear, no joy, no birth, death, no sterility and prolific maternity, no long marriage life or early widowhood, no misfortune of calamities and diseases, or prosperity of wealth and health, which does not have its good reason for being, even if it does not appear as such to the short-sightedness and pride of men, who see and judge through the cataracts and fogs typical of imperfect things. But the Eye of God, the infinite Thought of God, sees and knows. The secret of living free from sterile doubts, which irritate, exhaust and poison the days on the earth, is to believe that God does everything for a good intelligent reason, that God does what He does for love, not for the stolid intention of tormenting for the sake of tormenting.

God had created the angels. And some of them, who did not want to believe that the level of glory at which they had been placed was good, rebelled and with their minds parched by lack of faith in their Lord, they attempted to assail the unreachable throne of God. They opposed their discordant unjust pessimistic thoughts to the harmonious reasons of the faithful angels, and pessimism, which is lack of faith, changed them from spirits of light into spirits of darkness.

Blessed are those for ever who both in Heaven and on the earth base all their thoughts on a presupposition of fully enlightened optimism! They will not be wrong, at least as far as their spirits are concerned, as they will continue to believe, hope and above all love God and their neighbour, and will thus remain in God until the end of centuries!

Paradise had already been freed from those proud pessimists who saw gloomy sides also in the brightest words of God, as the pessimists on the earth look on dark sides also of the clearest deeds of men and by wishing to be separated in an ivory tower, as they consider themselves the only perfect ones, they condemn themselves to a dark dungeon, which ends in the darkness of the kingdom of hell, the kingdom of Negation. Because pessimism is Negation as well.

So God created the Universe. And as to understand the glorious mystery of Our being One and Trine one must believe and understand that the Word existed from the beginning and was with God, joined by the most perfect Love, Which can be effused only by two Who are Gods, being, however, only One; so, to see creation as it is, it is necessary to look at it with eyes of faith because in its being, as a son bears the indelible reflection of his father, so creation has within itself the indelible reflection of its Creator. We shall then see that in the beginning there was the sky and the earth and then light, which can be compared to love. Because light is delight, as love is. And light is the atmosphere of Paradise. And the incorporeal Being, Who is God, is Light and is the Father of every intellectual,

affective, material, spiritual light, both in Heaven and on the earth.

In the beginning there was the sky and the earth and for them light was given and through light everything else was made. And as in the most high Heaven the spirits of light were separated from those of darkness, so in creation light was separated from darkness and Day and Night were made and that was the first day of creation, with its morning and its evening, its midday and midnight. And when the smile of God, that is light, came once again after night, then the hand of God, His powerful will, stretched out over the shapeless empty earth, and over the sky where the waters wandered, one of the free elements in chaos, and wanted the firmament to separate the disorderly wandering of the waters between the sky and the earth, so that it would be a velarium for paradisiac splendour, a limit to superior waters, and thus floods would not descend upon boiling metals and atoms, washing away and disjoining what God was uniting.

Order was restored in the sky. And there was order on the earth through the command given by God to the waters spread over the earth. And the sea began to exist. There it is. On it, as on the firmament it is written: 'God is'. Whatever the intellectuality of man is, or his faith or disbelief, in front of this page, in which a particle of infinity, which is God, shines, and in which there is the evidence of His power, man is obliged to believe, because no human power and no natural settlement of elements can possibly repeat such a wonder, not even in a very small way. Man is obliged to believe not only in the Lord's power, but also in His goodness, as through that sea He gives food and ways of communication to man, He gives wholesome salts, He mitigates the heat of the sun and gives space to winds, and seed to lands remote from one another, and causes it to roar like storms to call the ant - man - to the Infinite One, his Father, and He gives man the possibility of elevating himself to higher spheres, contemplating higher visions.

Three things speak most of God in creation, which is entirely a witness of His power: the light, the firmament and the sea. The astral and meteorological order, which is a reflection of the divine Order; the light, which only a God could create; the sea, the power which only God could confine within firm limits, after creating it, and He gave it motion and voice, without, however, damaging, as a turbulent disorderly element, the earth, which bears the sea on its surface.

Ponder on the mystery of light, which is inexhaustible. Raise your eyes towards the firmament where stars and planets are resplendent. Look at the sea and consider it for what it is. It is not a separation but a bridge between peoples who live on other shores and although they cannot be seen and are unknown, one must

believe that they exist, simply because the sea exists. God does not make anything useless. He, therefore, would not have created the seemingly infinite sea, unless it were limited by other lands beyond the horizon, which prevents us from seeing, lands which are populated with other men, who have all come from one only God, and by God's will have been carried there by storms and currents, to people continents and regions. And the sea sends remote appeals through its waves, through the voice of its waves and its tides. It is a link, not a separation.

The anxiety which causes John a sweet anguish is the appeal of remote brothers. The more the spirit dominates the flesh, the more capable it is of hearing the voices of spirits that are united even if they are divided, like branches that spring up from the same root are united even if one cannot see the other if an obstacle is interposed between them. Look at the sea with eyes full of light. You will see lands strewn round its shores, at its limits, and other lands inside it and a cry will reach you from every one of them: 'Come. Bring us the Light that you possess. Bring us the Life given to you. Speak to our hearts the word with which we are not acquainted, but we know is the foundation of the universe: love. Teach us to read the word that we see written on the infinite pages of the firmament and of the sea: God. Enlighten us because we feel that there is a light, which is more real than the one which reddens the sky and makes the sea glitter like gems. Bring to our darkness the Light that God gave you after generating It through His love, and He gave It to you on behalf of all peoples, as He gave light to the stars so that they might give it to the earth. You are the stars, we are the dust. But form us as the Creator formed the earth with dust, so that man might people it adoring Him now and for ever, until the hour comes when there is no earth, but the Kingdom comes. The Kingdom of light, of love, of peace, as the living God told you it will be, because we are children of this God as well, and we ask to become acquainted with our Father'.

And learn to go along the ways of infinity. Without fear and without disdain, towards those who call you and weep. Towards those who will also grieve you because they feel God but do not know how to adore God, but they will also procure you glory, because, the more you possess love and bestow it, leading to the Truth the people who are waiting to reach it, the greater you will be".

Jesus said so, but much better than I did. But that was at least His idea. »

« John, you have repeated exactly what the Master said. You have only omitted what He said about your capability to understand God through your generosity in giving yourself. You are good, John. The best amongst us! We have come to the end of our

way without noticing it. There is Nazareth on its hill. The Master is looking at us and smiling. Let us reach Him at once to enter the village together. »

« Thank you, John » says Our Lady. « You have given a great present to your Mother. »

« I thank you, too. You have opened infinite horizons to poor Mary... »

« What were you talking so much about? » Jesus asks those who have just joined Him.

« John has repeated the speech You made on Mount Tabor. Perfectly. And we were delighted. »

« I am glad that My Mother has heard it, because the sea is related to Her name and Her charity is as vast as the sea. »

« Son, You possess such charity as the Man, and yet it is nothing as compared to Your infinite charity of the divine Word. My sweet Jesus! »

« Mother, come near Me. As You held Me by the hand when we came back from Cana or from Jerusalem, when I was a little boy. »

And they look at each other with eyes full of love.

244. Jesus at Nazareth.

6th August 1945.

The first place where Jesus stops in Nazareth is the house of Alphaeus. He is about to enter the kitchen garden when He meets Mary of Alphaeus who is going to the fountain carrying two copper amphoras.

« Peace be with you, Mary! » says Jesus, embracing His relative, who, effusive as usual, kisses Him shouting for joy.

« This will certainly be a peaceful joyful day, my Jesus, because You have come! Oh! My dearest sons! How happy is your mother to see you! » and she kisses her big boys who were behind Jesus. « You are staying with me today, are you not? I have just lit the oven for the bread. And I was going to the fountain, because I do not want to interrupt its baking. »

« Mother, we will go » say her sons taking the amphoras.

« How kind they are, aren't they, Jesus? »

« Yes, they are so kind » confirms Jesus.

« Also to You, are they not? Because if they should love You less than they love me, they would be less dear to me. »

« Be not afraid, Mary. They are nothing but joy to Me. »

« Are You alone? Mary went away so suddenly... I would have come too. She was with a woman... A disciple? »

« Yes. Martha's sister. »

« Oh! Blessed be God! I have prayed so much for that. Where is she? »

« There she is, she is arriving with My Mother, Martha and Susanna. »

The women in fact have just turned the corner, followed by the apostles. Mary of Alphaeus runs to meet them and she exclaims: « How happy I am to have you as my sister! I should say "daughter" because you are young and I am old. But I will call you by the name which is so dear to me since I call my Mary by it. Come, my dear, you must be tired... But you are certainly happy » and she kisses the Magdalene holding her by the hand as if she wanted her to feel more deeply that she loves her. The fresh beauty of Mary Magdalene seems more striking when she is close to the rather run down figure of good Mary of Alphaeus.

« You are all staying with me today. I will not let you go away » and with a deep involuntary sigh of her soul, confession escapes her: « I am always so lonely! When my sister-in-law is not here, my days are sad and lonely. »

« Are your sons not here? » asks Martha.

Mary of Alphaeus blushes and sighs: « With their souls, yes. They are still here. To be a disciple joins and divides... But as you came, Mary, they will come too » and she wipes a tear. She looks at Jesus Who is watching her pitifully and she strives to smile and asks: « It takes a long time, doesn't it? »

« Yes, Mary. But you will see it happen. »

« I was hoping... After that Simon... But he heard of other... things and he became hesitant again. Love him just the same, Jesus! »

« Can you doubt it? »

While Mary is speaking she prepares some refreshments for the pilgrims, turning a deaf ear to the words of everybody assuring her that they need nothing.

« Let us leave the women disciples in peace » says Jesus and He concludes: « And let us have a walk through the village. »

« Are You going away? The other sons may come. »

« I am staying all day tomorrow. So we will be together. I am now going to see My friends. Peace to you, women. Goodbye, Mother. »

Nazareth is already in a state of excitement because of Jesus' arrival and in the company of the Magdalene. Some rush to the house of Mary of Alphaeus, some to Jesus' and since the latter is closed they all go back towards Jesus Who is crossing Nazareth going towards the centre of the village. The town is always ill-disposed to the Master. Some people are ironical, some incredulous, some are openly wicked as is obvious from certain biting remarks: they all follow the great Son of Nazareth out of curiosity, without love, and they do not understand Him. Even in the questions they ask Him there is no love, but disbelief and derision. But He feigns not

to notice and replies kindly and mildly to those who speak to Him.

« You give to everybody, but You seem a son without any tie to Your fatherland, because You give it nothing. »

« I am here to give what you ask for. »

« But You prefer not to be here. Are we perhaps bigger sinners than the others? »

« There is no sinner, no matter how big he may be, whom I do not wish to convert. And you are not worse than the others. »

« However, You do not say that we are better than the others. A good son always says that his mother is better than any other mother, even if she is not so. Is perhaps Nazareth a stepmother to You? »

« I am not saying anything. When it is not possible to say that one is good, and when one does not wish to lie, to be silent is the charitable rule towards others and oneself. But you would be readily praised if you only came to My doctrine. »

« So You wish to be admired? »

« No, only listened to and believed, for the good of your souls. »

« Speak, then! We will listen to You. »

« Tell Me about what you wish Me to speak. »

A middle-aged man says: « Listen. I would like You to come with me and explain something to me. »

« I will come at once, Levi. »

And they go to the synagogue while people gather behind the Master and the head of the synagogue. The synagogue is soon crowded.

The head of the synagogue takes a roll and reads: « Solomon brought Pharaoh's daughter from the Citadel of David up to the house he had built for her, because he said: "My wife must not live in the palace of David king of Israel, because it was sanctified when the ark of the Lord entered it" Now I would like to have Your opinion on the matter, whether You think that measure was right or not, and why. »

« It was undoubtedly right, because respect for David's house, which had been sanctified when the ark of the Lord was brought into it, demanded it. »

« But since the Pharaoh's daughter was Solomon's wife, was she thereby not worthy to live in the house of David. Does the wife not become, according to Adam's word, "bone of the bone" of her husband and "flesh of his flesh"? If it is so, how could she desecrate what the husband did not desecrate »

« In the first Book of Ezra it is written: "You have committed sin by marrying foreign women; you have added to the sin of Israel". And one of the causes of Solomon's idolatry was his marriages with foreign women. God had said: "Foreign women will lead your hearts astray to the extent of making you follow foreign

gods". We are aware of the consequences. »

« But he was not led astray because he had married the Pharaoh's daughter, in fact he wisely judged that she was not to live in the holy house. »

« God's goodness cannot be measured by our standards. Man, after one fault, does not forgive, although he himself is always guilty. God is not inexorable after a first fault, but He does not allow man to persist with impunity in the same sin. He therefore does not punish man the first time he falls; He then speaks to his heart. But He punishes when His goodness does not serve to convert, but is mistaken for weakness by man. He then inflicts punishment, because God is not to be derided. Although bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, the Pharaoh's daughter had laid the first germs of corruption in the heart of the Wise King, and you know that a disease breaks out not when there is only one germ in the blood, but when the blood is corrupt with many germs that have multiplied from the first one. Man's fall into sin always begins with an apparently innocuous laxity. Then compliance with evil increases. Then one becomes accustomed to conscience compromises and to neglecting one's duties and obedience to God and thus by degrees man falls into grave sins, even of idolatry in the case of Solomon, who thus provoked a schism, the consequences of which are still lasting. »

« So You say that it is necessary to be extremely careful and to have the greatest respect for holy things? »

« Most certainly. »

« Now explain also this to me. You say that You are the Word of God. Is it true? »

« I am. He sent Me to bring the Gospel to all men on the earth and to redeem them from all their sins. »

« So, if You really are what You say, You are greater than the Ark. Because God is not in the glory dominating the Ark, but He is within You. »

« You are right. That is the truth. »

« Why, then, do You desecrate Yourself? »

« And did you bring Me here to tell Me that? I feel sorry for you, for you and for those who urged you to speak. I ought not to justify Myself, because every justification is deliberately misunderstood by your hatred. But I will give a justification to you who accuse Me of not loving you and of desecrating My person. Listen. I know what you are hinting at. But I reply to you: "You are wrong". As I open My arms to those who are dying in order to bring them back to life and I call the dead and give their lives back to them, likewise I open My arms to those who are more truly about to die and to those who are more truly dead: sinners, to bring them to eternal Life and raise them, if they are already putrid, so that they

may not die again. But I will tell you a parable. A man became a leper because of his many vices. Human society banished him from its company and the man, in dire solitude, began to ponder on his situation and his sins, which had brought him to that state. Many years passed thus and when he had given up hope he suddenly recovered his health. The Lord had mercy on him because of his many prayers and tears. What did the man then do? Could he go back home because the Lord had had mercy on him? No. He had to show himself to the priest, who after examining him for some time, had him purified and sacrificed two sparrows. And after washing his clothes not only once, but twice, the man went back to the priest with the prescribed spotless lambs, the ewe-lamb, flour and oil. The priest then led him to the door of the Tabernacle. And the man was finally religiously readmitted amongst the people of Israel. But tell Me: when he went to the priest the first time, why did he go? »

« To be purified the first time and thus be able to go through the great purification, which would readmit him amongst the holy people! »

« You are right. So he was not entirely purified? »

« Ehi! No. There is still a lot missing before he is; with regard both to his body and his soul. »

« How did he dare then to go near the priest the first time when he was utterly unclean, and a second time to go near the Tabernacle? »

« Because the priest is the necessary means to be readmitted amongst the living. »

« And the Tabernacle? »

« Because only God can forgive sins and it is of our faith to hold that God rests in His glory beyond the Holy Veil, dispensing His pardon from that source. »

« So the cured leper is not yet clear of sin when he approaches the priest and the Tabernacle? »

« No. Certainly not! »

« Men with twisted thoughts and insincere hearts, why do you accuse Me, if I, Priest and Tabernacle, allow spiritual lepers to approach Me? Why do you have two measures to judge? Yes, the woman who was lost is now here with Me, as well as Levi the publican, who is here with his new soul and his new office and many others as well, who came before them. They may stay because they have been readmitted amongst the people of the Lord. They were brought to Me by the will of God Who has given Me the power to judge and absolve, to cure and raise people from the dead. There would be desecration if they persisted in their idolatry as Pharaoh's daughter did, but there is no desecration because they have embraced the doctrine that I brought to the

earth and through it they have risen to the Grace of the Lord. Men of Nazareth, who lay snares for Me as you do not think that it is possible that the true Wisdom and Justice of the Word of the Father are in Me, I say to you: "Imitate sinners". They truly surpass you in coming to the Truth. And I also say to you: "Do not have recourse to mean snares to oppose Me". Do not do that. Ask, and I will give you the vital Word, as I give it to everyone who comes to Me. Receive Me as a son of this land of ours. I bear you no grudge. My hands are full of caresses and My heart of the desire to teach you and make you happy. I am so anxious to please you, that if you wish so, I will spend the Sabbath with you, teaching you the New Law. »

There is a conflict of opinions amongst the crowd. But curiosity or love prevails and many shout: « Yes, we will be here tomorrow and will listen to You. »

« I will pray that every obstacle oppressing your hearts may be removed during the night. So that every prejudice may vanish and with free minds you may understand the Voice of God that has come to bring the Gospel to the whole world, but it is My desire that the first place capable of receiving it may be the town where I grew up. Peace to you all. »

245. In the Synagogue at Nazareth on the Sabbath.

7th August 1945.

We are once again in the synagogue at Nazareth, but on a Sabbath.

Jesus has read the apologue against Abimelech and ends with the words: « "May, fire come from the thorn bush and devour the cedars of Lebanon" ». He then hands the roll to the head of the synagogue.

« Are You not reading the rest? You ought to read it, so that they may understand the apologue » says the head.

« It is not necessary. The days of Abimelech are very remote. I will apply the old apologue to the present time.

Listen, people of Nazareth. You already know the moral of the apologue against Abimelech, as you have been instructed by the head of your synagogue, who in his days was instructed by a rabbi, who had learned from another rabbi and so on for ages, always with the same method and the same conclusions. You will hear a different moral from Me. And I ask you to make use of your intelligence and not to be like the ropes of a well pulley, which, until they are worn out, run from the pulley down to the water, and then from the water back up to the pulley, without ever changing. Man is not a rope or a mechanical device. Man has been gifted with intelligence and must make use of it on his own behalf, according to

needs and circumstances. Because if the letter of the word is eternal, circumstances change. Those are poor masters who do not want the trouble or the satisfaction of extracting each time new teachings, that is the spirit that the ancient wise words always contain. They will be like echoes, which can but repeat, even dozens of times, the same word, without ever adding one word of their own.

Mankind - the forest in fact, where all kinds of trees, shrubs and herbs are gathered, represents mankind - feels the need to be led by someone who would take upon himself all the glory and the even greater burden of authority and responsibility for the happiness or unhappiness of his subjects: someone who would be responsible to the subjects, to neighbouring countries, and what is more dreadful, to God. Because it is true that crowns and social pre-eminence, whichever they may be, are granted by men, but they are allowed by God, without Whose condescension no human power can be imposed. Which explains the sudden unimaginable changes of dynasties, which were considered everlasting and of powers which seemed untouchable, and which, when they overstepped the limit in punishing or trying people, were overthrown by the same people, with God's permission, and became nothing but dust or, at times, sewer filth.

I said: people feel the need to elect someone who will take upon himself all responsibilities towards his subjects, towards neighbouring nations and towards God, which is the most dreadful of all. Because if the judgement of history is dreadful and the interests of people endeavour in vain to change it, because future events and people will restore it to its original terrible truth, God's justice is even more relentless, because it is not affected by any pressure whatsoever, neither is it subject to changes of humour or opinion, as men too often are, and above all it is not subject to wrong judgement. Those, therefore, who are elected leaders of peoples and makers of history ought to act with the heroic justice of saints, in order not to become ill-famed in future centuries and be punished by God for ever.

But let us go back to Abimelech's apologue. So the trees wanted to have a king and went to the olive-tree. But the latter, being a sacred tree and consecrated to supernatural use because of its oil that burns in front of the Lord and is a predominant element in tithes and sacrifices, and forms the holy balm to anoint altars, priests and kings, and for its properties I would say it is almost thaumaturgic and as such is used both on healthy and sick bodies, the olive-tree replies: "How could I fail my holy supernatural vocation to degrade myself in worldly matters?"

Oh! How gentle was the reply of the olive tree! Why is it not learned and repeated by all those whom God elects to a holy mission, at least by those? Because in actual fact it should be pronounced

by every man as a reply to the suggestions of the demon, because every man is king and a son of God, gifted with a soul, which makes him a regal divine son, called to a supernatural destiny. His soul is an altar and a house. The altar of God, the house where the Heavenly Father descends to receive the love and reverence of His son and subject. Every man has a soul, and as each soul is an altar, every man is thereby a priest, a guardian of the altar and in Leviticus it is written: "The Priest shall not profane himself." Man, therefore, ought to reply to the temptations of the Demon, of the world and of the flesh: "Can I stop being spiritual and busy myself with material sinful matters?"

The trees went then to the fig-tree, inviting it to reign over them. But the fig-tree replied: "How can I forego my sweetness and my excellent fruit to become your king?"

Many apply to a meek and kind man to have him as their king. Not so much because they admire his kindness, but because they hope that by being very kind he will end up by being a king they can make fun of, from whom they can obtain anything they wish and whom they can abuse as they like. But kindness is not weakness. It is goodness. It is just, intelligent, firm. Never mistake kindness for weakness. The former is virtue, the latter a fault. And because it is a virtue it gives those who possess it a righteous conscience, which enables them to resist human solicitations and allurements, aiming at bending them towards worldly interests, which are not the interests of God, remaining faithful to their destiny, at all costs. A kind-minded man will never repel reproaches with bitterness, neither will he ever harshly reject those who ask his help. On the contrary, smiling sympathetically he will always say: "Leave me to my peaceful destiny. I am here to comfort you and help you, but I cannot become king, according to your expectations, because I am interested in one regality only, for the welfare of your soul and mine: spiritual regality".

The trees went to the vine and asked it to be their king. But the vine replied: "How can I forego being mirth and strength to come and reign over you?"

To be king always leads to spiritual gloom, both because of responsibilities and of remorse, because a king who does not commit sin and does not cause himself to feel remorse is more rare than a black diamond. Power allures while it shines from afar like a lighthouse, but when one reaches it, one realises that it is not a star but only the faint light of a firefly. Furthermore, power is but a strength tied with the multitude of ropes of thousands of interests stirred up around a king: the interests of courtiers, of allies, of relatives and personal ones. How many kings swear to themselves while being anointed with oil: "I will be impartial" and later are

unable to be so? Like a strong tree, which does not rebel against the first embrace of flexible or thin ivy saying: "It is so slender that it can do me no harm", on the contrary it is pleased to be decked with it and to be its protector supporting its climbing, so a king, very often, I could say always, yields to the first embrace of the interest of a courtier, of an ally, or a personal one or of a relative, who applies to him and he is pleased to be their munificent protector. "It is such a trifle!" he says, even if his conscience warns him: "Be careful!" And he thinks that it can harm neither his power nor his good name. Also the tree believes that. But the day comes when the ivy, growing in strength and in length, more and more voracious in sucking the lap of the soil and more and more anxious to climb up and conquer the sun and light, embraces, branch after branch, the whole big tree, overwhelms it, chokes it and kills it. And it was so slender! And the tree was so strong!

The same applies to kings. A first compromise with their mission, a first shrugging of shoulders at the voices of their conscience, because praise is pleasant and it is delightful to be a sought-after protector, and the moment comes when the king no longer reigns, but the interests of other people have taken over and imprison the king, they gag him and suffocate him, and if they have become stronger than he is, they kill him when they see that he is slow in dying. Also a common man, who is still a king in his spirit, is lost if he accepts a lower regality out of pride or greed. And he loses his spiritual serenity that comes to him from his union with God. Because the Demon, the world and the flesh can give an illusory power and joy, but at the cost of the spiritual cheerfulness that comes from the union with God.

O cheerfulness and strength of the poor in spirit, you really deserve that man may say: "How can I accept to become king in the inferior part, if by forming an alliance with you, I lose my internal strength and joy, Heaven and its true royalty?" And those blessed poor in spirit, who aim at possessing only the Kingdom of Heaven and despise all other riches not pertaining to that Kingdom, can also say: "How can we fail in our mission, which is to yield ripe fortifying juices and joyful juices for brotherly mankind that lives in the arid desert of animality and whose thirst is to be quenched so that it will not die and has need to be nourished with vital juices like a child without a nurse? We are the nurses of mankind that has lost the breast of God, and wanders barren and sick and would die of despair or tortured by the darkest scepticism, if it did not find us who, with the good-humoured activity of those who are free from every earthly tie, could convince them that there is a Life, a Joy, a Freedom, a Peace. We cannot forego such Charity for the sake of an interest that is miserable".

The trees then went to the thorn bush, which did not reject them.

But it imposed severe terms. "If you want me as your king, you must come under me. But if after electing me, you will not comply, I will make every thorn of mine a burning torture and I will devour you all, including the cedars of Lebanon".

Such is the regality that the world accepts as true! Arrogance and ferocity are mistaken by corrupt mankind for true royalty, whereas meekness and goodness are considered foolish weak sentiments. Man will not submit to God, but he submits to Evil. He is seduced by it and consequently he is burnt by it.

That is Abimelech's apologue. But now I will propose another one to you. It does not refer to far away and past events. But to present things and near at hand.

The animals decided to elect a king for themselves. And since they were shrewd they thought of electing one who would not frighten them being strong or wild. So they discarded the lion and all felids. They said they did not want rostrate eagles or any other kind of bird of prey. They did not trust the horse, which with its speed could reach them and see what they were doing; and they trusted even less the donkey, which they knew to be very patient, but also subject to sudden rage and equipped with powerful hooves. They were horrified at the idea of having a monkey as their king, because monkeys are too intelligent and revengeful. Under the pretext that the snake had favoured Satan in seducing man, they said that they did not want it as their king, notwithstanding its graceful colours and its smart movements. In actual fact they did not want it because they were aware of its silent gait, its powerful muscles and the dreadful effect of its poison. Could they possibly choose as their king a bull or any other animal gifted with pointed horns? Never! "Also the devil has them" they said. But they were thinking: "Should we one day rebel, it will wipe us out with its horns".

After so much discarding, they saw a little fat white lamb hopping merrily on a green meadow, butting his mother's round udder. He had no horns and his eyes were as meek as the April sky. He was docile and simple. And he was satisfied with everything: with the water of the little stream where he used to drink dipping his rosy little muzzle into the water; with the many-flavoured little flowers that gratified both his eyes and palate; with the thick grass where it was pleasant to lie when he was full; with the clouds, which seemed as many little lambs roving about the blue meadows up there, and inviting him to play running in the field as they did in the sky; and, above all, he was pleased with the caresses of his mother, as she still allowed him to suckle now and again while she licked his white fleece with her pinkish tongue; with the safe fold, which was well sheltered from winds, and with its soft fragrant litter, where it was lovely to sleep beside his

mother. "He is pleased. He has neither weapons nor poison. He is naive. Let us make him our king". And they did. And they were proud of him because he was beautiful and kind, admired by nearby people and loved by his subjects because of his patient meekness.

The days passed and the lamb became a ram and said: "The time has now come when I must really reign. Now I am fully aware of my mission. The will of God, Who permitted me to be elected king, has formed me for my mission and has given me the capability to reign. It is therefore just that I should exert it in a perfect manner, also because I do not want to neglect the gifts of God". And when he saw that his subjects were doing things contrary to morality, or to charity, kindness, loyalty, moderation, obedience, respect, prudence, and so on, he raised his voice to warn them. His subjects laughed at his wise and kind bleating, which did not frighten them like the roar of felines, or the screech of vultures when they dive onto a prey, or the hiss of a snake, or the barking of a frightful dog.

The lamb, which was now a ram, did not limit himself to bleating. He went to the culprits to bring them back to their duties. But the serpent slipped away through his legs. The eagle flew away and thus deserted him. The felines pushed him aside with their paws threatening: "For the time being our soft paws are only pushing you aside. But see what is in them? Claws". Horses and similar racers began to gallop round him, making fun of him. Strong elephants and other pachyderms pushed him about with their trunks, while monkeys threw objects at him from tree-tops.

The lamb, which had become a ram, at last was angry and said: "I did not want to use my horns or my strength. Because my neck is powerful indeed, and in fact it will be taken as a model to knock down war obstacles. I did not want to make use of it, because I prefer to use love and persuasion. But since you will not yield to such weapons, I will use force, because if you fail in your duties towards me and towards God, I do not want to fail in my duty towards God and towards you. I was elected to this position by you and by God, to guide you to Justice and Good. And I want Justice and Good, that is Order, to reign here". And he punished with his horns, but only slightly, because he was kind, an obstinate cur, which continued to molest its neighbours and later with his most powerful neck he broke down the door of the den where a greedy selfish pig had stored up victuals to the detriment of other animals, and knocked down also the liana thicket, which two lustful monkeys had chosen for their illicit love affairs.

"This king has become too strong. He really wants to reign. And he wants us to live as wise animals. That is not to our liking. We must dethrone him" they decided. But a shrewd monkey suggested: "We must do it only under the pretext of a just reason. Otherwise we shall cut a bad figure with nearby peoples and we

shall be disliked by God. Therefore let us spy on every action of the lamb, which has become a ram, so that our accusation may appear a just one".

"I will see to that" said the snake. "And I, too" said the monkey. So they never lost sight of the lamb, as one crawled on the grass and the other remained on tree-tops, and every evening, when he retired to rest after the fatigue of his mission and to ponder on the measures to be taken and the words to be used to put down the rebellion and overcome the sinful habits of his subjects, all the animals gathered, with the rare exception of a few honest faithful ones, to listen to the report of the two spies and traitors. Because that is what they were.

The snake would say to its king: "I follow you because I love you, and should I see you being attacked, I want to be able to defend you". The monkey used to say: "How much I admire you! I want to help you. Look: from here I can see that someone is committing a sin beyond that meadow. Run there", and then it would say to its companions: "Today also he took part in the banquet of some sinners. He pretended to go there to convert them, but in actual fact he was an accomplice of their orgy". And the snake reported: "He even went outside the limits of his people, as he approached butterflies, blue-bottles and slimy snails. He is not faithful. He deals with impure foreigners".

That is what they were saying behind the back of the innocent lamb, and they thought that he did not know. But the spirit of the Lord, Who had formed him for his mission, enlightened him also on the plots of his subjects. The lamb could have fled indignantly, cursing them. But he was kind and humble-hearted. And he was full of love. His mistake was to love. And an even greater mistake was to persevere in his mission, loving and forgiving, at the cost of death, to accomplish God's will. Oh! What mistakes these are with men. Unforgivable! So much so that it was condemned because of them. "Let him be killed; so that we may be free from his oppression". And the snake took upon itself to kill the lamb because the snake is always the traitor...

That is the other apologue. It is for you to understand it, people of Nazareth! Because I love you, I wish you to remain at least at the level of a hostile people, without going beyond that. The love for the land where I came when a child, and in which I grew up loving you and being loved, compels Me to say to you all: "Do not be more than hostile. Do not let history say: 'His traitor and His unjust judges came from Nazareth'".

Goodbye. Be righteous in judging and firm in willing. The former virtue applies to you all, my fellow-citizens. The latter to those among you who are not upset by dishonest thoughts. I am going... Peace be with you. »

And Jesus, sorrowfully, with His head lowered, leaves the synagogue of Nazareth, in a painful silence, broken by two or three voices only, expressing approval.

He is followed by the apostles. Alphaeus' sons are the last ones. And their eyes do not certainly look like the meek eyes of a lamb... They glare upon the hostile crowd and Judas Thaddeus does not hesitate to plant himself in front of his brother Simon and say to him: « I thought my brother was more honest and of a stronger character. »

Simon lowers his head and is silent. But the other brother, supported by other people of Nazareth, exclaims: « You ought to be ashamed of offending your eldest brother! »

« No. I am ashamed of you. Of all of you. Nazareth is not a stepmother, but a perverted stepmother to the Messiah. But listen to my prophecy. You will shed enough tears to feed a fountain, but they will not serve to wash out the true name of this town and your own from history books. Do you know what that name is? "Stupidity". Goodbye. »

James' salutation is gentler: he wishes them the light of wisdom. And they go out with Alphaeus of Sarah and two young men, who, if I am not wrong, are the two ass-drivers who escorted the donkeys that were used to go to Johanna of Chusa, when she was about to die.

The crowds, who have remained dumbfounded, whisper: « But where did He get so much wisdom? »

« And how can He work miracles? Because He really works miracles. The whole of Palestine talks about it. »

« Is He not the son of Joseph, the carpenter? We have all seen Him, at the bench of the carpenter of Nazareth, making tables and beds, adjusting wheels and locks. He did not even go to school and His Mother was His only teacher. »

« A scandal which also our father criticised » says Joseph of Alphaeus.

« But your brothers also finished school with Mary of Joseph. »

« Eh! My father was weak with his wife... » replies Joseph again.

« In that case, also your father's brother? »

« Yes. »

« But is He really the carpenter's son? »

« Can't you see Him? »

« Oh! So many are like one another! I think He is one who says He is, but He is not. »

« Where is Jesus of Joseph, then? »

« Do you think that His Mother would not recognise Him? »

« His brothers and sisters are here and they all say that He is their relative. Is that right, you two? »

The two sons of Alphaeus nod assent.

« Well, then, He is either mad or possessed, because what He says cannot come from a workman. »

« We should not listen to Him. His alleged doctrine is either delirium or possession. »

Jesus is standing in the square waiting for Alphaeus of Sarah who is speaking to a man. And while He is waiting, one of the assdrivers, who had stopped at the door of the synagogue informs Him of the slander uttered in the synagogue.

« Do not let it grieve you. A prophet generally is not honoured in his fatherland or at home. Man is so foolish that he believes that one must be almost out of this world to be a prophet. And fellowcitizens and relatives all know and remember more than anybody else the human nature of their fellow-citizen or relative. But the truth is always triumphant. And now I say goodbye to you. Peace be with you. »

« Thank you, Master, for curing my mother. »

« You deserved it because you believed. My people here are inert, because there is no faith here. Let us go, My friends. We shall be leaving tomorrow at dawn. »

246. Our Lady Teaches the Magdalene.

8th August 1945.

« Where shall we stop, my Lord? » asks James of Zebedee, while they are walking through a gorge between two hills, the sides of which are cultivated and green from foot to top.

« At Bethlehem in Galilee. But during the warm hours we shall stop on the mountain overlooking Meraba. So your brother will be delighted once again seeing the sea » and Jesus smiles. He then concludes: « We men could have gone farther, but we have the women disciples following us, and although they never complain, we must not tire them excessively. »

« They never complain. That is true. We are more inclined to complain » agrees Bartholomew.

« And yet they are less accustomed to this life... » says Peter.

« Perhaps that is why they live it willingly » says Thomas.

« No, Thomas. They do it willingly out of love. You may be sure that neither My Mother nor the other housewives, such as Mary of Alphaeus, Salome and Susanna leave their homes willingly to come along the roads of the world and among people. And Martha and Johanna, when also the latter will come, not being accustomed to such fatigue, would not do it willingly if they were not urged by love. With regard to Mary of Magdala only a mighty love can give her the strength to undergo this torture » says Jesus.

« Why did You order her to come, then, if You know it is a torture? » asks the Iscariot. « It does no good to her or to us. »

« Nothing but the clear unquestionable demonstration of her change could persuade the world. And Mary wants to persuade the world of that. Her separation from the past has been complete. It is complete. »

« That is still to be seen. It is early to say so. When one gets used to a certain kind of life, it is difficult to part with it. Friendships and nostalgia take us back to it » says the Iscariot.

« Are you feeling nostalgia, then, for your previous life? » asks Matthew.

« I... no. I was just saying. I am I... a man, I love the Master and... in short, I have within me the elements that help me to be steadfast in my purpose. But she is a woman, and what a woman! And even if she were very firm, it is never very pleasant to have her with us. Should we meet some rabbis, priests or important Pharisees, you may rest assured that their comments might not be pleasing. When I think of it, I blush in advance. »

« Do not contradict yourself, Judas. If you have really broken off with your past, as you say, why do you regret so much that a poor soul should follow us to complete her conversion to Good? »

« Out of love, Master. I do everything out of love, too: for You. »

« Improve your love, then. Love, to be really such, must not be exclusive. When one can love only one object, and cannot love anything else, even if one is loved by what one loves, it is clear that that is not true love. Perfect love loves, with due gradation, all mankind and also animals and vegetables, stars and water, because it sees everything in God. One loves God, as is proper, and one loves everything in God. Be careful: exclusive love is often selfishness. Endeavour therefore to love everybody else out of love. »

« Yes, Master. »

The subject of the discussion is in the meantime proceeding beside Mary with the other women, and she is unaware of being the cause of so much talk.

They reach and go through the village of Japhia, but none of its citizens shows any desire to follow the Master or detain Him. So they proceed and as the apostles appear to be worried about the apathy of the place, Jesus endeavours to calm them.

The valley runs in a westward direction and another village can be seen lying at the foot of another mountain. This village, which I hear being called Meraba, is also unconcerned. Only some children approach the apostles while they are drawing water from a clear fountain leaning against a house. Jesus caresses them and asks their names, and the children ask His, who He is and where He is going. Also an old, bent, almost blind man approaches them and stretches out his hand to receive alms, which is in fact given to him.

They take to the road again, climbing a hill, the one lying across

the valley, into which flow its little rivers, now reduced to a trickle of water or to stones parched by the sun. But the road is good and runs through olive-groves first and then through other trees, which intertwine their branches and form a green gallery over the road. They reach the top, which is crowned with a forest of rustling ash-trees, if I am not mistaken. And they sit down there to have a rest and some food. And while eating and resting, they enjoy a delightful sight, because the view is beautiful, with the Mount Carmel chain on their left, to the west. It is a very green mountainous chain, in which all the most beautiful shades of green are present. And where the mountain ends, there is the sea, a shining, open, endless sea, stretching with its surface lightly rippled by little waves towards the north, washing the shores, which from the promontory formed by the last ramifications of Mount Carmel extend towards Ptolemais and other towns and then fade away in the mist near the Syro-Phoenician coast. It is not possible to see the sea south of the Carmel promontory, because it is hidden by the chain of mountains, which is higher than the hill where the apostolic group is gathered.

Hours go by in the shade of the airy rustling wood. Some sleep, some speak in a low voice, some watch. John leaves his companions and climbs up as high as possible to have a better view. Jesus retires to a thicket to meditate and pray. The women have withdrawn behind a hedge of honeysuckle in bloom and have refreshed themselves at a tiny spring, which is reduced to a trickle and forms a pool on the ground, as the water is so scarce that it cannot flow away. The elder women, being tired, have fallen asleep, while the Blessed Virgin, Martha and Susanna talk of their far away homes and Mary says that She would like to have the beautiful shrub in bloom to adorn Her little grotto.

The Magdalene, who had let her hair down, as she could not stand its weight, puts it up again and says: « I am going to John, now that he is with Simon, to look at the sea with them. »

« I am coming, too » replies the Blessed Virgin.

Martha and Susanna remain with their sleeping companions.

To reach the two apostles they have to pass near the thicket where Jesus has retired to pray.

« Prayer is My Son's rest » whispers Mary.

The Magdalene replies to Her: « I think that it is also essential for Him to be alone in order to keep His wonderful control, which the world puts to hard tests. Do You know, Mother? I have done what You told me. Every night I seclude myself for a more or less long time to restore within me the calm, which many things upset. And I feel much stronger afterwards. »

« At present you feel strong, later you will feel happy. Believe Me, Mary, both in peace and in struggle, in joy and in sorrow, our

spirit needs to dive into the ocean of meditation to rebuild what the world and events demolish and to achieve fresh strength to climb higher and higher. In Israel we use and misuse vocal prayer. I do not mean that it is useless or displeasing to God. But I say that meditation, mental elevation to God is always much more useful to the soul, because by contemplating His divine perfection and our misery, or the misery of so many poor souls, not to criticise them but to be indulgent to them and understand them, and to be grateful to God Who has supported us keeping us away from sin, or has forgiven us, so that we would not be left in sin, by meditating thus, we are really successful in praying, that is in loving. Because prayer, to be really such, must be love. Otherwise it is mumbling of lips from which the soul is absent. »

« But is it lawful to speak to God when one's lips are still dirty with so many profane words? In my hours of meditation, which I do as You, my most sweet apostle, taught me, I do violence to my heart, which would like to say to God: "I love You" ... »

« No! Why? »

« Because I feel I would be making a sacrilegious offer by offering my heart... »

« Do not do that, My dear daughter. First of all, your heart has been reconsecrated by the Son's forgiveness, and the Father sees only that forgiveness. But even if Jesus had not yet forgiven you, and in an ignored solitude, which could be both material and moral, you should shout to God: "I love You. Father, forgive me my miseries. I am sorry for them because they grieve You", believe Me, Mary, God the Father would absolve you Himself and your cry of love would be dear to Him. Give yourself up to love. Do not do violence to it. Nay, let it become as violent as a blaze. A fire consumes everything that is material, but it does not destroy one molecule of air. Because air is incorporeal. On the contrary it purifies it from the tiny debris blown by winds and makes it lighter. Love does the same to souls. It may consume man's matter quicker, if God allows that, but it will not destroy his spirit. It will, instead, increase its vitality and will make it pure and agile to be able to ascend to God. See John over there? He is only a boy. And yet he is an eagle. He is the strongest of all the apostles. Because he has understood the secret of strength, of spiritual formation: loving meditation. »

« But he is pure. I... He is a boy. I... »

« Look at the Zealot, then. He is not a boy. He has lived, struggled, hated. He admits it frankly. But he has learned to meditate. And he, too, believe Me, is well high up. See? They look for each other, those two. Because they feel they are alike. They have reached the same perfect age of the spirit and by the same means: mental prayer. Through it the boy has become virile in his spirit and the

man, already old and tired, has recovered a strong virility. And do you know another one, who without being an apostle will make much progress, nay, has already made much progress, because of his natural inclination to meditation, which has become a spiritual necessity for him, since he is a friend of Jesus? Your brother. »

« My Lazarus?... Oh! Mother! Since You know so many things because God shows them to You, tell me, how will Lazarus treat me, the first time we meet? Before he was disdainfully silent. But he did it because I would not bear being criticised. I have been very cruel to my brother and sister... I now realise it. Now that he knows that he can speak, what will he say to me? I am afraid of his frank reproach. Oh! he will certainly remind me of all the grief of which I was the cause. I would like to fly to Lazarus. But I am afraid of him. I used to go there, and not even the memories of my dead mother, her tears, which were still warm on the things she had used, tears she had shed for me, through my fault, would upset me. My heart was cynical, shameless, deaf to every voice, except to "evil". But now I no longer have the wicked strength of Evil and I tremble... What will Lazarus do to me? »

« He will open his arms to you and will call you, more with his heart than with his lips "my darling sister". He is so formed in God that he can but behave thus. Be not afraid. He will not say one word about your past. It is just as if I could see him, he is there at Bethany and his days of waiting are very long for him. He is waiting for you, to clasp you to his heart, to sate his brotherly love. All you have to do is love him as he loves you to enjoy the happiness of being born of the same womb. »

« I would love him even if he reproached me. I deserve it. »

« But he will love you only. Nothing else. »

They have joined John and Simon who are talking of their future trips and stand up reverently when the Mother of the Lord arrives.

« We have come too, to praise the Lord for the beautiful works of His creation. »

« Have you ever seen the sea, Mother? »

« Oh! I have. And although it was then stormy, it was less agitated than My heart, and less bitter than My tears, when I was fleeing along the coast from Gaza towards the Red Sea, with My Child in My arms, and the fear of Herod behind My back. And I saw it on our way back. And then it was springtime both on the earth and in My heart. The spring season of our return home. And Jesus clapped His little hands, happy as He was seeing new things... And Joseph and I were also happy, notwithstanding that the kindness of the Lord had made our exile at Matarea less hard, in a thousand ways. »

And their conversation goes on whilst I can no longer see or hear.

247. At Bethlehem in Galilee.

9th August 1945.

It is evening when they reach Bethlehem in Galilee. It is obvious that it is the destiny of towns with this name to lie on undulating hills, covered with green, woods, meadows where flocks graze, descending to the folds at night. The sky is still red after a glorious sunset, which is just over, and the air is full of pastoral music of bells and trembling bleatings, which are joined by the merry shouting of children and by the voices of mothers calling them.

« Judas of Simon, go with Simon and find lodgings for us and for the women. There is an inn in the centre of the village and we shall meet you there. »

While Judas and Simon obey, Jesus turns to His Mother and says: « This time it will not be like the other Bethlehem. You will find where to rest, Mother. Few people move about at this time of the year and there is no edict. »

« In this season it would be pleasant to sleep also on meadows or amongst these shepherds and the little lambs » and Mary smiles at Her Son and at some little shepherds who are staring at Her curiously.

She smiles in such a way that one of them touches another with his elbow and whispers to him: « It must be Her » and he comes forward, sure of himself, saying: « Hail, Mary, full of grace. Is the Lord with You? »

Mary replies with an even sweeter smile: « There is the Lord » and She points to Jesus, Who has turned round to speak to His cousins, asking them to give alms to the poor who are approaching them with plaintive requests. And She touches Her Son lightly saying to Him: « Son, these little shepherds are looking for You and they have recognised Me. I do not know how... »

« Isaac must have been here and left the perfume of revelation. Young man, come here. »

The little shepherd, a little swarthy fellow, about twelfefourteen years old, strong though lean, with very dark bright eyes, and an ebony shock of hair, clad in sheep skin - and he seems to me a young copy of the Precursor - approaches Jesus smiling happily, as if he were enchanted.

« Peace to you, boy. How did you recognise Mary? »

« Because only the Mother of the Saviour could have such a smile and countenance. I was told: "The countenance of an angel, eyes like stars and a smile sweeter than the kiss of a mother, as sweet as Her name, which is Mary, so holy as to be able to bend over the new-born God". That is what I saw in Her and I greeted Her because I was looking for You. We were looking for You, Lord, and... I did not dare greet You first. »

« Who spoke to you of Us? »

« Isaac, from the other Bethlehem, and he promised to take us to You in autumn. »

« Was Isaac here? »

« He is still in this area with many disciples. And he spoke to us shepherds. And we believed in his word, Lord: allow us to adore You as our companions did on that blessed night » and while he kneels down on the dust of the road, he utters a cry to the other shepherds who have stopped their flocks at the gate of the town (gate so to say, because it is not a walled town), where also Jesus had stopped, waiting for the women to enter the town together.

The little shepherd shouts: « Father, brothers and friends, we have found the Lord. Come and worship Him. »

And the shepherds come crowding with their flocks round Jesus and they beg Him not to go elsewhere but to accept their poor house, which is not far, as a dwelling place for Himself and His friends. « It is a wide fold » they explain « because God protects us and there are rooms and porches full of fragrant hay. The rooms are for Mother and Her sisters, because they are women. But there is one also for You. The others can sleep with us in the porches, on the hay. »

« I shall stay with you, too. And I shall rest more pleasantly than if I slept in a king's room. But let us go and tell Judas and Simon first. »

« I will go, Masters » says Peter and he goes away with James of Zebedee.

They stop on the side of the road awaiting the return of the four apostles.

The shepherds look at Jesus as if He were already God in His glory. The younger ones are really delighted and they seem to be wishing to impress in their minds every detail of Jesus and Mary, who has bent to caress some lambs, which are rubbing their heads against Her knees and bleating.

« There was one, in the house of My relative Elizabeth, which used to lick My plaits every time it saw Me. I called it "friend", because it was My friend, just like a child, and it came to Me every time it could. This one reminds Me of it with its eyes of two different shades. Do not kill it! Also the other was allowed to live because of its love for Me. »

« It's a ewe-lamb Woman, and we were going to sell it, because of the different shades of its eyes and I think it can see very little with one of them. But we will keep it if You wish so. »

« Oh! yes! I would not like any little lamb to be killed... They are so innocent and with their child-like voices they seem to be calling their mothers. I would think I was killing a baby if I had to kill one of these. »

« But, Woman, if all the lambs were to live, there would be no room for us on the earth » says the oldest shepherd.

« I know. But I am thinking of their pain, and of the pain of their mothers. They weep so much when their little ones are taken away from them. They look like real mothers, like us. I cannot bear to see anybody suffer, but it tears My heart to see a mother tortured. It is a different grief from any other, because the shock for the loss of a son tears not only our hearts and brains, but our very wombs. We mothers are always united to our sons. And it rends us completely, when they are taken away from us. » Mary no longer smiles, but tears shine in Her blue eyes and She looks at Jesus, Who is listening to Her and looks at Her, while She lays a hand on His arm, as if She were afraid He might be torn away from Her side.

A small escort of armed men arrives from a dusty road: six men together with some people who are shouting. The shepherds look and whisper something to one another. They then look at Mary and Jesus.

The oldest one says: « So it was a good job that You did not go into Bethlehem this evening. »

« Why? »

« Because those people, who passed by going to town, have gone to tear a son from his mother. »

« Oh! But why? »

« To kill him. »

« Oh! no! What has he done? »

Jesus also asks the same question and the apostles have gathered to hear.

« Rich Joel was found dead on the mountain road: he had been killed. He was coming back from Sicaminon with a lot of money. But he was not killed by highwaymen, because the money was still there'. The servant, who was accompanying him, said that his master had told him to run ahead and inform relatives of their return, and on the way he saw the young man, whom they are now going to kill, going toward the place where the man was murdered. And two men of the town now swear that they saw the young man attack Joel. Joel's relatives now demand his death. And if he is a murderer... »

« Do you not think he is? »

« I don't think it is possible. The young man is a little older than a boy, he is good, and is always with his mother, as he is her only son and she is a widow and a holy living person. He is well off. He does not bother with women. He is neither quarrelsome nor foolish. So why did he kill? »

« Perhaps he has some enemies. »

« Who? Joel, the dead man, or Abel, the one who is accused »

« The latter. »

« Ah! I would not know... But... No, I would not know. »

« Be frank, man. »

« Lord, it is something I am thinking of, and Isaac told us that we must not think ill of our neighbour. »

« But one must have courage to speak to save an innocent person. »

« If I speak, whether I am right or wrong, I shall have to flee from here, because Aser and Jacob are powerful. »

« Speak without fear. You will not have to flee. »

« Lord, Abel's mother is young, beautiful and wise. Aser is not wise, neither is Jacob. The former likes the widow and the latter... everybody in town knows that the latter sleeps in Joel's bed. I think that... »

« I see. Let us go, My friends. You women stay here with the shepherds. I shall be back soon. »

« No, Son. I am coming with You. »

Jesus is already walking fast towards the centre of the town. The shepherds are uncertain as to what to do, but they leave the flocks to the younger ones, who stay with all the women, with the exception of the Blessed Virgin and Mary of Alphaeus, who follow Jesus and they go to meet the apostolic group.

At the third road crossing the main street in Bethlehem they meet the Iscariot, Simon, Peter and James, who are coming towards them gesticulating and shouting.

« What a terrible thing, Master! And how painful! » exclaims Peter who is deeply upset.

« A son torn off his mother to be killed, and she is defending him like a hyena. But she is a woman against armed men » adds Simon Zealot.

« Many parts of her body are already bleeding » says the Iscariot.

« They broke her door down because she had barricaded it » concludes James of Zebedee.

« I am going to her. »

« Oh! yes! You are the only one who can console her. »

They turn right, then left, towards the town centre. It is now possible to see the excited tumultuous crowd pressing near Abel's house, and the heart-rending, inhuman, wild and at the same time pitiful shouting of a woman can be heard.

Jesus quickens His pace and arrives at a very small square, a widened curve of the street rather than a square, where the uproar is at its greatest.

The woman is still contending for her son with the guards, holding on with one hand, which is like an iron claw, to the ruin of the knocked down door, and to her son's belt with the other one and she savagely bites anyone who tries to loosen her grip, notwithstanding they deal her many blows and pull her hair so cruelly

as to throw her head back. When she does not bite she shouts: « Leave him! Murderers! He's innocent! The night Joel was killed he was in bed beside me! Murderers! Slanderers! Foul Perjurers! »

And the young man, whom the armed men are holding by the shoulders and dragging by the arms, turns round terror-stricken and shouts: « Mother, mother! Why must I die if I have not done anything? »

He is a handsome tall slender young man, with dark mild eyes, and dark wavy hair. His torn garment shows the young agile body of an adolescent.

Jesus with the help of those who accompany Him, pushes His way through the crowd, as compact as a rock, and reaches the pitiful group just at the moment when the exhausted woman is torn away from the door and dragged along the stony road, like a sack, tied to the body of her son. But that lasts for only a few yards. A more violent jerk tears the mother's hand off the young man's belt and the woman falls prone on the ground beating the road with her face, which bleeds profusely. But she gets up on her knees, stretching out her arms, while her son, who is being dragged away swiftly, as far as the crowds allow, as they open out with difficulty, frees his left arm and waves it, twisting round and shouting: « Mother! Goodbye! Remember, at least you, that I am innocent! ». The woman looks at him with staring eyes, she then faints and drops to the ground.

Jesus stops before the group of captors. « Stop for one moment. I order you! » His countenance allows no objection.

« Who are You? » aggressively asks a citizen in the group. « We do not know You. Move aside and let us go so that he may be killed before night. »

« I am a Rabbi. The greatest. In the name of Jehovah stop, or He will strike you by lightning ». In the meantime He seems to be striking by lightning. « Who are the witnesses against this man? »

« I, him and him » replies the man who had spoken before.

« Your testimony is not valid because it is false. »

« How can You say that? We are ready to swear it. »

« Your oath is a sin. »

« We are sinning? Are we? »

« You are. As you nurse your lust and your hatred, as you are greedy for wealth, as you are murderers, so you are also perjurers. You have sold yourselves to Filth. You are capable of any filthy deed. »

« Watch how You speak! I am Aser... »

« And I am Jesus. »

« You do not belong to here, You are neither a priest nor a judge. You are nothing. You are a foreigner. »

« Yes, I am the Foreigner because the earth is not My Kingdom.

But I am Judge and Priest. Not only of this small portion of Israel, but of the whole of Israel and of the whole world. »

« Let's go, let's go! We are dealing with a mad man » says the other witness and he gives Jesus a vigorous push to draw Him aside.

« You shall not take another step » thunders Jesus, Whose majestic countenance subdues and paralyses, as it can give life and joy when He wishes. « You shall not take another step. You do not believe what I am saying? Well, look. There is no dust of the Temple here, or water from it, neither are there words written with ink to make the water bitter, which is judgement on jealousy and adultery (1). But I am here. And I will give judgement. » Jesus' voice is so piercing that it sounds like a blare.

People throng to see. Only the Blessed Virgin and Mary of Alphaeus have stayed to help the mother who has fainted.

« And this is My judgement. Give me a pinch of dust from the road and a drop of water in a jug. And while they are being brought to Me, you who are accusing, and you who are accused, reply to Me. Are you innocent, son? Say so frankly to Him Who is your Saviour. »

« I am, Lord. »

« Aser, can you swear that you have spoken but the truth? »

« I swear it. I have no reason to lie. I swear it by the altar. May fire descend from Heaven and burn me if I am not telling the truth. »

« Jacob, can you swear that you are sincere in accusing and that there is no secret motive urging you to lie? »

« I swear by Jehovah. Only the love for my slain friend induces me to speak. I have no personal grudge against him. »

« And you, servant, can you swear that you have told the truth? »

« I will swear it a thousand times, if necessary! My master, my poor master! » and he covers his head with his mantle.

« Good. Here is the water and here is the dust. And this is the word. "Holy Father and Most High God, pass judgement on truth through Me, so that life and honour may be given to the innocent man and to the anguished mother, and suitable punishment to those who are not innocent. But because of the grace, which I enjoy in Your eyes, let neither fire nor death, but a long expiation come to them who have committed sin". »

He says these words stretching His hand over the pitcher, as priests do at the altar, during Mass at offertory. He then dips His right hand into the pitcher and with His wet hand He sprays the four men under judgement and makes each drink a drop of water: first the young fellow and then the others. He then folds His arms across His chest and looks at them.

Also the crowds look, but after a few moments they utter a cry

(1) For details of old Jewish rite, see Numbers 5, 11-31.

and throw themselves down, with their faces on the ground. The four men then, who are lined up, look at one another and shout in their turn: the young man out of amazement, the others out of horror because they see their faces covered with sudden leprosy, whereas the young fellow is immune from it.

The servant throws himself at the feet of Jesus, Who steps aside, like everybody else, including the soldiers, and taking young Abel by the hand draws him away as well, so that he may not become contaminated near the three lepers. And the servant shouts: « No! No! Forgive me! I am a leper! They paid me to delay my master until evening, so that they could kill him on the desert road. They made me unshoe his mule on purpose. They instructed me how to lie saying that I had come ahead. Instead I was with them killing him. And I will also tell You why they did it. Because Joel had found out that Jacob was in love with his young wife and because Aser wanted the mother of this young man and she refused him. So they made an agreement to get rid of Joel and Abel at the same time and then have a nice time with the women. I have told You everything. Cleanse me of my leprosy! Abel, you are good, pray for me! »

« Abel, go to your mother, so that when she comes round, she may see your face and thus come back to life happily. And you... I should say to you: "Let it be done to you what you have done". And it would be human justice. But I am entrusting you to a superhuman expiation. The leprosy, which you abhor, saves you from being seized and killed as you deserve. People of Bethlehem, step aside, open out, as the water of the sea did, and let these men go to their long imprisonment. A dreadful imprisonment! More dreadful than sudden death. Divine pity has granted them the possibility to make amends, if they wish so. Go! »

The crowds throng against the walls of houses leaving the centre of the road free, and the three men, covered with leprosy as if they had been affected by the disease for years, go towards the mountain, walking one behind the other. In the silence of approaching twilight, when all birds and animals become quiet, only their moaning can be heard.

« Purify the street with plenty water, after lighting fires on it. And you, soldiers, go and report that justice has been done according to the most perfect Mosaic Law. » And Jesus is about to go where His Mother and Mary of Clopas are still assisting the woman who is coming to herself slowly, while her son is caressing and kissing her cold hands.

But the people of Bethlehem with almost terrified respect beg Him: « Speak to us, Lord. You are really powerful. You are certainly the One mentioned by the man who came here announcing the Messiah. »

«I will speak to you tonight, near the fold of the shepherds. I am now going to comfort Abel's mother. »

And He goes to the woman, who is sitting on the lap of Mary of Alphaeus and is recovering her senses. She looks at the loving face of Our Lady Who smiles at her, but she is not fully aware of the situation until her eyes rest on the dark haired head of her son bent over her trembling hands, and she asks: « Am I dead, too? Is this Limbo? »

«No, woman. This is the Earth. This is your son saved from death. And this is Jesus, My Son, the Saviour. »

The first reaction of the woman is simply human. She collects all her strength and leans forward to take the bent head of her son in her hands, she sees that he is safe and sound, she kisses him frantically, weeping, laughing, repeating all possible pet names to express her joy.

« Yes, mother, yes. But now look, not at me, at Him, at Him Who saved me. Bless the Lord. »

The woman, still too weak to stand up or get up on her knees, stretches out her trembling bleeding hands and takes Jesus' hand kissing and wetting it with tears.

Jesus lays His left hand on her head saying to her: « Be happy. In peace. And be always good. And you, too, Abel. »

« No, my Lord. My son's life and mine are Yours, because You have saved them. Let him go with Your disciples, as he has been wishing to, since they were here. I offer him to You with so much joy and I beg You to allow me to follow him, to serve him and the servants of God. »

« And what about your house? »

« Oh! Lord! Can one risen from death have the same affections one had before dying? Myrtha has come back from death and out of hell through You. In this town I may go as far as hating those who tortured me through my child. And You preach love. I know. So let poor Myrtha love the Only One Who deserves love, and let her love His mission and His servants. Just now I am still exhausted and I would not be able to follow You. But allow me, my Lord, to do so as soon as I am fit. I will follow You and be with my Abel... »

« You will follow your son and Me. Be happy and in peace now. With My peace. Goodbye. »

And while the woman goes into her house supported by her son and other kind people, Jesus leaves the town with the shepherds, the apostles, His Mother and Mary of Alphaeus, and goes towards the fold, which is situated at the end of a road, in the fields.

... A bonfire lights up the meeting. Many people sitting in semicircles are waiting for Jesus to come and speak to them. In the meantime they are talking of the events of the day. Abel is there as well and many congratulate him stating that everybody believed

in his innocence.

The young man cannot help replying: « But you were still prepared to kill me! Even you, who had greeted me at the doorstep of my house, just at the time Joel was killed ». And he adds: « But I forgive you in Jesus' name. »

Jesus is now coming from the fold towards them: tall, clad in white, surrounded by the apostles, followed by the shepherds and women.

« Peace to you all.

If My coming here has served to establish the Kingdom of God among you, blessed be the Lord. If My coming here has served to make innocence shine, blessed be the Lord. If My coming here in time to prevent a crime serves also the purpose of giving three culprits the possibility of redeeming themselves, blessed be the Lord. Of all the many things on which this day induces us to meditate, and on which we shall be meditating while night falls to envelop in its darkness the joy of two hearts and the remorse of three others - and in its darkness it hides, as in a chaste veil, the joyful tears of the former and the bitter ones of the latter, which, however God sees - there is one thing which points out that there is nothing useless in what God gave as His Law.

The Law given by God, nominally, is strictly observed in Israel. But in actual fact it is not. The Law is analysed, dissected, hashed, to the extent of causing it to die through the torture of petty quibbles. It is there. But as a mummified body has no life, no breathing and no blood circulation, notwithstanding it looks like a body that is motionless because fast asleep, so the Law has no life, no breathing, no blood in far too many hearts. One can sit on a mummy as on a stool. One can lay things on a mummy, such as clothes, even filth, if one wishes, and the mummy will not rebel, because it has no life. Likewise too many people make a stool of the Law, a place where to lay things or discharge their filth, sure that it will not rebel in their consciences, which are dead.

I could compare a large portion of Israel to the petrified forests that one can see strewn in the Nile valley and in the Egyptian desert. They were woods, woods of living trees, nourished with sap, rustling in the sunshine, with beautiful leaves, flowers and fruit. They made of the spot where they came up a small earthly paradise, dear to men and to animals, who forgot the desolate aridity of the desert, the parching thirst which sand causes to man, penetrating his throat with its burning dust. They forgot the merciless sun that calcifies corpses in a short time, removing their flesh and turning it into dust, leaving clean skeletons stretched on the sand, so clean that they look as if they had been diligently polished by a workman. They forgot everything in the green rustling shade, rich in water and fruit, which refreshed and comforted

them and gave them energy for new journeys.

Then, for some unknown reason, like cursed things, they withered like trees that, after dying, still serve to light fires for man, or bonfires to illuminate the night, to keep away wild animals, or disperse the dampness of the night for pilgrims far from their houses. But those did not serve as firewood. They became like stones. The silica of the soil seemed to have climbed from the roots up to the trunk, the branches and leaves, through witchcraft. The winds then broke the thinner branches, which had become like alabaster, which is hard and soft at the same time. But the stronger branches are still there, on the powerful trunks, to deceive tired caravans. In fact in the dazzling reflection of the sun or the spectral moonlight, caravans can see the shadows of the straight trunks stand out on tablelands or at the bottom of valleys, which receive water only at the time of the fertile floods, and they rush towards the phantom forests, both because they are anxious to find shelter, refreshment, water and fresh fruit, and because their tired eyes are dazzled by the sun shining on the shadeless sand. True phantoms! Illusive likeness of living bodies. Real presence of dead things.

I saw them. Although I was little older than a baby, I remember them as one of the saddest things on the Earth. That is how they appeared to Me, until I touched, experienced, and weighed the entirely sad things of the Earth, because they are completely dead things. Immaterial things, that is dead virtues and dead souls. The former are dead in souls, the latter are dead because they killed themselves.

There is the Law in Israel. But it is there like the petrified trees in the desert that have become silica, death, deceit. They are things destined to wear away without being of any use. Nay, they are harmful, because they cause mirages that allure people diverting them from true oases and thus cause them to die of thirst, hunger and desolation. They are death, attracting others to death, as we read in certain tales of pagan myths.

You have had an instance today of what a Law is when it is reduced to stone in a soul that has also become stone. It is all kinds of sins and the cause of misfortune. May this serve you to learn how to live and to let the Law live within you, in its integrity, which I enlighten with the light of mercy.

It is the dead of night. The stars are looking down at us and God is looking down at us as well. Look up to the starry sky and elevate your souls to God. And without criticising the unhappy men already punished by God, and without any pride of being free from such sins, promise to God and to yourselves that you will not fall into the aridity of the cursed trees in the Egyptian deserts and valleys.

Peace be with you. »

He blesses them and then withdraws into the large fold enclosure, surrounded by rustic porches under which the shepherds have spread much hay as beds for the servants of the Lord.

248. Going towards Sicaminon.

10th August 1945.

The calm sunny morning helps the apostolic group to climb up some hills stretching westwards, that is towards the sea.

« We did the right thing by arriving at the mountains early in the morning. We could not have stayed in the plain in this heat. It is shady and cool here. I feel sorry for those who are following the Roman road. It is all right in winter, of course » says Matthew.

« After these hills we shall meet the wind from the sea. It always mitigates the air » says Jesus.

« We shall eat up on the top. The other day it was so beautiful. And from here it must be even more so because we are closer to Mount Carmel and to the sea » adds James of Alphaeus.

« Our fatherland is beautiful indeed! » exclaims Andrew.

« Yes. There is really everything. Mountains covered with snow, pleasant hills, lakes and rivers, all kinds of trees, and there is also the sea. It is really the delicious country celebrated by our psalmists, prophets, our great warriors and poets » says Thaddeus.

« Repeat some of the passages, since you know so many things » asks James of Zebedee.

« "With the beauty of Paradise He formed the earth of Judas.

With the smiles of His angels He adorned the land of Naphtali and with rivers of heavenly honey He flavoured the fruit of his land...

The whole creation is mirrored in you, gem of God, granted by God to His holy people.

O blissful land, your beauty is for the hearts of your children sweeter than the rich grapes maturing on your hillsides, more delicious than the milk filling the udders of your ewe-lambs, more inebriating than the honey with the flavour of flowers adorning you.

The sky descended to become a river uniting two gems, forming a pendant and a girdle on your green dress.

The Jordan sings, one of your seas smiles, while the other reminds men that God is full of awe and in the evening the hills seem to be dancing like merry girls on a meadow, and at angelical dawns your mountains pray or sing halleluja in the ardour of the sun, or adore Your power with the stars, Most High Lord.

You did not enclose us in narrow borders, but You gave us the

open sea to tell us that the world is ours". »

« Lovely! Really beautiful! I have only been on the lake and to Jerusalem; for years and years I have seen nothing else. So far I know only Palestine. But I am sure there is nothing more beautiful in the world » says Peter full of national pride.

« Mary was telling me that also the Nile valley is beautiful » says John.

« And the man of Endor speaks of Cyprus as if it were paradise » adds Simon.

« Eh! But our land!... »

And all the apostles with the exception of the Iscariot and Thomas, who are with Jesus a little ahead of the others, go on praising the beauty of Palestine.

The women are last to come, as they cannot restrain themselves from picking seeds of flowers to be sown in their gardens, also because the flowers are beautiful and will be a remembrance of their journey.

Some eagles, I think they are sea-eagles or vultures, are flying in wide circles over the hill tops, swooping down now and again in search of prey. And two vultures begin to fight, attacking each other in swift evolutions in the air, both losing feathers at each assault: an elegant but fierce duel that ends with the flight of the defeated one, which perhaps withdraws to die on a remote mountain-top. At least that is what everybody thinks, judging by its laborious flying, as if it were about to die.

« Greed did it no good » comments Thomas.

« Greed and stubbornness always cause trouble. Also those three yesterday!... Eternal mercy! What a dreadful destiny! » says Matthew.

« Will they never recover? » asks Andrew.

« Ask the Master ».

When Jesus is asked, He replies: « It would be better to ask whether they will convert. Because I solemnly tell you that it is better to die a holy leper than a healthy sinner. Leprosy will remain on the Earth, in the grave. Sins last for ever. »

« I liked Your speech of yesterday evening very much » says the Zealot.

« I, instead, didn't. It was too severe for too many people in Israel » says the Iscariot.

« Are you one of them? »

« No, Master. »

« Well, then. Why are you concerned? »

« Because it could be detrimental to You. »

« Should I then come to terms with sinners and be their accomplice, in order to avoid possible detriment? »

« I don't say that. You could not do that. But be quiet. Do not

alienate the mighty ones... »

« Silence gives consent. I do not consent to sin. Neither of common people, nor of mighty ones. »

« See what happened to the Baptist? »

« His glory. »

« His glory? I think it was his ruin. »

« Persecution and death suffered to be faithful to our duty are a glory for man. A martyr is always glorious. »

« But by his death he prevents himself from being a master, and grieves disciples and relatives. He frees himself from every pain, but leaves others in greater suffering. The Baptist has no relatives, that is true. But he still has duties towards his disciples. »

« Even if he had relatives, it would still be the same. Vocation is more than blood. »

« And what about the fourth commandment. »

« It comes after those concerning God. »

« You saw yesterday how a mother can suffer for her son... »

« Mother! Come here. »

Mary hastens towards Jesus and asks: « What do You want, Son? »

« Mother, Judas of Kerieth is pleading Your cause, he loves You and loves Me. »

« My cause? In regard to what? »

« He wants to persuade Me to be more prudent, so that I may not have to suffer like our relative, the Baptist. And he is telling Me that sons must have mercy on their mothers, by sparing themselves on their behalf, because that is what the fourth commandment prescribes. What do You say? You may speak, Mother, so that You may kindly instruct our Judas. »

« I say that I would no longer love My Son as God, that I would begin to doubt whether I have always been mistaken and whether I have always been deceived concerning His Nature, if I saw Him fail in His perfection, by lowering His thought to human consideration, losing sight of superhuman considerations that is, the redemption, the effort to redeem men, for their own sake and for the glory of God, at the cost of procuring for Himself affliction and hatred. I would still love Him as a Son led astray by a wicked power, I would love Him out of pity, because He is My Son, because He would be a poor wretch, but I could not love Him with the fullness of love with which I love Him now that I see Him faithful to the Lord. »

« You mean to Himself. »

« To the Lord. Now He is the Messiah of the Lord and must be loyal to the Lord like anybody else, more than anybody else, because His mission is greater than any other that was, is or ever will be on the Earth, and He certainly has from God suitable assistance for such a great mission. »

« But if anything wrong happened to Him, would You not weep? »

« I would shed all My tears. But I would weep tears of blood if I saw Him faithless to God. »

« That will greatly diminish the guiltiness of those who will persecute Him. »

« Why? »

« Because both You and He almost justify them. »

« Do not believe it. Their sins will always be the same in the eyes of God, whether we judge that it is inevitable, or we deem that no man in Israel ought to be guilty towards the Messiah. »

« Man in Israel? And if they were Gentiles would it not be the same? »

« No, it would not. The Gentiles would be in the wrong only towards a fellow-man. Israel knows who Jesus is. »

« Many in Israel do not know. »

« They do not want to know. They are deliberately incredulous. They thus add incredulity to anti-charity and they deny hope. It is not a small sin, Judas, to tread on the three main virtues. It is a grave sin, more grave spiritually than any material action against My Son. »

Judas, who is short of arguments, bends to lace a sandal and is left behind.

They reach the top of the mountain, or rather a ledge almost at the top, a ledge protruding forth as if it wished to run towards the beautiful blue sea. A thick wood of holm-oaks filters a clear emerald light, pierced by soft sunbeams as thin as needles. The charming airy mountain crest opens on to the nearby sea coast, opposite the majestic Mount Carmel chain. Below, at the foot of the mountain with the ledge protruding as if it were anxious to fly up, after some little fields situated in the central part of the mountain side, there is a narrow valley with a deep torrent, which must certainly be imposingly impetuous in time of floods, but is now reduced to a tiny silvery foaming stream in the middle of its bed. The torrent flows towards the sea along the foot of Mount Carmel. A road runs along the torrent, above its right hand bank and links a town situated in the middle of the bay to other inland towns, perhaps in Samaria, if I am taking my bearings correctly.

« That town is Sicaminon » says Jesus. « We shall be there late in the evening. Let us have a rest now, because the descent is difficult, though cool and short. »

And sitting in a circle, they talk to one another and to the women, while roasting on a rustic spit a lamb, certainly a gift of the shepherds...

249. Jesus Meets the Disciples at Sicaminon.

11th August 1945.

It is on the bank of the deep torrent that Jesus finds Isaac with many known and unknown disciples. Among the known ones there are: the head of the synagogue of the Clear Water, Timoneus; Joseph of Emmaus, the one accused of incest; the young man who did not bury his father to follow Jesus; Stephen; Abel, the leper cured near Korazim with his friend Samuel; Solomon, the ferryman of Jerico, and many more, whom I recognise, but I do not remember in the least where I saw them or their names. Many faces indeed are known to me, but only as faces of disciples. And there are other people who have been converted by Isaac or by the above mentioned disciples and are following the main group hoping to find Jesus.

Their meeting is tender, joyful and respectful. Isaac's eyes are beaming with joy, when he looks at the Master and shows Him his new flock and as a reward he asks Jesus to say a few words to his people.

« Do you know any quiet place where we can gather together? »

« At the end of the bay there is a desert beach, with some hovels of fishermen, which are empty at this time of the year because they are unhealthy and because the fishing season of fish to be salted is over and the fishermen have gone to Syro-Phoenicia to fish for murices. Many of them already believe in You because they heard You speak in sea towns or because they found disciples, and they have given us the little houses to rest in. We go there after a mission. Because there is a lot to be done in this area. It is deeply corrupted by many things. I would like to go as far as SyroPhoenicia, and I could do it by sea, because the coast is parched by the sun and it is impossible to go there on foot. But I am a shepherd, not a sailor, and among my people there is not even one who can sail. »

Jesus, Who listens carefully, smiling lightly, lowering His head a little, as He is so tall compared with the little shepherd who, like a soldier, is reporting everything to his general, replies: « God helps you because of your humility. If I am known here it is due to you, My disciple, and to no one else. We will now ask the men of the lake whether they feel they can sail the sea, and if possible, we will go to Syro-Phoenicia. » And He turns round looking for Peter, Andrew, James and John, who are talking animatedly to some disciples, while Judas is warmly congratulating Stephen, and the Zealot, Bartholomew and Philip are near the women. The other four are with Jesus.

The four fishermen come at once. « Do you feel up to sailing the sea? » asks Jesus.

The four look at one another perplexedly. Peter ruffles his hair

while pondering on the matter. He then asks: « But where? Off shore? We are fresh water fish... »

« No, along the coast, as far as Sidon. »

« H'm! I think it can be done. What do you say? »

« I think so, too. Sea or lake, it is still the same thing: water » says James.

« Nay: it will be even more beautiful and easier » exclaims John.

« I don't know how you can say that » replies his brother.

« It's his fondness for the sea. He who loves something, sees every perfection in it. If you loved a woman like that, you would be a perfect husband » says Peter jokingly shaking him affectionately.

« No, I am saying so because at Ashkelon I saw that manoeuvres are the same and navigation very smooth » replies John.

« Well, let us go, then! » exclaims Peter.

« However, it would be better to have someone from here. We have no experience with this sea and its depth contour » remarks James.

« Oh! I would not even think of that. We have Jesus with us! Before I was not yet certain, but after He calmed the lake! Let us go with the Master to Sidon. Perhaps there is some good to be done there » says Andrew.

« Well, we shall go. You will get the boats tomorrow. Ask Judas of Simon to give you the purse. »

And all mixed together, apostles and disciples - and it is needless to say how happy many are, particularly the ones already well known to Jesus - they retrace their steps going back towards the town, and walk round the outskirts, until they reach the end of the bay, which protrudes into the sea like a bent arm. A few little houses there, spread on the narrow pebbly shore, represent the most poverty-stricken and depopulated quarter of the town, which is inhabited only at intervals.

The walls of the little cubic shaped houses are worn away by saltness and age and they are all closed. When the disciples open them, they show their smoky misery and bare essential furnishings.

« Here they are. They are not beautiful, but are clean and comfortable » says Isaac, who is doing the honours of the house.

« The poor things are certainly not beautiful. The Clear Water was a royal palace in comparison. And there were some who complained!... » grumbles Peter.

« But they are a real fortune to us. »

« Of course! The all important thing is to have a roof over your head and to be fond of one another. Oh! look, there is our John! How are you? Where were you? »

But John of Endor, although smiling at Peter, runs to greet Jesus Who replies to him with very kind words.

« I did not let him come because he has not been well... I prefer him to stay here. He is so clever with citizens and with those who ask information on the Messiah... » says Isaac.

The man from Endor is indeed much thinner than previously. But his countenance is serene. His emaciation ennobles his features, so that one thinks of him as a man already affected by the double martyrdom of flesh and soul.

Jesus watches him and asks: « Are you not well, John? »

« I am not any worse than I was before seeing You. And that as far as my body is concerned. With regard to my soul, I think I am recovering from my peculiar wounds. »

Jesus looks at his peaceful eyes and hollow temples but does not say anything. He lays a hand on his shoulder while entering a little house with him, into which they have brought basins of salt water to refreshen their tired feet and pitchers of cool water to quench their thirst, while outside they are laying the table on a rustic board shaded by a very poor pergola of creepers.

While twilight is falling and the sea is whispering its evening prayers with the surf rustling on the pebbly shore, it is beautiful to see Jesus having supper with the women and the apostles, sitting at the coarse board, while the others, sitting on the ground, or on seats or baskets turned upside down, form a circle round the main table.

The meal is soon over and the table is cleared even sooner, because there were only very few plates, only for the more important guests. The sea has become indigo-black in the starless night. And all its majesty appears in this sad but solemn hour, typical of sea shores.

Jesus, Whose tall white figure is outstanding in the darker and darker shadows, rises from the table and comes towards the middle of the apostolic group, while the women withdraw. Isaac and another man light little fires on the beach to illuminate and keep away the clouds of mosquitoes, which probably come from nearby marshes.

« Peace to you all.

The mercy of God has joined us before the appointed time, giving reciprocal joy to our hearts. I have searched all your hearts, which are morally good, as is evidenced by your being here, waiting for Me, formed in Me, but still spiritually imperfect as is proved by some of your reactions that show how the old man of Israel still persists in you with all his ideas and prejudices, and the new man, the man of Christ with Christ's wide, bright merciful mentality and even wider charity has not yet come out of him, like a butterfly from its larva. Do not feel mortified if I have scanned you and pried into all your secrets. A teacher must know his pupils in order to correct their faults, and believe Me, if he is a good

teacher, he is not disgusted with the more faulty ones, on the contrary he pays greater attention to them, to improve them. You know that I am a good Master. And now let us consider those reactions and prejudices, let us consider together the reason why we are here, and because of the joy we experience by being together, let us bless the Lord, Who always achieves a collective welfare from an individual one.

I have heard from your own lips how much you admire John of Endor, and your admiration is even more remarkable because he professes to be a repentant sinner and on his past and present condition he bases the argument of his preaching to those whom he wants to bring to Me. It is true: he was a sinner. Now he is a disciple. Many of you have now come to the Messiah through his merit. You can thus see that God creates the new people of God just by those means that the old man of Israel would despise.

I now ask you to refrain from misjudging the presence of a sister, whom old Israel cannot understand to be a disciple. I told the women to go and rest. I was not so anxious to let them rest as I was to be able to give you a holy careful consideration on her conversion and thus prevent you from committing a sin against love and justice, and that is why I gave that command, which has certainly disappointed them.

Mary of Magdala, the great sinner, who had no excuse for her sin, has come back to the Lord. And from whom will she expect faith and mercy but from God and the servants of God? The whole of Israel, and with Israel the foreigners who are amongst us, who know her very well and judge her very severely, criticise and deride her resurrection, now that she is no longer their accomplice in vice.

Resurrection. That is the exact word. To raise the flesh from death is not the greatest miracle. It is only a relative miracle because it is destined to be cancelled one day by death. I do not give immortality to those whose flesh I raise from death, but I give eternity to those who resuscitate in their souls. And while a man, whose body is dead, does not join his will to Mine in order to come back to life and therefore he has not merit, there is a firm will in the man who revives spiritually, nay his will is there first. And he thus has merit.

I am not saying this to justify Myself. I have to give account of My action to God only. But you are My disciples. And each of you must be another Jesus. And none of you must be ignorant or guilty of any of those deep-rooted faults, whereby so many are united to God only by name.

Everything can become a good action. Also what seems less suitable to become so. When matter is presented to the will of God, even if it were the most inert, cold and filthy, it can become living,

blazing pure beauty.

I will give you an instance taken from the book of the Maccabees. When Nehemiah was sent back to Jerusalem by the king of Persia, they decided to offer sacrifices on the purified altar in the rebuilt Temple. Nehemiah remembered that at the time they were captured by the Persians, the priests assigned to the cult of God used to take the fire of the altar and hide it in a secret place, at the bottom of a valley, in a deep dry well, and did it so carefully and secretly that they were the only ones who knew where the sacred fire was. As Nehemiah remembered all that, he asked the grandchildren of those priests to go to the place which the priests, before dying, had disclosed to their sons, who in turn had informed their children, handing on the secret from father to son, and to take the sacred fire to light the fire for the sacrifice. But when the grandchildren went down into the secret well, they did not find the fire, and they found instead thick water, a putrid, stinking, heavy slime, which had filtered down there from all the obstructed sewers of the devastated city of Jerusalem. And they told Nehemiah, who told them to take some of that water and bring it up to him. After laying firewood on the altar and the victims on top of it, he sprayed everything copiously with the slimy water. The people was amazed and the priests scandalised, but they watched and did everything respectfully, only because it was Nehemiah who told them. But how sad their hearts were! And how discouraged they felt! As the overcast sky made the day a sad one, so uncertainty made men melancholy. But the sun broke through the clouds and its rays descended upon the altar and the firewood sprayed with the slimy water caught fire, which soon consumed the sacrifice, while the priests were saying the prayers that Nehemiah had written, singing the most beautiful hymns of Israel, until the whole sacrifice was consumed. And in order to convince the crowds that God can work miracles also with the most unsuitable means, when they are used for a righteous purpose, Nehemiah ordered the remaining water to be sprayed on to some large stones. And as soon as the stones were sprayed, they caught fire and were burnt out in the great light coming from the altar.

Every soul is a sacred fire laid by God on the altar of man's heart that it may burn the sacrifice of life through love for the Creator of life. Every life is a holocaust, if spent properly, and every day is a sacrifice to be offered holily. But marauders come, the oppressors of man and of man's soul. The fire falls into the deep well, not through any holy need, but through fateful stupidity. And submerged by all the drainage of the dens of vice, it becomes heavy putrid mud, until a priest descends to that bottom and brings that mud up to daylight, laying it on the holocaust of his own sacrifice. Because - and remember this - the heroism of

the man to be converted is not sufficient: also the heroism of him who converts is required. Nay, the latter must precede the former, because souls are saved through our sacrifice. Because thus we are successful in getting mud to change into fire and God to judge perfect and pleasing to His holiness the sacrifice that is being consumed.

Then, as it is still not enough to convince the world that repentant mud burns more than common fire, even if it is consecrated fire, which common fire serves only to burn wood and victims, that is, combustible material, then the repentant mud becomes so powerful as to set on fire and burn even stones, which are incombustible material. Are you not wondering whence such property comes to that mud? Do you not know? I will tell you: because in the ardour of repentance they merge with God, flame with flame; rising flame, descending flame; flame which offers itself loving, flame which gives itself loving; the embrace of two who love and find each other, who join together forming one thing only. And since the flame of God is a greater one, it overflows, excels, penetrates, absorbs and the flame of the repentant mud is no longer a relative flame of a created thing, but it is the infinite flame of the Uncreated Thing: of the Most High, Most Powerful, Infinite God.

That is what truly and wholly converted big sinners are, who have generously devoted themselves to their conversion without keeping anything of their past, burning themselves as the first thing, in their heavier part, by means of the flame rising from their mud, which has run towards Grace and has been touched by Grace. I solemnly tell you that many stones in Israel will be attacked by the fire of God because of these burning furnaces, which will blaze more and more, until the human creature is utterly consumed. And from their thrones in Heaven they will continue to burn the stones, the tepidity, uncertainty, timidity of the Earth, and as true supernatural burning glasses they will collect the One and Trine lights to converge them on to mankind and set it afire in God.

I would repeat that I did not have to justify My actions, but I wanted you to understand My conception and make it your own. A wrong conception, a Pharisaical suspicion of contaminating God by taking a repentant sinner to Him must never stop you from such a deed that is the perfect coronation of the mission for which I destine you. Always bear in mind that I have not come to save saints, but sinners. And do likewise, because a disciple is not worth more than his Master, and if I do not loathe taking by the hand the dregs of the Earth who feel the need of Heaven, who at long last feel it, and exulting I take them to God, because that is My mission, and every conquered soul justifies My incarnation,

which humiliated My Infinity, neither you must loathe doing so, as you are imperfect men, and you have all become more or less acquainted with imperfection, as you are of the same nature as your brother sinners, and I have elected you to the rank of saviours so that My work on the Earth may be continued for ever, as if I continued to live on it in an endless life.

And such it will be, because the union of My priests will be like the vital part of the great body of My Church, of which I will be the animating Spirit, and the numberless particles of believers will assemble round this vital part to form one only body, which will be called after My Name. But if the sacerdotal part should lack vitality would the numberless particles be able to live? In actual fact, as I am in the body, I could extend My Life as far as the most remote particles, neglecting the obstructed and useless channels and cisterns, reluctant to fulfill their mission. Because rain falls wherever it wishes and the good particles, being capable by themselves of desiring life, would still live My Life. But what would Christianity then be? A close assembly of souls, one near the other. One near the other and yet separated by channels and cisterns that no longer link them, distributing to each particle the Vital blood coming from one only centre. But there would be dividing walls and precipices across which the particles would look at one another, and they would be humanly hostile, supernaturally anguished, saying in their spirits: "And yet we were brothers and we still feel as such, notwithstanding they have divided us!" It would be a closeness of souls, not a fusion or an organism. And My love would shine sorrowfully upon such ruin...

Further, do not think that that applies only to religious schisms. No. It applies also to all the souls that remain all alone because priests refuse to support them, to take care of them, to love them, violating their mission, which is to say and do what I say and do, that is: "Come to Me, all of you, and I will lead you to God".

Go in peace, now, and God be with you. »

The crowd disperse slowly, going to their little houses. Also John of Endor stands up. He took notes while Jesus was speaking and in order to see what he was writing, he became red-hot near the fire.

But Jesus stops him saying: « Stay for a little while with your Master ». And He keeps him close to Himself until they have all gone away. « Let us go as far as that rock near the water. The moon is high in the sky and we can see our way. »

John agrees without demur. They move away from the houses about two hundred metres and they sit on a huge boulder, which I do not know whether it is the ruin of a pier, or the extreme ramification of a cliff fallen into the sea, or the wreck of one of the little houses swallowed by the water that through centuries advanced

on the shore. I know that whilst from the little beach it is possible to climb on to the rock, making use of the cavities and juts, which form a sort of steps, on the sea side the face is a sheer cliff ending in the blue sea. Because of the tide, half of the rock is surrounded by water, which grumbles and lightly smacks the obstacle and then withdraws with the sound of a huge sigh, becomes silent for a moment, starting all over again, with regular motions and sounds of slaps, aspirations and pauses, like syncopated music. They sit on the very top of the boulder struck by the sea. The moon forms a silvery road on the water and the sea looks deep blue in the moonlight, whereas before the moon rose, it was like a large blackish expanse in the dark night.

« John, are you not telling your Master the reason why your body suffers? »

« You know, my Lord. But do not say: "it suffers". Say: "it is being consumed". That is more exact, and You know, and You also know that it is being consumed with delight. Thank You, Lord. I recognised myself, too, in the mud that becomes flame. But I shall not have time to set the stones afire. I shall soon die. I have suffered too much through the hatred of the world and I exult too much because of the love of God. But I do not regret life. I might sin again here, or fail in the mission to which You destine us. I have already failed twice in my life. In my mission of a master, because I should have been able to find what was necessary to perfect myself and I did not train myself: in my mission of a husband, because I was not able to mould my wife... which was logical. As I was not able to perfect myself, I could not perfect her either. I might fail in my mission as a disciple. And I do not want to fail with You. Blessed therefore be death if it comes to take me where one can no longer sin! But if I am not destined to be a teaching disciple, I shall be a victim disciple, which fate is more like Yours. You said that this evening: "Burning ourselves as first thing. »

« John, is it a fate, which you suffer or is it an offer you are making? »

« An offer, which I am making, if God does not disdain mud that has become fire. »

« John, you are doing much penance. »

« Saints do, You are the first. It is fair that he should do it, who has so much to pay. But do You think that mine is not pleasant to God? Are You prohibiting me from doing it? »

« I never interfere with the good yearnings of a loving soul. I have come to preach by actual facts that suffering is expiation and sorrow redemption. I cannot contradict Myself. »

« Thank You, Lord. It will be my mission. » « What were you writing, John? »

« Oh! Master! Sometimes old Felix emerges again with his habits

of a teacher. I am thinking of Marjiam. He has a whole life to preach You, but because of his age, he is not here to hear Your sermons. I thought I should write certain instructions You have given us and which he has not heard, because he is intent on playing, or he is far away with one of us. There is so much wisdom in Your words, also in the least ones! Your familiar conversations are a lesson on matters of every day and every man, on the least things in life, which after all are the most important, because by piling up they form a heavy burden, which requires patience, perseverance, resignation to be borne holily. It is easier to accomplish one only great heroic deed than a thousand little ones for which a constant presence of virtue is required. And yet one will not attain a great deed, both in good and in evil, I know by experience with regard to evil, unless one stores up many little deeds, which seem insignificant. I began to kill when, tired of the frivolity of my wife, I looked at her scornfully for the first time. I have written Your short lessons for Marjiam. And this evening I wanted to take a note of Your great lesson. I will leave my work to the boy, so that he may remember me, the old master, and he may have what otherwise he would never have had. Your words: a wonderful treasure for him. Will you allow me? »

« Yes, John. But be in complete peace, like this sea. See? It would be too warm for you to go about in the heat of the sun, and apostolic life is really hard. You have fought so much in life. Now God calls you to Himself in this placid moonlight that makes everything calm and pure. Proceed in the kindness of God. I can tell you: God is pleased with you. »

John of Endor takes Jesus' hand, kisses it and whispers: « And yet it would have been lovely to say to the world: "Come to Jesus!" »

« You will say that from Paradise, where You will be a burning glass, too. Let us go, John. I would like to read what you have written. »

« Here it is, Lord. And tomorrow I will give You the other roll on which I wrote the other words. »

They descend from the boulder, and in a most clear moonlight, which has changed the pebbly shore into silver, they go back to the houses. They say goodbye to each other, John kneeling down, Jesus blessing him with His hand laid on his head and giving him His peace.

250. At Tyre, Jesus Speaks of Perseverance.

12th August 1945.

It is early morning when Jesus arrives in front of a sea-town. Four boats are following His. The town juts out strangely towards

the sea, as if it were built on an isthmus. Or rather: as if a slender isthmus linked the part protruding on the sea to the part stretching along the shore. It looks like a huge mushroom, as seen from the sea, with its crown lying on the waves, its roots under the shore, the isthmus being the stem. There are two harbours, one on each side: one, to the north, is wider and full of small boats; in the other, to the south, which is more sheltered, there are large ships arriving or departing.

« We must go over there » says Isaac, pointing to the harbour of the smaller boats. « That is where the fishermen are. »

They walk round the island and I can see that the isthmus is an artificial one, a kind of Cyclopean dam linking the little island to the mainland. They built lavishly in those days! I gather from this work and from the number of boats in the harbours that the town was wealthy and commercially very active. Behind the town, beyond a flat area, there are some pretty looking little hills, and the Great Hermon and the Lebanon chain of mountains can be seen very far behind. I also understand that this is one of the towns I could see from Lebanon.

Jesus' boat is now entering the northern harbour, the roadstead, because it does not dock, but the men row slowly backwards and forwards until Isaac sees those he is looking for and calls them at the top of his voice. Two beautiful fishing boats come towards them and the crew bend over the smaller boats of the disciples.

« The Master is with us, my friends. Come, if you wish to hear His word. This evening He is going back to Sicaminon » says Isaac.

« We are coming at once. Where shall we go? »

« To a quiet place. The Master is not disembarking at Tyre nor at the town on the mainland. He will speak from the boat. So choose a shaded and sheltered place. »

« Follow us towards the rock. There are some quiet shady inlets. You can also land. »

And they go to an inlet in the cliff, farther north. The very steep cliff protects from the sun. It is a lonely spot: only sea-gulls and woodpigeons live there: they fly out for their raids at sea and then fly back to their nests in the rocks, squeaking loud. Some more small boats have joined the leading one and have thus formed a little fleet. At the end of the tiny bay there is a very small beach. It is really a sham beach: a small square strewn with stones. It can hold about one hundred people.

They land making use of a large flat rock emerging from the deep water like a small natural wharf and they gather on the little stony beach, sparkling with salt. They are thin swarthy men, parched by the sun and the sea. Their short undergarments leave their thin agile limbs uncovered. They are clearly a different race from the Jews of the present time, but the difference is not so

striking with regard to Galileans. I would say that those SyroPhoenicians are more like the old Philistines than their neighbouring peoples. At least those I can see.

Jesus draws close to the beach and begins to speak.

« We read in the Book of Kings that the Lord ordered Elijah to go to Zarephath of Sidonians during the drought and famine which afflicted the Earth for over three years. The Lord did not lack means to appease the prophet's hunger in any place, neither did He send him to Zarephath because that town was rich in food. On the contrary, they were already dying of starvation there. Why then did God send Elijah the Tishbite?

There was in Zarephath a woman with a righteous heart. She was a widow, a holy living woman, the mother of a boy; she was poor and lonely, yet she never rebelled against the dreadful punishment, neither was she selfish in her hunger, or disobedient. God wanted to benefit her by granting her three miracles. One for the water she took to the thirsty man, one for the little loaf of bread she baked under ashes, when she had only a handful of flour left, one for the hospitality she offered the prophet. He gave her bread and oil, the life of her son and the knowledge of the word of God.

You can see that a charitable action not only satisfies the hunger of bodies or removes the grief for a death, but it teaches the soul the wisdom of the Lord. You have given lodgings to the servants of the Lord and He gives you the word of Wisdom. A good deed has brought the word of the Lord to this land, where that word does not come. I can compare you to the only woman in Zarephath who welcomed the prophet. Because if I had gone to town, the rich and mighty people would not have welcomed Me, the busy merchants and sailors would have neglected Me and My coming here would have been valueless.

I will now leave and you will say: "But what are we? A handful of men. What do we possess? A drop of wisdom". And yet I say to you: "I entrust you with the task of announcing the hour of the Redeemer". I leave you repeating the words of Elijah, the prophet: "The jar of flour will not run out. The oil will not diminish until one comes who will give it more copiously".

You have already done that. Because there are Phoenicians here among you who have come from beyond Mount Carmel. Which means that you have spoken as you were spoken to. You can thus see that the handful of flour and the drop of oil have not run out, but have instead increased in quantity. Continue to make it grow. And if you think that it is strange that God has chosen you for this work, as you do not feel capable of carrying it out, repeat the word of great trust: "I will do what you tell me, trusting your word". »

« Master, how are we to deal with the heathens here? We know

these people because they are fishermen, like ourselves. We fraternise because we do the same work. But what about the others? » asks a fisherman of Israel.

« You say that you fraternise because of the same work. Well, then, should the same origin not cause you to fraternise as well? God created both Israelites and Phoenicians. The people of the plain of Saron or of High Judaea are not different from the people of this shore. Paradise was made for all the sons of man. And the Son of man has come to take all men to Paradise. The purpose is to attain Heaven and give joy to the Father. Meet therefore on the same road and love one another spiritually as you love one another for reasons of your trade. »

« Isaac has told us many things. But we would like to know more. Is it possible for us to have a disciple, although we are so far out of the way? »

« Send them John of Endor, Master. He is so clever and he is accustomed to living with pagans » suggests Judas of Kerioth.

« No. John is staying with us » replies Jesus resolutely. He then turns to the shepherds: « When will the murex fishing be over? »

« At the first storms in autumn. The sea is too rough here, afterwards. »

« Will you be going back to Sicaminon then? »

« We will be going there and to Caesarea. We supply many Romans. »

« You will then be able to meet the disciples. For the time being... persevere. »

« On board my boat there is one whom I did not want and he came here almost in Your Name. »

« Who is he? »

« A young fisherman from Ashkelon. »

« Tell him to disembark and come here. »

The man goes on board and comes back with a young fellow who seems rather embarrassed at being the centre of so much attention.

The apostle John recognises him. « He is one of those who gave us the fish, Master » and he gets up to greet him. « You have come, Ermasteus? Are you alone here? »

« Yes, I am alone. At Capernaum I was ashamed... I stayed on the beach, hoping... »

« What? »

« To see your Master. »

« And not yours yet? My dear friend, why are you still hesitating? Come to the Light waiting for you. See how He is watching and smiling at you. »

« How will they bear with me? »

« Master, please come here for a moment. »

Jesus gets up and goes to John.

« He does not dare to come because he is a foreigner. »

« There are no foreigners, as far as I am concerned. And your companions? Were you not many?... Do not be upset. You are the only one who persevered. But I am happy also because of you alone. Come with Me. »

Jesus goes back to His place with His new conquest. « We shall certainly give this young man to John of Endor » He says to the Iscariot. He then speaks to everybody.

« A group of diggers went down into a mine where they knew there were some treasures well hidden in the bowels of the earth... And they began to dig. But the ground was hard and the work laborious. Many became tired, threw away their picks and went away. Some made fun of the foreman and treated him almost as a fool. Some cursed their fate, the work, the ground, the metal and in a fit of anger they struck the bowels of the earth tearing the vein into useless tiny bits and when they saw that they had only caused damage without making any profit, they also went away.

Only one remained: the most persevering one. He dealt kindly with the hard layers of the soil to pierce it without damaging anything, he made various tests, he dug and went down deeper. A wonderful valuable vein was at last discovered. The perseverance of the miner was thus rewarded and with the most pure metal he had found he was able to get many work contracts, a great glory and many customers, because everybody wanted that metal, which perseverance only was able to find, whereas lazy or angry people had achieved nothing.

But once the gold has been found, it must in its turn persevere and be available to be worked on, in order to become beautiful and ready to be used by the goldsmith. If the gold, after being excavated, should refuse to undergo further treatment, however painful it might be, it would remain a coarse metal, unsuitable to be worked on. You can thus see that the first enthusiasm is not enough to be successful, either as apostles, or disciples or believers. It is necessary to persevere.

Ermasteus had many companions, and in their first enthusiasm they all promised to come. He only has come. I have many disciples and their number will increase. But only a few of them will persevere until the end. Perseverance! It is the great word. For all good things.

When you cast the drag-net to catch murex shells, do you do that only once? No. Many times, for hours, for days, for months, and you are willing to go back to the same spot the following year, because your work brings bread and comfort to you and to your families. And would you behave differently for more important things, such as the interests of God and of your souls, if You are believers; your interests and your brothers', if you are disciples? I

solemnly tell you that it is necessary to persevere until the end, to extract purple for eternal garments.

And now let us stay here as good friends until it is time for us to go back. We shall thus become better acquainted and it will be easy to recognise one another... »

And they spread out in the little rocky bay, cooking mussels and crabs caught on the rocks, and little fish caught with small nets. Some sleep on dried seaweeds in caves opened in the rock by earthquakes or by the sea, while sky and sea are a dazzling blue kissing each other at the horizon. Seagulls fly backwards and forwards, from the sea to their nests in the rocks, squeaking and flapping their wings, the only noises which can be heard, together with the washing of the sea, in these sultry summer hours.

251. Return to Sicaminon. Jesus Speaks of Faith.

13th August 1945.

The people of Sicaminon, impelled by curiosity, besieged the place where the apostles were, all day long, awaiting the return of the Master. The women disciples, in the meantime, have not wasted any time, but have washed the clothes covered with dust and wet with perspiration, and on the little beach there is a bright display of garments drying in the wind and sunshine. As it is evening and getting dark, the dampness of sea fog is felt, so they hasten to take in the clothes, although they are still dampish. Before folding them they stretch them out in all directions and press them, so that they may look tidy to the respective owners.

« Let us take Mary's clothes to her at once » says Mary of Alphaeus. And she concludes: « She has been really suffering yesterday and today in that little stifling room!... »

I thus realise that Jesus has been absent for more than one day, during which time Mary of Magdala, who had only one dress, had to remain indoors, until her dress was dry.

Susanna replies: « Fortunately she never complains! I did not think she was so good. »

« And so humble, you should say, and reserved. Poor woman! It was the devil who tormented her! Since she was freed by my Jesus, she has become herself once again, exactly as she was when a girl. »

And talking to each other, they arrive back home carrying the laundry.

In the meanwhile Martha is busy preparing food and the Blessed Virgin is cleaning vegetables in a copper basin and then boils them for supper.

« Here you are. Everything is dry, clean and folded. And they badly needed it. Go to Mary and give her her clothes » says Susanna handing the clothes to Martha.

The two sisters come back shortly afterwards. « I thank both of you. The sacrifice of wearing the same dress for days was the most painful one to me » says Mary of Magdala smiling. « I now feel fresh and cool. »

« Go and sit outside, there is a lovely breeze. You certainly need it after being closed in » remarks Martha, who, being smaller than her sister and not so buxom, was able to put on a dress of Susanna's or of Mary of Alphaeus', while her clothes were being washed.

« This time we had to make the best of it. But in future we will bring little bags, like the others, and we will not have all this trouble » says the Magdalene.

« What? Are you going to follow Him as we do? »

« Of course. Unless He tells me otherwise. I am now going to the beach to see whether they are coming back. Are they coming back this evening? »

« I hope so » replies the Most Holy Virgin. « I am worried because He has gone to Phoenicia. But I know that He is with the apostles and after all the Phoenicians may be better than many other people. When I went to the fountain, a mother stopped Me saying: "Are You with the Galilean Master, the One they call Messiah? If so, come and see my son. Fever has been tormenting him for over a year". I went into the little house. Poor thing! He looks like a little flower about to die. I will tell Jesus. »

« There are others as well who want to be cured. They are more anxious to be cured than to be taught » says Martha.

« It is difficult for a man to be entirely spiritual. The voice and needs of the flesh are more strongly felt » replies the Virgin.

« However, many revive spiritually after a miracle. »

« Yes, Martha. And that is one of the reasons why My Son works so many miracles. Out of love for man, but also to draw him by such means on to His Way, which, otherwise, many would not follow. »

John of Endor, who had not gone with Jesus, comes back home with many disciples who are going to the little houses where they live. Almost at the same time the Magdalene comes back saying: « They are arriving. They are the five boats that left yesterday at dawn. I recognised them very well. »

« They must be tired and thirsty. I will go and get some more water. The water of the fountain is very cool » and Mary of Alphaeus goes out carrying some pitchers.

« Let us go and meet Jesus. Come » says the Blessed Virgin. And She goes out with the Magdalene and John of Endor, because Martha and Susanna, both flushed and very busy preparing supper, remain near the kitchen range.

Walking along a wall they arrive at a little pier, where other

fishing boats have already come in and are moored. From the end of the pier it is possible to have a very good view of the whole bay and of the town after which it is called, and one can also see the five boats sailing fast, slightly heeled to one side, as a light northern breeze fills the sails, and is thus favourable and at the same time brings relief to the men who are tired and warm.

« See how well Simon and the others are manoeuvring. They are following the pilot's boat excellently. They have now passed the breaker; they are now taking to the open sea to avoid the current which is strong over there. Good... Now everything is all right. They will soon be here » says John of Endor. The boats in fact are coming nearer and nearer and it is possible to distinguish the people in them.

Jesus is on the first one with Isaac. He has stood up and His tall figure appears in all its magnificence until the furling sail conceals Him for a few minutes. In fact the boat veers round to approach the little pier and passes before the women standing on the point. Jesus smiles waving to them, while they begin to walk fast to reach the landing place at the same time as the boat.

« May God bless You, My Son! » says Mary greeting Jesus Who is disembarking on the quay.

« May God bless You, Mother. Have You been worrying? The man whom we were looking for, was not in Sidon. We went as far as Tyre. And we found him there. Come, Ermasteus... Here, John. This man wants to be taught. I entrust him to you. »

« I shall not disappoint You in teaching him Your word. Thank You, Master! There are many people waiting for You » replies John of Endor.

« There is also a poor sick boy, Son, and his mother wants You to go there. »

« I will go to her at once. »

« I know who she is, Master. I will take You there. Ermasteus, come with us. You will begin to know the infinite goodness of our Lord » says the man from Endor.

Peter lands from the second boat, James from the third, Andrew from the fourth, John from the fifth; the four pilots followed by the other apostles or disciples who were with them all gather round Jesus and Mary.

« Go home. I shall soon be there as well. In the meantime prepare the supper and tell those who are waiting that I will speak to them at the end of vesper. »

« And what if there are some sick people? »

« I will cure them first. Even before supper, so that they may go back home happily. »

They part. Jesus with John of Endor and Ermasteus goes towards the town, the others walk back along the pebbly beach,

telling what they have seen or heard, as happy as children returning to their mothers.

Also Judas of Keriath seems happy. He shows all the offerings given to him by the murex fishermen, and above all he shows a little bundle containing the precious substance. « This is for the Master. If He does not wear it, who can possibly do so? They called me to one side saying: "We have some precious madrepores in our boat, and we have also a pearl. Imagine! A treasure. I do not know how we were so lucky. But we will give them willingly to you for the Master. Come and see them". I went with them to please them, while the Master had withdrawn into a cave to pray. They were beautiful corals and a pearl, not a big one, but beautiful. I said to them: "Don't deprive yourselves of these things. The Master does not wear jewels. Give me instead some of that purple to make an ornament for His tunic". They had this little packet. They insisted in giving it all to me, at all costs. Take it, Mother, make something nice with it for our Lord, as You know how to do it. But make sure You do so. If He becomes aware of it, He will have it sold for the poor. And we like to see Him dressed as He deserves. Is that right? »

« Oh! It is true! I suffer when I see Him dressed so plainly amongst other people, while He is a king, and they are less than slaves and yet they wear gorgeous decorations and garments. And they look at Him as if He were unworthy of being near them! » says Peter.

« Ehi! Did you see how those gentlemen in Tyre were laughing when we took leave of the fishermen?! » replies his brother.

« I said to them: "You ought to be ashamed, you dogs! A single thread of His white tunic is worth all your finery". » says James of Zebedee.

« Since Judas has been able to get it, I would like You to have it ready for the Tabernacles » says Judas Thaddeus.

« I have never spun purple. But I will try... » says the Blessed Virgin touching the light bright-coloured wool, as soft as silk.

« My nurse is an expert at that. We shall find her at Caesarea. She will let you see how to do it. You will learn at once, because You do everything so well. I would put a band round the neck, the sleeves and at the hem of His tunic: purple on snow-white linen or wool, with palm or rosette decorations as we see on the marble of the Holy, and David's knot in the centre. It would look lovely » says the Magdalene who is an expert in such beautiful things.

Martha says: « Our mother made that design, because it was so beautiful, on the tunic that Lazarus wore on his journey to Syria when he took possession of our land there. I kept it because it was the last work of our mother. I will send it to You. »

« I will do it praying for your mother. »

They have reached the houses. The apostles spread out to gather those who want the Master, particularly sick people...

And Jesus comes back with John of Endor and Ermasteus. And He passes by greeting those who have crowded in front of the little houses. His smile is a blessing.

They bring Him the inevitable man with eye trouble, who is almost blind with ulcerous ophthalmia, and He cures him. Then it is the turn of a man sick with malaria, as emaciated and yellow as a Chinese, and He cures him. Then a woman asks for a particular miracle: milk for her breast, which has none, and she shows her baby, only a few days old, underfed and all red probably because of some inflammation. She moans: « See? We are told to obey man and to procreate. But what does it serve if we see our children languish? This is my third one, and I have buried two in the grave, because of my unfruitful breast. And this one is about to die, too, because he was born in this hot season, the others lived: one ten months, the other six, to make me weep even more when they died of intestine trouble. If I could give them my milk, that would not happen... »

Jesus looks at her and says: « Your child will live. Have faith. Go home and as soon as you are there offer your breast to the baby. Have faith. »

The woman goes away obediently with the poor baby, who moans like a kitten, close to his mother's heart.

« Will she have milk? »

« Of course she will. »

« I say that the baby will live, but she will never have any milk, and it is already a miracle if he lives. He is almost dead with privations. »

« Instead I say that she will have milk. » « Of course. »

« No, she will not. »

The people present are of different opinions.

Meanwhile Jesus withdraws to eat. When He comes out to preach, the crowd is even larger because the news of the miracle of the boy sick with fever, which Jesus worked as soon as He landed, has spread throughout the town.

« I give you My peace that it may prepare you to understand. It is not possible to hear the Voice of the Lord in a storm. Every perturbation is detrimental to Wisdom, which is peaceful, as it comes from God. Perturbations instead do not come from God, because worries, anxieties, doubts are the work of the Evil One to upset the children of man and separate them from God.

I will tell you a parable that you may understand My teaching more clearly.

A farmer had many trees in his fields and many vines which

yielded much fruit, among which there was a special quality, of which he was very proud. One year that vine produced many leaves but few grapes. A friend said to the farmer: "That is because you did not prune it enough". The following year the man pruned it much more. The vine had few shoots and fewer grapes. Another friend said to him: "That is because you pruned it too much". The third year the farmer left it alone. The vine did not produce any grapes at all, only a few crumpled leaves, covered with blight. A third friend stated: "It is dying because the soil is not good. Bum it". "Why? It is the same soil that the others have and I tend it exactly as I do with the others. Before it was doing so well!". His friend shrugged his shoulders and went away.

An unknown wayfarer passed by and stopped to look at the farmer sadly leaning on the poor vine. "What is the matter?" he asked. "Someone dead in the family?". "No. But this vine, of which I was so fond, is dying. It has no more sap and yields no fruit. One year little, the next one less, this year nothing. I have done everything they told me, but to no avail".

The unknown wayfarer entered the field and approached the vine. He felt the leaves, took a lump of earth in his hand, smelt it, crumpled it with his fingers, looked at the trunk of the tree supporting the vine. "You must remove that trunk. The vine is made barren by it".

"It has been its support for years!"

"Tell me, man: when you planted this vine, what was it like, and what was that trunk like?"

"Oh! It was a lovely three year old vine-shoot. I got it from another vine of mine, and to bring it here, I dug a deep hole, so that its roots would not suffer when they were taken away from the native soil. I dug a similar hole here as well, nay a larger one, so that it should be at ease at once, and I hoed the soil around it, to make it soft, so that the roots could spread out at once, without any difficulty. I settled it carefully, laying underneath it some good manure. As you know, roots grow strong immediately if they find suitable nourishment. I did not pay so much attention to the elm-tree. It was only a little tree planted there to support the vineshoot. In fact I planted it superficially near the vine-shoot, I earthed it up and went away. They both took roots, because the soil is good. The vine grew every year, it was looked after, hoed and pruned. The elm-tree instead hardly grew. But for what it was worth!... Then it grew strong. See how lovely it is now? When I come here, from afar I can see its top standing out like a tower and it looks like the ensign of my little kingdom. Once the vine covered it up and one could not see its beautiful foliage. But look how lovely it is up there, in the sunshine! And what a trunk! Straight and strong. It could have supported this vine for many

years, even if it became like the ones that the explorers of Israel took near the Torrent of Grapes. Instead...

"It has killed it. It has overwhelmed it. Everything was right for its life: the soil, its place, light, sunshine, the care you took of it. But the elm-tree killed it. It became too strong. It entangled its roots suffocating them, it took all the sap of the soil, it prevented it from breathing and receiving the necessary light. Cut down this useless powerful tree at once, and your vine will revive. And it will revive even better if you patiently dig up the ground to expose the roots of the elm-tree and then cut them, to ensure that they do not sprout. Their last ramifications will rot in the ground, and once dead they will become life, because they will become manure, a worthy punishment for their selfishness. Burn the trunk, make thus good use of it. A useless harmful tree is good only as firewood, and it is to be removed so that all the nourishment of the soil may go to the good and useful plant. Have faith in what I am telling you and you will be happy".

"But, who are you? Tell me that I may have faith".

"I am the Wise One. He who believes in Me will be safe" and he went away.

The man was rather doubtful. Then he made up his mind and he got a saw. And he called his friends to help him.

"Are you mad?" "You will lose both elm-tree and vine". "I would cut off only its top, in order to give air to the vine. But no more". "It must have a support. You are going to do a useless job". "I wonder who He was! Perhaps one who hates you, without you knowing it". "Or a madman" and so on.

"I am going to do what he told me. I have faith in Him" and he cut the elm-tree down at its root, and not happy, he laid bare the roots of both plants in a wide circle around them, and he patiently cut the roots of the elm-tree, taking great care not to damage those of the vine, he then filled in the hole, and as the vine had no support, he placed a strong iron pole near it with the word "Faith" written on a wooden board tied to the top of the pole.

The others went away shaking their heads. Autumn and winter passed and spring came. The vine-shoots twined round the support became adorned with buds, first closed like silvery velvet cases, then half open against the emerald of the fresh leaves, then fully open, and finally producing new strong shoots from the trunk, all covered with tiny flowers that turned into grapes. There were more bunches of grapes than leaves, and the latter were large, green, strong, the size of two, three or more clusters. And each bunch was thick with pulpy, juicy, wonderful grapes.

"And now what do you say? Was the tree the cause of the withering of my vine or was it not? Was the Wise One right or not? Was I right or not in writing on that board the word: 'Faith'?" said the

farmer to his incredulous friends.

"You were right. You are happy because you had faith and you were able to destroy the past and neglect the wrong information given to you".

That is the parable. With regard to the woman with the unfruitful breast, there is the answer. Look towards the town. » They all turn round and see the woman of a little while ago running towards them, and although she is running she does not detach the baby from her breast now full of milk, which the child sucks with such voracity as to almost choke himself. The woman stops only when she is at Jesus' feet, in front of Whom she detaches the baby from her nipple for a moment, shouting: « Bless him that he may live for You! »

After that moment Jesus resumes: « And you have had a reply to your various conjectures on the miracle. But the parable has a wider meaning than the little episode of faith rewarded. And here it is.

God had planted His vine, His people, in a suitable place, and supplied it with everything necessary to grow and bear more and more fruit, supporting it with masters so that the people might understand the Law more easily, and make it its strength. But the masters wanted to excel the Lawgiver, and they grew more and more until they imposed themselves more than the eternal word did. And Israel became sterile. The Lord then sent the Wise One so that those in Israel who with righteous souls are sorry for such barrenness and try this and that remedy, according to the dictates and advice of the masters, who are humanly learned but supernaturally unlearned, and thus far from knowing what is to be done to give life back to the spirit of Israel, may have true healthy advice.

But what happens? Why does Israel not recover its strength and become energetic as in the golden days of its loyalty to the Lord? Because the advice is: remove all parasites that have grown to the detriment of what is Holy: the Law of the Decalogue, as it was given, without any compromise, hesitation, hypocrisy, remove them to give air, space, nourishment to the Vine, to the People of God, and a strong, straight, inflexible, unique support, with a name as bright as the sun: Faith. But that advice is not accepted. I therefore tell you that Israel will perish, whilst it could revive and possess the Kingdom of God, if it believed and made amends and changed itself substantially.

Go in peace and the Lord be with you. »

252. Departure from Sicaminon. The Blessed Virgin Mary and Spiritualised Maternity.

14th August 1945.

It is still night, a beautiful night with waning moon, when

Jesus, the apostles and the women, John of Endor and Ermasteus, silently take leave of Isaac, the only one to be awake, and set out along the shore. The noise of their steps is only a slight creaking of gravel pressed by their sandals, and no one speaks until they have gone a few metres beyond the last house. The people sleeping in it, or in the ones before it, were certainly not aware of the silent departure of the Lord and His friends. There is dead silence. Only the sea speaks to the moon about to set in the west and it tells the sand the stories of its depths with the long wave at high tide, which begins leaving a narrower and narrower dry margin on the beach.

This time the women are in front, together with John, the Zealot, Judas Thaddeus and James of Alphaeus, who help them to get over small rocks spread here and there, which are damp and also slippery with the humidity of the night. The Zealot is with the Magdalene, John with Martha, while James of Alphaeus takes care of his mother and of Susanna, and Thaddeus does not surrender to anybody the honour of taking in his long strong hand - which is like Jesus' - the little hand of Mary to help Her in difficult spots. Each speaks in a low voice to his companion. They all seem to be wishing to respect the sleep of the Earth.

The Zealot is conversing intensely with Mary of Magdala and I can see that Simon stretches out his arms more than once, meaning: « it is so and there is nothing we can do about it » but I cannot hear what they are saying as they are ahead of everybody.

John speaks to his companion only now and again, pointing at the sea and Mount Carmel, the western side of which looks white in the moonlight. Perhaps he is talking of the road they took the last time, skirting Mount Carmel on the other side.

Also James, who is between Mary of Alphaeus and Susanna, is speaking of Mount Carmel. He says to his mother: « Jesus has promised me to climb up there with me alone and to tell me alone something. »

« What does He want to tell you, son? Will you tell me, afterwards? »

« Mother, if it is a secret, I cannot tell you » replies James smiling with his smile which is so tender; his likeness to Joseph, the spouse of the Blessed Virgin, is remarkable both with regard to his features and even more to his serene kindness.

« There are no secrets for a mother. »

« In fact I have none. But if Jesus wants me up there, all alone to speak to me, it means that He does not want anyone to know what He is going to tell me. And you, mother, are my dear mother, whom I love so much, but Jesus is above you, as His will is. But, when the time comes, I will ask Him whether I may repeat His words to you. Are you happy? »

« You will forget to ask Him... »

« No, mother. I never forget you, not even when you are far from me. Every time I see or hear something beautiful, I always say: "I wish my mother were here!" »

« My dear! Give me a kiss, son. » Mary of Alphaeus is moved. But emotion does not kill curiosity. After being quiet for a few moments, she makes a fresh assault: « You said: His will. So you know that He wants to tell what His Will is. Come on, you can tell me at least that. He told you that in the presence of everybody. »

« In actual fact I was alone with Him, ahead of the others » says James smiling.

« But the others could hear you. »

« He did not tell me very much, mother. He reminded me of the words and the prayer of Elijah on Mount Carmel: "Of all the prophets of the Lord, I alone am left". "Hear me, that this people may acknowledge that You are the Lord God". »

« And what did He mean? »

« How many things you want to know, mother! Go to Jesus, then, and He will tell you » replies James, to parry her embarrassing questions.

« He probably meant that, since the Baptist has been captured, He is the only prophet left in Israel and that God must preserve Him for a long time, so that the people may be taught » says Susanna.

« H'm! I don't believe that Jesus asks to be preserved for a long time. He asks nothing for Himself... Come on, dear James! Tell your mother. »

« Curiosity is a fault, mother; it is useless, dangerous, at times it is sorrowful. Make a nice act of mortification... »

« Alas! Did He mean that your brother will be put in prison, and killed perhaps?! » asks Mary of Alphaeus, who is thoroughly upset.

« Judas is not "all the prophets", mother, even if, as far as your love is concerned, each son of yours is the whole world... »

« I am thinking also of the others... because you will certainly be among the future prophets. So... so if you are the only one to be left... If you are the only one left, it means that the others, that my Judas... oh!... » Mary of Alphaeus leaves James and Susanna, and she runs back fast, as if she were a young girl, paying no attention to the question Thaddeus asks her.

She arrives in Jesus' group like one who has been chased. « My Jesus... I was speaking to my son... about what You told him... of Mount Carmel... of Elijah... of the prophets... You said... that James will be the only one left... And what will happen to Judas? He is my son, You know? » she says panting because of her anguish and her racing.

« I know, Mary. And I also know that you are happy that he is My

disciple. You see that you have all the rights of a mother, and I have them as Master and Lord. »

« That is true... it is true... but Judas is my boy!... » and Mary, foreseeing the future, burst into tears.

« Oh! how badly shed your tears are! But the heart of a mother is forgiven everything. Come here, Mary. Do not weep. I comforted you once before. Also on that occasion I promised you that your grief would obtain great graces from God, for you, for your Alphaeus, for your sons... » Jesus has laid His arm on the shoulder of His aunt drawing her close to Himself... He tells those who were with Him: « Move forward... » When He is alone with Mary Clopas, He resumes speaking: « And I did not tell a lie. Alphaeus died invoking Me. Thus every debt he had with God was cancelled. It was your grief, Mary, that obtained that conversion to his misunderstood relative, to the Messiah Whom he did not recognise before. Your present grief will get your hesitant Simon and your stubborn Joseph to imitate your Alphaeus. »

« Yes, but... What will You do to Judas, to my Judas? »

« I will love him even more than I love him now. »

« No, no. There is a threat in those words. Oh! Jesus! Oh! Jesus!... »

The Blessed Virgin Mary comes back to comfort Her sister-in-law, although She does not know yet the nature of her grief, and when She knows, because when Mary sees Her beside her, she weeps more and informs Her, Our Lady becomes paler than the moon.

Mary of Alphaeus moans: « Will You tell Him, no, no, not death for my Judas... »

Our Lady, Who is deadly pale, says to her: « And can I ask that on your behalf, when I do not ask salvation from death for My own Son? Mary, say with Me: "Your will be done, Father, in Heaven, on the Earth and in the hearts of mothers". To do the will of God through the destiny of our sons is the redeeming martyrdom of us mothers... In any case... No one said that Judas is to be killed, or killed before you die. How burdensome your present prayer, that he may live to the most longeval age, would be for you, when in the Kingdom of Truth and Love, you will see everything in the light of God and in your spiritualised maternity. I am sure that you then, both as a blessed soul and a mother, would like your Judas to be like My Jesus in His destiny of Redeemer, and you would long to have him soon with you again, for ever. Because it is a mother's torture to be separated from her children. So great a torture, that I think it will last, as anxious love, also in Heaven, where we shall be received. »

Mary's crying, so loud in the silence of early dawn, has caused everybody to come back, to learn what has happened, and they thus hear the words of the Blessed Virgin and everybody is moved.

Mary of Magdala whispers weeping: « And I gave my mother that torture even here on the Earth. »

Martha weeps saying: « To be separated is sorrowful for both mothers and children. »

Peter's eyes are shining with tears and the Zealot says to Bartholomew: « Wonderful words of wisdom to explain what the maternity of a blessed soul will be! »

« And how things will be considered by a blessed mother: in the light of God and her spiritualised maternity... It takes your breath away as if you were facing a bright mystery » replies Nathanael.

The Iscariot says to Andrew: « Maternity is divested of all sensible weight and takes wings... when described thus. We seem to be seeing our mothers already transformed into inconceivable beauty. »

« That is true. Our mother, James, will love us thus. Can you imagine how perfect her love will be? » says John to his brother and he is the only one to smile brightly, so deeply moved he is at the thought that his mother will be able to love perfectly.

« I am sorry I caused so much sorrow » apologises James of Alphaeus. « But she apprehended more than I said... Believe me, Jesus. »

« I know, I know. But Mary is working on herself by herself, and that was a particularly hard stroke of the chisel. But it will relieve her of so much dead weight » says Jesus.

« Come on, mother, stop weeping. I am sorry that you should suffer like a poor little woman who is unaware of the certainties of the Kingdom of God. You are in no way like the mother of the Maccabean brothers » says Thaddeus reproaching her severely, but he embraces her at the same time and kisses her grey-haired head. « You are like a little girl who is afraid of shadows and of the tales they tell her to frighten her. And yet you know where to find me: in Jesus. What a mother! You ought to weep if you had been told that, in future, I was to become a traitor to Jesus, or one who would abandon Him, or would be a damned soul. In that case I agree. You ought to weep tears of blood. But, with the help of God, I will never give you such deep sorrow, mother. I want to be with you for ever and ever... »

The reproach first, and the subsequent caresses stop the tears of Mary of Alphaeus, who is now rather ashamed of her weakness.

Light, in the transition from night to day, has faded, because the moon has set, but it is not yet daylight. It is twilight. But immediately afterwards light begins to assert itself: at first it is leaden, then greyish, then greenish, afterwards whitish with bluish traces, and finally clear, like an incorporeal silver, and it makes it easy to walk on the damp shingly shore, from which the sea has receded, while it is delightful to contemplate the sea

becoming pale blue and on the point of brightening up with facets of gems. And then the air blends its silver with a darker and darker pink, until the golden pink of dawn becomes a reddish pink shower on the sea, on faces, on the country, with brighter and brighter contrasting hues, which reach the perfect climax, which I consider the most beautiful of the day, when the sun bouncing out from the eastern horizon, darts its first rays on mountains and hills, forests, meadows and the large expanses of sea and sky, emphasising each shade, whether it is the whiteness of snow, or remote mountains of indigo changing into jasper green, or cobalt sky attenuating to mix with pink, or sapphire veined with jade and lined with sea pearls. And today the sea is a real prodigy of beauty. It is not dead in dull calm, it is not ruffled by the fury of winds, but it is majestically alive in smiling little thin waves, just marked with rippings crowned with a tiny crest of foam.

« We shall arrive at Dora before the heat of the day. And we shall depart at sunset. Sisters, your toilsome journey will end tomorrow at Caesarea. And we shall have a rest, too. Your wagon will be certainly waiting for you. We will part... Why are you weeping, Mary? Am I supposed to see all the Maries weep today? » says Jesus to the Magdalene.

« She is sorry to leave You » says her sister excusing her.

« That does not mean that we shall not be meeting again and soon. »

Mary shakes her head. That is not the reason why she is weeping.

The Zealot explains: « She is afraid she will not be able to be good without being near You. She is afraid of... of being tempted too strongly, when You are not near her to keep the demon away. She was telling me a little while ago. »

« Do not be afraid for that. I never withdraw the grace I have granted. Do you want to sin? No? Then do not worry. Be watchful, of course, but be not afraid. »

« Lord... I am weeping because at Caesarea... Caesarea is full of my sins. I can see them all now... My human nature will have much to suffer... »

« I am glad of that. The more you suffer, the better. Because afterwards you will no longer suffer such useless pains. Mary of Theophilus, I remind you that you are the daughter of a strong man, that you are a strong soul and I want to make you most strong. I can bear with the weakness of the other women disciples, because they have always been meek and shy, including your sister. But I will not put up with it in your case. I will work you with fire and on the anvil. Because your character is to be dealt with thus, in order not to spoil the miracle of your will and Mine. Let that be known to you and to all those who among the people present or absent may think that, as I have loved you so much, I

may become weak with you. I allow you to weep for repentance and for love. But nothing else. Is that clear? » Jesus is imposing and severe.

Mary of Magdala endeavours to swallow tears and sobs and she goes down on her knees, kisses Jesus' feet and endeavouring to steady her voice she says: « Yes, my Lord. I will do what You want. »

« Get up then and be calm. »

253. Syntyche, the Greek Slave.

15th August 1945.

I do not see the town of Dora. The sun is setting and the pilgrims have directed their steps towards Caesarea. But I did not see the stop at Dora. Perhaps it was a simple stop, without anything remarkable to be noted. The sea seems on fire, as in its calm it reflects the red of the sky so much, so deep a red that it looks unreal. Blood seems to have been shed on the vault of heaven. It is still warm notwithstanding the sea air makes the heat bearable. They are walking along the sea all the time, to avoid the fierce heat of the dry earth, and many of them have taken off their sandals and pulled up their garments to paddle in the water.

Peter states: « If the women disciples were not here, I would strip myself and go in up to my neck. »

But he has to come out even from where he is, because the Magdalene, who was ahead with the other women, comes back and says: « Master, I am familiar with this area. Can You see that yellow strip in the blue sea over there? A river flows into the sea there, also in summer, as it is a perennial one. And one must be careful in crossing it... »

« We have crossed so many. It is surely not the Nile! We will cross this one as well » says Peter.

« It is not the Nile. But in the water and on its banks there are dangerous water animals. You cannot cross it carelessly or barefooted, if you do not want to be wounded. »

« Oh! What are they? Leviathans? »

« You are right, Simon. They are in fact crocodiles. Small ones, that is true, but capable of maiming you for a while. »

« How did they come to be here? »

« I think they were brought there for religious rites of the Phoenician era. And they have remained there, they have become smaller, but not less aggressive, and from the temples have passed into the sludge of the river. They are now large lizards, with vicious teeth! The Romans come here hunting and to amuse themselves in various ways. I have come with them, too. Everything helps to... occupy the time. Their skin is lovely and is

used for many articles. Allow me therefore to be your guide, in view of my experience. »

« All right. I would like to see them... » says Peter.

« We may see some, although they have almost all been destroyed, they are hunted so much. »

They depart from the shore and turn inland, until they find a main road, half way between the hills and the sea and they soon reach an ogival bridge, thrown across a little river, the bed of which is rather wide, but the scanty water flows only in its centre. Where there is no water there are reeds and bog-grass, now almost parched by the summer heat, but in other seasons they perhaps form tiny islands in the water. The banks instead are covered with thick bushes and trees.

Although they look very carefully, they can see no animal, and many of them are disappointed. But when they are near the end of the bridge, the only arch of which is very high, so that it may not be submerged by water in the period of floods - it is a very strong construction probably built by the Romans - Martha gives a very shrill scream and runs back terrified. A very big lizard, that is all it is, but with the typical head of a crocodile, is lying across the road, feigning sleep.

« Don't be afraid! » shouts the Magdalene. « When they are like that, they are not dangerous. The trouble is when they are hidden and you put your foot on them without seeing them. »

But Martha remains prudently behind. Susanna also is frightened... Mary of Alphaeus is prudent but more brave and walking close to her sons she advances and looks. The apostles are not afraid and they look making comments on the ugly animal, which deigns to turn round its head slowly, so that its face can be seen. It then moves and seems to be wanting to come towards those who have disturbed it. Another scream from Martha who runs farther back, imitated also by Susanna and Mary Clopas. But Mary of Magdala picks up a stone, throws it at the lizard which, hit on one side, runs down the gravel bed and sinks into the mud.

« Come forward, you fearful woman. It's no longer here » she says to her sister. The women come together.

« It is really ugly » comments Peter.

« Is it true, Master, that once they fed them with human victims? » asks the Iscariot.

« It was considered a sacred animal, it represented a god, and as we offer sacrifices to our God, so the poor idolaters did it in the forms and with the errors becoming their condition. »

« But not now? » asks Susanna.

« I think that it is still possible that it might be done in idolatrous countries » says John of Endor.

« My God! But they will give them dead, eh? »

« No. If they give them, they give them alive. Generally girls or boys. The choice of the population. At least that is what I read » replies John once again to the women who look around frightened.

« I would die of fear if I had to go near one » says Martha.

« Really? But these ones are nothing compared with real crocodiles. They are at least three times as long and large. »

« And they are famished, too. This one was certainly replete with water snakes or wild rabbits. »

« Mercy! Water snakes, too! My Lord, where have You brought us? » moans Martha, who is so frightened that she makes everybody laugh.

Ermasteus, who has always been quiet, says: « Do not be afraid, It is enough to make a lot of noise to make them flee. I know because I have been to low Egypt many times. »

They set out clapping their hands or beating tree trunks. And the dangerous spot is left behind.

Martha has gone near Jesus and she often asks Him: « Will there be any more? »

Jesus looks at her, shakes His head, but reassures her: « The Saron plain is nothing but beauty, and we are now there. But the women disciples have really surprised me to-day. I do not really know why you are so fearful. »

« I do not know myself. But anything that creeps terrorises me. I seem to feel on me the cold of their bodies, which are certainly cold and slimy. And I wonder why they exist. Are they necessary? »

« You should ask Him Who made them. But you may be sure that if He made them, it means that they are useful. At least to make Martha's heroism shine » says Jesus, eyes shining wittily.

« Oh! Lord. You are joking and You are right. But I am afraid and I will never be able to control myself. »

« We shall see about that... But what is moving in those bushes over there? » says Jesus raising His head and looking straight in front of Him, at a tangled mass of bramble and other plants with long branches climbing towards an embankment of Indian figs, growing farther back with their leaves, which are as rigid as the climbing branches are flexible.

« Another crocodile, Lord?!... » moans Martha, who is terrorised once again.

The rustling of the branches increases and the head of a woman appears. She looks. When she sees so many men, she is uncertain whether to flee to the country or withdraw back into the wild tunnel. The former alternative prevails and she runs away screaming.

« A leper? » « A mad woman? » « A woman possessed? » they ask perplexedly.

The woman comes back because a Roman wagon is arriving from Caesarea and is already near. The woman looks like a mouse in a

trap. She does not know where to go, because Jesus and His group of people are near the thicket where she was sheltered, and thus she cannot go back to it, and she does not want to go towards the Roman wagon... In the evening dusk, as night falls fast after a powerful sunset, it is possible to see that she is young and pretty although her garments are torn and she is unkempt.

« Woman! Come here! » commands Jesus peremptorily.

The woman stretches out her arms imploring: « Do not hurt me! »

« Come here. Who are you? I will do you no harm » and He says so, so kindly that He persuades her.

The woman moves forward with her head lowered and she throws herself on the ground saying: « Whoever You are, have mercy on me. Kill me but do not hand me back to my master. I am a fugitive slave... »

« Who was your master? And where are you from? You are certainly not Hebrew. It is obvious from your way of speaking and from your garments. »

« I am Greek. The Greek slave of... Oh! mercy! Hide me! The wagon is about to arrive... »

They all form a group round the poor wretch curled up on the ground. Her dress torn by thorns shows her shoulders streaked with lashes and covered with scratches. The wagon passes by without any of its passengers paying attention to the group standing near the hedge.

« They have gone by, speak now. We will help you if we can » says Jesus laying the tips of His fingers on her ruffled hair.

« I am Syntyche, the Greek slave of a noble Roman of the Proconsul's suite. »

« So you are the slave of Valerian! » exclaims Mary of Magdala.

« Ah! Have mercy! Don't denounce me to him » implores the unhappy woman.

« Do not be afraid. I will never speak to Valerian again » replies the Magdalene. And she informs Jesus: « He is one of the richest and filthiest Romans we have here. And he is as cruel as he is filthy. »

« Why did you run away? » asks Jesus.

« Because I have a soul. I am not merchandise... (the woman takes heart when she realises she has come across compassionate people). I am not merchandise. He bought me. That is true. But he may have bought my person to embellish his house, that I may brighten up his time by reading for him, that I may serve him. But nothing else. My soul is mine! It cannot be bought. But he wanted also that. »

« How do you know there is a soul? »

« I am not illiterate, Lord. I was a prey of war since my youth. But I was not plebeian. This was my third master and a dirty faun. But I remember the words of our philosophers. And I know that

we are not made only of flesh. There is something immortal enclosed within us. Something which has no precise name for us. But I recently learned its name. One day a man came from Caesarea, he worked miracles and spoke better than Socrates and Plato. They discussed him very much, in thermal baths, in triclinia, or in gilt peristyles, contaminating his august Name by mentioning it in the halls of foul orgies. And I, just I who already felt I had something immortal that belongs only to God and cannot be purchased as merchandise at slave markets, was ordered by my master to read the works of philosophers to compare them and find out whether this unknown thing, that the Man from Caesarea had called "soul", was described in them. He made me read that! Me whom he wanted to enslave to his sensuality! I thus found out that this immortal thing is the soul. And while Valerian and his like were listening to my voice, and belching and yawning he endeavoured to understand, compare and discuss, I linked their conversation, referring the words of the Unknown Man, with the words of the philosophers and I kept them here, in my heart, and my dignity became stronger and stronger to reject his lustfulness... Some evenings ago he beat me to death because I rejected him, biting him with my teeth... and I ran away the following day... I have lived in that thicket for five days, picking blackberries and Indian figs at night. But I will end up by being caught. He is certainly looking for me. I cost much money and his sensuality craves too much for me to leave me alone... Have mercy on me! You are an Israelite and you certainly know where he is, I ask you to take me to the Unknown Man who speaks to slaves and speaks of souls. They told me that he is poor. I will starve, but I want to be near him that he may teach me and elevate me. It is brutalising to live with brutes, even if one resists them. I want to possess my moral dignity once again. »

« That man, The Unknown One, Whom you are looking for, is in front of you. »

« You? O unknown God of the Acropolis, Hail! » and she bows her forehead to the ground.

« You cannot remain here. But I am going to Caesarea... »

« Do not leave me, Lord! »

« I will not leave you... I think... »

« Master, our wagon is certainly at the appointed place, waiting for us. Send for it. She will be as safe in the wagon as she would be in our house » suggests Mary of Magdala.

« Oh! yes, Lord! Send her to us, in the place of old Ishmael. We will teach her Your doctrine. She will be torn from paganism » begs Martha.

« Do you want to come with us? » asks Jesus.

« With any of Your friends, providing I am no longer with that

man. But... but a woman here said that she knows him. Will she betray me? Will any Romans go to her house? No... »

« Be not afraid. Romans do not come to Bethany, above all Romans of the kind » replies the Magdalene reassuring her.

« Simon and Simon Peter, go and look for the wagon. We shall wait for you here. We shall go to town afterwards » orders Jesus.

... When the noise of the hooves and of the wheels and the lamp hanging from its roof announce the arrival of the heavy closed wagon, those waiting for it come up from the river bank, where they certainly had their evening meal, and come on to the road. The wagon comes jolting to a stop on the edge of the rough road and Peter and Simon come off it. They are immediately followed by an elderly woman who runs to embrace the Magdalene saying: « I did not want to delay one moment to tell you that I am so happy, to tell you that your mother is rejoicing with me, to tell you that you are once again the fair rose of our house, as when you used to sleep in the cradle after I had suckled you » and she kisses her many times.

Mary weeps in her arms.

« Woman, I entrust this young woman to you and I ask you to make the sacrifice of waiting here all night. Tomorrow you will be able to go to the first village on the consular road and wait there. We shall come by the third hour » Jesus says to the nurse.

« Everything as You wish, may You be blessed! Just let me give Mary the clothes I brought her. » And she climbs on to the wagon with the Most Holy Virgin, Martha and Mary. When they come out the Magdalene is dressed as we shall always see her in future: a plain dress, a wide thin linen cloth as a veil and a mantle without any ornament.

« You may go peacefully, Syntyche. We shall be coming tomorrow as well. Goodbye » says Jesus greeting her. And He takes to the road again towards Caesarea...

The sea-front is crowded with people walking in the light of torches or lanterns carried by slaves, breathing the air coming from the sea, which is a relief to their lungs tired of the summer sultriness. The ones walking are mainly rich Romans. The Jews are closed in their houses and enjoy the fresh air on their terraces. The sea-front looks like a very long parlour during visits. To pass there means to be examined closely in every detail. And Jesus passes just there... for the whole length of the promenade, ignoring those who watch Him, make comments or deride Him.

« Master, You are here? At this time? » asks Lydia, who is sitting on a kind of armchair, or little bed, which slaves have brought for her to the edge of the road. And she stands up.

« I am coming from Dora and I am late. I am looking for lodgings. »

« I would say to You: here is my house » and she points at a beautiful building behind her. « But I do not know whether... »

« No. Thank you. I cannot accept. I have many people with Me and two have already gone ahead of us to inform some people I know. I think they will give us hospitality. »

Lydia's eyes rest also on the women and the disciples at whom Jesus pointed, and she immediately recognises the Magdalene.

« Mary? It's you? So it's true? »

Mary's eyes are like those of a surrounded gazelle: she is tortured. And she is justified because Lydia is not the only one she has to face, as many more look at her... But she looks also at Jesus and plucks up courage again.

« It is true. »

« So we have lost you! »

« No. You have found me. At least I hope to find you again one day, and in a better friendship, on the road that at long last I have found. Please tell all those who know me. Goodbye, Lydia. Forget all the evil you saw me do, I ask you to forgive me... »

« Mary! Why are you lowering yourself? We have led the same life, the life of rich idle people, and there is no... »

« No. No, my life was worse. But I have come out of it. And for ever. »

« Goodbye, Lydia » the Lord cuts short and He directs His steps towards His cousin Judas who is coming towards Him with Thomas.

Lydia keeps the Magdalene back for another moment. « Tell me the truth, now that we are alone: are you really convinced? »

« Not convinced: happy to be a disciple. I regret one thing only: that I did not meet the Light before and that I have been feeding on filth instead of being nourished by It. Goodbye, Lydia. »

Her reply sounds clear in the silence enveloping the two women. None of the many people present speak any more... Mary turns round and makes haste to reach the Master.

A young man stands on her way: « Is that your last foolish action? » he says, and tries to embrace her. But half drunk as he is, he is not successful, and Mary evades him shouting: « No, it is my only wise one. » She reaches her companions who are completely covered with their veils, such is their disgust to be seen by those vicious people.

« Mary » says Martha anxiously « did you suffer much? »

« No, and He is right, I will never suffer again because of that. He is right... »

They all turn into a narrow dark street and enter a large house, certainly a hotel, for the night.

254. Goodbye to Mary of Magdala, to Martha and to Syntyche.

17th August 1945.

And they are once again on their way, going eastwards, towards the country.

The apostles and the two disciples are now with Mary Clopas and Susanna, a few yards behind Jesus, Who is with His Mother and the two sisters of Lazarus. Jesus is engrossed in talking. The apostles instead are silent. They look tired or disheartened. Their attention is not even attracted by the beauty of the country, which is really wonderful, with gentle undulations across the plain like many green pillows under the feet of a giant king and its tiny hills spread here and there, prelude to the mountain chains of Mount Carmel and Samaria. Both the plain, which is the dominating part of the country, and the small decorated hills and undulated ground, are completely covered with blooming flowers and full of ripening fruit. It must be a well-watered place, notwithstanding its position and the season, because it is too flourishing to be lacking in water. I now understand why the plain of Saron is so often mentioned enthusiastically in the Holy Scriptures. But that enthusiasm is not shared by the apostles, who look somewhat sulky, the only ones to look so, in this splendid day and in this charming country.

The consular road, which is well kept, cuts across the most fertile land like a white ribbon and in the early morning one frequently meets farmers laden with victuals and travellers going to Caesarea. One of the farmers, leading a line of donkeys laden with sacks, who catches up with the apostles and compels them to step aside to make room for the asinine caravan, asks arrogantly: « Is the Kishon here? »

« Farther back » replies Thomas dryly, and mutters between his teeth: « You lout! »

« He is a Samaritan and that's enough! » replies Philip.

They become silent again. After a few yards, as if he were concluding an internal speech, Peter says: « For what it was worth! Was it worth going all that road? »

« Of course! Why did we go to Caesarea if He did not say even one word? I thought He intended working some wonderful miracle to convince the Romans. Instead... » says James of Zebedee.

« He exposed us to ridicule, that's all » comments Thomas.

The Iscariot aggravates the situation saying: « And He made us suffer. But He likes to be insulted and He thinks we like that as well. »

« In actual fact it was Mary of Theophilus who suffered in this case » remarks the Zealot calmly.

« Mary! Mary! Has Mary become the centre of the universe? She is

the only one who suffers, the only heroine, the only one to be perfected. If I had known, I would have become a robber and a killer in order to be the object of so much care » bursts out the Iscariot.

« Actually the last time we came to Caesarea and He worked a miracle and evangelized, we vexed Him by expressing our discontent because He had done so » remarks the cousin of the Lord.

« The trouble is that we do not know what we want... If He does one thing, we grumble, if He does the opposite thing, we still grumble. We are full of faults » says John seriously.

« Oh! There is the other wise man speaking! One thing is certain: no good has been done for some time. »

« No good, Judas? What about the Greek woman, and Ermasteus, and Abel, and Mary, but... »

« It is not with such nonentities that He will establish the Kingdom » retorts the Iscariot, who is haunted by the idea of an earthly triumph.

« Judas, please do not judge the actions of my Brother. It is a ridiculous pretence. A boy who wants to judge his master, or I should say: a nonentity wishing to be placed in high quarters » says Thaddeus, who has the same name and an invincible aversion for his namesake.

« Thank you for just calling me a boy. Actually, after living so long in the Temple I thought I could be considered at least of age » replies the Iscariot sarcastically.

« How dull these discussions are! » says Andrew with a sigh.

« True! Instead of being united, the more we live together, we are being divided. And yet at Sicaminon He told us that we must be united to the flock... How shall we ever be so, if we are not united as shepherds? » remarks Matthew.

« So we must not speak? We must never express our ideas? I don't think that we are slaves. »

« No, Judas, we are not slaves. But we are not worthy of following Him, because we do not understand Him » says the Zealot peacefully.

« I understand Him very well. »

« No. You do not understand Him, and like you, those who criticise Him, do not understand Him either... To understand means to obey without discussing, because one is convinced of the holiness of the guide » says the Zealot.

« Ah! You are talking of understanding His holiness! I was referring to His words. His holiness is undisputed and indisputable » the Iscariot hastens to say.

« Can you separate one from the others? A saint will always possess Wisdom, and his words will be wise. »

« That is true. But He does harmful things. Because of His excessive

holiness. I agree. But the world is not holy, and He causes trouble for Himself. Now, for instance, do you think that this Philistine and that Greek woman will do us any good? »

« If I am going to be harmful, I will withdraw » says Ermasteus, who feels mortified. « I came with the idea of honouring Him and doing the right thing. »

« You would grieve Him by going away for this reason » James of Alphaeus replies to him.

« I will pretend that I have changed my mind. I will say goodbye to Him... and I will go. »

« Surely not! You will not go away. It is not fair that the Master should lose a good disciple because of the short temper of other people » replies Peter promptly.

« If he wants to go away for so little, it means that he is not sure of his own will. So let him go » insists the Iscariot.

Peter loses his temper: « I promised Him, when He gave me Marjiam, that I would become paternal to everybody, and I am sorry to break my promise. But you force me to. Ermasteus is here and is staying here. Do you know what I must tell you? That you are the one who upsets the will of other people and makes them feel uncertain. You are one who causes separations and disorder. That is what you are. Shame on you. »

« What are you? The protector of... »

« Yes. You are quite right. I know what you mean. I am the protector of the Veiled woman, of John of Endor, of Ermasteus, of the slave, of anyone else who has been found by Jesus and is not one of those splendid ostentatious examples of the Temple, who are formed with the sacred mortar and cobwebs of the Temple, the wicks scented with the dregs of the lamps of the Temple, those like you, in other words, to make the parable clearer, because if the Temple is much, unless I have become a fool, the Master is much more than the Temple and you are lacking... » he shouts so loud that the Master stops and turns round and is about to walk back, leaving the women.

« He has heard! He will be sorrowful! » says the apostle John.

« No, Master. Don't come. We were discussing... to kill the boredom of the journey » says Thomas promptly.

But Jesus remains still so that they can reach Him.

« What were you discussing? Must I tell you once again that the women disciples surpass you? » His kind reproach touches their hearts. They become silent and lower their heads. « My friends. Do not be the cause of scandal to those who are being born to the Light just now! Do you not know that an imperfection of yours is more harmful to the redemption of a heathen or a sinner, than all the errors of paganism? »

No one replies because they do not know what to say to justify

themselves or to avoid accusing the others.

The wagon of Lazarus' sisters is near a bridge over a dry torrent. The two horses are grazing the thick grass on the banks of the torrent, which has perhaps run dry only recently and thus the banks are thick with grass. Martha's servant and another man, perhaps the driver, are also on the river-bed, whilst the women are in the closed wagon, which is completely enveloped with a heavy cover with tanned hides, which hang like heavy curtains down to the floor of the wagon. The women disciples move towards it, and the servant who is the first to see them, informs the nurse, while the other man takes the horses to the shaft.

In the meantime the servant rushes towards his mistresses bowing to the ground. The elderly nurse, a fine woman with an olive complexion, but pleasant, comes down from the wagon quickly and goes towards her mistresses. But Mary of Magdala says something to her and she directs her steps towards the Blessed Virgin saying: « Forgive me... But my joy in seeing her is so great that I see nobody else. Come, blessed Mother. The sun is scorching. It is cool in the wagon. »

All the women get on to it waiting for the men who are far behind. And while they are waiting and Syntyche, who is wearing the dress which the Magdalene had on yesterday, kisses the feet of her mistresses, as she insists in calling them, although they tell her that she is neither their slave nor their servant, but their guest in the name of Jesus, the Virgin Mary shows the precious little parcel of purple asking how the very short threads can be spun as they refuse to be moistened or twisted.

« That is not how to do it, Donna. They are to be reduced to powder and used as any other dye. It's the filament of the shell, not a hair. See how crumbly it is, now that it is dry? Reduce it to thin powder, sift it, to remove all long bits, which would stain the yarn or the cloth. It is better to dye the yarn in skeins. When You are sure that it is all fine powder, You dissolve it like cochineal, or saffron, or indigo powder or the powder of any other bark, root or fruit and You use it. Fasten the dye with strong vinegar the last time You rinse it. »

« Thank you, Naomi. I will do as you told Me. I have embroidered with purple threads, but they were given to Me ready to be used... Here is Jesus. It is time to say goodbye, My daughters. I bless you all in the name of the Lord. Go in peace and take peace and joy to Lazarus. Goodbye, Mary. Remember that you wept on My breast your first happy tears. I am therefore your Mother because a baby weeps its first tears on its mother's breast. I am your Mother and will always be such. What may be burdensome for you to tell also the most kind sister, the most loving nurse, come and tell Me. I will always understand you. What you would not dare say to My

Jesus, because it is still stained with humanity, which He does not want in you, come and tell Me. I will always be indulgent to you. And if you should like to inform Me also of your triumphs - but I would prefer you told Him, like sweet-smelling flowers, because He is your Saviour, not I - I will rejoice with you. Goodbye, Martha. You are now going away happily, and your supernatural happiness will last. So you need nothing else but to make progress in justice, in the peace which now nothing perturbs in you. Do it for the sake of Jesus, Who has loved you so much as to love your sister whom you love with complete love. Goodbye, Naomi. Go with the treasure you have found. As you used to satisfy her hunger with your milk, satisfy now your own, with the words that she and Martha will tell you, so that you may see in My Son much more than the exorciser who frees hearts from Evil. Goodbye, Syntyche, flower of Greece, you perceived by yourself that there is something more than flesh. Bloom now in God and be the first of the new Grecian flowers in Christ. I am very happy to leave you united thus. I bless you with My love. »

The shuffling of feet is now close at hand. They lift the heavy curtain and see Jesus Who is a few feet from the wagon. They come off in the parching sun, which is blazing down on the road.

Mary of Magdala kneels at Jesus' feet saying: « I thank You, for everything. And I thank You also very much for making me do this pilgrimage. You only possess Wisdom. I am now leaving divested of the remains of the Mary of time ago. Bless me, My Lord, to fortify me more and more. »

« Yes. I bless you. Enjoy the company of your brother and sister and with them form yourself more and more in Me. Goodbye, Mary. Goodbye, Martha. Tell Lazarus that I bless him. I entrust this woman to you. I am not giving her to you. She is My disciple. But I want you to give her the opportunity, however small, of understanding My doctrine. I will come later. Naomi, I bless you, and you two, as well. »

Martha and Mary have tears in their eyes. The Zealot greets them in particular handing them a letter for his servant. The others greet them all together. The wagon then sets out.

« And now let us go and look for some shady spot. May God guide them... Are you so sorry, Mary, that they have gone? » He asks Mary of Alphaeus, who is weeping silently.

« Yes. They were very good... »

« We shall be meeting them again soon. And they will have grown in numbers. You will have many sisters... or daughters, if you prefer so. It is all love, whether it is maternal or brotherly » says Jesus comforting her.

« Providing that does not cause trouble... » grumbles the Iscariot.

« Trouble to love one another? »

« No. Trouble having people of different races or origin. »

« You mean Syntyche? »

« Yes, Master. After all she was the property of the Roman and it was wrong to take possession of her. He will be angry with us and we will draw upon ourselves the rigour of Pontius Pilate. »

« What do you think Pontius Pilate cares if one of his subordinates loses a slave? He will know what a slave is worth. And if he is generally honest, as they say he is, at least at home, he will say that the woman did the right thing to run away. If he is dishonest, he will say: "Serves him right. I may find her". Dishonest people are not sensitive to other people's sufferings. In any case, poor Pontius! With all the trouble we make for him, he has enough to worry about instead of wasting his time with the complaint of a man who let his slave run away! » says Peter. And many say that he is right and laugh at the anger of the lewd Roman.

But Jesus discusses the matter at a higher level. « Judas, are you familiar with Deuteronomy? »

« Certainly, Master. And, I do not hesitate to say, as very few people are. »

« And what do you consider it is? »

« The spokesman of God. »

« Spokesman. So it repeats the word of God. »

« Exactly. »

« You judge it correctly. But, then, why do you not think that it is right to do what it commands? »

« I never said that. On the contrary! I find that we neglect it too much by following the new Law. »

« The New Law is the fruit of the old one, that is, it is the perfection achieved by the tree of Faith. But none of us neglect it, as far as I know, because I am the first to respect it and to prevent others from neglecting it. » Jesus is very incisive in saying these words. He resumes: « The Deuteronomy is untouchable. Also when My Kingdom will triumph, and with My Kingdom the New Law and its new codes and clauses, the Deuteronomy will always be applied to the new dictates, as the squared stones of ancient buildings are used for new ones, because they are perfect and make very strong walls. But My Kingdom does not yet exist, and I, a faithful Israelite, do not offend or neglect the Mosaic Book. It is the base of My behaviour and My teaching. Upon the base of the Man and of the Master, the Son of the Father places the heavenly construction of His Nature and Wisdom. In Deuteronomy it is written: "You shall not hand over to his master the slave who has come to you. He shall live with you, wherever he pleases, he shall stay peacefully in one of your towns and you shall not molest him". This decree applies in any case where a slave has been compelled to run away from a cruel master. In My case, in the case of Syntyche, the flight

is not towards a limited freedom, but towards the unlimited freedom of the Son of God. And now that this skylark has escaped from the hunters' trap, do you expect Me to put her into a net once again and hand her over to her prison to deprive her also of hope, after taking away her freedom? No, never! I bless the Lord because, as our trip to Endor brought this son back to the Father, so our visit to Caesarea has brought this woman to Me, that I may lead her to the Father. At Sicaminon I spoke to you of the power of faith. Today I will speak to you of the light of Hope. But now let us eat and rest in this orchard. Because the sun is scorching as if hell were open. »

255. Jesus Speaks of Hope.

18th August 1945.

Some vine-dressers, who are passing through the orchard, laden with baskets of golden grapes, which seem to be made of amber, see the apostles and ask them: « Are you pilgrims or strangers? »

« We are Galilean pilgrims going towards Mount Carmel » replies on behalf of everybody James of Zebedee, who with his fishermen companions is stretching his legs to overcome a residual somnolence. The Iscariot and Matthew are just waking up on the grass on which they had lain down, while the elder ones, being very tired, are still sleeping. Jesus is speaking to John of Endor and Ermasteus, while the Blessed Virgin and Mary Clopas are nearby, but they do not speak.

The vine-dressers ask: « Have you come from afar? »

« Caesarea was our last stop. Before that we were at Sicaminon and farther away. We come from Capernaum. »

« Oh! It's a long way in this season! But why did you not come to our house? It's over there, see? We could have given you cool water to refreshen yourselves, and some food, rustic food, but good. Come now. »

« We are about to depart. May God reward you just the same. »

« Mount Carmel will not flee on a chariot of fire as its prophet did » says a peasant half-seriously.

« No more chariots come from Heaven to take prophets away. There are no more prophets in Israel. They say that John is already dead » says another peasant.

« Dead? Since when? »

« That's what we were told by some people who came from beyond the Jordan. Did you venerate him? »

« We were his disciples. »

« Why did you leave him? »

« To follow the Lamb of God, the Messiah Whom he announced. Men, He is still in Israel. And much more than a chariot of fire

would be required to transfer Him worthily to Heaven. Do you not believe in the Messiah? »

« Of course we do! We decided to go and look for Him when the harvest is over. They say that He is very zealous in obeying the Law and that He goes to the Temple on prescribed festivities. We shall soon be going for the Tabernacles and will stay in the Temple every day to see Him. And if we do not find Him, we will go looking for Him until we find Him. Since you know Him, tell us: is it true that He is at Capernaum almost all the time? Is it true that He is tall, young, pale, fair-haired and that His voice is different from every other man's, as it touches the hearts of men and even animals and trees listen to it? »

« It touches every heart, except the hearts of Pharisees, Gamala. They have become harsher. »

« They are not even animals. They are demons, including the one whose name I bear. But tell us: is it true that He is so kind as to speak to everybody, to comfort everybody, to cure diseases and convert sinners? »

« Do you believe that? »

« Yes, we do. But we would like to be told by you who follow Him. Oh! I wish you would take us to Him! »

« But you have your vineyards to look after. »

« But we have also a soul to take care of, and it is worth more than our vineyards. Is He at Capernaum? By forced marches we could go and come back in ten days... »

« The One you are looking for is over there. He has rested in your orchard and is now speaking to that old man and the young one, and His Mother and the sister of His Mother are beside Him. »

« That One... Oh!... What shall we do? »

They become stiff with amazement. They are all eyes looking at Him. All their vitality is concentrated in their eyes.

« Well? You were so anxious to see Him, and now you are not moving? Have you become of salt? » says Peter prodding them.

« No... it's... But is the Messiah so simple? »

« What did you expect Him to be? Sitting on a flashing throne wearing a royal mantle? Did you think that He was a new Ahasuerus? »

« No. But... so simple, and He is so holy! »

« Man, He is simple just because He is holy. Well, let us do this... Master! Be patient, come here and work a miracle. There are some men here who are looking for You, but they have become petrified seeing You. Come and give them back motion and speech. »

Jesus, Who turned round when He was called, gets up smiling and comes towards the vine-dressers, whose countenance is so stupefied that they seem to be frightened.

« Peace be with you. Did you want Me? Here I am » and He makes

the usual gesture with His arms, which He stretches out as if He offered Himself.

The vine-dressers fall on their knees and remain silent.

« Be not afraid. Tell Me what you want. »

They offer their baskets full of grapes, without speaking.

Jesus admires the beautiful grapes, and saying: « Thanks » He stretches a hand and takes a bunch and begins to eat them.

« O Most High God! He eats like us! » says with a sigh the one whose name is Gamala.

It is not possible not to laugh at such a remark. Jesus also smiles more noticeably and almost to excuse Himself, He says: « I am the Son of man! »

His gesture has overcome their ecstatic torpor, and Gamala says: « Would You not enter our house, at least until vesper? We are many, because we are seven brothers with wives and children, and then there are the old ones who are waiting for death in peace. »

« Let us go. Call your companions and join us. Mother, come with Mary. »

And Jesus sets out behind the peasants who have got up and are walking a little sideways in order to see Him walk. The path is a narrow one and runs between trees tied to one another by vines.

They soon reach the house, or rather the houses, because there are several houses forming a square with a large common yard in the centre, where there is a well. The entrance is through a long corridor, which serves as a lobby and is closed at night with a heavy door.

« Peace to this house and to those who live in it » says Jesus entering and raising His hand to bless, and then lowers it to caress a little half-naked baby, who looks at Him ecstatically: he is lovely in his little sleeveless shirt, which has fallen off his plump shoulder; he is bare-footed, with one finger in his mouth and a crust of bread, dressed with oil, in the other hand.

« That's David, the son of my youngest brother » explains Gamala, while one of the other vine-dressers enters the house next door to inform the people in it, he then comes out and enters another one and so on, so that faces of every age look out and withdraw, and finally come out after a short toilet.

There is an old man sitting in the shade of a shed, shielded by a huge fig-tree, and he is holding a stick in his hands. He does not even raise his head, as if nothing were of interest to him.

« He is our father » explains Gamala. « He is one of the old people of the household, because Jacob's wife also brought her father here, when he was left all alone, then there is the old mother of Leah, who is the youngest wife. Our father is blind. His eyes are covered by a veil. So much sunshine in the fields! So much heat from the soil! Poor father! He is very sad. But he is very good. He

is now waiting for his grandchildren, who are his only joy. »

Jesus goes towards the old man. « May God bless you, father. »

« May God give Your blessing back to You, whoever You are » replies the old man raising his head towards the voice.

« Your fate is unpleasant, is it not? » asks Jesus kindly, beckoning to the others not to say who is speaking.

« It comes from God, after so much good He has given me during my long life. As I accepted good from God I must accept also the misfortune of my sight. After all, it is not eternal. It will end on the bosom of Abraham. »

« You are right. It would be worse if your soul were blind. »

« I have always endeavoured to keep its sight perfect. »

« How did you do that? »

« You who are speaking, are young, Your voice tells me. Are You perhaps like the present-day young people who are all blind, because they are without religion, eh? Be careful, it is a great misfortune not to believe and not to do what God told us. An old man tells You, my boy. If You abandon the Law, You will be blind both on the earth and in next life. You will never see God. Because the day will come when the Redemptor Messiah will open the gates of God for us. I am too old to see that day here on the earth. But I will see it from the bosom of Abraham. That is why I do not complain of anything. Because I hope that through my darkness I will expiate anything I may have done disagreeable to God, and that I may deserve Him in eternal life. But You are young. Be faithful, son, so that You may see the Messiah. Because the time is near. The Baptist said so. You will see Him. But if Your soul is blind You will be one of those of whom Isaiah speaks. You will have eyes, but You will not see. »

« Would you like to see Him, father? » asks Jesus laying one hand on his white head.

« I would like to see Him. Of course. But I prefer to go without seeing Him, rather than I should see Him and my sons should not recognise Him. I still have the ancient faith and it is enough for me. They... Oh! the world nowadays... »

« Father, see therefore the Messiah, and may the evening of your life be crowned with delight » and Jesus' hand slides from the white head down across his forehead as far as the bearded chin of the old man, as if He were caressing him, and in the meantime He bends to be at the height of his senile face.

« Oh! Most High Lord! But I can see! I see... Who are You, with this unknown face, which, however, is familiar to me, as if I had already seen You?... But... Oh! How foolish I am! You Who have given me back my eyesight are the blessed Messiah! Oh! » The old man weeps over Jesus' hands, which he has grasped, covering them with tears and kisses.

All the relatives are in a turmoil.

Jesus frees His hand and He caresses the old man again saying: « Yes, it is I. Come, so that you may become acquainted with My words as well as with My face. » And He goes towards a little staircase, which leads up to a shady terrace entirely shielded by a thick pergola. Everybody follows Him.

« I had promised My disciples to speak to them about hope and I was going to tell them a parable to explain it. This is the parable: this old Israelite. The Father of Heaven gives Me the subject to teach you all the great virtue that supports Faith and Charity, like the arms of a yoke.

A sweet yoke. The scaffold of mankind like the arm of the cross, the throne of salvation like the support of the wholesome snake raised in the desert. Scaffold of mankind. Bridge of the soul to fly up to the Light. And it is placed in the middle, between essential Faith and most perfect Charity, because without Hope there can be no Faith and without Hope, Charity dies. Faith presupposes unfailing hope. How can one believe that one will reach God if one does not hope in His Bounty? What can support you during your lifetime if you do not hope in eternal life? How can we persist in justice if we do not entertain the hope that every good deed of ours is seen by God Who will reward us for it? Likewise how can Charity be alive in us if we have no hope? Hope precedes Charity and prepares it. Because a man needs to hope in order to love. Those who have lost all hope, cannot love. This is the staircase, made of steps and banisters: Faith the steps, Hope the banisters; at the top there is Charity to which one climbs by means of the other two. Man hopes in order to believe, and believes in order to love.

This man knew how to hope. He was born. A baby of Israel like everybody else. He grew up with the same teaching as everybody else. He became a son of the Law like all the others. He became a man, a husband, a father, old, always hoping in the promises made to the patriarchs and repeated by the prophets. In his old age shadows came over his eyes, but not over his heart. Hope has always been lit in it. Hope to see God. To see God in next life. And, in the hope of that eternal vision, there was a more intimate and dearer hope: "to see the Messiah". And he said to Me, not knowing who was the young man speaking to him: "If you abandon the Law you will be blind both on the earth and in Heaven. You will not see God and you will not know the Messiah". He spoke as a wise man.

There are too many people in Israel now who are blind. They have no hope because it was killed by their rebellion to the Law, which is always a rebellion, even when veiled by sacred vestments, if it is not complete acceptance of the word of God, I say of God, not of the superstructures put there by man, which being too many and completely human, are neglected by the very

ones who put them there, and are fulfilled mechanically, compulsorily, wearily, unfruitfully by others. They have no more hope. But they deride the eternal truth. Therefore they no longer have Faith or Charity. The divine yoke given by God to man that he might make it his obedience and merit, the heavenly cross that God gave to man to conjure the serpents of Evil, that he might make it his health, has lost its cross arm, the one supporting the white flame and the red one: Faith and Charity, and darkness descended into the hearts of men.

The old man said to Me: "It is a great misfortune not to believe and not to do what God told us". It is true. I confirm it. It is worse than bodily blindness, which can be cured to give a just man the joy to see again the sun, meadows, the fruit of the earth, the faces of his sons and grandchildren, and above all, what was the hope of his hope: "To see the Messiah of the Lord". I wish such virtue were alive in the soul of every man in Israel and above all in the souls of those who are more learned in the law. It is not sufficient to have been to the Temple or to be of the Temple, it is not sufficient to know the words of the Book by heart. It is necessary to make them the life of our lives by means of the three divine virtues. You have an example: everything is easy to deal with where they are alive, even misfortune. Because the yoke of God is always a light one, which weighs only on the body but does not deject the spirit.

Go in peace, you who live in this house of good Israelites. Go in peace, old father. You have the certainty that God loves you. End your just day by laying your wisdom in the hearts of the children of your own blood. I cannot stay, but My blessing remains here, among these walls rich in grace like the grapes of this vineyard. »

And Jesus would like to go away. But He has to stay at least long enough to meet this tribe of all ages, and receive what they wish to give Him, until their travelling sacks are like bulging goat-skins... He can then take to the road again, along a short cut through the vineyard, shown to Him by the vine-dressers, who leave Him only when they reach the main road, in sight of a little village where Jesus and His friends can stay for the night.

256. Jesus Goes up Mount Carmel with His Cousin James.

19th August 1945.

« Evangelize in the plain of Esdraelon until I come back » Jesus orders His apostles on a clear morning, while they are taking a little food, some bread and fruit, on the banks of the Kishon.

The apostles do not appear to be very enthusiastic, but Jesus comforts them, telling them how to behave, and He concludes: « In any case you have My Mother with you. She will give you good advice. Go to Johanan's peasants, and on the Sabbath endeavour to

speak to Doras' peasants. Give them some assistance and console the old relative of Marjiam, giving him news of the boy and tell him that we will take him his grandson for the feast of the Tabernacles. Give those poor people very much, everything you have. Tell them everything you know, give them all the love you can, all the money we have. Be not afraid. As it goes, so it comes. We shall never die of starvation, even if we have to live on bread and fruit only. And if you see people needing clothes, give them some, also Mine. Nay, Mine first. We shall never be left nude. And above all if you come across poor wretches looking for Me, do not disdain them. You have no right to do that. Goodbye, Mother. May God bless you all through My lips. Go without any fear. Come, James. »

« Are You not taking Your bag? » asks Thomas seeing that the Lord is going away without picking it up.

« I do not need it. I shall walk more freely. »

James also leaves his, notwithstanding his mother had taken care to fill it with bread, cheese and fruit.

They set out following for a little while the bank of the Kishon, then they start climbing the first slopes leading up to Mount Carmel and can no longer be seen by those left behind.

« Mother, we are now in Your hands. Guide us because... we are not capable of doing anything » confesses Peter humbly.

Mary smiles reassuringly and says: « It is very simple. All you need do is obey His orders and you will do everything very well. Let us go. »

Jesus is climbing with His cousin and does not speak. Neither does James. Jesus is engrossed in thought; James, who feels he is on the threshold of a revelation, is full of reverential love, of spiritual tremor and looks now and again at Jesus, Whose pensive solemn face brightens up now and again with a smile. James looks at Him as he would look at God not yet incarnate and shining in His immense majesty. The apostle's face, which resembles the countenance of Saint Joseph, a brownish visage, with, however, some red on the top points of cheeks, becomes pale with emotion. But he respects the silence of Jesus.

They climb up steep short cuts, paying no attention to the shepherds pasturing their flocks on the green meadows under holm-oaks, oaks, ash-trees and other forestry, and as they climb up, they brush with their mantles glaucous juniper bushes, or golden broom ones, or emerald tufts strewn with myrtle pearls, or trembling curtains of honeysuckle and flowery climatis.

They ascend leaving behind woodsmen and shepherds until they reach, after an exhausting climb, the crest of the mountain, or rather a small tableland close to the crest crowned with gigantic oaks, and surrounded by a veritable balustrade of forestry, whose base is formed by the tops of the other trees on the mountain side,

so that the little meadow seems to be resting on a rustling support, isolated from the rest of the mountain, and is rather concealed by the branches beneath. Behind it there is the peak, with its trees rising towards the sky, with the firmament above and in front the unbroken horizon reddening in the sunset and stretching endlessly beyond the bright sea. A fissure on the earth, which does not collapse only because the roots of gigantic oaks hold it firmly in position, opens in the cliff and is barely wide enough for one man of normal build. The path is further narrowed and lengthened by some fringe undergrowth.

Jesus says: « James, My dear brother, we shall stop here tonight, and although our bodies are so tired, I ask you to pass the night in prayer. Tonight and all day tomorrow until this time. A whole day is not too much to receive what I want to give you. »

« Jesus, My Lord and Master, I will always do what You want » replies James, who became even paler when Jesus began to speak.

« I know. Let us go now and pick some blackberries and bilberries to eat and refresh ourselves at a spring that I heard below here. You may leave your mantle in the cave. No one will take it. »

And together with His cousin He goes round the cliff and picks wild fruit off the bushes in the undergrowth, and then, a few yards further down, on the opposite side to the one they came up, they fill their flasks, the only things they brought with them, at a babbling spring, which runs out from a mass of intertwined roots, and they refresh themselves because it is still very warm notwithstanding the height. They then climb back to the tableland, and while the sun setting in the west reddens the mountain top, they eat what they have picked and drink some water, smiling at each other like two happy children or two angels. They speak only a few words: a remembrance of those left down in the plain, an exclamation admiring the infinite beauty of the day, the names of two mothers... Nothing else.

Then Jesus draws His cousin towards Himself and James takes John's habitual posture: his head resting on the upper part of Jesus' chest, one arm hanging loose, the other hand in that of his Cousin. They remain thus, while in the dusk, birds twitter loudly in the thicket, the tinkle of cattle-bells recedes and fades in the distance, and a light breeze rustles caressingly in the tree tops, cool and reviving after the heat of the day, and promising dew in the night.

They remain thus for a long time, and I think that only their lips are silent, whilst their souls, more active than ever, are engaged in supernatural conversation.

257. Jesus Reveals to James of Alphaeus His Future Apostolic Mission.

20th August 1945.

It is the same time on the following day.

James is still in the fissure of the mountain and is sitting all curled up, with his head almost resting on his knees, which are drawn up and embraced by his arms. He is either engrossed in meditation or sleeping. I do not know which. He is certainly unaware of what is happening around him, that is, of the fight of two large birds, which for some private reason are duelling fiercely on the little meadow. I would say that they are mountain-cocks, or woodgrouse or pheasants, because they are the size of a cockerel, with variegated feathers but they have no combs, but only a helmet of flesh, as red as coral, on the top of their heads and on their cheeks, and I can assure you (1) that if their heads are small, their beaks must be like steel spikes. Feathers fly in the air and blood falls on to the ground in a dreadful noise, which has caused all whistling, trilling and warbling to come to an end among branches. Perhaps the little birds are watching the wild fight. James does not hear anything.

Jesus does hear and comes down from the hill top to which He had climbed and clapping His hands He separates the two opponents, which fly away bleeding, one towards the mountain side, the other to an oak-tree on the top, where it tidies its shaggy ruffled feathers.

James does not raise his head even at the noise made by Jesus, Who takes a few more steps smiling and stops in the middle of the little meadow. His white tunic seems to become tinged with red on the right hand side, so deep is the crimson of sunset. The sky seems to be catching fire. And yet James cannot be asleep, because as soon as Jesus whispers, He just whispers: « James, come here », he lifts his head from his knees, frees his legs from the embrace of his arms, stands up and comes towards Jesus. He stops a couple of paces before him and looks at Him.

Jesus returns the glance, gravely but encouraging him at the same time, by means of a smile, which is not formed by His lips or His eyes, and yet is visible. He stares at James, as if He wanted to read the slightest reaction and emotion of His cousin and apostle, who, feeling as on the previous day, that he is about to receive a revelation, turns pale and becomes even paler until he is as white as his linen tunic when Jesus raises His arms and lays His hands on his shoulders, and remains thus with arms stretched forth. James then looks just like a sacred host. Only his mild dark brown eyes and his brown beard give some colour to his expectant face.

(1) Maria Valtorta is addressing her confessor.

« James, My brother, do you know why I wanted you here, all by ourselves, to speak to you after hours of prayer and meditation? »

James seems to find it difficult to reply, as he is so deeply moved. But at last he replies in a low voice: « To give me a special lesson; or with regard to the future or because I am the least capable of all. I thank You from this moment, even if it is for a reproach. But, believe me, My Master and Lord, if I am slow and incapable, it is due to inborn deficiency, not to poor will. »

« It is not a reproach but a lesson for the time when I shall no longer be with you. During the last months you have pondered in your heart over what I told you one day, at the foot of this mountain, when I promised to come here with you, not only to speak of the prophet Elijah and to watch the infinite sea shining over there, but to speak to you of another sea, greater, more changeable and untrustworthy than this one, which today looks like the most placid of all seas, and yet in a few hours it may swallow boats and men in its voracious hunger. And you have always linked what I told you then to the idea that your coming here had some connection with your future destiny... In fact you are now becoming paler and paler, as you realise that it is a grave destiny, a heritage full of such responsibility as to cause even a hero to tremble. A responsibility and a mission to be fulfilled with all the holiness that is possible in man in order not to disappoint the will of God.

Be not afraid, James. I do not want your ruin. Therefore if I destine you to it, it means that I know that you will not receive any harm from it, but only supernatural joy. Listen, James. Set your heart at rest, through a fine act of abandonment to Me, so that you may be able to hear and remember My words. Never again shall we be all alone as we are now and with our souls so prepared to understand each other.

I will go one day, like every man who has a limited period of time to stay on the earth. My stay will come to an end in a way that is different from that of men, but it will still come to an end, and you will no longer have Me with you, except through My Spirit which, I can assure you, will never desert you. I will go after giving you what is necessary to enable My Doctrine to make progress in the world, after completing the Sacrifice and obtaining Grace for you. By means of that Grace and of the sapiential septiform Fire you will be able to do what you would now consider madness and presumption even to imagine. I will go and you will remain. And the world that did not understand Christ will not understand the apostles of Christ. You will therefore be persecuted and dispersed as the greatest danger to the welfare of Israel. But since you are My disciples you must be happy to suffer the same afflictions as your Master suffered.

One day in the month of Nisan I said to you: "You will be the one

who is left of the prophets of the Lord". Your mother, by spiritual ministry, almost understood the meaning of those words. But before they come true for My apostles, they will be realised with regard to you. James, everybody will be dispersed, except you, and that until you are called by God to His Heaven. You will remain in the place to which God will have elected you through the word of your brothers, you, the descendant of the royal race, in the royal city, to raise My sceptre and speak of the true King. Of the King of Israel and of the world, according to a sublime regality that no one understands except those to whom it is revealed.

They will be days when you will need strength, perseverance, patience and unlimited sagacity. You will have to be just with charity and with the pure simple faith of a child, but at the same time erudite as becoming a true master in order to support faith attacked in many hearts by so many enemies, and to confute the errors of false Christians and the doctrinaire quibbles of old Israel, which is blind now and will become even more blind after killing the Light and will twist the words of the prophets and even the instructions of the Father from Whom I come, to convince the world and itself, in order to give itself peace, that I was not the One of Whom patriarchs and prophets spoke. They will instead state that I was a poor man, a madman, a dreamer, according to the better ones, a possessed heretic according to the worse ones of old Israel.

I beg you then to be another Myself. No, it is not impossible! It is possible. You will have to bear in mind your Jesus, His actions, His words, His deeds. You will have to become molten in Me, as if you lay in the clay mould used by those who melt metals to shape them. I will always be present, so present and alive with you, My faithful ones, that you will be able to unite yourselves to Me and form another Me, if you only wish so. But you, who have been with Me since our earliest youth and have received the food of Wisdom from the hands of Mary, even before you received it from Mine, you who are the nephew of the most just man that Israel had, you must be a perfect Christ... »

« I cannot, I cannot, Lord! Give that task to my brother. Give it to John, to Peter Simon, to the other Simon. But not to me, my Lord! Why to me? What have I done to deserve it? Can't You see that I am a poor man capable of one thing only: that is, to love You and firmly believe what You say? »

« Judas' character is too strong. He will do well where paganism is to be demolished. Not here, where those who are to be convinced of the Christian faith believe that they are absolutely right, as they already are the people of God. Not here, where those are to be persuaded, who although they believe in Me, will be disappointed at the course of events. They are to be convinced that My Kingdom is not of this world, but it is the entirely spiritual Kingdom of

Heaven, the prelude to which is a Christian life, that is, a life in which spiritual values are the prevailing ones.

Persuasion is achieved by means of firm kindness. Woe to those who catch people by their throats to persuade them. They will say: "yes"! at the moment, to be freed from the grip. But they will run away without looking back and they will refuse any further discussion, if they are not wicked, but only misguided. But if they are wicked or simply fanatics, they will run away to get armed and kill the overbearing assessor of doctrines different from theirs. And you will be surrounded by fanatics. There will be fanatics among Christians and among Israelites. The former will expect you to take strong action or will claim authority from you to take strong action themselves. Because old Israel, with its intolerance and restrictions, will still be wriggling its poisonous tail amongst them. The latter will march against you and the others, as if they were fighting a holy war to defend the old Faith, its symbols and ceremonies. And you will be in the middle of the stormy sea.

Such is the fate of leaders. And you will be the leader of all those belonging to the Jerusalem converted to Christianity by your Jesus. You will have to know how to love perfectly in order to lead them holily. You will have to oppose your heart to the weapons and anathemas of the Jews, and not offer resistance with other weapons and anathemas. Never take the liberty of imitating the Pharisees in judging the Gentiles as filth. I have come for them as well, because the humiliation of God in taking flesh liable to death would have been out of proportion if done for Israel alone. Because while it is true that My Love would have made Me become incarnate with joy for the salvation of one only soul, Justice, which is also a divine perfection, demands that Infinite be humiliated for an infinity: for Mankind. You will have to be kind to them as well, in order not to repel them, confining yourself to being firm with regard to My doctrine, but indulging as far as other forms of life different from ours, and material matters are concerned, without any detriment to souls. But you will have to fight hard with your brothers over that, because Israel is enveloped in practices that are external only and useless, as they do not change souls. You instead must be concerned only with the spirit, and you must teach others to do the same. Do not expect Gentiles to change their habits all of a sudden. You will not change yours with one blow either. Do not remain anchored at your rock. Because to pick up wreckage at sea and take it to the dockyard and reshape it for a new life, it is necessary to sail and not remain still. And you must go and look for wreckage. There is some in paganism and also in Israel. Beyond the boundless sea there is God, Who opens His arms to all His creatures, whether they are rich because of their holy origin, like Israelites, or poor, because

pagans. I said: "You shall love your neighbour". Your neighbour is not only your relative or countryman. Also the Hyperborean, whose face is unknown to you, is your neighbour, as well as the man who is now admiring dawn in regions of which you are unaware, or the man who travels on the fabulous mountain chains covered with snow in Asia, or drinks at a river flowing in the unknown forests in central Africa. And if a worshipper of the sun should come to you, or one whose god is the voracious crocodile, or one who believes that he is Wisdom reincarnate, who understood the Truth, but did not grasp its Perfection, neither did he give it as Health to his faithful ones, or should a nauseated citizen of Rome or Athens come to you asking: "Give me knowledge of God", you cannot and must not say to them: "I reject you because it would be a profanation to take you to God". Bear in mind that they do not know, whereas Israel does. And yet many people in Israel are and will be really more idolatrous and cruel than the most barbarian idolater in the world, and they will not sacrifice human victims to this or to that idol, but to themselves, to their pride, avid for blood after they have become parched with an unquenchable thirst, which will last until the end of centuries. That terrible thirst may be quenched only by drinking once again and with faith what caused it. But it will then be the end of the world, because Israel will be the last to say: "We believe that You are God and the Messiah", notwithstanding all the proofs that I have given and will give of My Divinity.

You will watch and ensure that the faith of Christians is not vain. It would be vain if it consisted only of words or hypocritical practices. It is the spirit that vivifies. There is no spirit in mechanical or Pharisaic practices, which are but sham faith and not true faith. What would it avail man to sing praises to God in the congregation of believers, if every action of his is an imprecation to God, Who does not become the laughing-stock of such believer, but in His paternity, always maintains His prerogatives of God and King?

Watch and ensure that nobody takes a place not belonging to him. The Light will be given by God according to your situation, God will never let you be without Light, unless Grace is extinguished in you by sin. Many will love to be called: "master". One only is your Master: He Who is speaking to you; and one only is your Mistress: the Church, which perpetuates Him. In the Church those will be masters who have been consecrated with the special appointment to teach. But among the believers there will be some who by the will of God and their own holiness, that is because of their good will, will be overwhelmed by the vortex of Wisdom and will speak. There will be others, who are not wise themselves but are docile instruments in the hands of artisans, and they will

speak in the name of the Artisan, repeating, like good children, what the Father tells them to say, although they do not understand the full meaning of the words they speak. And finally there will be those who speak as if they were masters, and their magniloquence will deceive simple people, but they will be proud, hard-hearted, jealous, irascible, liars and lustful. While I tell you to receive the words of the wise in the Lord and of the sublime children of the Holy Spirit, helping them to understand the depth of divine words, because if they are the bearers of the Divine Voice, you, My apostles, will always be the teachers of My Church, and you must assist those who are supernaturally tired of the enrapturing and grave richness that God has granted them that they may take it to their brothers, so I say to you: reject the false words of false prophets, whose lives are not in accordance with My doctrine. A holy life, mildness, purity, charity and humility will never be lacking in the wise and little voices of God. They will always be lacking in the others.

Watch and ensure that there are no jealousy and slander, or resentment or desire for revenge in the congregation of believers. Watch and ensure that the flesh does not overwhelm the spirit. He, whose spirit does not control his body, could not withstand persecutions.

James, I know that you will do it, but promise your Brother that you will not disappoint Me. »

« But, my Lord! I am afraid of one thing only: that I am not capable of doing it. My Lord, I beg You, give that task to someone else. »

« No. I cannot... »

« Simon of Jonah loves You, and You love him... »

« Simon of Jonah is not James of David. »

« John! John, the learned angel, make him Your servant here. »

« No. I cannot. Neither Simon nor John possess that nothingness, which is, however, so important with men: kinship. You are a relative of Mine. After refusing to acknowledge Me, the better part of Israel will endeavour to be forgiven by God and by themselves and will make an effort to know the Lord Whom they cursed in the hour of Satan, and they will feel they have been forgiven, and will thus feel strong to come on to My Way, if one of My blood is in My place. James, great things have been accomplished upon this mountain. Here the fire of God consumed not only the holocaust, the wood and stones, but even the dust and the very water that was in the ditch. James, do you believe that God can do again such a thing, burning and consuming all the materiality of the man-James to make a James-fire of God? We have been speaking while the setting sun has inflamed our tunics. Do you think that the brightness of the chariot that took Elijah away, was like this or

more or less refulgent? »

« Much more refulgent because it was made of heavenly fire. »

« Consider therefore what a heart will be, when it has been turned into fire to have in itself God, because God wants it to perpetuate His Word preaching the Gospel of Salvation. »

« But You, Word of God, eternal Word, why do You not remain? »

« Because I am Word and Flesh. By the Word I must teach, and by the Flesh, redeem. »

« Oh! My Jesus, how will You redeem? What have You to face? »

« James, remember the prophets. »

« But are their words not allegoric? Can You, the Word of God, be manhandled by men? Do they perhaps not mean that Your divinity, Your perfection will be tormented but nothing more than that? My mother is worried about Judas and me, but I am worried about You and Mary, and also about ourselves, because we are so weak. Jesus, if men should overwhelm You, do You not think that many of us would believe You to be guilty, and being disappointed, would abandon You? »

« I am sure of it. There will be confusion among all My disciples. But then peace will reign, and there will be a cohesion of all the better parts, upon which the fortifying wise Spirit: the Divine Spirit will come, after My sacrifice and My triumph. »

« Jesus, in order that I may not deviate and may not be scandalised in the dreadful hour, tell me: what will they do to You? »

« You are asking Me a great thing. »

« Tell me, my Lord. »

« It will be a torture for you to know it exactly. »

« It does not matter. For the love that has united us... »

« It is not to be known. »

« Tell me and then cancel it from my memory until the hour it is to be accomplished. Then bring it back to my memory, together with the remembrance of this hour. I will thus not be scandalised and I will not become Your enemy in the depth of my heart. »

« It will be of no avail, because you, too, will yield to the storm. »

« Tell me, my Lord! »

« I shall be accused, betrayed, captured, tortured, crucified. »

« No! » shouts James writhing as if he had been struck to death. « No! » he repeats. « If they do that to You, what will they do to us? How shall we be able to continue Your work? I cannot accept the position You have destined to me... I cannot... When You die, I will die too, having no more strength. Jesus, listen to me! Don't leave me without You. Promise me at least that! »

« I promise that I will come and guide you with My Spirit, after My glorious Resurrection has freed Me from the restrictions of matter. You and I will be again one thing only, as we are now that you are between My arms » James in fact has begun to weep on

Jesus' chest. « Do not weep any more. Let us come out of this bright and painful hour of ecstasy, as one comes out from the shadow of death, remembering everything except the act of dying, a fright that freezes one's blood and lasts but one minute, and as an accomplished fact it lasts for ever. Come I will kiss you thus, to help you forget the burden of My fate as Man. You will remember all this at the right moment, as you asked. Here, I kiss your lips that will have to repeat My words to the people of Israel, and your heart that will have to love as I told you, and there, on your temple, where life will cease together with the last word of loving faith in Me. My beloved brother, I will come to you and be with you in the meetings of believers, in the hour of meditation, in those of danger and in the hour of your death! No one, not even your angel, will receive your spirit, because I will, with a kiss, thus... »

They remain embraced for a long time and James seems to doze off in the joy of God's kisses that make him forget his suffering. When he lifts his head, he has become once again James of Alphaeus, peaceful and kind, so much like Joseph, the spouse of Mary. He smiles at Jesus, his smile is more mature, somewhat sad, but always so sweet.

« Let us take our food, James, and then we shall sleep under the stars. At daybreak we shall go down to the valley... back to men... » and Jesus sighs... But He ends with a smile: « ... and to Mary. »

« And what shall I tell my mother, Jesus? And my companions? They will ask me many questions... »

« You can tell them everything I told you, making you consider Elijah in his answers to Ahab, to the people on the mountain, and meditating on the power of a man loved by God to achieve what is wanted of people and all the elements, his zeal, which devours him, for the Lord, and how I made you consider that with peace and in peace one understands and serves God. You will say to them as I said to you: "Come", and as Elijah put his mantle on Elisha, so you by the mantle of charity will be able to gain for the Lord new servants of God. And to those who are always worried, say that I drew to your attention the joyful freedom from past things, which Elisha shows, when he got rid of the oxen and plough. Tell them how I reminded you that evil and no good befalls those who want miracles through Beelzebub, as it happened to Ahaziah, according to the word of Elijah. And finally tell them, how I promised you that for those who are faithful until death, the purifying fire of Love will come to bum their imperfections and take them straight to Heaven. The rest is for you only. »

258. Jesus and His Cousin James on Their Way Back from Mount Carmel.

21st August 1945.

Jesus leaves the tableland on Mount Carmel and descends along dewy paths through woods that become livelier with trills and voices in the early sunshine gilding the eastern side of the mountain. When the sun dissolves the heat haze, the beauty of the whole plain of Esdraelon is displayed with its orchards and vineyards all gathered around houses. It looks like a carpet, mostly green, with a few yellowish oases strewn with red areas, which are the fields where the corn has been cut and poppies now sparkle, a carpet enclosed by the triangular bezel of Mount Carmel, Mount Tabor and Mount Hermon (Little Hermon) and by more remote mountains, the names of which I do not know, which conceal the Jordan and are linked to the south-east to the mountains of Samaria. Jesus stops and looks pensively at all that area of Palestine.

James looks at Him and says: « Are You looking at the beauty of this region? »

« Yes, also at that. But more than anything else I was thinking of future pilgrimages and of the necessity of sending disciples without any delay to do real missionary work, and not just limited work as we have done now. There are many areas where I am not yet known and I do not want to leave any place without the knowledge of Me. It is a worry constantly present in My mind: to go and do everything, while I can... »

« Now and again something happens that delays You. »

« Rather than delay Me they cause changes to My itinerary; because the trips we make are never useless. But there is still so much to be done... Also because after being absent from one place I find that many hearts have gone back to where they started from, and I have to start all over again. »

« Yes, the apathy of souls, their inconstancy and affection for evil are depressing and disgusting. »

« Depressing, yes, but do not say disgusting. The work of God is never disgusting. We must feel pity not disgust for poor souls. We must always have the heart of a father, of a good father. A good father is never disgusted at the diseases of his children. We must never have a dislike for anyone. »

« Jesus, may I ask You a few questions? I did not sleep last night. But I pondered very much while watching You sleep. You look so young when You are asleep. My brother! You were smiling, with Your head resting on Your folded arm, just like the posture of a little boy. I could see You very well in the clear moonlight of last night. And I pondered. And many questions came up from my heart... »

« Tell Me. »

« I was saying: I must ask Jesus how we shall be able to set up that organised body, which You called Church, and in which there will be hierarchies, if I understood properly, considering how incapable we are. Will You tell us what we must do, or shall we have to do it by ourselves? »

« When the time comes, I will tell you who is its head. Nothing else. While I am with you, I will inform you of its various classes with the differences between apostles, disciples and women disciples. Because they cannot be avoided. But as I want the disciples to respect and obey the apostles, so the apostles must love and be patient with the disciples. »

« And what shall we have to do? Preach You all the time and nothing else? »

« That is essential. Then you will have to absolve in My name and bless, readmit to Grace, administer the Sacraments that I will institute... »

« What are they? »

« They are supernatural and spiritual means, applied also through material means, which are used to convince men that the priest is really doing something. You know that man does not believe unless he sees. He always needs something to tell him that there is something. That is why, when I work miracles, I impose My hands, or I wet with saliva, or I give a morsel of soaked bread. I could work a miracle by means of a simple thought. But do you think that in that case people would say: "God has worked the miracle?" They would say: "The invalid is cured because it was time for him to be cured". And they would ascribe the merit to the doctor, or to medicines or to the physical strength of the invalid. The same will apply to sacraments: religious formalities to administer Grace, or give it again, or fortify it in believers. John, for instance, used to immerge sinners into water to symbolise cleanness from sin. In actual fact the mortification of confessing oneself unclean because of sins committed, was more useful than the water that washed only the body. I will have a baptism as well, My baptism, which will not be only a symbol, but will really cleanse a soul of the original sin and give back to it the spiritual state that Adam and Eve possessed before they sinned, a state, which is now improved, because it will be granted through the merits of the Man-God. »

« But... water does not descend upon the soul! A soul is spiritual. Who can touch it in a new-born baby, in an adult or in an old person? Nobody. »

« See, you admit that water is a material means, with no effect on a spiritual thing? So it will not be the water, but the word of the priest, a member of the Church of Christ, consecrated in his service, or the word of another true believer, who may replace him in

exceptional cases, that will work the miracle of redeeming the baptised person from original sin. »

« All right. But man commits sins of his own... Who will remove the other sins? »

« It will always be the priest, James. If an adult is baptised, also the other sins will be removed with the original one. If a man has been baptised and he commits sins, the priest will absolve him in the name of God One and Trine and through the merits of the Incarnate Word, as I do with sinners. »

« But You are holy! We... »

« You must be holy because you touch holy things and you administer what belongs to God. »

« So shall we baptise the same man several times, as John does, in fact he grants immersion into water as many times as one goes to him? »

« John's baptism purifies only through the humility of the person who is immersed into water. I already told you. You shall not baptise again those who have already been baptised, unless a person has been baptised with a schismatic formula and not with the apostolic one, in which case a second baptism is to be administered, subject to a precise request of the person to be christened, if adult, and subject to a clear statement that the person in question wishes to become a member of the true Church. In all other cases, to give a soul its friendship and peace with God, you will use the words of forgiveness joined to the merits of Christ, and the soul that has come to you with true repentance and a humble confession, will be absolved. »

« And if a man cannot come because he is so ill that he cannot be moved? Will he die in sin? Will the fear for the judgement of God be added to the misery of his agony? »

« No. The priest will go to the dying person and give absolution. In actual fact he will give the person a more ample form of absolution, not a comprehensive one, but an absolution for each and every sense-organ, by means of which man generally sins. We have in Israel the Sacred Oil, compound according to the prescriptions given by the Most High, with which the altar, the Pontiff, priests and kings are consecrated. Man is really an altar. And he becomes king through his election to a throne in Heaven; he can therefore be consecrated with the oil of Unction. The Holy Oil will be taken with other rites of the Israelite cult and included in My Church, but with different uses. Because not everything in Israel is evil and to be rejected. Nay, many recollections of the old stock will be in My Church. And one will be the Oil of Unction, which will be used also in the Church to consecrate altars, Pontiffs, all ecclesiastic hierarchies, kings and believers, when they become princes and heirs of the Kingdom, or when they need the greatest

help to appear before God with their bodies and senses cleansed of all sins. The grace of God will assist both the soul and the body, if God so wishes for the benefit of the sick person. A body does not always react against diseases also because its peace is upset by remorse and because of the work of Satan, who through the death of the sick person hopes to gain a soul to his kingdom and cause despair to those who are left behind. The sick person passes from the satanic grip and internal emotion to a peaceful state, through the certainty of God's forgiveness, which also brings about Satan's departure. And since the gift of Grace was coupled in our first progenitors with the gift of immunity from diseases and from all forms of sorrow, the sick person who has been restored to Grace as great as the Grace of a new-born baby christened with My baptism, may get over the illness. The sick man is assisted also by the prayers of his brethren, who are obliged to have not only physical but above all spiritual pity on invalids, in order to obtain both physical and spiritual salvation for their brother. Prayer is in fact a form of miracle, James. The prayer of a just man, as you have seen in Elijah, can be very powerful. »

« I understand only a little of what You say, but what I do understand fills me with deep respect for the sacerdotal character of Your priests. If I have understood You correctly, we shall have many points in common with You: preaching, absolution, miracles. Three sacraments, therefore. »

« No, James. Preaching and miracles are not sacraments. The Sacraments will be more: seven, like the sacred candelabrum of the Temple and the gifts of the Spirit of Love. And in fact the Sacraments are gifts and flames and are granted to man so that he may bum for ever before the Lord. There will be a Sacrament also for the marriage of man. And it is already symbolised in the holy marriage of Sarah, the daughter of Raguel, after she was freed from the demon. The Sacrament will give the married couple all the assistance needed to live together according to the law and the wishes of God. Husband and wife also become the ministers of a rite: the rite of procreation. Husband and wife become also the priests of a small church: their family. They must therefore be consecrated in order to procreate with the blessing of God and to bring up a progeny that will bless the Most Holy Name of God. »

« And by whom will priests be consecrated? »

« By Me, before I leave you. You will, afterwards, consecrate your successors and those whom you will aggregate to yourselves to propagate the Christian faith. »

« You will teach us, will You not? »

« I and He Whom I will send to you. Also His coming will be a Sacrament. It will be granted voluntarily by the Most Holy God in His first Epiphany, and it will then be given by those who have

received the fullness of Priesthood. It will be strength and intelligence, confirmation in Faith, it will be holy piety and fear, it will be assistance in advice and supernatural wisdom, and it will be possession of a justice that by its nature and power will turn the child who receives it, into an adult. But you cannot for the time being understand that. But He will make you understand: the Divine Paraclete, the Eternal Love, when the moment comes for you to receive Him. And likewise, you cannot for the time being understand another Sacrament. It is so sublime that it is almost incomprehensible to angels. And yet you, simple men, will understand it by virtue of faith and love. I solemnly tell you that those who will love it and nourish their souls by it, will be able to trample on the demon with impunity. Because I will then be with them. Try to remember these things, brother. You will have to repeat them many times to your companions and to believers. You will all already know through your divine ministry, but you will be able to say: "He told me one day, coming down from Mount Carmel. He told me everything because since then I was destined to be the head of the Church of Israel". »

« Here is another question I wanted to ask You. I was thinking about it last night. Shall I have to say to my companions: "I will be the head here?" I don't like it. I will do it if You tell me. But I do not like it. »

« Be not afraid. The Paraclete Spirit will descend upon you all and will instil holy thoughts into you. You will all have the same thoughts for the glory of God in His Church. »

« And will there be no more of those... so unpleasant discussions that we have now? Even Judas of Simon will no longer be the cause of disagreement? »

« He will no longer be, do not worry. But there will still be differences of opinion. That is why I said to you: be careful and watch, without ever tiring, doing your duty to the end. »

« Another question, my Lord. How am I to behave during persecutions? By what You say, it looks as if I am the only one of the Twelve to be left. So the others will go away to avoid persecutions. And what about me? »

« You will stay in your place. Because if it is necessary that you are not all exterminated until the Church is well consolidated, which justifies the dispersion of many disciples and of almost all the apostles, nothing would justify your desertion and your abandoning the Church of Jerusalem. Nay, the greater its danger is, the more you will have to watch over it, as if it were your dearest child about to die. Your example will strengthen the souls of believers. And they will need it to pass the test. The weaker you see them, the more you will have to support them with pity and wisdom. If you are strong, do not be pitiless with weak people. Support them

saying: "I have received everything from God to become so strong. I must admit it humbly and act charitably on behalf of those who have not been blessed with so many gifts of God", and you must share your strength through your word, your assistance, your calm and example. »

« And if among the believers there should be some wicked ones, who are the cause of danger and of scandal to the others, what shall I do? »

« Be wise when you accept them, because it is better to be few and good, than many and not good. You know the old apologue of the good apples and the bad ones. Make sure it does not happen also in your church. But should you find people who betray you as well, endeavour in every way to get them to repent, using severe measures as a last resource. But if it is a matter of small individual faults, do not be so severe as to dismay people. Forgive, always... A heart is more easily redeemed by forgiveness joined to tears and loving words than by anathema. If the fault is a grave one, but is the result of a sudden attack by Satan, and is so grave that the culprit feels the need to run away from your presence, go and look for the offender. Because he is a lamb led astray, and you are the shepherd. Do not be afraid of degrading yourself by going along muddy paths, searching pools and precipices. Your forehead will then be crowned with the crown of the martyr of love, and it will be the first of the three crowns... And if you are betrayed yourself, as the Baptist was, and like many others, because every holy man has his traitor, forgive. Forgive the traitor more than you would forgive anybody else. Forgive as God forgave men and as He will forgive. Call him "son" again, who will grieve you, because that is how the Father calls you through My lips, and, truly, there is no man who has not caused deep sorrow to the Father in Heaven... »

There is a long period of silence while they cross pastures strewn with grazing sheep.

At last Jesus asks: « Have you no more questions to ask Me? »

« No, Jesus. And this morning I understood my tremendous mission more clearly... »

« Because you are less upset than you were yesterday. When your time comes, you will be even more calm and you will understand even better. »

« I will remember all these things... everything... except... »

« What, James? »

« Less what did not let me look at You last night without weeping. What I do not really know whether You told me, and whether I should believe it if really told by You; or whether it was a fright by the demon. How can You be so calm if... if that should really happen to You? »

« And would you be calm if I said to you: "That shepherd is dragging

himself along with great difficulty because of his maimed leg. Try to cure him in the name of God"? »

« No, my Lord. I would be beside myself thinking that I was tempted to usurp Your place. »

« And if I ordered you? »

« I would do it out of obedience and I would no longer be upset because I would know that You want it, and I would not be afraid of not knowing how to do it. Because, if You sent me, You would certainly give me the strength to do what You want... »

« You say so, and you are right. You can thus see that I, by obeying the Father, am always in peace. »

James lowers his head weeping.

« Do you really want to forget? »

« As You wish, my Lord... »

« You have two options: to forget or to remember. By forgetting you will be relieved from sorrow and from the necessity of being absolutely silent with your companions, but you will be left unprepared. By remembering you will become prepared for your mission, because in order never to complain and to be strengthened spiritually seeing the whole of Christ in the brightest light, one thing only is necessary: to remember what the Son of man suffers in His earthly life. Make your choice. »

« To believe, to remember, to love. That is what I would like. And to die, as soon as possible, Lord... »
And James continues to weep silently. If it was not for the tears shining on his brown beard, one would not realise that he is weeping.

Jesus lets him weep... Then James asks: « And if in future You should allude again to... to Your martyrdom, shall I say that I know? »

« No. Be quiet. Joseph was able to be silent on his sorrow of a bridegroom when he thought his bride was unfaithful to him and on the mysteries of Her virginal conception and of My Nature. Imitate him. That was a tremendous secret as well. And it was to be kept, because if it had been disclosed, out of pride or carelessness, the whole Redemption would have been endangered. Satan is constant in watching and acting. Remember that. If you spoke now, you would damage too many people and too many things. Be silent. »

« I will... and it will be a double burden... »

Jesus does not reply. He lets James weep freely, sheltered by his linen hood.

They meet a man carrying an unhappy child tied to his back.

« Is he your son? » asks Jesus.

« Yes. He was born thus, and was the cause of his mother's death. Now, my mother is also dead, and when I go to my work, I take him with me to watch him. I am a woodcutter. I lay him on the

grass, on my mantle, and while I cut trees down, he plays with flowers, the poor wretch! »

« It is a great misfortune. »

« Yes, it is. But we must accept peacefully what God wants. »

« Goodbye, man. Peace be with you. »

« Goodbye. Peace to You. »

The man climbs the mountain, Jesus and James continue to descend.

« How many misfortunes! I was hoping that You would cure him » says James with a sigh.

Jesus does not appear to hear.

« Master, if that man had known that You are the Messiah, perhaps he would have asked You to work a miracle... »

Jesus does not reply.

« Jesus, will You let me go back and tell him? I feel sorry for that boy. My heart is already so grieved. Give me at least the joy of seeing the little fellow cured. »

« You may go. I will wait for you here. »

James runs back. He comes up with the man and calls him.« Man, stop, listen! The man who was with me is the Messiah. Give me your boy that I may take him to Him. You may come as well, if you wish so, to see whether the Master will cure him. »

« Go, man. I have all this wood to cut. I am already late because of the child. And if I do not work, I get no food. I am poor, and he costs me so much. I do believe in the Messiah, but it is better if you speak to Him on my behalf. »

James bends to pick up the boy lying on the grass.

« Be careful » warns the woodcutter. « He is painful all over. »

In fact, as soon as James attempts to lift him, the boy weeps moanfully.

« Oh! How painful! » exclaims James with a sigh.

« A dreadful pain » says the woodcutter working with a saw on a hard trunk, and he adds: « Could you not cure him? »

« I am not the Messiah. I am only a disciple... »

« Well? Doctors learn from other doctors. Disciples learn from their Master. Come on, be good. Don't make him suffer. Try. If the Master wanted to come, He would have come. He sent you either because He does not want to cure him or because He wants you to cure him. »

James is undecided. He then makes up his mind. He stands up and he prays as he has seen Jesus pray. Finally he enjoins: « In the name of Jesus Christ, the Messiah of Israel and Son of God, be cured » and immediately afterwards he kneels down saying: « Oh! My Lord, forgive me! I acted without Your permission! But I did it out of pity for this child of Israel. Have mercy, my God! On him and on me, a sinner! » and he sheds bitter tears bent over the boy

outstretched on the grass. His tears fall on to the twisted inert legs.

Jesus suddenly appears on the path. But no one sees Him, because the woodcutter is working, James is weeping and the boy is looking at him curiously, and then caressing him, he asks: « Why are you weeping? » and he stretches out his little hand to caress him again, and without realising it, he sits up by himself, he stands up and embraces James to comfort him. It is James' cry that makes the woodcutter turn round and he then sees his boy standing straight on his legs, which are no longer inert or twisted. And turning round he sees Jesus.

« There He is! » he shouts pointing to the back of James who turns round and sees Jesus looking at him beaming with joy.

« Master! I do not know how it happened... pity... that man... this child... Forgive me! »

« Stand up. Disciples are not above their Master but they can do what the Master does, when they do it for a holy reason. Stand up and come with Me. May you two be blessed and remember that also the servants of God accomplish the deeds of the Son of God » and He goes away, dragging James who continues to say: « How could I do that? I do not understand yet. How did I work a miracle in Your name? »

« By being pitiful, James. Through your desire to make Me loved by that innocent child and by that man who believed and doubted at the same time. John worked a miracle near Jabneel out of love, curing a dying man whom he anointed while praying. You cured here by means of your tears and your pity. And with your faith in My Name. See how peaceful it is to serve the Lord when a disciple has good intentions? Now let us walk fast, because that man is following us. It is not right that your companions should be aware of this, for the time being. I will soon be sending you in My name... (a deep sigh of Jesus), as Judas of Simon is anxious to work (another heavy sigh). And you will work... But it will not do everybody good. Quick, James! Your brother, Simon Peter and the others would suffer if they knew about this, as if it were favouritism. But it is not. It is to prepare someone among you twelve who may be capable of guiding the others. Let us go onto the gravel bed of the torrent that is covered with leaves. All trace of us will be lost... Are you sorry for the boy? Oh! we shall meet him again... »

259. Peter Speaks to Doras' Peasants about the Love Which Is Salvation.

22nd August 1945.

« My dear friends, what are you doing near this fire? » asks Jesus when He finds His disciples round a well fed fire, which blazes in

the early evening shadows at a crossroads in the plain at Esdraelon.

The apostles start, as they did not see Him come, and they forget the fire to greet the Master. They look as if they had not seen Him for ages. They then explain: « Listen! We settled an issue between two brothers from Jezreel and they were so pleased that they gave us a lamb each. We decided to cook them and give them to Doras' men. Micah of Johanan slaughtered and prepared them and we are now going to roast them. Your Mother has gone with Mary and Susanna to tell Doras' men to come here after vesper, when the steward goes home to tipple. Women do not attract attention so much... We endeavoured to see them pretending we were wayfarers passing by their fields, but we did not do much. We decided to gather here this evening and say... a little more, for their souls, and satisfy also their bodies, as You have done in the past. And now that You are here it will be even more pleasant. »

« Who was going to speak? »

« Well... A little each... informally. We are not capable of doing any more, also because John, the Zealot and Your brother do not want to speak. Judas of Simon and Bartholomew are not anxious to speak either... We even quarrelled over that... » says Peter.

« Why do those five not want to speak? »

« John and Simon because they say that it is not right that they should be the ones who always speak. Your brother because he wants me to speak and says that if I never start... Bartholomew because... because he is afraid that he may speak too masterly and that he may not succeed in convincing people. You can see that they are excuses... »

« And you, Judas of Simon, why do you not want to speak? »

« For the same reasons as the others! For all those reasons; because they are all fair... »

« Many reasons. But not one is specified. I will now decide, and My verdict will be inappellable. You, Simon of Jonah, shall speak, as Thaddeus wisely says. And you, Judas of Simon, shall also speak. Thus, one of the many reasons, the one known to God and to you, will no longer exist. »

« Master, believe me, there is nothing else... » Judas endeavours to retort.

But Peter cuts him short saying: « Oh! My Lord! How can I speak in Your presence? I shall never be able! I am afraid You may laugh at me... »

« You do not want to be alone; you do not want to be with Me... What do you want? »

« You are right. But... what shall I say »

« There is your brother coming with the lambs. Help him, and while you are cooking them, think it over. Everything helps to find a subject. »

« Also a lamb on the spit? » asks Peter incredulously.

« Yes. So obey. »

Peter heaves a deep sigh, a really pitiful one, but does not reply. He goes towards Andrew and helps him to fix the lambs on to a sharpened stick which is used as a spit, and he watches them cooking with such a grave countenance, that he looks like a judge on the point of passing sentence.

« Judas of Simon, let us go and meet the women » orders Jesus. And He goes away through the barren fields of Doras. « Judas, a good disciple does not despise what his Master does not despise » He says after a little while without wasting words.

« Master, I do not despise. But like Bartholomew, I feel that I would not be understood, and I prefer not to speak. »

« Nathanael is afraid that he may not fulfil My desire, which is to enlighten and relieve hearts. He is at fault, too, because he lacks confidence in the Lord. But you are much more at fault, because you are not afraid of not being understood, but you disdain being understood by poor peasants, who are ignorant of everything, except virtue. They surpass many of you, in fact, as far as virtue is concerned. You have not yet understood anything, Judas. The Gospel is really the Good News brought to the poor, the sick, the afflicted and the slaves. Later it will be given also to others. But it is given just to assist and relieve those who suffer from all kinds of misfortunes. »

Judas lowers his head but does not reply.

The Blessed Virgin, Mary of Clopas and Susanna appear coming out from a thicket.

« I greet You, Mother! Peace to you, women! »

« Son! I went to those... poor wretches. But I was given news that did not make Me suffer too much. Doras has got rid of this land and Johanan has taken it. It is not paradise... But it is no longer hell. The steward told the peasants today. He has already gone taking away on his carts all the corn to the last grain, and thus leaving everybody without anything to eat. And as Johanan's steward today has food only for his own men, Doras' peasants were to be left with nothing to eat. Those lambs are really providential! »

« It is also providential that the men no longer belong to Doras. We saw their houses... Pigsties » says Susanna who is obviously scandalised.

« The poor people are so happy' » concludes Mary of Clopas.

« I am happy, too. They will be better off than previously » replies Jesus going towards the apostles.

John of Endor joins Him carrying some pitchers of water, which he is taking along with Ermasteus. « Johanan's men gave them to us » he explains, after greeting Jesus respectfully.

They all go towards the spot where they are roasting the two lambs in a thick cloud of greasy smoke. Peter keeps turning his spit and in the meantime he broods over his thoughts. Judas Thaddeus, instead, is walking backwards and forwards, engrossed in conversation holding one arm round his brother's waist. Of the other apostles some bring firewood, some... lay the table, carrying large stones to be used as seats or as a table. I do not know.

Doras' peasants arrive. They are thinner and more ragged than ever. But they are so happy! They are about twenty in number and there is not even a child or a woman with them. Poor men all alone...

« Peace to you all and let us bless the Lord for giving you a better master. Let us bless Him by praying for the conversion of the man who has caused you to suffer so much. Is that right? Are you happy, old father? I am glad, too. I shall be able to come more frequently with the boy. Have they told you? You are weeping for joy, are you not? Come here, be not afraid... » He says speaking to Marjiam's grandfather, who stoops kissing His hand and weeping whispers: « I beg nothing else of the Most High. He has granted me more than I asked. I would now like to die lest I should live so long that suffering may overwhelm me again. »

The peasants, who were somewhat embarrassed being with the Master, soon take heart again, and when the two lambs are laid on large leaves arranged on the stones brought previously, and the portions are made, each of which is placed on a large bread-cake that serves also as a dish, they relax in their simplicity and they eat with relish, satisfying their hunger, after starving so long: they talk of the recent events.

One of them says: « I have always cursed locusts, moles and ants. But from now on they will look like messengers of the Lord to me, because it is through them that we are leaving hell. » And although the comparison of ants and locusts with angelical cohorts is somewhat queer, nobody laughs because they all perceive the tragic circumstances concealed in those words.

The fire lights up the assembly, but their faces do not look at the flame, neither do they pay much attention to what is in front of them. All eyes are turned towards Jesus' face, and are diverted only for a few moments when Mary of Alphaeus, who is busy making portions, lays more meat on the flat bread-cakes of the hungry peasants, and she finishes her work by wrapping two roasted legs in some large leaves and says to Marjiam's grandfather: « Take this. You will have a morsel each also tomorrow. And Johanans' steward in the meantime will provide something. »

« But what about you... »

« We will have less to carry. Take it, man. »

Of the two lambs there is nothing left but the picked bones and

the persistent smell of dripped fat still burning on the fire, which is dying out and its light is being replaced by moonlight.

Johanán's men also join the others. It is the moment to speak to them.

Jesus' blue eyes look up in search of Judas who is sitting near a tree, half hidden in the shade. And when Jesus sees that Judas pretends he does not understand, He calls in a loud voice: « Judas! » Judas is thus compelled to stand up and come forward. « Do not seclude yourself. Please evangelize in My place. I am very tired. In any case, if I had not come this evening, one of you would have had to speak! »

« Master... I do not know what to say... At least ask me some questions. »

« It is not for Me to ask you them. Men, what do you wish to hear or to have explained to you? » He then asks the peasants.

The men look at one another... they are uncertain... At last a peasant asks: « We have become aware of the power of the Lord and of His bounty. But we know little about His doctrine. Perhaps we will now be able to learn a little more, being with Johanán. But we are really anxious to know which are the essential things we must do in order to gain the Kingdom that the Messiah promises. As we can practically do nothing, will we be able to gain it? »

Judas replies: « You are certainly in a very painful situation. Everything in you and around you conspires to drive you away from the Kingdom. The lack of freedom to come to the Master whenever you wish, your condition of servants of a master, who, if not a hyena like Doras, is, as far as we know, a Molossian hound who keeps his servants prisoners, your sufferings and dejection, are unfavourable conditions to your election to the Kingdom. Because it is difficult for you not to cherish resentment and feelings of grudge, criticism and revenge for the man who treats you so hard. And the bare essential is to love God and one's neighbour. Otherwise there is no salvation. You must be watchful to maintain your hearts passively submitted to God's will, which is revealed to you in your destiny, and bear your master patiently without ever taking the liberty of expressing a judgement that certainly could not be kind to your master, or express gratitude for your... your... In short, you must not ponder on your situation, to avoid feelings of rebellion that would kill love. And he who does not love will not reach salvation, because he infringes the first precept. But I am almost certain that you will be saved because I see that you have good will joined to kind souls, which give rise to hope that you will be able to refrain from hatred and desire for revenge. In any case God's mercy is so great that He will remit what is still lacking for your perfection. »

There is silence. Jesus has lowered His head so much that His

countenance cannot be seen; but the faces of the rest can be seen and their expression is certainly not happy. The peasants look more dejected than previously, the apostles and the women seem surprised and almost frightened.

« We shall endeavour to repress every thought against patience and forgiveness » the old man replies humbly.

Another peasant says with a sigh: « It will certainly be difficult for us to reach the perfection of love, because it is already a great thing that we have not become the murderers of those who tortured us! A soul suffers a great deal, and even when it does not hate, it finds it difficult to love, like emaciated children who grow with difficulty... »

« No, man. I, instead, think that just because you have suffered so much without becoming murderers and revengeful, your souls love more strongly than ours. You love without even realising it » says Peter to comfort them.

And he becomes aware that he has spoken and he stops to say: « Oh! Master!... But... You told me that I had to speak... and to find the subject even in the lambs that I was roasting. And I continued to watch them to find some good words for our brothers here, and- for their situation. But, as I am stupid, I did not find anything suitable, and I do not know how, I found that I was wandering away in thoughts, which I do not know whether they are strange, in which case they are certainly mine, or holy, and if so, they have certainly come from Heaven. I will express them, exactly as they came to me, and You, Master, will explain them to me or reproach me, and you, my friends, will bear with me. I was looking first at the fire, and I thought: "Now: what is a fire made of? Of wood. But wood does not bum by itself. And if it is not dry, it will not bum at all, because water makes it heavy and prevents the tinder from lighting it. And when wood is dead, it rots and woodworms pulverise it, but it will not catch fire by itself. And yet if one arranges it in a suitable manner and holding tinder and flint close to it produces a spark and helps it to light by blowing on thin branches to increase the flame, because one always starts from the smallest things, then the flame rises and becomes beautiful and useful and sets everything on fire, also thick pieces of wood". And I said to myself: "We are like wood. We do not light up by ourselves. But we must take care not to be too impregnated with the heavy moisture of flesh and blood, to allow the tinder to be lit up by a spark. And we must desire to be burnt because if we remain inactive we may be destroyed by inclement weather and by woodworms, that is, by mankind and by the demon. Whereas if we give ourselves to the fire of love, it will begin to burn the thinner branches and will destroy them, and I considered the little branches to be imperfections, then it will grow and set on fire the

bigger pieces of wood, that is the stronger passions. And we, being like wood, something material, hard, dull, even ugly, will become the beautiful, incorporeal, agile, bright thing that a flame is. And that because we have given ourselves to love, which is the flint and tinder that turn us poor sinners into future angels and citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven". And that was one thought. »

Jesus has raised His head a little and is listening with His eyes closed and the shadow of a smile on His lips. The others are looking, they are still surprised but no longer frightened.

Peter continues to speak peacefully. « Another thought came to my mind looking at the lambs that were roasting. Do not say that my thoughts are childish. The Master told me to look for them in what I was watching... And I obeyed. So I was looking at the lambs and I said: "There you are. They are two innocent meek animals. Our Holy Scriptures are full of gentle allusions to lambs, both to remember Him Who is the promised Messiah and Saviour as was symbolised in the Mosaic lamb, and to remind us that God will have mercy on us. The prophets say so. He comes to gather His flock together, to assist wounded sheep and carry those whose limbs are fractured. How much goodness!" I was saying to myself. "We must not be afraid of a God Who promises us, poor wretches, so much mercy! But", I still said to myself, "we must be meek, at least meek, since we are no longer innocent. We must be meek and anxious to be consumed by love. Because what would the most beautiful and pure little lamb also become, after it has been slaughtered, if it is not cooked on a fire? A putrid carrion. Fire instead turns it into wholesome blessed food". And I concluded: "In short, all good things are achieved through love. Love relieves us of the burden of humanity, it makes us bright and useful, it enables us to be good to our brothers and grateful to God. It elevates our good natural qualities raising them to a height that bears the name of supernatural virtues. And he who is virtuous is holy, and who is holy possesses Heaven. So it is not science or fear that open the way to perfection for us, it is love. It detaches us from evil, much more than the fear of punishment, as through it we do not wish to grieve the Lord. It makes us pity our brothers and love them because they come from God. Therefore love is the salvation and the sanctification of man". That is what I was thinking while watching my roast and obeying my Jesus. Forgive me if that is all. But those thoughts did me good. I offer them to you hoping they may do you good as well. »

Jesus opens His eyes, which are radiant with joy. He stretches out one arm and lays His hand on Peter's shoulder: « I solemnly tell you that you have found the words that you had to find. Obedience and love made you find them and humility and the desire to give solace to your brothers will make of them as many stars in

their dark sky. May God bless you, Simon of Jonah. »

« May God bless You, Master! And are You not speaking? »

« They will be commencing their new service tomorrow. I will bless their commencement with My word. Go now in peace and may God be with you. »

260. Jesus to Johanan's Peasants: « Love Is Obedience ».

23rd August 1945.

It is not yet daybreak. Jesus is standing in the middle of Doras' ruined orchard: rows of withered or withering trees, many of which have already been felled or uprooted. Around Him there are Doras' and Johanan's peasants and the apostles, some standing, some sitting on the felled trunks.

Jesus begins to speak: « Another day and another departure. And I am not the only one who is leaving. You are departing as well, if not materially, morally, as you are going to another master. You will thus be joined to other good and pious peasants, and you will form one family, in which you will be able to speak of God and of His Word, without having to resort to subterfuges to do so. Sustain one another in your faith, help one another bear one another's faults and edify one another.

That is love. And you heard from My apostles last night, although in different ways, that love is salvation. Simon Peter with his simple kind word made you ponder how love changes your heavy nature into a supernatural nature, how a man without love may become corrupt and corrupting, like a slaughtered animal that is not cooked, or he may become useless like wood rotten with water that will not burn in a fire, and how love makes a man live in the atmosphere of God and thus he comes out of corruption and becomes useful to his neighbour. Because, believe Me, My dear children, love is the great strength of the Universe. I will never tire telling you. All the misfortunes on the earth come from lack of love, beginning from the death and diseases caused by the lack of love of Adam and Eve for the Most High Lord.

Because love is obedience. He who does not obey is a rebel. He who is a rebel does not love him against whom he rebels. Where do other general or particular misfortunes come from, such as wars or the downfall of contending families? From selfishness, which is estrangement. And the ruin of welfare through God's punishment follows the downfall of families. Because God sooner or later will strike him who lives without loving.

I know that it is rumoured here - and because of such rumour I am hated by some, looked at with fearful hearts by others, or invoked as a fresh punishment or tolerated for fear of a punishment - I know that it is rumoured here that it was My look that made

these fields cursed. It was not My look: but the punished selfishness of an unjust and cruel man. If My eyes were to scorch the land of all those who hate Me, very little green would be left in Palestine! I never avenge Myself for ill will manifested towards Me, but I hand over to the Father those who stubbornly persist in their sin of selfishness towards their neighbour and sacrilegiously deride the precept of love, and the more one endeavours to persuade them to love, by means of words and suitable deeds, the more cruel they become. I am always willing to raise My hand and say to a repentant soul: "I absolve you. Go in peace". But I will not offend Love by agreeing to inconvertible harshness. Always bear that in mind, to see things in the right light and disprove tales, which are always different from the truth, whether they are told out of veneration or angry fear.

You are changing master, but you will not be leaving this land, to take care of which in its present state seems madness. And yet I say to you: do your duty on it. You have done it so far for fear of cruel punishment. Do it also now, although you are aware that you will not be dealt with as in the past. Nay, I say to you: the more humanely you are treated, the more diligently and cheerfully you are to work, to return humanity through your work to those who grant you humanity. Because while it is true that masters are obliged to be humane to their subordinates - remembering that we are all of one race and that every man is born nude in the same manner and dies putrefying in the same manner, whether he is rich or poor, and that wealth is not the work of those who possess it, but of those who either honestly or dishonestly have amassed it for them, and that one is not to be proud of it or make use of it to oppress other people, instead one should use it with love, discretion and justice in order not to be looked at with severity by the true Master, Who is God, Who cannot be bought or seduced by jewels or gold talents, but can be made our friend only through our good deeds - because while all that is true, it is also true that servants are obliged to be good to their masters.

Do the will of God, Who wants you in your humble condition, with simplicity and good will. You know the parable of Dives. You know that not gold, but virtue is rewarded in Heaven. Virtue and submission to the will of God, make God the friend of man. I know that it is very difficult to be able to always see God through the deeds of men. It is easy in good people. It is difficult in bad people, because your souls may be induced to think that God is not good. But you must overcome the evil done to you by men tempted by Satan, and beyond that barrier that costs so many tears, you must see the truth of sorrow and its beauty. Sorrow comes from Evil. But as God cannot abolish it, as the power of Evil exists and it is the assay of the spiritual gold of the children of God, He compels

it to extract from its poison the juice of a medicine which gives eternal life. Because the pungency of sorrow inoculates good people with such reactions that spiritualise them more and more making them holy.

Be therefore good, respectful, submissive. Do not judge your masters. There is One Who judges them. I would like the man who commands you to become just, to make your life easier, and gain eternal life himself. But remember that the more burdensome the task to be accomplished is, the greater is the merit in the eyes of God. Do not try to defraud your master. Money or victuals obtained by fraud do not enrich or satisfy anybody's hunger. Let your hands, lips and hearts be pure. You will then keep the Sabbaths and holy days of obligation with grace in the eyes of God, even if you are compelled to work in the fields. I solemnly tell you that your labour will be worth more than the hypocritical prayer of those who go to fulfil their duty to be praised by the world, because in actual fact they infringe the precept by disobeying the Law that prescribes that each man and all the members of his family are to keep the Sabbath and festivals of Israel for their own sake. Because prayer does not consist in actions, but in sentiments. And if your hearts love God in a holy manner they will celebrate the rites of the Sabbath and festivals, which other people prevent you from keeping, better than they do and under every circumstance.

I bless you and I will now leave you because the sun is rising and I want to be on the hills before the heat of the day. We shall meet again soon because autumn is not far. Peace be with you all, both the new and the old servants of Johanan and may your hearts be serene. »

And Jesus sets out passing through the peasants and blessing them one by one.

Behind a large withered apple-tree there is a man half-hidden. But when Jesus is about to pass by pretending He has not seen him, the man jumps out and says: « I am Johanan's steward. He said to me: "If the Rabbi of Israel should come, let Him stop in my fields and let Him speak to my servants. They will do more work for us, because He teaches only good things". And yesterday he wrote to me informing me that as from today they (and he points to Doras' men) are with me, and these fields belong to Johanan and he says: "If the Rabbi should come listen to what He says and act accordingly. Let no calamity befall us. Load Him with honours but see if you can get Him to revoke the curse on the land". Because You must know that Johanan bought it out of spite. But I think he already regrets it. It will be a great achievement if we can turn into grazing ground... »

« Did you hear Me speak? »

« Yes, Master. »

« You know, then, how to behave, both you and your master, to

have God's blessing. Tell your master. And as far as you are concerned, moderate his orders, because you know how burdensome in actual fact is the work of a man in the fields and you are well liked by your master. But it is better for you to lose his favour and your position, rather than lose your soul. Goodbye. »

« But I have to honour You. »

« I am not an idol. I do not need interested honours to grant graces. Honour Me with your soul, by practising what you have heard and you will serve God and your master at the same time. »

And Jesus, followed by the apostles and the women, and then by all the peasants, goes across the fields and directs His steps towards the hills, greeting everybody once again.

261. In the House of Dora and Philip.

24th August 1945.

Jesus is going back towards Nazareth along a road which winds through hills, benefitting from the shade of olive-groves and orchards spread in this fertile and well cultivated region.

But when He arrives at a cross-road, intersecting the road to Ptolemais, He stops and says: « Let us stop at that house, where I have rested before, we shall have our meal, and while the sun follows its course, let us stay together before we part again. We shall go towards Tiberias, My Mother and Mary will go to Nazareth, John and Ermasteus to Sicaminon. »

Through an olive-grove they turn their steps towards a low large house of peasants, adorned with the usual fig-tree, and decked with the festoons of a vine which climbs up an outside staircase and expands its branches over the terrace.

« Peace be with you. I am here once again. »

« Come, Master. You are always welcome. May God grant peace to You and to Your friends » replies an elderly man who was crossing the yard carrying an armful of faggots. He then shouts: « Sarah! Sarah! The Master is here with His disciples. Add more flour to your bread! »

A woman covered with flour comes out of one of the rooms: she has obviously been sieving, because she is still holding in her hands a sieve with some bran in it; she kneels in front of Jesus smiling.

« Peace to you, woman. I brought you My Mother, as I promised you. Here She is. And this is Her sister-in-law, the mother of James and Judas. Where are Dinah and Philip? »

The woman, after greeting the two Maries, replies: « Dinah had her third baby-girl yesterday. We are a little sad, because we have not yet been given a nephew. But we are happy, too, is that right, Mattathias? »

« Yes, because she is a beautiful baby and she is always our blood. We will show her to You. Philip has gone to bring back Anna and Naomi from his old parents, but he will soon be back. »

The woman goes back to her baking while the man, after putting the faggots into the oven, takes care of the guests, offering them seats and new milk, if they want it, or fruit and olives, if they prefer them.

The room on the ground floor is cool and shady, large as it is and with two doors, one in the front, the other at the back, the former being shaded by the large fig-tree, the latter by a tall hedge of starshaped flowers, which resemble sunflowers in shape, but with smaller corollas. Thus an emerald green light enters the large room, and it is of great relief to eyes tired by the strong sunshine. There are benches and tables in the room, which is perhaps the one where the women spin and weave and the men repair their agricultural tools or store their supplies of flour and fruit, as would appear by some small beams with many hooks and boards placed on consoles, besides long chests along the walls. Fluffy hurds of linen or hemp look like loose plaits hanging on the whitewashed wall, and a piece of bright red cloth stretched on an uncovered loom seems to cheer up the whole room with its pompous joyful colour.

The landlady, who has finished her baking, comes back and asks the guests whether they wish to see the new-born baby.

Jesus replies: « I will certainly bless her. »

Mary instead stands up saying: « I will come and greet the mother. »

All the women go out.

« It is very comfortable here » says Bartholomew who is clearly very tired.

« Yes. It is quiet and shady. We shall end up by falling asleep » confirms Peter, who is already drowsy.

« In three days' time we shall be at home for a long time. You will be able to rest because you will be going evangelizing in the neighbourhood » says Jesus.

« And what about You? »

« I will stay at Capernaum most of the time, going to Bethsaida now and again. And I will evangelize those who join Me there. Then at the moon of Tishri we shall begin to go about again. In the meantime, I will instruct you in the evening... »

Jesus becomes silent because He sees that sleep makes His words useless. He shakes His head smiling, while watching the group overwhelmed by fatigue and sleeping in more or less comfortable postures. There is dead silence in the house and in the sunny country. It looks like an enchanted place. Jesus goes to the door near the hedge of flowers and through the branches He contemplates

the gentle Galilean hills, covered with grey still olive-trees.

A light shuffling is heard above His head together with the uncertain crying of a new-born baby. Jesus looks up and smiles at His Mother Who is coming down holding in Her arms a white little bundle from which three tiny red things emerge: a little head and two lively little fists.

« Look, Jesus, what a beautiful baby! She is somewhat like You when You were one day old. Your hair was so fair, that You did not seem to have any, if it had not been even then raised in light curls like a woolly cloud, and You were as red as a rose as well. And, look, look, now that she has opened her little eyes here in the shade and she is looking for her mother's breast, her eyes are dark blue, like Yours... Oh! darling! But I have no milk, My dear little one, My little rose, My little dove! » and Our Lady lulls the baby who stops crying and falls asleep, gurgling like a little dove.

« Mother, did You do that to Me also? » asks Jesus watching His Mother lull the baby, with Her cheek pressed against the little fairhaired head.

« Yes, Son. But I called You "My little lamb". She is beautiful, is she not? »

« Really beautiful and strong. Her mother can be proud of her » confirms Jesus, Who is also stooped watching the sleep of the innocent child.

« Instead she is not... Her husband is angry because all the children are girls. It is true that men are better for the fields we have. But it is no fault of our daughter... » says with a sigh the landlady who has just arrived.

« They are young. Let them love each other and they will have boys also » says the Lord confidently.

« Here is Philip... He will become gloomy now... » moans the upset woman. And in a louder voice she says: « Philip, the Rabbi of Nazareth is here. »

« I am glad to see Him. Peace to You, Master. »

« And to you, Philip. I saw your lovely baby. I am still looking at her, because she is really praiseworthy. God blesses you with beautiful, healthy and good children. You must be very grateful to Him... Are you not replying to Me? You seem to be annoyed... »

« I was hoping it was a boy! »

« You are not going to tell Me that you are unfair by accusing the innocent child of being a female or that you are going to be hard on your wife? » asks Jesus severely.

« I wanted a boy! For the Lord and for myself! » exclaims Philip resentfully.

« And do you think you are going to get one through injustice and rebellion? Have you perhaps read God's thought? Are you above Him that you may say to Him: "Do that because that is just?" This

woman disciple of Mine has no children, for instance. And yet she said to Me: "I bless my sterility which gives me wings to follow You". And this disciple, the mother of four sons, is anxious that all four of them may no longer belong to her. Is it true, Mary and Susanna? Do you hear them? And you, although you have been married only a few years to a fertile woman, and have been blessed with three rose-buds who seek your love, you are angry? With whom? Why? You do not want to tell Me? Well, I will tell you: because you are selfish. Pocket your ill-feeling. Open your arms to this child born of your seed and love her. Come on! Take her! » and Jesus takes the little bundle of linens and lays it in the arms of the young father. He then resumes speaking: « Go to your wife, who is weeping, and tell her that you love her. Or God really will never give you a son. I am telling you. Go!... »

The man goes up to his wife's room.

« Thank You, Master! » whispers his mother-in-law. « He has been very rude since yesterday... »

The man comes down after a few minutes and says: « I did it, my Lord. She thanks You. And she told me to ask You to name the baby because... in my unjust hatred I had decided on a name that was too ugly... »

« Call her Mary. She has sucked bitter tears with the first drop of milk, which was also bitter because of your harshness, so she may be called Mary and Mary will love her. Is that right, Mother? »

« Of course, poor little darling. And she is so pretty. And she will certainly be good and become a little star of Heaven. »

They go back into the large room where the apostles are fast asleep, with the exception of Judas, who seems to be on tenterhooks.

« Did you want Me, Judas? » asks Jesus.

« No, Master, but I cannot get to sleep and I would like to go out for a little while. »

« Who stops you? I am going out as well. I am going up to that hillock. It is all in the shade... I will rest praying. Do you want to come with Me? »

« No, Master. I would disturb You because I am not in condition to pray. Perhaps... perhaps I am not feeling very well and that is upsetting me... »

« Stay here, then. I do not force anybody. Goodbye. Goodbye, women. Mother, when John of Endor wakes, send him to Me, by himself. »

« Yes, Son. Peace be with You. »

Jesus goes out, Mary and Susanna bend to watch the cloth on the loom. Mary sits down with Her hands in Her lap, slightly bent. Perhaps She is praying, too. Mary of Alphaeus soon tires of watching the work. She sits in the darkest comer and soon falls asleep.

Susanna thinks it is a good idea and imitates her.

Only Mary and Judas are awake: the former deeply absorbed in Her thoughts, the latter looking at Her with wide open gaze, which never leaves Her. In the end he gets up and approaches Her slowly and noiselessly. Although he is most definitely a handsome man, he gives me the impression of a feline or snake approaching its prey, I do not know why. Probably because I dislike him, I feel that his very steps are deceitful and dangerous... He calls Her in a low voice: « Mary! »

« What do you want from Me, Judas? » Mary asks kindly looking at him with Her most loving eyes.

« I would like to speak to You... »

« Do so. I am listening. »

« Not here... I do not want anybody to hear me... Would You mind going out there for a moment? It is shady out there as well... »

« Let us go... But see. They are all sleeping... you could have spoken here as well » says the Blessed Virgin. But she gets up and goes out before him leaning against the tall flowery hedge.

« What do you want from Me, Judas? » She asks again, staring at the apostle who appears to be somewhat upset and to find difficulty in speaking. « Are you not feeling well? Or have you done something wrong and you do not know how to tell? Or do you feel that you are on the point of doing something wrong and it is a burden for you to admit that you are tempted? Speak, son. As I cured your body, I will cure your soul. Tell Me what is upsetting you, and if I can I will help you. If I cannot do so by Myself, I will tell Jesus. Even if you had committed a grave sin, He will forgive you if I ask Him. Really, Jesus would forgive you at once, as well... But perhaps you are ashamed of Him, the Master. I am a mother... I do not make anyone feel ashamed... »

« No, You do not, because You are a mother and You are so good. You are peace to all of us. I feel... very upset. I have a very bad character, Mary. I do not know what I have in my blood and in my heart... Now and again I am no longer able to control them... and then I would do the strangest... and worst things. »

« Even with Jesus near you, can you not resist temptation? »

« Yes. And I suffer because of that, believe me. It is so. I am a poor wretch. »

« I will pray for you, Judas. »

« It is not enough. »

« I will get just people to pray for you without telling them for whom it is. »

« It is not enough. »

« I will make children pray. So many of them come to Me, to My kitchen garden, like little birds looking for corn. And My caresses and the words I speak to them are corn to them. I speak to them of

God... And they, little innocent souls, prefer that to games and tales. The prayer of children is pleasing to the Lord. »

« Never as much as Yours. But it is still not enough. »

« I will tell Jesus to pray the Father for you. »

« It is still not sufficient. »

« More than that is impossible! Jesus' prayer defeats also demons... »

« Yes, but Jesus would not always pray. And I would go back to being myself... Jesus always says so, He will go away one day. I must think of the time when I shall be without Him. Jesus now wants to send us evangelizing. I am afraid to go with this enemy of mine, which is myself, to spread the word of God. I would like to be already perfected. »

« But, son, if not even Jesus is successful, who can ever be so? »

« You, Mother! Let me stay a little while with You. Pagans and prostitutes have stayed with You. So I can stay as well. If You do not want me to be where You live, at night I will go and sleep at Alphaeus and Mary of Clopas', but I will spend the day with You and the children. In the past I tried to do things by myself, and I made the situation worse. If I go to Jerusalem, I have too many wicked friends and in the situation I am in now, when I feel like this, I become their laughing-stock... It is the same if I go to any other town. The temptation of the road bums me with this one which I already have. If I go to Kerioth, to my mother's, I become the slave of pride. If I withdraw to a solitary place, silence rends me with Satan's voices. But if I am staying with You, oh! I feel that it will be different!... Let me come! Tell Jesus to grant me this! Do You want me to be lost? Are You afraid of me? You are looking at me with the countenance of a wounded gazelle which has no strength left to escape its assailants. But I will not offend You. I have a mother, too... and I love You more than her. Have mercy on a sinner, Mary! Look: I am weeping at Your feet... If You reject me, it may be my spiritual death... » and Judas is really weeping at Mary's feet; She looks at him and Her eyes are full of pity and anguish mixed with fear. She is very pale.

But She takes a step forward, because She had almost sunk into the hedge to keep away from Judas who was going too close to Her, and She lays a hand on Judas' dark hair. « Be quiet, lest they should hear you! I will speak to Jesus. And if He agrees... you will come to My house. I disregard the opinion of the world. It does not injure My soul. I would be horror-struck only at being guilty towards God. Calumny leaves Me cold. No one will speak ill of Me because Nazareth knows that its daughter does not cause scandal to Her town. In any case, let come what may, I am anxious that you may save your soul. I am now going to Jesus. Peace to you. » And She covers Herself with Her veil, which is white like Her dress and

She walks fast along the path which leads up to a hillock covered with olive-trees.

She looks for Her Jesus and finds Him engrossed in meditation.

« Son, it is I... Listen to Me! »

« Oh! Mother! Have You come to pray with Me? What joy and relief You bring to Me! »

« What is it, Son? Is Your soul anguished? Are You sad? Tell Your Mother! »

« You have said it, anguished and tired. Not so much because of work or of the miseries I see in hearts, as for the immutability of My friends. But I do not wish to be unfair to them. One only worries Me: Judas of Simon... »

« Son, I have come to speak to You of him... »

« Has he wronged You? Has he grieved You? »

« No. But I feel sorry for him just as I would feel sorry if I saw a very infected person... Poor son! How ill his soul is! »

« And You feel sorry for him? Are You no longer afraid of Him? You were once... »

« Son, My pity is even greater than My fear. And I would like to help You and him to save his soul. You can do everything, and You do not need Me. But You say that everybody must cooperate with Christ in redeeming... and that son needs to be redeemed so badly! »

« What else can I do for him in addition to what I already do? »

« You cannot do any more. But You could let Me do. He asked Me to let him stay in our house because he thinks that he will be able to get rid of his monster there... You are shaking Your head? You do not want? I will tell him... »

« No, Mother. It is not that I do not want. I am shaking My head because I know that it is useless. Judas is like one who is drowning and although he realises that he is drowning, he rejects out of pride the rope that has been thrown to him to draw him to the shore. He has no will to come to the shore. Now and again, he is in terror of drowning and he seeks and invokes help, he clings to the rope... and then, seized once again by pride, he refuses help, rejects it, he wants to be independent... and he becomes heavier and heavier because of the muddy water that swallows him down. But as I wish to leave no stone unturned, let that be done as well, poor Mother... Yes, poor Mother, as You are subjecting Yourself, for the love of a soul, to the pain of having near You... one who frightens You. »

« No, Jesus. Do not say that. I am a poor woman because I am still subject to antipathies. Reproach Me. I deserve it. I should not be disgusted at anybody, for Your sake. That is why I am a poor woman. Oh! I wish I could give You back Judas spiritually cured! To give You a soul is to give You a treasure. And the person who gives a treasure is not poor. Son!... Shall I go and tell Judas that it

is all right, that You agree? You said once: "The day will come when You will say: 'How difficult it is to be the Mother of the Redeptor' " I have already said it once... for Aglae... But what is once only? Mankind is so numerous! And You are the Redeemer of all men. Son!... Son!... As I held the little baby in My arms to bring her to You to be blessed, let Me hold Judas in My arms, that I may bring him to Your blessing... »

« Mother... Mother... He does not deserve You... »

« Jesus, when You hesitated to give Marjiam to Peter, I told You that it would be beneficial to him. You cannot deny that Peter has become a new man since that moment... Let Me try with Judas. »

« Let it be done as You wish! And may You be blessed for Your loving intention towards Me and Judas! Now let us pray together, Mother. It is so pleasant to pray with You!... »

... The sun is just beginning to set when I see them depart from the house that gave them hospitality.

John of Endor and Ermasteus take leave of Jesus as soon as they reach the road. Mary with the women instead proceeds with Her Son along a road through the olive-groves on the hills. They are talking of the events of the day.

Peter says: « Philip must be really crazy! He was almost going to disown his wife and daughter, if You had not been there to make him listen to reason. »

« Let us hope that he will persevere in his repentance and he does not have another fit of bad temper against females. After all... it is due to women that the world goes on » says Thomas and many laugh at his witty remark.

« It is certainly true. But they are more unclean than we are and... » replies Bartholomew.

« Never! With regard to uncleanliness... we are not angels either! Now, I would like to know whether after Redemption it will always be the same for women. They teach us to honour mothers, and hold in great respect sisters, daughters, aunts, daughters- and sisters-in-law and then... Anathema here, anathema there! The Temple is out of question. Many times we are not allowed to approach them Eve sinned? Agreed. But also Adam sinned. God punished Eve and very severely. Is that not enough? »

« Thomas! Moses also considers women unclean. »

« And Moses, without women, would have been drowned... But, mind you, Bartholomew, although I am not so learned as you are, as I am only a gold-beater, I would remind you that Moses mentions the bodily uncleanliness of women so that we may respect them, not to anathematise them. »

The debate is becoming livelier. Jesus, Who was ahead of them with the women and John and Judas Iscariot, stops and turning round He comes in to the discussion: « God had in front of Him a

people which was morally and spiritually amorphous and contaminated by connections with idolaters. He wanted to make the people physically and spiritually strong. Thus the precepts He gave were instructions beneficial to both physical strength and moral honesty. He could not do otherwise to check the lust of men and thus prevent repetition of the sins which caused the earth to be submerged and Sodom and Gomorrah to be burned down. But in future the redeemed woman will not be oppressed as she is now. Prohibitions concerning physical prudence will remain, but obstacles to her coming to the Lord will be removed. I am already removing them to prepare the first priestesses of the future era. »

« Oh! Will there be priestesses?! » asks Philip who is almost dumbfounded.

« Do not misunderstand Me. They will not be priestesses like men, they will not consecrate and will not administer the gifts of God, which you are not yet capable of understanding. But they will belong to the sacerdotal class, cooperating in many ways with priests to the benefit of souls. »

« Will they preach? » asks Bartholomew incredulously.

« As My Mother already preaches. »

« Will they make apostolic pilgrimages? » asks Matthew.

« Yes, they will. They will take faith very far, and I must admit it, with greater heroism than men. »

« Will they work miracles? » asks the Iscariot laughing.

« Some will work also miracles. But do not consider miracles the essential thing. They, being holy women, will work many miracles of conversions through their prayers. »

« Bah! Will women pray to the extent of working miracles! » grumbles Nathanael.

« Do not be narrow minded like a scribe, Bartholomew. What is prayer, according to you? »

« To address God by means of the formulae known to us. »

« That and much more. Prayer is the conversation of the heart with God and it ought to be the habitual state of man. Women, because of their more retired lives than ours and because of their affective faculties that are stronger than ours, are inclined to such conversation with God more than we are. They find comfort to their sorrows in it, relief in their work, which is not only the work in the house and in procreating, but also in tolerating us men, they find what wipes their tears and brings peace and joy to their hearts. Because they know how to speak to God and they will know even better in future. Men will be giants in doctrine, women will be those who support men and the world with their prayers, because many misfortunes will be avoided through their prayers and many punishments will be withheld. They will thus work miracles, invisible in most cases and known to God only, but not

less real. »

« You also worked an invisible but real miracle today. Is that right, Master? » asks Thaddeus.

« Yes, brother. »

« It would have been better to work a visible one » remarks Philip.

« Did you want Me to change the little girl into a boy? A miracle really is the alteration of what has been destined, a beneficial disorder, thus, which God grants to hear the prayer of man and thus prove to him that He loves him, or that He is He Who is. But child was born a female, and a female she will stay. »

I was so distressed this morning! » says the Blessed Virgin with a sigh.

« Why? The loveless baby was not Yours » says Susanna. And she adds: « When I see an unfortunate child I say: "Luckily for me I have none!" »

« Do not say so, Susanna! It is not charitable. I also could say so because My only Maternity is beyond natural laws. But I do not say that, because I always think: "If God had not wanted Me to be a virgin, that seed might have fallen on Me, and I would be the mother of the unhappy child", and thus I pity them all... Because I say: "He might have been My son" and as a mother I would like all children to be good, healthy, loved and loving, because every mother wishes that for her own children » replies Mary kindly. And Jesus seems to envelop Her in light, so radiantly He looks at Her.

« That is why You pity me... » says the Iscariot in a low voice.

« I pity everybody. Even if one were the murderer of My Son. Because I think that he would be the most in need of help... and love. Because the whole world would certainly hate him. »

« Donna, You would have to work hard defending him to give him time to repent... I would get rid of him immediately... » says Peter.

« This is where we part, Mother, God be with You. And with you, Mary. And with you, too, Judas. » They kiss one another and Jesus adds: « Remember that I have granted you a great thing, Judas. Make it beneficial and not detrimental to you. Goodbye. »

And Jesus with the eleven apostles left and Susanna goes eastwards at a quick pace, while Mary, Her sister-in-law and the Iscariot go straight ahead.

262. The Man with the Withered Hand.

26th August 1945.

Jesus enters the synagogue in Capernaum, which slowly becomes crowded with believers, because it is Sabbath. Everybody is greatly

surprised seeing Him. They all point to Him whispering and some pull the tunic of this or that apostle asking when they came back to town, because nobody knew that they were back.

« We landed at the "fig well" coming from Bethsaida, to avoid taking one step more than is prescribed, my friend » replies Peter to Uriah, the Pharisee, who, feeling offended at being called « friend » by a fisherman, goes away disdainfully and joins his peers in the first row.

« Don't tease them, Simon! » warns Andrew.

« Tease them? He asked me a question and I replied saying also that we avoided walking to respect the Sabbath. »

« They will say that we worked in the boat... »

« They will end up by saying that we worked by breathing! Fool! It's the boat, the wind and the waves that work, not us who sail in the boat. »

Andrew accepts the reprimand and becomes silent.

After the preliminary prayers it is time to read a passage and explain it. The head of the synagogue asks Jesus to do so, but Jesus points to the Pharisees saying: « Let them do it. » But as they do not wish to comply, He is compelled to speak.

Jesus reads a passage from the first Book of the Kings, which tells how David was betrayed by the men of Ziph, who informed Saul that he was at Gibeah. Jesus hands the roll back and begins to speak.

« It is always evil to infringe the precepts of charity, hospitality and honesty. But man does not hesitate to do so with utmost indifference. We have here a double episode of such infringement and the consequent punishment of God. The behaviour of the men of Ziph was deceitful. Saul's was equally so. The former were mean in their intention of getting into the graces of the stronger of the two. The latter was vile in the intention of getting rid of the Lord's anointed. They were thus united by their selfishness. And the false sinful king of Israel dares to give a reply to the base proposal mentioning the Lord: "May you be blessed by the Lord".

Derision of God's Justice! Habitual derision! Too often the Name of the Lord and His blessing are invoked as a reward or guarantee for man's wickedness. It is written: "You shall not utter the Name of God in vain". And can there be anything more vain, or rather, more wicked than uttering it to commit a crime against one's neighbour? And yet it is a sin that is more frequent than any other, committed with indifference also by those who are always the first in the meetings of the Lord, in ceremonies and teaching. Remember that it is a sin to investigate, take notice and prepare everything to damage one's neighbour. It is also a sin to make other people investigate, take notice and prepare everything so that other people may injure one's neighbour. It implies inducing

others to sin by tempting them with rewards or threatening them with retaliation.

I warn you that it is a sin. I warn you that such behaviour is selfishness and hatred. And you are aware that hatred and selfishness are enemies of love. I am warning you because I am anxious about your souls. Because I love you. Because I do not want you to be in sin. Because I do not want you to be punished by God as happened to Saul, whose country was destroyed by the Philistines, while he was chasing David to capture him and kill him. I solemnly tell you that that will always happen to those who harm their neighbours. Their victory will last as long as the grass of a meadow. It will come up quickly, but it will soon be dry and trodden on by the foot of indifferent passersby. Whereas good behaviour and honest life seem to find it hard to grow and assert themselves. But once they are perfected as habits of life they become strong leafy trees, which no hurricane can uproot or dogdays parch. Really, he who is faithful to the Law, truly faithful, becomes a strong tree, which is not bent by passions nor burnt by Satan's fire.

I have finished. If there is anyone who wishes to say something, let him do so. »

« We ask You whether You have spoken referring to us Pharisees. »

« Is the synagogue perhaps full of Pharisees? You are four, and there are hundreds of people. My word was for everybody. »

« But the allusion was clear. »

« Really, it has never been known that a man accuses himself only because suspicion is thrown on him by a parallel! But that is what you are doing. Why do you accuse yourselves if I do not accuse you? Are you aware of behaving as I said? I am not. But if you are, mend your ways. Because man is weak and may sin. And God forgives him if he sincerely repents and wants to sin no more. But to persist in evil is double sin for which there is no forgiveness. »

« We have not committed such sin. »

« Well, do not grieve over My words. »

The argument is over. And the singing of hymns fills the synagogue. The meeting seems to be on the point of winding up without any further incident, when Joachim, the Pharisee, sees a man in the crowd and beckons to him to go to the first row. The man is about fifty years old and has an atrophic arm and as atrophy has destroyed his muscles, also his hand is affected and is smaller than the other one.

Jesus sees him. And He notices the bustle to draw His attention to him. There is a flashing but very clear sign of disgust and pity on His face. But He does not ward off the blow. On the contrary He faces the situation resolutely.

« Come here, in the middle » He orders the man. And when the man is before Him, Jesus turns to the Pharisees and says: « Why do you tempt Me? Have I not just finished speaking of snares and hatred? And have you not just now said: "We have not such sin"? Are you not replying to Me? Answer at least this: Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath? Is it lawful to save life or to kill? Are you not replying? I will reply in your place and in the presence of all the people, who will be able to judge better than you do, because they are simple and free from hatred and pride. It is not lawful to do any work on the Sabbath. But as it is lawful to pray, so it is lawful to do good, because good is even a greater prayer than the hymns and psalms which we have sung. But neither on the Sabbath nor on any other days is it lawful to do evil. And you have done just that by intriguing to have here this man who is not even from Capernaum and was brought here two days ago, as you knew that I was at Bethsaida and you guessed that I would be coming to My town. And you have done that to see if you can find something to use against Me. And thus you commit also the sin of killing your souls instead of saving them. But, as far as I am concerned, I forgive you and I will not disappoint the faith of this man, whom you told to come saying that I would cure him, whereas you wanted to lay a snare for Me. He is innocent because He came here with no other intention but to be cured. And be it so. Man: stretch out your hand and go in peace. »

The man obeys and his hand is cured and is like the other one. He makes use of it at once by taking the hem of Jesus' mantle to kiss it saying: « You know that I was not aware of their true intentions. Had I known, I would not have come, as I would have preferred to keep my withered hand, rather than serve against You. So have no grudge against me. »

« Go in peace, man. I know the truth and with regard to you I assure you of My good will. »

The crowd go out making comments, and Jesus comes out last with His eleven apostles.

263. A Day of Judas Iscariot at Nazareth.

27th August 1945.

The house in Nazareth would be the most suitable for spiritual elevation. There is peace, silence, order. Holiness seems to exude from its stones, from the trees of the kitchen garden, or to pour from the serene thatch which forms a heavenly dome over it. In actual fact it exhales from Her Who lives in it, and moves about quickly and silently, with Her unchanged youthful gait and light step, as when She entered the house as a bride, and with the same smile which soothes and caresses.

The sun, in this early morning hour, is shining on the right hand side of the house, the one close to the first undulation of the hill, and only the tops of trees benefit from it, first of all the olive-trees planted near the terrace to retain the earth by means of their roots: they are the surviving olive-trees of Joachim's olive-grove, huge contorted trees with their thicker branches rising towards the sky as if they were invoking its blessing or were praying also from that peaceful place. Once the grove consisted of many trees, which like praying pilgrims formed a long procession extending as far as the fields where olive-grove and fields became grazing ground, whereas there are only a few trees left now within Joachim's mutilated property. The next to benefit from the sunshine are the tall strong almond and apple-trees, forming sunshades over the garden with their branches, then there is a pomegranate enjoying the rays of sunlight, and last the fig-tree near the house, when the sun already caresses the well cultivated flowers and vegetables in rectangular flower-beds and along the hedges planted under pergolas laden with grapes.

Buzzing bees, like flying golden drops alight on everything that may give them sweet scented juices. A small honeysuckle shoot is attacked by them as well as a hedge of bell-shaped flower bunches, the name of which I do not know, but must be night flowers, as they are about to close, and their scent is very strong. The bees hasten to suck them before they fold their petals to sleep in the corolla.

Mary goes quickly from the nest of the doves to the little fountain, and from there to the house, doing Her work, and yet, while doing so, She manages to admire Her flowers or the doves cooing along the paths or flying around the house and the kitchen garden.

Judas Iscariot comes back laden with plants and scions. « Hail, Mother. They gave me everything I wanted. I ran back so that they may not get injured. But I hope that they will take root as the honeysuckle did. Next year Your garden will be like a flowery basket. And You will thus remember poor Judas and his stay here » he says, carefully taking out from a bag some plants, the roots of which are enveloped in earth and damp leaves, and some scions from another bag.

« Thank you, Judas. Thank you very much, indeed. You have no idea how happy I am to have that honeysuckle near the little grotto. When I was a little girl, over there, at the end of those fields, which belonged to us in those days, there was a lovelier grotto, and ivy and honeysuckles adorned it with their branches and flowers, forming a kind of curtain and shelter for tiny lilies growing inside the grotto, which the delicate embroidery of maidenhair made completely green. Because there was a spring there... In the Temple I often thought of that grotto and I tell you that when I prayed

before the Veil of the Holy, as a virgin of the Temple, I did not perceive God more strongly. Nay, I must say that I dreamed there of the sweet conversations of My soul with My Lord... My Joseph prepared this one for Me, with this fine stream of water, not so much because of its utility, as to give Me the joy of a grotto like the other one... Joseph was good, and considerate of the least details... And he planted a honeysuckle and ivy, the latter is still alive, the former died during the years of our exile... He replanted it later. But it died three years ago. You have planted it once again. It has taken root, see? You are a very clever gardener. »

« Yes. When a child I loved plants so much and my mother taught me how to take care of them... Being with You, Mother, I feel as if I were a boy again and I discover my old skill. I do it to please You. You are so good to me!... » replies Judas, working skilfully in setting the plants in the most suitable places. Near the hedge of the night flowers he places a tangle of roots, which I do not know whether they are lilies of the valley or some other flower. « They will do well here » he says pressing with a little hoe the earth on to the buried roots. « Too much sunshine is not good for them. Eleazar's servant did not want to give me them. But I insisted so much that he gave them to me. »

« They did not want to give Joseph those Indian jasmines. But he did some work for them without asking for payment in order to get them for Me. They have flourished more and more. »

« There You are, Mother. I will now water them and they will be all right. » He waters them and then washes his hands in the fountain.

Mary looks at him: he is so different from Her Jesus, and so different as well from the Judas of certain stormy hours; She scans him, approaches him and laying a hand on his arm She kindly asks him: « Are you feeling better, Judas? In your soul, I mean. »

« Oh! Mother! So much better! I am in peace. And You can see it. I find pleasure and salvation in humble things and in being with You. I should never leave this peace, this quietude. Here... How far is the world from this house!... » And Judas looks at the garden, the plants, the little house... He concludes: « But if I stayed here I would never be an apostle. And I want to be one... »

« However, believe Me, it would be better for you to be a just soul rather than an unjust apostle. If you feel that contact with the world upsets you, if you realise that the praises and honours of an apostle hurt you, give it up, Judas. It is better for you to be a simple believer in My Jesus, but a holy believer, rather than be a sinful apostle. »

Judas lowers his head pensively. Mary leaves him to his meditation and goes into the house, to Her housework.

Judas remains still for some time, he then walks up and down

under the pergola. His arms are folded, his head is lowered. He is engrossed in thought, then he begins to speak and gesticulate to himself. His monologue is incomprehensible. His gestures are typical of a person anguished with clashing ideas. He seems to be invoking and rejecting, or pitying, or cursing something, his inquisitive countenance becomes frightened, anguished, until his face has the expression of his worse moments... and he stops abruptly in the middle of the path, remaining still for some time, with a real diabolic countenance... He covers his face with his hands and runs up the hillock of the olive-trees, away from Mary's sight, and he weeps hiding his face in his hands, until he calms down and remains sat, leaning with his back against on olive-tree, as if he were bewildered...

... It is no longer morning, but the end of a glorious sunset. Nazareth opens the doors of its houses, which have been closed all day against the fierce summer heat of an eastern day. Women, men, children come out into the kitchen gardens or on to the roads still warm but no longer sunny, seeking cool air at the fountain, or playing or talking... waiting for supper. Men, women, children greet one another in loud voices, they chatter, laugh, shout...

Judas also goes out and turns his steps to the fountain carrying copper pitchers. He is noticed and indicated by the people of Nazareth with the nickname « the disciple of the Temple », which sounds to him like sweet music. He passes by greeting people kindly, but also with a little reserve, which if it is not yet proud haughtiness, it is very close to it.

« You are very good to Mary » a citizen with a long beard says to him.

« She deserves that and more. She really is a great woman of Israel. You are lucky to have such a citizen. »

The praise of the woman of Nazareth delights the people who repeat to one another what Judas said.

The apostle has in the meantime reached the fountain where he waits for his turn and he is so kind as to carry the pitchers of an elderly woman, who cannot bless him enough, and he fills the jars of two women, who are hampered by the suckling each carries in her arms. Sorting their veils they whisper: « May God reward you. »

« Love for our neighbour is the first duty of a friend of Jesus » replies the Iscariot bowing. He then fills his own pitchers and goes back home.

The head of the synagogue of Nazareth and other people stop him on his way home, and invite him to speak on the following Sabbath. « You have been here with us over two weeks and you have not taught us any lesson apart from your kindness to us all » complains the head, who is with other elders of the village.

« But if the speeches of your greatest son are not pleasant to you,

how can you be satisfied with the sermon of one of His disciples, who is a Judaeen over and above? » replies Judas.

« Your suspicion is an unfair one and it grieves us. Our invitation is sincere. You are a disciple and a Judaeen. That is true. But you are of the Temple. So you may speak. Because there is doctrine in the Temple. Joseph's son is only a carpenter... »

« But He is the Messiah! »

« He says so... But is it true? Or is it delirium? »

« But, people of Nazareth, what about His holiness! » His holiness Judas is scandalised at the incredulity of the Nazarenes.

« It is great. That is true. But between that and being the Messiah!... And then... Why does He speak so harshly? »

« Harsh? No. He does not seem harsh to me. Well, He is too sincere and too intolerant, that is true. He leaves no fault untouched, He does not hesitate to denounce abuses... and people do not like that. He always brings up a sore point. And that hurts. But He does it because of His holiness. Surely! That is the only reason. I have said to Him several times: "Jesus, You are damaging Your reputation". But He will not listen to me!... »

« You are very fond of Him, and learned as you are you could guide Him. »

« Oh! not learned... But practical, yes. I am of the Temple, you know!? I am familiar with customs. I have friends. Annas' son is like a brother to me. If you want something from the Sanhedrin, just tell me... But let me take the water to Mary now, as She is waiting for me for supper. »

« Come back later. It is cool on my terrace. You will be among friends and we shall be able to talk... »

« Yes, goodbye » and Judas goes home where he apologises to Mary for being late as he was held up by the head of the synagogue and by the elders of the village. And he concludes: « They would like me to speak on Sabbath... The Master did not tell me to speak. What do You say, Mother. Guide me. »

« Speak to the head of the synagogue... or to the synagogue? »

« To both. I would not like to speak to any of them because they are against Jesus and also because it seems a sacrilege to me to speak where He is by right the only Master there. But they insisted so much! They want me after supper... I have almost promised them to go. And if You think that by speaking I may be able to mitigate their spirit of resistance to the Master, which is so unpleasant, I will go and speak to them although it is so burdensome to me. I will speak as best I can, very simply, endeavouring to be very patient in view of their stubbornness. Because I have realised that it is worse to be hard. Eh! I will not make again the mistake I made at Esdraelon! The Master was so upset about it! He did not say anything to me, but I understood. I will not do it again. But I

would like to leave Nazareth after persuading the people that Jesus is the Messiah and is to be believed and loved. »- Judas is speaking while sitting at the table, at Jesus' place and eating what Mary has prepared for him. And it hurts me to see Judas sitting in that place, in front of Mary Who serves him like a mother.

She now replies: « It would be a good thing if Nazareth understood the truth and accepted it. I will not hold you back, you may go. No one can say better than you whether Jesus deserves love. Consider how much He loves you and He shows it by always excusing you and satisfying you whenever possible... Let that consideration inspire you with holy words and deeds. »

The supper is soon over. Judas goes to water the flowers in the garden before it gets too dark and he then goes out, leaving Mary on the terrace intent on folding the clothes She had hung out to dry. And Judas, after greeting Alphaeus of Sarah and Mary of Clopas who are talking standing at the door of the latter, goes straight to the house of the head of the synagogue.

Also the Lord's two cousins are present with other six elders. After pompous greetings they all sit gravely on seats adorned with cushions and they refresh themselves drinking anise or mint water, which must be very cool because the metal pitcher is moist outside owing to the difference in temperature between the ice cold water and the still warm air, notwithstanding the breeze blowing from the hills to the north of Nazareth stirs the tree-tops.

« I am glad you agreed to come. You are young. A little relaxation is good for you » says the head of the synagogue who is full of attention towards Judas.

« I was afraid of bothering you if I had come earlier. I know that you are rather disdainful towards Jesus and His followers... »

« Disdainful No. Sceptical... and we are hurt by His... let us admit it... by His too crude truth. We were under the impression that you disdained us and that is why we did not invite you. »

« I disdain you? On the contrary! I understand you very well... Of course! But I am sure that at the end peace will be made between you and Him. It suits both you and Him. It suits Him because He is in need of everybody, and it suits you because it does not pay to be considered enemies of the Messiah. »

« And do you think that He really is the Messiah? » asks Joseph of Alphaeus. « There is no trace in Him of the royal figure predicted by the prophets. Perhaps it is because we remember Him as a carpenter... But... Where is the liberating king in Him? »

« David also appeared to be only a little shepherd. But you know that there has been no greater king than David. Not even Solomon in all his glory was so great. Because, after all, Solomon only continued David's work, but was never inspired like him. Whereas David! Just consider the figure of David! It is gigantic! His regality

almost reaches up to Heaven. Do not doubt the royalty of the Christ, basing your judgement on His genealogy. David was king and shepherd. More truly: shepherd and then king. Jesus is king and carpenter. Or better still: carpenter and later king. »

« You speak as a rabbi. One can see that you have been brought up in the Temple » says the head of the synagogue. « And could you let the Sanhedrin know, that I, the head, am in need of the help of the Temple for a private reason? »

« Of course! Certainly! With Eleazar! Just imagine! And then Joseph the Elder, you know? The wealthy man from Arimathea. And then Sadoc, the scribe... and then... All you have to do is to tell me! »

« Well, be my guest tomorrow. We will talk about it. »

« Your guest? No. I cannot leave Mary, that holy and sorrowful woman. I came here specially to keep Her company... »

« What is the matter with our relative? We know that She is healthy and, although poor, She is happy » says Simon of Alphaeus.

« Yes. And we never leave Her. My mother is always with Her. And my wife and I, too. Although... Although I cannot forgive Her for being so weak with Her Son. And also for grieving my father, who because of Jesus died with only two of his sons at his bedside. And then... But family troubles are not to be proclaimed publicly » says Joseph of Alphaeus with a sigh.

« You are right. They should be whispered in a low voice and confided to a friendly heart. The same applies to many troubles. I have mine as well, as a disciple... But it's better not to speak of them! »

« On the contrary, let us speak of them. What is the matter? Trouble for Jesus? We do not approve of His behaviour. But we are His relatives. And we are read to side with Him against His enemies. Speak up! » says Joseph again.

« Trouble? No! I was just saying... The sorrows of a disciple are manifold! Not only because of the behaviour of his Master with friends and enemies, harming Himself, but also because it is grievous to see that He is not loved. I wish you all loved Him... »

« But what can we do? You said that yourself! His behaviour is such... He was not like that before leaving His Mother » says the head of the synagogue apologetically. « Is that true, what do you all say? »

They all agree solemnly, speaking highly of the silent, meek, retired Jesus of the past.

« Who could have imagined that He was to become what He is now? He was completely devoted to house and relatives. Now instead? » remarks an elderly Nazarene.

Judas exclaims with a sigh: « Poor woman! »

« Well, what do you know? Tell us, speak up! » shouts Joseph.

« Nothing more than you know. Do you think that it is pleasant for Her to be left alone? »

« If Joseph had lived as your father did, that would not have happened » states another elderly Nazarene sententiously.

« Don't believe that, man. It would have been the same. When one takes an idea into one's head!... » says Judas.

A servant brings some lamps and lays them on the table, because it is a moonless night although the sky is sparkling with stars. More drinks are brought at the same time and the head of the synagogue offers them to Judas at once.

« Thank you. I cannot stay any longer. I must go back to Mary » he says getting up.

Also Alphaeus' two sons stand up saying: « We will come with you. We are going the same way... » and they part greeting one another ceremoniously while the six elders remain with the head of the synagogue.

The streets are now deserted and silent. People can be heard talking in low grave voices on the terraced roofs. Children are already sleeping in their little beds and thus their shrill voices resembling the twittering of joyful birds are not heard. From the terraces of the wealthier houses the faint glow of oil lamps descends with the low voices of people.

Alphaeus' sons and Judas walk for a little while without speaking, then Joseph stops and taking Judas' arm he says: « Listen. I realise that you know something that you did not wish to mention in the presence of strangers. But now you must tell me. I am the oldest in the family and it is my right and my duty to know everything. »

« And I came here for the purpose of telling you and thus protect the Master, Mary, your brothers and your reputation. It is something painful to tell and to hear. Very painful to be done. Because it looks like playing the spy. But please understand me properly. It is not so. It is only love and prudence. I know many things, which you know as well. My friends of the Temple told me. And I know that they are dangerous for Jesus and for the good name of the family. I have tried to make the Master understand. But I was not successful. On the contrary, the more I advise Him, the worse He behaves, thus causing people to criticise and hate Him more and more. The reason is that He is so holy that He cannot understand what the world is like. In short, it is sad to see a holy thing perish through the heedlessness of its founder »

« But what is it? Tell us everything. And we will take action. Is that right, Simon? »

« Of course. But it seems impossible to me that He is imprudent and acts against His mission... »

« But if this kind young man, who loves Jesus, says so!? See what

you are like. You are always like that: uncertain, hesitating. You always leave me alone at the crucial moment. The whole family is against me. You have no pity for our reputation and for our poor brother who is ruining Himself! »

« No! He is not ruining Himself! But He is injuring Himself, that's what He is doing. »

« Speak up! » insists Joseph while Simon is perplexedly silent.

« I would speak... But I would like to be certain that you will not make any mention to Jesus... Swear it. »

« We swear it on the holy Veil. Speak up. »

« And you must not relate to your mother, and least of all to your brothers what I am going to tell you. »

« You can be certain of our silence. »

« And will you say nothing to Mary? In order not to grieve Her. It's your duty to see to the peace of that poor Mother, in silence, as I do. »

« We will not say anything to anybody. We swear it. »

« Well listen... Jesus no longer confines Himself to approaching Gentiles, publicans and prostitutes, to offending Pharisees and other important people. But He does things that are absolutely absurd... Just imagine that when in Philistia, He made us go about taking with us a black billy-goat. Now He has a Philistine among His disciples. And before that, the boy He picked up? You have no idea what comments were made. And a few days ago He took a Greek girl, a slave, who had run away from her Roman master. And His speeches are contradictory to our well known wisdom. In short He seems to be mad. And He damages Himself. In Philistia He intruded also into a ceremony of wizards, competing face to face with them. He defeated them, but... scribes and Pharisees hate Him. But what will happen if they happen to hear about such things? You must intervene and stop... »

« That's serious, very serious. But how could we know? We are here... And even now, how will we be able to find out? »

« And yet it is your duty to intervene and stop Him. His Mother is a mother, and She is too good. You must not abandon Him thus. For His own sake and for the sake of the world. Also His continuous driving away demons... It is rumoured that He is assisted by Beelzebub. You can imagine whether that can do Him any good. In any case, what kind of a king will He ever become if the crowds laugh at Him just now or are scandalised? »

« But... does He really do such things? » asks Simon incredulously.

« Ask Him yourself. He will tell You that He does. Because He even boasts about it. »

« You should let us know... »

« I certainly will! When I see something new I will send you word.

But... please, never say a word to anybody! »

« We swore it. When are you leaving? »

« After the Sabbath. There is no reason why I should stay here any longer. I have done my duty. »

« And we thank you for it. Eh! I said that He had changed. And you, brother... you would not believe me... Can you now see whether I was right? » says Joseph of Alphaeus.

« I can hardly believe, it. Judas and James, after all, are not fools. Why have they not told us? If such things are really happening, why have they not taken action? » says Simon of Alphaeus.

« Man, you will not disgrace me by refusing to believe my words! » answers back Judas resentfully.

« No!... but... That's enough. Forgive me if I say: I will believe when I see things myself. »

« All right. You will soon see and then you will have to say to me: "You were right". Well. There is your house. I leave you. God be with you. »

« God be with you, Judas. And... listen. Don't speak to anyone about that. For our reputation... »

« I will be as silent as the grave. Goodbye. »

And he goes away at a good pace. He enters the house serenely and goes up to the terrace where Mary, with Her hands in her lap, is contemplating the sky crowded with stars. In the light of the little lamp that Judas has lit to climb the steps, tears can be seen shining on Mary's cheeks.

« Why are You weeping, Mother? » asks Judas anxiously.

« Because I think that there are more snares in the world than stars in the sky. Snares for My Jesus... » Judas looks at Her attentively and he seems upset. But She concludes kindly: « But I am comforted by the love of His disciples... Love My Jesus... love Him... Do you wish to stay here, Judas? I am going down to My room. Mary of Clopas has already gone to bed after preparing the leaven for tomorrow. »

« Yes. I will remain up here. It is lovely here. »

« Peace be with you, Judas. »

« Peace be with You, Mary. »

264. Instructions to the Apostles at the Beginning of Their Apostolate.

28th August 1945.

Jesus is sitting at the table in the house in Capernaum with all His disciples, which means that Judas has joined his companions after fulfilling his task. It is evening. The light of the fading day enters from the door and the wide open windows through which it is possible to see the purple of sunset change into unreal violet-red,

the borders of which fray crumpling up into a violet-slate that pales into grey. It puts me in mind of a sheet of paper thrown on to a fire: it lights up and as soon as it stops burning, its edges crumple up and become a leaden bluish shade, which fades into an almost white pearly grey.

« It's warm » states Peter, pointing at a huge cloud which tinges the west with those shades. « Warm. But no rain. That's not a cloud, it's fog. Tonight I am going to sleep in the boat, where it is cooler. »

« No. Tonight we are going to the olive-groves. I must speak to you. Judas is now back. It is time for Me to speak to you. I know an airy spot, where we shall be comfortable. Get up and let us go. »

« Is it far? » they ask picking up their mantles.

« No. It is very near. Within a stone's throw by sling from the last house. You may leave your mantles. But take tinder and flint so that we can see our way when coming back. »

They come out of the upstairs room and go downstairs bidding good night to the landlord and his wife who are enjoying the cool air on the terrace. Jesus walks resolutely in the opposite direction from the lake and, after crossing the village, He proceeds for about two or three hundred yards into an olive-grove on the first hillock behind the village. He stops on a projection of earth that because of its position free from obstacles enjoys all the air possible in that sultry night.

« Let us sit down, and pay attention to Me. The hour of evangelization has come. I am about half way through My public life preparing hearts for My Kingdom. It is now time that My apostles also take part in the preparation of this Kingdom. That is what kings do when they decide to conquer a kingdom. First they make investigations and approach people to find out their reaction and win them to the plan they are pursuing. Later they enlarge their preparatory work by means of reliable messengers sent to the country to be conquered. And they send more and more of them until all the geographical and moral details of the whole country are known. After that the king completes his work by proclaiming himself king of that country and being crowned as such. And much blood is shed to achieve that. Because victories always cost blood... »

« We are ready to fight for You and shed our blood » promise the apostles by one consent.

« I will shed no blood but that of the Holy One and of saints. »

« Do You wish to begin Your conquest starting from the Temple, storming it at the hour of the sacrifice?... »

« Let us not stray, My friends. You will be informed of the future in due course. But do not shudder with horror. I assure you that I will not upset the ceremonies by means of a violent irruption. And yet they will be upset and there will be one evening when terror

will prevent the ritual prayer. The terror of sinners. But I shall be in peace that evening. In peace with both My spirit and My body. A total blissful peace... »

Jesus looks at His twelve apostles one by one and it is the same as if He looked at the same page twelve times and read for twelve times the one word written on it: incomprehension. He smiles and continues.

« So I have decided to send you so that you may penetrate further ahead and more widely than I can do by Myself. But for prudential reasons I will ensure that there is a difference between your way of evangelizing and Mine, because I do not want to put you in too difficult situations, which could be too seriously dangerous for your souls and bodies, and also because I do not wish to jeopardise My own work. You are not as yet perfected to the point of being able to approach anyone without being damaged or without damaging, and least of all are you heroic to the extent of defying the world on behalf of the Idea, facing the revenge of the world. So, when you go about preaching Me, do not go among Gentiles and do not enter the towns of Samaritans, but go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. There is so much to be done amongst them, because I solemnly tell you that the crowds that you think are so numerous around Me, are the hundredth part of those who are still waiting for the Messiah in Israel and they do not know Him, neither do they know that He is living amongst them. Take them faith in Me and the knowledge of Me. On your way preach saying, "The Kingdom of Heaven is near". Let that be your basic announcement supporting all your preaching... You have heard Me speak so much of the Kingdom! All you need do is repeat what I told you. But man, to be attracted by and convinced of spiritual truth, needs material kindness, as if he were an eternal boy who will not study a lesson or learn a trade unless he is attracted by a sweet from his mother, or a reward from his school master, or his trade tutor. In order to let you have the means to be believed and sought after, I will grant you the gift of working miracles... »

The apostles jump to their feet, with the exception of James of Alphaeus and John, shouting, protesting, becoming excited, each reacting according to his temperament. Really, the only one strutting about at the idea of working miracles is the Iscariot, who with the foolhardiness of false and selfishly motivated interest exclaims: « It was time that we should do that to have the least authority over the crowds! »

Jesus looks at him but does not say anything. Peter and the Zealot who were saying: « No, Lord! We are not worthy of so much! That is due to saints », contradict Judas, as the Zealot says: « Why do you take the liberty of reproaching the Master, you silly proud man? » and Peter adds: « The least authority? And what do you

want to do more than work miracles? Do you want to become God as well? Have you got the same itch Lucifer had? »

« Silence! » orders Jesus. And He continues: « There is one thing that is even greater than miracles and equally convinces the crowds, but more deeply and durably: a holy life. But you are far from that, and you, Judas, are farther than the rest. But let Me speak because My instruction is a long one.

Go therefore, curing sick people, cleansing lepers, raising bodies and spirits from the dead, because bodies and spirits can be sick, leprous, dead as well. And you are already aware how a miracle is worked: through a life of penance, fervent prayer, sincere desire to glorify the power of God, deep humility, living charity, burning faith, and through hope that no kind of difficulty can upset. I solemnly tell you that everything is possible to those who have such virtues. Demons also will flee before the Name of the Lord pronounced by you, if you have within you what I said. That power is given to you by Me and by our Father. No money can buy it. Only our Will grants it, only a just life keeps it. As it is given to you gratuitously, so gratuitously give it to others, to the needy. Woe betide you if you depreciate the gift of God by using it to fatten your purse. It is not your power, it is the power of God. Make use of it, but do not take possession of it, saying: "It is mine". As it is given to you, so it can be taken away from you. Simon of Jonah a little while ago said to Judas of Simon: "Have you got the same itch as Lucifer had?" He gave a correct definition. To say: "I do what God does because I am like God" is to imitate Lucifer. And his punishment is well known. Equally known is what happened to the two progenitors who in the earthly paradise ate the forbidden fruit, through instigation of the Envious One, who wanted to imprison more unhappy souls in his Hell, besides the rebellious angels already there, but also through their own itch of perfect pride. The only fruit you are allowed to take from what you do, are the souls whom you will conquer for the Lord by means of the miracle and who are to be given to the Lord. That is your money. Nothing else. You will enjoy your treasure in the next life.

Go without riches. Do not take with you gold, or silver, or money in your purses, or travelling-bag with two or more tunics or spare shoes, or pilgrim's staff, or weapons. Because for the time being your apostolic visits will be short ones and every Sabbath eve we shall meet and you will be able to change your sweated garments without having to take spare ones with you. No staff is required because it is more pleasant to walk without, and what is useful on hills and plains is different from what is useful in deserts and on high mountains. No weapon is needed. Weapons are useful to men who do not know what is holy poverty or divine forgiveness. You have no treasures to protect and defend from robbers.

The only robber you must fear is Satan. And he is defeated by perseverance and prayer, not by swords and daggers. Forgive those who offend you. If anyone should rob you of your mantle, give him also your tunic. If you should remain completely nude because of your mildness and detachment from riches, you will not scandalise the angels of the Lord or the infinite chastity of God, because your charity would clothe your nude body with gold and your mildness would adorn you like a sash, while your forgiveness towards the robber would give you a royal mantle and crown. You would therefore be better dressed than a king: not with corruptible clothes, but with imperishable material.

Do not worry about your food. You will always have what is appropriate for your condition and your ministry, because a worker is always worthy of the food that is offered to him. And if men should not provide for the worker, God will. I have already proved to you that to live and preach it is not necessary to have your stomachs full of food. That is useful to unclean animals whose purpose in life is to grow fat and then be slaughtered to fatten men. But you must fatten your own souls and the souls of other people with the food of wisdom. And Wisdom is revealed to minds not made dull by guzzling and to hearts nourished with supernatural food. You have never been so eloquent as after the retreat on the mountain. And then you ate only what was necessary to survive. And yet at the end of the retreat you were as strong and cheerful as you have never been before. Is that not true?

Whatever town or place you enter, find out who is deserving of receiving you. Not because you are Simon, or Judas, or Bartholomew, or James, or John, and so on. But because you are the messengers of the Lord. Even if you had been the dregs of society, or murderers, thieves, publicans, but now you were repentant and at My service, you would deserve respect because you are My messengers. I will say even more. I say: Woe betide you if outwardly you look like My messengers, whilst inwardly you are abject servants of Satan. Woe betide you! Hell would be too little compared to what your deceit deserves. But even if you were messengers of the Lord publicly, and at the same time the dregs of society, or publicans, thieves, murderers occultly and people in their hearts suspected or were almost certain of that, you would still be entitled to honour and respect, because you are My messengers. The eye of man must see beyond the means, and see the messenger and the final purpose, that is God and His work beyond the too often faulty means. Only in the case of grave sin, injuring the faith in hearts, I for the time being, My successors in future, will see that the bad limb is cut off. Because it is not lawful that the souls of believers should be lost through a demon priest. It will never be lawful, in order to hide the wounds affecting the apostolic body, to allow gangrenous

limbs to survive in it, as their repugnant aspect drives people away and their demoniac stench is poisonous.

So you will find out which is the most righteously living family, where women know how to live in seclusion and morals are chaste. And you will enter that house and live there until you leave the place. Do not imitate drones, which after sucking a flower pass on to a more nourishing one. Whether you arrive among people with a splendid house and rich table, or you happen to go to a humble family, rich only in virtue, stay where you are. Never seek what is "better" for the perishable body. On the contrary, always give it what is worse, keeping all the rights for the spirit. And whenever possible, give your preference to the hospitality of the poor: I tell you because it is better to do so. Do so in order not to mortify them and in memory of Me, as I am and will remain poor and I boast of being poor, and also because very often the poor are better than the rich. You will always find poor people who are just, but only rarely you will find a rich man without any fault. You have no excuse in saying: "I found goodness only amongst the rich" in order to justify your keen desire for welfare.

When entering a house greet its inhabitants with My salutation, which is the kindest there is. Say: "Peace be with you. Let peace be in this house, or Let peace come to this house". In fact, as messengers of Jesus and of the Gospel, you take peace with you and your going to one place is to make peace come to it. If the house is worthy of it, peace will come and remain in it; if it is not worthy of it, your peace will come back to you. So mind to be peaceful yourselves, in order to have God as your Father. A father always helps. And with the help of God you will do everything and everything well.

It may be, nay it will certainly happen, that a town or house will not receive you or will not listen to your words, but will drive you away or ridicule you or will chase you throwing stones at you as boring prophets. In such cases you must be more than ever peaceful, humble and mild, having acquired such virtues as a habit of life. Otherwise you will be overwhelmed by anger and you will commit sin, scandalising and increasing the incredulity of those you wish to convert. If instead you peacefully accept the insult of being driven away, derided, chased, you will convert people by means of the most beautiful sermon: the silent sermon of true virtue. One day you will find on your way the enemies of today and they will say to you: "We have been looking for you because your behaviour has convinced us of the Truth that you announce. Please forgive us and accept us as your disciples. Because we did not know who you were, but now we know that you are saints. And if you are saints, you must be the messengers of a saint, and we now believe in Him". But when leaving the town or the house

where you were not received, shake the dust off your sandals, so that the pride and harshness of that place may not stick even to your soles. I solemnly tell you: "On Doomsday Sodom and Gomorrah will be dealt with less severely".

Now: I am sending you like sheep among wolves. Be, therefore, as cunning as serpents and yet as harmless as doves. Because you are aware how the world, in which really there are more wolves than sheep, treats Me also, and I am the Christ. I can defend Myself by My power and I will do so until the hour of the temporary triumph of the world comes. But you do not possess that power and you need greater prudence and simplicity. Thus greater sagacity as well, to avoid being scourged and imprisoned for the time being.

In actual fact, notwithstanding your statement that you are willing to shed your blood on My behalf, you are not capable at present of putting up with an ironic or angry glance. But the time will come when you will be as strong as heroes against persecutions, even stronger than heroes and your heroism, which the world cannot conceive or explain, will be called: "madness". No, it will not be madness! It will be the identification, through love, of man with the Man-God, and you will be able to do what I have already done. To understand this heroism it will be necessary to see it, study it and judge it from a heavenly level. Because it is something supernatural that is beyond all the limitations of human nature. Kings, the kings of the spirit will be My heroes, for ever kings and heroes...

In those days they will arrest you laying hands on you, they will drag you before lawcourts, garrison commanders and kings, to judge and condemn you for the great sin, in the eyes of the world, of being the servants of God, the ministers and guardians of Good, the masters of virtue. And for that same reason you will be scourged and punished in many ways and even killed. And you will give testimony of Me to kings, garrison commanders, nations, confessing with your blood that you love Christ, the True Son of the True God.

When you are in their hands do not worry about what you have to reply and what you have to say. Do not grieve then for anybody, but for the judge and accusers led astray by Satan to the extent of becoming blind to the Truth. You will be given the words to be spoken at the time. Your Father will put them on your lips because it is not you who will be speaking to convert people to your Faith and profess the Truth, but it will be the Spirit of the Father Who will speak in you.

Brother will then betray brother to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against their parents and have them put to death. Do not be shocked or scandalised! Tell Me: according

to you is it a greater crime to kill a father, a son, a brother, or God Himself? »

« God cannot be killed » replies sharply Judas Iscariot.

« That is true. He is an invincible Spirit » confirms Bartholomew. And the others, although they do not speak, are all of the same opinion.

« I am God and I am Flesh » says Jesus calmly.

« No one is thinking of killing You » retorts the Iscariot.

« Please, reply to My question. »

« Of course, it is a graver crime to kill God! »

« Well: God will be killed by man, in the Flesh of the Man-God and in the soul of the murderers of the Man-God. So, as they will go so far as committing that crime, without the murderers being horrified at it, so the crimes of fathers, brothers and children, against children, brothers and fathers will be committed.

You will be hated by all men on account of My Name. But he who stands firm until the end will be saved. And when they persecute you in one town, take refuge in the next one. Not out of cowardice, but to give time to the new-born Church of Christ to reach the age, not of a weak incapable unweaned child, but an older age in which it will be able to face life and death without being afraid of Death. Let those flee who are advised by the Spirit to flee. As I fled when a child. Truly, all the vicissitudes of My earthly life will be repeated in My Church. All of them. From the mystery of its formation to the humbleness of the early times, to the perturbation and snares brought about by cruel people, to the necessity of fleeing to continue to live, from poverty and unremitting work, to many more events that I am living now, that I will suffer later, before reaching My eternal triumph. On the other hand let those remain who are advised by the Spirit to remain. Because even if they are killed they will live and be useful to the Church. Because what the Spirit of God advises, is always good.

I solemnly tell you that you and your successors will not have covered all the roads and all the towns in Israel before the Son of Man comes. Because on account of its dreadful sin Israel will be scattered like chaff by a whirlwind, and will be spread all over the earth and centuries and millennia will go by before it is gathered again on the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite. Every time Israel will try to gather together, before the predetermined hour, it will be caught once again in the whirlwind and scattered, because Israel will have to weep for its sin for as many centuries as the drops of blood that will flow from the veins of the Lamb of God sacrificed for the sins of the world. And My Church, which will be struck by Israel in Me and in My apostles and disciples, will have to open its motherly arms and endeavour to gather Israel under its mantle, as a brooding hen does with its stray chickens.

When the whole of Israel will be under the mantle of the Church of Christ, then I will come. But that applies to the future. Let us talk of the present.

Remember that the disciple is not superior to his Teacher, nor the slave to his Master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his Teacher, which is already an undeserved honour; and for a slave to be like his Master, and it is supernatural bounty to grant you that. If they have called the Landlord Beelzebub, what will they not say of the household? And will the slaves be able to rebel, if the Landlord does not rebel, does not hate or curse, but calm in his justice he continues to work, postponing judgement to another moment, when he sees them obstinate in Evil, after he has tried everything to persuade them? No. The slaves will not be able to do what the Master does not do, but they can imitate Him, considering that they are sinners, whereas He is without sin. So, be not afraid of those who will call you "demons". The truth will be known one day and then it will be clear who was the "demon", whether it was you or they.

There is nothing hidden that is not to be revealed, and nothing secret that is not to be known. What I now say to you in the dark and secretly, because the world is not worthy of knowing all the words of the Word, it is not yet worthy of that and it is not yet time to tell also those who are unworthy, when the time comes when everything is to be known, tell in daylight, proclaim from housetops what I now whisper more to your souls than to your ears. Because the world then will have been baptised in Blood and there will be such a banner against Satan that the world, if it wishes so, will be able to understand the secrets of God, while Satan will not be able to injure anyone but those who wish to be bitten by him and prefer his bite to My kiss. But most of the world will not wish to understand. Only a minority will be willing to know everything in order to follow all My Doctrine. It does not matter. As it is not possible to separate that minority from the unjust mass, preach My Doctrine as well from housetops, preach it from mountain tops, on the boundless seas, in the bowels of the earth. Even if men will not listen to it, birds and winds, fish and waves will pick up the divine words and the bowels of the earth will keep their echo to repeat it to underground springs, minerals and metals, and they will all rejoice over them, because they have been created by God as well to be a stool for My feet and joy to My heart.

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul, fear him rather who can lose your soul and unite it on Doomsday to your body raised from death, to throw both into the fire of Hell. Be not afraid. Are two sparrows not sold for a penny? And yet, if your Father does not allow it, not one of them will fall to the

ground notwithstanding all the snares of man. So be not afraid. The Father knows you. Every hair on your heads is known to Him. And you are worth more than many sparrows! And I tell you that if anyone acknowledges Me in the presence of men, I will acknowledge him in the presence of My Father Who is in Heaven. But the one who disowns Me in the presence of men, I will disown in the presence of My Father. To acknowledge means to follow and practice; to disown means to abandon My way out of cowardice, or treble concupiscence, or petty calculation, or attachment to a relative who opposes Me. Because that will happen.

Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth and for the earth. My Peace is above the selfish peace treaties for every day's wangle. It is not peace I have come to bring, but a sword. A sharp sword to cut the lianas detaining people in mud and open the way to supernatural flights. I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. Because I am He Who reigns and has every right on His subjects. Because no one is greater than I am with regard to rights on affections. Because all love is centralised in Me and becomes thus sublime: I am Father, Mother, Husband, Brother, Friend, and I love you as such and as such I am to be loved. And when I say: "I want", no tie can resist and that soul is Mine. I created it with the Father, I save it by Myself, so I am entitled to have it.

The real enemies of man are men, besides demons; and the enemies of the new man, of the Christian, will be his relatives at home, with their complaints, their threats or their entreaties. But from now on he who prefers his father and mother to Me, is not worthy of Me; he who prefers his son or daughter to Me, is not worthy of Me. He who does not take his cross daily, complex as it is, made of resignation, renunciation, obedience, heroism, sorrow, illness, mourning, made of anything that reveals the will of God or a test for man, and does not follow with it in My footsteps, is not worthy of Me. Anyone who appraises earthly life more than the spiritual one, will lose true Life. Anyone who loses his earthly life for My sake, will find an eternal blissful one.

Anyone who receives you, receives Me. He who receives Me receives Him Who sent Me. Anyone who receives a prophet as a prophet, will receive a reward proportionate to the charity offered to the prophet, he who receives a just man because he is just, will receive a prize proportionate to the just man. The reason is that he who acknowledges a prophet as such, must be a prophet himself, that is, very holy because he is held in the arms of the Spirit of God; and who will acknowledge a just man as such proves that he is just as well, because like souls know one another. Thus, each will be given a reward according to justice.

And he who has given a glass of pure water to one of My servants, even if he were the least one - and are servants of Jesus all those who preach Him through their holy lives, and may be kings or beggars, wise men or people who know nothing, old people and babies, because all ages and all classes can be My disciples - he who has given a disciple of Mine even a glass of water in My name and because he is My disciple, I solemnly tell you that he will not go without a reward.

I have finished. Now let us pray and go home. You will leave at dawn as follows: Simon of Jonah with John, Simon Zealot with Judas Iscariot, Andrew with Matthew, James of Alphaeus with Thomas, Philip with James of Zebedee, My brother Judas with Bartholomew. That is for this week. I will let you have new instructions later. Let us pray. »

And they pray in loud voices...

265. John the Baptist Sends His Disciples to Ask Jesus whether He Is the Messiah.

29th August 1945.

Jesus is alone with Matthew, who, having hurt his foot, has not been able to go and preach with the others. Invalids and people anxious to hear the doctrine of the Gospel have crowded the terrace and the free area of the kitchen garden, to hear Jesus and receive assistance.

Jesus ends speaking saying: « We have meditated together on Solomon's great sentence: "The greatest strength lies in the abundance of justice" and I now exhort you to have such abundance, because it is money to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Be with My peace and may God be with you. » He then turns to the poor and the sick - in many cases the same person is both - and He kindly listens to what they tell Him, He assists with money, advises with words, cures them by imposing His hands and by His words. Matthew, who is beside Him, sees to the alms in money.

Jesus is attentively listening to a poor widow who weeping informs Him of the sudden death of her husband, a carpenter, at his work bench, only a few days previously: « I ran here looking for You, and all the relatives of my dead husband accused me of being unbecoming and hard-hearted and they now curse me. But I came because I know that You can raise people from death and I also know that if I had found You, my husband would have risen again. But You were not here... He has now been buried two weeks... and I am here with five children... Our relatives hate me and do not help me. I have some olive-tree and vines. They are only a few, but they would give me bread for the winter months, if I could only keep them until harvest time. But I have no money, because my

husband was ill for some time and worked very little and he ate and drank even too much to support himself. He used to say that wine did him good... but it brought about double trouble as it killed him and used up all our savings, which were already scanty because of his work. He was just finishing a cart and a chest and he had orders for two beds, some tables and shelves. But now... They are not finished and my boy is not yet eight years old. I shall lose the money... I shall have to sell the tools and the wood. I cannot sell the cart and the chest as such, although they are almost finished, and I shall have to give them as firewood. And the money will not be enough, because I, my old mother, who is also ill, and five children are seven all together... I will sell the vineyard and the olive-trees... But You know what the world is like... They fleece you when they know that you are in need. Tell me, what shall I do? I wanted to keep the bench and tools for my son, who is already capable of doing some work with wood... and I wanted to keep the land to live on and as a dowry for my daughters... »

Jesus is listening to all that when the confusion of the crowd warns Him that something is happening. He turns round and sees three men who are elbowing their way through the crowd. He turns round to the widow again to ask her: « Where do you live? »

« At Korazim, near the road to the Warm fountain. A low house between two fig trees. »

« Very well. I will come and finish the cart and the chest and you will sell them to those who ordered them. Wait for Me tomorrow at dawn. »

« What? You are going to work for me! » the woman is choking with amazement.

« I will resume My work and bring you peace. And in the meantime I will give a lesson on charity to the heartless people of Korazim. »

« Yes! They have no hearts! If only old Isaac were there! He would not have let me die of starvation. But he has gone back to Abraham... »

« Do not weep. Do not worry. Here is what you need for today, I will come tomorrow. Go in peace. »

The woman stoops to kiss His tunic and she is somewhat relieved when she goes away.

« Three times holy Master, may I greet You? » asks one of the three men who have just arrived and have stopped respectfully behind Jesus, waiting for Him to dismiss the woman, and have thus heard Jesus' promise. The man who has greeted Jesus is Manaen.

Jesus turns around and smiling says: « Peace to you, Manaen! So you have remembered Me? »

« Always, Master. And I had planned to come to see You in

Lazarus' house or at the Garden of Gethsemane and stay with You. But the Baptist was captured before Passover. He was recaptured by treachery and I was afraid that Herodias might order the holy man to be killed during the absence of Herod, who had come to Jerusalem for Passover. She refused to go to Zion for the Festivity saying that she was not well. It is true, she was ill... of hatred and lust... I was at Machaerus to control the situation and check the wicked woman who is capable of killing with her own hand... And she does not do so because she is afraid of losing Herod's favour who... either because he is afraid or he is convinced, defends John, confining his action to keeping him in prison. Herodias has now escaped from the oppressing heat at Machaerus and she has gone to a castle of her own property. So I came with these friends of mine and disciples of John. He sent them that they may ask You some questions. And I joined them. »

When the crowd hear the man speak of Herod and they understand who is speaking, they press curiously round the little group of Jesus and the three men.

« What did you want to ask Me? » asks Jesus after exchanging greetings with the two austere personages.

« You had better speak, Manaen, since you know everything and you are more friendly » says one of the two.

« Well, Master. You must be indulgent if out of excess of love these disciples look suspiciously at Him Whom they believe to be the antagonist or the supplanter of their master. Your disciples do so as well as John's. It is an understandable jealousy that proves all the love of the disciples for their masters... I am... impartial, and these who are with me can confirm it, because I know You and John and I love you both with justice, so much so that, although I love You for what You are, I preferred to sacrifice myself and stay with John, because I respect him as well for what he is, and at the present moment, because he is in greater danger than You are. Now, because of their love, which the Pharisees are instigating with their hatred, they have come to doubt that You are the Messiah. And they told John thinking that they would fill him with joy by saying: "As far as we are concerned you are the Messiah. There cannot be anyone holier than you are". But John reproached them calling them first of all blasphemers, and then, after rebuking them, he more kindly explained the various facts that prove that You are the true Messiah. Finally, when he realised that they were still not convinced, he took two of them, these ones here, and said: "Go to Him and say to Him in my name: 'Are You the One Who is to come, or shall we wait for another one?' ". He did not send the shepherd disciples, because they believe and it would have been of no avail to send them. But he chose amongst those who are doubtful to let them approach You,

so that their word may dispel the doubts of their companions. I brought them here so that I could see You as well. That is all. I beg You to dispel their doubt. »

« But do not think that we are hostile to You, Master! Manaen's words might make You think so. We... We have known the Baptist for years and we have always seen him to be holy, penitent, inspired. You... we know You only through the words of other people. And You know what the words of man are worth... They build up and destroy fame and praises in the contrast between those who exalt and those who demolish, as a cloud is formed and dissolved by contrasting winds. »

« I know. I read in your souls and your eyes can read the truth in what surrounds you, just as your ears heard My conversation with the widow. That should be enough to convince you. But I say to you: look at those who are around Me. There are no rich, or jolly or scandalous people here; but only poor, sick, honest Israelites who are anxious to know the Word of God. Nothing else. This man, that one, this woman, and that little girl, that old man, were ill when they came here, and now they are sound and healthy. Ask them and they will tell you what was wrong with them, how I cured them and how they are feeling now. Do so. And in the meantime I will speak to Manaen » and Jesus is about to withdraw.

« No, Master. We do not doubt Your words. Just give us a reply to take back to John, that he may know that we came here, and on the strength of it he may convince our companions. »

« Go and report this to John: "The deaf hear; this girl was deaf and dumb. The dumb speak; and that man was dumb since his birth. The blind see". Man, come here. Tell these men what was wrong with you » says Jesus taking a miraculously cured man by the arm.

The man says: « I am a mason and a pail full of quicklime fell on my face. It burnt my eyes. I was four years in the dark. The Messiah wetted my dry eyes with His saliva and they have become fresher than when I was twenty years old. May He be blessed for it. »

Jesus resumes: « And with the blind, the deaf, the dumb who have been cured, the lame walk straight, the cripple run. Over there is that old man, a short while ago he was contracted, now he is as straight as a palm tree in the desert, and as agile as a gazelle. The most serious diseases are cured. Woman, what was the matter with you? »

« I had trouble with my breast for giving too much milk to voracious mouths. And my illness ate not only into my breast but also into my life. Look now » and opening her dress she shows her wholesome breasts and adds: « They were one big sore, as you can see from my tunic which is still soaked with pus. I am now going

home to put on a clean dress and I feel strong and am happy. Whilst only yesterday I was dying and I was brought here by compassionate friends, and I was so unhappy... because of my children who were about to be left motherless. Eternal praise to the Saviour! »

« Do you hear? And you can ask the head of the synagogue of this town with regard to the resurrection of his daughter, and on your way back to Jericho, go to Naim, and ask for the young man who rose again in the presence of the whole town when they were going to put him into his grave. You will thus be able to report that dead people rise again from the dead. You will be able to find out in many places in Israel that a large number of lepers have been cured, but if you wish to go to Sicaminon you will find many among the disciples, if you look for them. Tell John, therefore, that lepers are cleansed. And tell him, as you can see, that the Gospel is announced to the poor. And blessed are those who will not be scandalised in Me. Tell John that. And tell him that I bless him with all My love. »

« Thank You, Master. Bless us as well, before our departure. »

« You cannot leave in this warm hour. Stay here, therefore, as My guests, until evening. You will live for one day the life of this Master Who is not John, but loves John because He knows who he is. Come into the house. It is cool and it will restore you. Goodbye, My listeners. Peace be with you » and after dismissing the crowd He enters the house with the three guests...

... What they have said to one another during those sweltering hours I do not know. What I now see is the preparation for the departure to Jericho of the two disciples. Manaen is apparently staying, because they have not brought his horse with the two strong donkeys to the opening in the wall of the yard. The two messengers of John, after bowing several times to the Master and Manaen, mount their donkeys and look back saluting until they disappear round a corner.

Many people of Capernaum have gathered together to see the departure because the news of the visit of John's disciples and of Jesus' reply to them had spread through the village and I think it reached nearby towns as well. I see people from Bethsaida and Korazim, who introduced themselves to John's messengers, asking after him and to be remembered to him - they are perhaps ex-disciples of the Baptist - who are now chatting together with the people of Capernaum, making their comments. Jesus is about to enter the house while speaking to Manaen who is beside Him. But people press round Him, anxious to see Herod's foster-brother and his respectful manners to Jesus, and to speak to Jesus at the same time.

There is also Jairus, the head of the synagogue. But, thanks be to God, there are no Pharisees. And it is Jairus who remarks: « John

will be glad! You have sent him not only an exhaustive answer, but, by keeping them here, You have also been able to teach them and show them a miracle. »

« And it was not a little one, either! » exclaims a man.

« I deliberately brought my little daughter here today, that they might see her. She has never been so well and it is a great joy for her to come to the Master. And did you hear her reply? "I do not remember what death is. But I remember that an angel called me and he took me through a brighter and brighter light at the end of which there was Jesus. And I do not see him now as I saw Him then with my soul that was coming back to me. You and I now see the Man. But my soul saw the God Who is closed in the Man". And how good she has become since then! She was good. But now she is a real angel. Ah! they can say what they like, but as far as I am concerned, no one is holy but You! »

« But John is holy, too » says a man of Bethsaida.

« Yes. But he is too severe. »

« Not more with others than he is with himself. »

« But he does not work miracles and they say that he fasts to be like a magician. »

« And yet he is a saint » and the petty quarrel spreads among the crowd.

Jesus raises His hand stretching it out in His usual gesture asking for silence and attention when He wants to speak. The crowd become silent at once.

Jesus says: « John is holy and great. Do not consider his way of behaving or the lack of miracles. I solemnly tell you: "He is a great one in the Kingdom of God". He will appear there in all his grandeur.

Many complain that he was and still is so severe as to appear rude. I tell you solemnly that he has worked like a giant to prepare the ways of the Lord. And he who works like that has no time for softness. Did he not repeat, when he was along the Jordan, the words of Isaiah, by which he and the Messiah are prophesied: "Let every valley be filled in, every mountain and hill be laid low, let every cliff become a plain, and the ridges a valley" in order to prepare the ways to the Lord and King? He really did more than the whole of Israel to prepare My way! And he who has to lay mountains low and fill in valleys and straighten roads and make ridges become plains can but work rudely, because he was the Precursor and he preceded Me by only a few months and everything was to be done before the Sun was high on the day of Redemption. And this is the time, the Sun is rising to shine on Zion and thence on the whole world. John has prepared the way as he had to do.

What did you go to see in the wilderness? A reed swaying in

every direction in the breeze? But what did you see? A man clad in fine soft clothes? But those live in the palaces of kings, wearing fine clothes and respected by many servants and courtiers, and they are courtiers themselves of a poor man. There is one here. Ask him whether he is not disgusted with the life at Court and whether he admires the solitary rugged rock that is struck in vain by thunderbolts and scourged by hailstones, and against which silly winds struggle endeavouring to demolish it, while it stands firm, thrusting its whole being towards the sky, with its top proclaiming the joy of altitude, straight as it is and sharp like a rising flame. That is John. That is how Manaen sees him, because he has understood the truth of life and death and he can see grandeur where it really is, even if it be hidden under a wild appearance.

And what did you see in John when you went to see him? A prophet? A saint? I will tell you: He is more than a prophet. He is more than many saints, because he is the one of whom it is written: "Look, I- am going to send my angel to prepare Your way before You". Angel. Consider this. You know that the angels are pure spirits created by God to His spiritual likeness and placed as a link between man, the perfection of the visible and material creation, and God, the Perfection of Heaven and Earth, Creator of the spiritual Kingdom and of the animal kingdom. Even in the holiest man there is always flesh and blood forming an abyss between him and God. And the abyss subsides under the weight of sin that weighs down also what is spiritual in man. So God created the angels, creatures reaching the summit of the creation scale, just as minerals lie at its base, minerals being the dust forming the earth and inorganic materials in general. They are clear mirrors of the Thought of God, willing flames operating out of love, ready to understand, quick in acting, free in willing as we are, but their entirely holy will ignores the rebellion and incentive of sin. That is what the angels adoring God are, His messengers to men, our protectors, who grant us the Light that shines on them and the Fire that they gather worshipping.

John is called "angel" by the prophetic word. And I say to you: "Of all the children born of women, a greater one than John the Baptist has never been seen". Yet the least in the Kingdom of Heaven will be greater than John-man. Because one of the Kingdom of Heaven is a son of God and not of woman. Endeavour therefore to become citizens of the Kingdom.

What are you asking one another? »

« We were saying: "But will John be in the Kingdom? And how will he be there?" »

« He is already in the Kingdom in his spirit and he will be there after his death as one of the most splendid suns of the eternal Jerusalem. And that because of the Grace that is in him without

any flaw and through his own will. Because he was and is violent also against himself for a holy purpose. From the Baptist onwards the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are capable of conquering it through strength opposed to Evil, and the violent will conquer it. Because now it is known what is to be done and everything has been given for such conquest. It is no longer the time when the Law and the Prophets only spoke. They spoke down to the time of John. Now the Word of God speaks and He does not hide an iota of what is to be known for this conquest. Thus, if you believe in Me you must see him as the Elijah who is to come. If anyone has ears to hear, let him listen. What description can I find for this generation? It is like children shouting to their companions as they sit in the market place: "We have played the pipes for you and you would not dance, we sang dirges and you would not weep". For John came and he neither ate nor drank and this generation says: "He can do that because the demon assists him". The Son of man came, eating and drinking and they say: "Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of publicans and sinners". Thus her children do justice to Wisdom! I tell you solemnly that only children are capable of discerning the truth, because there is no malice in them. »

« You are right, Master » says the head of the synagogue. « That is why my daughter, who is still without malice, can see You as we are not able to see You. And yet this town and the neighbouring ones are overflowing with Your power, wisdom and kindness, and, I must admit it, they are making progress only in wickedness towards You. They will not mend their ways. And the good You do them ferments into hatred against You. »

« What are you saying, Jairus? You are calumniating us. We are here because we are faithful to the Christ » says one from Bethsaida.

« Yes. We are. But how many are we? Less than one hundred out of three towns that ought to be at Jesus' feet. Of those who are absent, I am talking of the men, half are hostile, a quarter are indifferent, I will grant that the rest cannot come. Is that not a sin in the eyes of God? And will such hatred and obstinacy in evil not be punished? Speak, Master, because You know, and if You are silent it is out of kindness, not because You do not know. You are patient, and that is mistaken for ignorance and weakness. Speak, therefore and may Your words stir at least those who are indifferent, as the wicked will not repent, but they become more and more wicked. »

« Yes, it is a sin. And it will be punished. Because the gift of God must never be despised or used to do wrong. Woe betide you, Korazim, woe betide you, Bethsaida, who misuse the gifts of God. If the miracles worked in you had taken place in Tyre and Sidon,

their inhabitants would have done penance and come to Me a long time ago wearing sackcloths and sprinkled with ashes. I therefore say that Tyre and Sidon will be dealt with more mercifully than you will on Doomsday. And you, Capernaum, do you think that You will be exalted to Heaven only because you gave Me hospitality? You will descend to hell. Because if the miracles I gave you had been worked in Sodom, it would still be flourishing, as it would have believed in Me and turned. Therefore greater mercifulness will be shown to Sodom on the Day of Judgement, because they did not know the Saviour and His word, and thus their sin is not so grave, than will be shown to you as you knew the Messiah and heard His word but you did not mend your ways. But, since God is just, those of Capernaum, Bethsaida and Korazim who believed and are becoming holy obeying My word, will be treated with great mercifulness. Because it is not fair for the just to be involved in the ruin of sinners. With regard to your daughter, Jairus, and yours, Simon, and your boy Zacharias, and your grandchildren, Benjamin, I tell you that they already see God, because they are without malice. And you can see how their faith is pure and active, joined to celestial wisdom and charitable yearning, which adults do not possess. »

And Jesus, looking at the sky, which is becoming dark at dusk, exclaims: « I thank You, Father of Heaven and Earth, because You have concealed these things from wise and learned people and You have disclosed them to the humble. Because that is what pleases You. Everything has been trusted to Me by My Father, and nobody knows Him but the Son and those to whom the Son has revealed it. And I have revealed it to the little ones, to the humble, the pure, because God gives Himself to them, and the truth descends like seed on free soil and the Father pours His light on it that it may take root and grow. Truly, the Father prepares these souls of children by age or children by will, that they may know the truth and I may rejoice in their faith. »

266. Jesus Works as a Carpenter at Korazim.

31st August 1945.

Jesus is working diligently in a carpenter's workshop. He is finishing a wheel. A delicate sad child helps Him handing this or that tool to Him. Manaen, although an idle witness, admires Him sitting on a bench near a wall.

Jesus has taken off His beautiful linen tunic and has put on a dark one, which is obviously not His own as it reaches only half way down His shins. It is an overall, clean although patched, which probably belonged to the deceased carpenter.

Jesus encourages the boy with smiles and kind words, teaching

him what he must do to prepare the glue properly and polish the sides of the chest.

« It did not take You long to finish it, Master » says Manaen standing up and running a finger on the mouldings of the finished chest that the boy is polishing with a fluid.

« It was almost finished!... »

« I wish I had this work of Yours. But the buyer has already come and he seems to have acquired some rights... You have disappointed him. He was hoping to be able to take everything to make up for the little money he had lent. Now he has to take his articles and nothing else. If he were one who believed in You... they would be of infinite value to him. But did You hear?... »

« Leave him. On the other hand there is some wood here, and the woman will be happy to make use of it and have some profit. Give an order for a chest and I will make it for you... »

« Really, Master? Do you intend to go on working? »

« Until there is no more wood left. I am a conscientious worker » He says smiling more frankly.

« A chest made by You! Oh! What a relic! But what shall I put in it? »

« Anything you like, Manaen. It will only be a chest. »

« But made by You! »

« So? The Father also made man, He made all men. And what did man put in himself, what do men put in themselves? » Jesus speaks while working, moving about looking for the necessary tools, tightening vices, drilling, planing, turning, according to what is needed.

« We have put sins in ourselves. That's true. »

« See! And you may rest assured that man created by God is worth much more than a chest made by Me. Never mix up objects and actions. Of My chest just make a relic for your soul. »

« That is? »

« Give your spirit the teaching you get from what I do. »

« Your charity, humility, activity, then... These virtues, is that right? »

« Yes. And do likewise yourself in future. »

« Yes, Master. But will You make me a chest? »

« Yes, I will. But since you still consider it a relic, I will make you pay for it as such. Thus they will be able to say that at least once I have been greedy for money... But you know for whom the money is... For these little orphans... »

« Ask me whatever You want. I will give it to You. At least it will justify my idling while You, the Son of God, are working. »

« Agreed: "With sweat on your brow, you shall eat your bread". »

« But that was said for the guilty man. Not for You! »

« Oh! One day I shall be the Guilty One and I shall have on Me all

the sins of the world. I will take them away with Me, on My first departure. »

« And do You think that the world will not sin any more? »

« It should not. But it will always sin. That is why the burden I shall have on Me will be such as to break My heart. Because I will have to bear the sins committed from the time of Adam down to that hour, and those from that hour until the end of the world. I will expiate everything on behalf of man. »

« And yet man will not understand You and will not love You... Do You think that Korazim will turn to You because of this holy silent lesson You are giving by this work You are doing to help a family? »

« No, they will not. They will say: "He preferred to work to kill the time and keep the money for Himself ". I had no more money. I had given it all. I always give everything I have, to the last little coin, and I have worked to give the money away. »

« And what about food for Yourself and Matthew? »

« God would have provided it. »

« But You gave us to eat. »

« Of course. »

« How did You do that? »

« Ask the landlord. »

« I will, as soon as we go back to Capernaum. »

Jesus smiles mildly into His fair beard.

In the silence that follows one can hear only the squeaking of the vice tightened on two pieces of a wheel.

Then Manaen asks: « What are You thinking of doing before the Sabbath? »

« I will go to Capernaum and wait for the apostles. We decided to meet every Sabbath eve and spend the Sabbath all together. Then I will give them instructions, and if Matthew is well there will be six couples going out to evangelize. If not... Do you wish to go with them? »

« I would rather stay with You, Master... But may I give You a piece of advice? »

« Tell Me. I will accept it if it is just. »

« Never be all by Yourself. You have many enemies, Master. »

« I know. But do you think that the apostles would be of much help, in case of danger? »

« They love You, I think. »

« Of course. But that would not help. If My enemies are thinking of capturing Me, they would come with greater forces than the apostles'. »

« It does not matter. Do not be alone. »

« In two weeks' time many disciples will join Me. I am going to prepare them to send them to evangelize as well. I will no longer

be alone. Do not worry. »

While they are talking thus, many curious people of Korazim come to eye them and then go away without speaking.

« They are astonished seeing You work. »

« Yes. But they are not so humble as to say: "That is how He teaches us". The best ones I had here are with the disciples, with the exception of an old man who died. It does not matter. A lesson is always a lesson. »

« What will the apostles say when they know you have been working? »

« They are eleven, because Matthew has already said what he thinks. There will be eleven different opinions. And most of them will oppose Me. But it will help Me to teach them. »

« Will You let me attend the lesson? »

« If you wish to stay... »

« But I am a disciple, they are apostles. »

« What is good for apostles will be good also for a disciple. »

« They may resent being reminded what justice is, in my presence. »

« It will do their humility good. Stay, Manaen. I keep you willingly with Me. »

« And I remain willing with You. »

The woman shows herself and says: « Your meal is ready, Master. But You are working too much... »

« I am earning My bread, woman. And... Here is another customer. He wants a chest as well. And he will pay a good price for it. The place where you keep the wood will be empty » says Jesus taking off the worn out apron He had on, and going out of the room to wash Himself in a basin the woman brought Him into the kitchen garden.

And with one of the uncertain smiles that reappear after a long period of deep sorrow, she says: « The place for the wood empty, the house full of Your presence and my heart in peace. I am no longer afraid of tomorrow, Master. And You... be not afraid that we may ever forget You. »

They enter the kitchen and it all ends.

267. Jesus Speaks of Love.

1st September 1945.

Jesus with Manaen beside Him comes out of the widow's house saying: « Peace to you and to your family. We will meet again after the Sabbath. Goodbye, little Joseph. You can play and rest tomorrow, and then you will help Me again. Why are you weeping? »

« I am afraid that You will not come back again... »

« I always speak the truth. But are you so sorry that I am going

away? »

The boy nods assent.

Jesus caresses him saying: « A day will soon pass. You will be with your mother and brothers tomorrow. And I will be with My apostles and I will be speaking to them. During the past days I spoke to you to teach you how to work, I am now going to them to teach them how to preach and to be good. You would not enjoy yourself with Me, the only boy among so many men. »

« Oh! I would enjoy myself because I would be with You. »

« I see, woman! Your son is like many, and they are the best. He does not want to leave Me. Can you trust him with Me until the day after tomorrow? »

« Oh! Lord! I would give You them all! They are as safe with You as they would be in Heaven... And this boy, who used to stay with his father more than the rest of them, has suffered too much. He was with his father at the moment... See?... He does nothing but weep and pine. Don't weep, son. Ask the Lord if what I say is true. Master, to comfort him I always say to him that his father is not lost, but has only gone far away from us temporarily. »

« Which is the truth. It is exactly as your mother says, little Joseph. »

« But I'll not be able to find him again until I die. And I am only a boy. If I am to become as old as Isaac, how long will I have to wait? »

« Poor boy! But time flies. »

« No, Lord. My father has been dead three weeks, and it seems such a long time to me... I cannot go on without him... » and he weeps silently but most pitifully.

« See? He is always like that. Particularly when he is not busy with something that interests him. The Sabbath is a torture. I am afraid he will die... »

« No. I have another boy who is orphan of father and mother. He was emaciated and sad. Now, staying with a good woman at Bethsaida and being sure that he is not separated from his parents, he has flourished again both in his body and soul. The same will happen to your son, both because of what I will tell him, and because time is a great healer, and also because he will calm down, too, when he sees that you are no longer worried about your daily bread. Goodbye, woman. The sun is setting and I must go. Come, Joseph. Say goodbye to your mother, your little brothers and then run to pick up with Me. »

And Jesus goes away.

« And what will You tell the apostles now? »

« That I have an old disciple and a new one. »

They walk through Korazim that is becoming animated with people.

A group of men stops Jesus: « Are You going away? Are You not staying for the Sabbath? »

« No. I am going to Capernaum. »

« You have not spoken one word during the whole week. Are we not worthy of Your word? »

« Have I not given you for six days the best word? »

« When? To whom? »

« To everybody. From the carpenter's bench. For days I have been preaching that our neighbour is to be loved and helped in every possible way, particularly when our neighbour is weak, as in the case of widows and orphans. Goodbye, people of Korazim. Ponder on this lesson of Mine on the Sabbath. »
And Jesus sets out again, leaving the citizens perplexed.

But the boy, who has reached Jesus running, rouses the curiosity of the people who stop the Master again asking: « Are You taking away the widow's son? Why? »

« To teach him to believe that God is a Father and that in God he will find his lost father. And also that there might be one here who believes, in the place of old Isaac. »

« There are three men from Korazim with Your disciples. »

« With My disciples. Not here. This one will be here. Goodbye. » And with the child between Him and Manaen He walks fast through the country towards Capernaum, talking to Manaen.

They reach Capernaum after the apostles had arrived. They are sitting on the terrace in the shade of the pergola, round Matthew, whose wound is not yet healed, informing him of their feats. They turn round at the light shuffling of sandals on the little staircase and they see Jesus' fair head emerge more and more from the little wall of the terrace. They rush towards Him, Who is smiling... and they are dumbfounded seeing a poor boy behind Jesus. Manaen climbs the steps in his pompous pure white linen tunic, which is made even more beautiful by a precious belt, by the bright-red dyed linen tunic, which is so shiny as to seem silk, hanging from his shoulders like a train, and by his byssus head-dress fastened by a thin gold diadem, an engraved thin plate, which divides his wide forehead in two halves and gives him almost the air of an Egyptian king. His presence prevents an avalanche of questions which, however, are clearly expressed by the apostles' eyes. After greeting one another, while sitting near Jesus, the apostles ask: « And who is this one? » pointing at the boy. « This is My last conquest. Little Joseph, a carpenter like the great Joseph, who was My father. And thus most dear to Me, as I am to him. Is that right, little boy? Come here that I may introduce you to these friends of Mine of whom you have heard Me speak so much. This is Simon Peter: the kindest man to Children there is. And this is John: a big boy who will speak to you of God also when playing. And this is

James his brother, serious and good like an elder brother. And this is Andrew, Simon's brother: you will get along well at once with him, because he is as meek as a lamb. And this is Simon the Zealot: he loves fatherless children so much that I think he would go round the whole world looking for them, if he were not with Me. Then here is Judas of Simon and with him there is Philip of Bethsaida and Nathanael. See how they look at you? They have children as well and they love children. And there are My brothers James and Judas. They love everything I love and so they will love you. Now let us go to Matthew, who is suffering agonies with his foot, and yet he is not angry with the boy who playing recklessly hit him with a sharp flint-stone. Is that right, Matthew? »

« Oh! no, Master. Is he the widow's son? »

« Yes, he is. He is very clever, but he has become very sad. »

« Oh! poor boy! I will get you to call little James and you will play with him » and Matthew caresses him drawing him close to himself with one hand.

Jesus ends the introductions with Thomas, who, practical as he is, completes it by offering the boy a bunch of grapes he has picked off the pergola.

« Now you are friends » concludes Jesus, sitting down again while the child eats his grapes replying to Matthew who keeps him close to himself.

« But where have You been all alone for a whole week? »

« At Korazim, Simon of Jonah. »

« I know. But what did You do? Did You go to Isaac? »

« Isaac the Elder is dead. »

« So? »

« Did Matthew not tell you? »

« No. He only said that You were at Korazim since the day after our departure. »

« Matthew is more clever than you are. He can keep quiet, but you cannot check your curiosity. »

« Not only mine. Everybody's. »

« Well: I went to Korazim to preach factual charity. »

« Factual charity? What do You mean? » ask many.

« There is a widow at Korazim with five children and an old sick woman. Her husband died suddenly at his work bench, leaving behind him misery and unfinished jobs. Korazim did not find a tiny bit of pity for this unhappy family. I went to finish the work and... »

There is pandemonium. Some ask questions, some protest, some reproach Matthew for allowing it, some admire and some criticise. Unfortunately the majority protest or criticise.

Jesus lets the storm calm down just as it started and as a reply He says: « I am going back the day after tomorrow. And I will do so

until I finish. And I hope that you at least will understand. Korazim is a closed fruit-stone without its germ. You at least ought to be stones with germs.

Boy, give Me the walnut that Simon gave you and listen to Me as well.

See this nut? I am taking this one because I have no other fruitshells available, but to understand the parable, think, for instance, of the seeds of pines or palms, the hardest ones, or the stones of olives... They are very hard containers, completely closed, without cracks, of solid wood. They look like magic coffers, which can be opened only by means of violence. And yet if one of them is thrown on to the ground by chance and a passer-by buries it in the earth treading on it, what happens? The coffer opens and takes root and comes into leaf. How does that happen by itself? We have to strike it hard with a hammer to open it, instead without any blow it opens by itself. Is the seed a magic one? No. It contains a pulp. Oh! a feeble thing compared to the hard shell. And yet it nourishes an even smaller thing: the germ. And that is the lever that forces, opens it and produces a plant with roots and leaves. As an experiment, bury some fruit-stones and wait. You will see that some strike root, others do not. Pull out the ones that did not sprout. Open them with a hammer and you will see that they are empty seeds. So it is not the dampness of the ground or its heat that makes the stone open. But it is its pulp, or rather, the soul of the pulp: the germ, which swelling, acts as a lever and opens it.

That is the parable. Now let us apply it to ourselves.

What did I do that should not have been done? Have we understood one another so little that we have not understood that hypocrisy is a sin and that words are just like wind if they are not corroborated by action? What have I always told you? "Love one another. Love is the precept and the secret of glory". And I, Who preach, should I be without charity? Should I thus set the example of an untruthful master? No, never!

My dear friends! Our body is like a hard stone, in which pulp is enclosed: our soul, and in it there is the germ that I laid. It is made of many elements, the main one being charity. It acts as a lever to open the stone and free the spirit from the constrictions of matter and reunite it to God, Who is Charity.

Charity does not consist only in giving alms or comforting by means of words. Charity is accomplished through charity alone. Do not think that this is a pun. I had no money and words were not sufficient for this case. There were seven people on the threshold of starvation and anguish. Despair was already putting forth its black claws to grasp and strangle. The world was withdrawing harshly and selfishly before this misfortune. The world was proving that it had not understood the words of the Master. The Master

evangelized through deeds. I was capable and free to do it. And it was My duty, on behalf of the whole world, to love those poor wretches whom the world did not love. That is what I did.

Can you still criticise Me? Or should I criticise you, in the presence of a disciple who did not hesitate to come among sawdust and shavings in order not to leave the Master and who, I am sure, became more convinced of Me seeing Me bent over a piece of wood, than he would have been persuaded if he had seen Me on a throne, and in the presence of a boy, who perceived Me to be what I am, notwithstanding his ignorance, the misfortune that blunts his mind and the fact that he was in no way acquainted with the Messiah as He really is. Are you not saying anything? Do not feel humiliated only while I raise My voice to correct wrong ideas. I do it out of love. But strive to have within you the germ that sanctifies and opens the stone. Or you will always be useless beings. You must be prepared to do what I have done.

No work must be burdensome to you for the sake of your neighbour, or to take a soul to God. Work, whatever it may be, is never humiliating. Whereas base action, falseness, untrue denunciations, harshness, abuse of power, usury, slander, lust are humiliating. They do humiliate Man. And yet they are done unashamedly by those also who say they are perfect and who were certainly scandalised seeing Me work with saw and hammer. Oh! A hammer! The worthless hammer, if used to drive nails into wood to make a piece of furniture that will earn food for orphans, how noble it becomes! The hammer, although ignoble, if it is in My hands for a holy purpose will not longer appear as such and how it will be craved for by all those who gladly shout that they are scandalised because of it!

Oh! man: you ought to be light and truth, how dark and false you are! But you, at least, endeavour to understand what Goodness is! What Charity is. What Obedience is. I solemnly tell you that great is the number of Pharisees. And they are even present among those who surround Me. »

« No, Master. Don't say that! We... it is because we love You that we do not want certain things!... »

« It is because you have not yet understood anything. I have spoken to you of Faith and Hope and I did not think that any new word was required to speak to you of Charity, because so much emanates from Me that you should be saturated with it. But I see that you know it only by name, without being aware of its nature and form. Just as you know the moon.

Do you remember when I told you that Hope is like the cross-bar of the kind yoke supporting Faith and Charity, and it is the scaffold of mankind and the throne of salvation? You do? But you have not understood My words in their true meaning. And why did

you not ask for a clarification? I will give it to you. It is a yoke because it compels man to lower his silly pride under the weight of eternal truths. And it is the scaffold of such pride. The man who hopes in God his Lord unavoidably mortifies his pride that would like him to be proclaimed his "god" and acknowledges that he is nothing and God is everything, that he can do nothing and God can do everything, that he-man is transient dust and God is eternity elevating to a higher degree and rewarding man with eternity. Man nails himself to his holy cross to reach Life. The flames of Faith and Charity nail him to his cross, but Hope, which is between the former and the latter, elevate towards Heaven. But, remember the lesson: if charity is lacking, the throne is without light and the body, unnailed on one side, hangs towards mud and no longer sees Heaven. It thus cancels the wholesome effects of Hope and ends up by making sterile also Faith, because when one is detached from two of the three theological virtues, one falls into languor and deadly chill.

Do not reject God even in the least things. And to refuse to assist one's neighbour through heathen pride is to reject God.

My Doctrine is a yoke that bends guilty mankind; it is a mallet that breaks the hard bark to free its spirit. It is a yoke and a hammer indeed. And yet he who accepts it does not feel the tiredness that all other doctrines and all other human things give. And he who allows himself to be struck by it does not feel the pain of being crushed in his human ego, but feels a sensation of liberation.

Why do you endeavour to get rid of it to replace it with what is lead and pain? You all have your sorrows and your difficulties. All mankind has sorrows and difficulties, which at times are beyond human strength. From children like this one, who is already carrying on his little shoulders a heavy weight, which bends him and prevents his lips from smiling childishly and removes all thoughtlessness from his mind, which, from a human point of view, has never been childish, to the old man who is declining towards his sepulchre with all the disappointments, troubles, burdens and wounds of his long life. But in My Doctrine and in My Faith there is the relief from all such overwhelming burdens. That is why it is called the "Gospel". And he who accepts it and obeys will be blessed on the earth also because he will have God to comfort him and Virtues to make his way easy and bright, as if they were good sisters who, holding him by the hand with lit lamps, illuminate his way and his life and sing the eternal promises of God to him, until, yielding in peace his tired body to the earth, he awakes in Paradise.

Why, men, do you wish to be fatigued, desolate, tired, disgusted, desperate, when you can be relieved and consoled? Why do you

wish, too, My apostles, to feel the fatigue, the difficulty, the severity of your mission, whereas with the reliance of a child you could have cheerful zeal, bright aptitude to accomplish it and realise and perceive that it is severe only for the unrepentant who do not know God, whilst for its believers it is like a mother who supports her child on his way, pointing out to his uncertain steps stones and thorns, nests of snakes and ditches, that he may identify them and thus avoid danger?

You are now desolate. Your desolation had a really miserable beginning! You are desolate first of all because of My humility, as if it were a crime against Myself. And you are now distressed because you have understood that you have grieved Me and that you are still so far from perfection. But only in a few this latter desolation is devoid of pride: of the pride hurt by the ascertainment that you are still nothing, whilst out of pride you would like to be perfect. Be only humbly willing to accept a reproach and to confess that you are wrong, promising in your hearts that you want perfection for a superhuman purpose. And then come to Me. I correct you, but I understand and I am indulgent.

Come to Me, you apostles, and come to Me, you all men, who suffer through material, moral, spiritual sorrows. These last one are caused by the fact that you cannot sanctify yourselves as you would like for the love of God, with promptitude and without returning to Evil. The way of sanctification is long and mysterious, and sometimes it is covered unknown to the walker, who proceeds through darkness, with the taste of poison in his mouth and thinks that he is not proceeding and is not drinking a celestial liquid, and does not realise that such spiritual blindness is an element of perfection.

Blessed, three times blessed are those who continue to proceed without enjoyment of light and kindness and that do not surrender because they see or hear nothing, and they do not stop saying: "I will not proceed until God grants me some delight". I tell you: the darkest road will suddenly become the best-lighted one, opening on to celestial landscapes. And the poison after removing all relish for human things will change into heavenly sweetness for those brave believers, who quite astonished will exclaim: "Why all this? Why so much kindness and joy to me?". Because they have persevered and God will let them enjoy on the earth what Heaven is.

But, in the meantime, come to Me you all who are fatigued and tired, you, apostles, and with you all the men who seek God, who weep because of the sorrows of the world, who have become exhausted in their loneliness, and I will restore you. Take My yoke upon you. It is not heavy. It is a support. Embrace My Doctrine as you would embrace a beloved bride. Imitate your Master Who does

not confine Himself to bless it, but does what it teaches. Learn from Me Who am meek and humble-hearted... You will find rest for your souls, because meekness and humility grant the kingdom both on the earth and in Heaven. I have already told you that the true triumphers among men are those who conquer them by love, and love is always meek and humble. I would never ask you to do things that are beyond your strength, because I love you and I want you with Me in My Kingdom. Take therefore My insignia and My uniform and strive to be like Me and as My Doctrine teaches. Do not be afraid because My yoke is sweet and its weight is light, whereas the glory that you will enjoy if you are faithful to Me is infinitely powerful. Infinite and eternal...

I will leave you for some time. I am going to the lake with the boy. He will find some friends... Later we shall eat our bread together. Come, Joseph. I will introduce you to the little ones who love Me. »

268. The Dispute with the Pharisees and the Arrival of Jesus' Mother and Brothers.

2nd September 1945.

The scene is the same as in the last vision. Jesus is taking leave of the widow, holding little Joseph by the hand and He says to the woman: « Nobody will come before I come back, unless they are Gentiles. But keep here until the day after tomorrow whoever should come, saying that I shall definitely be here. »

« I will, Master. And if there are any sick people, I will give them hospitality as You taught me. »

« Goodbye, then, and peace be with you. Come, Manaen. »

From this brief conversation I understand that sick and unhappy people in general have come to the Master at Korazim and that Jesus has been evangelizing not only working but also through miracles. And if Korazim is still indifferent, it really means that it is a wild untillable soil. And yet Jesus walks through it, exchanging greetings with those who greet Him, as if nothing were the matter, and then resuming His conversation with Manaen, who is uncertain whether he should leave again for Machaerus or remain another week...

... In the meantime in the house at Capernaum they are preparing for the Sabbath. Matthew still limping a little welcomes his companions, offers them water and fresh fruit, inquiring about their mission.

Peter turns up his nose seeing that some Pharisees are already sauntering near the house: « They want to poison our Sabbath. I almost feel like going to meet the Master to tell Him to go to Bethsaida and thus frustrate their plans. »

« And do you think that the Master would do it? » asks his brother.

« Then, there is that poor wretch waiting for Him in the room on the ground floor » remarks Matthew.

« We could take him to Bethsaida by boat, and I, or someone else, could go and meet the Master » says Peter.

« It's not a bad idea... » says Philip, who would willingly go to Bethsaida where is his family.

« All the more that, take note, their guardianship has been reinforced with scribes. Let us go immediately. You will take the sick man, go through the kitchen garden and away through the back of the house. I will take the boat to the "fig well" and James will do likewise. Simon Zealot and Jesus' brothers will go to meet the Master. »

« I am not going away with the possessed man » proclaims the Iscariot.

« Why not? Are you afraid the demon might cling to you? »

« Don't bother me, Simon of Jonah. I said that I am not going and I will not go. »

« Go with the cousins to meet Jesus. »

« No. »

« Ugh! Come by boat. »

« No. »

« Well, what is it you want? You are always a hindrance... »

« I want to stay here, where I am. I am not afraid of anybody and I am not running away. In any case the Master would not be happy with the trick. And there would be another sermon reproaching us, and I have no intention of getting it through your fault. You may go. I will stay here to report... »

« Definitely no! Either everybody or nobody » shouts Peter.

« Then nobody, because the Master is here. Here He is coming » says the Zealot seriously, looking down the road.

Peter, who is obviously dissatisfied, grumbles into his beard. But he goes to meet Jesus with the others. After greeting Him, they inform Him of a blind and dumb man possessed, who has been waiting for several hours with his relatives for Him.

Matthew explains: « He is like an inert body. He threw himself on some empty sacks and has not moved since. His relatives hope in You. Come and refresh Yourself and You will assist him later. »

« No. I am going to him at once. Where is he? »

« In the room on the ground floor, near the oven. I put him in there with his relatives, because there are many Pharisees and scribes, who seem to be lying in wait... »

« Yes, and it would be better not to make them happy » grumbles Peter.

« Is Judas of Simon not here? » asks Jesus.

« He stayed in the house. He must do the opposite of what others do » grumbles Peter again.

Jesus looks at him but does not reproach him. He goes quickly towards the house, entrusting the boy just to Peter, who caresses him taking out at once from his wide sash a whistle saying: « One for you and one for my son. I will take you to see him tomorrow evening. I got a shepherd to make them for me after I had spoken to him of Jesus. »

Jesus enters the house, He greets Judas who seems to be busy sorting out the kitchenware, and He then goes straight to a kind of low dark store-room beside the oven.

« Get the sick man to come out » orders Jesus.

A Pharisee, who is not from Capernaum, but whose standoffishness is even worse than that of the local Pharisees, says: « He is not sick, he is possessed. »

« That is still a disease of the spirit... »

« But his eyes and tongue are bound... »

« It is always a disease of the spirit that expands to limbs and organs. If you had allowed Me to finish you would have realised that that is what I wanted to say. Fever is in the blood when one is ill, but after the blood it attacks this or that part of the body. »

The Pharisee does not know what to retort and becomes silent.

The possessed man has been led before Jesus. He is motionless. Matthew was quite right. He is greatly impeded by the demon.

People are gathering in the meantime. It is incredible how, particularly during the hours that I would call of relaxation, people were so quick in gathering where there was something to be seen. The notables of Capernaum are now there, and among them there are four Pharisees, Jairus is also there, and, in a corner, with the excuse of supervising order, there is the Roman Centurion, and citizens from other towns are with him.

« In the name of God, depart from the eyes and the tongue of this man! I want it! Set him free! You are no longer permitted to have him. Go away! » shouts Jesus stretching out His hands while giving the order.

The miracle begins with a howl of rage from the demon and ends with a cry of joy of the cured man who shouts: « Son of David! Son of David! Holy and King! »

« How can this man know that it was He Who cured him? » asks a scribe.

« It's all a farce! These people are paid to do that! » says a Pharisee shrugging his shoulders.

« By whom? If you do not mind me asking you » asks Jairus.

« By you, too. »

« And for what purpose? »

« To make Capernaum famous. »

« Do not mortify your intelligence by talking nonsense and your tongue by making it foul with lies. You know that it is not true, and you ought to realise that you are talking nonsense. What has happened here has happened in many parts of Israel. So there must be someone paying everywhere? I did not really know that the common people in Israel were very rich! Because you, and with you all the mighty ones, do not certainly pay for that. So it is the common people who pay, being the only ones who love the Master. »

« You are the head of the synagogue and you love Him. There is Manaen. At Bethany there is Lazarus of Theophilus. They are not common people. »

« But they are honest, and I am honest, too. And we do not cheat anybody, in no way. Much less in matters of faith. We do not take the liberty of doing that, because we fear God and we have understood what is pleasant to God: honesty. »

The Pharisees turn their back to Jairus and they attack the relatives of the cured man: « Who told you to come here? »

« Who? Many people, who had already been cured, or their relatives. »

« But what did they give you? »

« Give? The assurance that He would cure him. »

« Was he really ill? »

« Oh! Sly minds! Do you think that all this is feigned? If you do not believe it, go to Gadara and inquire about the misfortune of the family of Anna of Ismael. »

The irritated people of Capernaum are in tumult, while some Galileans, who have come from near Nazareth say: « And yet He is the son of Joseph, the carpenter! »

The citizens of Capernaum, being faithful to Jesus, shout: « No. He is what He said and what the cured man has just said: "Son of God and Son of David". »

« Do not increase the excitement of the population with your statements! » says a scribe contemptuously.

« And what is He, then, according to you? »

« A Beelzebub! »

« Ugh! Tongues of vipers. Blasphemers! You are possessed! Heartless men! You are our ruin. Do you want to deprive us also of the joy of the Messiah? Usurers! Arid stones! » A real uproar!

Jesus, Who had gone into the kitchen to drink some water, appears on the threshold in time to hear once again the stale stupid accusation of the Pharisees: « He is a Beelzebub because demons obey Him. The great Beelzebub, who is His father, helps Him and He drives out demons only through the assistance of Beelzebub, the prince of demons. »

Jesus descends the two little steps of the threshold and comes forward. He stops erect, severe and calm in front of the group of

scribes and Pharisees and staring at them with keen eyes He says to them:

« Also on the earth we see that a kingdom divided into opposed parties becomes weak internally and can be easily attacked and laid waste by nearby countries that make it their slave. Also on the earth we see that a town divided into conflicting parts does not flourish and the same applies to a family, the members of which are divided by mutual hatred. It falls to pieces and becomes a useless nibble, which is of no use to anybody, and the laughing stock of fellow citizens. Harmony is shrewdness besides being necessary. Because it keeps people independent, strong and loving. Patriots, citizens, relatives ought to ponder on that when for the caprice of an individual advantage they are tempted to have separations or commit abuses, which are always dangerous because they are alternative in parties and they destroy love. And such shrewdness is practised by those who are the masters of the world. Consider Rome in its undeniable power, so painful to us. Rome rules the world. But they are united by one mind and one will: "to rule". Even amongst them there must be differences, aversions, rebellions. But they lie at the bottom. On the surface they are one block, without cracks or perturbations. They all want the same thing and they are successful because of that. And they will be successful as long as they want the same thing.

Consider that example of human cohesive shrewdness and say: if the children of this world are like that, what will Satan be like? The Romans are demons, as far as we are concerned. But their heathen satanism is nothing compared to the perfect satanism of Satan and his demons. In their eternal kingdom, without time, without end, with no limits to cunning and wickedness, where they rejoice in being detrimental to God and men, and to be harmful is their very life and their only cruel painful enjoyment, they have attained with cursed perfection the fusion of their spirits in one will: "to be harmful". Now if, as you state, to insinuate doubt about My power, Satan is the one who helps Me because I am a minor Beelzebub, does it not follow that Satan is divided against himself and his demons, if he drives them out of the people possessed by him? And if he is at variance with his followers, can his kingdom last? No, it is not so. Satan is very shrewd and does not damage himself in the hearts of men. The aim of his life is "to steal - to damage - to lie - to offend - to upset". To steal the souls of God and the peace of men. To damage the children of the Father grieving Him. To lie in order to mislead. To offend in order to rejoice. To upset because he is disorder and cannot change. He is eternal in his being and in his methods.

But answer this question: if I drive out demons in the name of Beelzebub, in whose name do your sons drive them out? Are you

willing to admit that they are Beelzebub as well? If you say that, they will consider you slanderers. And if their holiness is such that they will not react to your accusation, you will condemn yourselves confessing that you think that you have many demons in Israel, and God will judge you in the name of the children of Israel accused by you of being demons. Therefore whoever may pass judgement, in actual fact they will be your judges, where judgement is not suborned by human pressure.

If, instead, as it is true, I expel demons through the Spirit of God, that would be evidence that the Kingdom of God and the King of that Kingdom have come to you. Which King has such power that no adverse force can resist Him. Thus I bind and compel the usurpers of the children of My Kingdom to depart from the place they have occupied and give Me back the prey so that I may take possession of it. Is that not what is done by one who wants to enter a house inhabited by a powerful man, to take his property, rightly or wrongly acquired? It is. He enters and ties him, and then he can plunder the house. I tie the dark angel who has taken what is Mine, and I take away from him the good property he has stolen of Me. And I am the only one who can do it, because I alone am the Strong One, the Father of the future century, the Prince of Peace. »

« Clarify for us what You mean by saying: "Father of the future century". Do You think that You will live until the new century and, still more foolishly, do You think that You, a poor man, will create time? Time belongs to God » asks a scribe.

« And are you, a scribe, asking Me? Do you not know that there will be a century that will have a beginning but no end, and that it will be Mine? I shall triumph in it gathering round Me its children and they will live for ever like the century that I shall have created and I am already creating it, giving the spirit its true value above the flesh, the world, and above the infernal angels whom I expel because I can do everything. That is why I say that those who are not with Me are against Me, and those who do not gather with Me, scatter. Because I am He Who I am. And he who does not believe that, which was already prophesied, sins against the Holy Spirit, Whose word was announced by the prophets, and it is neither false nor wrong, and must be believed without resistance.

And I tell you: men will be forgiven everything, all their sins and their blasphemy. Because God knows that man is not only spirit, but also flesh and his flesh, when tempted, is subject to sudden weakness. But blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. He who has spoken against the Son of man will still be forgiven, because the weight of the flesh enveloping My Person and the man who speaks against Me, can still mislead. But he who has spoken against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this or in future life, because the Truth is what it is: clear, holy,

undeniable and manifested to the spirit in such a way that it cannot mislead. Only those err who deliberately want to err. To deny the Truth spoken by the Holy Spirit is to deny the Word of God and the Love given by that word for the sake of men. And the sin against Love is not forgiven.

Every tree bears its fruit. You bear yours, but your fruit is not good. If you give a good tree to have it planted in the orchard, it will give good fruit; but if you give a bad tree, the fruit it will yield will be bad and everybody will say: "This is not a good tree". Because a tree is known by its fruit. And how can you think that you are able to speak well, since you are bad? Because a mouth speaks of what fills its heart. Because it is out of the superabundance of what is within us, that we act and speak. A good man takes good things out of his good treasure; a wicked man takes wicked things out of his evil one and he speaks and behaves according to what is within him.

I tell you solemnly that idleness is sinful. But it is better to be idle than accomplish wicked deeds. And I also tell you that it is better to be silent than speak idly and wickedly. Even if to be silent is to be idle, do that rather than sin with your tongues. I assure you that on Doomsday justification will be requested for every word spoken idly to men, and that men will be justified by the words they have spoken, and by their words they will be condemned. Be careful, therefore, because you speak many words that are more than idle, as they are not only idle but also harmful, and are spoken to drive hearts away from the Truth speaking to you. »

The Pharisees and scribes consult one another and afterwards, pretending to be kind, they ask: « Master, it is easier to believe what one sees. Give us, therefore, a sign so that we may believe that You are what You say You are. »

« You can see that there is in you the sin against the Holy Spirit, Who several times has pointed Me out to you as the Word Incarnate. Word and Saviour, Who has come in the predicted time, preceded and followed by the signs prophesied, and operating what the Spirit says. »

They reply: « We believe in the Spirit, but how can we believe in You unless we see a sign with our own eyes? »

« How can you believe in the Spirit Whose actions are spiritual, if you do not believe in Mine that are perceptible by your eyes? My life is full of them. Are they not enough? No, they are not. I say so Myself. They are not enough. One sign only will be given to this adulterous wicked generation that seeks a sign: that of the prophet Jonah. In fact as Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three days, so the Son of man will be for three days in the bowels of the earth. I tell you solemnly that the Ninevites will rise on the Day of

Judgement like all men, and they will rebel against this generation and condemn it. Because they did penance upon Jonah's preaching, but you do not. And there is One here who is greater than Jonah. And so the Queen of the South will rise and stand up against you and will condemn you, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. And there is One greater than Solomon here. »

« Why do you say that this generation is adulterous and wicked? It is not any worse than the others. There are the same saints in it as in the others. The structure of Israel has not changed. You offend us. »

« You offend yourselves by injuring your souls, because you remove them from the Truth, and therefore from Salvation. But I will reply to you just the same. This generation is holy only in garments and outward appearance. It is not holy inwardly. There are in Israel the same names meaning the same things. But there is no reality of things. There are the same habits, garments and rites. But their spirit is missing. You are adulterers because you rejected the supernatural marriage with the Divine Law and you have married, in a second adulterous union, the law of Satan. You are circumcised only in a frail member. Your hearts are no longer circumcised. And you are wicked because you have sold yourselves to the Evil one. I have spoken. »

« You offend us too grievously. But, if it is so, why do You not free Israel from its demon so that it may become holy? »

« Is Israel willing to do that? No. Those poor people who come here to be freed from the demon are willing, because they feel it like a burden and a shame. But you do not feel that. And you would be freed quite uselessly, because as you are not anxious to be relieved, you would be caught again at once and in a stronger way. Because when an unclean spirit goes out of a man it wanders through arid country looking for a place to rest and cannot find one. The country is not materially arid, mind you. It is arid because it is hostile to him as it will not receive him, just as arid soil is hostile to seed. He then says: "I will go back to the house from which I was expelled by force and against his will. And I am sure that he will welcome me and let me rest". In fact he goes back to the one he possessed, and many times finds him willing to welcome him, because I solemnly tell you that man feels nostalgia more for Satan than for God and if Satan does not oppress his body, he does not complain of being possessed. He thus goes back and finds the house empty, swept, tidied, smelling of purity. He then goes off and collects seven other spirits, because he does not want to lose it again, and with these seven spirits more evil than himself he enters the house and they all settle in there. And the present state of a man who was converted once and is perverted a

second time is worse than it was before. Because the demon now knows exactly how much that man loves Satan and is ungrateful to God, and also because God will not go back where they tread on His graces, and where people, after the first experience of possession, open their arms to a greater one. A relapse into satanism is worse than a relapse into lethal phthisis already cured once. It cannot improve or recover. The same will apply to this generation, which although converted by the Baptist wanted to return to sin because it loves the Evil one and does not love Me. »

A whispering, which is neither of approval nor of protest, runs through the crowd which has become so large that not only the kitchen garden and terrace are full, but also the street. People are sitting astride the low wall, many have climbed up the fig-tree and the trees of the neighbouring orchards, because everybody wants to listen to the dispute between Jesus and His enemies. The whispering, like a wave that from the open sea arrives at the shore, from mouth to mouth reaches the apostles who are closer to Jesus, that is Peter, John, the Zealot and Alphaeus' sons. Some of the other apostles are on the terrace, some in the kitchen, except Judas who is in the street, among the crowds.

Peter, John, the Zealot, Alphaeus' sons pick up the whispering and say to Jesus: « Master, Your Mother is here with Your brothers. They are out there, in the street, and they are looking for You because they want to speak to You. Tell the crowds to move away, so that they may come to You, because a grave reason has certainly brought them here looking for You. »

Jesus raises His head and at the end of the crowd He sees the anguished face of His Mother, Who strives not to weep, while Joseph of Alphaeus is speaking to Her excitedly, and He sees Her repeated emphatic gestures of denial notwithstanding Joseph's insistency. He sees also the embarrassed face of Simon, who is openly grieved and disgusted... But He does not smile, neither does He give any order. He leaves the Sorrowful One in Her grief and His cousins where they are.

He lowers His head and looks at the crowd, and replying to the apostles near Him, He replies also to those who are far away and are endeavouring to make blood have more weight than one's duty. « Who is My Mother? Who are My brothers? » He looks round with severe countenance, as His face becomes pale as a result of the violent effort He has to make against Himself to set duty above family ties and blood, and to disavow His tie to His Mother in order to serve His Father, and pointing with a large gesture to the crowd pressing round Him in the red light of torches and in the silvery light of the almost full moon, He says: « This is My Mother and these are My brothers. Those who do the will of God are My brothers and sisters, they are My Mother. I have nobody else. And

My relatives will be such if they are the first to do the will of God with greater perfection than anybody else to the extent of completely sacrificing every other will or the call of blood or of affection. »

The crowds whisper in louder voices, like a sea made rough by sudden gusts of wind.

The scribes begin to withdraw saying: « He is a demon! He repudiates His own blood! »

His relatives come forward saying: « He is crazy! He tortures His very Mother! »

The apostles say: « His word is really full of heroism! »

The crowds comment: « How much He loves us! »

Mary, Joseph and Simon elbow their way through the crowd with difficulty. While Mary is thoroughly kind, Joseph is very angry and Simon is utterly embarrassed. They arrive near Jesus.

Joseph attacks Him at once: « You are crazy! You are offending everybody. You do not respect even Your Mother. But I am here now and I will stop You. Is it true that You are wandering about as a workman? If it is true, why do You not work in Your own shop, and thus provide for Your Mother? Why do You lie saying that Your task is to preach, You idle and ungrateful man, when You work for money with other people? I think that You are really possessed by a demon misleading You. Reply to me! »

Jesus turns round and takes little Joseph by the hand, He draws him close to Himself and holding him up by his armpits He says: « I worked to provide food for this innocent child and his relatives and persuade them that God is good. It was a sermon on humility and charity for Korazim. And not only for Korazim. But also for you, Joseph, My unfair brother. But I forgive you because I know that you have been bitten by snakes. And I forgive you, too, Simon, who are so changeable. I have nothing to forgive My Mother or be forgiven by Her, because Her judgement is just. Let the world do what it wants. I do what God wants. And with the blessing of My Father and Mother I am happier than I would be if the whole world hailed Me king according to the world. Come, Mother. Do not weep. They do not know what they are doing. Forgive them. »

« Oh! Son! I know. You know. There is nothing else to be said... »

« There is nothing else to be said except say to the people: "Go in peace". »

And Jesus blesses the crowd, and holding Mary with His right hand and Joseph with His left one, He goes towards the staircase and is the first to climb it.

269. The News of the Murder of John the Baptist.

4th September 1945.

Jesus is curing some sick people; Manaen only is present. They are in the house in Capernaum, in the shady kitchen garden, early in the morning. Manaen is no longer wearing his precious belt or the thin plate on his forehead. His tunic is held tight by a woollen cord and his headgear by a thin strip of cloth. Jesus is bareheaded, as He always is, when at home.

After curing and comforting the sick people, Jesus goes upstairs with Manaen and they both sit on the window-sill of the window facing the mountain, because the sun is shining on the other side of the house and it is very warm, although it is no longer the height of summer.

« Vintage will be starting soon » says Manaen.

« Yes. Then it will be the feast of the Tabernacles... and it will soon be winter. When are you thinking of going away? »

« H'm... I would never leave... But I am thinking of the Baptist. Herod is weak. If one knows how to influence him to do good, if he does not become good, he remains at least... not blood-thirsty. But only few people advise him wisely. And that woman!... That woman!... But I would like to stay here until Your apostles come back. Not that I rely much on myself... but I still have some weight... although the favour I enjoyed previously has diminished much since they have realised that I now follow the way of Good. But it does not matter. I would like to have enough courage to be able to abandon everything and follow You completely, like the disciples whom You are expecting. But shall I ever succeed? We who are not of the common people find it more difficult to follow You. Why? »

« Because the tentacles of your poor wealth hold you back. »

« However, I know some people who are not exactly rich, but are teemed or about to be so, and they do not come either. »

« They also have the tentacles of poor riches holding them back. One is not rich only in money. There is the wealth of knowledge. Few can confess with Solomon: "Vanity of vanities. All is vanity", which confession is resumed and enlarged not so much materially but deeply in Qoheleth. Do you remember it? Human science is vanity because to increase human knowledge only "is anguish and affliction of the spirit and he who multiplies science multiplies such anguish". I solemnly tell you that it is so. And I also tell you that it would not be so if human science were supported and bridled by supernatural wisdom and the holy love of God. Pleasure is vanity, because it does not last, but quickly fades away after burning, leaving ashes and emptiness. Wealth stored up by means of various industries is vanity for the man who dies, as he leaves it to other people and cannot repel death by means of it. Woman is vanity,

when she is considered a female and desired as such. So we conclude that the only thing which is not vanity is the holy fear of God and obedience to His commandments, that is the wisdom of man, who is not only flesh, but has a second nature: the spiritual one. Who can reason thus and is willing, is able to break off from every tentacle of poor wealth and move freely towards the Sun. »

« I want to remember those words. How much You have given me during the past days! I can now go back to that ugly Court, which seems bright only to fools, and seems powerful and free, whereas it is misery, prison and darkness, and I will be able to go back with a treasure that will enable me to live better waiting for the best. But will I ever reach that best, which is to be entirely Yours? »

« Yes, you will. »

« When? Next year? Later? Or when old age will make me wise? »

« You will reach it in a few hours by becoming spiritually mature and perfect in willing. »

Manaen looks at Him thoughtfully, inquisitively... But he does not ask any other question.

There is silence. Then Jesus says: « Have you ever approached Lazarus of Bethany? »

« No, Master. I can say no. If we met on few occasions, I cannot say it was out of friendship. You know... I was with Herod and Herod was against him... So... »

« Lazarus would now see you in God, beyond such things. You must endeavour to approach him, as a fellow-disciple. »

« I will do it, if You wish so... »

Excited voices are heard in the garden. They are anxiously asking: « The Master! The Master! Is He here? »

The harmonious voice of the landlady replies: « He is upstairs. Who are you? Sick people? »

« No. Disciples of John and we want Jesus of Nazareth. »

Jesus looks out of the window saying: « Peace be with you... Oh! It is you. Come in! »

They are the three shepherds John, Matthias and Simon. « Oh! Master! » they say looking up and showing their sorrowful faces. Not even the sight of Jesus cheers them up.

Jesus leaves the room and goes out to meet them on the terrace. Manaen follows Him. They meet where the staircase leads on to the sunny terrace.

The three men kneel down kissing the floor. Then John says on behalf of them all: « Receive us now, Lord, because we are Your inheritance » and tears stream down the faces of the disciple and his companions.

Jesus and Manaen utter one only cry: « John! »

« He has been killed... »

The word drops like a loud dull noise, which drowns every other

noise in the world. And yet it was uttered in a low voice. But it petrifies both him who speaks and those who listen. And the earth, upon hearing it and being horrified, seems to interrupt every noise, such is the period of deep silence and complete immobility in animals, in leafy branches, in the air. Doves stop cooing, blackbirds interrupt their musical songs, the choir of sparrows is struck dumb, and a chirping cicada suddenly becomes silent, as if its contrivance had broken down unexpectedly, while the wind, which was caressing the leaves of vines and trees, making them rustle like silk and causing poles to squeak, drops completely.

Jesus becomes as pale as ivory while His eyes dilate glazing over. He opens His arms saying, and His voice is deep in the effort to make it steady: « Peace to the martyr of justice and to My Precursor. » He folds His arms, collects His thoughts in prayer, communicating with the Spirit of God and of the Baptist.

Manaen does not dare to make a gesture. Contrary to Jesus, he blushes vehemently and has an impulsion of anger. Then he becomes stiff and his excitement is revealed by the mechanical movement of his right hand rumpling the cord of his tunic, and of the left one which unintentionally searches for his dagger... and Manaen shakes his head pitying his weak mind that does not remember that he had renounced weapons in order to be « the disciple of the Meek Master, near the Meek Messiah. »

Jesus opens His mouth and eyes again. His countenance, His eyes, His voice have resumed the divine majesty habitual to Him. Only a deep melancholy tempered with peace hovers about Him. « come and tell Me. As from today you will be Mine. » And He takes them into the room, closing the door and half-drawing the curtains, to have a subdued light and an atmosphere of concentration around the sorrow and the beauty of the Baptist's death, and to form a partition between such perfection of life and the corrupt world. « Speak » He tells them.

Manaen is still petrified. He is near the group but does not utter one word.

« It was the evening of the feast... The event was unforeseeable... Only two hours before Herod had consulted with John and had dismissed him very kindly... And shortly before the... murder, the martyrdom, the crime, the glorification, Herod had sent a servant with icy fruit and rare wines for the prisoner. John had distributed everything to us... he never changed his austerity... We were the only ones to be there, thanks to Manaen, we were in the palace as kitchen servants and stable-grooms. And that was a grace because we could always see our John... John and I were in the kitchen, while Simon supervised in the stables ensuring that the grooms looked after the mounts of guests properly... The palace was full of important people, military commanders and gentlemen from

Galilee. Herodias had locked herself in her rooms after a violent quarrel in the morning with Herod... »

Manaen interferences: « But when did the hyena come? »

« Two days previously. Unexpectedly... saying to the monarch that she could not live away from him and be absent on the day of his feast. Viper and sorceress as she had always been, she had made a laughing-stock of him... But that morning, although he was already full of wine and lust, Herod refused to give the woman what she asked for with loud cries... But nobody thought it was John's life!... She remained disdainfully in her rooms. She sent back the royal dishes that Herod sent to her on precious trays. She kept only a precious one full of fruit, exchanging the gift with an amphora of drugged wine for Herod... Drugged... Ah! Her vicious intoxicated nature was sufficient to drug him for the crime! From the servants waiting at the table we learned that after the dance of the mimers, nay half way through it, Salome had rushed dancing into the banquet hall. And the mimers, in the presence of the royal girl, had withdrawn against the walls. We were told that her dance was perfect. Lewd and perfect. Worthy of the guests... Herod... Oh! perhaps a new desire of incest was fermenting in his heart!... Herod, at the end of the dance, said enthusiastically to Salome: "You have danced very well! I swear that you deserve a prize. I swear that I will give it to you. I swear that I will give anything you may ask me for. I swear it in the presence of everybody. And the word of a king is loyal also without swearing. Ask what you want". And Salome, simulating perplexity, innocence and modesty, enveloping herself in her veils with bashful gesture after so much impudicity, said: "Allow me, great king, to ponder for a moment. I will withdraw and I will come back later, because your grace has moved me"... and she left going to her mother. Selma told me that she went in laughing, saying: "Mother, you have won! Give me the tray". And Herodias with a cry of triumph ordered the slave to give the girl the tray that she had kept previously, saying: "Go, and come back with the hated head and I will clothe you with pearls and gold". And Selma was struck with horror and obeyed... Salome re-entered the hall dancing and went to prostrate herself at the king's feet saying: "Here. On this tray that you sent to my mother as a token that you love her and you love me, I want the head of John. And I will dance again, if it pleases you so much. I will dance the dance of victory. Because I have won! I have beaten you, king! I have defeated life, and I am happy!" That is what she said, and her words were repeated to us by a friendly cup-bearer. And Herod was embarrassed, being caught by two desires: to abide by his promise, to be just. But he could not be just, because he is unjust. He nodded to the headsman who was standing behind the royal seat, and he took from

Salome's raised hands the tray and from the banquet hall went down to the lower rooms. John and I saw him cross the yard... and shortly afterwards we heard Simeon's cry: "Murderers!" and then we saw the headsman pass again with the head on the tray... John, Your Precursor, was dead... »

« Simeon, can you tell Me how he died? » asks Jesus after some time.

« Yes, he was praying... He had previously said to me: "The two messengers will be back before long, and those who do not believe, will believe. But remember, should I be no longer alive when they come back, I, on the point of dying, say to you: 'Jesus of Nazareth is the true Messiah' so that you may repeat it to the others". He was always thinking of You... The headsman entered. I uttered a cry. John looked up and saw him. He stood up and said: "You can take only my life. But the lasting truth is that it is not legal to do wrong". And he was about to say something to me when the headsman swung his heavy sword, while John was standing and the head fell from the bust in a stream of blood that reddened the goatskin while his thin face blanched, but his open eyes were still alive and accusing. The head rolled at my feet... I fell at the same time as his body, as I fainted with grief... After... After Herodias had disfigured it, the head was thrown to the dogs. But we picked it up at once and we tied it in a precious veil together with the trunk, and during the night we recomposed the body and carried it out of Machaerus. We embalmed it at daybreak in a nearby acacia-thicket with the help of other disciples... But it was taken from us again to be slashed... Because she cannot destroy it and cannot forgive him... And her slaves, fearing death, were more ferocious than jackals in taking the head from us. If you had been there, Manaen!... »

« Had I been there... But that head is her malediction... Nothing is taken from the glory of the Precursor, even if the body is mutilated. Is that right, Master? »

« That is true. Even if the dogs had destroyed it, his glory would not change. »

« Neither has his word changed, Master. His eyes, although disfigured, under a large wound, still say: "You are not allowed". But we have lost him! » says Matthias.

« And we are now Your disciples, because that is what he said, and he told us that You already know. »

« Yes, you have been Mine for months. How did you come? »

« On foot; by stages. It was a long painful journey, in the heat of sands and of the sun, made even more painful by grief. We have been walking for almost twenty days... »

« You will rest now. »

Manaen asks: « Was Herod not surprised at my absence? »

« Yes, at first he was annoyed, then he became furious. But when his rage calmed down, he said: "One judge less". That is what our friend, the cup-bearer, told us. »

Jesus says: « One judge less! He has God as a judge and that is enough. Let us go to where we sleep. You are tired and covered with dust. You will find the garments and sandals of your companions. Take them, refresh yourselves. What belongs to one, belongs to everybody. Matthias, since you are tall, you can take one of My tunics. We will provide later. My apostles will be coming before night, because this is the Sabbath eve. Isaac will be coming next week with the disciples, and later Benjamin and Daniel will come; Elias, Joseph and Levi will be here after the Tabernacles. It is time for others to join the Twelve. Go and rest now. »

Manaen takes them in and then comes back. Jesus remains with Manaen. He sits down pensively, and is clearly sad, with His head reclined on a hand, His elbow resting on His knee as a support. Manaen is sitting near the table and does not move. He is sullen. His face is a storm.

After a long time, Jesus raises His head, looks at him and asks: « And what are you going to do now? »

« I do not know yet... There is no purpose in staying any longer at Machaerus. But I would like to remain at the court to find out... to protect You according to what I learn. »

« You had better follow Me without any delay. But I will not force you. You will come, when the old Manaen has been destroyed bit by bit. »

« I would also like to take that head away from that woman. She is not worthy to have it... »

Jesus has a pale hint of a smile and says frankly: « And you are not yet dead to human wealth. But you are dear to Me just the same. I know that I shall not lose you even if I have to wait. I know how to wait... »

« Master, I would like to give You my generosity to comfort You... Because You are suffering. I can see it. »

« It is true. I am suffering. Very much! »

« Only because of John? I do not think so. You know that he is in peace. »

« I know that he is in peace and I perceive him close to Me. »

« Well, then? »

« Then!... Manaen, what does dawn precede? »

« The day, Master. Why do You ask me? »

« Because the death of John precedes the day when I will be the Redeemer. And the human part in Me trembles at the idea... Manaen, I am going up the mountain. You stay here to receive whoever should come and to assist those who have already come. Stay until I come back. Then... you will do whatever you wish,

Goodbye. »

And Jesus leaves the room. He goes slowly down the steps, crosses the kitchen garden and at the back of it He takes a little path along ruffled gardens, olive-groves, orchards of apple and figtrees and vineyards and He climbs the slope of a little hill where He disappears from my sight.

270. Departure in the Direction of Tarichea.

5th September 1945.

Jesus goes back to the house at dead of night. He enters the kitchen garden silently. He looks for a moment into the dark kitchen. He looks into the two rooms where are the mats and beds. They are empty also. Only the changed clothes, piled on the floor, tell that the apostles have come back. The house is so silent that it seems unhabited.

Jesus, making less noise than a shadow, goes up the little steps, immaculate white in the whiteness of the full moon, and arrives on the terrace. He walks along it. He seems a ghost moving about silently, a bright ghost. In the white incandescence of the moon, He looks thinner and taller. He lifts with one hand the curtain at the door of the upper room. It had been left down since John's disciples had entered with Jesus. Inside there are the apostles, sitting here and there, in groups or alone, with John's disciples and Manaen; there is also Marjiam sleeping with his head on Peter's knees. The moon illuminates the room entering with its phosphorescent rays through the wide open windows. No one is speaking. And no one is sleeping, with the exception of the boy, who is sitting on a mat on the floor.

Jesus enters quietly and Thomas is the first to see Him. « Oh! Master! » he exclaims starting.

All the others rouse themselves. Peter in his excitement, is on the point of jumping to his feet, but he remembers the child and he stands up gently, laying Marjiam's dark-haired head on his seat, and thus is the last to arrive at Jesus, while the Master, with the tired voice of one who has suffered very much, is replying to John, James and Andrew, who are expressing their sorrow to Him: « I understand. But only he who does not believe can feel desolate because of death. Not we, who know and believe. John is no longer separated from us. He was before. Nay, he separated us. Either with Me, or with him. No longer so. Where he is, I am. He is near Me. »

Peter pushes his grey-haired head among the younger ones and Jesus sees him: « You have been weeping, too, Simon of Jonah? » And Peter with a voice hoarser than usual: « Yes, Lord. Because I was a disciple of John, as well. And then... Last Sabbath eve I was

complaining that the presence of Pharisees was going to embitter our Sabbath! This is really a bitter Sabbath! I brought the boy, to have a more enjoyable Sabbath... Instead... »

« Do not lose heart, Simon of Jonah. John is not lost. I am repeating that to you, too. And in exchange we have three perfected disciples. Where is the boy? »

« Over there, Master. He is sleeping... »

« Let him sleep » says Jesus stopping over the dark little head which is sleeping peacefully. And He asks again: « Have you had your supper? »

« No, Master. We were waiting for You and we were worried, because of Your delay, as we did not know where to look for You... and we seemed to have lost You as well. »

« We have still plenty time to be together. Well, prepare the supper, because afterwards we shall go to another place. I need to be alone among friends, and if we are here tomorrow, we shall always be surrounded by people. »

« And I swear to You that I would not put up with them, particularly with those snakes of Pharisaic souls. And it would be most unfortunate if a smile escaped them concerning us in the synagogue! »

« Be good, Simon!... I have thought of that as well. That is why I came back to take you with Me. »

The excitement on their faces can be better seen in the light of the little lamps that have been lit at the two ends of the table. Only Jesus is majestically solemn and Marjiam smiles in his sleep.

« The boy has already had his meal » explains Peter.

« It is better to let him sleep, then » says Jesus.

And in the middle of His disciples He offers and hands out the frugal food, which is taken without appetite. And the supper is soon over.

« Tell Me now what you have done... » says Jesus encouragingly.

« I went with Philip into the country at Bethsaida and we evangelized and cured a sick boy » says Peter.

« In actual fact it was Simon who cured him » says Philip, who does not wish to ascribe to himself a glory not belonging to him.

« Oh! Lord! I do not know how I did it. I prayed hard, with all my heart, because I felt sorry for the little sick boy. I then anointed him with oil, I rubbed him with my coarse hands... and he was cured. When I saw him colour up and open his eyes, that is, when I saw him revive, I was almost afraid. »

Jesus lays a hand on his head without speaking.

« John amazed people by expelling a demon. But I had to speak » says Thomas.

« Your brother Judas also did it » states Matthew.

« Andrew, too » says James of Alphaeus.

« Simon the Zealot, instead, cured a leper. Oh! he was not afraid of touching him! And he said to me: "Be not afraid. By the will of God, no physical disease will affect us" » says Bartholomew.

« You are right, Simon. And what about you two? » Jesus asks James of Zebedee and the Iscariot, who are a little farther away, the former talking to the three disciples of John, the latter being all alone and sulky.

« Oh! I did nothing » says James. « But Judas worked three wonderful miracles: a blind man, a paralytic, a possessed man. He looked like a lunatic to me. But that is what people said... »

« And you are pulling a long face, when God has assisted you so much? » exclaims Peter.

« I can be humble as well » replies the Iscariot.

« And we were the guests of a Pharisee. I was rather embarrassed. But Judas knows how to deal with them and he really appeased the Pharisee. On the first day he was stand-offish, but later... Is that right, Judas? »

Judas nods without speaking.

« Very well. And you will do better and better. We shall be all together next week. In the meantime... Simon, go and prepare the boats. You, too, James. »

« For everybody, Master? They will not contain us. »

« Can you not get another one? »

« Yes, if I ask my brother-in-law. I will go. »

« Go. And come back as soon as you are ready. And do not tell them too much. »

The four fishermen leave. The others go downstairs to get their sacks and mantles. Manaen stays with Jesus. The boy continues to sleep.

« Master, are You going far? »

« I do not know yet... They are tired and depressed. I am, too. I am thinking of going to Tarichea, into the country, to be alone in peace... »

« I have my horse, Master. But, if You will allow me, I will come following the lake. Will You be there for long? »

« Perhaps the whole week, but not longer. »

« In that case, I will come. Master, bless me in this first departure. And relieve my heart of a burden. »

« Which, Manaen? »

« I feel remorse for leaving John. Perhaps if I had been there... »

« No. It was his hour. And he was certainly pleased to see you come to Me. Do not let that upset you. Nay, endeavour to get rid quickly and properly of the only burden you have: the gusto of being man. Become spiritual, Manaen. You can. You are capable of being so. Goodbye, Manaen. My peace be with you. We shall soon meet in Judaea. »

Manaen kneels down and Jesus blesses him. He then raises him and kisses him.

The others come back in and exchange greetings, both the apostles and John's disciples. The fishermen are the last to come. « We are ready, Master. We can go. »

« Good. Say goodbye to Manaen Who is staying here until tomorrow evening. Assemble the foodstuffs, take some water and let us go. Make as little noise as possible. »

Peter stoops to awake Marjiam.

« No, leave him. He might cry. I will pick him up » says Jesus and He gently lifts the boy who whimpers a little, but instinctively makes himself comfortable in Jesus' arms.

They put the lamps out. They go out closing the door. They go downstairs and on the threshold they say goodbye once again to Manaen, and then, in single file, along the moonlit street they go to the lake: a huge silvery mirror under the moon at its zenith. The three little lamps on the prows, which are already in the water, look like three red drops on the quiet mirror. They go on board, settling themselves in the boats, the fishermen being the last to embark. Peter and a servant are in the boat where Jesus is, John and Andrew in the second, James and a servant in the third one.

« Where are we going, Master? » asks Peter.

« To Tarichea. Where we landed after the miracle of the Gadarenes. It will not be boggy now. And it will be quiet. »

Peter sets sail and the other two boats sail in his wake. Nobody speaks. Only when they are in the open lake and Capernaum disappears in the moonlight and things present a uniform appearance in its silvery dust, Peter says, as if he were speaking to the tiller: « And I am glad. They will be looking for us, my dear, and thanks to you they will not find us. »

« To whom are you speaking, Simon? » asks Bartholomew.

« To my boat. Don't you know that she is like a bride for a fisherman? How much I have talked to her! More than to Porphirea. Master!... Is the boy well covered? It's damp on the lake at night... »

« Yes, he is. Listen. Simon. Come here. I want to speak to you. »

Peter entrusts the tiller to the ship-boy and comes to Jesus.

« I said Tarichea. But it will be quite all right to be there after the Sabbath to say goodbye once again to Manaen. Could you not find a place nearby where we may stay in peace? »

« Oh! Master! In peace for us or also for the boats? For the boats we must go to Tarichea or to some harbour on the other shore. But if You are referring to us, it is enough to go into the woods beyond the Jordan, where only wild animals will find You... and perhaps an odd fisherman who is watching nets. We can leave the boats at Tarichea. We shall be there at dawn and we will go away quickly beyond the ford. It is easy to wade it at this time of the year. »

« Very well. We will do that... »

« The world is disgusting You as well, eh? You prefer fish and mosquitoes, eh? You are right. »

« It does not disgust Me. One must not be disgusted. But I do not want you to stir up a scandal and I wish to find comfort in you on the Sabbath. »

« My Master!... » Peter kisses Jesus' forehead and goes away wiping a large tear that insisted in dropping out and streaming down to his beard. He goes back to his rudder heading south resolutely, while the moonlight fades as the planet sets behind a hill, concealing its huge face from the sight of men, but still making the sky white with its light and the lake silvery on the eastern coast. The rest is dark-indigo hardly distinguishable in the light of the prow lamp.

271. Speaking to a Scribe on the Banks of the Jordan.

6th September 1945.

When Jesus sets foot on the right bank of the Jordan, a good mile, probably more, from the little peninsula of Tarichea, where there is nothing but beautiful green country, because the ground, which is now dry, but moist in its depths, keeps also the weakest plants alive, He finds a large crowd waiting for Him.

His cousins come to meet Him with Simon Zealot: « Master, the boats have given us away... Perhaps Manaen also was a hint... »

« Master » says Manaen apologetically « I left at night so that no one could see me and I have not spoken to anyone. Believe me. Many of them asked me where You were. And my reply to everybody was: "He left". But I think the trouble was brought about by a fisherman who said that he had given You his boat... »

« That fool of my brother-in-law! » thunders Peter. « And I told him to keep his mouth shut! And I also said to him that we were going to Bethsaida! And I told him that if he said one word I would tear his beard off! And I will do it! I will, indeed. And what are we going to do now? That's the end of our peace, solitude and rest! »

« Be good, Simon, be good. We have already had our peaceful days. In any case I have attained part of what I intended: teach you, comfort and calm you to prevent offences and contrasts between you and the Pharisees of Capernaum. Now let us go to these people who are waiting for us, and reward their faith and love. Is their love not a relief, too? Hatred grieves us. But there is love here, so it is joy. »

Peter calms down like a wind that drops suddenly. And Jesus goes towards the crowd of sick people, who are waiting for Him so anxiously, that their desire seems engraved on their faces, and He heals them, one after the other, kindly, patiently. He goes also to a

scribe who shows his little sick son to Him.

And it is the scribe who says to Him: « See? You are running away. But it is useless. Hatred and love are shrewd in finding. In this case, love has found You, as it is written in the Song of Songs. You are like the Beloved of the Songs. And they come to You as the maid of Shulam goes to her bridegroom, facing patrol guards and Amminadib's quadrigae. »

« Why do you say that? »

« Because it is true. It is dangerous to come because You are hated. Do You not know that Rome is watching for You and the Temple hates You? »

« Why are you tempting Me, man? Your words are insidious, to take My answers back to Rome and to the Temple. I did not cure your son by deceit... »

The scribe, who has been reproached so gently, lowers his head confusedly and confesses: « I see that You can really read the hearts of men. Forgive me. I now see that You are truly holy. Forgive me, Yes, it is true, I came and the yeast that others put into my heart was fermenting within me... »

« And it had found in you the necessary heat to ferment. »

« Yes, it is true... But now I am going away without any such yeast. That is, with a new leaven. »

« I know. I bear no grudge. Many are at fault through their own will, many through the will of other people. God, Who is just will judge them with different measures. Scribe, be just and do not corrupt in future as you were corrupted. When the pressure of the world will be urging you, look at the living grace, which is your son, who was rescued from death, and be grateful to God. »

« To You. »

« To God. All glory and praise to Him. I am His Messiah and I am the first to praise and glorify Him. And the first to obey Him. Because man does not degrade himself by honouring and serving God in truth, but he lowers himself by serving sin. »

« You are right. Do You always speak thus? To everybody? »

« Yes, to everybody. If I spoke to Annas, or to Gamaliel, or to a begging leper on a country path, the words would be the same because one is the Truth. »

« Speak, then, because everybody here is begging for a word or a grace of Yours. »

« I will. So that nobody may say that I am biased against those who are honest in their convictions. »

« Those I had are now dead. But it is true. I was honest in mine. I believed that I was serving God by fighting You. »

« You are sincere. And that is why you deserve to understand God, Who is never falsehood. But your convictions are not yet dead. I am telling you. They are like burned couch-grass. They

seem to be dead superficially and have in fact received a hard blow that has exhausted them. But the roots are alive and the soil nourishes them. And the dew invites them to strike new rhizomes, which will emit fresh shoots. You must watch that that does not happen, otherwise you will be invaded once again by couch-grass. Israel is a die-hard! »

« So Israel must die? Is it a wicked plant? »

« It must die to rise again. »

« A spiritual reincarnation? »

« A spiritual evolution. There is no reincarnation of any kind. »

« Some believe in it. »

« They are wrong. »

« Hellenism has spread such beliefs also among us. And learned people feed on them and are proud of them as if they were a most noble nourishment. »

« An absurd contradiction in those who cry anathema when one of the minor sixhundred and thirteen precepts is neglected. »

« It is true. But that is how things are. People like to imitate even what they hate. »

« Well, imitate Me, seeing that you hate Me. And it would be better for you. »

The scribe cannot help laughing at Jesus' witty remark. The people are listening open-mouthed and those who are farther away ask those who are near Jesus and the scribe to repeat their words.

« But, in confidence, what do You think of reincarnation? »

« That it is an error. I told you. »

« There are some who maintain that the living originate from the dead and the dead from the living, because what exists cannot be destroyed. »

« In fact, what is eternal cannot be destroyed. But tell Me. According to you, has the Creator limitations to Himself? »

« No, Master. To think that would be an abatement. »

« You are right. Can, then, one think that He allows a spirit to reincarnate because no more than so many spirits can exist? »

« One should not think so. Yet there are some who believe it. »

« And what is worse, Israel believes it. The thought of the immortality of the spirit, which is already a great one, even if it is joined to the error of a wrong evaluation by a pagan as to how such immortality takes place, ought to be perfect in an Israelite. Instead it becomes a small, low, guilty thought in those who believe in it in the terms of the heathen thesis. It is not the glory of a thought, which proves itself worthy of admiration by coming close to the Truth by itself and which therefore testifies to the composite nature of man, as it is in heathens, because of their intuition of an eternal life of the mysterious thing that is called soul and distinguishes us from brutes. But it is a, degradation of the

thought, which being acquainted with Divine Wisdom and the True God, becomes materialistic even in so highly a spiritual thing. A spirit transmigrates only from the Creator to the being and from the being to the Creator, to Whom it presents itself after this life to receive a sentence of life or of death. That is the truth. And it remains for ever where it is sent. »

« Do You not admit Purgatory? »

« Yes, I do. Why do you ask Me? »

« Because You say: "It remains where it is sent". Purgatory is temporary. »

« That is why in My thought I assimilate it to eternal Life. Purgatory is already "life". Stunned, tied, but always vital. After the temporary stay in Purgatory, the spirit reaches perfect Life, without any limitation or ties. Two things will remain: Heaven the Abyss. Paradise - Hell. Two categories: the blessed - the damned. But from those three kingdoms that now exist, no spirit will ever come to clothe itself with flesh. And that until the final resurrection, which will end for ever the incarnation of spirits in flesh, of the immortal in the mortal. »

« Not of the eternal? »

« God is Eternal. Eternity is to have no beginning and no end. And that is God. Immortality is to continue to live since when life began. And that is the spirit of man. That is the difference. »

« You say: "Eternal Life". »

« Yes. From the moment man is created to live, because of his spirit, through Grace and his own will, he can reach eternal Life. Not eternity. Life implies a beginning. We do not say "the Life of God", because God had no beginning. »

« And what about Yourself? »

« I will live because I am also flesh and to My divine spirit I joined the soul of the Christ in the flesh of man. »

« God is called the "Living God". »

« In fact He does not know death. He is Life. The endless Life. Not Life of God. Just Life. Only that. They are nuances, o scribe. But Wisdom and Truth clothe themselves in nuances. »

« Do You speak thus to Gentiles? »

« No. They would not understand. I show them the Sun. But as I would show it to a boy, so far blind and silly, who had miraculously recovered sight and intelligence. Thus: like a star. Without going into the details of its composition. But you people of Israel are neither blind nor fools. For ages the finger of God has opened your eyes and cleared your minds... »

« That is true, Master. And yet we are blind and foolish. »

« You have made yourselves such. And you do not want the miracle of Him Who loves you. »

« Master... »

« It is the truth, scribe. »

The man lowers his head and is silent. Jesus leaves him and passes by and while doing so He caresses Marjiam and the scribe's little boy, who are playing with many-coloured pebbles. Rather than preach He talks to this or that group. But He is continuously preaching as He resolves doubts, clarifies ideas, He sums up or expands on things already said or concepts only partly remembered by someone. And the hours go by thus...

272. First Miracle of the Loaves.

7th September 1945.

The place is still the same. But the sun no longer shines from the east filtering through the undergrowth along the Jordan in this wild place where the water of the lake flows into the river bed. It shines, equally obliquely, from the west, while setting in a glorious red sky, streaked by its last rays. Under the thick foliage the light is quite moderate, tending to the peaceful evening hues. The birds, exhilarated by the sunshine they enjoyed all day and by the plentiful food they picked in the neighbouring country, are making an uproar of trills and songs on tree-tops. Evening is approaching with the final pomp of the day.

The apostles point it out to Jesus, Who always teaches according to the subjects presented to Him. « Master, evening is approaching. This is a desert place, far from houses and villages, it is shady and damp. In a short while it will not be possible to see or walk here. The moon rises late. Dismiss the people so that they may go to Tarichea or other villages along the Jordan to buy food and find lodgings. »

« They need not go. Give them something to eat. They can sleep here as they did when waiting for Me. »

« Master, You know that there are only five loaves left and two fish. »

« Bring them to Me. »

« Andrew, go and look for the boy. He is looking after the bag. A little while ago he was with the scribe's son and two more boys, intent on making garlands of flowers and playing at kings. »

Andrew goes away at once. John and Philip also look for Marjiam among the crowds, who continuously change place. They find him almost simultaneously, with the bag of victuals across his back, a large shoot of clematis around his head and a belt of clematis, from which an offshoot hangs, as a sword, the top being the hilt, the long stem its blade. There are seven boys with him, all wearing the same decorations, paying court to the scribe's son, a very thin child, with the grave countenance of one who has suffered very much, who is adorned with flowers more than the

others and plays the king.

« Come, Marjiam. The Master wants you! »

Marjiam leaves his friends and runs away without taking off his... floral insignia. But the other boys follow him and Jesus is soon surrounded by a circle of children wreathed with flowers. He caresses them while Philip takes a parcel out of the bag containing some loaves, which are wrapped together with two big fish: two kilograms of fish, or little more. They would not suffice for the seventeen people, nay eighteen, including Manaen, of Jesus' group. They take the food to the Master.

« Very well. Now bring Me some baskets. Seventeen, as many as you are. Marjiam will hand the food to the children... » Jesus stares at the scribe who has always been near Him and asks: « Will you give food to the hungry people, too? »

« I would like to. But I have none myself. »

« Give Mine. I will let you have it. »

« But... are You going to satisfy five thousand men, besides women and children, with those two fish and the five loaves? » « Undoubtedly. Do not be incredulous. Those who believe will see the miracle being accomplished. »

« Oh! In that case I want to hand out the food, too! »

« Then, get someone to give you a basket as well. »

The apostles come back with baskets and hand-baskets, some of which are low and wide, others are deep and narrow. The scribe comes back with a rather small one. Obviously his faith or his incredulity made him pick that one as the largest required.

« Good. Leave everything here. Now get the crowds to sit in an orderly way, in rows, as far as possible. »

And while they do that Jesus raises the loaves with the fish on top of them, offers them, prays and blesses them. The scribe does not take his eyes off Him for a moment. Jesus breaks the five loaves into eighteen parts; He makes also eighteen parts of the two fish, and puts a bit of fish: a tiny bit indeed, into each basket. He then breaks each of the eighteen bits of bread into morsels: each bit into many morsels. Relatively many; about twenty, not more. He then puts each bit which He has broken into morsels, into a basket, with the bit of fish.

« Now take them and hand the food out to satiety. Go. Marjiam, hand the food out to your companions. »

« Ah! How heavy it is! » says Marjiam lifting his basket. He goes at once towards his little friends, walking like one who carries a heavy weight.

The apostles, disciples, Manaen, the scribe watch him go incredulously... They then pick up their baskets and shaking their heads they say to one another: « The boy is joking! They are the same weight as before. » And the scribe looks inside his basket,

puts his hand into it searching for the bottom, because it is getting dark in the thicket where Jesus is, whereas farther away, in the glade, it is clear. However, notwithstanding their remarks, they go towards the people and begin to hand the food out. And they distribute... Now and again they look back at Jesus thoroughly astonished, as they move farther and farther away, and the Master leaning against a tree with folded arms, smiles subtly at their astonishment.

The distribution takes a long time and is plentiful... the only one who show no surprise is Marjiam, who smiles and is happy to be able to fill the laps of so many poor children with bread and fish. He is also the first to go back to Jesus saying: « I have dealt out so much, so much!... because I know what it is to be hungry... » and he raises his little face, which is no longer emaciated, but, remembering, it blanches with wide open eyes... But Jesus caresses him and a bright smile appears on his face, while he leans trustfully against Jesus, His Master and Protector.

The apostles and disciples come back slowly, dumbfounded with amazement. Last is the scribe who says nothing. But he makes a gesture that is more than a sermon. He kneels down and kisses the hem of Jesus' tunic.

« Take your share and give Me some. Let us eat the food of God. »

They eat, in fact, bread and fish, each according to his need...

In the meantime the people, who are now sated, exchange their impressions. Also those around Jesus make their comments watching Marjiam who finishes his food and plays with other children.

« Master » asks the scribe, « why did the boy feel the weight at once, and we did not? I searched also inside. There were still the few morsels of bread and the only bit of fish. I began to feel the weight when I moved towards the crowd. But if it had weighed for what I gave out, it would have taken a pair of mules to carry it, not a basket, but a wagon packed with food. At the beginning I was dealing it out sparingly... but later I gave and gave... and as I did not want to be unfair, I went back to the first ones and gave them more, because I had given them little at first. And yet it was enough. »

« I also felt the basket was getting heavy when I set out, and I gave plenty at once because I realised that You had worked a miracle » says John.

« I, instead, stopped, I sat down and poured everything on my lap to see... And I saw loaves and loaves. I then went on » says Manaen.

« I even counted them, because I did not want to cut a bad figure. There were fifty small loaves. So I said: I will give them to fifty people and then I will go back ». And I counted. But when I got to fifty, the weight was still the same. I looked inside. They were so

many. I went on and I handed out hundreds of them. They never diminished says Bartholomew.

« I, I must admit it, I did not believe, and I took the morsels of bread and the bit of fish in my hand and I looked at them saying: "What's the use of them? Jesus must have been joking!... " and I looked at them over and over again, hiding behind a tree, hoping and despairing to see them grow. But they were always the same. I was about to come back, when Matthew passed by saying: "Have you noticed how beautiful they are?". "What?" I asked him. "The loaves and fish!... "Are you mad? I can only see morsels of bread". "Go and hand them out with faith, and you will see". I threw back into the basket the few morsels and I went reluctantly... And then... Forgive me, Jesus, because I am a sinner! » says Thomas.

« No. You are a worldly spirit. You reason according to the world. »

« I as well, Lord. So much so that I was thinking of giving a coin with the bread and I said to myself: "They will eat somewhere else" » says the Iscariot. « I was hoping to help You cut a finer figure. So what am I? Like Thomas or more? »

« You are much more "worldly" than Thomas. »

« And yet I was thinking of giving alms to be "heavenly"! It was my own personal money... »

« Alms to yourself, to your pride. And alms to God. But the Latter does not need them and it is a sin to give alms to your pride, not a merit. »

Judas lowers his head and becomes silent.

« I, instead, thought that I had to crumble the morsel of fish and the morsel of bread, so that they would suffice. I did not doubt they would be sufficient, both with regard to numbers and nourishment. A drop of water given by You can be more nourishing than a banquet » says Simon Zealot.

« And what did you think? » Peter asks Jesus' cousins.

« We remembered Cana... and did not doubt » replies Judas gravely.

« And you, James, My dear brother, were you only thinking of that? »

« No, I thought it was a sacrament, as You told me... Is it so or am I wrong? »

Jesus smiles: « It is and it is not. Your thought of a remote figure is to be added to the truth concerning the power of nourishment in a drop of water, mentioned by Simon. But it is not yet a sacrament. »

The scribe is holding a crumb in his hand.

« What are you going to do with it? »

« A... souvenir. »

« I will keep one too. I will put it round Marjiam's neck in a little bag » says Peter.

« And I will take it to our mother » says John.

« And what about us? We have eaten it all... » say the others sorrowfully.

« Stand up. Go round again with the baskets and collect the scraps remaining, select the poorest people and bring them here with the baskets. And then, you, My disciples, will go to the boats and set sail going to the plain of Gennesaret. I will dismiss the crowds after assisting the poorer people and I will join you later. »

The apostles obey... and they come back with twelve baskets full of remnants of food and followed by about thirty beggars or very poor people.

« Very well. You may go now. »

The apostles and John's disciples say goodbye to Manaen and go away leaving Jesus rather reluctantly. But they obey. Manaen stays with Jesus until the crowd, in the last light of the day, set out towards villages or look for a place where to sleep among the tall dry bog grass. He then takes leave of the Master. The scribe has gone before him, in fact he was one of the first, as he left with his son following the apostles.

When they have all gone or fallen asleep, Jesus stands up, blesses the sleepers, and walking with slow steps He goes towards the lake, to the little peninsula of Tarichea, a few yards above the lake, like an indented hill protruding on it. And when He reaches the foot of it, without entering the town, but going round it, He climbs the hill, and stops on a crest, praying in front of the blue lake and in the peace of the serene moonlit night.

Jesus says: « You will put here the vision dated March 4th 1944: Jesus walks on the water. »

273. Jesus Walks on the Water.

4th March 1944.

It is late in the evening, almost night, because I can hardly see on the path that climbs up a hillock studded with trees, which I think are olives. But the light is so faint that I am not sure. The trees are not tall, but they are leafy and twisted, characteristically olive.

Jesus is alone. He is wearing a white tunic and a dark blue mantle. He climbs and enters the grove. He is striding resolutely. He is not walking fast, but as He strides, He goes a long way without rushing. He walks until He reaches a kind of natural balcony overlooking the lake, which is peaceful and quiet in the light of the stars already crowding the sky like bright eyes. Silence surrounds

Jesus with its restful embrace. It detaches Him from the crowds and from the earth, making Him forget them and uniting Him to the sky, which seems to descend to worship the Word of God and caress Him with the light of its stars.

He is praying in His habitual posture: standing with His arms stretched out crosswise. There is an olive-tree behind Him and He seems to be already crucified to its dark trunk. Tall as He is, the leafy branches are only a little above Him and they replace the inscription on the Cross with a word consonant to the Christ. There: « King of the Jews ». Here: « Prince of Peace ». The peaceful olivetree speaks the truth to those who can understand it. He prays for a long time. He then sits at the foot of the tree, on a thick protruding root, and assumes His habitual attitude with His hands interlocked and His elbows resting on His knees. He meditates. I wonder into which conversation He falls with His Father and the Spirit, now that He is alone and can be entirely of God. God with God!

I think that many hours go by thus because I see that stars have changed their position and many have already set in the west.

Just when the appearance of light, or rather of luminosity, because it cannot be called light as yet, becomes visible on the remote eastern horizon, a puff of wind shakes the olive-tree. It calms down. It resumes blowing and is stronger and becomes more and more violent at short intervals. The light of dawn, which has just begun, finds it difficult to make its way because of a mass of dark clouds, which have invaded the sky, driven by stronger and stronger gusts of wind. The lake is no longer calm either. I think it is preparing a storm like that I already saw in the vision of the tempest. The noise of the leafy branches and the roar of the water now fill the air, which a little while ago was so calm.

Jesus is roused from His meditation. He stands up and looks at the lake. He scans it in the light of the remaining stars and of the poor sickly dawn and sees the boat of Peter, which is striving hard to reach the opposite shore, but cannot make it. Jesus pulls His mantle tight around Himself, lifting over His head, as if it were a hood, the hanging hem, which would hinder His descent, and runs down, not the road He came up, but a very steep path, which takes one straight to the lake. He runs so fast that He seems to be flying.

When He reaches the shore lashed by the waves, which leave on the shingle an edge of fluffy rustling foam, He continues to walk fast, as if He were treading not on a restlessly tossing liquid element, but on the smoothest most solid pavement on the earth. He now becomes light. All the faint light that still comes from the few dying stars and the stormy dawn seems to converge on Him, gathering like phosphorescence round His slender body. He flies over the waves, the foamy crests and the dark folds between the

waves, with His arms stretched forward, while His mantle swells around His cheeks and flaps as much as possible, tight as it is around His body, like a wing.

The apostles see Him and utter a cry of fear, which the wind carries towards Jesus.

« Be not afraid. It is I. » Jesus' voice, although the wind is against Him, carries clearly over the lake.

« Is it really You, Master? » asks Peter. « If it is You, tell me to come and meet You, walking on the water like You. »

Jesus smiles: « Come » He says simply, as if to indicate that to walk on the water were the most natural thing in the world.

And Peter, half naked as he is, that is wearing only a short sleeveless tunic, jumps overboard and walks towards Jesus.

But when he is about fifty yards from the boat and as many from Jesus, he is seized with fear. So far his love impetus supported him. Now his human nature overwhelms him and... he fears for his own skin. Like one who is on a slippery ground, or better still, on quicksands, he begins to stagger, to grope, to sink. And the more he gropes and fears, the more he sinks.

Jesus has stopped and looks at him. He is serious and waits. But He does not stretch even one hand; His arms are folded and He does not take one step or utter one word.

Peter is sinking. His malleoli, shins, knees disappear. The water reaches up to his inguen, rises above it, up to his waist. Terror is on his face. Terror paralyses also his thoughts. He is nothing but flesh afraid of sinking. He does not even think of swimming. Nothing. He is hebetated by fear.

At last he decides to look at Jesus. And as soon as he looks at Him, his mind begins to reason and see where salvation is. « Master, my Lord, save me. »

Jesus opens His arms and as if He were carried by the wind or by the waves, He rushes towards the apostle and holds out His hand saying: « Oh! what a man of little faith. Why did you doubt Me? Why did you want to do it by yourself? »

Peter who had clutched convulsively at Jesus' hand, does not reply. He looks at Him only to ascertain whether He is angry, with a mixture of remaining fear and rising repentance.

But Jesus smiles at him and holds him firmly by the wrist, until they reach the boat and step overboard into it. Then Jesus orders: « Go to the shore. He is soaked through. » And He smiles looking at the mortified disciple.

The waves smooth down making it easy to land and the town seen in the past from the height of a hill now looms beyond the shore.

The vision ends here.

Jesus says:

« Many times I do not even wait to be called, when I see My children in danger. And many times I rush to help a son who is ungrateful to Me.

You are asleep or you are seized by the worries and anxieties of life. I watch and pray for you. I am the Angel of all men and I look after you and nothing grieves Me more than the impossibility of interference because you refuse My intervention, because you prefer to act on your own, or, worse still, you ask the Evil one to help you. Like a father who hears his son say to him: "I do not love you. I do not want you. Go out of my house", I am mortified and I suffer more than I did because of My wounds. But if you do not say to Me: "Go away", and you are absent-minded only because of the worries of life, then I am the Eternal Watchman ready to come even before he is called. And if I wait for you to say a word, as I sometimes do, it is only to hear you call Me.

How pleasant, how sweet it is to hear men call Me. To hear that they remember that I am the "Saviour". I will not mention the infinite joy that pervades and exalts Me when there is someone who loves Me and calls Me without being in need. He calls Me because he loves Me more than he loves anybody else in the world and is filled with joy, as I am, only by calling: "Jesus, Jesus", as children call: "Mummy, mummy" and they taste the sweetness of honey on their lips, because the simple word "mummy" has in itself the taste of motherly kisses.

The apostles were rowing obeying My order to go and wait for Me at Capernaum. And I, after the miracle of the loaves, went away from the crowds, all alone, not because I disdained them or because I was tired. I never disdained men, not even when they were bad to Me. I became indignant only when I saw the Law trampled or the house of God desecrated. But then the interests of the Father were involved, not I. And I was on the earth as the first of the servants of God, to serve the Father of Heaven. I was never tired in devoting Myself to the crowds, even when I saw them so dull, sluggish and human as to dishearten even those who had most confidence in their mission. Nay, just because they were so deficient I multiplied My lesson infinitely, I treated them exactly as backward pupils and I guided their spirits in the most elementary discoveries and initiations, just as a patient master guides the inexpert hands of pupils to form the first letters and thus enable them to understand and write. How much love have I given to crowds! I took them by the flesh to lead them to the spirit. I began from the flesh as well. But while Satan through it leads to Hell, I led to Heaven.

I wanted to be all alone to thank the Father for the miracle of the loaves. Thousands of people had been fed. And I exhorted them to

say: "Thanks" to the Lord. But once a man has been helped, he forgets to say "thanks". I said it on their behalf. And afterwards... And afterwards I had merged with My Father, for Whose love I was infinitely sick. I was on the earth, but like a lifeless hide. My soul was thrust towards My Father, Whom I felt leaning on His Word, and I said to Him: "I love You, Holy Father!". It was a joy to Me to say to Him: "I love You". To say so as a Man besides as God. I humiliated My feelings as Man, as I offered Him My palpitation as God. I seemed to be the magnet that attracted all the love of men, of men capable of loving God a little and that I gathered all such love and offered it from the bottom of My Heart. I seemed to be the only one to exist: I, the Man, that is the human race, conversing once again with God, in the cool of the evening, as on the innocent days.

But although My blessedness was complete, because it was a blessedness of love, it did not abstract Me from the needs of men. And I became aware of the danger of My children on the lake. And I left Love for the sake of love. Charity must be speedy.

They took Me for a ghost. Oh! how often, My poor children, you take Me for a ghost, for a frightening object! If you always thought of Me, you would know Me at once. But you have other ghosts in your hearts, and that makes you dizzy. But I make Myself known. Oh! if you only listened to Me!

Why was Peter sinking after walking so far? You said it: because his human nature overwhelmed his spirit.

Peter was very much a "man". Had it been John, he would not have dared immoderately, neither would he have changed his mind. Purity grants prudence and strength. But Peter was "man" in the full meaning of the word. He was anxious to excel, to show that "nobody" loves the Master as he does, he wanted to impose himself, and only because he was one of Mine, he thought he was above the weakness of the flesh. Instead, poor Simon, his results, when he was tested, were far from being sublime. But it was necessary, that he might be later the one who was to perpetuate the mercy of the Master in the dawning Church.

Peter is not only overwhelmed by fear for his endangered life, but, as you said, he becomes nothing but "trembling flesh". He no longer thinks, he no longer looks at Me. You all do the same. The more impending is the danger, the more you want to do things by yourselves. As if you were able to do things! You never go away from Me, or close your hearts to Me or even curse Me, as in the hours when you ought to hope in Me and call Me. Peter does not curse Me. But he forgets Me and I have to impose My will to call his spirit to Me, so that he may look at his Master and Saviour.

I absolve him beforehand of his sin of doubt, because I love him, as this impulsive man, once he is confirmed in grace, will be able to

proceed without any further perturbation or tiredness as far as martyrdom, and will be indefatigable in casting his mystical net to take souls to his Master. And when he invokes Me, I do not walk, I fly to help him and I hold him tight to lead him to salvation. My reproach is a mild one because I understand the extenuating circumstances of Peter. I am the best advocate and judge there is and there has ever been. On behalf of everybody.

I understand you, My poor children! And even when I say a word of reproach, My smile mitigates it. I love you. That is all. I want you to have faith. And if you do have it, I will come and take you out of danger. Oh! if the Earth could say: "Master, Lord, save me!". One cry, of the whole Earth, would be enough, and Satan and his sectarians would be immediately defeated. But you do not know how to have faith. I am multiplying the means to lead you to faith. But they fall into your slime as a stone falls into the slime of a marsh and are buried there.

You do not want to purify the water of your souls, you prefer to be putrid filth. It does not matter. I do My duty as the Eternal Saviour. And even if I cannot save the world because the world does not want to be saved, I will save from the world those who in order to love Me, as I am to be loved, are no longer of the world. »

274. The Deeds of Corporal and Spiritual Mercy.

8th September 1945.

Jesus is in the Korazim plain, along the upper Jordan valley, between the lakes of Gennesaret and Merom. The country is covered with vineyards and it is already vintage time.

He must have been there for some days, because the disciples who were at Sicaminon have joined Him this morning, and among them there is Stephen with Hermas. Isaac apologises for not coming earlier, because, he says, the new disciples and his uncertainty whether he should bring them or not caused the delay. « But » he says « I thought that the way to Heaven is open to all those of good will and these two, although they are pupils of Gamaliel, seem to be so. »

« You are right and you have done the right thing. Bring them here. »

Isaac goes away and comes back with the two disciples.

« Peace to you. Has the apostolic word seemed so true to you that you have decided to join it? »

« Yes, and Yours above all. Do not send us away, Master. »

« Why should I? »

« Because we are disciples of Gamaliel. »

« So what? I honour the great Gamaliel and I would like him to be with Me, because he is worthy of it. That is all he lacks to make his

wisdom perfect. What did he say to you when you left him? Because you certainly said goodbye to him. »

« Yes, he said to us: "You are lucky that you can believe. Pray that I may forget in order to remember. »

The apostles who have gathered round Jesus inquisitively, look at one another and ask whispering: « What does he mean? What does he want? To forget in order to remember? »

Jesus hears their whispering and explains: « He wants to forget his wisdom to take on Mine. He wants to forget that he is rabbi Gamaliel to remember that he is a son of Israel awaiting the Christ. He wants to forget himself, to remember the Truth. »

« Gamaliel is not untruthful, Master » replies Hermas apologetically.

« No, he is not. But it is the medley of poor human words which is untruthful. Words taking the place of the Word. You must forget them, divesting yourselves of them and come to the Truth as pure as virgins in order to be reclothed and fecundated. Humility is required for that. The difficulty... »

« Then, we must forget as well? »

« Undoubtedly. You must forget everything pertaining to man. And remember what pertains to God. Come. You can do it. »

« We want to do it » confirms Hermas.

« Have you already lived as disciples? »

« Yes, we have. Since the day we heard the Baptist had been killed. The news spread very rapidly in Jerusalem, where it was brought by Herod's courtiers and commanders. His death roused us from our torpidity » replies Stephen.

« The blood of martyrs is always a new life for torpid people, Stephen. Remember that. »

« Yes, Master. Will You speak today? I hunger for Your word. »

« I have already spoken. But I will speak again, and very much, to you disciples. Your companions, the apostles, have already begun their mission, after due preparation. But they are not sufficient for the needs of the world. And everything is to be done in good time. I am like one who has an expiry date and must do everything within that date. I ask you all to help Me, and in the name of God I promise you help and a glorious future. »

Jesus' keen eyes discovers a man completely enveloped in a linen mantle: « Are you not John, the priest? »

« Yes, Master. The hearts of the Jews are more arid than the cursed large valley. I ran away looking for You. »

« And your priesthood? »

« Leprosy expelled me from it the first time. Men, the second time, because I love You. Your Grace draws me to itself: to You. It expels me as well, from a desecrated place to a pure one. You have purified me, Master, both in my body and in my soul. And what is

pure cannot and must not approach what is impure. It would be an offence to Him, Who purified. »

« Your judgement is severe, but not unfair. »

« Master, unpleasant family matters are known to those who live in the family and should be mentioned only to righteous-minded people. You are so, and in any case You know. I would not tell anybody else. Here we are: You, the apostles, I and two who know as well as You and I do. So... »

« All right. But... Oh! You are here, too? Peace be with you. Have you come to hand out more food? »

« No, I came to have some of Your food. »

« Have your crops been spoiled? »

« Oh! no. They have never been so plentiful. But, my Master, I am looking for another bread and a different crop: Yours. And I brought with me the leper whom You cured in my fields. He came back to his master. But both he and I have a master to follow and serve: You. »

« Come: one, two, three, four... A good harvest! But have you taken into consideration your position at the Temple? You know, and I know... and I will say no more. »

« I am a free man and I go with whomever I wish » says John, the priest.

« So am I » says the last arrival: John, the scribe, who dealt out the food at the foot of the Mount of Beatitudes on the Sabbath.

« And we are free, too » state Hermas and Stephen.

And Stephen adds: « Speak to us, Lord. We do not know what our mission exactly consists in. Give us the least necessary to enable us to serve You at once. The rest will come as we follow You. »

« Yes. On the mountain You spoke of the beatitudes. And that was a lesson for us. But what are we to do with regard to other people, in our second love, the love for our neighbour? » asks John, the scribe.

« Where is John of Endor? » is Jesus' only answer.

« He is over there, Master, with the people who have been cured. »

« Let him come here. »

John of Endor goes at once. Jesus lays His hand on John's shoulder as a special greeting and says: « Here you are. I will now speak. But I want you, who bear a holy name, to be in front of Me. You, My apostle; you, a priest; you, a scribe; You, John of the Baptist; and finally, you, to complete the sequence of graces granted by God. And if you are the last one to be mentioned by Me, you know that you are not the last one in My heart. One day I promised you this speech. You will now have it. »

And Jesus, as He is wont, climbs a little mound, so that everybody may see Him, and the five Johns are in the first row, in front of Him. Behind them there is a group of disciples mingled

with the crowds who have come from every part of Palestine seeking health or doctrine.

« May peace be with you all and wisdom upon you.

Listen. One day, a long time ago, a man asked Me whether and to what extent is God merciful towards sinners. It was a sinner who asked that question, and although he had been forgiven he could not believe that God had forgiven him completely. And I soothed his anxiety by means of parables, I assured and promised him that for his sake I would always speak of mercy, so that his repentant heart, which wept within him like a lost child, should feel sure of being already in the possessions of his Father in Heaven.

God is Mercy because God is Love. A servant of God must be merciful to imitate God.

God makes use of mercy to attract to Himself His children led astray. A servant of God must make use of mercy as a means of taking misguided men back to God.

The precept of love is compulsory for everybody. But it must be three times so in the servants of God. No one will conquer Heaven if one does not love. That is all that is necessary to say to believers. But to the servants of God I say: "You cannot make believers conquer Heaven if you do not love them with perfect love". And who are you, who are crowding here around Me? Most of you are children of God aiming at perfect life, at the blessed, hard, bright life of the servant of God and minister of the Christ. And which are your duties in such lives of servants and ministers? Complete love for God and complete love for your neighbour. Your aim is to serve. How? Taking back to God those whom the world, flesh, the demon have stolen from God. By which means? By love. Love, which can be active in a thousand ways, and has but one purpose: to make people love.

Let us consider our beautiful Jordan. How imposing it is at Jericho! But was it like that at its sources? No. It was just a trickle of water and would have remained such if it had always been alone. Instead from the mountains and hills on both sides of its valley, thousands of tributaries, either alone or made up by many rivulets, flow into its bed, and it grows more and more from the little silvery blue stream so pleasant and joyful in its infancy until it becomes the large solemn placid river, flowing like a sky-blue ribbon between its fertile emerald banks.

Such is love. It is initially a tiny stream among the infants on the Way of Life, who can just avoid grave sins for fear of punishment, but subsequently, as they proceed on the way to perfection, many brooks of this main virtue, by will of love, appear from the rugged, arid, proud, harsh mountains of mankind and everything helps to make it rise and gush out: sorrows and joy, just as upon the mountains the frozen snow and the sun melting it, form rivers.

Everything helps to open the way for them: humility as well as repentance. Everything serves to convey them to the initial river. Because a soul, thrust onto that Way, loves to have its ego destroyed, and aspires to rise again drawn by the Sun-God, after becoming a beautiful, mighty, beneficial river.

The brooks that nourish the embryonic stream of awesome love, are, besides virtues, the deeds that virtues teach men to accomplish: deeds, which being streams of love, are deeds of mercy. Let us consider them together. Some were already known to Israel, some will be made known to you by Me, because My law is the perfection of love.

To feed the hungry.

It is a duty of gratitude and love. And a duty of imitation. Children are grateful to their father for the bread he procures for them. And when they are grown into men, they imitate him by procuring with their work bread for their own sons and for their father, by now unable to work, because of his age, an affectionate fair return of the good received. The fourth commandment states: "Honour your father and mother". One honours their old age by ensuring they do not have to beg for bread of others. But the first commandment comes before the fourth: "Love God with your whole being" and the second: "Love your neighbours as you love yourself". To love God in Himself and to love Him in one's neighbour is to be perfect. One loves Him by giving bread to those who are hungry, remembering how many times He appeased man's hunger through miracles.

But without taking into account the gifts of manna and quails, let us consider the continuous miracle of corn, which germinates through the bounty of God Who gave men lands suitable to be cultivated and He adjusts and control winds, rain, heat, seasons, so that the seed may become an ear of wheat and the wheat bread. And was it not a miracle of His mercy the fact that by supernatural light He taught His guilty child that the tall slender grass, ending in golden ears of seed smelling of the warm sun, enclosed in a hard cover of thorny scales, was food, which man had to pick, hull, pulverise, knead and bake? God taught man all that. And He taught him how to pick it, husk it, pound it, knead and bake it. He placed stones near the ears and water near the stone and by means of the reflection of water and sun He lit the first fire on the earth and the wind blew onto the fire some grains of wheat which were roasted smelling pleasantly, so that man might understand that wheat is better when toasted by fire, than as it is in the ear, as birds eat it, or soaked in water, after being pulverised, as a sticky mash. Now that you eat the good bread baked in the family oven, do you not consider how much mercy is shown by the achievement of so much perfection in baking, and how much progress human

knowledge has made from the first ear chewed as horses do, to the bread of today? And by whom? By the Giver of bread. And the same applies to all kinds of food, which man, through beneficent enlightenment, has been able to single out among the plants and animals, which the Creator spread over the earth, a place of fatherly punishment for His guilty child.

Thus, to give something to eat to the hungry is a prayer of gratitude to the Lord and Father, Who satisfies our hunger, and it is imitating the Father, Whose likeness was gratuitously granted to us, and which we must continuously increase by imitating His action.

To give drink to the thirsty.

Have you ever thought what would happen if the Father did not let rain fall on the earth? And if He said: "Because of your harsh unkindness towards the thirsty I will stop clouds from descending upon the earth" could we protest and curse? Water, more than wheat, belongs to God. Because wheat is cultivated by man, but only God cultivates the fields of clouds, which descend as rain or dew, fog or snow, nourishing fields and cisterns, filling rivers and lakes, giving shelter to fish, which appease man's hunger with other animals. If someone asks you: "Give me a drink" can you say to him: "No. This water is mine and I will not let you have it"? Liars! Which of you made a snowflake or one single drop of rain? Which of you evaporated a dew-diamond with his astral heat? No one. It is God Who does that. And if water descends from the sky and re-ascends there, it is only because God controls that part of creation as He controls the rest.

Give, therefore, the good cool water of the springs of the earth, or the pure water of your well, or the water that filled your cisterns, to those who are thirsty. It is the water of God. And it is for everybody. Give it to the thirsty. For such a small deed, which costs you no money and involves no work except the handing of a cup or a jug, I tell you that you will receive a reward in Heaven. Because, not the water, but the charitable action is great in the eyes and judgement of God.

To clothe the poor.

Nude, shameful, pitiful miseries pass along the roads of the earth: forlorn old people, people disabled by disease or misfortune, lepers coming back to life through the Lord's bounty, widows laden with children, people deprived of every comfort by mishaps, innocent little orphans. If My eyes scan the vast earth, I can see everywhere people who are naked or covered with rags, which hardly protect their decency but do not shelter them from the cold. And all those poor people look with downcast eyes at the wealthy people who pass by wearing soft garments and comfortable shoes. Downcast eyes and kindness in good people, downcast

eyes and hatred in those who are not so good. Why do you not assist their dejection, making the good ones better, by means of your love, and destroying hatred in those who are less good?

Do not say: "I have only enough for myself". As in the case of bread, there is always something more than what is necessary on the tables and in the wardrobes of people who are not entirely forsaken. Among those who are now listening to Me, there is more than one who from a cast-off garment made clothes for an orphan or a poor boy and out of an old bed-sheet made swaddling-bands for an innocent baby who had none and there is one, a beggar, who for years shared the bread begged for with so much difficulty, with a leper who could not go and beg for it at the doorstep of rich people. And I solemnly tell you that such merciful people are not found among the wealthy, but among the poor humble classes who know by their own experience how painful is poverty.

Here again, as for water and bread, consider that wool and linen with which you dress yourselves, come from animals and plants, which the Father created not only for the rich, but for all men. Because God gave man only one wealth: His Grace, health and intelligence. Not the filthy wealth, which is gold, elevated by you to a useless nobility, whilst as a metal it is not more beautiful than any other and it is much more useless than iron, with which you make spades and ploughs, harrows and sickles, chisels, hammers, saws and planes, the holy tools for holy work. And you elevated it to false nobility through the instigation of Satan, who has made you, the children of God, as wild as beasts. God had given you the riches of what is holy to make you more and more holy! Not this murderous wealth, which sheds so much blood and so many tears.

And give as it was given to you. Give in the name of the Lord, without being afraid of remaining naked. It would be better to die of cold, after stripping yourselves in favour of a beggar, than chill your hearts, even if clad in soft garments, through lack of charity. The warmth of a good action accomplished is more pleasant than the comfort of a mantle of pure wool and the clad bodies of poor people speak to God saying: "Bless those who have clothed us".

If to satisfy people's hunger and quench their thirst and clothe the poor joins holy temperance and blessed justice to most holy charity, so that the destiny of our unhappy brothers is modified through our holiness, when we give what we abound in, with God's leave, on behalf of those who are deprived of it through the wickedness of man or through diseases, to give hospitality to pilgrims joins charity to confidence and to the esteem of our neighbour. And that is a virtue, too, you know. A virtue that denotes honesty, besides charity, in those who possess it. Because he who is honest acts righteously, and as we generally think that

other people act as we do, so the confidence and simplicity believing that the words of other people are true, show that he who listens to them is one who speaks the truth in important and small matters and does not distrust what other people tell him.

Why should one think of the pilgrim who is asking for shelter: "And what about if he is a thief or a murderer?". Are you so attached to your wealth, as to be afraid, because of it, of every stranger who arrives at your house? Are you so attached to your lives as to shudder with horror at the thought of being deprived of them? What? Do you think that God cannot defend you from robbers? What? Are you afraid that a passer-by may be a robber, and you are not afraid of the evil guest who robs you of what cannot be replaced? How many give hospitality to the demon in their hearts! I could say: everybody shelters capital sin, yet nobody fears that. Are wealth and life the only valuable things? Is perhaps eternity not more valuable since you allow sin to rob you of it and kill it? O poor souls, robbed of their treasure and handed over to killers, as if they were trifles, whilst houses are locked and bolted, protecting with dogs and safes things that we cannot take with us when we die!

Why should we see a robber in every pilgrim? We are all brothers. Houses should be open to brothers passing by. Is a pilgrim not of our same blood? Of course he is! He is of the blood of Adam and Eve. Is he not our brother? Why not? The Father is one only: God, Who has given each of us an identical soul, as the father only gives the children of the same marriage the same blood. Is he poor? Ensure that your spirit, deprived of the Lord's friendship, may not be poorer than he is. Are his clothes torn? Ensure that your soul may not be more torn by sin. Are his feet covered with mud or dust? Ensure that your ego may not be more worn by vices, than his dirty sandal has been worn by so much walking. Is his appearance unpleasant? Make sure that yours is not more unpleasant in the eyes of God. Does he speak a foreign language? Make sure that the language of your hearts is not incomprehensible in the city of God.

You must see a brother in each pilgrim. We are all pilgrims going towards Heaven and we all knock at the doors along the way to Heaven. And the doors are the patriarchs, the just, the angels and archangels, whom we implore to help and protect us, so that we may reach our goal, without becoming exhausted and dropping into the darkness of night, into the rigours of ice-cold weather, the preys of insidious wolves and jackals, of wicked passions and demons. As we want angels and saints to show us their love by giving us shelter and strength to proceed on our way, so let us do likewise to the pilgrims of the earth. And each time we open our homes and our arms, greeting a stranger with the sweet word of

brother, and thinking of God, Who knows him, I tell you that we will have gone many miles along the way leading to Heaven.

To visit the sick.

Truly, as men are pilgrims, so they are sick. And the sickness of the soul is the gravest, it is invisible and lethal. And yet people are not disgusted by it. A moral sore is not disgusting. The stench of vice is not nauseating. Demonic frenzy is not frightening. The gangrene of a spiritual leper does not make anyone sick. The sepulchre full of rotteness of a man whose soul is dead and putrified does not make anybody run away. He who approaches such impurities is not anathematised. How poor and narrow is the thought of man! But tell Me: which is worth more, the spirit, or blood and flesh? Can matter corrupt what is immaterial simply by being close to it? No, I tell you it cannot. The value of the spirit is infinite as compared to flesh and blood, that is true; but the flesh is not more powerful than the spirit. And the spirit can be corrupted by spiritual things, not by material ones. If a man takes care of a leper, his spirit does not become leprous; on the contrary, because of his charity practised heroically, to the extent of segregating himself in the valley of death out of pity for his brother, every stain of sin will be removed from him. Because charity is absolution from sin and the first purification.

Always bear in mind the following principle: "What would I like done to me, if I were like him?". And act as you would like other people to act on your behalf. Israel still has its ancient laws. But the day will come, and its dawn is no longer very far, when men will worship, as the symbol of absolute beauty, the image of One, Who will be the material repetition of the Man of sorrows of Isaiah and the Tortured Victim of David's psalm, Who will become the Redeemer of mankind, because He made Himself similar to a leper, and all those who are parched with thirst, ill, exhausted, weeping on the earth will hasten towards His wounds as deer rush to springs of water, and He will quench their thirst, will cure them, restore them, will comfort their souls and bodies, and the best believers will yearn to be like Him, covered with wounds, shedding their blood, beaten, crowned with thorns, crucified, for the sake of men to be redeemed, continuing thus the work of the King of kings and Redeemer of the world.

You, who are still Israel, but are already putting on wings to fly to the Kingdom of Heaven, begin to consider, as from this moment, this new conception and evaluation of sickness, and while blessing God for keeping you in good health, bend over those who are suffering and dying. One of My apostles said one day to one of his brothers: "Do not be afraid to touch lepers. No disease will attack us by God's will". He was right. God protects His servants. But even if you were infected when curing sick people, you would

be placed, in the next life, among the martyrs of love.

To visit prisoners.

Do you think that there are only criminals on galleys? One eye of human justice is blind and the other suffers from sight trouble, so that it mistakes camels for clouds and a snake for a flowery branch. It judges erroneously. Even more so because those who preside over it often deliberately stir up clouds of smoke, so that it may see more erroneously. But even if prisoners were all robbers or killers, it would be wrong for us to become robbers and murderers by depriving them of the hope of forgiveness through our scorn.

Poor prisoners! They dare not raise their eyes to God, laden as they are with their crimes. Their fetters really hurt their souls more than their feet. Woe to them if they despair of God! To the crime against their neighbour they would add the sin of despairing of forgiveness. The galley is expiation, just as dying on the scaffold. But it is not sufficient to pay what is due to human society for the crime committed. It is necessary to pay also and above all what is due to God, in order to expiate and have eternal life. But he who rebels and despairs, expiates only with regard to society. Let the convict or prisoner have the love of his brothers. It will be light in the dark. It will be a voice. A hand pointing upwards while the voice says: "May my love tell you that God also loves you, as He put in my heart this love for you, my unfortunate brother" and light enables men to see God, their merciful Father.

Let your charity go with greater reason to comfort the martyrs of human injustice: both those who are utterly innocent and those who have been led to kill by a cruel force. Do not judge what has already been judged. You do not know why man was driven to kill. You do not realise that many times the man who kills is nothing but a dead person, and automaton devoid of reason, because a bloodless murder has deprived him of reason with cruel cowardly betrayal. God knows. That is enough. In the next life many galley-slaves, murderers and robbers will be seen in Heaven, whereas many, who seemed to have been robbed and killed, will be seen in Hell, because in actual fact the pseudovictims were the true robbers of the peace, honesty and trust of other people and the true murderers of hearts. They were victims only because they were the last to be struck, after they had been striking covertly for years. Murder and theft are sins. But between one who kills and robs because he is led to such crimes by others and later repents, and one who induces others to sin and does not repent, the latter will be punished more severely, because he persuades others to commit sin and does not feel remorse.

Thus, by not passing judgement on them, be compassionate to prisoners. Always bear in mind that if all the murders and thefts

of men were to be punished, few men and women would not die in galleys and on the scaffold. What shall we call those mothers who conceive but do not wish to give birth to the fruit of their wombs? Oh! Do not let us pun! Let us call them frankly by their name: "Murderers". What shall we say about those men who steal other people's reputation and positions? Simply what they are: "Thieves". What is the name for those men and women, who are adulterous or torture their relatives to the extent of driving them to homicide or suicide, and for the mighty ones of the earth who drive their subjects to desperation and through desperation to violence? Here it is: "Murderers". Well? Is no one running away? So you can see that we live without any worry among criminals, who have evaded justice, who crowd houses and towns, rub against us in streets, sleep in the same hotels as we do, and share food with us. And yet, who is without sin? If God's finger should write on the wall of the room wherein the thoughts of man germinate, that is on man's forehead, words describing one as one was, is, or will be, very few would bear the word: "Innocent" written in bright letters. The other foreheads would bear the words: "Adulterers" "Murderers" "Thieves" "Killers" in letters as green as envy, or as black as treason, or as red as crime.

So, without being proud, be merciful to your brothers, who from a human point of view have been less fortunate than you are, and are now on galleys expiating what you do not expiate, although guilty of the same crime. Your humility will improve by doing so.

To bury the dead.

The contemplation of death is a lesson for life. I would like to take you all before death and say to you: "Endeavour to live as saints in order to have but this death: a temporary separation of the body from the soul, to rise thereafter triumphantly for ever, all gathered together in utter happiness".

We were all born nude. We all die and our mortal remains are destined to putrefaction. Whether kings or beggars, as we were born so we die. And if the pomp of kings allows their corpses to be preserved for a longer period of time, decomposition is still the fate of dead flesh. What are mummies? Flesh? No. They are matter fossilized by resins, lignified matter. It is not a prey to worms, as it has been altered and burned by essences, but it is a prey to woodworms, just like old wood.

But dust becomes dust once again, because God said so. And yet only because that dust enveloped the spirit and was vivified by it, like something that touched the glory of God - such is the soul of man - we must conclude that it is sanctified dust, not unlike the objects that have been in contact with the Tabernacle. There was at least one moment when a soul was perfect: while God was creating it. And if Sin disfigured it, depriving it of its perfection,

because of its Origin it still confers beauty to matter and because of the beauty that comes from God, a body is embellished and deserves respect. We are temples and as such we deserve to be honoured, as the places where the Tabernacle stopped were always honoured.

Grant, therefore, the dead the charity of an honourable rest while awaiting resurrection, and in the wonderful harmony of the human body contemplate the divine mind and hand that conceived and modelled it so perfectly and venerate the work of the Lord also in its remains.

But man is not only flesh and blood. He is also soul and mind. The latter suffer as well, and are to be assisted mercifully.

There are ignorant people who do wrong only because they do not know good. How many do not know or know wrongly the things of God and even moral laws! They languish like famishing people because no one satisfies their hunger and fall into marasmus through lack of nourishing truth. Go and teach them because that is why I have gathered you and I am sending you. Give the bread of the spirit to the hunger of spirits. To teach the ignorant corresponds, in the spiritual field, to appeasing the hunger of those who are starving. And if a reward is granted for a piece of bread offered to a languishing body, so that it may not die, what reward will be given to him who satisfies a spirit with eternal truth and gives it eternal life? Do not be avaricious of what you know. It was given to you without any expense or limit. Give it without avarice, because it belongs to God, like the water of the sky and it is to be given as it was given to us.

Be not avaricious or proud of what you know. But give with humble generosity. And give the limpid charitable relief of prayer to the living and to the dead who thirst for graces. Water is not to be refused to parched throats. What is therefore to be given to the hearts of anguished living people, and what to the expiating souls of the dead? Prayers, prayers that are prolific because they are full of love and spirit of mortification.

Prayer must be true, not mechanical like the noise of a wheel on the road. Is it the noise or the wheel that makes a cart proceed? It is the wheel that wears itself out to move the cart forward. The same applies to vocal mechanical prayer and to active prayer. The former is sound and nothing else. The latter is work, in which strength wears out and suffering increases, but it attains its goal. Pray more by means of mortification than with your lips and you will give relief to the living and the dead, fulfilling the second work of spiritual mercy. The world will be saved more by the prayers of those who know how to pray, than by useless rumbling deadly battles.

Many people in the world believe. But they do not believe firmly.

They waver as if they were drawn in opposite directions, and without proceeding by one step only, they wear their strength out unsuccessfully. They are the doubtful ones. Those who hesitate saying: "but", "if", "and then". Those who ask: "Will it really be thus?", "And if it were not so?", "Shall I be able?", "And if I am not successful?" and so on. They are like bearbines, which do not climb up unless they find something to cling to, and even when they do find it, they dangle to and fro, and it is not only necessary to find a support for them, but one must guide them onto it at each turn every day.

Oh! They really try one's patience and charity more than a backward child! But in the name of the Lord, do not abandon them! Give bright faith, ardent strength to those prisoners of themselves and of their hazy disease. Guide them towards the sun and the sky. Be masters and fathers to those dubious minds without tiring or losing your patience. They discourage you? Very well. How often you discourage Me and even more the Father Who is in Heaven and Who must often think that the Word seems to have become Flesh in vain, since men still hesitate even now that they hear the Word of God speak.

You will not presume that you are of greater worth than God is or I am! So open the prisons of these prisoners of "but" and "if". Relieve them from their chains of: "Shall I be able?", "If I am not successful?". Convince them that it is enough to do one's best and God is satisfied. And if you see them fall off their support, do not pass by ignoring them, but lift them up once again. Like mothers, who do not pass by if their child falls, but they stop, pick him up, clean him, comfort him and hold him until he is no longer afraid of falling again. And they do so for months and years if the boy's legs are weak.

Clothe those who are naked spiritually by forgiving those who offend you:

Offences are against charity. Lack of charity divests one of God. So he who offends becomes naked and only the forgiveness of the offended person can put clothes back on such nudity. Because he brings God back to it. God waits for the offended person to forgive before He forgives both the person offended by man, and the offender of man and of God. Because - let us admit it - there is no one who has not given offence to his Lord. But God forgives us if we forgive our neighbour, and forgives our neighbour if the person offended forgives. It will be done to you as you do to others. Forgive, therefore, if you wish to be forgiven and you will rejoice in Heaven for your charitable behaviour, as if a mantle studded with stars were placed on your holy shoulders.

Be merciful to those who are weeping. They have been wounded by life and their hearts are grieved in their affections.

Do not lock yourselves up in your serenity as in a stronghold. Weep with those who are weeping, comfort who is distressed, console the loneliness of those who have been deprived of a relative by death. Be fathers to orphans, sons to parents, brothers to one another.

Love. Why love only those who are happy? They already have their share of sunshine. Love the weeping. They are the least amiable for the world. But the world is not aware of the value of tears. You are. Love, therefore, those who are weeping. Love them if they are resigned in their grief. Love them even more if they rebel against their sorrow. Do not reproach them but kindly convince them of the truth of grief and the utility of sorrow. Through the veil of tears they may see the face of God deformed, and His countenance full of revengeful arrogance. No. Do not be scandalised! It is only a hallucination brought about by the fever of grief. Assist them so that their temperature may abate.

Let your fresh faith be like ice applied to a delirious patient. And when the raging fever drops and is followed by the seediness and torpid hebetude typical of those who come out of a trauma, then speak to them once again of God, as of something new, kindly and patiently, as you would deal with children who have become backward through disease... Oh! a lovely tale, told to amuse man, the eternal child! And then be quiet. Do not impose... A soul works by itself. Assist it with caresses and prayer. And when it asks: "So it was not God?", reply: "No. He did not want to hurt you, because He loves you, also on behalf of those who no longer love you because of death or other reasons". And when the soul says: "But I accused him", say: "He has forgotten it, because it was your fever". And when it says: "I would like to have Him", say: "Here He is! At the door of your heart, waiting for you to open it to Him".

Bear bothersome persons. They come in to upset the little house of our ego, just as pilgrims come in to upset the house in which we live. But as I told you to welcome pilgrims, so I tell you to welcome these persons.

Are they bothersome? But if you do not love them, because of the trouble they cause you, they love you, more or less righteously. Welcome them for such love. And even if they came inquiring, hating, insulting you, be patient and charitable. You can improve them through your patience. But you may scandalise them through your lack of charity. Be sorry because they sin; but be more sorry to make them sin and to sin yourselves. Receive them in My name, if you cannot receive them with your own love. And God will reward you, by coming Himself, later, to return the visit and cancel the unpleasant memory by His supernatural caresses.

Finally endeavour to bury sinners in order to prepare the return to the Life of Grace. Do you know when you do that? When

you admonish them with paternal, patient, loving insistence. It is as if you were burying little by little the ugly part of the body before delivering it to its sepulchre awaiting the command of God:

"Rise and come to Me".

Do the Jews not purify the dead out of respect for the body, which is to rise again? To admonish sinners is like purifying their limbs, the first operation for burial. The Grace of the Lord will do the rest. Purify them through charity, tears and sacrifices. Be heroes to snatch a soul from corruption. Be heroes.

You will not be left without reward. Because if a reward is given for a cup of water given to a thirsty body, what will be given to him who relieves a soul from infernal thirst?

I have finished. Those are the deeds of corporal and spiritual mercy that increase love. Go and practise them. And may the peace of God and Mine be with you now and ever. »

SUMMARY INDEX*

*Summary index by Emilio Pisani, who divided each chapter into sections marked by numbers. Chapters 141 to 196 of the summary index have been translated from Italian by Nicandro Picozzi and Chapters 197 to 274 by David Murray.

THE SECOND YEAR OF THE PUBLIC LIFE

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