

# THE THIRD YEAR OF THE PUBLIC LIFE

(the conclusion)

## 414. The Beggar on the Road to Jericho.

17th May 1944.

I see Jesus on a very dusty and sunny main road. There is not the smallest patch of shade, there is not a blade of grass. There is dust on the road, there is dust on the waste country bordering on it. There are certainly none of the pleasant hills of Galilee nor of the woody mountains of Judaea, so rich in waters and pastures. The land here is not a desert by its nature, but only because man has made it so by leaving it uncultivated. It is a flat country and I cannot see one hill, not even in the distance. As I am not familiar with Palestine, I cannot say which region it is. It is certainly one which I have never seen in previous visions. On one side of the road there are heaps of crushed stones, perhaps to repair the road, which is in a very bad state. At present one sinks into the dust: when it rains it must become a torrent of mud. I can see no houses, neither near the road nor far away.

Jesus, as usual, is walking a few metres ahead of the apostles, who, hot and tired, follow Him in a group. To protect themselves from the sun, they have pulled their mantles over their heads and they look like a confraternity dressed in many-coloured robes. Jesus, instead, is bare-headed. The sun does not seem to annoy Him. He is wearing a white linen short-sleeved tunic. It is very wide and loose. He is not even wearing His usual cord belt. His clothes are most suitable for this torrid place. His mantle also must be of sky-blue linen because it is very light and falls loosely over His body, which is thus less enveloped than usual. His shoulders are covered, but His arms are free. I do not know how He has fastened it to keep it thus.

A man is sitting, nay, he is half-lying on one of the heaps of crushed stones. He must be a poor beggar. His garment (so to speak) is a dirty tattered short tunic, which perhaps once was white, but now is the colour of mud. He is wearing two shabby worn-out sandals: two soles with holes, held together with pieces of string. In his hands he has a stick made from the branch of a tree. He has a dirty bandage on his forehead and another dirty rag, stained with blood, on his left leg, between his knee and hip. The poor fellow is emaciated, a heap of bones, dejected, dirty, hairy, uncombed.

Before he invokes Jesus, Jesus goes to him. He approaches the Poor wretch and asks him: « Who are you? »

« A poor man begging for bread. »

« Along this road? »

« I am going to Jericho. »

« The road is a long one and the country is depopulated. »

« I know, but the Gentiles who pass here are more likely to give me a piece of bread and a coin, than the Jews from whom I have

come. »

« Have you come from Judaea? »

« Yes, from Jerusalem. But I had to go a long way round to see some good people in the country, as they always give me something. Townsfolk don't give anything. There is no mercy there. »

« You are right. There is no mercy. »

« But You have mercy. Are You Judaeen? »

« No. I come from Nazareth. »

« Once the Nazarenes had a poor reputation. But now we must say that they are better than the people in Judaea. Even in Jerusalem, only the followers of that Nazarene, Who they say is a Prophet, are good. Do You know Him? »

« And do you know Him? »

« No. I went there because, see, my leg is numb and contracted, and I drag myself along with difficulty. I am not fit to work and I am dying of starvation and blows. I was hoping to meet Him, because I was told that He cures whoever He touches. It is true that I do not belong to the chosen people... but they say that He is good to everybody. I was told that He was in Jerusalem for the Feast of Weeks. But I walk slowly... and I was beaten and I was left suffering on the road... When I arrived in Jerusalem, He had left, because they told me that the Jews had ill-treated Him as well. »

« And did they maltreat you? »

« They always do. Only the Roman soldiers give me a piece of bread. »

« And what do the people in Jerusalem say of that Nazarene? »

« That He is the Son of God, a great Prophet, a Saint, a Just man. »

« And what do you think He is? »

«I... I am an idolater. But I think He is the Son of God. »

« How can you believe that, if you do not even know Him? »

« I know His works. Only God can be as good and speak words as He does. »

« Who told you of those words? »

« Other poor people, people who were cured, children who bring me some bread... Children are good and they know nothing of believers and idolaters. »

« But where do you come from? »

«... »

« Tell Me. I am like children. Be not afraid. But be sincere. »

« I am... a Samaritan. Don't beat me... »

« I never beat anybody. I never despise anyone. I feel sorry for everybody. »

« Then... Then You are the Rabbi of Galilee! »

The beggar prostrates himself, from the heap of stones he falls on the dust like a dead body, in front of Jesus.

« Stand up. It is I. Be not afraid. Stand up and look at Me. »

The beggar looks up, still on his knees: he is all contracted because of his deformity.

« Give this man some bread and something to drink » says Jesus to the apostles who have just arrived.

It is John who gives bread and water.

« Make him sit down, so that he may eat comfortably. Eat, brother. »

The poor man weeps. He does not eat. He looks at Jesus with the eyes of a stray dog, which is caressed and fed, for the first time, by a compassionate person.

« Eat up! » orders Jesus smiling.

The poor fellow eats between one sob and another and tears moisten his bread. But there is also a smile among his tears. He slowly regains confidence.

« Who wounded you here? » asks Jesus touching with His fingers the dirty bandage on the man's forehead.

« A rich Pharisee deliberately ran me over with his cart... I was standing at a cross-roads begging for bread. He drove his horses against me so quickly, that I was not able to move aside. I was on the point of death because of it. I still have a hole in my head, from which putrid matter comes out. »

« And who struck you there? »

« I had approached the house of a Sadducee, where there was a banquet, asking for some of the remains, after the dogs had chosen the best ones. He saw me and set the dogs on me. One of them tore my thigh to pieces. »

« And what about this large scar that maims your hand? »

« A scribe gave me a blow with a club three years ago. He found out that I was a Samaritan and he struck me breaking my fingers. That is why I cannot work. With my right hand maimed, my leg numbed, how can I earn my living? »

« But why are you leaving Samaria? »

« It's bad to be in need, Master. We are very unhappy and there is not enough bread for everybody. If You helped me... »

« What do you want Me to do for you? »

« To cure me so that I may work. »

« Do you think I can? »

« Yes, I do believe it, because You are the Son of God. »

« Do you believe that? »

« I do. »

« You, a Samaritan, believe that? Why? »

« I do not know why. I know that I believe in You and in Him Who sent You. Now that You have come, there is no difference in worshipping. It is enough to worship You in order to worship Your Father, the eternal Lord. Where You are, there is the Father. »

« Have you heard, My friends? (Jesus addresses His disciples). This man is speaking through the Spirit Who enlightens the truth for him. And I solemnly tell you that he is superior to scribes and Pharisees, to cruel Sadducees, to all those idolaters who falsely call themselves the children of the Law. The Law prescribes to love our neighbour, after God. And they give blows to the neighbour asking for bread, they drive horses and dogs on suppliants, on the neighbour who lowers himself below the dogs of a rich man, they set the very dogs on him, to make him even more unhappy than his diseases do. Disdainful, cruel, hypocrites, they do not want God to be known and loved. If they did want that, they would make Him known through their deeds, as this man said. It is deeds, not practices, which make people see the living God in the hearts of men and lead men to God. And you, Judas, since you reproach Me for being imprudent, tell Me, shall I not reprimand them? To be silent, to feign that I approve of them, would mean approving of their behaviour. No. For the glory of God, Whose Son I am, I cannot allow humble, unhappy, good people to believe that I approve of their sins. I have come to make the Gentiles sons of God. But I cannot do that if they see that the children of the Law - they call themselves so, but they are illegitimate children - practise a paganism more guilty than theirs, because these Jews have been acquainted with the Law of God, and now, just like unclean animals, they spit the regurgitations of their satisfied passions on it. Am I to believe, Judas, that you are like them? You, who reproach Me for the truth I speak? Or must I think that you are worried about your own life? He who follows Me must not be concerned with human worries. I told you, Judas, you are still in time to choose between My way and the way of the Judaeans, whom you approve of. But consider that My way goes to God; the other to God's Enemy. Consider that and make up your mind. But be sincere. And you, My friend, rise and walk. Remove those bandages. Go back home. You are cured because of your faith. »

The beggar looks at Him dumbfounded. He dare not stretch out his hand... but he tries. It is uninjured, exactly as his left one. He drops his stick, and pushing his hands on the heap of stones, he rises. He can stand. The paralysis contracting his leg is cured. He moves his leg, bends it... takes one step, two, three. He walks... He looks at Jesus with a cry and tears of joy. He rips off the bandage from his forehead. He touches the back of his head, where the infected hole was. There is nothing. It is all cured. He tears the bloodstained rag off his leg: the skin is intact.

« Master, Master and my God! » he shouts, lifting his arms, and then falling on his knees to kiss Jesus' feet.

« Go home now, and always believe in the Lord. »

« And where shall I go, Master and God, but after You, Who are good and holy? Do not reject me, Master... »

« Go to Samaria. And speak of Jesus of Nazareth. The hour of Redemption is close at hand. Be My disciple with your brothers. Go in peace. »

Jesus blesses him and they then part. The cured man walks fast northwards, turning round now and again to look.

Jesus, with His apostles, leaves the road and they proceed eastwards through uncultivated fields, taking a little path which cuts across the main road and which widens out only much farther on. It is perhaps the road to Jericho. I do not know.

#### **415. The Conversion of Zacchaeus.**

17th July 1944.

I see a large square, which looks like a market and is shaded by palms and other lower leafy trees. The palm-trees grow here and there, without any order and their top leaves rustle in the warm upper breeze, which raises a reddish dust, as if it came from a desert or from uncultivated places of reddish earth. The other trees, instead, form shady porches along the sides of the square, and vendors and buyers have taken shelter under them, in a restless shouting din.

In a corner of the square, exactly where the main road leads into it, there is a primitive excise office. There are scales and measures, and a bench at which is sat a little man who oversees, watches and deals in cash and to whom everybody speaks, as if he were very well known. I know that he is Zacchaeus, the exciseman, as many people address him, some to ask about the events of the town, and they are mainly strangers, some to pay their taxes. Many are surprised at seeing him worried. He seems in fact absent-minded and engrossed in thought. He replies in monosyllables and at times with gestures, which amazes many, who know that Zacchaeus is usually talkative. Some ask him whether he is not feeling well or if any of his relatives is ill. But he says no.

Only twice he shows keen interest. The first time when he questions two people who have come from Jerusalem and are speaking of the Nazarene, of His miracles and teaching. Zacchaeus then asks many questions: « Is He really as good as they say? And do His words correspond to facts? Does He really make use of the mercy which He preaches? On behalf of everybody, also of publicans? Is it true that He does not reject anybody? » And he listens, thinks and sighs. The second time when someone points out to him a bearded man, who is passing by with a little donkey laden with household goods. « See, Zacchaeus? That is Zacharias, the leper. He lived in a sepulchre for ten years. Now that he is cured, he has

bought the furnishings for his house, which was emptied according to the Law, when he and his relatives were declared lepers. »

« Call him. »

Zacharias comes.

« Were you a leper? »

« I was and so were my wife and my two children. My wife was the first to be infected and we did not notice it at once. The children became infected sleeping with their mother, and I, when I approached my wife. We were all lepers! When it was found out, they sent us away from the village... They could have left us in our house, as it was the last one... at the end of the street. We would not have caused any trouble... I had already grown a very high hedge, so that we might not even be seen. It was already a sepulchre... but it was our home... They sent us away. Away! Away! No town wanted us. And quite rightly! Not even our own town had wanted us. We stayed near Jerusalem, in an empty sepulchre. Many poor wretches are there. But the children died, in the cold of the cave. The disease, cold and starvation soon killed them... They were two boys... they were beautiful before the disease. They were strong and beautiful, dark brown like two blackberries in August, curly and lively. They had become two skeletons covered with sores... They had no hair left, their eyes were sealed with scabs, their feet and hands were falling off in white scales. I watched the bodies of my children waste away!... They no longer looked like human beings the morning they died... one after the other within a few hours... I buried them under a little earth and many stones, like the carrion of animals, while their mother screamed... A few months later their mother died... and I was left alone... I was waiting to die and no one would dig a hole to bury me...

I was almost blind when one day the Nazarene passed by. From my sepulchre I shouted: "Jesus! Son of David, have mercy on me!" A beggar, who was not afraid to bring me his bread, had told me that he had been cured of his blindness, by shouting that invocation. And he said: "He did not only give me the sight of my eyes, but also of my soul. I saw that He is the Son of God and I see everyone through Him. That is why, brother, I do not shun you, but I bring you bread and faith. Go to the Christ. So that one more soul may bless Him". I could not go. My feet, ulcerated to the bone, would not let me walk... in any case... I would have been stoned, if they saw me. I waited carefully for Him to pass. He often passed by coming to Jerusalem. One day I saw, as far as I could see, a cloud of dust on the road and many people and I heard shouts. I dragged myself to the brow of the hill, where the sepulchral caves were, and when I thought I could see a bare fair-haired head shine among other covered ones, I shouted aloud, at the top of my voice. I shouted three times, until my voice reached Him.

He turned round. He stopped. Then He came towards me: all alone. He came right under the spot where I was and He looked at me. He was handsome, kind, with a voice, a smile!... He asked: "What do you want Me to do for you?"

"I want to be cleansed".

"Do you believe that I can? Why?" He asked me.

"Because You are the Son of God".

"Do you believe that?"

"I believe it" I replied. "I see the Most High flash in His glory above Your head. Son of God, have mercy on me!"

He then stretched out a hand and His face was ablaze. His eyes seemed two blue suns, and he said: "I want it. Be cleansed" and He blessed me with a smile!... Ah! What a smile! I perceived a strength enter me. Like a sword of fire which ran searching for my heart, it ran through my veins. My heart, which was so diseased, became as it was when I was twenty years old, and the ice-cold blood became warm and fast-flowing in my veins. No more pains, no more weakness, and a joy, what a joy!... He was looking at me; with His smile He made me blissful. He then said: "Go, show yourself to the priests. Your faith has saved you".

I then realised that I had been cured and I looked at my hands and legs. There were no more sores. There was fresh rosy flesh where previously the bone was uncovered. I ran to a little stream and I looked at myself. My face also was clean. I was clean! Clean after being loathsome for ten years!... Oh! Why did He not pass by before? When my wife and children were alive? He would have cured us. Now, see? I am buying things for my house... But I am all alone!... »

« Have you not seen Him any more? »

« No, but I know that He is in this area and that is why I have come. I would like to bless Him once again and be blessed by Him to have strength in my solitude. »

Zacchaeus lowers his head and is silent. The group breaks up.

Some time passes. It gets warmer. The market place empties. The exciseman with his head resting on one hand is pensive, sitting at his desk.

« Here is the Nazarene! » shout some children, pointing at the main road.

Women, men, sick people, beggars rush towards Him. The square is empty. Only some donkeys and camels, tied to the palmtrees, remain where they were, and Zacchaeus remains at his desk.

He then stands up and climbs on his desk. But he cannot see anything because many people have pulled off branches and are waving them joyfully and Jesus is bending over sick people. Zacchaeus then takes off his garment and having on only his short tunic he climbs one of the trees. He goes up the large smooth trunk

with difficulty as his short arms and legs make climbing difficult. But he succeeds and sits astride two branches as on a perch. His legs hang from that kind of railing and from his waist upwards he leans out as if he were at a window and he watches.

The crowds arrive in the square. Jesus looks up and smiles at the solitary spectator perched on the branches. « Zacchaeus, come down at once. I am staying at your house today » He orders.

And Zacchaeus, after a moment of astonishment, his face purple with excitement, lets himself slide down on the ground like a sack. He is so excited that he is hardly able to put on his clothes. He closes his books and cash-desk with gestures which he would like to be very fast, but instead are very slow. But Jesus is patient: He caresses some children while waiting.

Zacchaeus is ready at last. He approaches the Master and leads Him to a beautiful house with a large garden around it, in the centre of the town. A beautiful town. Not much inferior to Jerusalem with regard to its buildings, if not to its size.

Jesus goes in and while waiting for the meal to be made ready, he takes care of sick and healthy people. With such patience... as He only is capable.

Zacchaeus comes and goes, busying himself. He is beside himself with joy. He would like to speak to Jesus. But Jesus is always surrounded by a crowd of people.

At last Jesus dismisses everybody saying: « Come back at sunset. Go to your homes now. Peace be with you. »

The garden empties and the meal is served in a beautiful cool hall facing the garden. Zacchaeus has done things in great style. I do not see any other relatives, so I think that Zacchaeus is single and lives only with many servants.

At the end of the meal, when the disciples scatter in the shade of bushes to rest, Zacchaeus remains with Jesus in the cool hall. In actual fact Jesus remains alone for a little while, because Zacchaeus withdraws to let Him rest. But he comes back and looks through a slit in the curtains. He sees that Jesus is not sleeping, but is pensive. He then approaches Him. He is carrying a heavy coffer, which he lays on the table near Jesus and says: « Master... they have spoken to me about You. For some time. One day on a mountain side You said so many truthful things, that our doctors cannot excel them. They remained in my heart... and since then I have been thinking of You... Then I was told that You are good and that You do not reject sinners. I am a sinner, Master. They told me that You cure sick people. My heart is diseased, because I defrauded, I practised usury, I have been a depraved fellow, a thief, hard on the poor. But now, I have been cured, because You spoke to me. You approached me and the demon of sensuality and riches fled. And as from today, I belong to You, if You do not reject me, and to prove

to You that I am reborn in You, I divest myself of the ill-acquired riches and I give You half of my wealth for the poor and I will use the other half to give back, multiplied by four, what I got by fraud. I know whom I cheated. Then, after handing back to each of them what belongs to them, I will follow You, Master, if You allow me... »

« I do want that. Come. I have come to save and call people to the Light. Today Light and Salvation have come to the house of your heart. Those who over there, beyond the gate, are grumbling because I have redeemed you sitting at your banquet, are forgetting that you are a son of Abraham as they are, and that I have come to save who was lost and to give Life to those whose spirits were dead. Come, Zacchaeus. You have understood My word better than many people who follow Me only to be able to accuse Me. Therefore you will be with Me as from now on. »

The vision ends here.

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18th July 1944.

Jesus says:

« There is yeast and yeast. There is the yeast of Good and the yeast of Evil. The yeast of Evil, a Satanic poison, ferments more easily than the yeast of Good, because it finds matter more suitable for fermentation in the heart of man, in the thought of man, in the flesh of man, seduced all three by a selfish will, contrary therefore to the universal Will, which is the Will of God.

The will of God is universal because it is never confined to a personal thought, but it takes into consideration the welfare of the whole universe. Nothing can increase the perfection of God in any way, as He has always possessed everything in a perfect manner. Thus there can be no thought in Him of personal gain inciting any of His actions. When we say: "This is done to the greater glory of God, in the interest of God", we do not mean that divine glory is in Itself susceptible to improvement, but that everything which in Creation bears the mark of good and any person doing good, and thus deserving to possess it, is adorned with the sign of divine Glory and thus gives glory to Glory itself, Which has created all things gloriously. It is, in short, the testimony which people and things bear to God, giving evidence, with their deeds, of the perfect Origin from Which they come.

Thus, when God orders or advises you to do an action or inspires you with one, He does not aim at any selfish interest, but at your welfare, with altruistic charitable mind. That is, therefore, the reason why the Will of God is never selfish, on the contrary it is a Will which aims entirely at altruism and universality. It is the only and true Strength in the universe which considers universal welfare.

On the contrary, the yeast of Good, spiritual embryo coming

from God, grows through difficulties and hardships, as it has against itself the reactions propitious to the other one: the flesh, the heart, the thought of man, pervaded with selfishness, the antithesis of Good, which by its origin can be but Love. Most men lack the will of Good and consequently Good becomes sterile and dies, or lives so poorly that it does not leaven: it remains as it was. There is no grave fault. But there is not even the effort to do the greatest good. The spirit thus lies inert: not dead, but unfruitful.

Bear in mind that not to do evil serves only to avoid Hell. To enjoy at once beautiful Paradise one must do good. It is essential. As much good as one can do, struggling against oneself and other people. Because I said that I had come not to bring peace but war, also between father and children, brothers and sisters, when such war was to defend the Will of God and His Law against the abuse of human wills aiming at what is contrary to what God wants.

In Zacchaeus the tiny quantity of yeast of good had leavened a huge mass. Only an original small particle had fallen into his heart: they had related My Sermon on the Mount to him. And they had done it so badly, mutilating it of many parts, as happens with reported speeches.

Zacchaeus was a publican and a sinner, but not through bad will. He was like one who sees things badly because the veil of cataract covers his eye-lenses. But he knows that once the veil is removed, he can see properly once again. And that sick person wants the veil to be removed. Zacchaeus was like that. He was neither convinced nor happy. He was not convinced of Pharisaic practices, which had already replaced the true Law. And he was not happy with his way of living.

He was instinctively seeking Light. The true Light. He saw a flash of it in that fragment of My speech and he hid it in his heart like a treasure. Because he loved it - bear this in mind, Mary because he loved it, the flash became more and more lively, vast and vehement, and caused him to see Good and Evil clearly and to choose rightly, generously cutting off all the tentacles which previously, from things to his heart and from his heart to things, had enveloped him in a net of malicious slavery.

"Because he loved it". That is the secret of success or failure. One succeeds when one loves. One has little success when one loves niggardly. One has no success at all when one does not love. In anything. All the more in the things of God, where, as God is invisible to corporal senses, I dare say, one must love perfectly, as far as a creature can reach perfection, in order to succeed in an enterprise. In holiness, in this case.

Zacchaeus, disgusted with the world and the flesh, as he was disgusted with the meanness of Pharisaic practices, so captious and severe for other people, so indulgent for them, loved the little

treasure of a word of Mine, which reached him by chance, speaking from a human point of view. He loved it as the most beautiful thing that his forty-year-old life had ever possessed, and from that moment he concentrated his heart and thought on that point.

It is not only in evil that man's heart is where his treasure is. But also in good. Did saints perhaps during their lifetime not have their hearts where their treasure was: in God? Yes, they did. And that is why, looking only at God, they passed on the Earth, without contaminating their souls with the mud of the Earth.

That morning, even if I had not appeared there, I would have conquered a proselyte. Because the speech of the leper had completed Zacchaeus' metamorphosis. At the bench of the excise-house there was no longer a cheating vicious publican, but a man repenting his past and decided to change life. If I had not gone to Jericho, he would have closed his office, he would have taken his money and come looking for Me, because he could no longer live without the water of Truth, without the bread of Love, without the kiss of Forgiveness.

The usual harsh critics who always watched Me to reproach Me, did not see that and they could understand it even less. And that is why they were amazed at My having a meal with a sinner. Oh! I wish you never judged, leaving that task to God, you poor blind people, who cannot even judge yourselves! I never went with sinners to approve of their sin. I went to remove them from sin, because they often had only the exterior aspect of sin: their contrite souls had already changed into new souls, living to expiate. So was I with a sinner? No, I was with a redeemed soul, in need only of a guide to stand up in its weakness of a soul risen from death.

How much Zacchaeus' episode can teach you! The power of upright intention that excites desire. Upright desire that urges one to seek deeper and deeper knowledge of Good and to long for God continuously until one reaches Him, true repentance that gives the courage of abnegation. Zacchaeus had the upright intention of listening to words of true Doctrine. When he heard some, his upright desire urged him to greater desire and thus to uninterrupted research for that Doctrine; the research for God, hidden in the true Doctrine, detached him from the mean gods of richness and sensuality and made him a hero of renunciation.

"If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and follow Me" I said to the rich young man, but he did not do that. But Zacchaeus, although more hardened in avarice and sensuality, was able to do it. Because, through the few Words related to him, like the blind beggar and the leper cured by Me, he saw God. Can a soul that has seen God, find any more attraction in the little things of the Earth? Is that ever possible, My little bride? »

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19th July 1944.

Jesus says:

« In My several beatitudes I enunciated the requisites necessary to achieve them and the rewards that will be given to the blessed ones. But while the categories mentioned are different, the reward is the same, if you consider the situation carefully: to enjoy the same things that God enjoys.

Different categories. I have already explained that God with His thought creates souls of different tendency, so that the Earth may enjoy a just balance in all its inferior and superior necessities. If the rebellion of man upsets that balance, as he always wants to go against the divine Will, Which guides him lovingly along the just way, it is not God's fault. Men, perpetually dissatisfied with their situation, invade or upset other people's estates, either by means of true and proper abuse of power, or by attempts at such abuse. What are world wars, family feuds, professional warfare, but such active abuse? What are social revolutions, what are the doctrines that clothe themselves with the name "social", but in actual fact are nothing but arrogance and the very opposite of charity, because they neither want nor practise the justice they preach, on the contrary they overflow with outbreaks of violence, which do not relieve oppressed people, but increase their numbers to the advantage of a few arrogant fellows?

But where I, God, reign, such alterations do not take place. Nothing upsets order in My Kingdom and in the spirits which are really Mine. Thus the several -aspects of the multiform holiness of God are lived and rewarded, because God is just, pure, peaceful, merciful, free from the greed of fleeting riches, joyful in the happiness of His love. Some souls tend to one form, some to another. They tend in an eminent manner, because all virtues are present in saints. But one predominates, and on account of it, that saint is particularly celebrated among men. But I bless and reward him on account of all of them, because the reward is "to enjoy God" both for the peaceful and the merciful, for those who love justice and for those who are persecuted by injustice, for the pure and the distressed, for the meek and for the pure in spirit.

The pure in spirit! How badly is this definition always understood, even by those who perceive its right meaning! According to human superficiality and to foolish human irony, and according to ignorance, which considers itself wise, pure in spirit means "stupid".

The better class of people think that the spirit is intelligence, thought; those who are more material consider it artfulness and malice. No. The spirit is by far superior to intelligence. It is the king of everything in you. All physical and moral qualities are subjects and servants of that king. That is the situation where a

creature devoted to God in a filial manner knows how to keep things in the right place. Where instead a creature is not devoted in a filial manner, idolatries take place, and the maidservants become queens and depose the spirit king. Anarchy which causes disaster like all anarchies.

Poverty in spirit consists in having the sovereign freedom from everything that is the delight of man, and for which man goes to the extent of committing material crime or the unpunished moral crime that too often escapes human law, but does not make fewer victims, on the contrary it makes more and with consequences which are not limited to taking the life of the victim, but often deprive both the victims and their relatives of their good reputation and livelihood.

The man poor in spirit is no longer enslaved by riches. Even if he does not go so far as to repudiate them materially, depriving himself of them and of every comfort by joining a monastic order, he knows how to use them sparingly for himself, which is a double sacrifice, in order to be prodigal of gifts to the poor of the world. He has understood My sentence: "Make friends by means of unjust riches". Of his money, which might be the enemy of his spirit, leading it to lust, greed and anticharity, he makes a servant that levels the way to Heaven for him - the rich: poor in spirit - a way completely spread with his mortifications and his charitable deeds for the miseries of his fellow-creatures. How many injustices the man poor in spirit mends and cures! His own injustices of the time when, like Zacchaeus, he was but a greedy hard-hearted man. Injustices of his neighbours, whether alive or dead. Social injustices.

You erect monuments to people who were great only because they were overbearing. Why do you not erect monuments to the secret benefactors of destitute mankind, to the poor and working classes, to those who use their wealth not to make their own lives a perpetual feast, but to make life brighter, better and more elevated for those who are poor, for those who suffer, for those whose functional faculties are impaired, for those left in ignorance by overbearing people, because ignorance serves their hateful aims better? How many there are, also among those who are not rich, nay, who are little less than poor, and yet they can sacrifice the "two farthings" they possess, in order to relieve a misery, which, being without the Light which they have - and their behaviour makes one understand that they do have it - is greater than their own!

Those are poor in spirit who, losing their possessions, whether large or small, know how to keep their peace and hope, without cursing or hating anyone, either God or men.

The wide category of the "poor in spirit", which I mentioned as the first one - because I could say that without such freedom of

the spirit from all the delights of life, it is not possible to have the other virtues which give beatitude - is divided and subdivided into many forms.

Humility of thought which does not swell with pride and does not proclaim itself super-thought, but makes use of the gift of God acknowledging its Origin, for Good. Only for that.

Generosity in affections, whereby one can deprive oneself also of them, in order to follow God, also of life, the most real wealth and the most loved instinctively by the animal creature. All My martyrs were generous in that way, because their spirits had become poor, in order to become "rich" in the only eternal riches: God.

Justice in loving our personal things. It is our duty to love them, because they are testimony of Providence in our favour. I have already spoken about that in previous dictations. But we must not love them more than we love God or His Will; you must not love them to the extent of cursing God, if man snatches them from you.

And finally, I would repeat it, freedom from the slavery of money.

Those are the different forms of that spiritual poverty that I said will possess Heaven out of justice. Put under your feet all the fleeting riches of human life to possess the eternal riches. Consider the Earth and its deceitful fruit, which is sweet outside and bitter inside, as the last thing, and live working to conquer Heaven. Oh! there is no fruit there with a false flavour. There is the ineffable fruit of the enjoyment of God.

Zacchaeus had understood that. That sentence was the arrow that opened his heart to Light and Charity. It opened it to Me as I approached him to say to him: "Come". And when I came up to him to call him, he was already "poor in spirit". He was therefore capable of possessing Heaven. »

#### **416. At Solomon's Village.**

Jesus says:

« You will put here the vision of Jesus and the beggar on the road to Jericho, which you had on 17th May 1944, and immediately after it, the vision of the conversion of Zacchaeus, of 17th July 1944. »

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13th April 1946.

Jesus arrives there at dead of night. The position of the moon makes me think that it is about two o'clock a.m. A beautiful moon, just beginning to wane is beaming in the middle of the clear sky spreading peace on the earth. Peace and abundant dew, the heavy dew of warm countries, beneficial to plants after the parching heat of the sun during the day.

The pilgrims must have followed the gravel bed of the river, which is dry near the banks, as the river is more restricted in its bed because of the summer drought. And from the cane-brake they climb up to the wood limiting the banks and supporting them with the network of the roots of the trees growing near the water.

« Let us stop here and await morning » says Jesus.

« Master... I am aching all over... » says Matthew.

« And I am afraid I have a temperature. A river is not a healthy place in summer... as You know » adds Philip.

« But it would have been worse if from the river we had gone up to the Judaeen mountains. That is also well known » says the Zealot, who feels sorry for Jesus, to Whom they all tell their fears and complaints, but Whose mood no one understands.

« Never mind, Simon. They are right. But we shall have a rest shortly... Please, only another short distance... And a short rest here. You can see how the moon is going down westwards. Why wake the old man and Joseph, who is perhaps still ill, when it will soon be daybreak?... »

« The trouble is that everything is wet with dew here. One does not know where to sit... » grumbles the Iscariot.

« Are you afraid of spoiling your garment? Never mind, after these forced marches among dust and dew, there is no strutting about in it! In any case... kind Helkai would prefer it as it is. Your Greek frets... ha! ha! those at the hem and round the sleeves are hanging in ribbons on the thorny bushes of the Judaeen desert, and the one round your neck has been ruined by your perspiration... You are now a perfect Judaeen... » says Thomas, who is always merry.

« I am perfect a wretch, dirty as I am, and disgusted with it » retorts Judas angrily.

« It is enough for you to have a clean heart, Judas » says Jesus calmly. « That is important... ».

« Important! Important! We are exhausted with fatigue, with starvation... We are ruining our health, and that only is important » replies rudely Judas.

« I am not compelling you to stay... It is you who want to stay. »

« After all this time!... I had better do so. I am... »

« You may as well say the word that makes your lips rankle: "You are compromised in the eyes of the Sanhedrin". But you can always make amends... and regain their confidence... »

« I do not want to make amends... because I love You and I want to stay with You. »

« In actual fact you say so in such a manner that rather than love it sounds like hatred... » grumbles between his teeth Judas of Alphaeus.

« Well... every man has his own way of expressing his love. »

« Of course! There is also who loves his wife but kills her with blows... I would not like that kind of love » says James of Zebedee endeavouring to put an end to the incident with a jest. But no one laughs. But no one, thanks be to God, replies.

Jesus advises: « Let us go and sit down on the threshold of the house. The eaves are wide and will protect us from the dew, and there is a footing at the base of the little house... »

They obey without speaking and when they arrive at the house they sit in a row along the wall.

But Thomas' simple remark: « I am hungry. These night marches make one hungry » revives the argument.

« Marches don't come into it! The fact is that for days we have been living on nothing! » replies the Iscariot.

« Actually at Nike's and at Zacchaeus' we had good meals, and Nike gave us so much food that we had to give it to the poor, otherwise it would have gone bad. We have never been short of bread. The caravan guide also gave us bread and butter... » remarks Andrew.

Judas, who cannot contradict, is silent.

A cock crows in the distance greeting the first sign of daylight.

« Oh! good! It will soon be dawn! » says Peter stretching himself, as he had almost fallen asleep.

They wait for daybreak in silence.

A bleating in a sheep-fold... Then a harness-bell in the distance on the main road, poles apart from them... The nearby cooing of Ananias' doves. The hoarse voice of a man in the cane-brake... It is a fisherman coming back with his night catch and he is cursing because it is scanty. He sees Jesus and stops. He hesitates, then says: « If I give it to You, will You promise me plenty in future? »

« For profit or for your needs? »

« For my needs. I have seven children, my wife and her mother. »

« You are right. Be charitable and I promise you that you will not lack what is necessary. »

« Here, then. In there, there is also the injured man who is not recovering despite treatment... »

« May God reward you and give you peace » says Jesus.

The man says goodbye and goes away, leaving his fish strung through the mouth with a willow twig.

Silence falls on them again, just broken by the rustling of the canes, by the trills of some birds... Then a creaking is heard nearby. The rustic little gate, which Ananias made, creaks when opened and the little old man appears on the road scanning the sky. A sheep follows him bleating...

« Peace to you, Ananias! »

« Master! But... how long have You been there? Why did You not call, so that I could open the door for You?! »

« Not long. I did not want to disturb anyone... How is Joseph? »

« You know?... He is not well. Pus runs out of his ear and he suffers from headaches. I think he will die. That is, I thought. You are here now and I think that he will recover. I was going out to get some herbs to make a poultice... »

« Are Joseph's companions here? »

« Two of them. The others have gone ahead. Solomon and Elias are here. »

« Did the Pharisees annoy you? »

« Immediately after You left. Not afterwards. They wanted to know where You had gone. I said: "To my daughter-in-law, at Masada". Did I do the wrong thing? »

« No, you did not. »

« And... have You really been there? » The little old man is anxious.

« Yes, I was there. She is well. »

« But... did she not listen to You?... »

« No, she did not. We must pray very much for her. »

« And for the little ones... That she may bring them up for the Lord... » says the old man and two large tears stream down his face to say what he does not speak. He concludes: « Did You see them? »

« I can say that I saw one... I got a glimpse of the others. They are all well. »

« I offer my renunciation and forgiveness to God... But... it is so grievous having to say: "I will never see them again"... »

« You will soon see your son and you will be in peace with him in Heaven. »

« Thank You, Lord. Come in... »

« Yes. Let us go at once to the injured man. Where is he? »

« In the best bed. »

They go into the well-kept kitchen garden, and from it into the kitchen and from the kitchen into the little room. Jesus bends over the sick man who moans in his sleep. He bends... and breathes into the ear enveloped in lints already impregnated with pus. He stands up and withdraws noiselessly.

« Are You not waking him? » asks the old man in a low voice.

« No. Let him sleep. He is no longer suffering. He will rest. Let us go to the others. »

Jesus sets the door ajar without making any noise and goes into the large room where are the little beds purchased the last time. The two disciples, being tired, are still sleeping.

« They keep vigil until morning. I keep watch over him from morning till evening. So they are tired. They are so good. »

The two must be sleeping with their ears cocked, because they awake at once: « Master! Our Master! You came just in time! Joseph is... »

« Cured. I have already seen to him. He is sleeping and does not

know. There is nothing wrong with him now. All he has to do is to purge himself of the pus and he will be as healthy as previously. »

« Oh! In that case purge us as well, because we have sinned. »

« How? »

« In order to assist Joseph we did not go to the Temple... »

« Charity makes every place a temple. And in the Temple of charity there is God. If we all loved one another, the whole Earth would be a Temple. Do not worry. The day will come when Pentecost means "Love". A manifestation of love. You have celebrated, anticipating times, the future Pentecost, because you have loved your brother. »

From the other room Joseph's voice is heard calling: « Ananias! Elias! Solomon! But I am cured! » and the man, thin and still pale, but no longer suffering, appears covered only with his short tunic. He sees Jesus and says: « Ah! It was You, my Master! » and he runs to kiss His feet.

« May God grant you peace, Joseph, and forgive Me if you suffered because of Me. »

« I glory in having shed my blood for You, as my father did. I bless You for making me worthy of that! » Joseph's simple plain face shines with joy uttering these words and looks noble, with the handsomeness which originates from an interior light.

Jesus caresses him and says to Solomon: « Your house serves to do much good. »

« Oh! because it is Yours, now. Previously it served only for the sound sleep of the ferryman. But I am glad that it has been useful to You and to this just man. We shall now have some good days here with You. »

« No, My friend. You will leave at once. We are no longer granted any rest. This period of time will be a real test and only those with a strong will will remain faithful. We shall now break the bread together and then you will leave at once, going along the river, preceding Me by half a day. »

« Yes, Master. Joseph also? »

« Yes. Unless he is afraid of new injury... »

« Oh! Master! Would to God that I had to precede You in death shedding my blood for You! »

They go out into the dewy kitchen garden shining in the early sun. And Ananias does the honours of the house by picking some early figs from the branches better exposed, and he apologises for being unable to offer a young pigeon because the two broods were used for the sick man. But there is the fish and they get busy preparing the food.

Jesus is walking between Elias and Joseph who tell Him of the recent adventure and of the strength of Solomon, who carried the injured man on his back for miles and miles, which they covered a

little at a time, by night...

« But you, Joseph, have forgiven those who injured you, have you not? »

« I never had a grudge against those unhappy people. I offered forgiveness and my sufferings for their redemption. »

« That is what one must do, My good disciple! And what about Ogla? »

« Ogla has gone with Timoneus. I do not know whether he will go on with him or whether he will stop at Mount Hermon. He always said that he wanted to go to Lebanon. »

« Well. May God inspire him to do what is best. »

Many birds now chirp in chorus among the branches, while bleatings, the voices of children and women, braying donkeys, squeaking pulleys of wells, tell that the village is awake.

In the kitchen garden the bread is broken, the fish handed round and they have their meal. Immediately afterwards, the three disciples, blessed by Jesus, leave the house and walk fast along the road, as far as the river, and vanish into the cool shady canebrakes... They can no longer be seen...

« And now let us rest until evening and then we will follow them » orders Jesus.

And some lie down on the little beds, some on the piles of nets, which Ananias made, saying that thus he is not idle and he earns his daily bread, and they all seek a refreshing sleep.

In the meantime Ananias, after picking up the garments wet with perspiration, goes out noiselessly, closes the door and the gate and goes down to the river to wash them, so that they may be fresh and dry by evening...

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Jesus says:

« And here you will put the vision: "Jesus in a little village of the Decapolis" of 2nd October 1944, and then the other one: "The Demoniac of the Decapolis" of 29th September 1944. »

#### **417. In a Little Village of the Decapolis. Parable of the Sculptor.**

2nd October 1944.

This is what I see. A little river in a village consisting of few modest houses. It must be the one from which Jesus came when, in a boat, He crossed the Jordan in flood, because I see the boatman and his relatives come to meet Jesus, Who had sent the Iscariot and Thomas ahead, to prepare the way for Him.

The boatman, when he sees Jesus coming from afar, quickens his step and when he is before Him, he bows most reverently saying: « You are welcomed, Master, by our sick people. They are waiting

for You. I told them much about You. The entire village greets You through my lips saying: "Blessed be the Messiah of the Most High God!" »

« Peace to you and to this village. I am here for you. You will not be disappointed in your hopes. Those who believe will find Heaven merciful. Let us go. » And Jesus proceeds towards the centre of the village, walking beside the boatman.

Men, women and children appear at the doors and then follow the little procession, as it advances. At every step the people grow in numbers as many more join those already there. Some greet, some bless, some invoke.

« Master » shouts a mother « my son is ill. Come, Blessed One! »

And Jesus deviates towards a poor house, He lays one hand on the shoulder of the mother in tears and asks: « Where is your son? »

« Here, Master, come. »

The mother, Jesus, the boatman, Peter, John, Thaddeus and some local people go in. The others crowd at the door and look in craning their necks to see.

In a corner of the poor dark kitchen there is a little bed near the glimmering fireplace. On the bed there is the little corpse of a child about seven years old. I say a little corpse because he is so emaciated, yellowish, motionless. One is aware only of the heavy panting of the little chest, affected, I would say, by tuberculosis.

« Look, Master. I have spent all my resources to save at least this one. I am a widow, the other two sons died at the same age as this one is at present. I took him as far as Caesarea on the Sea to have him visited by a Roman doctor. But all he could say to me was: "Resign yourself. Caries is corroding him". Look... »

And the mother uncovers the poor little thing, pushing the blankets back. Where there are no bandages, there are little bones protruding from a parched yellowish skin. But only a tiny part of the body is uncovered. The rest is covered with bandages and linens and when the mother removes them, they show the characteristic dripping holes of osseous caries. A pitiful sight. The sick boy is so prostrate that he makes no gesture. He does not even seem to be involved. He just opens his hollow dull eyes, he casts an indifferent, I would say annoyed, glance at the people and then closes them again.

Jesus caresses him. He lays His long hand on the little abandoned head, and the child opens his eyes again, looking with more interest at the unknown man, who is touching him with so much tenderness and is smiling with so much sympathy.

« Do you want to be cured? » Jesus says to him in a low voice, bending over his wan face. He had previously covered the little body saying to the mother, who wanted to put some more bandages: « It is not necessary, woman. Leave him thus. »

The little patient nods without speaking.

« Why? »

« For my mother » he says in a very faint voice. His mother weeps more grievously.

« Will you always be good if you are cured? A good son? A good citizen? A good believer? » He asks the questions separating them clearly, to give the child time to answer each one. « Will you always remember what you are now promising? »

The feeble, yet so deep in desire, « yes », is uttered repeatedly, like a succession of sighs from his soul.

« Give me your hand, My little one. » The little patient wants to give his healthy one, the left one. But Jesus says: « Give Me the other one. I will not hurt you. »

« Lord » says the mother « it's one big sore. Let me bandage it. For You... »

« It does not matter, woman. I am disgusted only at the impurities of hearts. Give Me your hand and say with Me: "I want to be always good as a son, as a man, as a believer in the true God". »

The boy repeats stressing his voice. Oh! His whole soul is in his voice, and his hope as well... and certainly also his mother's.

A solemn silence has fallen in the room and in the street. Jesus, Who is holding the boy's right hand with His left one, lifts His right one, with the gesture as when He announces a truth, or when He imposes His will on diseases and elements, and standing solemnly upright, He says in a powerful voice: « And I want you to be cured. Rise, child, and praise the Lord » and He releases the little hand which is now completely healed, thin, but without the least excoriation, and He says to the mother: « Uncover your child. »

The woman, who looks as if she were between a death sentence and one of mercy, removes the blankets hesitantly... and she utters a cry and throws herself on the very lean but wholesome body, kissing and embracing it... mad with joy. So much so that she does not see Jesus going away from the bed towards the door.

But the boy sees and says: « Bless me, Lord, and allow me to bless You. Mother... are you not thanking? »

« Oh! forgive me... » The woman, with the child in her arms, throws herself at Jesus' feet.

« I understand, woman. Go in peace and be happy. Goodbye, boy, Be good. Goodbye, everybody. » And He goes out.

Many women lift up their children so that Jesus' blessing may preserve them from evil in future. Little ones creep through adults to be caressed. And Jesus blesses, caresses, listens, He stops to cure also three people with diseased eyes and a man trembling as if he were affected by St. Vitus' dance. He is now in the centre of the village.

« There is a relative of mine here, deaf-and-dumb from birth. He

is quick-witted, but he cannot do anything. Cure him, Jesus » says the boatman.

« Take Me to him. »

They enter a small kitchen garden at the end of which there is a young man, about thirty years old, who is drawing water from a well and pouring it on vegetables. As he is deaf and with his back turned, he does not notice what is happening and he calmly goes on with his work, notwithstanding that the shouts of the crowd are so loud as to frighten the doves on the roofs.

The boatman goes towards him, takes him by the arm and leads him to Jesus.

Jesus stands in front of the unhappy fellow, very close to him, body against body, so that with His tongue He touches the tongue of the dumb man, who is standing with his mouth open, and with His middle-fingers in the ears of the deaf-mute, He prays for a moment with His eyes raised to the sky. He then says: « Be opened! » and removing His fingers He steps aside.

« Who are You Who have loosened my tongue and ears? » shouts the man cured miraculously.

Jesus makes a gesture and tries to proceed going out from the rear of the house. But both the cured man and the boatman hold Him back, one saying: « He is Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah » and the other exclaiming: « Oh! stay, that I may worship You! »

« Worship the Most High God and be always faithful to Him. Go. Do not waste time in useless words, and do not turn the miracle into a human pastime. Make use of your tongue to do good, and listen to the voices of the Creator Spirit Who loves and blesses you, with your heart, rather than with ears. »

Of course, it is quite useless to tell a man, who is so happy, not to talk of his happiness! The cured man makes up for so many years of mutism and deafness, by speaking to all the people present.

The boatman insists on Jesus entering his house to rest and take some refreshments. He feels that he is the maker of all the respect surrounding Jesus and is proud of it. He wants his right to be acknowledged.

« But I am the notable elder of the village » says an old imposing man.

« But if I had not been there with my boats, you would not have seen Jesus » replies the boatman.

And Peter, who is always frank and impulsive, says: « Actually... if I had not told you a little thing, you... the boats... »

Jesus interferes providentially, making everybody happy. « Let us go near the river. While waiting for our food there - and let it be frugal and sparing, because food is to serve the body and not be the aim of the body - I will evangelize. Anyone wishing to hear Me or ask Me questions, may come with Me. »

I can say that the entire village follows Him.

Jesus gets into a boat beached on the gravel bed and from that improvised pulpit He speaks to His listeners, who are sat in front of Him, in a semicircle, on the bank and among the trees.

He takes as a starting point the question asked by a man: « Master, our Law seems to point out as struck by God those who were born wretched, in fact He forbids them to serve at the altar. How can they be guilty? Would it not be fair to consider guilty their parents who give birth to wretched sons? Mothers in particular? And how are we to behave with those born unfortunate? »

« Listen. A great perfect sculptor one day carved a statue and he made such a perfect job, that he was pleased and he said: "I want the Earth to be full of such marvels". But by himself he could not cope with such a task. He therefore called other people to help him and said to them: "On this model make for me one thousand, ten thousand statues equally perfect. I will then give them the final touch, instilling expression into their features". But his assistants were not capable of so much, because besides being much inferior to their master in skill, they had become somewhat intoxicated eating of a fruit, the juice of which brings about delirium and dullness. The sculptor then gave them some moulds and said: "Mould the material in them; it will be a perfect work and I will complete it, enlivening it with a final touch". And the assistants set down to work.

But the sculptor had a great enemy. A personal enemy and the enemy of his assistants, and he tried with every means to make the sculptor cut a poor figure and rouse disagreement between him and his assistants. Thus he attacked their work with his cunning, altering the material to be poured into the moulds, or reducing the fire, or praising the assistants exaggeratedly. It thus happened that the ruler of the world, in an effort to prevent as far as possible the work from going out in imperfect copies, imposed heavy sanctions on those models issued in an imperfect state. And one of the sanctions was that such models could not be displayed in the House of God, where everything must be, or ought to be perfect. I say: ought to be, because it is not so. Even if appearances are good, facts are not so. Those present in the House of God seem faultless, but the eye of God discovers the gravest faults in them. The faults which are in their hearts.

Oh! the heart! It is with the heart that one serves God; indeed: it is with the heart. It is not necessary, neither is it enough to have clear eyes and perfect hearing, harmonic voice, beautiful limbs, to sing the praises pleasing to God. It is not essential or sufficient to have beautiful clean and scented garments. The spirit is to be pure and perfect, harmonic and well shaped in sight, hearing, voice, in spiritual forms, and these are to be adorned with purity; that is the

beautiful clean dress scented with charity: that is the oil saturated with essence that God likes.

And what kind of charity would be the attitude of a man, who being happy and seeing an unhappy fellow, should despise him and hate him? On the contrary, double and treble charity is to be given to those who, although not guilty, were born poor wretches. Wretchedness is a pain that gives merit to those who bear it and to those who, united with the victims, suffer seeing them bear it out of love of relationship, and perhaps they strike their chests thinking: "I am the cause of such pain through my vices". And it must never become the cause of spiritual fault in those who see it. It becomes a fault if it becomes anti-charity. So I say to you: "Never be without charity towards your neighbour. Was he born a poor wretch? Love him because he endures a great pain. Did he become unhappy through his own fault? Love him because his fault has already become a punishment. Is he the parent of a wretch born such or who became such? Love him because there is no deeper sorrow than the grief of a parent struck in his child. Is it a mother who has given birth to a monster? Love her because she is literally crushed by such grief, which she considers the most inhuman. It is inhuman".

But even deeper is the grief of a woman who is the mother of a son, who is a monster in his soul, as she realises that she has given birth to a demon dangerous for the Earth, for the Fatherland, for the Family, for friends. Oh! the poor mother of a cruel, vile son, of a murderer, of a traitor, of a thief, of a corrupt man, dare not even raise her forehead! Well. I say to you: Love those mothers also, the most unhappy ones. Those who in history will be known as the mothers of murderers, of traitors.

Everywhere the Earth has heard the weeping of mothers whose hearts were broken because of the cruel death of their sons. From Eve onwards how many mothers have felt their bowels being lacerated more painfully than in labour, nay, they felt their bowels and their hearts being torn off by a cruel hand, in the presence of their sons murdered, tortured, martyred by men, and they howled their pangs, throwing themselves with the frenzy of convulsive sorrowful love on the corpses which could not hear them any longer, neither could they be warmed by their warmth, nor could they say with a look, a gesture, since they could not do so with their lips: "Mother I can hear you".

And yet I tell you that the Earth has not yet heard the cry and has not collected the tears of the most holy Mother and of the most unhappy one among all those who will be remembered for ever by man: the Mother of the Killed Redeemer and the mother of the man who will be His traitor. Those two mothers, martyrs in different ways, will be heard mourning miles apart, and the innocent

and holy Mother, the most innocent, the Innocent Mother of the Innocent, will be the one Who will say to Her far away sister, the martyr of a son more cruel than anything on the Earth: "Sister, I love you".

Love to be worthy of that Woman Who will love everybody and on behalf of everybody. It is love that will save the Earth. »

And Jesus comes down from His rustic pulpit and bends to caress a little boy rolling on the grass of the gravel bed half-naked in his little shirt. After so many sublime words from a Master, it is pleasant to see Him thus, taking interest in a child, like a common man, and then breaking the bread, offering it round and handing it to those close to Him, sitting and eating like every man, while He certainly already hears in His heart the cry of His Mother and sees Judas beside Him.

Such control over His feelings impresses me, who am so impulsive, more than many other things. It is a continual lesson to me. Those present, instead, seem to be really fascinated. They are pensive and silent while eating and they look with veneration at the kind Master of love.

#### **418. The Demoniac of the Decapolis.**

29th September 1944.

Jesus and His apostles are still moving about the country. The mowing season is now over and the fields display scorched stubble. Jesus is walking along a shady path and is speaking to some men who have joined the group of the apostles.

« Yes » says one. « Nothing can cure him. He is more than mad. And he terrorises everybody, women in particular, because he chases them with obscene jibes. It would be a tragedy if he caught them! »

« One never knows where he is » says another man. « On the mountains, in the woods, in the fields... he appears all of a sudden like a snake... Women are terrified of him. One of them, a young girl, who was coming back from the river, died in a few days of a high temperature because she had been grasped by the madman. »

« The other day my brother-in-law went to the place where he prepared a sepulchre for himself and his relatives, because his father-in-law had died, and he wanted to make all the preparations for the burial. But he had to run away because the demoniac, nude and howling as usual, was inside and threatened to strike him with stones... He chased him almost as far as the village, then went back to the sepulchre and the dead man had to be buried in my sepulchre. »

« And what about the time when he remembered that Tobias and Daniel had taken him by force, had tied him and taken him back

home? He waited for them hiding among the canes and the mud of the river and when they got into the boat to go fishing or to ferry, I am not sure which, with the strength of a demon he lifted the boat and turned it upside down. They saved themselves by a miracle, but what was in the boat was lost and the very keel of the boat was damaged and the oars were broken. »

« But have you not shown him to the priests? »

« Yes, he was taken to Jerusalem tied like a bale... What a journey!... I was there and I can tell You that I do not need to go to hell to learn what happens and is said there. But it was of no avail... »

« Just as bad as before? »

« Worse! »

« And yet... the Priest!... »

« But what can You expect!... It would be necessary... »

« What? Go on... »

There is silence.

« Speak up. Be not afraid, I will not accuse you. »

« Well... I was saying... but I do not want to commit a sin... I was saying... that... well... the priest might be successful if... »

« If he were a holy man, you mean, but you dare not say so. I say to you: do not judge. But what you say is true. It is regretfully true!... »

Jesus becomes silent and sighs. A short embarrassed silence.

Then one dares to take up the thread of the speech again: « If we should meet him, will You cure him? Will You clear this countryside? »

« Do you hope that I may be able to do so? Why? »

« Because You are holy. »

« God is holy. »

« And You who are His Son. »

« How do you know? »

« Eh! people talk, in any case, we live here, near the river, and we know what You did three months ago. Who can stop a river in spate, but the Son of God? »

« And what about Moses? And Joshua? »

« They worked in the name of God and for His glory. And they were able to do so because they were holy. You are greater than they were. »

« Will You do it, Master? »

« I will, if we meet him. »

They proceed. The increasing heat makes them leave the road and seek shelter in a thicket along the river, which is not ruffled as when it was in flood. Although still rich in water, the water is calm and blue, shining in the sun. The path widens and white houses appear at the end of it. They must be approaching a village. At the borders of it there are some small very white buildings, with only

one opening in one wall. Some are open. Most of them are hermetically closed. There is no one about. They are spread over bare uncultivated ground, which seems to be abandoned. There are only weeds and boulders.

« Go away! Away! Go back or I will kill You! »

« The demoniac has seen us! I am going away. »

« I, too. »

« And I will follow you. »

« Be not afraid. Remain here and watch. »

Jesus is so sure of Himself that the... brave ones obey, but they go behind Jesus. The disciples also remain behind Him. Jesus proceeds alone and solemnly, as if He saw and heard nothing.

« Go away! » The voice is a rending cry. It sounds like a growl and a howl. It seems impossible that it can be uttered by a human being. « Go away! Back! I will kill You! Why are You persecuting me? I do not want to see You! » The possessed man bounds, he is nude, swarthy, with long ruffled hair and beard. His dark bristly locks strewn with dry leaves and dust fall over his grim bloodshot eyes, which roll in their sockets, and reach down to his mouth. And his mouth, open in howls and bursts of laughter of a madman - they sound like a nightmare - is foaming and bleeding, because he is striking it with a sharp stone and he says: « Why can I not kill You? Who is binding my strength? Is it You? You? »

Jesus looks at him and proceeds.

The madman rolls on the ground, bites himself, foams even more, strikes himself with his stone, springs to his feet, points his forefinger towards Jesus, Whom he stares at fixedly and wildly and says: « Listen! Listen! He Who is coming is... »

« Be silent, demon of the man! I order you. »

« No! No! I will not be silent. What is there between You and us? Why do You not leave us in peace? Are You not satisfied with confining us to the kingdom of hell? Is it not enough for You that You have come to snatch man from us? Why do You force us back down there? Allow us to dwell in our preys! Since You are great and powerful, pass and conquer, if You can. But let us rejoice and be harmful. We exist for that. Oh! cur... No! I cannot say that! Don't make me say that to You! I cannot curse You! I hate You! I persecute You! I am waiting for You to torture You! I hate You and Him from Whom You proceed and I hate Him Who is Your Spirit. I hate Love, because I am Hatred! I want to curse You! I want to kill You! But I cannot! I cannot! Not yet! But I will wait for You, o Christ, I will wait for You. I will see You dead! O what a joyful hour! No! Not joyful! You dead? No. Not dead. And I defeated! Defeated! Always defeated!... Ah!... » Paroxysm is at its utmost.

Jesus continues towards the demoniac keeping him under the radiation of His magnetic eyes. Jesus is now all by Himself. The

apostles and the other people have remained behind. The people are behind the apostles, who are at least thirty metres from Jesus.

Some inhabitants of the village, which appears to be thickly peopled and I think is also wealthy, have come out, attracted by the shouts, and are watching the scene, ready to run away just like the other group. So the scene is as follows: in the centre the possessed man and Jesus, now a few metres apart from each other; behind Jesus, to the left, the apostles and the people of the country; on the right hand side, behind the demoniac, the citizens.

Jesus, after ordering the demon to be silent, has not spoken any more. He only stares at the demoniac. But now He stops and raises His arms, He stretches them towards the possessed man and is about to speak. The man's cries are now dreadful. He writhes, he jumps to the right, to the left, upwards. He looks as if he wanted either to run away or hurl himself upon Jesus, but he cannot. He is riveted there and apart from his writhing, he can make no other movement.

When Jesus stretches out His arms, His hands extended as if He were taking an oath, the madman howls louder and after cursing, laughing and swearing, he begins to weep and implore. « No, not in hell! Don't send me there! My life is dreadful even here, imprisoned in man, because I want to travel through the world and tear Your creatures to pieces. But not there! No! No! Leave me outside!... »

« Come out of him. It's an order. »

« No! »

« Come out. »

« No! »

« Come out. »

« No! »

« In the name of the true God, come out! »

« Oh! Why do You defeat me? But I am not coming out, no. You are the Christ, the Son of God, but I am... »

« Who are you? »

« I am Beelzebub, the Master of the world and I will not surrender. I defy You, o Christ! »

The demoniac becomes motionless all of a sudden, stiff, almost dignified, and stares fixedly at Jesus with phosphorescent eyes, hardly moving his lips to utter unintelligible words and making light gestures with his hands near his shoulders and his elbows bent.

Jesus also has stopped. With His arms folded over His chest He gazes at him. Jesus also moves His lips lightly, but I cannot hear any word.

The people present are waiting, but they do not agree with one another:

« He cannot do it! »

« Yes, the Christ will now succeed. »

« No. The other one is winning. »

« He is strong. »

« Yes, he is. »

« No, he isn't. »

Jesus opens His arms. His face flashes command, His voice sounds like thunder. « Come out. For the last time. Come out, o Satan! It is I Who command! »

« Aaaaah! » (it is a very long cry of never-ending torture. Not even a man slowly pierced by a sword would yell thus). And the cry ends in words: « I am coming out. Yes, You have defeated me. But I will avenge myself. You are driving me away, but there is a demon beside You and I will go into him and possess him, investing him with my full power. And no order of Yours will be able to take him away from me. In every age, in every place I, the author of Evil, procreate sons for myself. And as God procreated Himself by Himself, I procreate myself by myself. I conceive myself in the heart of man and he gives birth to me, he gives birth to a new Satan, who is he himself and I rejoice having so many children! You and men will always find those creatures of mine, who are as many Satans. I am going, o Christ, to take possession of my new kingdom, as You wish, and I leave You this poor wretch whom I maltreated. In his place, as I am leaving him to You, the alms of Satan to You, God, I will take one thousand and ten thousand now, and You will find them when Your body in lurid tatters will be given as a plaything to dogs, and I will take ten thousand and one hundred thousand in future centuries to use them as an instrument for me and a torture for You. Do You think that You will win by raising Your Sign? My followers will knock it down and I will be the winner... Ah! It is not true that I will win! But I will torture You both in Yourself and in Your followers!... »

A loud crash, like thunder, is heard, but there is neither flash of light nor rumbling of thunder. Only a sharp lacerating crack, and as the demoniac falls like a dead body to the ground and remains there, a huge tree-trunk collapses near the apostles, as if it had been cut about one metre from the ground by a saw working as quickly as lightening. The apostolic group moves away just in time, while the local people run away.

But Jesus, Who has bent over the prostrated man and has taken him by the hand, turns round, still stooping and with the hand of the cured man in His own, He says: « Come. Be not afraid! » The people approach timorously. « He is cured. Bring a garment. » A man runs away to fetch one.

The man comes round slowly. He opens his eyes and meets Jesus'. He sits up. With his free hand he wipes off perspiration,

blood and foam, he pushes his hair back and looks at himself. When he realises that he is nude in the presence of so many people, he feels ashamed. He crouches and asks: « What happened? Who are You? Why am I here? Nude? »

« Nothing, My friend. They will now bring you some clothes and you will go back home. »

« Where have I come from? And where are You from? » He speaks with the faint tired voice of a sick person.

« I come from the Sea of Galilee. »

« And how come You know me? Why are You helping me? What is Your name? »

Some men arrive with a tunic which they put on the man cured miraculously. And an old woman arrives weeping and she presses the cured man to her heart.

« Son! »

« Mother! Why did you leave me for such a long time? »

The old woman weeps even more and kisses and caresses him. Perhaps she would speak more words, but Jesus dominates her with His eyes and inspires her with more pitiful ones: « You have been so ill, son! Praise God Who has cured you and the Messiah Who acted in the name of God. »

« Him? What's His name? »

« Jesus of Galilee. But His name is Goodness. Kiss His hands, son, and ask Him to forgive you for what you did or said... you certainly spoke in your... »

« Yes, he spoke when he was feverish » says Jesus to prevent unwise words. « But it was not he who spoke and I am not severe with him. Let him be good now. Let him be continent. » Jesus stresses the word. The man lowers his head, embarrassed.

But what Jesus spares him is not spared by the rich citizens who have by now approached them. Among them there are some ineffable Pharisees. « You have been lucky! It is a good job that you met Him, the master of the demons. »

« I... a demoniac? » The man is terrified.

The old woman bursts out: « You cursed ones! You have neither mercy nor respect! You greedy cruel vipers! And you as well, you useless minister of the synagogue. The Holy One master of the demons! »

« And who do you think has power over them but their king and father? »

« Oh! Impious people! Blasphemers! Be c... »

« Be silent, woman. Be happy with your son. Do not curse. They do not upset or worry Me. You may all go in peace. My blessing to good people. Let us go, My friends. »

« May I follow You? » It is the cured man who asks the question.

« No. Stay here. Be My witness and your mother's joy. Go. »

And among cheering shouts and whispered mockery Jesus crosses part of the little town and then goes back to the shade of the trees along the river.

The apostles crowd round Him.

Peter asks: « Master, why did the unclean spirit offer so much resistance? »

« Because it was a complete spirit. »

« What does that mean? »

« Listen to Me. Some people give themselves to Satan by opening a door to one capital vice. Some give themselves twice, some three times, some seven times. When one has opened his spirit to the seven vices, then a complete spirit enters him. Satan, the black prince, enters. »

« How could that man, still young, be possessed by Satan? »

« Oh! My friends! Do you know along which path Satan comes? Generally three are the beaten paths, and one is never missing. Three: sensuality, money, pride of the spirit. Sensuality is the one which is always present. Courier of the other concupiscences, it passes spreading its poison and everything flourishes with satanic flowering. That is why I say to you: "Be the masters of your flesh". Let that control be the beginning of everything else, as that slavery is the beginning of everything else. The man enslaved by lust, becomes thief, swindler, cruel, murderer, in order to serve his mistress. The very thirst for power is also related to the flesh. Do you not think so? It is so. Meditate on that and you will see whether I am mistaken. It was through the flesh that Satan entered man and through the flesh he goes back into man, and he is happy if he can do so. He, one and sevenfold, enters with the proliferation of his legions of minor demons. »

« You said that Mary of Magdala had seven demons. You said so and they were certainly demons of lust. And yet You freed her very easily. »

« Yes, Judas. That is true. »

« So? »

« So, according to you, My theory is wrong. No, My friend. That woman wanted, by that time, to be freed from her possession. She wanted. Will power is everything. »

« Why, Master, do we notice that many women are possessed by the demon, and we can say, by that demon? »

« See, Matthew. Woman is not equal to man in her formation and in her reaction to the original sin. Man has other aims for his desires which may be more or less good. Woman has one aim only: love. Man has a different formation. Woman has this one, sensitive, which is even more perfect, because its purpose is procreation. You know that every perfection brings about an increase in sensitiveness. A perfect ear can hear what escapes a less perfect

ear and is glad of that. The same applies to the eyes, to the palate and to olfaction. Woman was to be the sweetness of God on the Earth, she was to be love, the incarnation of that fire which moves Him Who is, the manifestation, the testimony of that love. God had therefore gifted her with a supereminent sensitive spirit, so that, one day as a mother, she could and would know how to open the eyes of the hearts of her sons to the love for God and their fellow-creatures, as man would open the eyes of intelligence of his children to understanding and acting. Consider the command of God to Himself: "Let us make a helpmate for Adam". God-Goodness could but want to make a good helpmate for Adam. He who is good loves. Adam's helpmate, therefore, was to be able to love to succeed in making Adam's day happy in the blissful Garden. She was to be so capable of loving as to be the second, collaborator and substitute of God, in loving man, His creature, so that even when God did not reveal Himself to His child with His loving voice, man should not feel unhappy for lack of love. Satan was aware of such perfection. Satan knows so many things. It is he who speaks through the lips of pythonesses telling lies mixed with truth. And - bear this in mind all of you, both you who are present here and those who will come in future - he speaks such truth, which he hates because he is Falsehood, only to seduce you with the chimera that it is Light that speaks and not Darkness. Satan, cunning, tortuous and cruel, crept into such perfection, he bit there and left his poison. The perfection of woman in loving has thus become Satan's instrument to dominate man and woman and spread evil... »

« What about our mothers, then? »

« John, do you fear for them? Not every woman is an instrument for Satan. Perfect as they are in their feelings, they exceed in action: angels if they want to be of God, demons if they wish to be of Satan. Holy women, and your mother is one of them, want to be of God and they are angels. »

« Do You not think that the punishment of woman is unfair, Master? Man also sinned. »

« And what about the reward then? It is written that Good will come back to the world through Woman and Satan will be defeated. »

« Never judge the work of God. That is the first thing. But consider that as Evil came into the world through woman, it is fair that through the Woman Good should come into the world. A page written by Satan is to be cancelled. And the tears of a Woman will do that. And as Satan will shout his cries for ever, the voice of a Woman will sing to drown those cries. »

« When? »

« I solemnly tell you that Her voice has already descended from

Heaven where Her hallelujah has been sung from eternity. »

« Will She be greater than Judith? »

« Greater than every woman. »

« What will She do? »

« She will turn Eve upside down with her treble sin. Absolute obedience. Absolute purity. Absolute humility. She will rise on that: a victorious queen... »

« But, Jesus, is Your Mother not the greatest, having given birth to You? »

« Great is he who does the will of God. And that is why Mary is great. Every other merit comes from God. But that one is entirely Hers and may She be blessed for it. »

And it all ends.

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Jesus says:

« You have seen a man "possessed" by Satan. There are many replies in My words. Not so much for you as for other people. Will they be of any use? No. They will be of no use to those who need them most. Rest with My peace. »

#### **419. The Yeast of the Pharisees.**

22nd April 1946.

After the Holy Week and the consequent penitence of not having any visions, the spiritual vision of the Gospel comes back to me this morning. And all my anxiety is forgotten in this joy that is foretold by an indescribable sensation of superhuman jubilation...

... And now I see Jesus, Who is still walking along the thickets on the banks of the river, and He stops and orders the apostles to have a rest during the hours which are too warm to travel. Because, while it is true that the thickly interlacing branches protect from the sun, they form a kind of canopy which obstructs the very light breezes, and thus the air in there is warm, still, heavy, and damp; dampness in fact rises from the ground near the river, and far from being a relief it is a sticky torture, which mixes with and increases the troublesome perspiration streaming down their bodies.

« Let us stop until evening. We will then go down to the whitish gravel bed still visible in starlight and we will proceed by night. Let us take some food and a rest now. »

« Ah! before taking any food I will refresh myself in the water. The water will be warm, too, like a decoction for a cough, but it will wash my sweat away. Who is coming with me? » asks Peter.

They all go with him: everyone, Jesus also, as, like everybody else, He is perspiring and His tunic is heavy with dust and sweat. Each of them takes a clean tunic from his sack and they all go down to the river. On the grass, to mark their stop, there are only

thirteen sacks and the small water flasks, watched over by old trees and countless birds, which look curiously with their tiny jet eyes at the thirteen full multicoloured sacks spread over the grass.

The voices of the bathers fade away and mingle with the murmuring water. Only now and again the sharp laughter of the younger ones resounds like a high note above the low monotonous tone of the river.

But silence is soon broken by the shuffling of feet. Some heads appear from behind a thicket; they cast sidelong glances and say with an expression of satisfaction: « They are here. They have stopped. Let us go and tell the others » and they disappear behind the bushes...

... In the meantime the apostles come back with the Master. They are refreshed, their hair is still wet, although they have dried it hurriedly, they are barefooted and are holding their dripping washed sandals by the straps, and they are wearing fresh clothes and the other ones are hanging in the cane-brake after being washed in the blue water of the Jordan. They are obviously in very good form after the long bath.

Unaware of the fact that they have been discovered, they sit down, after Jesus has offered and handed out the food. And after the meal, sleepy as they are, they would like to lie down and slumber, when a man arrives and after him another one, and then a third one...

« What do you want? » asks James of Zebedee, who sees them arrive and stop behind a large bush, undecided about moving forward or not. The others, including Jesus, turn round to see to whom James is speaking.

« Ah! it's the people of the village... They have followed us! » says Thomas without enthusiasm, as he was preparing to have a little nap.

In the meantime the visitors reply somewhat timorously, seeing the obvious reluctance of the apostles to receive them: « We wanted to speak to the Master... To tell Him that... Is that right, Samuel?... » and they stop not daring to say anything more.

But Jesus benignly encourages them: « Speak up. Have you more sick people?... » and He stands up directing His steps towards them.

« Master, You are even more tired than we are. Have a little rest and let them wait... » say some of the apostles.

« There are creatures here who want Me. So their hearts have no rest either. And the weariness of a heart is heavier than the tiredness of limbs. Let Me listen to them. »

« All right! Farewell to our rest!... » grumble the apostles, who are so affected by fatigue and heat as to reproach the Master in the presence of strangers, so much so, that they say to Him: « And when Your lack of prudence will have caused us all to be taken ill,

You will realise too late that we were necessary to You. »

Jesus looks at them... compassionately. There is nothing else in His kind tired eyes... And He replies: « No, My friends. I do not expect you to imitate Me. Look, you stay here, and rest; I will speak and listen to these people and then I will come and rest with you. »

His reply is so kind that it achieves more than a reproach would obtain. The kind hearts and affections of the Twelve are awakened and overwhelm them: « No, Lord! Stay where You are and speak to them. We will go and turn our clothes round so that the other side may dry. We will thus overcome sleep, and then we will come back and rest all together. » And the more sleepy ones go towards the river... Matthew, John and Bartholomew remain.

In the meantime the three citizens have become more than ten and their number increases more and more...

« So? Come here and speak without any fear. »

« Master, after You left, the Pharisees have become even more violent... They attacked the man freed by You... and it will be a new miracle if he does not become mad... because... they said to him... that You freed him from a demon who hampered only his reason and that You gave him a stronger demon, so strong that he defeated the previous one and is stronger than the previous one, because this one damns and possesses his soul, and thus, while in next life he would not have had to bear the consequences of the first possession because his actions were not... what did they say, Abraham?... »

« They said... oh! a strange word... In short God would not have asked him to give an account of those actions because he had not done them with a free mind, whereas now, by adoring You through the imposition of the demon he has in his heart, placed there by You - oh! forgive us for telling You - by You, the prince of demons, by adoring You with a mind which is no longer mad, he is impious, cursed and will be damned. Consequently the poor wretch regrets his previous state and... he almost curses You... So he is more insane than previously... and his mother is in despair because her son has given up hope of being saved... -and all their joy has become a torture. We have been looking for You so that You may give him peace, and an angel certainly guided us here... Lord, we believe that You are the Messiah. And we believe that the Messiah has in Himself the Spirit of God. He is therefore Truth and Wisdom. And we ask You to give us peace and an explanation... »

« You are in justice and in charity. May you be blessed. But where is the poor wretch? »

« He is following us with his mother, shedding desperate tears. See? The entire village, except them, the cruel Pharisees, is coming here, disregarding their threats. Because they have threatened to

punish us for believing in You. But God will protect us. »

« God will protect you. Take Me to the man I cured. »

« No. We will bring him here. Just wait » and many of them depart towards the larger group of people who are coming making gestures, while two shrill cries overwhelm the confused noise of the talk of the crowd. The others, those who have remained, are already so many, and when they are joined by the group surrounding the cured demoniac and his mother, a really large crowd is pressing among the trees around Jesus, climbing even the trees to find a place to hear and see.

Jesus goes towards the cured demoniac, who begins to tear his hair as soon as he sees Him, and kneeling down he says: « Give the first demon back to me! Out of pity for me, for my soul! What have I done to You that You should injure me so much? »

And his mother, also on her knees, says: « He is raving mad with fear, Lord! Do not pay attention to his blasphemous words, but free him from the fear that those cruel people have infused into him, so that he may not lose the life of his soul. You have already freed him once!... Oh! for the sake of a mother, free him once again! »

« Yes, woman. Be not afraid' Listen, child of God! » And Jesus lays His hands on the ruffled hair of the man delirious with supernatural fear: « Listen. And judge. Judge by yourself because your reason is free and you can judge according to justice. There is an unerring way to find out whether a prodigy comes from God or from a demon. And it is what a soul feels. If the extraordinary event comes from God, it infuses peace into the soul, peace and solemn joy. If it comes from the demon, it brings about perturbation and sorrow. And peace and joy come also from the words of God, whereas perturbation and sorrow come from those of a demon, be it a demon spirit or a demon man. And also the closeness of God grants peace and joy whereas the closeness of wicked spirits or men bring about perturbation and sorrow. Now consider, child of God. When, by yielding to the demon of lust, you began to receive your oppressor within you, did you enjoy happiness and peace? »

The man ponders and blushing replies: « No, Lord. »

« And when your everlasting Enemy captured you completely, did you enjoy peace and happiness? »

« No, Lord. Never. As long as I could understand, as long as a particle of my mind was free, I was distressed and grieved by the arrogance of the Enemy. Later... I do not know... My mind was no longer able to understand what I suffered... I was lower than a beast... But even in that state when I seemed to be less intelligent than an animal... oh! how much I could still suffer! I cannot say what... Hell is dreadful! It is nothing but horror... and it is not

possible to say what it is... »

The man shivers remembering what he suffered when he was possessed. He trembles, blanches, perspires... His mother embraces him and kisses his cheek to distract his mind from that nightmare... People whisper their comments.

« And when you woke up with your hand in Mine, what did you feel? »

« Oh! Such a wonderful sensation... and such a joy and an even greater peace... I seemed to be coming out from a dark prison, where countless snakes had been my chains and the air was permeated with the stench of a putrid sewer, and I seemed to be entering a garden full of flowers, of sunshine, of songs... I became acquainted with Paradise... but even that cannot be described... » The man smiles as if he were enraptured by the remembrance of his recent short hour of happiness. He then sighs and concludes: « But it was soon all over... »

« Are you sure? Now that you are close to Me and far from those who upset you, tell Me, what do you feel? »

« Peace once again. Here with You, I cannot believe that I am damned, and their words sound like blasphemy to me... But I believed them... So did I not sin against You? »

« You did not sin; they did. Rise, child of God, and believe in the peace within you. Peace comes from God. You are with God. Do not sin and be not afraid » and He removes His hands from the head of the man making him stand up.

« Is it really so, Lord? » ask many.

« It is really so. The doubt raised by the deliberately harmful words was the final revenge of Satan, who had come out of him defeated, but anxious to recapture the lost prey. »

With much good common sense a man of the people says: « Then... the Pharisees... assisted Satan! » and many applaud the keen remark.

« Do not judge. There is Who judges. »

« But at least we are sincere in our judgment... And God sees that we judge evident sins. They pretend to be what they are not. They act deceitfully and with wicked purposes. And yet they are more successful than we are, although we are honest and sincere. They are our terror. They extend their power even on the freedom of faith. One must believe and practise to their liking and they threaten us because we love You. They strive to reduce Your miracles to witchcraft and to frighten You. They conspire, they oppress, they injure... » The people speak excitedly.

With a gesture Jesus imposes silence and says:

« Do not receive in your hearts anything originating from them, neither their suggestions nor their methods, not even the thought: "they are wicked and yet they are successful". Do you not

remember the words of Wisdom: "Fleeting is the triumph of the wicked", and the words of Proverbs: "Son, do not follow the examples of sinners and do not listen to the words of the wicked because they will become entangled in the chains of their sins and they will be deceived by their own great stupidity"? Do not put into yourselves what comes from them and which you, although imperfect, consider wrong. You would, in fact, put within yourselves the same yeast which corrupts them. The yeast of the Pharisees is hypocrisy. Let it never be in you, neither with regard to the forms of worship of God nor with regard to your behaviour with your brothers. Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees. Remember that there is nothing concealed which cannot be disclosed, there is nothing hidden which is not revealed in the end.

You can see that yourselves. They allowed Me to leave and then they sowed darnel where the Lord had scattered chosen seed. They thought they had acted artfully and successfully. And it would have been enough if you had not found Me, if I had crossed the river leaving no trace of Myself on the water, which resumes its normal aspect after the bows open it, and their wickedness, under the appearance of good, would have triumphed. But their trick was soon found out and their evil deed was annulled. And the same applies to all the actions of man. At least One is aware of them and provides: God. What is spoken in the dark, ends up by being disclosed by Light, and what is plotted in the secrecy of a room can be disclosed as if it had been planned in a square. Because every man may have an informer. And because every man is seen by God Who can intervene and unmask offenders.

So one must always live honestly in order to live peacefully. And those who live thus need not be afraid, neither in this life nor with regard to the next one. No, My friends, I tell you: who acts righteously need not be afraid. They must not fear those who kill, yes, those who can kill the body, but can do nothing else. I will tell you what you must be afraid of. Be afraid of those who after putting you to death, can send you to hell, that is, of vices, of evil companions, of false teachers, of all those who insinuate sin or doubt into your hearts, of those who try to corrupt your souls more than your bodies, to detach you from God and to drive you to despair of divine Mercy. I repeat to you that that is what you are to be afraid of, because in that case you will be dead for ever. But be not afraid for the rest, for your lives. Your Father does not lose sight even of one of these tiny birds which builds its nest in the leafy branches of trees. Not one of them is caught in the net without its Creator being aware of it. And yet their material value is tiny: five sparrows for two pennies. And their spiritual value is nil. And yet God takes care of them. Will He, therefore, not take care of you? Of your lives? Of your welfare? Every hair on your heads is known to

the Father, and no wrong done to His children passes unnoticed by Him, because you are His children, that is, you are worth much more than the sparrows which nest on roofs or among leafy branches.

And you remain His children until, by your own free will, you renounce to be so. And one renounces such filiation when one denies God and the Word Whom God sent amongst men to lead men to God. Then, when a man will not acknowledge Me in the presence of men, because he is afraid of being damaged by such acknowledgement, God will not acknowledge him as His child, and the Son of God and of man will not acknowledge him in the presence of the angels in Heaven, and those who disown Me in the presence of men, will be disowned as children in the presence of God's angels. And those who have spoken ill of the Son of man or against Him will still be forgiven, because I will plead with the Father for their forgiveness, but those who blaspheme against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

Why that? Because not everybody can understand the extent of Love, its perfect infinity and see God in a body like the body of every man. The Gentiles, the heathens cannot believe that through faith, because their religion is not love. Also among us the fearful respect of Israel for Jehovah can prevent people from believing that God has become man and the humblest of men. It is a fault not to believe Me. But when it is based on excessive fear of God, it is still forgiven. But he cannot be forgiven, who does not yield to the truth shining through My deeds, and denies that the Spirit of Love has kept the promise to send the Saviour at the fixed time, the Saviour preceded and accompanied by the signs foretold.

Those who are persecuting Me, are acquainted with the prophets. The prophecies are full of Me. They are acquainted with the prophecies and they know what I do. The truth is evident. But they deny it because they want to deny it. They systematically deny that I am not only the Son of man, but also the Son of God, foretold by the prophets, He Who was born of a Virgin, not by the will of man, but of the Eternal Love, of the Eternal Spirit, Who announced Me so that men could recognise Me. In order to be able to say that the night of the Expectation of the Christ is still enduring, they persist in keeping their eyes closed, so that they may not see the Light which is in the world, and therefore they deny the Holy Spirit, Its Truth and Its Light. And they will be judged more severely than those who do not know. Neither will they be forgiven for saying that I am "satan", because the Spirit works divine, not satanic deeds for Me. And they will not be forgiven for driving people to despair, when Love had led them to peace. Because those are all offences against the Holy Spirit. Against this Paraclete Spirit Who is Love and grants love and asks for love and

Who is awaiting My holocaust of love in order to spread out in wise love, illuminating the hearts of My believers. And when that has happened and they will still persecute you, accusing you before magistrates and princes of synagogues and in courts, do not worry about how to defend yourselves. The same Spirit will tell you what to say to serve the Truth and conquer Life for yourselves, just as the Word is giving you what is necessary to enter the Kingdom of eternal Life.

Go in peace. In My Peace. In that Peace with God and which God sheds to saturate His children with it. Go and be not afraid. I have not come to deceive you, but to teach you, not to lose you, but to redeem you. Blessed are those who will believe My words. And you, man, who have been saved twice, be firm and remember My peace, so that you may say to tempters: "Do not try to seduce me. My faith is that He is the Christ". Go, woman. Go with him and be in peace. Goodbye. Go back to your homes and leave the Son of man to His humble rest on the grass, before resuming His persecuted journey in search of other people to be saved, until the end. My peace be with you. »

He blesses them and goes back to the place where they had their meal. The apostles are with Him. After the people disperse, they lie down, resting their heads on their sacks and they soon go to sleep, in the sultry heat of the afternoon and in the heavy silence of those torrid hours.

#### **420. Consider Yourselves Unprofitable Servants.**

24th April 1946.

The gravel bed is white in the moonless but very clear night, as thousands of large, unusually large stars are shining in the Eastern sky. It is not an intense light like moonlight, but it is already a pleasant phosphorescence, which enables those whose eyes are accustomed to darkness, to see where they walk and what is around them. Here, on the right hand side of the wayfarers, who are going up northwards along the river, the mild starlight shows the vegetable border made by cane-brakes, willows and then by tall trees, and as the light is faint, they look like a compact continuous wall, without any interruption, impossible to penetrate, with a gap where a stream or torrent bed, completely dry, draws a white line that runs eastwards and disappears at the first curve of the tiny tributary now dried up. On the left hand side, instead, the travellers discern the glittering waters that flow down towards the Dead Sea grumbling, sighing, rustling, quiet and serene. And between the shining line of the blue indigo waters, in the night, and the dark opaque mass of grass, bushes and trees, the clear strip of the gravel bed, in places wider, in others narrower, is now and

again interrupted by tiny ponds, remainders of previous floods, with still a little water, which is slowly absorbed by the soil and in which there are still some tufts of green grass, which elsewhere is dried up in the gravel bed parched in the hours of sunshine.

The apostles are compelled by those tiny ponds or by tangles of dry bulrushes, as dangerous as blades for their feet half-naked in sandals, to part now and again and then join again in a group round the Master, Who is proceeding with vigorous strides, always solemn, silent most of the time, with His eyes raised to the stars rather than bent to the ground. But the apostles are not silent. They are talking to one another, summarising the events of the day, drawing conclusions or foreseeing future developments. A few rare words of Jesus, often spoken in reply to a direct question or to correct a wrong or uncharitable opinion, punctuate the chattering of the Twelve. And the march proceeds in the night, marking the night silence with new elements for those desert banks: human voices and shuffling of feet. Nightingales are silent among the branches, surprised at the discordant harsh sounds mixing with and disturbing the usual murmur of water and whispering of breezes, the customary accompaniments of their virtuosi solos.

But a direct question, not concerning what has happened but what is to happen, breaks not only the peace of the night, but also the more intimate peace of hearts, with the violence of a rebellion in addition to the sharp tone of voices upset by scorn and anger. Philip asks whether and in how many days they will be home. A latent need of rest, an unexpressed but understood desire for family love is in the simple question of the elderly apostle, who is a husband and father besides being an apostle, and has interests to look after...

Jesus perceives all that and turns round to look at Philip, He stops waiting for him, as Philip is a little behind with Matthew and Nathanael, and when he is near, He embraces him with one arm saying: « Soon, My friend. But I ask you to be kind enough to make another small sacrifice, providing you do not wish to part from Me before... »

« Me? Part from You? Never! »

« Then... I will keep you away for some time from Bethsaida. I want to go to Caesarea on the Sea via Samaria. On our way back we will go to Nazareth and those who have no family in Galilee will remain with Me. Then, after some time, I will join you at Capernaum... And I will evangelize you there to make you even more capable. But if you think that your presence at Bethsaida is necessary... you may go, Philip. We shall meet there... »

« No, Master. It is more necessary for me to stay with You! But You know... Home is sweet... and my daughters... I do not think that I will have them very much with me in future... and I would

like to enjoy a little of their modest kindness. But if I have to choose between them and You, I choose You... and for many reasons... » ends Philip with a sigh.

« And you are doing the right thing, My friend. Because I will be taken away from you before your daughters... »

« Oh! Master!... » says grievously the apostle.

« It is so, Philip » concludes Jesus kissing the temple of the apostle.

Judas Iscariot, who has been grumbling between his teeth since Jesus mentioned Caesarea, raises his voice as if the kiss given to Philip has made him lose control of his actions. And he says: « How many useless things! I don't really understand why it is necessary to go to Caesarea! » and he says so with angry impetuosity; he seems to imply: « and You Who want to go there are a fool. »

« It is not for you to judge the necessity of what we do, but for the Master » Bartholomew replies to him.

« Really, why not? As if He saw natural necessities clearly! »

« I say! Are you mad or sane? Do you realise of Whom you are speaking? » asks Peter shaking him by the arm.

« I am not mad. I am the only one with sound brains. And I know what I am saying. »

« You are saying lovely things! », « Beg God not to take them into account! », « Modesty is not your strong point! », « One might think that you are afraid that by going to Caesarea you might be found out for what you are » say James of Zebedee, Simon Zealot, Thomas and Judas of Alphaeus respectively.

The Iscariot addresses the last one: « I have nothing to be afraid of and you have nothing to find out. But I am tired of seeing that we pass from one error to another, ruining ourselves. Conflicts with the members of the Sanhedrin, arguments with Pharisees. The Romans are the last straw... »

« What? Less than two months ago you were overjoyed, you were full of confidence, you were, you were... you were everything because Claudia was your friend! » remarks Bartholomew ironically who, being the most... uncompromising, is the one who does not rebel against contacts with the Romans only out of obedience to the Master.

Judas is speechless for a moment because the logic of the ironical remark is obvious, and unless he is prepared to appear illogical, he cannot contradict what he said previously. But he soon collects himself and says: « It is not because of the Romans that I am saying that. I mean because of the Romans as enemies. They... after all they are only four Roman ladies, four, five, six at most, they promised to help us and they will. But it is because that will increase the hatred of His enemies, and He does not realise that and... »

« Their hatred is intense, Judas. And you know that as well as I

do, even better than I do » says Jesus calmly stressing the word « better ».

« Me? Me? What do You mean? Who knows things better than You do? »

« Just now you said that you are aware of necessities and how to make use of them... » retorts Jesus.

« With regard to natural things, yes. I say that You know spiritual matters better than anybody. »

« That is true. But I was just saying to you that you know better than I do, unpleasant, disgraceful, natural things, if you wish to call them so, such as the hatred of My enemies, such as their purposes... »

« I know nothing! I do not know anything. I swear to it on my soul, on my mother, on Jehovah... »

« That is enough! It is written that you must not swear » orders Jesus with such severity that even His countenance seems to become petrified in the perfection of a statue.

« Well, I shall not swear. But I must be allowed to say, since I am not a slave, that it is not necessary, that it serves no purpose, on the contrary it is dangerous to go to Caesarea, to speak to the Romans... »

« And who told you that that will happen? » asks Jesus.

« Who? Everything! You need to make sure of something. You are on the track of a... » he stops realising that wrath is making him say too much. He then resumes: « And I tell You that You ought to think also of our interests. You have deprived us of everything: home, earnings, affections, peace. We are persecuted because of You and we shall be persecuted even later. Because You, You say so in every possible way, will go away one fine day. But we are staying. We shall be ruined, but we... »

« You will not be persecuted when I am no longer among you. I, who am the Truth, tell you so. And I tell you that I have taken what you spontaneously and insistently gave Me. So you cannot say that I have taken away from you, with abuse of power, even one of the hairs that fall off when you tidy them. Why are you accusing Me? » Jesus is now less severe, His sad countenance expresses the desire to bring Judas back to reason kindly and I think that his compassion, so full and so divine, acts as a check on the others, who would not be so sympathetic towards the culprit.

Judas also perceives that and with one of the brusque changes of his soul urged by two opposed forces, he throws himself on the ground striking his head and chest and shouting: « Because I am a demon. I am a demon. Save me, Master, as You save so many demoniacs. Save me! Save me! »

« Do not let your desire to be saved be inactive. »

« It exists. You can see that. I want to be saved. »

« By Me. You expect Me to do everything. But I am God and I respect your free will. I will give you the strength so that you may get to say: "I do want". But to want not to be a slave must come from you. »

« I do want! I do want! But do not go to Caesarea. Don't go! Listen to me as You listened to John, when You wanted to go to Achor. We have all the same rights. We all serve You in the same manner. You are obliged to satisfy us for what we do... Treat me as You treated John! I want it! What difference is there between him and me? »

« The soul is different! My brother would never have spoken as you did. My brother does not... »

« Be silent, James. I will speak. To everybody. And you stand up and behave as a man, as I treat you, not like a slave moaning at the feet of his master. Be a man, since you are so anxious to be treated as John, who, truly, is more than a man because he is chaste and full of Charity. Let us go. It is late. I want to cross the river at dawn. The fishermen will be coming back then after hauling the lobster-pots and it is easy to find a ferry-boat. The moon in her last days raises her thin crescent higher and higher. We will be able to walk faster in her increased light.

Listen. I solemnly tell you that no one must boast of doing his duty and exact for that, which is an obligation, special favours.

Judas has reminded Me that you have given Me everything. And he told Me that it is My duty to satisfy you for what you do. But just listen. Among you there are some fishermen, some landowners, some own a workshop, and the Zealot had a servant. Now then. When the boat servants, or the men who helped you like servants in the olive grove, in the vineyard, or in the fields, or apprentices in the workshop, or even the faithful servant who looked after the house and meals, finished their work, did you begin to serve them? Is it not so in every house and in every task? Which man, with a servant ploughing or minding sheep, or a workman in a workshop, would say to him when he finishes his work: "Go and have your meal immediately"? No one. But whether he comes back from the fields or he lays down his working tools, every master says: "Get my supper laid, get yourself tidy and with clean clothes wait on me while I eat and drink. You will eat and drink afterwards". Neither can one say that that is insensibility. Because a servant must serve his master, and the master is not obliged to him, because the servant has done what the master had ordered him to do in the morning. Because, while it is true that the master must be kind to his servant, so it is the duty of the servant not to be lazy or a squanderer, but he must cooperate for the welfare of the master who feeds and clothes him. Would you bear your boat assistants, your peasants, workmen, your house servant

to say to you: "Serve me because I have worked"? I do not think so.

So with you, when you consider what you have done and you do for Me - and, in future, considering what you will do to continue My work and to continue to serve your Master - you must always say, because you will see that you have always done much less than was fair to do to be on a par with what you received from God: "We are unprofitable servants because we have done but our duty". If you reason thus, you will see that you will no longer feel pretensions and bad temper arise in you, and you will act according to justice. »

Jesus is silent. They are all pensive.

Peter nudges John, who is pondering staring with his blue eyes at the waters, which from indigo have become silver-blue in the moonlight, and says to him: « Ask Him when is it that one does more than one's duty. I would like to be able to do more than my duty, I... »

« I, too, Simon. I was just thinking of that » replies John with his beautiful smile and in a loud voice he asks: « Master, tell me: will the man who serves You never be able to do more than his duty to tell You that he thus loves You entirely? »

« Child, God has given you so much, that in all fairness, all your heroism would always be too little. But the Lord is so good that He does not measure what you give Him with His infinite measure. He measures it with the limited measure of human capability. And when He sees that you have given without parsimony, with a full measure, overflowing generously, He then says: "This servant of Mine has given Me more than it was his duty. I will therefore give him the superabundance of My rewards". »

« Oh! How happy I am! I will give You an overflowing measure to have that superabundance! » exclaims Peter.

« Yes, you will give Me it. You will all give Me it. All those who are lovers of the Truth, of the Light, will give Me it. And they will be supernaturally happy with Me. »

#### **421. The Repentant Sinner Is always To Be Forgiven.**

25th April 1946.

They are now on the other bank. On their right are mount Tabor and the little Hermon, on their left the mountains of Samaria, the Jordan is behind them, and in front of them, beyond the plain in which they are, the hills in front of which is Megiddo; (if my memory does not fail me, I heard this name in a remote vision, the one in which Jesus joins Judas of Kerieth and Thomas, after the separation brought about by the necessity of concealing the departure of Syntyche and John of Endor).

They must have rested all day in some hospitable house, because it is evening once again and it is evident that they have rested. It is still warm, but dew is already beginning to form, mitigating the heat. And violet shadows of twilight are falling after the last red flares of a blazing sunset.

« We can walk without difficulty here » remarks Matthew happily.

« Yes. If we proceed this fast, we shall be at Megiddo before cockcrow » the Zealot replies to him.

« And at dawn we shall be beyond the hills, in sight of the plain of Sharon » concludes John.

« And of your sea, eh? » says his brother teasing him.

« Yes. Of my sea... » replies John smiling.

« And with your spirit you will depart on one of your spiritual wanderings » says Peter pressing his arm with strong fatherly affection. And he concludes: « Teach me as well, how to draw certain... angelical thoughts from the sight of things. I have looked at water so many times... I have loved it... but... but it has never been of any avail to me other than to earn my living by fishing in it. What do you see in it? ... »

« I see water, Simon. Like you and everybody else. As I now see fields and orchards... But then, beside the eyes of my body, I have other eyes in here, and I no longer see grass and water but words of wisdom come out from those material things. It is not I who think. I would not be able. It is somebody else who thinks in me. »

« Are you perhaps a prophet? » asks the Iscariot somewhat ironically.

« Oh! no! I am not a prophet... »

« What then? Do you think that you possess God? »

« Even less so... »

« You must be raving then. »

« It might well be so, I am so small and weak. But if it is so, it is pleasant raving and leads me to God. My disease then becomes a gift and I bless the Lord for it. »

« Ha! Ha! Ha! » Judas guffaws maliciously.

Jesus, Who has been listening, says: « He is not ill, he is not a prophet. But a pure soul possesses wisdom. It is wisdom that speaks in the heart of a just man. »

« In that case I will never get there, because I have not always been good... » says Peter, somewhat discouraged.

« What about me, then? » replies Matthew.

« My friends, only few people, too few could possess wisdom because they have always been pure. But repentance and good will make man, previously guilty and imperfect, just, and then the conscience is purified in the bath of humility, contrition and love, and thus purified, it can vie with those who are pure. »

« Thank You, Lord » says Matthew bending to kiss the hand of the Master.

There is silence. Then Judas exclaims: « I am tired! I don't know whether I will be able to walk all night. »

« No wonder! Today you wandered about like a blowfly, while we were sleeping! » James of Zebedee replies to him.

« I wanted to see if I met any of the disciples... »

« What did it matter to you? The Master did not tell you. So... »

« Well, I did it. And if the Master allows me, I will stop at Megiddo. I think a friend of ours is there, he goes there every year, at this time, after harvest-time. I would like to speak to him of my mother and... »

« Do as you wish. After your errand you will go to Nazareth. We will meet you there. You can thus inform My Mother and Mary of Alphaeus that we shall soon be home. »

« I also say to You, as Matthew did: "Thank You, Lord". »

Jesus does not reply, and He receives the kiss on His hand as He received Matthew's. It is not possible to see His countenance because it is the moment in the evening when daylight has disappeared completely and there is no starlight as yet. It is so dark that they are proceeding along the road with difficulty and to avoid all possible trouble Peter and Thomas decide to light some twigs, which they have taken from hedges and which burn with a crackle. But the lack of light previously and the smoky moving light later do not enable one to see the expressions of faces.

In the meantime they are approaching the hills, the dark tops of which are visible because they are darker than the mown fields, where the stubble looks whitish against the black of the night, and they become more and more visible as they are approached and as the light of the first stars illuminates them...

« I would leave You here, as my friends live a little outside Megiddo. I am so tired... »

« You may go. May the Lord watch over your steps. »

« Thank You, Master. Goodbye, friends. »

« Goodbye, goodbye » say the others without attaching much importance to their greetings.

Jesus repeats: « May the Lord watch over your actions. »

Judas goes away quickly.

« H'm! He doesn't look so tired » remarks Peter.

« True! He was dragging his feet here. But now he is running like a gazelle over there... » says Nathanael.

« Your farewell was a holy one, Brother. But unless the Lord overwhelms him with His will, the assistance of God will not help him to take good steps and do fair actions. »

« Judas, the fact that you are My brother does not exempt you from being reproached! I therefore reproach you for being harsh

and pitiless towards your companion. He has his faults. But you also have yours. And the first is that you do not endeavour to help Me to perfect his soul. You exasperate him with your words. It is not with violence that you bend hearts. Do you think that you are entitled to censor every action of his? Do you consider yourself so perfect as to be able to do so? May I remind you that I, your Master, do not do so, because I love that imperfect soul. It moves Me to pity more than any other soul... just because it is imperfect. Do you think that he is happy with his state? And how will you be able to be a master of spirits in future, if with one of your companions you do not practise to make use of the infinite charity which redeems sinners? »

Judas of Alphaeus has bent his head as from the first words. But at the end he kneels on the ground saying: « Forgive me. I am a sinner. And reproach me when I am wrong, because reproof is love, and only a fool does not appreciate the grace of being corrected by a wise person. »

« You can see that I do it for your own good. And forgiveness is joined to My reproach because I can understand the reason for your severity and because the humility of the person corrected disarms him who corrects. Stand up, Judas, and sin no more » and He keeps him beside Himself with John.

The other apostles exchange comments with one another, whispering at first, then in louder voices out of their habit of speaking aloud. I can thus hear them make comparisons between the two Judases.

« If it had been Judas of Kerioth to get that reproach, I wonder how he would have reacted! Your brother is good » says Thomas to James.

« But... well... We cannot say that what he said was wrong. He said one thing which is true with regard to Judas of Kerioth. Do you believe the story of the friend who goes to Judaea? I don't » says Matthew frankly.

« It must be... vineyard matters as it happened at the Jericho market » says Peter referring to the scene which he cannot forget. They all laugh.

« It certainly takes the Master to pity him so much... » remarks Philip.

« So much? Always, you should say » replies James of Zebedee.

« If it were I, I would not be so patient » says Nathanael.

« Neither would I. Yesterday's scene was disgusting » confirms Matthew.

« The man cannot be completely sound of mind » says the Zealot conciliatorily.

« But he knows how to look after his business. He is even too clever. I would bet my boat, my nets, even my house, sure that I

would not lose anything, that he has gone to see some Pharisee to beg for protection... » says Peter.

« That's right. Ishmael! There is Ishmael at Megiddo! How come we never thought of that?! We must tell the Master! » exclaims Thomas striking his forehead vigorously with his hand.

« It is of no use. The Master would excuse him once again and would reproach us » says the Zealot.

« Well let us try. James, go: He loves you and you are a relative of His »

« We are all alike, as far as He is concerned. Here, He does not see us as relatives or friends, He sees only apostles and He is impartial. But I will go, just to please you » says James of Alphaeus. And he quickens his step to depart from his companions and join Jesus.

« You think that he has gone to see a Pharisee. This one or that one... it does not matter... But I think he did it in order not to come to Caesarea. He does not come there willingly... » says Andrew.

« He seems to have been disgusted with the Roman ladies for some time » remarks Thomas.

« And yet... while you were going to Engedi and I was going with him to Lazarus, he was so happy to speak to Claudia... » says the Zealot.

« Yes... but... I think that he did something wrong just then. And I think that Johanna knows and that is why she sent for Jesus and... and I have been making many suppositions since Judas flew into a passion at Bethzur... » grumbles Peter between his teeth.

« Do you mean that? » asks Matthew curiously.

« Well... I don't know Ideas... We shall see... »

« Oh! Don't let us think of evil things! The Master does not approve of that. And we have no proof that he did anything wrong » says Andrew imploringly.

« You are not going to tell me that he acts rightly in grieving the Master, in lacking in respect to Him, in causing ill feelings... »

« Be good, Simon! I can assure you that he is somewhat mad... » says the Zealot.

« Well. He may be. But he sins against the kindness of our Lord. If he spat in my face, if he boxed my ears, I would put up with that and offer it to God for his redemption. I have taken it into my head to make every sacrifice for that and I bite my tongue and I run my nails into the palms of my hands when he plays the fool, in order to control myself. But I cannot forgive him for being bad to our Master. The sin he commits against Him, it's the same as if he committed it against me, and I cannot forgive him. Then... if it were only now and again! But he is always at it! I cannot get over the anger boiling within me about one of his quarrels, and he makes a fresh scene! Once, twice, three times... There is a limit! » Peter is almost shouting his words and is gesticulating impetuously.

Jesus, Who is about ten metres ahead of them, turns round, a white shadow in the night, and He says:

« There is no limit to love and forgiveness. There is none. Neither in God nor in the true children of God. As long as there is life, there is no limit. The only obstacle to the descent of forgiveness and love is the impenitent resistance of the sinner. But if he repents, he is always to be forgiven, even if he sinned not once, twice or three times a day, but much more frequently. You also sin and you want to be forgiven by God and you go to Him saying: "I have sinned! Forgive me". And forgiveness is pleasant to you and it is pleasant to God to forgive. And you are not gods. Consequently the offence given to you by people like yourselves is less grave than that given to God, Who is not like anybody else. Do you not think so? And yet God forgives. Do likewise yourselves. Be careful! Watch that your intolerance does not become detrimental to you by causing God to be intolerant towards you. I have already told you, but I will repeat it once again. Be merciful in order to have mercy. No one is so sinless as to be inexorable towards a sinner. Look at your own burdens before considering those weighing on the hearts of other people. Remove yours from your souls and then turn to those of other people to show them not the severity that condemns, but the love that teaches and helps to be freed from evil. In order to be able to say - and not be silenced by a sinner - in order to be able to say: "You have sinned against God and against your neighbour" it is necessary not to have sinned or at least to have made amends for the sin. In order to be able to say to those who are dejected because they have sinned: "Have faith that God forgives those who repent" - as servants of God Who forgives repentant souls - you must show so much mercy in forgiving. Then you will be able to say: "See, repentant sinner? I forgive your sins seven and seven times, because I am a servant of Him Who forgives countless times those who repent of their sins as many times. Consider then how the Perfect One forgives, if I know how to forgive, simply because I serve Him. Have faith!". You must be able to say so, and say so with your deeds, not just with words. You must say so forgiving. So if your brother sins, admonish him kindly, and if he repents, forgive him. And if at the end of the day he has sinned seven times and says to you seven times: "I repent", forgive him seven times. Have you understood? Will you promise Me that you will do that? While he is away, do you promise Me to be indulgent to him and to help Me to cure him making the sacrifice of controlling yourselves when he does anything wrong? Do you not want to help Me to save him? He is your brother in spirit as he comes from one sole Father, by race as he comes from one sole people, by mission as he is an apostle like you. So you ought to love him three times. If in your family you had a brother who grieved your father

and exposed himself to censure, would you not try to correct him so that your father suffered no longer and no one spoke ill of your family? So? Is your family not a greater and holier one as its Father is God and I am the First-born? Why, then, do you not want to console the Father and Me and help us to improve the poor brother who, believe Me, is not happy to be so?... »

Jesus is anxiously imploring on behalf of the apostle who is so full of faults... And He concludes: « I am the Great Beggar and I ask you for the most valuable alms: I ask you to give Me souls. I go about looking for them, but you must help Me... Satisfy the hunger of My Heart, which seeks love and finds it only in too few people. Because those who do not aim at perfection are like as many loaves of bread of which My spiritual hunger is deprived. Give souls to your Master Who is distressed at not being loved and understood... »

The apostles are moved... They would like to say so many things, but every word seems too mean... They press round the Master, each one wishing to caress Him, to make Him feel that they all love Him.

At last it is meek Andrew who says: « Yes, Lord. With patience, silence and sacrifice, the powerful means of conversion, we will give You souls. Also that one... if God helps us... »

« Yes, Lord. And You help us with Your prayer. »

« Yes, friends. And in the meantime let us pray together for your companion who has gone away. "Our Father Who art in Heaven... »

Jesus' perfect voice repeats the words of the Our Father pronouncing them distinctly and slowly. The others chorus in a subdued tone. And while praying they move away in the night.

#### **422. Martyrdom for Love Is Absolution.**

27th April 1946.

From the tops of the last risings of the ground, which cannot be called hills, as their height is so minimal, a large stretch of the Mediterranean coast appears; it is limited to the north by the Carmel promontory, while to the south it stretches freely as far as human eyes can see. A placid almost straight coast with behind it a fertile plain interrupted by slight undulations of the ground. Coast-towns are visible with their white houses situated between the green of the country and the blue of the sea, which is placid and serene, a bright blue reflecting the pure azure of the sky.

Caesarea is a little to the north of the place where the apostles are with Jesus and with some disciples, whom they probably met in the villages they passed through in the evening or at dawn. It is now later than daybreak and dawn, although it is very early in the

morning. In those beautiful hours of summer mornings, when the sky, after rosy dawn becomes again blue, the air is fresh and clear and fresh is the country. No sail appears on the sea. They are the pure hours of the day, when fresh flowers begin to open and the dew, drying in the early sun, exhales the sweet smells of herbs, bestowing freshness and perfume on the light breath of the morning breeze, which moves the leaves on stems just lightly and barely ripples the smooth expanse of the sea.

The town appears stretched along the shore, as beautiful as every place where Roman refinement has settled. Thermal baths and marble buildings exhibit their whiteness like solid blocks of snow in the districts closer to the sea, overlooked by a tall white square tower near the harbour: perhaps a Castrum or a look-out post. Then there are the more modest little suburban houses, in Jewish style, and everywhere there are green pergole, roofgardens built more or less splendidly on the flat roofs of houses, and tall trees growing everywhere.

The apostles admire the view resting in the shade of a group of plane-trees almost on the top of the hill.

« The sight of this immensity lightens one's heart! » exclaims Philip.

« And you seem to be already feeling all the coolness of those beautiful blue waters » says Peter.

« True! After so much dust, stones, thorns... look what a marvel! How fresh and peaceful! The sea always brings peace... » remarks James of Alphaeus.

« H'm! Except when... it slaps your face and whirls you and the boat round like tops in the hands of boys... » replies Matthew who probably remembers being seasick.

« Master... I think... I think of all the words of our psalmists, of the book of Job, of the words of the wisdom books, where the power of God is celebrated. And, I do not know why, the thoughts coming from what I see make me feel that we shall be elevated to perfect beauty on a blue bright purity thus, if we are just until the end in the great gathering, in Your eternal Triumph, the one which You described to us and which will be the end of Evil... And I seem to be seeing this azure immensity peopled with bright risen bodies and You, shining more than a thousand suns, in the middle of the blessed souls... and no more sorrow, tears, insults, disparagement like yesterday evening's... and peace, peace, peace... But when will Evil stop being harmful? Will it perhaps blunt its arrows against Your Sacrifice? Will it be convinced that it has been beaten? » asks John, who at first was smiling and now is depressed.

« Never. It will always think that it is triumphant, notwithstanding all the contradictions of the just. And My Sacrifice will not blunt its arrows. But the hour will come, the final hour, when Evil

will be defeated, and in a beauty even more infinite than that foreseen by your spirit, the chosen ones will be the only People, the eternal, holy true People of the true God. »

« And shall we all be there? » ask the apostles.

« Yes, all. »

« And what about us? » ask the already large group of the disciples.

« You will all be there, too. »

« All the ones present or all those who are Your disciples? We are many now, notwithstanding those who parted from us. »

« And you will be more and more. But not everyone will be faithful until the end. But many will be with Me in Paradise. Some will have their reward after expiation, some immediately after their death, but the reward will be such that, as you forget the Earth and its sorrows, so you will forget Purgatory with its penitential longing for love. »

« Master, You told us that we will suffer persecutions and martyrdom. They may capture and kill us before we have time to repent, or our weakness will prevent us from being resigned to violent death... So? » asks Nicolaus of Antioch who is among the disciples.

« Do not believe that. Owing to your human weakness you could not suffer martyrdom with resignation. But supernatural assistance will be instilled by the Lord into the great spirits who must bear witness to the Lord... »

« Which? Insensibility, perhaps? »

« No, Nicolaus. Perfect love. They will achieve such complete love that torture, accusations, separations from relatives, from life, from everything, will no longer be depressing matters, on the contrary they will become the base to rise to Heaven, to receive it, to see it and therefore to stretch arms and hearts towards tortures, in order to go where their hearts already are: to Heaven. »

« One who dies thus will be much forgiven » says an old disciple whose name I do not know.

« Not much, but completely forgiven, Papias. Because love is absolution, and sacrifice is absolution, and heroic confession of faith is -absolution. You can thus see that martyrs will have treble purification. »

« Oh! then... I have sinned much, Master, and I have followed these disciples to be forgiven, and yesterday You forgave me and because of that You were insulted by those who do not forgive and are guilty. I think that Your forgiveness is valid. But for my long years of sin give me the absolution of martyrdom. »

« You are asking for a great deal, man! »

« Not as much as I have to give to have the beatitude which John of Zebedee has described and You have confirmed. I implore You,

Lord. Let me die for You, for Your doctrine... »

« You are asking for very much, man! The life of man is in the hands of My Father... »

« But every prayer of Yours is heard, as every judgement of Yours is heard. Ask the Eternal Father that forgiveness for me... »

The man is on his knees at the feet of Jesus, Who looks him in the eye and then says: « And do you not think that it is martyrdom to live when the world has lost all attraction and the heart yearns for Heaven, and to live to teach other people to love and to become acquainted with the disappointments of the Master and to persevere tirelessly to give souls to the Master? Always do the will of God, even if your own should appear to you to be more heroic, and you will be holy... But here are your companions coming with supplies. Let us set out to arrive in town before the torrid hours. »

And He sets out first down the light descent that soon arrives at the plain marked by the white ribbon of the road leading to Caesarea on the Sea.

### **423. At Caesarea on the Sea. Parable of the Father Who Gives Each of His Children the Same Amount of Money.**

30th April 1946.

Caesarea has large markets where fine victuals pour in for the refined Roman tables, and near the market squares where, in a kaleidoscope of faces, colours and races, more common foodstuffs can be found, there are stores with richer delicacies, imported both from the various Roman colonies and from remote Italy, to make the separation from the Fatherland less painful. And stores selling wines and delicatessen imported from abroad are in deep porches, because the Romans do not like being burned by the sun or drenched by rain while purchasing refined foodstuffs for their banquets. While satisfying their gluttony like Epicureans, they do not neglect the other parts of their bodies... thus cool shady porches and arches protecting from the rain lead from the Roman district - which is almost entirely grouped around the building of the Proconsul, between the coast road and the square of barracks and tollhouse - to the Roman stores near the Jewish markets.

There are many people under these porches, the end part of which near the markets is comfortable if not beautiful. There are people of all races. There are slaves and freedmen and an occasional pleasure-loving gentleman surrounded by slaves, passing listlessly from one shop to another, after leaving his litter in the street, and doing his shopping which the slaves take to his house. And when two Roman gentlemen meet, one can hear the usual idle talk: the weather, the tedium of the town which does not offer the pleasures of remote Italy, regret for great performances, plans for

banquets and licentious speech.

A Roman, preceded by about a dozen slaves laden with bags and parcels, meets two friends. Reciprocal greetings: « Hail, Ennius! »

« Hail, Florus Tullius Cornelius! Hail, Marcus Heracleus Flavius! »

« When did you come back? »

« The day before yesterday, at dawn, exhausted. »

« You, exhausted? You are never in a sweat! » the young man named Florus says teasing playfully.

« Don't jeer at me, Florus Tullius Cornelius. I am drudging even now on behalf of my friends! »

« Your friends? We did not ask you to drudge » objects the elder friend, named Marcus Heracleus Flavius.

« But my love thinks of you. You cruel people who sneer at me, see this procession of slaves laden with goods? Others have gone before them with other goods. And it's all to honour you. »

« So this is your work? A banquet? »

« Why? » shout the two friends loudly.

« Sh! Noble patricians making such a terrible din! You sound like the plebeians of this country where we are wearing ourselves out in... »

« Orgies and idleness. Because we do nothing else. I am still asking myself: why are we here? What tasks have we got? »

« To be bored to death is one. »

« To teach the hired female mourners here how to live is another. »

« And... to sow Rome in the sacred pelvises of Jewish women is another one. »

« And to enjoy, here as anywhere else, our wealth and power, to which everything is allowed, is a further one. »

The three alternate as in a litany and laugh. But young Florus suddenly stops and becomes gloomy and he says: « But for some time a fog has been hanging over the merry Court of Pilate. The most beautiful women look like chaste vestals and their husbands comply with their whims. And that spoils the habitual feasts a great deal... »

« Of course! The caprice for that coarse Galilean... But it will soon be over... »

« You are wrong, Ennius. I know that Claudia also is conquered by Him and thus... good morals have strangely installed themselves in her palace. Roman republican austerity seems to be revived there... »

« Alas! What a mouldy smell! Since when? »

« Since sweet April, suitable for love affairs. You don't know... You were not here. But our ladies came back as sad as the mourners of cinerary urns and we poor men have to look elsewhere

for many of our amusements. Which we are not even allowed in the presence of the modest ladies! »

« One reason more why I should help you. A great dinner this evening... and a greater orgy in my house. I was at Cynthium and I found delightful things which these stinkers consider impure: peacocks, partridges, and all kinds of moorhens, and little wild boars removed alive from their mother, which had been killed, and bred for our dinners. And wines... Ah! sweet, precious wines of the Roman hills, of my warm shores near Liternum and of your sunny coast near Aciri!... And sweet-smelling wines from Chios, of which Cynthium is the pearl. And inebriating wines from Iberia, suitable to excite senses for the final enjoyment. Oh! It must be a great feast, to dispel the tedium of our exile and to convince ourselves that we are still virile!... »

« Will there be women as well? »

« Of course... And more beautiful than roses. Of every colour and... taste. I spent a treasure for all the goods, including the women... But I am generous to my friends!... I was just finishing my shopping here. What might have gone bad during the journey. After the banquet, let us have love!... »

« Did you have a good voyage? »

« Very good. Aphrodite Anadyomene was friendly to me. In any case I am dedicating tonight's rite to her... »

The three men laugh grossly anticipating the on-coming shameful pleasures...

But Florus asks: « But why this exceptional feast? What's the reason for it?... »

« Three reasons: my beloved nephew in the next few days will begin to wear his toga virilis. I must celebrate the event. Obedience to the foreboding that Caesarea was changing into a distressing abode and that it was necessary to discredit fate by means of a rite to Venus. The third reason... I will whisper it to you: I am invited to a wedding... »

« You? Liar! »

« I am invited to a wedding. It is a "wedding" every time one relishes the first sip from a sealed amphora. And I am doing that this evening. Twenty thousand sesterces, or if you prefer so, two hundred gold pieces I paid for her, because in actual fact that is what I had to give for her, including brokers and the like. But even if Venus had given birth to her at dawn in April, and had made her with foam and golden beams, I would not have found her more beautiful and pure! A bud, a closed but... Ah! And I am her master! »

« Profaner! » says Marcus Heracleus jokingly.

« Do not play the censor, for you are my equal... After Valerian left, we were bored to death here. But I am replacing him... We

must take advantage of the experience of our forefathers. But I will not be so foolish to wait, as he did, for the girl, who is fairer than honey and whom I have called Galla Ciprina, to be spoiled by the sadness and the theories of emasculated philosophers who do not know how to enjoy the pleasures of life... »

« Bravo!!! But... Valerian's slave was a learned woman and... »

«... and became mad reading philosophers... Soul!... second life!... virtue!!!... a lot of nonsense!... To live is to enjoy oneself! And we live here. Yesterday I burned every mournful scroll and I ordered the slaves, under pain of death, not to remember the miseries of philosophers and of Galileans. And the girl will know me only... »

« But where did you find her? »

« Well! Somebody was very shrewd and bought slaves after the Gallic wars and used them only as reproducers, treating them well, obliging them only to procreate, to give fresh flowers of beauty... And Galla is one of them. She is now pubescent and her master sold her and I bought her... ah! ah! ah! »

« You lustful! »

« If it had not been me, it would have been somebody else... So She should not have been born a girl... »

« If He heard you... Oh! Here He is! »

« Who? »

« The Nazarene Who cast a spell on our ladies. He is behind you »

Ennius turns round as if he had an asp behind him. He looks at Jesus Who is coming forward slowly among the people pressing round Him, the poor common people and some Roman slaves as well, and he contemptuously says: « That ragamuffin?! Women are depraved. But let us run away, lest He should cast a spell on us as well! » Then addressing his poor slaves, who have been standing all the time with their loads, like caryatids for whom there is no mercy, he orders: « Go home quickly, because you have been wasting your time so far, and those who are making preparations are waiting for spices and perfumes. Run! Quick! And remember that you will be scourged if everything is not ready by sunset. »

The slaves go away at a run and the Roman follows them slowly with his two friends...

Jesus advances. He is sad, because He heard the end of Ennius' conversation and from the height of His stature He looks with infinite compassion at the slaves running under their burdens. He turns round, looking for the faces of more Roman slaves... He sees some, trembling with fear of being caught by superintendents or being driven away by the Jews, mixed among the crowds surrounding Him. He stops and asks: « Is there anyone among you belonging to that household? »

« No, Lord. But we know them » reply the slaves present.

« Matthew, give them abundant offerings. They will share them

with their companions, so that they may know that there is someone who loves them. And remember, and tell the others that sorrow comes to an end with life only for those who were good and honest in their chains, and with sorrow ends also the difference between rich and poor, between free people and slaves. Afterwards there is only one just God for everybody, Who, without taking into account wealth or chains, will reward the good and punish the wicked. Bear that in mind. »

« Yes, Lord. But we, who belong to the households of Claudia and Plautina, are quite happy, like those who belong to Livia and Valeria, and we bless You because You have improved our lot » says an old man to whom everyone listens as if he were their chief.

« To show Me your gratitude be always good and you will have the true God as your eternal Friend. »

And Jesus raises His hand as if to dismiss and bless them and He then leans against a column and begins to speak in the attentive silence of the crowd. The slaves do not go away, they remain listening to the words uttered by the divine lips.

« Listen. A father of many children gave each of them, when they became adults, two coins of great value and said to them: "I no longer intend to work for each of you. You are now old enough to earn your living. So I am giving each of you the same amount of money, so that you may invest it as you please and to your own profit. I will remain here waiting, ready to advise you and also to assist you, if through misfortune you should lose all or part of the money that I am now giving you. But remember that I will be inexorable towards those who squander it mischievously, and towards sluggards who waste it or leave it as it is through idleness or vices. I have taught each of you Good and Evil. You cannot therefore say that you are facing life without knowing what life is. I have set for everyone an example of wise, just activity and of honest life. So you cannot say that I have contaminated your spirits through my evil examples. I have done my duty. It is for you now to do yours, as you are neither stupid, nor unprepared, nor illiterate. Go » and he dismissed them and remained alone, waiting, in his house.

His sons scattered through the world. They all had the same things: two valuable coins of which they could dispose freely, and a greater treasure of health, energy, knowledge and their father's examples. So they should have all been successful in the same way. But what happened? Some of the sons employed their money wisely and by means of untiring honest work and a simple honest life, in accordance with their father's teaching, they soon owned a large honest treasure; some at first made an honest fortune, but later they squandered it through idleness and orgies; some made money practising usury or dealing in contemptible business; and

some did nothing because they were inactive, lazy, undecided and they finished their valuable coins before they could find any employment.

After some time the father of the family sent servants wherever he knew that his sons were and said to the servants: "You will tell my sons to meet in my house. I want them to give me an account of what they have done during this time and I wish to ascertain myself what is their situation". And the servants went everywhere, they met the children of their master, they gave the message and each of them went back with the master's son whom they had met.

The father received them with great solemnity, as a father, but also as a judge. And all the relatives of the family were present with friends, acquaintances, servants, fellow-villagers and people from neighbouring villages. A solemn meeting. The father was on his seat of head of the family, and around him, in a semicircle there were all the relatives, friends, acquaintances, servants, fellow-villagers and people from the neighbourhood. In front of him, in a line, his sons. Even without being questioned, their different countenances expressed the truth. Those who had been active, honest, of good morals and had made a holy fortune looked prosperous, peaceful and well-off, like people who are wealthy, enjoy good health and a clear conscience. They looked at their father with a kind, grateful, humble but at the same time triumphant smile; they were shining with joy having honoured their father and family and because they had been good children, good citizens and faithful believers. Those who had squandered their assets in laziness or vices were mortified, low-spirited, haggardfaced and shabby, with the signs of orgies or starvation clearly visible. Those who had made a fortune by contemptible means had an aggressive hard countenance, with the cruel upset look of beasts which are afraid of the tamer and are prepared to react...

The father began to question these last ones: "How come you who looked so serene when you left, now look like beasts ready to tear people to pieces? Where did you get that mien?"

"Life gave it to us. And your severity in sending us away from home. You put us in touch with the world".

"All right. And what did you do in the world?"

"What was possible for us to obey your orders to earn a living with the mere nothing you gave us".

"All right. Stand in that corner... And now it is your turn, you emaciated, sick looking and shabby people. What did you do to come to this state? You were healthy and well dressed when you left".

"Clothes wear out in ten years..." objected the sluggards.

"So there are no more looms in the world to make cloth for men's

garments?"

"Yes... But one needs money to buy it

"You had it".

"In ten years... it is more than finished. Everything which has a beginning comes to an end".

"Yes, if you take from it and never put anything back into it. But why have you only taken from it? If you had worked, you could have added to it and taken from it and the money would not have come to an end, on the contrary you could have increased it. Have you been ill, perhaps?"

"No, father".

"Well, then?"

"We felt lost... We did not know what to do, what was right... We were afraid of doing the wrong thing. And not to do wrong, we did not do anything".

"And had you no father to whom you could apply for advice? Have I ever been an uncompromising frightening father?"

"Oh! no! But we were ashamed of having to say to you: 'We are not capable of taking the initiative'. You have always been so active... We hid ourselves out of shame".

"All right. Stand in the middle of the room. It's your turn now! What are you going to tell me? From your outward looks you seem to have suffered not only hunger but also from illness. Were you perhaps taken ill because you had worked too hard? Be frank and I will not reproach you".

Some of the children who were questioned threw themselves on their knees striking their breasts and saying: "Forgive us, father! God has already punished us and we deserved it. But you, who are our father, forgive us!... We began well, but we did not persevere. As we had become wealthy so easily we said: 'Well, let us enjoy ourselves a little, as our friends suggest, then we will go back to work and make up for it'. And we really wanted to do so: go back to the two coins and make them yield again, as if it were a game. And twice (say two), three times (says one) we were successful. Then our good luck abandoned us... and we finished all our money".

"But why did you not return to reason after the first time?"

"Because the bread spiced with vice corrupts the palate, and one can no longer do without it

"There was your father

"True. And we longed for you with regret and homesickness. But we offended you... We implored Heaven to inspire you to send for us, so that we might receive your reproach and your forgiveness; that is what we wanted and are now asking for, more than riches which we do not want any more because they led us astray".

"All right. Stand in the middle of the room beside those who

were questioned before you. And you who are sick and poor like those, but are silent and show no sign of grief, what are you going to say?"

"What the first ones said. That we hate you, because your unwise way of doing things has been the cause of our ruin. Since you knew us, you should not have exposed us to temptations. You hated us and we hate you. You set that trap for us to get rid of us. May you be cursed".

"Very well. Stay with the first ones in that corner. And now it is your turn, my prosperous, serene, wealthy sons. Tell me. How did you do so well?"

"By carrying out your teaching, your examples, advice, orders, everything. We resisted temptations, out of love for you, blessed father who gave us life and wisdom".

"Very well. Come to my right hand side and listen all of you to my judgement and to my defence. I gave each of you the same money, examples and wisdom. My sons have reacted in different manners. From a hard working, honest moderate father different children have come forth: some are like him, some are lazy, some an easy prey to temptations, and some so cruel that they hate their father, their brothers and neighbours, on whom, even if they do not say so, but I know, they have practised usury and committed crimes. And among the weak and lazy ones there are some who are penitent and some impenitent. This is my judgement. The perfect ones are already on my right hand side, equal to me in glory and in deeds; those who are repentant, like children to be educated, will come once again under my authority until they reach a degree of capability which will prove that they are adults again; the unrepentant and guilty ones will be driven out of my property and will be persecuted by the malediction of him who is no longer their father, because their hatred for me annuls our relationship of father and son. But I wish to remind you all that each son has been the author of his own fate, because I gave everybody the same things, which, however, have brought about four different situations in those who received them and I cannot be accused of desiring their evil lot".

The parable is over and I will now explain it to you who have listened to it.

The Father in Heaven is symbolised by the father of the large family. The two coins given by the father to each of his children before sending them into the world are: time and free will, that God grants to every man to be used as he wishes, after being taught and perfected by the Law and the examples of just people. Everyone receives the same gifts. But every man makes use of them as he wishes. Some treasure up time, means, education, wealth, everything, for a good purpose and remain holy and

sound, the owners of increased riches. Some begin well, then become tired and lose everything. Some do nothing as they expect other people to do it. Some accuse the Father of their mistakes; some repent and are willing to make amends; some do not repent and they accuse and curse as if their ruin has been brought about by other people. And God grants rewards to the just at once; He grants mercy to those who repent and time to expiate, so that they may achieve a reward through repentance and expiation; and He gives malediction and punishment to those who trample on love through impenitence, the consequence of their sins. He gives every man what is due to him.

So do not waste the two coins: time and free will, but make the right use of them to be on the right hand side of the Father, and if you fail, repent and have faith in Merciful Love. Go. Peace be with you! »

He blesses them and looks at them moving away in the sun flooding the square and streets. But the slaves are still there...

« Are you still here, My poor friends? Will you not be punished? »

« No, Lord, if we say that we have been listening to You. Our mistresses venerate You. Where are You going now, Lord? They have been wishing to see You for such a long time... »

« To the rope-maker near the harbour. But I am leaving this evening, and your mistresses will be at the party... »

« We shall tell them just the same. Months ago they told us to in, form them every time You come here. »

« All right. Go. And make good use of your time and thoughts, which are always free, even if a man is in chains. »

The slaves bend to the ground and go away towards the Roman quarters. Jesus and His apostles go towards the harbour, along a narrow street.

#### **424. At Caesarea on the Sea. The Roman Ladies and the Slave Galla Ciprina.**

1st May 1946.

Jesus is a guest of the rope-maker's humble family. Their house is low, with a saltish smell, close as it is to sea water. At the rear there are some smelly storehouses where goods are unloaded before they are collected by the various buyers. At the front there is a dusty road, furrowed by heavy wheels, very noisy because dockers, urchins, carters and seamen come and go incessantly. Beyond the street there is a little dockyard with dirty water soiled by the rubble thrown into it, and by its own stagnation. From the dockyard a canal flows into the actual port, capable of taking large ships. On the western side there is a large sandy square where ropes are made with squeaky twisting winches worked by hand.

On the eastern side there is another little square, much smaller but more noisy and untidy, where men and women are patching up nets and sails. And beyond lie low hovels with a saltish smell, crowded with half-naked children.

One certainly cannot say that Jesus has chosen a magnificent abode. Flies, dust, bustle, the smell of stagnant water, the stink of hemp steeped before being used, reign there. And the King of kings, lying with His apostles on heaps of coarse hemp, tired as He is, falls asleep in that poor environment, partly a lumber-room, partly a storeroom, which is at the rear of the little house and from which, through a door as black as tar, one can enter the kitchen, which is also black, and through a worm-eaten door, corroded by dust and salt, so that it looks whitish-grey like pumice-stone, one comes out into the square where ropes are being made and from which comes the stench of steeped hemp.

The sun is blazing down on the square notwithstanding that there are four huge plane-trees, two at each end of the rectangular square, under which are the winches to twist the hemp. I do not know whether I am giving the implement the right name. The men, wearing tunics reduced to the bare essential for decency, running with sweat as if they were under a shower, keep turning their winches with continuous motion, as if they were galley-slaves... They speak only to say the words indispensable to their work. Thus, without the squeaking of the winch wheels, and the creaking of the hemp stretched in twisting, there is no other noise in the square, a strange contrast with the din in the other places around the house of the rope-maker.

Thus the exclamation of one of the workers is most surprising as it is uttered unexpectedly: « What? Women? At this awful time of the day?! Look! They are coming here... »

« They may be in need of ropes to tie their husbands... » says a young rope-maker jokingly.

« They may need some hemp for some work. »

« H'm! It's unlikely that they need ours, which is so coarse, when they can get it combed! »

« Ours is cheaper. See? They are poor... »

« But they are not Jewesses. See, their mantles are different... »

« Perhaps they are not Jewesses. There are all races in Caesarea now... »

« Perhaps they are looking for the Rabbi. They may be ill... See how they are all covered, even in this heat... »

« Provided they are not lepers... Poverty, yes, but leprosy, no; I do not want it, not even to be resigned to God » says the rope-maker whom everybody obeys.

« But did you not hear the Master?: "We must accept everything God sends us". »

« But leprosy is not sent by God. It is sent by sins, vices, contagion... »

The women are now behind them, not behind those who are speaking and are at the very end of the square, but behind those who are on the side near the house, thus the first to be met, and one of them bends to say something to one of the rope-makers, who turns round astonished and remains like a blockhead.

« Let us go and listen to them... Covered like that... With all the children I have, leprosy would be the last straw!... » says the owner who has stopped turning his winch and goes towards the women. His companions follow him...

« Simon, this woman wants something, but she speaks a foreign language. Since you have travelled, listen to her » says the man to whom the woman had spoken.

« What do you want? » asks the rope-maker rudely, trying to see her through the dark dyed byssus which covers her face.

And in the purest Greek the woman replies: « The King of Israel. The Master. »

« Ah! I see. But... are you lepers? »

« No. »

« Who can assure me? »

« He can. Ask Him. »

The man hesitates... He then says: « Well. I will make an act of faith and God will protect me... I am going to call Him. Stay where you are. »

The four women do not move, a greyish silent group, looked at with amazement and evident fear by the rope-makers, who have gathered together a few steps apart.

The man goes into the storeroom and touches Jesus Who is sleeping. « Master... Come out. They are looking for You. »

Jesus wakes and gets up immediately asking: « Who? »

« Who knows!... Some Greek women... they are all covered... They say that they are not lepers and that You can assure me... »

« I will come at once » says Jesus tying His sandals which He had taken off, and buttoning the top part of His tunic near His neck, and putting on the belt which He had taken off to be more free in His sleep. And He goes out with the rope-maker.

The women make the gesture of starting towards them. « Stay where you are, I tell you! I do not want you to walk where my children are playing... I want Him to say first that you are healthy. » The women stop.

Jesus joins them. The tallest one, not the one who previously spoke Greek, says a word in a low voice. Jesus addresses the ropemaker: « Simon, you need not worry. The women are healthy and I have to listen to them in peace. May I go into the house?... »

« No. The old woman is there and she is more curious and chatty

than a magpie. Go over there, to the end, under the shed of the vats. There is also a little room. You will be alone there and in peace. »

« Come... » says Jesus to the women. And He goes with them to the end of the square, under the unsavoury shed, into the little room as narrow as a cell, where there are broken tools, rags, refuse hemp, huge cobwebs, and where the smell of macerating-vats and mould is so strong as to catch their throats. Jesus, Who is very grave and pale, smiles lightly saying: « It is not a place in accord with your tastes... But I have nothing else... »

« We do not see the place, because we see Him Who lives in it just now » replies Plautina removing her veil and mantle, imitated by the other ladies, who are Lydia, Valeria and Albula Domitilla, a freedwoman.

« From which I infer that after all you still believe that I am a just man. »

« More than a just man. And Claudia has sent us precisely because she believes that You are more than just and she does not take into consideration the words she heard. But she wishes to have Your confirmation to double her veneration for You. »

« Or to deprive Me of it, should I appear as they tried to picture Me. But you can assure her. I have no human ambitions. My ministry and My desire are only and entirely supernatural. I do want to gather all men into one only kingdom. But what part of men? Their flesh and blood? No. I leave that, a fleeting matter, to fleeting monarchies, to unsteady empires. I want to gather under My sceptre only the spirits of men, immortal spirits in an immortal kingdom. I reject all other accounts of My will, irrespectively of whoever gave them, if they differ from that one. And I beg you to believe and to tell her who sent you, that the Truth has but one word... »

« Your apostle was so sure of himself when he told us... »

« He is an overexcited youngster. He is to be listened to as such... »

« But he is detrimental to You! Reproach him... Send him away... »

« And what about My mercy? He acts through mistaken love. So must I not pity him? And what would change if I sent him away? He would do double harm to himself and to Me. »

« So he is like a cannon-ball tied to Your foot!... »

« He is a poor wretch to be redeemed... »

Plautina falls on her knees stretching out her arms and saying. « Ah! Master, greater than anybody else, how easy it is to believe that You are holy when one feels Your heart in Your words! How easy it is to love and follow You because of Your charity, which is even greater than Your intelligence! »

« Not greater. But more understandable for you... whose intellects

are hampered by too many errors and you are not generous in clearing them to receive the Truth. »

« You are right. Your divination is as great as Your wisdom. »

« As wisdom is a form of holiness it gives enlightenment of judgement, both on past or present events, and on forewarning of future ones. »

« So your prophets... »

« Were holy. God therefore communicated with them in great fullness. »

« Were they holy because they belonged to Israel? »

« They were holy because they belonged to Israel and because they were just in their actions. Because not all Israel is or was holy, although they belonged to Israel. The fact that one belongs by chance to a people or to a religion cannot make one holy. Those two conditions can be of great assistance to be so, but they are not the essential factors of holiness. »

« Which is then the factor? »

« The will of man. The will that leads the actions of man to holiness if it is good, to wickedness if it is bad. »

« Then... it is not fair to say that just people cannot be found also among us. »

« Certainly not. Nay, some just people were certainly among your ancestors, and there are certainly some among those who are living now. Because it would be too dreadful if the whole heathen world were made of demons. Those among you who feel attraction to Good and Truth and repulsion to Vice, and shun evil deeds as disgracing man, believe Me, they are already on the path of justice. »

« Claudia then... »

« Yes. And you as well. Persevere. »

« But if we should die before being... converted to You?... Of what use would it be to have been virtuous?... »

« God is just in judging. But why hesitate to come to the true God? »

The three ladies lower their heads... Silence... Then the great confession, the one which explains so many cruelties and so much resistance of the Romans against Christianity... « Because, by doing so, we would appear to be betraying our Fatherland... »

« On the contrary you would serve your Fatherland, making it morally and spiritually greater, strengthened by the possession and protection of God, in addition to its armies and riches. Rome, the City of the world, the City of the universal Religion!... Just think of that... »

There is silence...

Then Livia, blushing like a peony, says: « Master, some time ago we were seeking information on You also in the pages of our Virgil. Because, as far as we are concerned, prophecies in no way

connected with any of the beliefs of Israel are of greater value to us than those of your prophets, as we feel that the latter are influenced by millenary beliefs... And we discussed the matter... comparing those who presaged You in all times, nations and religions. But no one presaged You so justly as our Virgil... How much we spoke on that day with Diomed also, the Greek freedman, an astrologer dear to Claudia! He maintained that that happened because the time was nearer and the stars spoke with their conjunctions... And in support of his thesis he put forward the fact of the three Wise men from the three Eastern countries, who had come to worship You, still a baby, causing the massacre, which struck Rome with horror... But we were not persuaded because... for over fifty years none of the wise people in the world spoke of You explaining the voices of the stars, although we are even closer to Your present revelation. Claudia exclaimed: "We would need the Master! He would speak the truth and we would know the place and the immortal destiny of our greatest poet!". Would You tell us... for Claudia... A gift to prove that she is not disliked by You because of her doubt about You... »

« I understood her reaction of a Roman and I have had no grudge against her. You may reassure her. And listen. Virgil was not great only as a poet, was he? »

« Oh! no! Also as a man. In the midst of a society already corrupt and vicious he shone with spiritual purity. No one knew him to be lewd, fond of orgies and debauchery. His writings are chaste, but even chaster was his heart. So much so that where he lived mostly, he was called the "little virgin" with mockery by vicious people, with respect by good people. »

« So, could God not be reflected in the limpid soul of a chaste man, even if that man was a heathen? Will perfect Virtue not have loved the virtuous man? And if he was granted love and the sight of Truth because of the pure beauty of his soul, could he not have had a flash of prophecy? As prophecy is nothing but the truth which is revealed to those who deserve to know the Truth as a reward and a spur to greater and greater virtue? »

« So... he did prophesy You? »

« His mind inflamed with purity and genius was elevated to the knowledge of a page concerning Me, and he can be called the just heathen poet, a pre-Christian prophetic spirit as a reward to his virtues. »

« Oh! Our Virgil!! And will he be rewarded? »

« I said: "God is just". But do not imitate the poet stopping at his limit. Go on, because the Truth did not reveal itself to you by intuition and partly, but completely and it spoke to you. »

« Thank You, Master... We are going away. Claudia told us to ask You if she can be useful to You in moral matters » says Plautina

without replying to Jesus' remark.

« And she told you to ask Me, if I was not an usurper... »

« Oh! Master! How do You know? »

« I am more than Virgil and the prophets... »

« It is true! It is all true! Can we serve You?... »

« For Myself I need but faith and love. But there is a creature who is in great danger and whose soul will be killed this evening. Claudia could save her. »

« Here? Who? Soul killed? »

« One of your patricians is giving a dinner-party and... »

« Ah! Yes! Ennius Cassius. My husband also is invited... » says Livia.

« And mine... And we, too, really. But as Claudia is not going, we will not go either. We had decided to withdraw immediately after dinner, in the event we had gone... Because... our dinners end in orgies... which we can no longer bear... And with the contempt of neglected wives we let our husbands remain... » says Valeria severely.

« Not with contempt... With pity for their moral misery... » corrects Jesus.

« It is difficult, Master... We know what happens there... »

« I also know many things which happen in hearts... and yet I forgive... »

« You are holy... »

« You must become so. Urged by My desire and spurred by your will... »

« Master!... »

« Yes. Can you say that you are as happy now as you were before meeting Me, happy with the poor brute sensual happiness of heathens unaware that they are more than flesh, now that you know a little of Wisdom?... »

« No, Master. We admit it. We are discontented, annoyed, like one who is looking for a treasure and cannot find it. »

« And it is in front of you! What annoys you is the yearning after Light of your spirits, which suffer because of your delay... in giving them what they ask for... »

There is silence... Then Plautina, without replying to Jesus' remark, says: « And what could Claudia do? »

« She could save that creature. A girl purchased for pleasure by the Roman. A virgin who will not be such tomorrow. »

« If he bought her... she belongs to him. »

« She is not a piece of furniture. Within her body there is a soul... »

« Master... our laws... »

« Women: the Law of God!... »

« Claudia is not going to the feast... »

« I am not telling her to go. I am telling you to say to her: "The Master, to be sure that Claudia does not blame Him, asks her for

help for the soul of that girl"... »

« We will tell her. But she will not be able to do anything... A slave purchased... is an object of which one may dispose... »

« Christianity will teach you that a slave has a soul like the soul of Caesar, in most cases even better, and that that soul belongs to God, and he who corrupts it is cursed. » Jesus is imposing while saying so.

The women perceive His authority and severity. They bow without discussing. They put on their mantles and veils again and say: « We will report. Hail, Master. »

« Goodbye. »

The women go out into the warm square. But Plautina turns round and says: « With regard to everybody we were Greek women. Is that clear? »

« I understand. Go without worrying. »

Jesus remains under the low porch and they go away along the same road they came.

The rope-makers go back to their work...

Jesus walks back to the storeroom slowly. He is pensive. He does not lie down again. Sitting on a pile of rolled up ropes He prays fervently... The eleven apostles are still fast asleep...

Some time goes by thus... About one hour. Then the rope-maker looks in and beckons Jesus to go to the door. « There is a slave who wants You. »

The slave, a Numidian, is outside in the square still exposed to the sun. He bows and without speaking he gives Jesus a waxed tablet.

Jesus reads it and says: « Tell her that I will wait until dawn. Have you understood? »

The man nods assent and to make Jesus understand why he does not speak, he opens his mouth to show that his tongue has been cut off.

« Poor wretch! » says Jesus caressing him.

Two tears stream down the dark cheeks of the slave who takes Jesus' white hand in his dark ones, which are so much like those of a big monkey, and he rubs it against his face, he kisses it, and then throws himself on the ground. He takes Jesus' foot and lays it on his head... A language of gestures to express his gratitude for that gesture of pitiful love...

And Jesus repeats: « Poor wretch! » but He does not cure him.

The slave stands up and wants the waxed tablet back... Claudia does not wish to leave any trace of her correspondence... Jesus smiles and hands the tablet to him. The Numidian departs and Jesus approaches the rope-maker.

« I must remain here until dawn... Will you allow Me?... »

« Everything You wish. I am sorry that I am poor... »

« I am pleased that you are honest. »

« Who were those women? »

« Foreigners needing advice. »

« Healthy? »

« As you and Me. »

« Good!... Here are Your apostles... »

In fact, rubbing their eyes, stretching themselves, still half sleeping, the Eleven come out of the storeroom and go toward the Master.

« Master... we will have to have supper if You wish to leave this evening... » says Peter.

« No. I am not leaving until dawn. »

« Why? »

« Because I have been asked to do so. »

« But why? Who asked You? It was better to walk by night. It's new moon now... »

« I hope to save a creature... And that is brighter than the moon and more refreshing for Me than the coolness of the night. »

Peter draws Him aside: « What has happened? Have You seen the Roman ladies? What mood are they in? Is it them who are becoming converted? Tell me... »

Jesus smiles: « If you let Me reply I will tell you, o most inquisitive man. I saw the Romans. They are going towards the Truth only very slowly. But they are not going back. It is already a lot. »

« And... with regard to what Judas said... what is the situation? »

« That they are continuing to respect Me as a wise man. »

« But... for Judas? Is he not involved?... »

« They came to see Me, not him... »

« Why then was he afraid to meet them? Why did he not want You to come to Caesarea? »

« Simon, it is not the first time that Judas is strangely capricious... »

« That is true. And... are the Romans coming tonight? »

« They have already come. »

« Why are we waiting until dawn, then? »

« And why are you so inquisitive? »

« Master, be good... Tell me everything. »

« Yes, I will... to remove all doubt... You also heard the conversation of those three Romans... »

« Yes, I did. Filthy! Plague! Demons! But what have we got to do with that?... Ah! I see! The Roman ladies will go to the dinner and then they will come and ask to be forgiven for taking part in filthiness... I am surprised that You agree. »

« And I am surprised at your rash judgement! »

« Forgive me, Master! »

« Yes, you had better know that the Roman ladies are not going to the dinner-party and that I asked Claudia to intervene on behalf of that girl... »

« Oh! But Claudia can do nothing! The girl was bought by the Roman and he can do what he likes with her! »

« But Claudia can exert much influence upon the Roman. And Claudia sent word to Me to wait until dawn before leaving. Nothing else. Are you satisfied? »

« Yes, Master, I am. But You have not rested... Come now... You are so tired! I will watch to ensure that You are left in peace... Come... » and lovingly tyrannical he pulls and pushes Jesus, compelling Him to lie down once again...

Hours go by. It is sunset, work comes to an end, and children shout louder in the streets and little squares and swallows screech in the sky. The first shades of evening descend upon the earth, and swallows go back to their nests, and children to bed. One by one all noises cease, so that one can hear only the light rippling of the water in the canal and the louder lapping of the waves on the shore. Houses, the houses of tired workmen are closed, lights go out and rest descends to make everyone blind and dumb... remote... The moon rises and adorns with her silver also the dirty sheet of water of the little dockyard, which now looks like a sheet of silver...

The apostles are sleeping once again on the hemp... Jesus, sitting on one of the winches, His hands in His lap, is praying, thinking, waiting... He does not lose sight of the street coming from town.

The moon rises, rises... She is perpendicularly above His head. The noise of the sea is louder, the smell of the canal is stronger, and the cone of the moon which plunges its beams into the sea becomes wider and wider, embracing all the expanse in front of Jesus, and fades away farther and farther: a path of light which seems to be coming towards Jesus from the end of the world, along the canal, finishing in the basin of the dockyard. And a little white boat is coming along that path. It is proceeding without leaving any trace on the liquid path, as the water becomes smooth again after it passes... It comes up the canal... It is now in the silent dockyard... It draws closer and stops. And three shadows land from it. A robust man, a woman and between them a slender figure. They direct their steps towards the house of the rope-maker.

Jesus stands up and goes to meet them. « Peace to you. Whom are you looking for? »

« For You, Master » says Lydia unveiling her face and coming forward alone. And she goes on: « Claudia has fulfilled Your desire because it was a just and completely moral matter. That is the girl. Valeria will take her later as a nurse for little Fausta. In the meantime she asks You to keep her, or, better still, to entrust her to

Your Mother or to the mother of Your relatives. She is completely pagan. Nay, more than pagan. The master who brought her up, put absolutely nothing into her. She knows nothing about Olympus or anything else. She has only a holy terror of men, because life was revealed to her in all its brutality only a few hours ago... »

« Oh! How sad! Too late? »

« No, not from a material point of view... But he was preparing her for his... let us say: sacrilege. And the girl is terrified... Claudia had to leave her with that satyr while dinner lasted, as she intended to take action when wine had impaired his capability of pondering. I need not remind You that if man is always lewd in his sensual love affairs, he is much more so when he is drunk... But only then he is a laughing-stock who can be urged by force and despoiled of his treasure. And Claudia took advantage of the situation. Ennius wants to go back to Italy, whence he was sent away as he had fallen out of favour... Claudia promised his return in exchange for the girl. Ennius swallowed the bait... But tomorrow, when he is sober, he will rebel, will look for her, he will cause an uproar. It is true that tomorrow Claudia will have the means to silence him. »

« Violence? No!... »

« Oh! violence used for a good purpose is useful! But it will not be used... Only Pilate, still stunned by the quantity of wine he drank this evening, will sign the order for Ennius to go and report to Rome... Ha! Ha!... And he will leave with the first military ship. But in the meanwhile... it is wise for the girl to be elsewhere, lest Pilate should repent and revoke the order... He is so uncertain! And it is better for the girl to forget, if she can, human filth. Oh! Master!... We went to the dinner for that purpose... But how were we able to go to such orgies up to a few months ago, without feeling sick? We ran away as soon as we achieved our purpose... Our husbands are there just now emulating brutes... How disgusting, Master!... And we have to receive them after they... »

« Be austere and patient. You will improve your husbands through your exemplary conduct. »

« Oh! it is not possible!... You do not know... » The woman weeps more out of scorn than sorrow. Jesus sighs. Lydia resumes: « Claudia asked me to tell You that she did this to prove to You that she reveres You as the Only Man Who deserves veneration. And she wants me to inform You that she thanks You for teaching her the value of a soul and of purity. She will never forget that. Do You want to see the girl? »

« Yes. And who is the man? »

« The dumb Numidian whom Claudia employs in the most secret matters. There is no danger of delation... He has no tongue... »

As in the afternoon Jesus repeats: « Poor wretch! » But even now

He does not work a miracle.

Lydia goes and takes the girl by the hand and almost drags her before Jesus. She explains: « She knows few Latin words and even fewer Judaeen... A little wild animal... Just an object of pleasure. » And she says to the girl: « Don't be afraid. Say "thanks" to Him. It is He Who saved you... Kneel down. Kiss His feet. Cheer up! Do not tremble!... Forgive her, Master! She is terrorised by the last caresses of drunken Ennius... »

« Poor girl! » says Jesus laying His hand on the veiled head of the girl. « Be not afraid! I will take you to My Mother, for some time. To a Mother, do you understand? And you will have so many brothers around you... Be not afraid, My dear daughter! »

What is there in Jesus' voice and looks? Everything: peace, confidence, purity, holy love. The girl perceives that, she throws back her mantle with hood to look at Him better, and the slender figure of a girl hardly at the threshold of puberty, almost still a little child, somewhat immature in comeliness, innocent looking, appears in a dress too wide for her...

« She was half-naked... I put on her the first garments I found, and I put some also in her sack... » explains Lydia.

« A little girl! » says Jesus compassionately. And stretching out His hand towards her, He asks: « Do you want to come with Me, without any fear? »

« Yes, sir. »

« No. I am not your owner. Call Me: Master. »

« Yes, Master » says the girl with more confidence and a timid smile replaces the expression of fear previously visible on her very pale face.

« Are you capable of walking a long distance? »

« Yes, Master. »

« Then you will rest at My Mother's, in My house, awaiting Fausta... a little girl of whom you will be very fond... Are you pleased? »

« Oh! Yes!... » and the girl confidently raises her clear grey-blue eyes, which are most beautiful between her golden eyebrows and she dares to ask: « No more that master? » and a flash of terror upsets her once again.

« Never again » Jesus promises once more laying His hand again on the girl's thick hair of the shade of blond honey.

« Goodbye, Master. In a few days' time we shall be on the lake as well. Perhaps we shall meet again. Pray for the poor Roman ladies. »

« Goodbye, Lydia. Tell Claudia that these are the conquests which I expect, and nothing else. Come, child. We are leaving at once... » And holding her by the hand He looks in at the door of the storeroom calling the apostles.

While the boat, without leaving any trace of its voyage sails back to the open sea, Jesus and the apostles, with the girl enveloped in a

mantle in the middle of the group, go towards the country through narrow desert streets of the outskirts...

#### **425. Aurea Galla.**

2nd May 1946.

Summer dawns are so early that the time between the setting of the moon and daybreak is short. So that, although they have walked very quickly, at the darkest hour of the night they are still in the neighbourhood of the town of Caesarea, and a branch of thorn-bush which they have lit, does not give sufficient light. They are compelled to stop for some time, also because the girl, who is not accustomed to walking by night, often stumbles over stones half buried in the dust.

« It is better to stop for a little while. The girl cannot see and she is tired » says Jesus.

« No, I can go on... Let us go far, far away... He may come. We passed here to go to that house » says the girl with chattering teeth, mixing Hebrew and Latin in a new language to make herself understood.

« We will go behind those trees and nobody will see us. Do not be afraid » Jesus replies to her.

« Yes, be not afraid. That... Roman is dead drunk under the table by now... » says Bartholomew to reassure her.

« And you are with us. And we love you! We will not let anybody hurt you. I say! We are twelve strong men... » says Peter, who is little taller than she is, but as sturdy as she is lean, and as burnt by the sun as she is snow-white, a poor flower brought up in the shade so that she might be more exciting and valuable.

« You are a little sister. And brothers defend their sisters... » says John.

The girl, at the last flash of light of the improvised torch, looks at her consolors; with her clear iron-grey eyes, lightly tinged with blue, two limpid eyes still shining with the tears shed in the moment of terror shortly before... She is suspicious. And yet she trusts them. And together with the others she crosses the dry rivulet beyond the road to enter an estate at the end of which there is a thick orchard.

They sit down in the dark, waiting. The men perhaps would like to sleep. But every noise makes the girl moan and the gallop of a horse causes her to cling convulsively to the neck of Bartholomew, who, perhaps because he is old, inspires confidence and trust. It is thus impossible to sleep.

« Don't be afraid! When one is with Jesus, nothing harmful happens any more » says Bartholomew.

« Why? » asks the girl trembling and still clinging to the apostle's

neck.

« Because Jesus is God on the Earth, and God is stronger than men. »

« God? What is God? »

« Poor creature! How have they brought you up? Have they not taught you anything? »

« To keep my skin white, my hair shiny, to obey masters... to always say yes... But I could not say yes to the Roman... he was ugly and he frightened me... He frightened me all day long... He was always there... at the bath, when I was getting dressed... those eyes... and hands... oh!... And who does not say "yes" gets beaten... »

« You will not be beaten. Neither the Roman nor his hands are here any longer... There is peace... »  
Jesus replies to her.

And the others remark: « It is horrible! Treated like valuable animals, no better than animals! Worse!... Because an animal knows at least that they teach it to plough, to have a saddle on and a bit, because that is its task. But this girl was thrown there without knowing anything!... »

«If I had known I would have thrown myself into the sea. He had said: "I will make you happy"... »

« And he did make you happy. But in a way that he had never imagined. Happy for the Earth and for Heaven. Because to know Jesus is happiness » says the Zealot.

There is silence: everybody is meditating on the horrors of the world. Then, in a low voice, the girl asks Bartholomew: « Will you tell me what is God? And why He is God? Because He is good and handsome? »

« God... How can one teach you, since you are completely devoid of religious ideas? »

« Religious What is it? »

« Most High Wisdom! I am like one who is getting drowned in a deep sea! What shall I do in front of this abyss? »

« What seems so difficult to you, Bartholomew, is so simple. It is an abyss, but an empty one. And you can fill it up with the Truth. It is worse when the abyss is full of filth, poison, snakes... Speak with simplicity, as you would speak to a baby. And she will understand you better than an adult would. »

« Oh! Master! But could You not do it? »

« I could. But the girl will accept the words of one like her more easily than she would listen to My words of God. And in any case... You will have to face such abysses in future, and fill them with Me. After all, you must learn to do so. »

« That is true! I will try. Listen, girl... Do you remember your mother? »

« Yes, sir. Flowers have bloomed for seven years without her. But before that I was with her. »

« All right. And do you remember her? Do you love her? »

« Oh! » a sob joined to her exclamation says everything.

« Don't weep, poor creature... Listen... The love you feel for your mother... »

«... and my father... and my little brothers... » says the girl sobbing.

« Yes... for your family, the love for your family, your thoughts for it, your desire to go back to it... »

« Never again!!... »

« Who knows!... All that is something which can be called the religion of the family. So religions, religious ideas, are the love, the thought, the desire to go where He or they are, in whom we believe, whom we love and desire. »

« Ah! If I believe in that God there, I will have a religion... It is easy! »

« Well. What is easy? To have a religion or to believe in that God there? »

« Both. Because it is easy to believe in a good God like that one there. The Roman mentioned so many of them and swore... He used to say: "by goddess Venus!", "by god Cupid". But they could not be good gods because he did things which were not good, while mentioning them. »

« The girl is not stupid » remarks Peter in a low voice.

« But I still do not know what is God. I see Him a man like you... So God is a man. And how can one tell? In what is He stronger than everybody? He has neither swords nor servants... »

« Master, help me... »

« No, Nathanael! You are doing so well... »

« You are saying so out of kindness... However, let us see how we can proceed. Listen, girl... God is not a man. He is like a light, a look, a sound, so big that He fills the sky and the earth illuminating everything, He sees everything, directs everything and gives orders to everything... »

« Also to the Roman? Then He is not a good God. I am afraid! »

« God is good and gives good orders, and He had ordered men not to make war, not to make slaves, to leave little girls to their mothers and not to frighten them. But men do not always listen to the orders of God. »

« But you do... »

« Yes, I do. »

« But if He is stronger than anybody else, why does He not make men obey Him? And how can He speak if He is not a man? »

« God... oh! Master!... »

« Go on, Bartholomai. You are so wise a teacher, you can express the most sublime thoughts with so much simplicity, and you are afraid? Do you not know that the Holy Spirit is on the lips of those who teach Justice? »

« It seems so easy when we listen to You... and all Your words are in here... But to draw them out when we have to do what You do!... Oh! misery of us poor men! What worthless teachers we are! »

« To acknowledge your worthlessness is to predispose your spirits to the teaching of the Paraclete Spirit... »

« All right. Listen, girl. God is strong, very strong, stronger than Caesar, than all men put together with their armies and warmachines. But He is not a cruel master who makes people always say yes, under pain of the lash if one does not say so. God is a father. Did your father love you? »

« So much! He named me Aurea Galla because gold is precious and Gaul is our fatherland, and he used to say that I was dearer to him than the gold he had once possessed and than our fatherland... »

« Did your father beat you? »

« No. Never. Even if I was naughty he used to say to me: "My poor daughter!" and he wept... »

« There you are! That is what God does. He is a father and He weeps if we are bad, but He does not compel us to obey Him. But those who are bad will be punished one day with horrible tortures... »

« Oh! lovely! The master who took me away from my mother and took me to the island and the Roman in tortures! And will I see them? »

« You will be near God and you will see, if you believe in Him and you are good. But to be good you must not hate even the Roman. »

« No? How can I do that?!... »

« Praying for him or... »

« What is to pray? »

« It is to speak to God telling Him what we want... »

« But I want a dreadful death for my masters! » says the girl with wild vehemence.

« No, you must not. Jesus will not love you if you say so... »

« Why? »

« Because we must not hate those who injured us. »

« But I cannot love them... »

« Forget them for the time being... Try to forget them. Later, when you know more about God, you will pray for them... So we were saying that God is powerful but He leaves His children free. »

« Am I a child of God? Have I two fathers? How many sons has He? »

« All men are children of God, because He made them all. See the stars up there? He made them. And these plants? He made them. And the earth on which we are sitting, and that bird which is singing and the sea which is so big, everything and all men. And men are His children more than anything else, as they are His children because of that thing which is called soul and which is light, sound,

look, not as big as His, which fill Heaven and Earth completely, but are beautiful and they never die as He never dies. »

« Where is the soul? Have I got one? »

« Yes and it is in your heart, and it is that thing that made you understand that the Roman was bad, and that certainly will not make you wish to be like him. Is that right? »

« Yes... » The girl ponders after her uncertain yes... She then says with confidence: « Yes! It was like a voice within me and a need to have help... and with another voice, but that one was mine, I called my mother... because I did not know that there was God, that there was Jesus... If I had known, I would have called Him with that voice which I had within me... »

« You have understood well, child, and you will grow in Light. I am telling you., Believe in the true God, listen to the voice of your soul, devoid of acquired wisdom, but devoid also of evil will, and you will have a Father in God, and in death, which is the passage from the Earth to Heaven for those who believe in the true God and are good, you will have a place in Heaven, near your Lord » says Jesus laying His hand on the head of the girl, who changes position and kneels down saying:

« Near You. It is nice to be with You. Do not part from me, Jesus. I now know who You are and I prostrate myself. At Caesarea I was afraid to do so... But You seemed a man to me. I now know that You are a God hidden in a man and You are a Father and Protector to me. »

« And Saviour, Aurea Galla. »

« And Saviour. You saved me. »

« And I will save you even more. You will have a new name... »

« Are You going to deprive me of the name which my father gave me? The master on the island called me Aurea Quintillia, because they divided us according to complexion and number and I was the fifth blonde... But why do You not leave me the name given to me by my father? »

« I am not taking it off you. But you will have in addition to your old name, a new one, the eternal one. »

« Which? »

« Christian. Because the Christ saved you. But it is dawning. Let us go... See, Nathanael, it is easy to speak of God to empty abysses... You spoke very well. The girl will improve quickly in Truth... Aurea, go ahead with My brothers... »

The girl obeys but timidly. She would prefer to remain with Bartholomew, who understands and promises: « I am coming at once, too. Go, be obedient... » And when he is with Jesus, Peter, Simon and Matthew, he remarks: « It's a pity that Valeria will have her. She is always a heathen... »

« I cannot impose her on Lazarus... »

« There is Nike, Master » suggests Matthew.

« And Eliza... » says Peter.

« And Johanna... She is a friend of Valeria and Valeria would cede the girl to her willingly. She would be in a good home » says the Zealot.

Jesus is pensive and silent...

« You will decide... I am going to join the girl, as she is always turning round. She trusts me because I am old... I would keep her... one daughter more... But she is not from Israel... » and he goes away, the good but too Israelite Nathanael.

Jesus looks at him depart and shakes His head.

« Why that gesture, Master? » asks the Zealot.

« Because it grieves Me to see that wise people are also slaves to prejudice... »

« However let us keep this to ourselves... Bartholomew is right... and in actual fact... You should provide... Remember Syntyche and John... Don't let the same thing happen... Send her to Syntyche... » says Peter who is afraid of trouble in case the heathen girl should stay with them.

« John will not live long... Syntyche is not yet mature enough to be the teacher of a girl like this one... It is not a suitable place... »

« And yet You must not keep her. Consider that Judas will soon be with us. And Judas, Master, allow me to tell You, is a lustful man and a... one who is inclined to speak to gain some profit... and he has too many friends among the Pharisees... » insists the Zealot.

« That's it! Simon is right! Just what I was thinking! » exclaims Peter. « Do as he says, Master!... »

Jesus ponders but is silent... He then says: « Let us pray! And the Father will help us » and, at the rear of the others, they pray fervently.

Dawn is breaking They pass by a village and resume walking in the country... The sun is becoming warmer and warmer. They stop to eat in the shade of a huge walnut-tree.

« Are you tired? » Jesus asks the girl who is eating with no relish. « Tell Me and we will stop. »

« No, no. Let us go... »

« We have asked her several times. But she always says no... » says James of Alphaeus.

« I can go on, I am fit! Let us go far away... »

They resume their journey. But Aurea remembers something. « I have a purse. The ladies said to me: "You will give it when you are near the mountains". The mountains are here and I am giving it. » And she rummages in the sack where Livia put some clothes for her... She takes out the purse and gives it to Jesus.

« Their offerings... They did not want to be thanked. They are better than many among us... Take it, Matthew. And keep this

money. It will be used as secret alms. »

« Shall I not tell Judas of Kerioth? »

« No. »

« He will see the girl... »

Jesus does not reply... They set out again, but they proceed with difficulty because of the intense heat, the dust and dazzling light. Then they begin to climb the first ramifications of Mount Carmel, I think. Although it is more shady and cooler here, Aurea walks slowly and often stumbles.

Bartholomew goes back to the Master. « Master, the girl is feverish and exhausted. What shall we do? »

They consult. Should they stop? Or proceed carrying her? They are undecided. At last they decide that they must at least reach the road to Sicaminon to ask assistance of some wayfarer on horseback or in a wagon. And they would like to carry the girl in their arms, but she is heroic in her will to go farther away and keeps repeating: « I can walk, I am fit! » and wants to proceed by herself. She is flushed, her eyes are feverish and she is really exhausted. But she does not give up... She walks slowly, agreeing to be supported by Bartholomew and Philip... But she proceeds... They are all really tired. But they realise that they must go on and they do so...

They are on the top of the hill. There is the opposite slope... The plain of Esdraelon is down there, and beyond it the hills among which is Nazareth...

« If we do not find anybody, we will stop at the peasants... » says Jesus...

They go on... Almost down on the plain they see a group of disciples. There is Isaac and John of Ephesus with his mother, and Abel of Bethlehem with his mother, and other disciples whose names I do not know. For the women there is a rustic cart drawn by a strong little mule. There are also two shepherds, Daniel and Benjamin, Joseph the boatman and others.

« It is Providence helping us! » exclaims Jesus and He tells everybody to stop while He goes to speak to the disciples and to the two women in particular.

He takes them aside with Isaac and tells them part of Aurea's adventure: « We took her away from a lustful master... I would like to take her to Nazareth to cure her because she is suffering from fear and exhaustion. But I have no vehicle. Where were you going? »

« To Bethlehem in Galilee, to Myrtha's. It is impossible to stand the heat in the plain » replies Isaac.

« Go to Nazareth first, I ask you to do so out of charity. Take the girl to My Mother and tell Her that I will be with Her in two or three days' time. The girl has a temperature, so pay no attention to her raving. I will tell you later... »

« Yes, Master. As You wish. We will leave at once. Poor creature! Did he thrash her? » ask the three.

« He wanted to profane her. »

« Oh!... How old is she? »

« About thirteen... »

« The coward! The lewd rogue! But we will love her. We are true mothers, not because we have been promoted such by merit, is that right, Naomi? »

« Of course it is, Myrtha. Lord, are You keeping her as a disciple? »

« I do not know yet... »

«If You keep her, we are here. I am not going back to Ephesus. I have sent friends to sell everything. I am staying with Myrtha... Remember us for anything the girl needs. You saved our sons and we want to save her. »

« We will see later... »

« Master, the two women disciples are reliable because of their holiness... » says Isaac pleading.

« It does not depend on Me... Pray fervently and do not mention anything to anybody. Have you understood? To anybody. »

« We will hold our tongues. »

« Come with the cart. » And Jesus goes back followed by Isaac who is driving the cart and by the two women.

The girl is lying on the grass seeking refreshment for her high temperature.

« Poor creature! But she will not die, will she? »

« What a beautiful girl! »

« My dear, do not be afraid. I am a mother, you know? Come... Hold her up, Myrtha... She is tottering Help us, Isaac... Over here where she will not be jolted so much Put her sack under her head... Let us put our mantles under her Isaac, wet these linens and we will put them on her forehead... What a temperature, poor child... »

The two women are careful and motherly. Aurea is so overwhelmed by the high fever, that she is almost absent...

Everything is ready... The cart can start... Isaac before using his whip remembers: « Master, if You go to the bridge, You will find Judas of Kerioth. He is waiting for You like a beggar... It was he who told us that You were coming here. Peace to You, Master. We will get to Nazareth during the night! »

« Peace to You, Master » say the women disciples.

« Peace to you! »...

The cart trots away...

« Thanks be to the Lord!... » says Jesus.

« Yes. It is a good thing for the girl and because of Judas... It is better if he knows nothing... »

« Yes. It is better. So much better that I ask your hearts to make a sacrifice. We will part before arriving at Nazareth, and you people of the lake will go to Capernaum with Judas, whereas I with My brothers, Thomas and Simon will go to Nazareth. »

« We will do that, Master. And what will You say to these disciples who are waiting for You? »

« That it was urgent for us to inform My Mother of My arrival... Let us go... » and He joins the disciples who are so happy to be with their Master, that they do not ask any question.

#### **426. Parable of the Vineyard and of Free Will.**

4th May 1946.

« Peace to you, My friends. The Lord is good. He grants us to meet for a brotherly meal. Where were you going? » Jesus asks the ex-shepherds while making His way into a thicket to protect Himself from the sun.

« Some towards the sea, some towards the mountains. We came here together, growing in numbers all the time, as other groups joined us along the road » says Daniel, formerly a shepherd in Lebanon.

« Yes, and the two of us would like to go as far as Great Hermon to nourish our hearts where we pastured our flocks » says his companion Benjamin.

« It is a good idea. I will go to Nazareth for some time, later I will be at Capernaum and Bethsaida until the new moon of Elul. I am telling you so that you may find Me in case of need. Sit down and let us put together our victuals to share them according to justice. »

They do so spreading their... wealth on a piece of cloth: cakes, cheese, salt fish, olives, some eggs, the first apples... and they share out the food as cheerfully as they had laid it down, after Jesus has offered and blessed it.

How pleased they are with the unhopd-for feast of love! They forget tiredness and heat, lost as they are in the joy of listening to Jesus, Who inquires about what they have done, gives them advice, or tells them what He has done. And although the very warm hour of a sultry day would make one drowsy, they are so interested that no one yields to sleep. And when the meal is over and the few provisions left have been collected and divided into equal parts among them, they move into the thickest part of the nearest brushwood on the hill, and sitting around Jesus in the shade of the trees, they beg Him to tell them a beautiful parable, which they may use as a practical rule of life and teaching.

Jesus, Who is sat facing the plain of Esdraelon, now bare of crops but luxuriant in vineyards and orchards, turns His eyes round looking at the panorama as if He were looking for a subject

in what He sees. He smiles. He has found it. He begins with a general question: « The vineyards in this plain are beautiful, are they not? »

« Yes, very beautiful. They are extraordinarily laden with grapes which are maturing. And they are very well kept. That is why they yield so much. »

« They must be plants of great value... » insinuates Jesus. And He concludes: « As the plain is divided into estates belonging to rich Pharisees, they have cultivated it with good plants regardless of expenses. »

« Oh! It would have been of no use to purchase the best plants, if they had not been taken care of continually. I am an expert in the matter because I grow vines in all my property. But if I do not toil hard, that is, if I had not toiled hard at it, as my brothers continue to do now, believe me, Master, I would not be able to offer You at vintage time grapes like those of last year » says a strong man, about forty years old, whom I think I have already seen, but whose name I do not remember.

« You are right, Cleopas. The whole secret to have good fruits is to take care of our property » say another man.

« Good fruits and good profits. Because if the land gave only what one spends on it, it would still be a bad investment of money. The land must yield the fruit of the capital it costs us, plus a profit enabling us to increase our wealth. Because we must consider that a father has to divide his property among his sons. And of one property, be it land or money, he has to make several parts, one for each son, to give each of them what to live on. I do not think that we are to be blamed if we increase our property for the benefit of our children » insists Cleopas.

« You are not, if you achieve it by honest work and in an honest manner. So you say that notwithstanding the good quality of the seedlings planted out, it is necessary to toil hard at them to have a profit? »

« Most certainly so! Before we have the first bunches... Because it takes time, you know! Because one must have patience and work as well while the young shoots have only leaves. And later, when they begin to yield fruit and are strong, one must watch that there are no useless vine-branches, harmful insects and that parasitic grass do not impoverish the soil. And you have to ensure that the vine-branches are not suffocated by the foliage of bushes and bindweed and you have to dig round the foot of the vine forming circles so that dew may penetrate and water may stagnate a little longer than elsewhere nourishing the plant, and you have to spread manure... Hard work! But it is necessary, even if it is unpleasant, because grapes, so sweet, so beautiful, that each bunch seems a collection of precious stones, grow exactly by sucking fetid black

manure. It seems impossible but it is so! And one has to thin out the leaves so that the sun may shine on the bunches, and when vintage is over, one has to arrange the vines, tying and pruning them, covering the roots with straw and excrement, to protect them against frost, and also during winter one has to go and see whether the wind or some robber has pulled off the stakes and whether the weather has loosened the withes by which the branches are tied to the stakes... Oh! there is always something to be done until the vine is completely withered... And then there is still work to be done to remove it from the soil, which is to be cleaned out taking away all the roots so that it may be ready to receive a new plant. And do You know how one must work patiently with a light hand and eyes wide awake extricating the vine-shoots of the dead plants entangled with those of the vines still alive? If one acted foolishly and with a heavy hand, how much damage would be caused! One must be of the trade to know that!... The vines? They are like children! And before a child becomes a man, how hard one has to work to keep him sound in body and mind!... But I am speaking all the time and I am not letting You speak... You promised us a parable... »

« Actually you have already told it. It would be sufficient to apply your conclusion and say that souls are like vines... »

« No, Master! You must speak. I... I have talked nonsense and we cannot do the work of application by ourselves... »

« All right. Listen.

When we had an animal body in the womb of our mother, God created a soul in Heaven to make the future man in His likeness and He infused it into the body which was forming in the womb. And man, when it was time for him to be born, was born with a soul, which up to the age of reason was like land left uncultivated by its master. But when man reached the age of reason, he began to reason and to tell Good from Evil. He then realised that he had a vineyard to cultivate to his liking. And he became aware that he had a vine-dresser in charge of his vineyard: his free will. In fact the freedom to guide himself, which God granted to man, His son, is like an efficient servant, granted by God to man, His son, to assist him to make his vineyard fertile, that is his soul.

If man did not have to work by himself to become rich, to build for himself an eternal future of supernatural prosperity, if he should have had to receive everything from God, what merit would he have in re-creating himself in holiness, after Lucifer had corrupted the initial holiness given gratuitously by God to the first parents? It is already a great gift that the creatures, who had fallen by inheritance of fault, are granted by God the possibility to deserve a reward and become holy, by being born again, through their own will, to the initial nature of perfect creatures, as the

Creator had given to Adam and Eve, and to their children, if the first parents had remained free from the original Fault. Man, who had fallen, must become a chosen man through his free will. Now, what happens to souls? This. Man entrusts his soul to his will, to his free will, which begins to work the vineyard that had remained so far a piece of ground without vines, a good ground, but bare of durable plants. During the first years of its existence only frail grass and caducous flowers had grown on it: the instinctive goodness of a child who is good because he is an angel still unaware of Good and Evil.

You may ask: "How long does he remain such?". We generally say: for the first six years. But in actual fact there are precocious reasons so that we have children who are responsible for their actions before the age of six. There are children who are responsible for their actions also at three, four years of age, and they are responsible because they know what is Good and what is Evil, and they freely want the former or the latter. The moment a child can tell a good action from a bad one, that child is responsible. Not before. Thus a fool, even if one hundred years old, is irresponsible, but his guardians are responsible in his place and they must lovingly watch over him and his neighbour who may be damaged by the dull-witted or foolish fellow, so that he may not harm himself or other people. But God does not impute any fault to the idiot or fool, because unfortunately they are deprived of reason. But we are talking of intelligent beings, sound in mind and body.

So man entrusts his uncultivated vineyard to his vine-dresser: his free will, which begins to cultivate it. The soul, that is the vineyard, has a voice and makes the free will hear it. It is a supernatural voice nourished by supernatural voices which God never denies souls: the voice of the Guardian, those of the spirits sent by God, the voice of Wisdom, those of the supernatural remembrances which every soul recollects, although man does not have a precise perception of them. And the vineyard speaks to the free will, in a kind and imploring voice, begging it to adorn it with good plants, to be active and wise so that it may not become a wild, sterile, poisonous thicket of thorn-bushes, where serpents and scorpions nest, foxes have their earths and martens and other evil quadrupeds their holes.

Free will is not always a good cultivator. It does not always watch over the vineyard and defend it with an impassable hedge, that is with firm good will, aiming at protecting the soul from robbers, from parasites, from all harmful things, from strong winds which might cause the little flowers of good resolutions to fall off when they have hardly begun to be desired. Oh! what a high strong hedge is required around the heart to save it from evil! How one must watch to ensure that it is not forced, and that no one opens

either large gaps through which dissipations may enter, or sly little openings, at its base, through which vipers creep in: the seven capital vices! How necessary it is to hoe, to bum weeds, to prune, to trench, to manure through mortification and take care of one's soul through love for God and for our neighbour. And it is necessary to watch with wide-open bright eyes and mind wide awake that the vine-shoots which appeared to be good, do not turn out to be bad, and if that should happen, they are to be extirpated mercilessly. One plant only, but perfect, is better than many useless or noxious ones.

We have hearts, we have therefore vineyards which are always cultivated, in which new vines are planted by an extravagant cultivator who piles up new plants: he wants to do this work and that one, he has ideas, which are not even wicked, then he neglects them and they become evil, they fall on the ground, they degenerate and die... How many virtues perish because they are mingled with sensuality, they are not cultivated, because, in short, free will is not supported by love! How many thieves enter to rob, to tamper with things, to extirpate, because one's conscience falls asleep instead of being vigilant, because one's will loses its strength and becomes corrupted, because one's free will is seduced, and although free, it becomes a slave to Evil. But consider! God made it free and yet free will becomes a slave to passions, to sin, to concupiscence, to Evil in a word. Pride, wrath, avarice, lust, first mixed with, then triumphant over good plants!... A disaster! How much drought there is that parches plants, because people no longer pray, whereas prayer is union with God, and therefore a dew of beneficial juices for the soul! How much frost freezes roots through lack of love for God and our neighbour! How much poorness of soil, because people refuse the manuring of mortification and humility! What an inextricable tangle of good and bad vine-shoots, because one has not the courage to suffer cutting off what is noxious! That is the state of a soul whose guardian and cultivator is an extravagant free will inclined to Evil.

Whereas the soul whose free will lives in an orderly way - and therefore in submission to the Law given so that man may know what is order, how it is and how it is kept - and is heroically faithful to Good, because Good elevates man and makes him similar to God, whereas Evil makes him brutal and similar to a demon, is a vineyard bedewed with the pure, plentiful useful waters of faith, appropriately shaded by trees of hope, warmed by the sun of charity, controlled by will, matured by mortification, tied with obedience, pruned by strength, guided by justice, watched over by wisdom and conscience. And Grace increases assisted by so much help, Holiness increases and the vineyard becomes a wonderful garden, where God descends for His delight. Providing

the vineyard always remains a perfect garden till the death of the creature, God has such work of a willing good free will brought by His angels into the great eternal Garden of Heaven.

You certainly want that lot for yourselves. So watch that the Demon, the World and the Flesh do not seduce your free will and ruin your souls. Watch that there is love in you, but not selfregard, which extinguishes love and puts the soul in the power of various sensualities and disorder. Be vigilant until the end and storms may wet you but not hurt you, and laden with fruit you will go to your Lord for the eternal reward.

I have finished. Now meditate and rest until sunset while I retire to pray. »

« No, Master. We must not delay in setting out to arrive at some house » says Peter.

« Why? There is time until sunset! » say many.

« I am not thinking of sunset or of the Sabbath. I am thinking that within an hour there will be a violent storm. See those tongue shaped dark clouds which are rising slowly from the mountain ranges of Samaria? And those which are so white and are progressing rapidly from the west? A lower wind is blowing the former, an upper wind the latter. But when they are here above us, the upper wind will yield to sirocco and the dark clouds, laden with hailstones, will come down and clash with the white ones, laden with lightning, and then you will hear some music! Come on, quick! I am a fisherman and I can read in the sky. »

Jesus is the first to obey and they all set off quickly towards the farm-houses in the plain...

At the bridge they meet Judas who shouts: « Oh! My Master! How much I have suffered without You! Praised be the Lord Who has rewarded my perseverance in waiting for You here! How did things go at Caesarea? »

« Peace to you, Judas » briefly replies Jesus and He adds: « We will speak in the house. Come, a storm is impending »

In fact gusts of wind begin to raise clouds of dust from the parched roads, the sky becomes overcast with clouds of all shapes and shades, and the air is yellow and lurid... And the first large, warm, sparse drops begin to fall and the first lightning furrows the sky, which is now almost dark...

They begin to run and goaded by the desire not to get drenched to the skin, they arrive at the first house when, amid the roar of a thunderbolt which falls nearby, a deluge of rain and hailstones falls upon the area causing a strong smell of damp earth and of ozone exhaling from the incessant lightning.

They go in and fortunately the house is provided with porches and is inhabited by peasants believing in the Messiah. And with veneration they invite the Master to make Himself at home with

His companions « as if He were in His own house. But raise Your hand and disperse the hail, out of pity for our work » they say crowding round Jesus.

Jesus raises His hand and blesses the four cardinal points, and rain only pours from the sky to water orchards, vineyards, meadows and to purify the heavy atmosphere.

« May You be blessed, Lord! » says the head of the family. « Come in, my Lord! »

And while the rain is pelting down, Jesus enters a very large room, a storeroom, and tired as He is, He sits down surrounded by His apostles.

#### **427. Going about the Plain of Esdraelon.**

6th May 1946.

It must have continued to rain all the previous day and during the night, because the ground is very damp and the roads are becoming muddy. But to compensate for this the atmosphere is clear, free from dust at all levels. And the sky smiles up there, and looks as fresh and clear after the storm as if it were springtime, and the earth also smiles, dewy, fresh, clean, with a reminiscence of spring in the serene fresh dawn. And the last drops of rain, held by the entangled foliage or hanging from vine-tendrils shine like diamonds in the sun, while fruits washed by the heavy rain display the hues of their skins, the pastel shades of which are becoming day by day the perfect hues of full maturity. Olives and grapes, still hard and unripe, mingle with the green foliage, but each little olive has a tiny drop hanging from its base, and the compact bunches of grapes are like a network of tiny drops hanging from the stalks of the grapes.

« It is pleasant to walk today! » say Peter trampling joyfully on the ground which is not dusty, does not scorch and is not slimy either.

« You seem to breathe purity. But look at the hue of the sky! » Judas Thaddeus replies to him.

« And those apples? That bunch over there, all around that branch. I do not know how it can hold the weight and come out of the mass of fruits with a cluster of leaves? How many colours! The green of the hidden ones is shading into yellow, the others are turning to red, and the two which are more exposed are completely red where the sun shines. They look as if they were covered with sealing wax! » says the Zealot.

And they walk on happily contemplating the beauties of creation until Thaddeus, immediately imitated by Thomas and the others, intones a psalm celebrating the creative glory of God.

Jesus smiles upon hearing them sing so happily and He joins in

the chorus with His beautiful voice. But He cannot finish because the Iscariot, while the others continue to sing, approaches Him and says: « Master, while they are busy and inattentive singing, tell me: how did the trip to Caesarea go and what did You do? You have not told me yet... And this is the first moment that we are alone and can speak about it. At first there were our companions and the disciples and the peasants who welcomed us, then our companions and the disciples, now that the disciples have gone ahead of us... I have never been able to ask You... »

« You are greatly interested... But at Caesarea I did not do what I will do in Johanan's estate. I spoke of the Law and of the Kingdom of Heaven. »

« To whom? »

« To the citizens. Near the markets. »

« Ah! Not to the Romans?! Did You not see them? »

« How is it possible to be at Caesarea, the residence of the Proconsul, and not see Romans? »

« I know. But I say... Well... You did not speak to them personally? »

« I repeat: you are greatly interested! »

« No, Master. Simple curiosity. »

« Well. I did speak to the Roman ladies. »

« To Claudia also? What did she say to You? »

« Nothing, because Claudia did not come. Nay, she made Me understand that she does not wish anyone to know that she is in touch with us. »

Jesus lays much stress on the sentence and diligently watches Judas who, although an impudent fellow, changes colour, blushes lightly and then blanches.

But he soon collects himself and says: « She does not want? She no longer esteems You? She is mad.- »

« No, she is not mad. She has a well-balanced mind. She can tell and distinguish her duty as a Roman lady from her duty towards herself. And if she procures light and breath for herself, for her soul, by coming towards Light and Purity, as she is a creature who instinctively seeks the Truth and will not rest in the falsehood of paganism, at the same time she does not want to be detrimental to her Fatherland, not even in theory, as she might be by making people think that she sides with a possible competitor of Rome... »

« Oh! but... You are King of the spirit!... »

« But you apostles, although you know that, cannot convince yourselves that it is true. Can you deny that? »

Judas blushes again and then grows pale, he cannot lie and says: « No! But it is our excessive love that... »

« Even more so who does not know Me, that is Rome, can mistrust Me as a competitor. Claudia is acting righteously both towards God and her Fatherland, by honouring Me as king and master of

the spirit, if not as God, and by being loyal to her Fatherland. And I admire loyal, just, non-obstinate spirits. And I would like My apostles to deserve the praise which I give the heathen woman. »

Judas does not know what to say. He is about to part from the Master. But curiosity goads him again. Rather than curiosity it is the desire to find out how much the Master knows... and he asks: « Did they ask after me? »

« Neither after you nor any other apostle. »

« What did you speak about, then? »

« Of chaste life. Of their poet Virgil. You can see that the subject was of no interest to Peter, John or anybody else. »

« But what had that got to do with it? A useless conversation... »

« No. It helped Me to make them consider that a chaste man has a bright intellect and an honest heart. Very interesting for heathen ladies... and not only for them. »

« You are right... I will not keep You further, Master » and he almost runs away to join those who have finished singing and are waiting for the two left behind...

Jesus joins them more slowly and He says: « Let us take that path in the wood. We will shorten the road and will be sheltered from the sun which is already becoming strong. We will also be able to stop in the thick of the wood and eat in peace. »

And they do so going towards north-west, towards Johanan's estate, because I can hear them talk about the peasants of that Pharisee...

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Jesus says: « And you will put here the vision of 16th June 1944: Jesus, the fallen nest and the Pharisee.. »

#### **428. The Fallen Nest and the Scribe Johanan ben Zaccai.**

16th June 1944. Later, 10.30 a.m.

I see Jesus wearing a white tunic with His dark-blue mantle thrown over His shoulder, while He is walking along a woody path. It is woody because there are trees and shrubs on both sides. Narrow tracks cut through the green entanglement, but it is not a solitary place remote from any village, as they often meet other people. I would say that it is the road linking two villages close to each other, running through the fields of the villagers. The country is flat, and mountains can be seen in the distance. I do not know what place it is.

Jesus, Who was speaking to His disciples, stops and listens, looking round, He then takes a little path in the thicket and goes towards a large group of small trees and shrubs. He bends and searches. And He finds. There is a nest in the grass. I do not know whether it was knocked down by a storm, as one would think from

the damp soil and the branches still dripping, as is usual after a storm, or whether anybody tampered with it and left it there, not to be caught with the brood in his hands. I do not know. I can only see a small nest interwoven with hay and full of dry leaves, down of plants and wool, among which five little birds, only a few days old, are stirring and chirping: they are reddish, without feathers, rather ugly looking because of their wide open beaks and bulging eyes. High above, on a tree, their parents are screeching desperately.

Jesus picks up the little nest carefully. He holds it in the hollow of one hand and He looks for the spot where it was or where it can be placed safely. He finds a tangle of brambles so compact that it looks like a little basket, and so deep in the bush as to be safe. Without minding the thorns which scratch His arms, after handing the nest to Peter - and the apostle so elderly and stout looks funny with the little nest in his short rough hands - Jesus rolls up His long wide sleeves and works to make the entangled branches more concave and thus safer. It is done. He takes the nest and places it in the bush and secures it by pulling long cylindrical blades of grass which look like very thin reeds. The nest is now safe. Jesus stands aside and smiles. He then gets one of the apostles, who is carrying his sack across his shoulder, to give Him a piece of bread and He crumbles some on the ground, on a stone. Jesus is now happy. He turns round to go back to the main road while the birds fly down to the rescued nest screeching with joy.

A little group of men is standing on the roadside. Jesus finds them facing Him and looks at them. His smile fades away and His face becomes very severe, I would say sombre, while it was so compassionate when He was picking up the nest and so happy when He had arranged it safely.

Jesus stops. And He continues to look at His unexpected witnesses. He seems to be looking at their hearts with their secret thoughts. He cannot go any farther because the group have blocked the path. But He is silent.

But Peter does not keep quiet. « Let the Master pass » he says.

« Be quiet, Nazarene » replies one of the group. « How did your Master take the liberty of going into my wood and do manual labour on the Sabbath? »

Jesus looks straight at him with a strange expression. It is and it is not a smile. And if it is a smile it is not one of approval. Peter is about to reply. But Jesus asks: « Who are you? »

« The landlord of this place. Johanan ben Zaccai. »

« A renowned scribe. For what do you reproach Me? »

« For profaning the Sabbath. »

« Johanan ben Zaccai, do you know Deuteronomy? »

« Are you asking me? Me, a true rabbi of Israel? »

« I know what you want to tell Me: that I, as I am not a scribe, but

a poor Galilean, cannot be a "rabbi". But I ask you once again: "Do you know Deuteronomy?". »

« Certainly better than You do. »

« To the letter... certainly, if you wish to think so. But do you know it in its true meaning? »

« What is said is said. There is but one meaning. »

« True, there is but one meaning. And it is a meaning of love; or, if you do not want to call it love, of mercy; or if it annoys you to call it so, say: of humanity. And Deuteronomy says: "If you see your brother's sheep or his ox straying, even if they are not close at hand, you must not make off, but you will take them back to him, or you will keep them until he comes for them". It says: "If you see your brother's donkey or ox fall, do not pretend you have not seen, but help him to put it on its feet again". It says: "If in a tree or on the ground you find a nest with the mother bird sitting on the chicks or the eggs, you must not take the mother (because she is sacred to procreation) you may take the chicks only". I saw a nest on the ground and the mother weeping over it. I felt sorry for her because she was a mother. And I gave her chicks back to her. I did not think I was profaning the Sabbath by consoling a mother. We must not let the sheep of our brother go astray, but the Law does not say that it is a sin to put a donkey on its feet again on a Sabbath. It says only that we must have mercy on our brother and humanity for the donkey, a creature of God. I thought that God had created that mother that she might procreate, and that she had obeyed God's command, and that to prevent her from bringing up her offspring was to interfere with her obedience to a divine command. But you do not understand that. You and your friends consider the letter, not the spirit. You and your friends do not consider that you infringe the Sabbath twice, nay, three times, by degrading the divine Word to the pettiness of human mentality, by interfering with a command of God and by lacking in mercy towards your neighbour. In order to injure by means of a reproach, you do not consider that it is wrong to speak unnecessarily. This, which is also work, but neither useful, nor necessary, nor good, does not seem a profanation of the Sabbath to you. Johanan ben Zaccai, listen to Me. As today you have no mercy on a blackcap and according to Pharisaic practice you would let her die of grief, and you would let her offspring perish miserably, left at the mercy of asps or wicked people, likewise tomorrow you will have no mercy on a mother and you will make her die a miserable death and you will have her offspring killed, saying that it is right to do so out of respect to your law. To yours, not to God's. To the law which you and those like you have made to oppress the weak so that you, the strong ones, may triumph. But see. The weak always find a saviour. Whereas the proud, those who are strong according to the

law of the world, will be crushed under the weight of their own heavy law. Goodbye, Johanan ben Zaccai. Remember this hour and mind you do not profane yourself another Sabbath with the satisfaction of a crime committed. »

And Jesus casts a fulminating glance at the irascible old man, whose face is red with anger, and looking down on him, because the scribe is short and stout and Jesus seems a palm-tree compared with him, He passes by walking on the grass, because the scribe does not step aside.

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Jesus says:

« I wanted to uplift your spirit with a true vision, even if it is not mentioned in the Gospels.

This is the lesson for you: that I have so much mercy on little birds without nests, even if the name instead of being blackcap, is Mary or John. And I take care to give them a nest again, when an event has deprived them of it.

And this is the lesson for everybody. That too many know the words of the Law, still too many although they are few, because everybody ought to know them, but they know the "words" only. They do not live them. That is the error.

Deuteronomy prescribed humane laws, because men in those days, because of their spiritual childhood, were brutal and half-savage. They had to be led by hand along the flowery paths of pity, respect, love for the brother who lost an animal, for the animal which fell, for the bird sitting on eggs, to teach them to rise to higher pity, respect, love. But when I came I perfected the Mosaic rules and I opened wider horizons. The letter was no longer "everything". The spirit became "everything". Beyond the little human act for a nest and its inhabitants, it is necessary to consider the secret meaning of My gesture: that I, the Son of the Creator, bowed before the work of the Creator. That brood also is His work.

Oh! happy those who can see God in everything and serve Him with spirit of reverent love! And woe to those, who like a snake, cannot raise their heads above their filth and as they cannot sing the praises of God, Who reveals Himself in the work of their brothers, they bite them because of the excess of poison choking them. There are too many who torture the better ones saying, to justify their perversity, that it is right to do so out of respect to the law. Their law. Not God's. But if God cannot stop their wicked deeds, He can avenge His "little ones".

And let this be given to those who deserve it. May My vigilant Peace be with you. »

#### **429. The Journey in the Plain of Esdraelon Continues.**

6th May 1946.

After the incident they continue to walk for some time in silence. But when they arrive at a road junction in the country, James of Zebedee says: « Here we are! This road here will take us to Micah's house... But... are we still going there? That man will certainly be waiting for us in his property in order to ill-treat us... »

« And to prevent You from speaking to the peasants. James is right. Don't go there » advises the Iscariot.

« They are waiting for Me. I sent word that I am going there. Their hearts are rejoicing. I am the Friend Who is coming to console them... »

« You can go some other time. They will resign themselves » says Judas shrugging his shoulders.

« You do not resign yourself so easily when you are deprived of something for which you hoped. »

« My matters are serious ones. Theirs... »

« And what is more serious or greater than the perfecting and relief of a heart? Everything tries to separate those hearts from peace and hope... And they have but one hope: that of a future life. And they have but one means to go there: My help. No. I will go to see them at the cost of being stoned. »

« No, Brother! No, Lord! » say together the Zealot and James of Alphaeus. « It would only serve to have those poor servants punished. You did not hear him, but Johanan said: "So far I have tolerated the situation, but I will no longer do so. And woe betide the servant who will go to Him or welcome Him. He is a reprobate and a demon. I don't want corruption in my household", and he said to a companion: "Even if I have to kill them, I will cure them of their devilish attachment to that cursed man". »

Jesus lowers His head thinking... and suffering. His grief is evident... The others are sorry, but what can they do?

The situation is resolved by Thomas' practical serenity: « Let us do this. We will stay here until sunset, in order not to infringe the Sabbath. In the meantime one of us will steal away to the houses and say: "At dead of night, at the fountain outside Sephoris". And we will go there after sunset and wait for them in the thickets at the foot of the mountain on which is Sephoris. The Master will speak to those poor people and comfort them, and at daybreak they will go back to their houses and we will cross over the hill and go to Nazareth. »

« Thomas is right. Bravo Thomas! » say many.

But Philip remarks: « And who will go and warn them? He knows everyone of us and he may see us... »

« Judas of Simon could go. He knows the Pharisees well... » says Andrew innocently.

« What are you trying to insinuate? » replies Judas aggressively.

« I? Nothing. I am saying that you know them because you were for such a long time at the Temple and you have good friends there. You always boast about them. They will do no harm to a friend... » says meek Andrew.

« Don't you believe that, in no way. Let no one believe it. If we were still protected by Claudia, perhaps... I could... but not now. Because now, in short, she has disengaged herself, hasn't she, Master? »

« Claudia continues to admire the Wise Man. She has done nothing else or more than that. From such admiration she may pass to believe in the true God. But only the illusion of an excited mind could believe that she nourished other feelings for Me. And if she did, I would not want them. I can accept their heathenism, because I hope to change it into Christian faith. I cannot accept what would be idolatry on their side: that is, the adoration of a poor idol Man on a poor human throne. » Jesus says so calmly, as if He were speaking to everyone lecturing them. But He is so resolute as to leave no doubt about His intention and His decision to repress every possible deviation in that direction among His apostles.

No one therefore replies in regard to human regality, but they ask: « So what are we going to do for the peasants? »

« I will go. I made the proposal, I will go, if the Master allows me. The Pharisees will certainly not eat me... » says Thomas.

« You may go. And may your charity be blessed. »

« Oh! It is such a trifle, Master! »

« It is such a great thing, Thomas. You understand the desires of your brothers: Jesus and the peasants, and you feel sorry for them. And your Brother in the flesh blesses you also on their behalf » says Jesus laying a hand on the lowered head of Thomas, who is deeply moved and whispers: « I... Your... brother?! It is too great an honour, my Lord. I Your servant, You my God... That yes... I am going. »

« Are you going alone? I will come, too! » say Thaddeus and Peter.

« No. You are too impetuous. I can turn everything into laughter... the best means to disarm certain... characters. You become furious at once... I will go by myself. »

« I will come » say John and Andrew.

« Yes! One of you, yes, also one like Simon Zealot or James of Alphaeus. »

« No. I never react. I keep quiet and I act » insists Andrew.

« Come » and they go away in one direction while Jesus and those left with Him go in the other...

### 430. Near Sephoris, with Johanan's Peasants.

8th May 1946.

« Will they come? » Matthew asks his companions who are sat in a wood of holm-oaks in the lower slopes of the hill on which Sephoris rises. The Esdraelon plain is no longer visible, as it is beyond the hill where they are. But there is a much smaller plain between this hill and those in the region of Nazareth and which can be seen clearly in the bright moonlight.

« They promised. And they will come » replies Andrew.

« At least some of them. They were going to leave half-way through the first watch and they will be here at the beginning of the second one » says Thomas.

« Later » says Thaddeus.

« It took us less than three hours » objects Andrew.

« We are men and in full strength. They are tired and will have women with them » replies Thaddeus again.

« Provided their master does not find out! » says Matthew with a sigh.

« There is no danger. He left for Jezreel, where he will be the guest of a friend. The superintendent is there. But he is coming as well, because he does not hate the Master » says Thomas.

« Will that man be sincere? » asks Philip.

« Yes, because there is no reason why he should not be. »

« Well! To get into his master's good graces and... »

« No, Philip. When vintage time is over he will be dismissed by Johanan just because he does not hate the Master » replies Andrew.

« Who told you? » several of them ask.

« He himself and the peasants... each on his own account. And when two people of different categories agree in saying the same thing, it means that what they say is true. The peasants were weeping because the superintendent is leaving. He was very humane. And he said to us: "I am a man and not a clay puppet. Last year he said to me: 'Honour the Master, approach Him, become one of His believers'. I obeyed. Now he says to me: 'Woe betide you if you love my enemy and if you allow the servants to love Him. I do not want my land to be anathematised by receiving that cursed man'. But now that I know Him, how can I consider that order just? I said to the master: 'Last year you spoke differently, but He is always the same'. He beat me a first time. I said: 'I am not a slave, and even if I were, you would not be in possession of my thought. My thought judges Him to be holy Who you say is cursed'. He beat me again. This morning he said to me: "The anathema of Israel is in my property. Woe to you if disobey my order. You will no longer be my servant'. I replied: 'You are right. I will no longer be your servant. Look for another one who has a heart like yours and who is as rapacious about your property

as you are about other people's souls'. And he threw me on the ground and struck me... But the work of the year will soon be over and at the new moon of Tishri I will be free. I am only sorry for these..." and he pointed at the peasants » says Thomas.

« But where did you see him?... »

« In the wood, as if we were highwaymen. Micah, to whom we had spoken, had informed him and he came while he was still bleeding and servants and maid-servants came a few at a time... » says Andrew.

« H'm! so Judas was right! He is familiar with the mood of the Pharisee... » remarks Bartholomew.

« Judas knows too many things!... » says James of Zebedee.

« Be quiet! He may hear you! » advises Matthew.

« No. He has gone away saying that he is sleepy and has a headache... » replies James.

« Moon! Moon in the sky and moon in his head. It is so: he is more changeable than the wind » pronounces Peter who has been silent so far.

« Yes! A real misfortune among us! » says Bartholomew with a sigh.

« No, don't say that! Not a misfortune! On the contrary: a way to sanctify oneself... » says the Zealot.

« Or to damn oneself, because he makes one lose one's virtues... » says Thaddeus resolutely.

« He is a poor wretch! » remarks Andrew sadly.

There is silence. Then Peter asks: « But is the Master still praying? »

« No. While you were dozing He passed by and joined John and his brother James, placed as sentries on the road. He wants to be with the poor peasants at once. Perhaps it is the last time He will see them » replies the Zealot.

« Why the last time? Why? Don't say that. It seems to bring bad luck! » says Thaddeus excitedly.

« Because you can see it... We are persecuted more and more... I don't know what we will do in future... »

« Simon is right... Eh! it will be lovely to be all spiritual... But... if we had been permitted to have a little... humanity... a pinch of protection from Claudia would have done no harm » says Matthew.

« No. It is better to be alone... and above all to be free from contacts with the heathens. I... do not approve of them » says Bartholomew resolutely.

« Not much myself... But... the Master says that His Doctrine must spread all over the world. And that we have to do that... We have to sow His words everywhere... So we will have to adapt ourselves to approaching Gentiles and idolaters... » says Thaddeus.

« Impure people. It seems to me something sacrilegious. Wisdom

to pigs!... »

« They have a soul, too, Nathanael! You felt sorry for the girl yesterday... »

« Because... she is... a mere nothing which is to be perfected. She is like a new-born baby... But the others!... And she is not a Roman... »

« Do you think that the Gauls are not idolaters? They have their cruel gods as well. You will find out if you have to go and convert them!... » says the Zealot who is more learned than the others, I would say, in a cosmopolitan manner.

« But she does not belong to the race of those who are profaning Israel. I will never preach to the enemies of Israel, neither to the present nor to the old ones. »

« Then... you will have to go very far away, among the hyperboreans, because... it does not seem so, but Israel has had a taste of all the neighbouring peoples... » says Thomas.

« I will go far away... But here is the Master. Let us go and meet Him. How many people! They have all come! Even the children... »

« The Master will be happy... »

They join the Master Who is advancing with difficulty on the meadow, pressed as He is by so many surrounding Him.

« Is Judas still absent? » asks Jesus.

« Yes, Master. But we will call him, if You wish so... »

« It is not necessary. My voice will reach him where he is. And his free conscience speaks to him with its own voice. It is not necessary for you to add your voices and force a will. Come, let us sit down here with our brothers. And forgive Me if I have not been able to break the bread with you in a feast of love. »

They sit in a circle with Jesus in the centre, and Jesus wants around Him all the children who press against Him affectionately and full of confidence.

« Bless them, Lord! That they may see what we long to see: freedom to love You! » shouts a woman.

« Yes. They are depriving us also of that. They do not want Your words to be impressed in our souls. And now by forbidding You to come, they are preventing us from meeting... and we will have no more holy words! » moans an old man.

« If we are abandoned thus, we will become sinners. You taught us to forgive... You gave us so much love that we could bear our master and his ill-will... But now... » says a young man. I cannot see their faces very well, so I do not know exactly who is speaking. I base myself on the tones of the voices.

« Do not weep. I will see that you do not lack My word. I will come again, as long as I can... »

« No, Master and Lord. He is wicked and so are his friends. They could injure You and because of us. We will make the sacrifice of

losing You, but do not give us the sorrow of having to say: "He was caught because of us". »

« Yes, save Yourself, Master. »

« Do not be afraid. We read in Jeremiah how the prophet told his secretary Baruch to write what the Lord dictated to him and to go and read what he had written to those who had gathered in the house of the Lord, and to read it in place of the prophet who was in prison and could not go there. I will do the same. Among My apostles and disciples I have many faithful Baruchs. They will come and tell you the word of the Lord and your souls will not perish. And I will not be caught through your fault, because the Most High God will conceal Me from their eyes until the hour when the King of Israel is to be shown to the crowds so that the whole world may know Him. And do not be afraid either of losing the words which are in you. We read, always in Jeremiah, that also after the destruction of the scroll by Jehoiakim, king of Judah, who by burning the scroll hoped to destroy the eternal truthful words, what God had dictated remained, because the Lord gave this order to the prophet: "Take another scroll and write down all the words that were written on the scroll burnt by the king". And Jeremiah gave a scroll to Baruch, a scroll without any writing, and he dictated once again to his secretary the eternal words and he added some more as well to complete the previous ones, because the Lord mends the damages caused by men when such amends are useful to souls, and He does not allow hatred to cancel the work of love. Well, even if I, comparing Myself to a scroll full of holy verities, should be destroyed, do you think that the Lord would let you perish without the help of other scrolls, which will contain My words and those of My witnesses telling you what I cannot tell you, as I am a prisoner of Violence and destroyed by it? And do you think that what is impressed in the scrolls of your hearts can be cancelled with the passing of time on the words? No. The angel of the Lord will repeat those words to you, keeping them fresh in your souls eager for Wisdom. Not only. But he will explain them to you and you will be wise through the word of your Master. You seal your love for Me by means of the seal of sorrow. Can what resists persecution perish? It cannot. I am telling you. God's gifts cannot be cancelled. Sin only can cancel them. But you certainly do not wish to commit sin, do you, My friends? »

« No, Lord. It would mean losing You in the next life » reply many.

« But they will make us sin. He has ordered us not to leave his fields any more on Sabbaths... and there will be no more Passovers for us. So we will commit sin... » say others.

« No. You will not sin. He will. He only, as he does violence to the right of God and of His children to embrace and love one another

in sweet conversation of love and teaching on the day of the Lord. »

« But he makes amends through many fasting-days and offerings. We cannot, because the food we get is already too scanty as compared with the work we do, and we have nothing to offer... We are poor... »

« You offer what is appreciated by God: your hearts. Isaiah speaking to false penitents in the name of God says: "Look, on your fast-days your will is revealed and you oppress your debtors. Look, you fast to quarrel and squabble and fight cruelly. Do not fast any more as you have done so far, if you want to make your voice heard on high. Is that the sort of fast that pleases Me? That man for one day should just afflict his soul and torment his body and lie down on ashes? Is that what you call fasting, a day acceptable to the Lord? The fasting I prefer is a different one. Break the chains of sin, undo oppressive obligations, let the oppressed go free, remove all burdens. Share your bread with the hungry, shelter the poor and pilgrims, clothe the naked and do not despise your neighbour". But Johanan does not do that. You are his creditors because of the work you do for him making him rich, and he treats you worse than defaulting debtors and he raises his voice to threaten you and his hand to strike you. He is not merciful and he despises you because you are servants. But a servant is a man just like his master, and if it is his duty to serve, it is also his right to receive what is necessary to a man, with regard both to his body and to his spirit. The Sabbath is not honoured even if a man spends it in the synagogue, if on the same day the man who keeps it puts chains on his brothers and gives them aloë to drink. Keep your Sabbaths talking with one another of the Lord, and the Lord will be among you. Forgive and the Lord will glorify you.

I am the Good Shepherd and I have mercy on all My sheep. But I certainly love with particular fondness those which idolatrous shepherds have beaten, so that they may go away from My way. For them, more than for any other, I have come. Because your Father and Mine ordered Me: "Pasture these sheep for slaughter, killed mercilessly by their masters who have sold them saying: 'We have become rich!' and on which the shepherds had no mercy". Well, I will pasture the flock for slaughter, o poor people of the herd, forsaking to their wickedness those who distress you and afflict the Father Who suffers in His children. I will stretch out My hand to the little ones among the children of God and I will draw them to Me, so that they may have My glory. The Lord promises that through the lips of the prophets who celebrate My pity and power as Shepherd. And I promise directly you who love Me. I will provide for My flock. To those who accuse good sheep of making the water turbid or spoiling the pasture to come to Me, I will say: "Go away. You are the ones who cause the springs of My children

to dry up and their pastures to parch. But I have led and will lead them to other pastures; to the pastures which satisfy the spirit. I will leave you a pasture for your big bellies, I will leave you the bitter spring which you made well up and I will go with My sheep, separating the true sheep of God from the false ones, and My lambs will no longer be distressed by anything, but they will exult for ever in the pastures of Heaven".

Persevere, My beloved children! Be patient a little longer, as I am. Be faithful, doing what your unfair master allows you to do. And God will judge that you have done everything and will reward you for everything. Do not hate, even if everything urges and teaches you to hate. Have faith in God. See: Jonah was relieved of his suffering and Jabez was taken towards love. And what the Lord did to the old man and to the boy, He will do to you: partly in this life, completely in the next one.

I have but money to give you to make your material situation less painful. I will give it to you. Give it to them, Matthew, so that they may share it. It is much, but always too little for you who are so many, and so poor. But I have nothing else... materially. But I have My love, and the power of being the Son of the Father, so that I can ask infinite supernatural treasures for you, to comfort your grief and enlighten your darkness. Oh! your sad life can be made bright by God! By Him alone!... And I say: "Father, I pray You for them. I do not pray You for the happy and rich people in the world. But I pray for these, who have but You and Me. Let them rise so high in the ways of the spirit, that they may find all comfort in Our love, and let us give Ourselves to them with love, with all our infinite love, to fill their days and their work with peace, serenity, courage, with supernatural peace, serenity and strength, so that, as if they were estranged from the world through Our love, they may endure their calvary and after their death, they may have You, Us, infinite beatitude". »

Jesus has prayed standing up, slowly freeing Himself from the children who had fallen asleep leaning against Him. And He is solemn and kind in His prayer.

He now lowers His eyes and says: « I am going. You must go now, to be back in your homes in time. We will meet again. And I will bring Marjiam. But even when I can no longer come, My Spirit will always be with you and My apostles will love you as I did. May the Lord lay His blessing upon you. Go! » And He bends to caress the sleeping children and He gives Himself up to the effusive warmheartedness of the poor people who cannot make up their minds to Part from Him...

At last they all go their ways and the two groups part while the moon is setting and branches of trees are to be lit to illuminate the road. And the pungent smoke of the dampish branches is a good

excuse for shining eyes...

Judas is waiting for them leaning against the trunk of a tree. Jesus looks at him and does not say anything, not even when Judas says: « I feel better. »

They go on thus, as best they can during the night, then much quicker at dawn.

When they are in sight of a cross-roads Jesus stops and says: « Let us part. Thomas Simon Zealot and My brothers will come with Me. The others will go to the lake and wait for Me. »

« Thank You, Master... I did not dare ask You. But You are helping me. I am really tired. And if You allow me, I will stop at Tiberias... »

« At a friend's » James of Zebedee cannot refrain himself from saying.

Judas opens his eyes wide... but nothing else.

Jesus hastens to say: « As far as I am concerned it is enough if you go to Capernaum on the Sabbath with your companions. Come, that I may kiss you, you who are leaving Me. » And He fondly kisses the apostles who are departing, giving each of them a piece of advice in a whisper...

No one objects. Peter only, when leaving, says: « Come soon, Master. »

« Yes, come soon » say the others, and John concludes: « The lake will look very sad without You. »

Jesus blesses them again and promises: « I will see you soon! » and then they all go their own way.

### **431. Arrival at Nazareth.**

9th May 1946.

Coming from the Sephoris countryside one enters Nazareth on the north-eastern side, that is, on the highest and rockiest side. The entire amphitheatre, on the terraces of which Nazareth is spread, appears when one reaches the top of the hill, which is the last one coming from Sephoris and which slopes down rather steeply through ravines towards the town. If I remember correctly, because a long time has passed and many mountain places are alike, the spot where Jesus is, is the precise one where His fellowcitizens tried to stone Him, but He stopped them with His power, walking through them.

Jesus stops to look at His dear yet hostile town, and a smile of happiness brightens His face. What a blessing, ignored and undeserved by the Nazarenes, is His divine smile, which certainly pours and spreads graces on the land which received Him when He was a child, saw Him grow up and where His Mother was born and She became the Spouse of God and the Mother of God! Also the two cousins look at their town with evident joy, but Thaddeus' happiness

is tempered by austere reserved gravity, whereas James' is more open and kind, more like Jesus'.

Although it is not his town, Thomas' face shines brightly with joy, and pointing at Mary's little house, from the stone oven of which rings of smoke are rising, he says: « The Mother is at home and She is baking bread... » and he utters these simple words with such fervent love, that he seems to be speaking of his mother with all the affection of a son.

The Zealot, more calm because of his age and upbringing, smiles saying: « Yes, and Her peace is already arriving in our hearts. »

« Let us go down quickly » says James. « We will go down this path and it is unlikely that any of the Nazarenes will see us arrive. They would delay us... »

« But you will be going away from your home... Your mother also is anxious to see you. »

« Oh! You may be sure, Simon, that our mother is with Mary. She is almost always there... And she will be there because they are baking and because of the sick girl. »

« Yes, let us go this way. We will pass at the rear of Alphaeus' kitchen garden and we will arrive at the hedge of ours » says Jesus.

They go down quickly along a path which at first is very steep, then it becomes more gentle near the town. They go through olivegroves and small fields bare of crops. They pass near the first kitchen gardens in town. And the tall leafy hedges around the gardens and over which hang branches of trees laden with fruit, or the little dry-stone walls all covered with branches hanging outside from orchards, prevent their passing from being noticed by housewives moving about the gardens, or doing the washing or spreading it on the patches of grass near the houses...

The hedge bordering one side of Mary's kitchen garden, which is a tangle of thorns in winter, then thick with leaves in summer, after the hawthorn blooms in spring or the little fruits become ruby-colour in autumn, is now adorned with a luxuriant jasmine and with the undulating calyces of a flower, the name of which I do not know, and which from the inside of the garden throw their branches onto the hedge making it thicker and more beautiful. A blackcap is singing in the thick of the hedge and the cooing of doves is heard from inside the garden.

« The fence also is protected and entirely covered with branches in bloom » says James who has run ahead to look at the rustic gate at the rear of the garden, the one which, after not being used for years, was opened to let Peter's cart go in and out for John and Syntyche.

« We will go along the lane and will knock at the door. My Mother Would suffer seeing this protection destroyed » replies Jesus.

« Her enclosed garden! » exclaims Judas of Alphaeus.

« Yes. And She is its rose » says Thomas.

« As a lily among the thistles » says James.

« The sealed fountain » says the Zealot.

« Better: the well of living water which gushing impetuously from the beautiful mountain gives the Water of Life to the Earth and spurts towards Heaven with its scented beauty » says Jesus.

« She will soon be delighted to see You » says James.

« Tell me, Brother, something which I have been longing to know for some time. How do You see Mary? As a Mother or as a subject? She is Your Mother, but She is a woman and You are God... » asks Thaddeus.

« As sister and as bride, as delight and rest of God and as comfort of Man. I see everything and I have everything in Mary, as God and as Man. She Who was the Delight of the Second Person of the Trinity in Heaven, Delight of the Word as well as of the Father and of the Spirit, is the Delight of the God Incarnate, and She will be the Delight of the Man God Glorified. »

« What a mystery! So God has deprived Himself twice of His delights? In You and in Mary and He gave You to the Earth... » meditates the Zealot.

« What love! You ought to say. Love induced the Trinity to give Mary and Jesus to the Earth » says James.

« And, not with regard to You, Who are God, but with regard to His Rose, was He not afraid to entrust Her to men, who are all unworthy of protecting Her? » asks Thomas.

« Thomas, the Song of Songs replies to you: "The Peaceful One had a vineyard and he entrusted it to vine-dressers who, being profaners instigated by the Desecrator, would have paid large amounts to have it, that is, all allurements to seduce it, but the beautiful Vineyard of the Lord looked after itself by itself, and would not give its fruits to anybody but to the Lord and it unbosomed itself to Him generating the priceless Treasure: the Saviour". »

They have now arrived at the door of the house. While Jesus knocks, Judas of Alphaeus comments: « It would be the case to say: "Open, my sister, my spouse, my beloved immaculate dove"... »

But when the door opens, and the sweet face of the Virgin appears, Jesus utters the sweetest word, stretching out His arms to receive Her: « Mother! »

« Oh! Son! Blessed! Come in and may peace and love be with You! »

« And with My Mother and the house and those in it » says Jesus entering, followed by the others.

« Your mother is in there, and the two women disciples are busy baking and doing the washing... » explains Mary after exchanging greetings with the apostles and Her nephews, who discreetly withdraw leaving Mother and Son alone.

« Here I am with You, Mother. We will be together for some time... How sweet it is to come back... the house and You above all, Mother, after so much travelling amongst men... »

« And men become more and more acquainted with You and through such knowledge of You they become divided into two groups: those who love You... and those who hate You... And the latter group is the bigger... »

« Evil perceives that it is about to be defeated and it is furious... and makes people furious... How is the girl? »

« A little better... But she was on the point of death... And her words, now that she is not delirious correspond, although they are more reserved, to those which she spoke while raving. It would be a lie to say that we have not reconstructed her history... Poor girl!... »

« Yes, but Providence watched over her. »

« And now?... »

« Now... I do not know. Aurea does not belong to Me as a creature. Her soul is Mine, her body belongs to Valeria. For the time being, she will stay here, to forget... »

« Myrtha would like to have her. »

« I know... But I am not entitled to do anything without permission of the Roman lady. I do not even know whether they purchased her with money or simply used the weapon of promises... When the Roman lady will claim her... »

« I will go in Your place, Son. It is not right that You should go... Let Your Mother see to it... We women... the least beings for Israel, are not noticed so much if we go and speak to Gentiles. And Your Mother is so unknown to the world! No one will notice the Jewess of the common people going through the streets in Tiberias, enveloped in her mantle, and knocking at the door of a Roman lady... »

« You could go to Johanna's... and speak to the lady there... »

« I will do that, Son. May Your heart be relieved, Jesus!... You are so distressed... I understand... and I would like to do so much for You... »

« And You do so much, Mother. Thank You for everything You do... »

« Oh! I am a very poor help, Son! Because I am not successful in making You loved, in giving You... joy... as long as You are allowed to enjoy some... So what am I? A poor disciple, indeed... »

« Mother! Mother! Do not say that! My strength comes to Me through Your prayers. My mind rests thinking of You, and, see, My heart finds comfort thus, with My head against Your blessed heart... Mother of Mine!... » Jesus has drawn His Mother to Himself, as She was standing in front of Him, while He was sitting on the chest against the wall, and He leans His forehead on the

breast of Mary, Who gently caresses His hair... A pause of love.

Jesus then raises His head, stands up and says: « Let us go to the others and to the girl » and He goes out with His Mother into the kitchen garden.

The three women disciples, standing at the door of the room where the sick girl is, are talking to the apostles. But when they see Jesus, they become quiet and kneel down.

« Peace to you, Mary of Alphaeus, and to you, Myrtha and Naomi. Is the girl sleeping? »

« Yes, she is. She is still feverish and her temperature stupefies and consumes her. If it persists like this, she will die. Her frail body will not resist the disease and her mind is upset by remembrances » says Mary of Alphaeus.

« Yes... and she does not react because she says that she wants to die, so that she may not see any more Romans... » confirms Myrtha.

« And that grieves us because we are already fond of her... » says Naomi.

« Be not afraid! » replies Jesus going as far as the threshold of the little room and lifting the curtain...

On the little bed against the wall, facing the door, appears the little thin face of the girl, bright red at the cheek-bones, while all the rest is snow-white, buried in the mass of her long golden hair. She is sleeping restlessly, muttering incomprehensible words through her teeth and with her hand abandoned on the blankets she now and then makes a gesture as if she were rejecting something.

Jesus does not enter. He looks at her with pitiful eyes. He then calls her in a loud voice: « Aurea! Come! Your Saviour is here. »

All of a sudden the girl sits up in her bed, she sees Jesus and with a cry she gets up and runs barefooted in her long loose tunic towards Him, and kneels at His feet saying: « Lord! Now You have really freed me! »

« She is cured. See? She could not die because she must become acquainted with the Truth first. » And to the girl who is kissing His feet He says: « Rise and live in peace » and He lays His hand on the no longer feverish head.

Aurea, in her long linen dress, perhaps one of the Virgin's, so long as to form a train, her loose hair falling over her slender figure like a mantle, her grey-blue eyes still bright because of the temperature which has just dropped and of the joy which has just filled her, looks like an angel.

« Goodbye! We are withdrawing into the workshop while you look after the girl and the house... » says the Master and followed by His four apostles he goes into Joseph's old workshop and they sit on the benches no longer used...

### **432. Parable of Painted Wood.**

10th May 1946.

The rustic workshop fireplace has been lit after not being used for such a long time, and the smell of glue boiling in a can mingles with the characteristic smell of sawdust and fresh shavings, which are just piling up at the foot of a bench.

Jesus is working with zest to transform some timber, with the help of saw and plane, into legs for chairs, drawers and so forth. Some pieces of furniture, the modest furniture of the little house in Nazareth, have been taken into the workshop to be repaired: the kneading trough, one of Mary's looms, two stools, a garden ladder, a little chest and the door of the stone oven, the lower part of which I think has been perhaps gnawed away by mice. Jesus is working to repair what usage and old age have consumed.

Thomas, instead, with a complete outfit of a goldsmith's tiny tools, which he must have taken out of his sack lying on his little bed placed against the wall like the Zealot's, is working with a light hand at some thin silver plates. And the tapping of his little hammer on the burin, giving a silvery sound, mingles with the loud noise of the working tools used by Jesus.

Now and again they exchange a few words, and Thomas is so happy to be there with the Master and at his work of goldsmith and in fact he says so - that in the intervals of conversation he whistles softly. Now and again he raises his eyes and thinks, and absorbed in thought he stares at the smoky wall of the large room.

Jesus notices that and asks: « Are you drawing your inspiration from that black wall, Tom? It is true that it was the long work of a just man that made it so, but I do not think that it can inspire a goldsmith... »

« No, Master, a goldsmith in fact cannot reproduce with rich metals the poetry of holy poverty... But with his metal he can imitate the beautiful things in nature and thus ennoble gold and silver reproducing with them the flowers and leaves which are in creation. I think of those flowers and leaves, and to remember their details precisely I become fixed thus, with my eyes on the wall, but in actual fact I see the woods and meadows of our Fatherland, the light leaves, the flowers resembling chalices or stars, the bearing of stalks and leafy branches... »

« You are a poet, then, a poet singing in metal what another person sings with ink on parchment. »

« Yes. A goldsmith in fact is a poet who writes on metal the beautiful things of nature. But our work, artistic and beautiful, is not worth Yours, which is humble and holy, because ours serves the vanity of rich people, whereas Yours serves the sanctity of the house and the usefulness of the poor. »

« What you say is right, Thomas » says the Zealot, who has appeared

at the door opening on to the kitchen garden, with his tunic tucked up, his sleeves rolled up, with an old apron in front of him and a tin of paint in his hand.

Jesus and Thomas turn round looking at him and they smile. And Thomas replies: « Yes, what I say is right. But I want that once in a while the work of a goldsmith may serve to adorn a... good holy thing... »

« What? »

« It's a secret of mine. I have had this idea for a long time, and since we were at Ramah I have been carrying a goldsmith's little outfit, waiting for this moment... And what about your work, Simon? »

« Oh! I am not a perfect craftsman like you, Tom. It is the first time that I have held a brush in my hand and what I paint is uneven, notwithstanding all my good will. That is why I began from the... most simple things... to acquire skill... and I can assure you that my inexperience made the girl laugh heartily. But I am glad! She is reviving hourly to a serene life, and that is what is required to cancel her past and renew her for You, Master. »

« H'm! perhaps Valeria will not give her up... » says Thomas.

« Oh! what do you think it matters to Valeria to have her or not? If she had kept her, it would have been only to prevent her from being left forlorn in the world. It would certainly be a good thing if the girl were safe for ever and in everything, above all in her spirit. Is that right, Master? »

« That is true. We must pray hard for that. The girl is really simple and good, and if she were brought up in the Truth, she could yield much. She is instinctively inclined to the Light. »

« I quite believe it! She has no consolation on the Earth... and she seeks it in Heaven, poor soul! I think that when Your Gospel is announced all over the world, the first and the most numerous to receive it will be the slaves, those who have no human comfort and who will take shelter in Your promises to have some... And I say that if the honour of preaching You falls to me, I will love those poor wretches with a special love... »

« And you will do the right thing, Tom » says Jesus.

« Yes. But how will you approach them? »

« Oh! I will be a goldsmith for the ladies and... a master of their slaves. A goldsmith calls at houses or the servants of rich people come to his... and I will work... Two metals: those of the Earth for the rich... those of the spirit for slaves. »

« May God bless you for your good intentions, Tom. Persevere in them... »

« Yes, Master, I will. »

« Well, now that You have replied to Thomas, please come with me, Master... to see my work and to tell me what I must paint now.

Simple things again, because I am a very incapable apprentice. »

« Let us go, Simon... » and Jesus lays down His tools and goes out with the Zealot...

They come back after some time and Jesus points at the garden ladder. « Paint that. Paint makes wood impenetrable and preserves it longer, in addition to making it more beautiful. It is like the defence and ornament of virtues on a human heart. It may be rough, coarse... But as soon as virtues clothe it, it becomes beautiful and pleasant. See, to have a beautiful paint which serves its purpose, one must take care of many things. First of all: you have to choose carefully what is necessary to make it. That is, a clean can free from mould and residues of old paints, good oils and good colours, and then you have to mix them patiently, working on them to make a liquid which is neither too thick nor too thin. And you must not tire working until the least clot is dissolved. When that is done, you have to take a brush the bristles of which do not come off, and they must be neither too hard nor too soft; the brush is to be cleaned of any previous paint, and before applying the paint, you have to remove from the wood all roughness, the peelings of old paints, dirt, everything, and then neatly, with a steady hand and much patience, you spread the paint, working in the same direction all the time. Because on the same board you meet different resistances. On knots, for instance, the paint remains smoother, that is true, but it does not cover them well, as if the wood rejected it. Viceversa, the paint sticks well on the soft parts of the wood, but the soft parts are generally not very smooth and thus blisters or stripes form... One then must remedy the defect by spreading the paint with a steady hand. Then in old pieces of furniture there are new parts, like this rung, for instance. And in order not to show that the poor ladder has been botched, but is very old, one must get the new rung and the old ones to be alike... There you are, like that! » Jesus bent at the foot of the ladder is working and speaking at the same time...

Thomas, who has left his burins to come near Jesus and see, asks: « Why did You begin from the bottom and not from the top? Was it not better the other way round? »

« It would appear to be better, but is not. Because the lower part is more worn out and will wear out more because it rests on the ground. So you must paint it several times. A first coat, a second and a third one if necessary... and not to waste time waiting for the lower part to dry and thus be ready for a new coat, you paint the top and then the central parts of the ladder. »

« But in doing so, one might stain one's clothes and spoil what was painted previously. »

« If you are careful you do not stain your clothes and you do not spoil anything. See? This is how you do it. You gather your clothes »

and stand apart. Not out of disgust for the paint, but not to spoil the paint which, being fresh, is delicate » and Jesus with His arms raised up paints the top of the ladder.

And He continues to speak:

« And you do the same with souls. At the beginning I told you that paint is like the ornament of virtues on human hearts. It adorns and protects wood from wood-worm, from rain, from the sun. Woe to the landlord who does not take care of painted fittings and allows them to deteriorate! When one sees that the wood is losing its paint, one must not waste time, but fresh paint is to be put on. Paints must be refreshed... Also virtues acquired in a first fit of enthusiasm towards justice may grow feeble or fade away completely if the landlord does not watch, and body and soul, laid bare, at the mercy of inclement weather and of parasites, that is, of passions and dissipations, can be attacked and lose the garment which adorns them, and end by being... good only for the fire. Therefore, with regard both to ourselves and to those whom we love as our disciples, when we notice that the virtues which serve to defend our egos are being shattered or are fading away, we must provide at once with diligent patient work until the end of our lives, so that we may go to sleep, when we die, with body and soul worthy of a glorious resurrection. And in order to ensure that your virtues are true and good, you must begin with pure courageous intentions, which remove all rubbish and mould, and you must work not to leave any imperfection in the building up of virtues, and then take an attitude, which is neither too hard nor too lenient, because both intolerance and excessive indulgence are harmful. And the brush: your will. Let it be free from pre-existent human inclinations which might vein the spiritual hue with material disfigurements, and prepare yourselves or other people, with suitable operations, which are laborious, it is true, but necessary, to cleanse the old ego from any ancient leprosy, so that it may be pure to receive virtue. Because you cannot mix what is new with what is old.

You then begin to work: in good order, with consideration. You must not jump here and there without a good reason. You must not work a little in one direction and then a little in another. One would get less tired, that is true. But the paint would be uneven. As happens in disorderly souls. They display perfect points, then close to them there are deformities, different shades... One must insist on the spots resisting the paint, on the knots: confusion of matter or of dissolute passions, which, of course, have been mortified by will, which like a plane has laboriously smoothed them, but they remain to offer resistance like a knot amputated but not destroyed. And they deceive at times, as they appear to be well clad with virtue, whereas it is but a light veil which soon falls off.

Beware of the knots of concupiscence. Ensure that virtue covers them over and over again, so that they may not flourish again disfiguring the new ego. And cover the soft parts, which receive the paint too easily, but they do so to their own liking: if there are blisters and stripes you must insist with isinglass, smoothing and smoothing in order to give one or more coats of paint, so that such parts may become as glossy as hardened enamel. And watch that you do not overload. To exact too much from virtue makes the creature rebel, boil over and blister at the first impact. No. Neither too much nor too little. Be fair when working on yourselves and on creatures made of flesh and soul.

And if, as in most cases - because girls like Aurea are an exception, not the rule - there are new parts mixed with old ones, as Israelites have, passing from Moses to the Christ, as well as heathens with their mosaic of beliefs which cannot be cancelled all of a sudden and will surface with nostalgic memories, at least in the most pure matters, then one must be more vigilant and tactful and insist until the old part is homogeneous with the new one making use of pre-existent situations to complete the new virtues. For instance, the Romans hold in high esteem patriotism and manlike courage. They are both considered almost as myths. Well, do not destroy them but inculcate a new spirit on patriotism, that is, the spirit of making Rome great also spiritually as the Centre of Christendom and make use of Roman manliness to strengthen in Faith those who are strong in battle. Another instance: Aurea. Her disgust at a brutal revelation urges her to love what is pure and to hate what is impure. Well, make use of both feelings to lead her to perfect purity hating corruptness, as if it were the brutal Roman.

Do you understand Me? And use habits as means of penetration. Do not destroy brutally. You would not dispose at once of what is needed to build. But slowly replace what must not remain in a convert, with charity, patience and tenacity. And since matter overwhelms people, heathens in particular as, even if they are converts, they are always in touch with the heathen world, in which they live, you must insist on the necessity of shunning sensual pleasures. All the rest comes in after sensuality. Watch the exasperated sensuality of heathens and which, let us admit it, is very strong also among us, and when you notice that the contact with the world spoils the preservative paint, do not continue to paint the top, but go back to the lower part, balancing spirit and flesh, top and bottom. But always start from the flesh, from material vice, to prepare the soul to receive the Guest Who does not cohabit in impure bodies or with spirits stinking with carnal corruption... Do you understand me?

And do not be afraid of becoming corrupted if you touch with your garment the lower parts, that is the material ones, of those

whose spirits you are curing. Act wisely, so that at all times you may reconstruct rather than bring about ruination. Live engrossed in your ego nourished with God, enveloped with virtue, proceed gently particularly when you have to take care of the most sensitive spiritual ego of other people, and you will certainly succeed in changing even the most despicable beings into creatures worthy of Heaven. »

« What a beautiful parable You have told us! I want to write it for Marjiam! » says the Zealot.

« And for me, as all of me is to be made beautiful for the Lord » says slowly trying to find the words, Aurea who, barefooted, has been standing for some time at the door of the kitchen garden.

« Oh! Aurea! Were you listening to us? » asks Jesus.

« I was listening to You. It is so beautiful! Have I done wrong? »

« No, girl. Have you been here long? »

« No. And I am sorry because I do not know what You said previously. Your Mother has sent me to tell You that the meal will be ready shortly. The bread is about to be taken out of the oven. I have learned how to bake it... How lovely! And I have learned to bleach linen, and Your Mother has told me two parables concerning bread and linen. »

« Has She? What did She say? »

« That I am like flour still in the sieve, that Your goodness purifies me, Your grace works in me, Your apostolate perfects me, Your love cooks me and from coarse flour mixed with so much bran I will end up, if I allow myself to be worked on by You, by being flour for hosts, flour and bread of sacrifice, good for the Altar. And on the linen, which was dark, oily and coarse, and which after so much borit grass (1) and so many blows of mortification has become clean and soft, the sun will now shine, and it will become white... And She said that that is what the Sun of God will do with me, if I always remain in the Sun and I accept to be cleansed and mortified to become worthy of the King of kings, of You, my Lord. What lovely things I am learning... I seem to be dreaming... Lovely! Everything is beautiful here... Do not send me away, Lord! »

« Would you not like to go with Myrtha and Naomi? »

« I would prefer to stay here... But... also with them. But not with Romans, no, Lord... »

« Pray, child! » says Jesus laying His hand on her honey-blond hair. « Have you learned the prayer? »

« Oh! yes! It is so lovely to say: "My Father!" and think of Heaven... But the will of God frightens me a little... because I do not know whether God wants what I want... »

« God wants your welfare. »

(1) Soap-wort.

« Does He? You say so?! In that case I am no longer afraid... I feel that I will remain in Israel... to become more and more acquainted with this Father of mine... And... to be the first disciple of Gaul, my Lord! »

« Your faith will be satisfied because it is good. Let us go... »

And they all go out towards the basin under the spring of water to wash themselves, while Aurea runs to Mary and their two feminine voices are heard: Mary's, which is fluent in speaking, whereas the other is uncertain, of a person trying to find words. And one can hear their shrill voices laughing when a language error is made and which Mary corrects kindly...

« The girl is learning well and quickly » remarks Thomas.

« Yes. She is good and willing. »

« And then! With Your Mother as teacher!... Not even Satan could resist Her!... » says the Zealot.

Jesus sighs without speaking...

« Why are You sighing thus, Master? Was I not right? »

« Yes, quite right. But there are men more resistant than Satan, who at least runs away from Mary's presence. There are men who are close to Her and who, although taught by Her, do not improve... »

« But not us, eh? » says Thomas.

« No, not you... Let us go... »

They go into the house and it all ends.

### **433. The Sabbaths in the Peace of Nazareth.**

13th May 1946.

The Sabbath is a day of rest. That is already known. And men rest as well as having tools covered up or neatly arranged in their places.

Now that the red sunset of a summer Friday is almost over, Mary, Who is sat at Her smaller loom in the shade of the huge apple-tree, stands up, covers it and with the help of Thomas She carries it back to its place in the house. And She asks Aurea, who is sitting on a little stool at Her feet sewing with still unskillful hand the dresses given to her by the Roman ladies and fitted on her by Mary, to fold her work tidily and put it on the shelf in her little room. And while Aurea is doing so, the Mother with Thomas goes into the workshop where Jesus and the Zealot are busy putting straight saws, planes, screwdrivers, hammers, tins of paint and glue and sweeping away sawdust and shavings from benches and the floor. Of all the work done so far only two small planks of wood remain, gripped in a vice, at an angle, so that the glue may dry up at the joints (it may be a future drawer), and a stool, half painted, besides the strong smell of fresh paint.

Aurea also goes in and she bends over Thomas's burin work, which she admires and asks, somewhat curious and instinctively coquettish, what it is for and whether it would suit her.

« It would suit you fine, but it suits you better to be good. These ornaments embellish the body only, but are of no use to the spirit. Nay, by cherishing coquetry, they are harmful to the spirit. »

« Why do you make them, then? » asks the logical girl. « Do you want to harm a spirit? »

Thomas, who is always kind-hearted, smiles at the remark and says: « What is superfluous is harmful to a weak spirit. But in the case of a strong spirit, an ornament remains exactly what it is: a brooch to hold a garment in place. »

« For whom are you making it? For your bride? »

« I have no bride and will never have one. »

« For your sister, then. »

« She has more than she needs. »

« For your mother, then. »

« Poor old soul! What would she do with it? »

« But it is for a woman... »

« Yes, but it is not you. »

« Oh! I would not even think of it... And, now that you have said that those things there are harmful to the spirit, I would not like to have it. And I will take the fringes off my dresses. I do not want to do any harm to what belongs to my Saviour! »

« Clever girl! See, with your good will you have done a nicer work than mine. »

« Oh! You are saying so because you are kind!... »

« I am saying it because it is true. See: I took this piece of silver, I reduced it to thin plates as I needed them, then with a tool, or rather with many tools, I folded it thus. But I still have to do the most important work: join the parts together in a natural manner. At present, only these two tiny leaves joined to their little flower are complete » and Thomas with his big fingers lifts a graceful stem of a lily of the valley joined to a leaf which is a perfect imitation of a natural one. It is impressive to see the trinket shining with the brilliancy of pure silver held by the strong dark fingers of the goldsmith.

« Oh! lovely! There were many on the island and we were allowed to pick them before sunrise. Because we blond girls had never to take the sun, so that we might be more valuable. They compelled brunettes instead to stay out in the sun, until they felt sick, to become darker. They... What do you say when one sells something saying that it is one thing, whereas it is another?... »

« Who knows!... Deceit... swindle... I don't know. »

« See, they deceived them saying that they were Arabs or that they came from the Upper Nile, where it rises. They sold one girl

saying that she was a descendant of the Queen of Sheba. »

« Fancy that! They did not deceive the girls, but the purchasers. So you say: they cheated. What a race! A wonderful surprise for the purchaser when he saw... the false Ethiopian grow lighter! Did You hear that, Master? How many things we do not know!... »

« Yes, I heard. But the sad side is not the cheating of the purchasers... it is the destiny of the girls... »

« That is true. Souls desecrated for ever. Lost... »

« No. God can always intervene... »

« He did on my behalf. You saved me!... » says Aurea turning her clear serene eyes towards the Lord. And she concludes: « And I am so happy! » and as she cannot go and embrace Jesus, she clasps Mary with one arm bending her fair-haired head on the Virgin's shoulder in a gesture of confident love. The two fair-haired heads stand out, in their different shades, against the dark wall. A most gentle group.

But Mary has to see to the supper. They part and go away.

« May I come in? » says the rather hoarse voice of Peter at the workshop door which opens onto the road.

« Simon! Open the door! »

« Simon! He could not stay away! » exclaims Thomas laughing while he runs to open.

« Simon! This was to be expected... » says the Zealot smiling.

But it is not only Peter's face which appears at the door. All the apostles from the lake are there, with the exception of Bartholomew and the Iscariot. And Judas and James of Alphaeus have already joined them.

« Peace to you! But why did you come in this heat? »

« Because... we could not stay away any longer. It's two and a half weeks, You know? Do You understand? We have not seen You for two and a half weeks! » and Peter seems to be saying: « Two hundred years! An enormity! »

« But I told you to wait for Judas on every Sabbath. »

« Yes, but he did not come on the last two Sabbaths... and we have come here on the third one. Nathanael remained there because he is not too well. And he will receive Judas, if he goes there... But he will not go... Passing through Tiberias to come to us, before going to the Great Hermon, Benjamin and Daniel told us that they had seen him at Tiberias and... Of course. I will tell You later... » says Peter who has stopped speaking because of a tug at his tunic by his brother.

« All right. You will tell Me... But you were all so anxious to have a rest, and now that you had a chance you have been running about like this! When did you leave? »

« Yesterday evening. The lake was like a mirror, We landed at Tarichea to avoid Tiberias... so that we would not meet Judas... »

« Why? »

« Because, Master, we wanted to enjoy Your company in peace. »

« You are selfish! »

« No. He already has his joys Well! I don't know who gives him so much money to enjoy it with Yes, I have understood, Andrew. But don't pull my tunic so violently. You know that it is the only one I have. Do you want me to go back in rags? »

Andrew blushes. The others laugh. Jesus smiles.

« Well. We landed at Tarichea also because, well, don't reproach me... It may be the heat, it may be that I become wicked when I am far away from You, it may be the thought that he left you to join Listen, stop tearing at my sleeve! You see that I can stop in time! So, Master, it may be for many reasons... I did not want to commit a sin and if I had seen him I would have committed one. So I went straight to Tarichea. And at dawn we set off. »

« Did you pass through Cana? »

« No. We did not want to come the long way round... But it was a long way all the same. And the fish was beginning to go bad... We gave it to the people in a house, to have shelter for a few hours... the warm hours. And we left after the ninth hour, about the middle of the following hour... It was like an oven!... »

« You could have saved yourselves the trouble. I was coming soon... »

« When? »

« When the sun comes out of Leo. »

« And do You think we could stay so long without You? We will defy a thousand of such hot days and we will come to see You. Our Master! Our adored Master! » and Peter embraces his lost Treasure.

« And yet, when we are together you do nothing but complain of the weather, of the length of journeys... »

« Because we are foolish. Because, while we are together we do not really understand what You are for us... But here we are. We are all already settled. Some will stay with Mary of Alphaeus, some with Simon of Alphaeus, some with Ishmael, some with Aser and some here, nearby, with Alphaeus. We will rest now and tomorrow evening we will leave, and we will be more happy. »

« On last Sabbath we had Myrtha and Naomi here, they came to see the girl again » says Thomas.

« You can see that whoever can manage to do so, comes here! »

« Yes, Peter. And what have you done during these days? »

« We have fished... painted the boats... mended the nets... Marjiam often goes fishing with the servants, which reduces the insults of my mother-in-law against "the sluggard who lets his wife die of starvation after bringing an illegitimate son to her". And yet Porphirea has never been so well as now that she has Marjiam for her heart... and for everything else. The sheep from three have

become five and will soon be more... It is a great help for a little family like ours! And Marjiam by fishing makes up for what I do not do, except very rarely. But that woman has the tongue of a viper, whereas her daughter has the tongue of a dove... But I see that You have been working as well... »

« Yes, Simon. We have worked. All of us. My brothers in their house, these apostles and I in Mine. To make our mothers happy and let them rest. »

« Well, we have been working, too » say the sons of Zebedee.

« My wife and I have worked at the beehives and in the vineyard » says Philip.

« And what about you, Matthew? »

« I have no one to make happy... so I made myself happy by writing down the things that I like to remember... »

« Oh! in that case we will tell you the parable of the paint. I, a very inexperienced painter, was the cause of it... » says the Zealot.

« But you soon learned the trade. Look how smooth he made this seat! » says Thaddeus...

They are in perfect harmony. And Jesus, Who looks more rested since He has been at home, is bright with joy at having His dear apostles with Him.

Aurea comes and remains on the threshold surprised.

« Oh! here she is! Look how well she is! She looks like a true little Hebrew, dressed like that! »

Aurea blushes and does not know what to say. But Peter is so good natured and fatherly, that she soon recovers and says: « I am striving to become one... and with the help of my Teacher I hope to be one soon... Master, I am going to tell Your Mother that these people are here... » and she goes away quickly.

« She is a good girl » states the Zealot.

« Yes. I would like her to remain with us in Israel. Bartholomew lost a good chance and much joy by refusing her... » says Thomas.

« Bartholomew is very respectful of... formulae » says Philip excusing him.

« His only fault » remarks Jesus.

Mary comes in...

« Peace to You, Mary » say those who came from Capernaum.

« Peace to you... I did not know that you were here. I will provide at once... Come in the meantime... »

« Our mother is coming from our house with some provisions, and Salome is coming as well. Do not worry, Mary » says James of Alphaeus.

« Let us go into the kitchen garden... The evening breeze is rising and it is pleasant in there... » says Jesus.

And they go into the kitchen garden and sit here and there, conversing fraternally, while the doves coo competing for the last

meal which Aurea is spreading on the ground... It is then time to water the flower-beds and the beautiful vegetables so useful to man. And the apostles want to do it cheerfully, while Mary of Alphaeus, who has just arrived, and Aurea and the Virgin prepare a meal for the guests. And the smell of sizzling food mingles with that of the moist earth, as the chirping of birds competing cheekily for a good spot among the thick leaves above the garden, mingles with the deep or shrill voices of the apostles...

#### **434. Before Being a Mother, the Blessed Virgin Is a Daughter and Servant of God.**

14th May 1946.

And the Sabbath wears on. It is the true Sabbath. In the wonderful morning, when the air is still fresh and cool, it is beautiful to sit in a brotherly peaceful gathering under the shady pergola, or where the apple-tree, close to the fig and almond-trees, forms with them patches of shade extending that of the pergola on which grapes are ripening. And it is nice to walk up and down the paths between the flower-beds going from the beehives to the dove-cot and then to the little grotto, and, passing behind the women Mary, Mary of Clopas, the daughter-in-law of the latter: Salome of Simon, Aurea - going towards the few olive-trees which from the cliff hang over the peaceful kitchen garden. And that is what Jesus and His disciples, Mary and the other women are doing. And Jesus teaches unintentionally, and so does Mary. And the apostles of the Former and the women disciples of the Latter are carefully listening to the words of the two Teachers.

Aurea, sat on her usual little stool at Mary's feet, almost in a squatting posture, is embracing her knees with joined hands, her face is raised and her wide-open eyes are staring at Mary's face. She looks like a little girl who is listening to a wonderful tale. But it is not a tale. It is a beautiful truth. Mary is telling the little heathen of yesterday the ancient stories of Israel and the other women, although they already know them, are listening attentively. Because it is pleasant to hear the story of Rachel, that of the daughter of Jephthah, that of Hannah of Elkanah, flowing from Her lips!

Judas of Alphaeus comes near slowly and listens smiling. He is behind Mary Who therefore cannot see him. But the smiling look of Mary of Clopas at her Judas tells Mary that someone is behind Her and She turns round: « Oh! Judas? Have you left Jesus to hear Me, a poor woman? »

« Yes. I left You to go to Jesus, because You were my first teacher. But at times it is pleasant for me to leave Him and come to You, and become again a boy as when I was Your disciple. Go on,

please... »

« Aurea wants her reward each Sabbath. And the reward consists in telling her what impressed her most in our History, a little of which I explain to her every day while working. »

The others also have come near... Thaddeus asks: « And what do you like, child? »

« So much, I could say everything... But Rachel very much, and Hannah of Elkanah, then Ruth... then... ah! beautiful! Tobit and Tobias with the Angel, and then the bride who prays to be freed... »

« And Moses, no? »

« He frightens me... Too great... And of the prophets I like Daniel who defends Susanna. » She looks around and then whispers: « I also was defended by my Daniel » and she looks at Jesus.

« But also Moses' books are beautiful! »

« Yes. Where they teach not to do what is bad. And where they speak of that star which will be born of Jacob. I know its name now. I knew nothing before. And I am more fortunate than that prophet because I can see it and close by. She told me everything and I know as well » she concludes with an air of triumph.

« And do you not like Passover? »

« Yes... but... also the children of other people are the sons of mothers. Why kill them? I prefer the God Who saves to the God Who kills... »

« You are right... Mary, have You not told her anything yet of His Birth? » asks James pointing at the Lord Who is listening in silence.

« Not yet. I want her to know the past well before the present. She will thus understand the present which has in the past its reason for being. When she knows it, she will see that the God Who frightens her, the God of Sinai, is but a God of severe love, but still a God of love. »

« Oh! Mother! Tell me now! It will be less difficult for me to understand the past when I know the present, which, as far as I know, is so beautiful and makes one love God without fear. I need not to be afraid! »

« The girl is right. You must remember that truth when you will be evangelizing. Souls need not to be afraid in order to go to God with full confidence. It is what I am striving to do, all the more when people, either through ignorance or because of their faults, are likely to be much afraid of God. But God, also the God Who struck the Egyptians and Who frightens you, Aurea, is always good. See: when He killed the sons of the cruel Egyptians, He had mercy on the sons, who did not grow up and did not become sinners like their fathers and He gave their parents time to repent of their evil doings. So it was severe goodness. One must be able to tell true goodness from loose upbringing. Also when I was a little baby, many little children were killed on the very laps of their

mothers. And the world cried with horror. But when Time exists no more for individuals or for all Mankind, for a first time and for a second time you will realise that those were fortunate, blessed in Israel, in the Israel of the times of Christ, who slaughtered in their infancy, were preserved from the biggest sin, that of being accomplices in the death of the Saviour. »

« Jesus! » shouts Mary of Alphaeus springing to her feet, frightened, looking around as if she were afraid to see deicides appear from behind hedges and trunks of trees. « Jesus! » she repeats looking at him painfully.

« What? Do you perhaps not know the Scriptures, since you are so surprised at what I say? » asks Jesus.

« But... But... It is not possible... You must not allow that... Your Mother... »

« She is Saviour like Me, and She knows. Look at Her. And imitate Her. »

Mary is in fact austere, regal in Her deep pallor. She is motionless, with Her hands in Her lap clasped as if in prayer, Her head straight, looking into space...

Mary of Alphaeus looks at Her. She then addresses Jesus again: « All the same, You must not mention that horrible future! You are piercing Her heart with a sword. »

« That sword has been in Her heart for thirty-two years. »

« No! It's not possible! Mary... always so serene... Mary... »

« Ask Her, if you do not believe what I say. »

« I will ask Her! Is it true, Mary? You know?... »

And Mary in a gentle but firm voice says: « It is true. He was forty days old and I was told by a holy man... But also previously... Oh! When the Angel told Me that while remaining the Virgin I would conceive a Son, Who would be called the Son of God and is such because of His divine conception, when I was told that, and that in the barren womb of Elizabeth a fruit had been formed by a miracle of the Eternal Father, I had no difficulty in remembering the words of Isaiah: "The Virgin will give birth to a son and they will call Him the Immanuel"... All, all Isaiah! And where he speaks of the Precursor... And where he speaks of the Man of sorrows, stained with blood, unrecognizable... a leper... for our sins... The sword has been in My heart since then and everything has served to drive it in more deeply: the song of the angels and the words of Simeon and the visit of the Kings from the East, and everything... »

« But which other everything, Mary? Jesus is triumphing, Jesus works miracles, Jesus is followed by larger and larger crowds... Is that not the truth? » says Mary of Alphaeus.

And Mary, always in the same posture replies to each question: « Yes... » without anguish, without joy, only a quiet assent, because

it is so...

« Well then? Which other everything is piercing Your heart with a sword? »

« Oh!... Everything... »

« And You are so calm? So serene? Always the same as when You arrived here, a young bride, thirty-three years ago, and I remember it so well that it seems yesterday to me... But how can You? I would be mad... I would do... I don't know what I would do... I No! It is not possible for a mother to know that and to be calm! »

« Before being a Mother, I am a daughter and servant of God... Where do I find My tranquillity? In doing the will of God. From where does My serenity come? From doing that will. If I had to do the will of a man, I might be upset, because a man, even the wisest, can always impose a wrong will. But the will of God! If He wanted Me to be the Mother of His Christ, have I perhaps to think that that is cruel, and in that thought lose My serenity? Am I to be upset by the thought of what Redemption will be to Him and to Me, also to Me, and how I will be able to overcome that hour? Oh! it will be dreadful... » Mary gives an involuntary start, She suddenly shudders and clenches Her hands to prevent them from trembling, as if She wanted to pray more fervently, while Her face grows even paler and Her delicate eyelids close on Her kind sky-blue eyes with an expression full of anguish. But She steadies Her voice after a deep sigh of anxiety and She concludes: « But He, Who imposed His will on Me and Whom I serve with confident love, will grant Me His assistance for that hour. He will grant it to Me, to Him... Because the Father cannot impose a will that exceeds the strength of man... and He succours... always... And He will succour us, My Son... He will succour us... and there is no one but He, with His infinite means, who can succour us... »

« Yes, Mother. Love will succour us, and in love we will succour each other. And in love we will redeem... » Jesus has gone beside His Mother and lays His hand on Her shoulder and She raises Her face to look at Him, at Her handsome healthy Jesus destined to be disfigured by torture, killed with a thousand wounds, and She says: « In love and in sorrow Yes. And together... »

No one speaks any more Standing around the two chief Protagonists of the future tragedy of Golgotha, the apostles and women disciples look like pensive statues...

Aurea, on her little stool, is petrified... But she is the first to collect herself and without standing up she slides on her knees and thus finds herself facing Mary. She embraces Her knees and bends her head on Her lap saying: « All that also for me!... How much I cost You and how much I love You for what I cost! Oh! Mother of my God, bless me, that my cost may not be fruitless... »

« Yes, My daughter. Be not afraid. God will help you as well, if you always accept His will. » She caresses her hair and cheeks and

feels them wet with tears. « Do not weep! The first thing of the Christ with which you have become acquainted is His sorrowful destiny, the end of His mission as Man. It is not fair, having learned that, that you should be unacquainted with the first hour of His life in the world. Listen... Everybody will be pleased to come out of the dark bitter contemplation by recalling the sweet hour, full of light, of songs, of hosannas, of His Birth... Listen... » and Mary, explaining the reason for Her journey to Bethlehem in Judah, the town predicted to be the birthplace of the Saviour, in a soft gentle voice tells the story of the night of Christ's Nativity.

#### **435. Jesus and His Mother Converse.**

15th May 1946.

I do not know whether it is the evening of the same Sabbath. I know that I see Jesus and Mary, sitting on the stone seat against the house, near the door of the dining-room, from which comes the faint light of an oil lamp placed close to the door. The little flame palpitates in the air, rising and sinking, as if it were breathing. It is the only light in the moonless night: a faint light visible in the kitchen garden where it illuminates the small strip of ground before the door and dies on the first rose-bush in the flower-bed. But the feeble light is sufficient to illuminate the profiles of the Two engaged in intimate talk in the calm night full of the scent of jasmynes and other summer flowers.

They are speaking of their relatives... of Joseph of Alphaeus persistently stubborn, of Simon not very brave in his profession of faith, overwhelmed as he is by his eldest brother, who is as overbearing and obstinate in his ideas as his father was. It is the great sorrow of Mary Who would like all Her nephews to be disciples of Her Jesus.

Jesus comforts Her and to excuse His cousin He points out his strong Israelitic faith: « An obstacle, You know? A real obstacle. Because all the formulae and precepts form a barrier against the acceptance of the Messianic idea in its truth. It is easier to convert a heathen, provided his spirit is not completely corrupt. A heathen ponders and sees the good difference between his Olympus and My Kingdom. But Israel... the more learned part of Israel... finds it difficult to follow the new concept! ... »

« And yet it is always that concept! »

« Yes. It is always that Decalogue, those prophecies. But their nature has been perverted by man. He has taken them, and from the supernatural spheres -where they were, and has brought them down to the level of the Earth, in the atmosphere of the world, he has handled them with his humanity altering them... The Messiah, the spiritual King of the great Kingdom - which is called

Kingdom of Israel, because the Messiah is born of the throne of Israel, but it would be more correct to call it: the Kingdom of Christ, because Christ centralises the better part of Israel, both past and present, and sublimates it in His perfection of God-Man - according to them the Messiah, cannot be the meek poor man, without yearning after power and riches, obedient to those who rule over us by divine punishment, because obedience is holiness when it does not invalidate the great Law. We can therefore say that their faith works against the true Faith. Of such stubborn people convinced that they are right, there are many... in every class... and even among My relatives and apostles. Believe, Mother, that their dullness in believing in My Passion lies in that. Their errors in valuation originate from that... Also their obstinate aversion to consider Gentiles and idolaters, not looking at man, but at the spirit of man, that spirit which has only one Origin and to which God would like to give only one Destiny: Heaven. Take Bartholomew... He is an instance. Very good, wise, willing to do everything to honour and comfort Me... But before, I will not say an Aglae or a Syntyche, who is already a flower compared with poor Aglae, whom penance only restores from filth to a flower, but not even before a child, a poor child whose lot excites pity and whose instinctive modesty draws admiration, does his disgust for the Gentiles vanish, neither does My example convince him, nor My words that I have come for everybody. »

« You are right. Nay, Bartholomew and Judas of Kerioth, the two most learned, or at least: the learned Bartholomew, and Judas of Kerioth, who I do not know to which class he belongs exactly, but who is imbued and saturated with the air of the Temple, are the most resistant. But... Bartholomew is good and his resistance can still be excused. Judas... no. You heard what Matthew, who went to Tiberias on purpose, said... And Matthew is a man of experience, particularly of that life... And the remark of James of Zebedee is correct: "Who is it that gives so much money to Judas?". Because that life costs... Poor Mary of Simon! »

Jesus makes His gesture with His hands, to say: « It is so... » and He sighs. He then says: « Did You hear that? The Roman ladies are at Tiberias... Valeria has not told Me anything. But I must know before I resume My journey. Mother, I want You to come to Capernaum with Me for some time... You will then come back here, I will go towards the Syro-Phoenician border, and I will come back to say goodbye to You before going down towards Judaea, the obstinate sheep of Israel... »

« Son, I will go tomorrow evening... I will take Mary of Alphaeus with Me. Aurea will stay with Simon of Alphaeus, because her staying here with You for several days would certainly be criticised... Such is the world... And I will go... To Cana as first stage,

then at dawn I will leave and stop at the house of the mother of Salome of Simon. Then I will set out again at sunset and we will arrive at Tiberias in daylight. I will stay in the house of Joseph, the disciple, because I want to go personally to Valeria's house, and if I went to Johanna's, she would want to go... No. I, the Mother of the Saviour, will appear in her eyes, different from the disciple of the Saviour... and she will not say no to Me. Do not be afraid, Son! »

« I am not afraid. But I am sorry for all Your trouble. »

« Oh! to save a soul! What are twenty miles in a good season? »

« It will also be a moral strain. To beg... perhaps to be humiliated... »

« A passing trifle. But a soul remains! »

« You will be like a lost swallow in corrupt Tiberias... Take Simon with You. »

« No, Son. Just the two of us, two poor women... But two mothers and two disciples. That is, two great moral strengths... I will not be long. Let Me go... Just bless Me. »

« Yes, Mother. With all My heart as Son, and with all My power as God. Go and may the angels escort you along the way. »

« Thank You, Jesus. Well, let us go in. I will have to get up at dawn to prepare everything for those who leave and for those who are staying. Say the prayer, Son... »

Both Jesus and Mary stand up and they say together the Our Father... They then go back into the house, they close the door... the light disappears and human voices are heard no more. Only the rustling of the breeze among the leaves can be heard and the soft gurgling of the water in the fountain basin...

#### **436. The Blessed Virgin at Tiberias.**

16th May 1946.

Tiberias is already in sight when the two tired pilgrims are proceeding in the darkening twilight.

« It will soon be dark... And we are still in the middle of the country... Two women alone... And near a large town full of... Ugh! what people! Beelzebub! Beelzebub mostly... » says Mary of Alphaeus looking around frightened.

« Be not afraid, Mary. Beelzebub will do us no harm. He harms only those who receive him in their hearts... »

« These pagans have him!... »

« Not only pagans are in Tiberias. And also among the heathens there are just people. »

« What? They have not our God!... »

Mary does not reply because She understands that it would be useless. Her good sister-in-law is but one of the many Israelites who believe that they are the only depositaries of virtue... simply

because they are Israelites.

They are silent: only the shuffling of the sandals on their tired dusty feet can be heard.

« It was better to take the usual road... We knew that one... it is more beaten by people... This one... among vegetable gardens, solitary... unknown... I am afraid, that's all! »

« No, Mary. Look. The town is over there, a few steps from here. And here are peaceful kitchen gardens of the cultivators of Tiberias, and over there is the shore, only a few steps from here. Do you want to go to the shore? We will find fishermen there... We have only to go across these vegetable gardens. »

« No! We would be going away from town again! And then... The boatmen are almost all Greeks, Cretans, Egyptians, Romans... » and it seems as if she were mentioning infernal classes. The Blessed Virgin cannot help smiling in the shadow of Her veil.

They go on. The road becomes an avenue, and thus darker... and Mary of Alphaeus is more frightened than ever and she invokes Jehovah at every step, while they proceed slower and slower.

« Come on, take heart! Make haste, if you are afraid! » says Mary urging her after replying: « Maran Atha! » at each invocation.

But Mary of Alphaeus stops and asks: « But why did You want to come here? To speak perhaps to the Iscariot? »

« No, Mary. Or at least that is not exactly the reason. I have come to speak to Valeria, the Roman lady... »

« Goodness gracious! Are we going to her house? Ah! no! Mary! Don't do that! I... I am not coming with You! But why are You going there? To those... those... anathemas!... »

The kind smile of the Blessed Virgin becomes a severe expression while She asks: « And do you not remember that Aurea is to be saved? My Son began her liberation. I will complete it. Is that how you practise love for souls? »

« But she is not from Israel... »

« Truly, you have not understood one word of the Gospel! You are a very imperfect disciple... You do not work for your Master and you grieve Me so deeply. »

Mary of Alphaeus lowers her head... But her heart, full of the prejudices of Israel but congenitally kind, gets the upper hand and bursting into tears she embraces Mary and says: « Forgive me! Don't say that I grieve You and I do not serve my Jesus! Yes! I am very imperfect and I deserve to be reproached... But I will not do it again... I will come! Even to Hell if You should go there to save a soul and give it to Jesus... Give me a kiss, Mary, to tell me that You forgive me... »

Mary kisses her and they resume their journey, walking fast, cheered up by love...

They are now in Tiberias, near the little harbour of the

fishermen. They look for the little house of Joseph, the fisherman disciple... They find it and knock at the door...

« The Mother of my Master! Come in, o Donna! And may God be with You and with me, who am giving You hospitality. And you, come in, too, and peace be with you, the mother of apostles. »

They go in while the wife and young daughter come to greet them followed by a little group of younger children...

The frugal meal is soon over and Mary of Clopas, being tired, withdraws with the children. On the high terrace, from which the lake can be seen - it can be heard lapping the bank, rather than be seen, because there is no moonlight as yet - are the Blessed Virgin, the boatman and his wife, who endeavours to be good company, but in actual fact is nodding...

« She is tired!... » says Joseph excusing her.

« Poor woman! Housewives are always tired in the evening. »

« Yes, they do work. They are not like those there, who lead a gay life! » says the boatman disdainfully, pointing at some illuminated boats departing from the shore among songs and music. « They are going out now! They begin to work at this time, when honest people go to sleep! And they do harm to workers, because they go to the best spots, pretending that they are fishing, and they drive away us, who earn our living on the lake... »

« Who are they? »

« Roman women and the like. And among the latter you can count Herodias and her lustful daughter and some Jewesses as well... Because we have many Maries of Magdala... I mean Maries before repentance... »

« They are poor wretches... »

« Poor wretches? We are poor wretches because we do not stone them to rid Israel of those who have become corrupted and bring down on us the curses of God. »

In the meantime other boats have left and the lake reddens with the lights of the revellers' boats.

« Can you smell resin burning? First they become intoxicated with smoke, and they do the rest in the course of banquets. They are quite capable of going to the hot springs on the other side... In those Thermal baths... Infernal things take place! They will come back at daybreak, at dawn, perhaps later... drunk, lying one on top of the other, men and women, just like sacks, and their slaves will carry them home, to sleep it off... All the beautiful boats are going out this evening! Look! Look!... But I am more angry with the Jews who mix with them. With regard to them... we know! Shameless animals. But we! ... Donna, do You know that Judas, the apostle is here? »

« I know. »

« He is not setting a good example, You know? »

« Why? Does he go with those people?... »

« No... but... with bad companions... and a woman... I have not seen him... None of us has seen him in such company. But some Pharisees have sneered at us saying: "Your apostle has changed master. Now he has a woman and he is in the good company of publicans". »

« Do not judge, Joseph, what you have only heard people say. You know that the Pharisees do not love you and they do not even praise the Master. »

« That is true... But the rumour is spreading... and is harmful... »

« As it rose, so it will fall. Do not sin against your brother. Where does he live? Do you know? »

« Yes, with a friend, I think. One who has a warehouse of wines and spices. The third warehouse on the eastern side of the market, after the fountain... »

« Are all the Roman women alike? »

« Oh! more or less!... They do wrong, even if they do not let people see it. »

« Which are the ones that do not let people see? »

« The ones who came to Lazarus' at Passover. They are more retired... I mean... they do not always go to banquets. But they go so often that people can say that they are impure. »

« Are you saying so because you are sure, or is it your Jewish prejudice that makes you say so? Think it over carefully... »

« Well... really... I don't know... I have not seen them any more in the boats of the filthy ones... But they go out on the lake at night. »

« You go out, too. »

« Certainly If I want to go out fishing! »

« It is very warm! Only out on the lake is there relief at, night. You said so yourself while we were having supper. »

« That is true. »

« So, why not consider that they go on the lake for that? »

The man is silent... He then says: « It is late. The stars say that it is the second watch. I am withdrawing, Donna. Are You not coming? »

« No. I will stay here and pray. I will go out early. Do not be surprised if you do not see Me at dawn. »

« You are free to do as You like. Anne! Come on! Let us go to bed! » and he shakes his wife who is fast asleep. They go away.

Mary remains alone... She kneels down and prays... but She never loses sight of the boats sailing on the lake, the boats of rich people, all bright with lights, with flowers, singing and smell of incense... Many sail eastwards, they become very small in the distance, their singing is no longer heard. A splendid solitary boat remains out on the lake in a sheet of water upon which the Moon, setting in front of Tiberias, is shining brightly. It sails slowly up and down... Mary watches it until She sees it steer towards

the shore.

Mary then stands up saying: « Lord, help Me! Let it be... » She then goes downstairs nimbly, She enters a room the door of which is half open... In the moonlight it is possible to see a little bed. Mary bends over it and calls: « Mary! Wake up! Let us go! »

Mary of Alphaeus wakes up and, overwhelmed with sleep, rubbing her eyes she asks: « Is it already time to go? Is it already daylight? » She is so sleepy that she does not realise that it is not the light of dawn but moonlight the feeble phosphorescence which enters through the open door. She becomes aware of it when she is outside, on the small piece of cultivated ground in front of the boatman's house.

« But it's night-time! » she exclaims.

« Yes. But we will finish sooner and we will get out of this town sooner... at least I hope so. Come! This way, along the shore. Quick! Before the boat sets ashore... »

« The boat? Which boat? » asks Mary. But she runs after the Virgin, Who is walking very fast on the deserted shore, towards the little pier, where the boat is heading.

They arrive panting a few moments before it... Mary is watching carefully. She exclaims: « Praised be the Lord! It is they! Follow Me now... because we must go where they go... I do not know where they live... »

« But Mary... for pity's sake!... They will think that we are prostitutes!... »

The Most Pure Mother shakes Her head and whispers: « The important thing is not to be one. Come! » and She draws her into the shadow of a house.

The boat lands and while it is manoeuvring, a litter, which was waiting nearby, is brought forward towards it. Two women get on it, while two remain outside and walk beside it, when it leaves carried by four Numidians walking in step and wearing very short sleeveless tunics, which hardly cover their trunks...

Mary follows it, notwithstanding that Mary of Alphaeus protests in a low voice: « Two women alone! ... Behind those men! They are half-naked... Oh!... »

After a few metres the litter stops. A woman gets off while the leader knocks at a portal.

« Goodbye, Lydia! »

« Goodbye, Valeria! A caress to Faustina from me. Tomorrow evening we will read again in peace, while the others revel... »

The portal is opened and Valeria, with her slave or freedwoman, is about to go in.

Mary goes forward and says: « Domina! A word! »

Valeria looks at the two women enveloped in very plain Jewish mantles lowered over their faces, and thinks that they are beggars.

She orders: « Barbara, give them offerings! »

« No, domina. I am not asking for money. I am the Mother of Jesus of Nazareth and this is a relative of Mine. I have come in His Name to ask a favour of you. »

« Domina! Your Son is perhaps... persecuted »

« Not more than usually. But He would like »

« Come in, Domina. It does not become You to remain here in the street like a beggar. »

« No. A few words will suffice if you can listen to me in secret... »

« Go away, all of you! » Valeria orders her slave or freedwoman, whatever she may be, and the doorkeepers. « We are alone. What does the Master want? I did not come because I did not want to harm Him in His town. He did not come in order not to harm me, perhaps, with my husband? »

« No. I advised Him not to come. My Son is hated, domina. »

« I know. »

« And He finds comfort only in His mission. »

« I know. »

« He does not seek honours, or armies; He does not aspire to kingdoms or riches. But He asserts His rights on souls. »

« I know. »

« Domina... He should hand that girl back to you... But do not be offended if I tell you, she could not perfect her soul for Jesus here. You are better than the others... But around you... there is too much filth of the world. »

« That is true. So? »

« You are a mother... My Son has the feelings of a father for every soul. Would you allow your daughter to be brought up among people who can ruin her?... »

« No. I understand... Well... Say these words to Your Son: "In memory of Faustina, saved in her body, Valeria gives You Aurea that You may save her soul". It is true! We are too corrupt... to assure a saint... Domina, pray for me! » and she withdraws quickly, before Mary can thank her. She withdraws, I would say, weeping...

Mary of Alphaeus is dumbfounded.

« Let us go, Mary... We will leave during the night and tomorrow evening we will be in Nazareth »

« Let us go... She gave her up as if she were a thing... »

« She is a thing to them. To us she is a soul. Come. Look... It is already dawning over there. One can say that there is no nighttime in this month... »

They go along a road which is no longer semi-dark and which opens in front of them, instead of taking the shore. It is a road behind a row of modest houses... When they are half way along it, Judas springs out from a corner, manifestly drunk. A Judas returning from who knows what party, with dishevelled hair,

crumpled clothes, his face beaten.

« Judas! You? In this state? »

Judas does not have time to feign that he does not know Her and he cannot run away... Surprise clears his thoughts and keeps him fixed where he is, immobile.

Mary approaches him, overcoming the repulsion which the sight of the apostle stirs in Her, and She says to him: « Judas, wretched son, what are you doing? Are you not thinking of God? Of your soul? Of your mother? What are you doing, Judas? Why do you want to be a sinner? Look at Me, Judas! You have no right to kill your soul... » and She touches him trying to take his hand.

« Leave me alone. I am a man after all. And... I am free to do what everybody does. Tell Him, Who has sent You to spy on me, that I am not yet all spirit, and I am young! »

« You are not free to ruin yourself, Judas! Have pity on yourself... If you behave like that you will never be a happy spirit... Judas... He did not send Me to spy on you. He prays for you. Only that, and I pray with Him. In the name of your mother... »

« Leave me alone » says Judas rudely. Then realising that he has been rude, he rectifies himself: « I do not deserve Your pity... Goodbye... » and he runs away...

« What a demon!... I will tell Jesus » exclaims Mary of Alphaeus. « My Judas is right! »

« You will not say anything to anybody. You will pray for him. Yes... »

« Are You weeping? Weeping for him? Oh!... »

« I am weeping... I was happy having saved Aurea... I am now weeping because Judas is a sinner. But to Jesus, Who is distressed, we will take only the good news. And we will snatch the sinner from Satan by penance and prayers... As if he were our son, Mary! As if he were our son!... You are a mother, too, and you know... For that unhappy mother, for this soul of a sinner, for our Jesus... »

« Yes, I will pray... But I do not think that he deserves it... »

« Mary, do not say that!... »

« I will not say it... But it is so. Are we not going to Johanna's? »

« No. We will come back soon, with Jesus... »

### **437. Aurea Does the Will of God.**

20th May 1946.

The Virgin is very tired when She sets foot again in Her little house. But She is very happy. And She looks at once for Her Jesus, Who is still working, in the last light of the dying day, at the stone oven door, which He is repairing. Simon opens the door to Her, and after greeting Her, he wisely withdraws into the workshop. I do not see Thomas. Perhaps he is out.

Jesus lays down His tools as soon as He sees His Mother, and goes towards Her cleaning His greasy hands (He is oiling hinges and latches to make them run smoothly) on His apron. Their reciprocal smiles seem to brighten up the kitchen garden where it is growing dark.

« Peace to You, Mother. »

« Peace to You, Son. »

« How tired You are! You have not rested... »

« I did, from dawn to sunset in Joseph's house... But if it had not been so warm, I would have left at once to come and tell You that Aurea is Yours. »

« Yes?! » The joyful surprise makes Jesus' face look even younger. It seems the face of a man about twenty years old, and as joy rids Him of the gravity which is generally on His face and in His gestures, He resembles even more His Mother, Who is always such a serene girl in Her deportment and looks.

« Yes, Jesus. And I achieved that without any effort. The lady agreed at once. She was moved admitting that she and her friends are too corrupt to educate a creature for God. Such a humble, sincere, true avowal! It is not easy to find people who admit they are faulty without being forced to do so. »

« No, it is not. Many in Israel are not capable. They are beautiful souls buried under a crust of filth. But when the filth falls off... »

« Will that happen, Son? »

« I am sure it will. They tend instinctively to Good. They will end up by adhering to it. What did she say? »

« Oh! Only a-few words... We understood each other at once. But we had better have Aurea here at once. I want to tell her this, but only if You wish so, Son. »

« Yes, Mother. We will send Simon » and in a loud voice He calls Simon who comes immediately.

« Simon, go to Simon of Alphaeus' house and tell him that My Mother is back, then come here with the girl and Thomas, who must be there finishing the little job which Salome asked him to do. »

Simon bows and goes away at once.

« Tell Me, Mother... Your journey... your conversation... Poor Mother, how tired You are because of Me! »

« Oh! no, Jesus! It is no trouble when You are happy... » and Mary tells Him about Her journey and Mary of Alphaeus' fears, their rest in the house of the boatman, the meeting with Valeria, and She concludes: « I preferred to see her at that time, since Heaven allowed it. She was freer, I was freer, and Mary of Clopas was comforted sooner, because she was terrified at the idea of two women being all alone in Tiberias and only her love for You' and the thought of serving You overcame her terror... » and Mary smiles

remembering Her sister-in-law's anxiety...

And Jesus smiles saying: « Poor woman! She is the true woman of Israel, the ancient woman, reserved, wholly devoted to her family, the strong woman according to Proverbs. But in the new Religion women will not be strong only at home... Many will exceed Judith and Jael, being gifted with the same heroism as the mother of the Maccabees... And our Mary will be such. But for the time being... she is what she is... Did You see Johanna? »

Mary smiles no longer. She is perhaps afraid of a question about Judas. And She replies quickly: « I did not want to cause more worries to Mary. We remained in the house until half the time between the ninth hour and evening, resting, and then we left... I thought that we shall soon be seeing her on the lake... »

« You did the right thing. You have given Me proof of the feeling of the Roman ladies with regard to Me. If Johanna had intervened, we could have thought that they were yielding to their friend. We will now wait until the Sabbath and if Myrtha does not come we will go to her with Aurea. »

« Son, I would like to stay here... »

« I can see that You are very tired. »

« No, not because of that... I think that Judas may come here... As it is right that someone should always be in Capernaum to wait for him and give him a friendly welcome, it is equally right that someone should be here to receive him with love. »

« Thank You, Mother. You are the only one who understands what can still save him... »

They both sigh thinking of the disciple who causes grief...

Simon and Thomas come back with Aurea who runs towards Mary. Jesus leaves her with His Mother and goes into the house with His apostles.

« You have prayed very much, My daughter, and the good God has listened to you... » begins Mary.

But the girl interrupts Her with a cry of joy: « I am staying with You! » and she throws her arms round the Virgin's neck kissing Her.

Mary returns the kiss and holding Aurea in Her arms all the time She says: « When one does a great favour, it is necessary to reciprocate it, is that right? »

« Oh! Yes! And I will repay You with so much love. »

« Yes, My dear. But above Me there is God. It is He Who did you this great favour, this immeasurable grace of receiving you among the members of His people and making you a disciple of the Master Saviour. I have been but the instrument of the grace, but He, the Most High, granted the grace. What will you, therefore, give the Most High to tell Him that you thank Him? »

« Well... I don't know... Tell me, Mother... »

« Love, that is certain. But love, to be really such, is to be united to sacrifice, because a thing has more value if it costs, has it not? »

« Yes, Mother. »

« Then, I would say that, with the same joy with which you shouted: "I am staying with You!", you should shout: "Yes, o Lord" when I, His poor servant, tell you the will of the Lord concerning you. »

« Tell me, Mother » says Aurea whose countenance becomes grave.

« The will of God entrusts you to two good mothers, Naomi and Myrtha... »

Two big tears shine in the clear eyes of the girl, and stream down her rosy cheeks.

« They are good women. They are dear to Jesus and to Me. Jesus saved the son of one of them, I suckled the baby of the other one. And you have seen that they are good... »

« Yes... but I was hoping to stay with You... »

« My daughter, it is not possible to have everything! You see that I am not always with My Jesus. I have given Him to you all, and I am far, so far from Him, when He goes about Palestine preaching, curing and saving girls... »

« That is true... »

« If I had wanted Him all for Myself, you would not have been saved... If I had wanted Him all for Myself, your souls would not be saved. Consider how great is My sacrifice. I am giving you a Son to be sacrificed for your souls. In any case, you and I will always be united, because women disciples are and will always be united around Christ, forming a large family united by our love for Him. »

« That is true. And then... I will come here again, will I not? And we will meet again? »

« Certainly. As long as God wants... »

« And You will always pray for me... »

« And I will always pray for you. »

« And when we are together, will You still teach me? »

« Yes, My dear... »

« Ah! I wanted to become like You. Will I ever be able? To know, in order to be good... »

« Naomi is the mother of a head of a synagogue and a disciple of the Lord. Myrtha is the mother of a son who deserved the grace of a miracle and is a good disciple. And the two women are good and wise, besides being so full of love. »

« Can You assure me? »

« Yes, My daughter. »

« Then... bless me and may the will of the Lord be done... as Jesus, prayer says. I have said it so many times... It is only right that now I should do what I said to obtain the grace of not going

any more among the Romans... »

« You are a good girl. And God will always help you. Come, let us go and tell Jesus that the youngest woman disciple knows how to do the will of God... » and holding her by the hand Mary goes back into the house with the girl.

#### **438. Another Sabbath at Nazareth.**

21st May 1946.

Another Sabbath at Nazareth. That is, another beginning of a Sabbath, because Myrtha and Naomi arrive with young Abel, just when the sunset of Friday is beginning. They dismount from their little donkeys, which Abel takes away, obviously to a stable, probably to that of the two friendly ass-drivers of Nazareth, who have become disciples. The women go in through the workshop door, which has been left open to ventilate the large room, where up to a short time before, the heat of the coarse fireplace has joined the intense summer heat.

Thomas is putting away his tools, Simon is sweeping the sawdust, while Jesus is cleaning pots of glue and paint.

« Peace to You, Master, and to you, disciples greet the two women, bowing low as soon as they enter and then, after walking across the workshop, prostrating themselves at Jesus' feet.

« Peace to you. You are very faithful, to come in this heat! »

« Oh! nothing! One feels so well here, that one forgets everything. Where is Your Mother? »

« She is in there, finishing a dress for Aurea. You may go in. »

The two women walk away with their knapsacks and one can hear their clear voices, which are rather deep, blend with the shrill rather strident voice of Aurea and with the silvery voice of Mary.

« They will be happy now! » says Thomas.

« Yes. They are good women » replies Jesus.

« Master, Myrtha has not only kept the son she had, but she got another child. And in little more than one year... » says the Zealot.

« Yes! In little more than one year! It is already over a year since Mary of Lazarus was converted. How time flies! It seems yesterday... How many things last year! The lovely retreat before the election! Then John of Endor! Then Marjiam! Then Daniel of Nain, then Mary of Lazarus and then Syntyche... But where is Syntyche? I often think about her and I cannot understand why... » Thomas stops speaking to himself, because Jesus and Simon do not reply to him, on the contrary they go out into the kitchen garden to wash themselves and then join the women disciples.

And we begin to see again... Abel of Bethlehem in Galilee comes back and finds Thomas who is still pensive, in front of the place where he generally works, moving, lost in thought, his tiny

masterpieces in gold-work.

« Have you found work? » asks the disciple bending over the tiny objects.

« Oh! I have made all the women in Nazareth happy. I would never have thought that there were so many buckles, bracelets, necklaces and lilies to be repaired. I had to ask Matthew to bring me some metal from Tiberias. I have more customers... ha! ha! (he laughs happily) than my father has. It is true that I do not ask for money... »

« You lose everything? »

« No. I charge only the value of the metal. My work is a present. »

« You are generous. »

« No. I am wise. I am not idle. I set an example of industriousness and detachment from-money and... I preach... Be quiet! I think that I have preached more by doing so, without telling a parable, without saying a word in the synagogue, than I would have done if I had spoken incessantly. And then... I do a bit of training. I have promised myself to propagate our faith with my work when I will have to go and preach Jesus among the infidels. And I am training myself. »

« You are wise both as a goldsmith and as an apostle. »

« I strive to be so for Jesus' sake. So you have acquired a sister. Treat her well, you know? She is like a little dove in its nest. I am telling you, because in my trade I am accustomed to dealing with women. She is a candid dove who was scared to death by a hawk, and who is looking for motherly and brotherly wings to defend her. If your mother had not wanted her, I would have asked to have her for my twin sister. One child more, one less! My sister is so good, you know? »

« Also my mother. She lost a little daughter when she remained a widow. Perhaps her milk had gone bad, grieved as she was over the death of her husband... I can hardly remember my little sister... and perhaps I would not remember her at all if my mother did not mourn her death so often, and if every poor girl in Bethlehem were not entitled to some food and clothing in our house, in memory of the dead baby... But as I was brought up in the company of my mother only, I have ended up by loving little girls very much myself... I realise that this one is not a little girl... but I will consider her such,, because of her heart, if she is as my mother, Naomi and you say... »

« You can be sure. Let us go into the other room. »

In the other room, that is, in the dining room, are the women, Jesus and the Zealot. And Myrtha, who came full of hope, is winning over Aurea by fitting for her a linen dress which she made for the girl.

« It fits you really well » she say's taking it off her and caressing

her while she adjusts her dress which had become crumpled when putting on the new one « It really fits well. And everything will be all right. You will see, my dear daughter... Oh! here is my Abel. Come here, son. Here is Aurea. She will be a member of our family now, you know? »

« I know, mother, and I am happy with you. » He looks at the girl... he studies her... his dark eyes stare at and get lost in her large pale blue ones. He is satisfied with his examination. He smiles at her. He says to her: « We will love each other in the Lord Who saved us and we will love Him and have Him loved. And I will be a brother to you in spirit and in affection. I promise it in the presence of the Master and of my mother » and with a beautiful limpid smile of a pure youth, well advanced in high spirituality, he holds out his strong tanned hand to her.

Aurea hesitates and then, blushing, she puts her left hand into the right hand offered to her and says: « We will do that. In the Lord. »

The adults smile...

« One can enter here without knocking at the doors... »

« Here is Simon of Jonah! This time he could not resist temptation... » says Thomas laughing, while he runs out.

« Yes! I did not resist... Peace to You, Master! » He kisses Jesus and is kissed by Him. « Who can resist? » He sees Mary and bows greetings, he then resumes: « But, to satisfy our consciences, we came by Tiberias and we looked for Judas. Because we are all here, eh?! The others are coming. Including Marjiam. So I was saying that we came by Tiberias. H'm! Yes! to look for Judas in the event that... he should think of coming to Capernaum, at least on the fourth Sabbath It would not be nice if we were all away... And we found him yes! Nay, Isaac found him, as he had gone to see Jonathan... Because Isaac ended up by coming to Capernaum waiting for You with I don't know how many more, who have remained there to become more learned under the good guidance of Hermas and Stephen, of your son, Naomi, and of John, the priest... But Isaac came with us, because he, too, will die if he does not see You... Poor Isaac! he was not made welcome by Judas. But Isaac, during his long sickness, must have destroyed all feelings of impatience, grudge and anger... He never reacts! Even if they box his ears, he smiles... What a peaceful man! Well. He said to us: "I saw Judas. He is not coming. Do not insist". I understood. I asked him: "Did he answer you insolently? Tell me. I am the chief and I must know Oh! no" he replied. "He did not answer insolently, but his insolence did. He is to be pitied..." Well, let us pity him... Well, we are here. And happy to... Here are the others... »

And with the others there are Judas and James of Alphaeus with their mother and the disciples of Nazareth: Aser, Ishmael and

Simon of Alphaeus, and, a rarity, also Joseph of Alphaeus,

They unburden themselves of their bags. Nathanael has brought some apples and Philip a basketfull of grapes as golden as Aurea's hair. Peter and Zebedee's sons some pickled fish. Matthew, who has no home cared for by women and thus has nothing good, has brought a jar full of earth with inside it a slender trunk, which judging by its foliage, I would say is a lemon or orange-tree or another citrus-tree and he explains: « It's a rarity... Only who goes to Cyrene can get them, and I know a man who was at Cyrene, one of the revenue authorities like me once. He has now retired at Ippo. I went to him to get the plant because it must be planted out at the new moon. The fruit is beautiful and good, its flower is sweet-smelling and looks like a waxen star, a star like Your name... Here » and he offers the plant to Mary.

« But what a trouble for you, Matthew, all this weight! I am grateful to you. My garden is becoming more and more beautiful, thanks to you all. Porphirea's camphor, Johanna's roses, you rare plant, Matthew, the other flower plants brought by Judas of Kerioth... How many beautiful things, how kind you all are to Jesus' Mother! »

All the apostles are moved; they only cast sidelong glances at each other when Mary mentions Judas' name.

« Yes. They love You. But we love You, too » says gravely and stiffly Joseph of Alphaeus.

« Of course! You are the dear children of My dear relative Alphaeus and of Mary, who is so good. And You love Me. It is natural. We are relatives... These instead are not our blood, and yet they are like sons to Me, like brothers to Jesus, as they love Him so much and follow Him... »

Joseph takes the hint immediately, he clears his throat, searching for words... He finds them... He says: « Of course! But if I am not yet with them, it is because I think also of the consequences for Him, for You... and... and... Well! I love You, too, You especially, poor woman, as You are left all by Yourself too long... And I have come to tell Jesus that I am glad that He has remembered also the needs of His Mother and has done what was necessary here... » and, satisfied with being the « head » of the kindred and thus in a position to praise and admonish, he deigns to commend Jesus for all the work of carpentry, painting and other jobs done in that month: « That is how it should be done! One can now see that this woman has a son! And I am happy to be able to say that I have found again My wise Jesus of Joseph. Bravo! »

And the wise Jesus of Joseph, the most wise Divine Word humiliated in our flesh, meek and humble, accepts the praises mixed with... the authoritative advice of His cousin Joseph, smiling so kindly, that it helps to check any untimely reaction of the apostles

in His favour.

And Joseph, having set off, seeing that they listen to him, does not stop, but he continues: « I do hope that from now on Nazareth will no longer see a poor woman forlorn, while Her Son unwisely leaves the trodden path to beat paths which are uncertain, both with regard to their ends and their consequences. I will speak to my friends, to the head of the synagogue... We will forgive You... Oh! Nazareth will be happy to open out her arms to You, as to a son who has come back... as an example of virtue to all the citizens. Tomorrow I will take You to the synagogue myself and... »

Jesus raises His hand imposing silence and calmly but very resolutely, He says: « I will certainly come to the synagogue, as a believer, exactly as I went there on the other Sabbaths. But it is not necessary for you to plead in My favour. Because one hour after sunset I will set out again to evangelize, as it is My duty to obey the Most High. »

A bad let-down for Joseph!... A very bad one!... All his good naturedness is shattered and his hostile intolerance comes to light again: « All right! But do not look for me in the hour of need. I have done my duty and Your certain misfortunes will not fall on me. Goodbye. I am one too many here because I cannot understand you, and you cannot understand me. I am going away, with no grudge, but very sad... May the Lord protect You as He protects all those who... are simple-minded, incomplete... Goodbye, Mary! Take heart, poor Mother! »

« Goodbye, Joseph. But I must take heart for you, not for Him. Because you are the one who is out of the path of God and you grieve Me » says Mary calmly but sure of Herself.

« You are a fool, that's what you are! And if you were not the head of the family I would give you a thrashing, as you are a creature of my blood but not of my spirit... » shouts Mary of Alphaeus. And she would have said more, but Mary implores her: « Be quiet! For My sake. »

« I'll be quiet. Yes. But... tell me if I have to see a rascal like him among my sons!... »

The rascal in the meantime has gone away, while good Mary of Alphaeus unburdens her soul with regard to that stubborn son. And she ends giving vent to her feelings by bursting into tears, and sobbing she expresses her greatest pain: « And I will not have him with me in Heaven, I will not have him! I will see him in torments! Oh! Jesus! It's for You to work the miracle! »

« Yes, Mary! Do not weep! His hour will come, too. The eleventh perhaps. But it will come. I can assure you. Do not weep... » says Jesus comforting her... And when her weeping is over He says to the apostles and disciples: « Let us go into the olive grove while the women prepare their things. We will speak among ourselves. »

### **439. The Departure from Nazareth and the Journey towards Bethlehem in Galilee.**

22nd May 1946.

It is the evening of the true Sabbath and life begins again after the Sabbatical rest. Here, in the little house in Nazareth, it begins, after the rest, with the preparations for departure. Provisions are packed, clothes are crammed in knapsacks, the straps of which are fastened tightly, sandals are examined to ensure that the leather laces and buckles are in good condition, and the little donkeys are watered and fed near the hedge of the kitchen garden... and greetings and tears shed among smiles and blessings, and promises to meet again soon... And the unexpected offer of Thomas to Mary: a buckle, we could call it a brooch, to keep a dress closed at the neck. It is made of three thin, airy, perfect stems of lily of the valley, enclosed in two leaves, so like real ones, as the metal has been wrought by a master-hand.

« I know, Mary, that You will never wear it, but please accept it just the same. I have been anxious to make it since the day when my Lord spoke of You comparing You with the lilies of the valley... I have done nothing for Your house... but I made this for You, so that the praise of Your Son may be expressed in a symbol for You Who deserve it more than any other woman. And if I have not been able to give the stem the softness of a living one and the sweet scent of the flower, may my sincere respectful love for You soften it like a caress and put on it the scent of my devotion for You, Mother of my Lord. »

« Oh! Thomas! It is true. I never wear jewels, as they seem vain things to Me. But this one is not so. This is love of My Jesus and of His apostle, and it is dear to Me. I will look at it every day and think of good Thomas who loves his Master so much, that he remembers not only His Doctrine, but also His most humble words about the most humble thing and the most humble insignificant people. Thank you, Thomas. Not for its value, but for your love, thanks! »

Everybody admires the perfect work and Thomas, beaming with joy, pulls out a smaller piece of work: three tiny jasmine stars with a tiny leaf bound in a thin circle, and gives it to Aurea. « Because you did not behave coquettishly to have it, because you were here when the jasmine bloomed, and so that these little stars may remind you of our Stan But mind! With your virtues you must Perfume flowers and be a flower yourself, a candid, beautiful pure flower scenting towards Heaven. If you do not do that, I will take my brooch back. Come on, do not weep... everything passes... and we will soon come back to Mary's or She will come to us... and... » But Thomas, seeing that Aurea is shedding more and more tears, feels that it is better not to continue and he goes out, mortified,

saying to Peter: «If I had known that... it was going to make her weep more, I would not have given it to her... I made that brooch just to comfort her in this hour... I guessed wrongly... »

And Peter, in the confusion of the moment, does not control himself and says: « It is always like that when parting... You should have seen Syntyche... » and he realises that he has spoken, he wants to correct himself, he becomes purple... but... it is done...

Thomas understands, and kindly throws his arm round Peter's neck saying: « Don't be distressed, Peter. I know how to be quiet. And I understand why you have not said anything... Because of Judas of Simon. On the God of our fathers I swear to you that what I have learned involuntarily is forgotten. Do not be upset, Simon!... »

« It's because the Master did not want... »

« He certainly had good reasons for that. I don't take offence. »

« I know. But what will He say? »

« Nothing, because He will not know. You can trust me. »

« Ah! No! I will not resort to subterfuges with the Master. I made a mistake. I deserve to be reproached. And at once. I will not have peace unless I confess my error to Him. Thomas, be good. Go and call Him... I am going into the workshop. Go, and come back with Him. I am too upset to go and the others would notice me. »

Thomas looks at him with compassion full of admiration and goes back into the house to call Jesus: « Master, please come here for a moment. I have something to tell You. »

Jesus, Who was saying goodbye to Mary of Alphaeus, follows him at once. « What do you want? » He asks while walking beside him.

« I, nothing. Simon wants to speak to You. There he is... »

« Simon! What is the matter, why are you so upset? »

Peter throws himself at Jesus' feet moaning: « I have sinned! Absolve me! »

« Sinned? How? You were there with us, happy and peaceful... »

« Ah! Master, I disobeyed You. I told Thomas about Syntyche... I was upset because of the tears and he was more upset than I was; he thought that he had increased them... to comfort him I said: "It is always like that when parting... If you had seen Syntyche..." and he understood!... » Peter raises his troubled face, he looks mortified and desolate.

« Praised be God, My Simon! I thought you had done something much graver than that. And your sincerity cancels even that. You spoke without malice, you spoke to one of your companions. Thomas is good and will not divulge the news... »

« He swore it to me, in fact... But see? Now I am afraid that I am too foolish and that I cannot keep a secret. »

« You have kept it so far. »

« Yes, but just consider! Never one word to Philip and Nathanael! And now... »

« Come on, stand up! Man is always imperfect. But when he is so without malice, he commits no sin. Be careful, but do not distress yourself any more. Your Jesus can but kiss you. Thomas, come here. » Thomas approaches Him. « You have certainly understood the reasons for being silent. »

« Yes, Master. And I swore to respect them as far as I am concerned and capable. I have already told Simon... »

« The foolish Simon » says Peter with a sigh.

« No, my friend. You have edified me through your perfect humility and sincerity. You have taught me a great lesson, which I will never forget. For prudential reasons I shall not be able to make it known, and that grieves me, because only a few among us are or would be as just as you have been... But they are calling us! Let us go. »

Many in fact are already in the street and the three women Naomi, Myrtha and Aurea - have already mounted their little donkeys. Mary and Her sister-in-law are near Aurea, and they kiss her again, and when they see Jesus approaching, they kiss the two women disciples and they greet Jesus last and are blessed by Him, before He sets out...

And the Blessed Virgin and Mary of Clopas go back into the house... where, in remembrance of what was there a short while before, there are chairs out of place, kitchenware lying about... the disorder which takes place at every departure.

Mary, lost in thought, caresses the little loom on which She taught Aurea to work... Her eyes are shining with tears She has restrained.

« You are suffering, Mary! » says Mary of Clopas who is weeping without any effort to hold back her tears. « You had grown fond of her!... They come here... then they go away... and we suffer... »

« It is our life of women disciples. You heard what Jesus said today: "That is what you will do in future; you will be hospitable, supernaturally hospitable, seeing in every creature a brotherly soul, considering yourselves pilgrims and welcoming your guests as Pilgrims. You will give them help, comfort, advice, and then you will let your brothers go to their destiny, without holding them back with jealous love, sure as you are that you will meet them after your death. Persecutions will come and many will leave you to go towards martyrdom. Do not be cowardly and do not advise cowardice to anybody. Remain in your empty house praying to support the courage of martyrs, unperturbed to fortify the weaker ones, strong in order to be ready to imitate heroes. Get accustomed to separations, to heroism, to the apostolate of brotherly charity, as from now... And we do so. Suffering... certainly! We are creatures made of flesh... But the spirit rejoices with a supernatural happiness which is to do the will of the Lord and cooperate to His glory. On the other hand... I am the Mother of everybody... and I must not

be the Mother of one only. I am not even the Mother of Jesus exclusively... You see how I let Him go away without holding Him back... I would like to be with Him, that is true. But He deems that I must stay here until He will say: "Come". And I am staying. His days of rest here? My joys of a mother. My peregrinations with Him? My joys of a disciple. My solitude here? My joys of a believer who does the will of Her Lord. »

« That Lord, Mary, is Your Son... »

« Yes. But He is still My Lord... Are you staying with Me, Mary? »

« Yes, if You will allow me... My house is so sad during the first hours, when my sons go away!... Tomorrow it will be different... And this time, I would weep even more... »

« Why, Mary? »

« Because I have been weeping my heart out since yesterday... I am like a cistern... A cistern in the rainy season. »

« But why, My dear? »

« Because of Joseph... yesterday... Oh! I don't know whether I should go and reprimand him severely, because after all he is my son, because I carried him in my womb and I suckled him at my breast and no first-born son is above his mother,... or whether I should not speak any more to that rascal who was born of me and offends my Jesus and You and... »

« You will do nothing of the kind. You will always be his "mother". The mother who pities her stubborn, sick, perverted son and soothes him with her kindness, and leads him to God with prayers and patience... Cheer up, do not weep!... Come with Me. We will pray for him in My room, and for those who are travelling, for the girl, that she may not suffer too much and she may grow in holiness... Come, Mary » and She takes her away...

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The pilgrims in the meantime are going their way southwestwards. The women are in front, on their donkeys, which, being well fed and rested, are trotting lively, compelling Marjiam and Abel, who for prudential motives are at either side of Aurea, as she is in the saddle for the first time, to proceed almost at a running pace. But although it is tiring, it helps to take the girl's mind off the sorrowful separation from Mary. Now and again, to let the two young men take breath, Myrtha reins in her donkey and makes a halt. And she resumes going only when the apostolic group joins them. And during such pauses, Aurea becomes sad again, as she is not distracted by the adventures of horseback riding...

Marjiam, who is experienced in the misfortunes of a little orphan taken in, out of charity, by an adoptive mother after he had known Mary, comforts her telling her how one becomes attached to the adoptive mother « exactly as if she were one's own mother »,

and mentions his own impressions and relates how happy are Mary and Matthias with Johanna, and Anastasica with Eliza.

Aurea listens to the stories, and when Marjiam concludes by saying: « Believe me, the women disciples are all good, and Jesus knows to whom we poor wretches should be entrusted », and Abel corroborates saying: « And you must trust my mother who is so happy to have you and has prayed so much during these days to have you from God », Aurea replies: « I believe it. And I love her... But Mary is Mary... and you must bear with me... »

« Yes. But we are sorry to see you sad... »

« Oh! but I am not so sad as I was in the house of the Roman or during the first hours after my liberation... I am only... lost. For years I have never received a caress... Only Mary caressed me after I had been subjected to masters for many years... »

« My darling! But I am here to caress you! I will be another Mary for you. Come here, near me... If you were a little girl, I would take you in the saddle with me, as I used to do with my Abel when he was a little boy... But you are already a woman... » says Myrtha approaching her and taking her by the hand. « You are my little woman and I will teach you many things, and when Abel goes away evangelizing, you and I will receive pilgrims as the Lord says, and we will do much good in His Name. You are young and you will help me... »

« But look at that light over there, beyond that hill! » exclaims James of Zebedee, who has come up to the women.

« Is it a wood on fire? »

« Or a village? »

« Let us run up there and see... »

No one is tired any longer, because curiosity overwhelms all sensations. Jesus follows them benevolently, leaving the road to take a path which climbs up a hillock. They soon reach the top...

But it is neither a wood nor a village which is on fire, but a large hollow moor all covered with heather, lying between two hills. The heather, parched by the summer heat, has caught fire perhaps because of a spark which escaped the woodmen working higher up cutting trees, and is now burning: a carpet of low but bright flames which move around seeking new heather to bum, after having consumed where they had been burning previously. The woodcutters try to fight the fire by striking the flames. But in vain. They are too few and if they work on one side, the fire spreads on another.

« If it reaches the wood, it will be a disaster. There are resin trees there » says Philip.

Jesus, with folded arms, standing on the extreme edge of the hillock, looks and smiles... thinking...

The contrast between the white moonlight to the east and the red glow of the flames to the west, is strong and the backs of the

onlookers are white in the moon-beams, whereas their faces are red in the reverberation of the flames. And the flames spread unceasingly, like water which rises, overflows and floods... The fire is now only a few metres from the wood and it is already lighting up the piles of wood placed at its borders, while the light, which is becoming brighter and brighter, shows the little houses of a village on the top of the hill where the fire is climbing.

« Poor people! They will lose everything! » say many. And they look at Jesus, Who is smiling, but does not speak...

Then... He unfolds His arms and cries: « Stop! Die down! I want it. »

And suddenly, as if a huge bank of earth had fallen to suffocate the flames, the fire goes out prodigiously, the lively nimble dance of the flames changes into red flameless embers, then the red becomes violet, grey-red... an occasional flash quivers among the ashes... and then only the silvery moonlight shines on the forests.

In the clear light the woodcutters are seen while they gather gesticulating, looking around, above... for the angel of the miracle...

« Let us go down. I will work on those souls through the unforeseen opportunity given to Me and we will stop in the village instead of resting in the town. We will leave at dawn. They will certainly have room for the women. The wood is quite enough for us » says Jesus and He goes down quickly followed by the others.

« But why were You laughing? You looked very happy! » asks Peter.

« You will find out from My words. »

They are already where the fallow ground is covered with ashes still warm and creaking under their sandals. They go across it. When they are in the middle, where the moon shines fully, they are seen by the woodcutters.

« Oh! I told you! He is the only one who could do that! Let us run and venerate Him » shouts a woodman and he does so by throwing himself on the ashes at Jesus' feet.

« What makes you think that I could do it? »

« Because only the Messiah can do that. »

« And how do you know that I am the Messiah? Do you know Me, perhaps? »

« No. But only the Good One Who loves the poor can have had pity, and only the Holy One of God can have given an order to the fire and be obeyed. Blessed be the Most High Who sent us His Messiah! And blessed be the Messiah Who came in time to save our homes! »

« You ought to be more anxious to save your souls. »

« We save them by believing in You and endeavouring to do what You teach. But You realise, Lord, that the distress of being deprived of everything can weaken our already weak souls... and lead us to

doubt Providence- »

« Who informed you of Me? »

« Some of Your disciples... Here are our families... We had them woken because we were afraid that the whole hill would catch fire... Come here... Then we sent another man to inform them that a miracle had been worked and to come and see. Here they are, Lord. Mine. Jacob's, this one is Jonathan's, this one Mark's, this is the family of my brother Tobias, this one is of my brother-in-law Melkia, this is Philip's and this is Eleazar's. The others are the families of the shepherds who are now at the pastures up in the high mountains... »

It is a group of about two hundred and fifty people at most, including the little ones, sucking infants or babies just weaned, whimpering half asleep, or sleeping unaware of the danger in which they had been.

« Peace to you all. The angel of God has saved you. Let us praise the Lord together. »

« You saved us! You are always present where faithful people believe in You! » say many women... And the men nod solemnly.

« Yes. Providence is present where there is faith in Me. But one must act with constant circumspection both in spiritual matters and in material ones. What set fire to the moor? Probably a spark from one of your fires or a little branch which one of the boys wanted to light on the fire to play with it, waving it and throwing it down the slope with the thoughtlessness of his age. It is in fact pleasant to see an arrow of fire furrow the air at dusk. But you can see what an imprudent act may cause! It can cause serious damage. A spark or a little branch which fell on the dry heather was enough to set a valley on fire, and if the Eternal Father had not sent Me, the whole wood would have become a bonfire, which in the grip of fire would have consumed your goods and your lives.

The same applies to matters of the spirit. You must pay continual prudent attention to ensure that no arrow of fire or spark may cling to your faith and destroy it, after smouldering unnoticed in your hearts, by means of arson wanted by those who hate Me and committed to deprive Me of believers. Since the fire was stopped here in time, from malefic it became beneficent, destroying the useless heath which you allowed to flourish in the valley, and preparing, by such destruction and the fertilizing ashes, a ground which you can exploit with useful cultivations, if you are willing to do so. But with hearts it is quite a different matter! When all the Good has been destroyed, nothing but bramble for the fodder of demons will grow in them. Remember that and be vigilant against My enemies' insinuations, which will be thrown into your hearts like infernal sparks. Be ready to fight the fire then. And what is that fight? A stronger and stronger Faith, a firm

will to belong to God. It means to belong to a holy Fire. Because fire does not consume fire. Now, if you are fire of love for the true God, the fire of hatred against God will not be able to harm you. The Fire of love defeats every other fire. My Doctrine is love and those who accept it enter the Fire of Charity and cannot be tortured by the fire of the Demon.

From the top of that hill, while I was watching the heather burning and I heard the words of your souls to the Lord their God, more than I noticed your actions aiming at putting out the flames, I was smiling. And one of My apostles asked Me: "Why are You smiling?". I promised him: "I will tell you when speaking to those who have been saved". And I am doing that now. I was smiling thinking that as the flames spread among the heather of the valley, in vain restrained by your efforts, so My Doctrine will spread throughout the world, persecuted in vain by those who reject Light. And it will be light. It will be purification. It will be beneficent. How many little snakes have perished among these ashes, and other harmful insects with them! You were afraid to come to the valley, because there were too many asps in it. Well, not even one has survived. Likewise the world will be freed of many heresies, of many sins, of many sorrows, when it becomes acquainted with Me and is cleansed by the fire of My Doctrine. Cleansed and freed of harmful vegetation, it will be ready for the seed, and will become rich in holy fruits. That is why I was smiling... In the fire which was advancing, I saw a symbol of the spreading of My Doctrine in the world. Then the love for our neighbour, which is never to be separated from that for the Lord, made Me consider your necessities. And I lowered My thoughts from the contemplation of the interests of God to that of the interests of My brothers, and I stopped the fire, so that while rejoicing, you might praise the Lord. You can thus see that My thought rose to God, it descended from Him made more powerful, because union with God always increases our powers, and rose, once again, to God with yours. Thus, through charity, I did at the same time promote the interests of the Father and of My brothers. Do likewise in your future lives.

And now I ask you to give shelter to these women for the night. The moon is setting and the fire has delayed our journey. We cannot therefore proceed to the next town. »

« Come! Come all of you! There is room for everybody. We might have been homeless! Our homes are yours. Our houses are poor, but clean. Come and they will be blessed » they all shout.

And they slowly climb the rather steep slope as far as the little village, which miraculously escaped destruction, then each pilgrim disappears with his host...

#### **440. Judas of Kerieth with the Blessed Virgin at Nazareth.**

23rd May 1946.

Dawn is breaking and the eastern sky is just beginning to redden, when Judas of Kerieth knocks at the door of the little house in Nazareth.

On the road there are only peasants, or rather: small landowners of Nazareth, who are going to their vineyards or olive-groves with their working tools and are greatly surprised at seeing the man knock at Mary's door so early in the morning. They speak in low voices to one another.

« He is a disciple » says one replying to the remarks of another. « He is certainly looking for Jesus of Joseph. »

« It's no use. He went away yesterday evening. I saw Him myself. I will tell him... » says another man.

« Never mind! It's Judas of Kerieth. I don't like him. Perhaps we are guilty of much wrong doing with regard to Jesus and we are making a mistake. But he, that man over there, did much harm to us here last year... We might have been converted. But he... »

« What? How do you know? »

« I was present one evening in the house of the head of the synagogue and I foolishly believed everything at once... Now... that's enough! I think I have sinned and... »

« Perhaps he also realised that he had sinned and... »

They move away and I can hear nothing else.

Judas knocks once again at the little door, to which he has been clinging, his face pressed against the wood, as if he wished to avoid being seen and recognised. But the little door remains closed. Judas makes a gesture of disappointment and he goes away along a path skirting the kitchen garden and he goes to the rear of the house. He casts a glance over the hedge of the quiet garden. Only the doves animate it.

Judas considers what to do. He talks to himself: « Has She perhaps gone away, too? And yet... I would have seen Her. And then! No. I heard Her voice yesterday evening... Perhaps She has gone to sleep at Her sister-in-law's... Ugh! This is as annoying as a bee on one's face, because She will come back with her, and I want to speak to Her alone, without that old woman as a witness. She is gossipy and would raise objections. And I don't want any. And she is as sly as every old wife of the people. She would not accept my excuses and she would point that out to that stupid dove of her sister-in-law... I know I can make a fool of Her... in every way. She is as dull as ditch-water... And I must put right what happened at Tiberias. Because if She speaks... I wonder whether She has mentioned it or has kept quiet? If She has spoken, it is more difficult to put matters right... But She will not have spoken... She confuses virtue with foolishness. Like Mother like Son... And the others are

busy while they are fast asleep. In any case they are right. Why leave them aside if they seem to be wanting... But what do they want after all?... My notions are foggy... I must stop drinking and... Of course! But money is a temptation, and I am like a colt which has been kept inside too long. Two years, I say! Even longer! Two years of all kinds of abstinence... But in the meantime... What did Helkai say the day before yesterday? Eh! He is not a bad teacher! Certainly! Everything is legal providing we succeed in putting Jesus on the throne. But if He does not want that? But He must certainly consider that if we do not triumph, we will all end up like the followers of Theudas or of Judas the Galilean... Perhaps I ought to part company with them because... well, I do not know whether what they want is right. I don't trust them very much... They have changed too much recently... I would not like to... How dreadful! I to be the means to damage Jesus? No. I will part company. But it is sad to have dreamt of a kingdom and have to go back to what? To nothing... But better nothing than... He always says: "He who will commit the great sin". Hey!? It won't be me, eh! Me? Me? I will sooner drown myself in the lake... I'll go away. It is better for me to go away. I will go to my mother, I will get her to give me some money, because I certainly cannot ask the members of the Sanhedrin to give me the money to go away. They help me because they hope that I will help them to get over their state of uncertainty. Once Jesus is acknowledged as king, we will be settled. The crowds will side with us... Herod... who will bother about him? Neither the Romans nor the people. They all hate him! And... and... But Jesus is quite capable of renouncing the throne as soon as He is proclaimed king. Oh! Well! When Eleazar ben Annas assures me that his father is ready to crown Him king!... Afterwards He cannot remove His sacred character. After all... I am doing what the unfaithful steward of His parable did... I am having resort to my friends on my behalf, that is true, but also on His. So I am making unfair means serve as... Well, no! I must try once again to persuade Him. I am not convinced that I am doing the right thing by resorting to this subterfuge... and... Oh! If I could only convince Him! Because it would be so beautiful! Yes... very! That is the best solution: to tell the Master everything frankly. To implore Him... Providing Mary has not told Him about Tiberias... What did I say I should tell Mary?... Ah! yes! The refusal of the Roman ladies. Cursed be that woman! If I had not gone to her, I would not have met Mary that evening! But who could have imagined that Mary was in Tiberias? And yet I never went out on the day before the Sabbath, on the Sabbath or the day after it, as I did not want to see any of the apostles... What a fool! I could have gone to Hippos, to Gerghesa to find a woman! No! I had to go just there! To Tiberias through which the people of Capernaum must pass to come here...

And all that because of the Roman ladies... I was hoping... No, that is what I must say to excuse myself, but it is not true. There is no sense in saying that to myself, as I know why I went: to meet some of the powerful people in Israel and to have a good time, since I had plenty money... But... how quickly money goes. I will soon have none left... Ha! Ha! I will invent some story for Helkai and his partners and they will give me some more... »

« O Judas! Have you gone mad? I have been watching you for some time from the top of this olive-tree. You are gesticulating, speaking by yourself... Has the sun of the month of Tammuz harmed you? » shouts Alphaeus of Sarah leaning out of the forked branches of a huge olive-tree, about thirty metres away from the spot where Judas is standing.

Judas starts, looks round, sees him and moans: « May death rake you! Cursed village of spies! » But smiling affably he shouts: « No. But I am worried because Mary is not opening... Is She perhaps not well? I have knocked several times!... »

« Mary? You can knock as long as you like! She is in the house of a poor old woman who is dying. They sent for Her at the third watch... »

« But I must speak to Her. »

« Wait. I will come down and I will go and tell Her. But do you really need Her? »

« Eh! I should say so! I have been here since sunrise. »

Alphaeus climbs down the tree solicitously and runs away.

« He has seen me, too! And he will certainly come back with that other woman! Everything is going awry? » and he hurls a string of insults at Nazareth, the Nazarenes, Mary of Alphaeus, and even at the Blessed Virgin's charity for the dying woman and at the dying woman herself...

He has not yet finished when the door, which from the diningroom leads into the kitchen garden, is opened and Mary appears looking very pale and sad.

« Judas! », « Mary! » they say simultaneously.

« I will now open the door to you. Alphaeus said to Me only: "Go home. There is someone wanting You" and I ran here, also because the old woman no longer needs Me. She has finished suffering because of a bad son... »

Judas, while Mary is speaking, runs along the path and goes back to the front of the house... Mary opens the door.

« Peace to you, Judas of Kerioth. Come in. »

« Peace to You, Mary. »

Judas is somewhat hesitant. Mary is kind, but serious.

« I knocked so much, at dawn. »

« Yesterday evening a son broke his mother's heart... And they came looking for Jesus. But Jesus is not here. I am saying that to

you, too: Jesus is not here. You came late. »

« I know that He is not here. »

« How do you know? You have just arrived... »

« Mother, I will be frank with You, since You are good: I have been here since yesterday... »

« And why did you not come? Your companions came here every Sabbath, except one... »

« Eh! I know! I went to Capernaum but I did not find them. »

« Do not lie, Judas. You never went to Capernaum. Bartholomew remained there all the time and he never saw you. Bartholomew came here only yesterday. But you were not here yesterday... So... Why are you telling lies, Judas? Do you not know that a lie is the first step towards theft and homicide?... Poor Esther died, killed by grief because of the behaviour of her son. And Samuel, her son, became the shame of Nazareth through little lies, which became bigger and bigger... And from them he passed on to all the rest. Do you, an apostle of the Lord, wish to imitate him? Do you want your mother to die broken-hearted? »

She reproaches him slowly, in a low voice. But Her words bear heavily on him. Judas does not know what to reply. He sits down abruptly, his head in his hands.

Mary watches him. She then says: « Well? Why did you want to see Me? While assisting poor Esther I prayed for your mother... and for you... Because I feel sorry for both of you, and for two different reasons. »

« Then, if you pity me, forgive me. »

« I have never had ill-feelings. »

« What?... Not even because... of that morning at Tiberias?... You know? I was in that state because the evening before the Roman ladies had maltreated me as madman and... as the traitor of the Master. Yes, I admit it. I did the wrong thing in speaking to Claudia. I was mistaken with regard to her. But I do it for a good purpose. I grieved the Master. He has not mentioned it to me, but I am aware that He knows that I spoke. It was certainly Johanna who told Him. Johanna has never liked me and the Roman ladies grieved me... To forget, I drank... »

Mary's expression of compassion is unintentionally ironic, and She says: « Jesus, then, should get drunk every night, considering the grief He supposedly enjoys every day... »

« Did You tell Him? »

« I do not increase the bitterness of the chalice of My Son with the news of fresh defections, falls, sins, snares... I have been and will be silent. »

Judas falls on his knees trying to kiss Mary's hand, but She withdraws, without being rude, but quite decided not to be touched or kissed.

« Thank You, Mother! You are saving me. That is why I came here... and that You might make it easier for me to approach the Master without being reproached or ashamed. »

« To avoid that, all you had to do was to go to Capernaum and then come here with the others. It was very simple. »

« That is true... But the others are not kind, and they had me spied upon in order to reproach and accuse me. »

« Do not give offence to your brothers, Judas. Stop committing sins! You have been spying here, in Nazareth, the fatherland of the Christ, you... »

Judas interrupts Her: « When? Last year? They have distorted my words! But believe me, I... »

« I do not know what you did or said last year. I am referring to yesterday. You have been here since yesterday. You know that Jesus went away. So you have been investigating. But not in the friendly houses of Aser, Ishmael, Alphaeus, or of the brother of Judas and James, or of Mary of Alphaeus, or of any of the few people here who love Jesus. Because if you had done so, they would have come and told Me. Esther's house became crowded with women at dawn, when she died, but none of them had heard of you. They are the best among the women of Nazareth, those who love Me and love Jesus, and they strive to practise His Doctrine notwithstanding the hostility of their husbands, fathers and children. So you made inquiries among those who are enemies of My Jesus. What do you call that? I do not want to know. I tell you this only. Many swords will be plunged into My heart, which will be pierced over and over again, mercilessly, by the men who grieve My Jesus and hate Him. And one of the swords will be yours, and it will never be withdrawn. Because the memory of you, Judas, who do not want to be saved, who are ruining yourself, who are frightening Me, not because I am afraid for Myself, but for your soul, the memory of you will never be forgotten by My heart. Just Simeon pierced my soul with one sword, while I was carrying My Baby, My holy little Lamb, against My heart... You... you are the other sword. The point of your sword is already torturing My heart. But you are not yet satisfied with distressing a poor woman thus... and you are waiting to thrust your sword, like an executioner, right through the heart which has given you nothing but love... But it is foolish of Me to expect pity from you, who have none for your own mother!... On the contrary, now, I tell you! With one blow you will transfix Me and her, o wretched son, whom the prayers of two mothers cannot save!... »

Mary weeps while speaking, but her tears do not fall on Judas' dark-haired head, because he has remained where he fell on his knees, apart from Mary... The holy tears are absorbed by the brick floor. And the scene reminds me of Aglae, on whom, instead,

Mary's tears fell, because she was pressing against Mary in sincere desire of redemption.

« Can you not find one word, Judas? Can you not find within yourself the strength for a good purpose? Oh! Judas! Judas! Tell Me: are you satisfied with your way of living? Examine yourself, Judas. First of all, be humble and sincere with yourself, and then with God, so that you may go to Him, after removing your burden of stones from your heart, and say to Him: "Here I am. For Your sake I got rid of these stones". »

« I haven't... the courage to confess to Jesus. »

« You have not the humility to do it. »

« That is true. Help me... »

« Go to Capernaum and wait for Him, humbly. »

« But You could... »

« I can but tell you to do what My Son always does: to have mercy. I do not teach Jesus, but it is Jesus Who teaches Me, His disciple. »

« You are His Mother. »

« And that concerns My heart. But, by right, He is My Master. Exactly the same as He is for all the other women disciples. »

« You are perfect. »

« He is the Most Perfect One. »

Judas is silent and pensive. He then asks: « Where has the Master gone? »

« To Bethlehem in Galilee. »

« And then? »

« I do not know. »

« Is He coming back here? »

« Yes, He is. »

« When? »

« I do not know. »

« You do not want to tell me! »

« I cannot tell you what I do not know. You have followed Him for two years. Can you say that His itinerary was always certain? How many times did the will of men compel Him to change it? »

« True. I will go away... To Capernaum. »

« The sun is too strong to travel. Stay here. You are a pilgrim like all the others. And He said that the women disciples are to take care of them. »

« My presence is unpleasant to You... »

« The fact that you do not want to be cured is grievous to Me! Only that... Take off your mantle... Where did you sleep? »

« I did not sleep. I waited until dawn as I wanted to see You all alone. »

« Then you must be tired. In the large room there are the little beds which Simon and Thomas used. It is still quiet and cool in

there. Go and sleep while I prepare some food for you. »

Judas goes away without discussion. And Mary, without a rest after sitting up the whole night, goes into the kitchen to light the fire and then into the kitchen garden to get some vegetables. And tears and tears fall silently while She bends over the fireplace arranging the firewood, or when She stoops to pick the vegetables, and while She washes them in the basin and prepares them... And tears fall with the golden grains of corn when She feeds the doves, and they fall on the clothes which She takes out of the wash-tub and hangs out in the sun... The tears of the Mother of God... of the Faultless Mother, Who was not exempt from sorrow and suffered more than any other woman, in order to be the Co-Redeemer...

#### **441. The Death of Marjiam's Grandfather.**

25th May 1946.

Jesus must have left the women because He is with the apostles, Isaac and Marjiam. They are going down the last slopes towards the Esdraelon plain while it is slowly getting darker.

Marjiam is very glad that the Lord is taking him to his dear grandfather. The apostles are not so happy, as they remember the recent incident with Ishmael. But they are gravely silent, in order not to grieve the boy, who rejoices that he has not touched the honey which Porphirea gave him, « because » he says « I was hoping that the Lord would satisfy the desire of my heart by letting me see my grandfather. I do not know why... but for some time he has always been present to my spirit, as if he were calling me. I told Porphirea and she said to me: "It happens to me as well, when Simon is away". But I don't think it is as she says, because it never happened to me before. »

« Because you were a little boy previously. Now you are a man and you ponder more over things » Peter says to him.

« I have also two small round pieces of cheese and some olives. Just what I could bring of my own to my beloved grandfather. Then I have a hemp tunic and another hemp garment. Porphirea wanted to make them for me. But I said to her: "If you love me, make them for the old man". He is always so tattered and torn, so hot wearing clothes of coarse wool!... He will have some relief. »

« And so you are left without any cool clothes, and you are sweating like a sponge wearing woollen ones » Peter says to him.

« Oh! It does not matter! My grandfather went very often without food to give it to me, when I lived in the wood... At last I also can give him something. I wish I could save enough to give him what he needs to redeem himself! »

« How much have you got so far? » asks Andrew.

« Little. I earned one hundred and ten didrachmas with the fish.

But I will soon be selling the lambs and then... If I could do it before it gets very cold!... »

« Will you be keeping him? » Nathanael asks Peter.

« Yes. We shall not be ruined if the poor old man has a morsel of our food... »

« And then... He will be able to do little jobs... He can come to Bethsaida, where we are, is that right, Philip? »

« Of course... We will help you, Simon, and thus make our good Marjiam and the old man happy... »

« Let us hope that Johanan is not there... » says Judas Thaddeus.

« I will go ahead and warn them » says Isaac.

They walk fast in the moonlight... At a certain point Isaac parts from them quickening his step, while the group follows him more slowly. There is dead silence in the plain. Even nightingales are quiet. I

They walk on, until they see two shadows running towards them. « One is certainly Isaac... The other... may be Micah or the steward. One is as tall as the other » says John.

They are now close... very close It is the steward followed by Isaac who looks dismayed.

« Master... Marjiam poor son! Come quickly... Your grandfather, Marjiam, is ill very ill... »

« Ah! Lord!... » shouts the boy sorrowfully.

« Let us go, let us go... Be strong, Marjiam » and Jesus takes his hand and starts almost to run while He says to the apostles: « You can follow us. »

« Yes... But don't make too much noise... Johanan is there » shouts the steward who is already far away.

The poor old man is in Micah's house. Even a fool can understand that he is really dying. He is lying languidly, his eyes closed, his features relaxed, as is typical of a dying person. He is waxen, with the exception of his cheek-bones, where a cyanotic red persists.

Marjiam bends over the little bed calling: « Grandpa! My grandpa! I am Marjiam! Do you understand? Marjiam! Jabez! Your Jabez!... O Lord! He no longer hears me... Come here, Lord... Come here. Will You try... Cure him... Let him see me, let him speak to me... Must I see all my relatives die thus, without a parting word to me?... »

Jesus approaches him, He bends over the dying man, He lays a hand on his head saying: « Son of My Father, listen to Me. »

Like one who awakes from a deep sleep, the old man takes a deep breath, he opens his already glassy eyes looking vaguely at the two faces bent over his. He tries to speak, but his tongue is powerless. But now he must have been able to recognise, because he smiles and tries to take the hands of the two to lift them to his

lips.

« Grandpa... I had come... I prayed so hard that I might come!... I wanted to tell you... that I will soon have enough money... that I will be able to give you what you need to redeem yourself... and you will come with me, to Simon and Porphirea, who are so good, so kind to your Jabez... and to everybody... »

The old man succeeds in moving his tongue and he says with difficulty: « May God reward them... and reward you... But it is late... I am going to Abraham... to suffer no more... » He turns towards Jesus and eagerly asks: « It is so, is it not? »

« It is. Be in peace! » and Jesus straightens Himself imposingly saying: « With My power of Judge and Saviour, I absolve you of all faults and omissions you may have committed during your lifetime, and of any feeling of your heart against charity and against those who hated you. I forgive you everything, son. Go in peace! » Jesus has held His hands stretched out high above the little bed as if He were before an altar and He, the Priest, were consecrating a victim.

Marjiam is weeping, while the old man smiles gently whispering: « One falls asleep peacefully with Your help... Thank You, Lord... » and he collapses...

« Grandpa! Grandpa! Oh! he is dying! he is dying! Let us give him some honey... his tongue is dry... He is cold... honey warms one... » shouts Marjiam and he tries to search in the sack with one hand while he supports with the other his grandfather's head, which is becoming heavier.

The apostles have appeared on the threshold... and are watching in silence...

« All right, Marjiam. I will hold your grandfather » says Jesus... and then, addressing Peter: « Simon, come here... »

And Simon comes forward, deeply moved.

Marjiam tries to give a little honey to the old man. He puts a finger into the little vase and takes it out covered with liquid honey, which he places on the lips of his grandfather, who opens his eyes again, looks at him, smiles and says: « It's good. »

« I made it for you... And also the tunic of fresh hemp... »

The old man lifts his trembling hand and endeavours to lay it on the brown-haired head saying: « You are good... better than honey... And that... the fact that you are good, does me good... But Your honey... does not serve any more... Neither does your cool tunic... Keep them... keep them with my blessing... »

Marjiam falls on his knees and weeps with his head resting on the edge of the little bed moaning: « All alone! I am remaining all alone! »

Simon goes to the other side of the bed and in a voice made more hoarse than ever by emotion, he caresses Marjiam's hair saying:

« No... Not alone... I love you. Porphirea also loves you... The disciples... as many brothers... And then... Jesus... Jesus Who loves you... Don't weep, my son! »

« Your... son... yes... I... happy... Lord!... Lord... » the old man whispers confusedly... he feels the end is approaching.

Jesus embraces him with one arm, lifts him up, and intones slowly: « I lift my eyes to the mountains, whence help will come to me » and He continues till the end of psalm 120. He then stops watching the man who is dying in His arms placated by those words... He intones psalm 121. But He says little of it, because as soon as He starts the fourth verse He stops, saying: « Go in peace, just soul! » and He lays him down again slowly and closes his eyelids with His hand.

Such a placid death that no one, except Jesus, noticed it. But they realise seeing the gesture of the Master and they begin to whisper.

Jesus makes a gesture requesting silence. He goes beside Marjiam, who has not noticed anything, as he is weeping with his head on the bed, He bends and embraces the boy and tries to lift him up saying: « He is in peace, Marjiam! He does not suffer any more. This is the greatest grace of God for him: death, and in the arms of the Lord! Do not weep, dear son. Look how peaceful he is... In peace... Few people in Israel had the reward which this just man had, to die on the breast of the Saviour. Come here, in My arms... You are not alone. And there is God, and that is everything, and He loves you for the whole world. »

Poor Marjiam is really in a pitiful state, but he still finds the strength to say: « Thank You, Lord, for coming... and you, Simon, for bringing me here... And to you all, thanks... for what you gave me for him... But it is of no further use... But... the garment is... We are poor... We cannot have him embalmed... Oh! grandfather! I cannot even give you a sepulchre!... But if you trust me, if you can... meet the expenses and in October I will give you the money of the lambs and of the fish... »

« Hey! I say: you still have a father! I will see to it, at the cost of selling a boat. The old man will receive full honours. The important thing is to have a loan... and someone who can give a sepulchre... »

The steward says: « In Jezreel there are some disciples among the people. They will not deny anything. I will go at once and I will be back by the third hour... »

« Good, but... the Pharisee? »

« Don't worry. I will let him know that there is a dead man and in order not to be contaminated, he will not come out of the house. I am going... »

And while Marjiam, bent over his grandfather, weeps and

caresses him, and Jesus speaks in a low voice to the apostles and to Isaac, Micah and the others are busy preparing the last honours to their dead companion.

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And I make here a personal comment. I happened to be in similar situations several times, and I often noticed that the people present, with good intentions or with blameworthy intolerance, contradict those who grieve over the loss of a relative. I point out the kindness of Jesus, Who bears with the suffering of the orphan and does not exact an unnatural heroism from him... How much there is to be learned from each least act of Jesus!...

#### **442. Jesus Speaks of Charity to the Apostles.**

30th May 1946 (Ascension-Day).

« Where did you leave the boats, Simon, when you came to Nazareth? » asks Jesus while walking north-eastwards, leaving behind the Esdraelon plain and proceeding towards Mount Tabor.

« I sent them back, that they may go fishing, Master. But I told them to be at Tarichea every third day... I did not know how long I would be staying with You. »

« Very well. Which of you wants to go to tell My Mother and Mary of Alphaeus to join us at Tiberias? Joseph's house will be the meeting place. »

« Master... we would all like to go. But it is better if You say who is to go. »

« Then, Matthew, Philip, Andrew and James of Zebedee. Let the others come with Me to Tarichea. You will explain to the women the reason for the delay. And tell them to close the houses and to come. We will be together for the whole duration of the moon. Go, because this is where the road diverges. And may peace be with you. » He kisses the four who part, and He takes to the road again with the others.

But after a few steps He stops and watches Marjiam who is walking with his head lowered a little behind the group. When the boy comes up with Him, Jesus passes His hand under his chin forcing him to raise his head. Tears are streaming down the boy's tanned face.

« Would you like to go to Nazareth, too? »

« Yes, Master... But do as You wish. »

« I want you to be consoled, son... Go... Run after them. My Mother will comfort you. » He kisses the boy and lets him go, and Marjiam starts running and soon comes up with the four apostles.

« He is still a boy... » remarks Peter.

« And he is suffering much... Yesterday evening, as I found him weeping in a corner of the house, he said to me: "It is as if my

father and mother had died yesterday... The death of my old grandfather has renewed all the grief in my heart..." » says John.

« Poor son!... But it was a good thing that he was present at that death... » says the Zealot.

« He had so fondly cherished the illusion that he might be able to help the old man!... Porphirea told me that he made all sorts of sacrifices in order to be able to save money. He worked in fields, he made faggots for bakers, he fished, he did not eat any cheese or honey, so that he might sell them... He had that fixed idea in his heart and wanted the old man with him... who knows! » says Peter.

« He is a serious-minded and strong-willed man. Sacrifice and work are no burden to him. Good points » says Bartholomew.

« Yes, he is a good son and will be one of the best disciples. You can see how strictly he controls himself even in the most troubled circumstances... His afflicted heart was longing for Mary, but he did not ask to go. He has understood so well what strength there is in praying, that he exceeds many adults » says Jesus.

« Do you think that he makes sacrifices with an intent fixed in advance? » asks Thomas.

« I am sure he does. »

« It is true. Yesterday he gave some fruit to an old man saying: "Pray for my father's father, who died recently", and I remarked to him: "He is in peace, Marjiam. Do you not consider Jesus' absolution valid?". He replied to me: "I do consider it valid. But when offering sacrifices, I think of the souls for whom no one prays, and I say: if my grandfather no longer needs this, let these sacrifices be atonement for those who are forgotten by everybody". And I remained edified » says James of Alphaeus.

« Yes » says Peter. « Yesterday he came to me and throwing his arms round my neck, because, after all, he is still a boy, he said to me: "Now you really are my father... and I am giving back to you what your kindness had allowed me to save. My old grandfather no longer needs that money... and you and Porphirea are doing so much for me... I, I found it difficult to restrain my tears, I replied to him: "No, son. We will use that money as alms to poor old people or to orphans and God will make use of your alms to increase the peace to your old grandfather". And Marjiam kissed me twice so fondly that... well... I could not hold back my tears. And how grateful he is to you, Bartholomew, for meeting the expenses. He said to me: "As far as I am concerned the honour paid to my old grandpa is priceless. I will tell Bartholomew to keep me as his servant". »

« Oh! poor son! Not even for one hour! He serves the Lord and edifies us all. I honoured a just man. I was able to do it because my name is well known and it is easy for me to find people willing to advance a sum of money. When in Bethsaida I will have the little

debt settled, after all it was a trifle... »

« Yes. With regard to money it was not much, because those in Jezreel were generous. But your love for a fellow disciple is not a trifle. Because each act of love is of great value.

You are being perfected in your neighbour's love, which is the latter part of the fundamental precept of the Law of God, and which had been gravely neglected in Israel. The many precepts, the minuteness which followed the simple, yet complete, although brief Law of Sinai, have distorted the former part of the fundamental precept, converting it into a heap of exterior rites which lack what gives them strength, value, truth: that is they lack active consistence of the interior with the exterior forms of cult, through deeds performed and temptations overcome. What value can the ostentation of a cult have in the eyes of God, when internally a heart does not love God, does not annihilate itself in respectful love for God, when a heart does not praise and admire God by loving what He made, and first of all by loving man, who is the masterpiece of the terrestrial Creation?

Do you understand how the mistake was made in Israel? It happened because, at first, of one precept they made two, and afterwards, with the decline of spirits, they cut the latter neatly off from the former, as if it were a useless branch. It was not a useless branch, there were not even two branches. It was one trunk only, which from its very base had adorned itself with the individual virtues of the two loves. Look at that big fig-tree which has grown up there, on that hillock. It grew spontaneously, and almost from its roots, that is, as soon as it sprang up from the ground, it split into two branches, which are so united that the two barks have adhered together. But each branch has put forth its own foliage at the sides, in such an eccentric manner, that the little village on this hillock has been named after it the "House of the twin fig-tree". Now, if one should want to separate the two trunks, which are actually one trunk only, one would have to use a hatchet or a saw. But what would one do? One would cause the tree to die, or, if one were so skilful as to handle the hatchet or the saw in such a way as to injure one only of the two trunks, one would be saved whilst the other would inexorably die, and the survivor, although still alive, would live poorly and would probably wither, bearing no fruit or very little.

The same happened in Israel. They wanted to divide, to separate the two parts, which were so united as to really be one thing only, they wanted to touch up what was perfect. Because each work, each thought and work of God is perfect. Therefore, if God on Sinai ordered man to love the Most High God and his neighbour, by means of one only precept, it is evident that they are not precepts which may be practised independently one from the

other, but they are one precept only. And as I am never satisfied with perfecting you in this sublime virtue, the greatest of them all, because it rises with the spirit to Heaven and is the only one which subsists in Heaven, I insist on it, the soul of the whole life of the spirit, which dies if it loses Charity, because it loses God.

Listen to Me. Suppose one day a very wealthy couple came and knocked at your door, asking to be given hospitality for their lifetime. Could you say: "We accept the husband, but we do not want the wife" without hearing the husband reply to you: "That is not possible, because I cannot part with the flesh of my flesh. If you do not want to accept her, I cannot stay with you, and I will go away with all my treasures, which I would have shared with you"?

God is joined to Charity. And Charity is truly, and more intimately and really the spirit of His Spirit even than is a married couple who love each other deeply. God Himself is Charity. Charity is but the most manifest and illustrative aspect of God. Of all His attributes Charity is the sovereign and original one, because all the other attributes of God originate from Charity. What is Power but active charity? What is Wisdom but teaching charity? What is Mercy but forgiving charity? What is Justice but ruling charity? And I could go on thus with regard to all the numberless attributes of God. Now, after what I have said, can you believe that he, who has no Charity, has God? No, he has not. Can you imagine that he may accept God, but not Charity? There is one Charity only and it embraces Creator and creatures and it is not possible to have only one half of it: that for the Creator, without having also the other half: that for our neighbour.

God is in His creatures. He is in them with His indelible sign, with His rights of Father, Spouse and King. The soul is His throne, the body His temple. Now he who does not love one of his brothers and despises him, holds in contempt, grieves and underestimates the Landlord of his brother's house, the King, the Father, the Spouse of his brother, and it is natural that this great Being Who is Everything, and Who is present in a brother, in all brothers, should consider as given to Him the offence given to a lesser being, to a part created by Everything, that is to a single man. That is why I taught you the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, that is why I taught you not to scandalise your brothers, that is why I taught you not to judge, not to have contempt or to reject your brothers, whether they are good or not good, faithful or Gentiles, friends or enemies, rich or poor.

When on a nuptial bed a conception takes place, it is performed through the same action, whether it happens on a golden bed or on straw in a stable. And the creature which forms in a royal womb is not different from that which forms in the womb of a beggar. To conceive, to form a new being, is the same in every spot of the

Earth, irrespective of parents' religion. All creatures are born as Abel and Cain were born of Eve's womb. And to the equality of conception, formation and manner of birth of the children of man and woman on the Earth, corresponds another equality in Heaven: the creation of a soul to be infused into the embryo, so that it may be the soul of a man and not of an animal, and it may accompany him from the moment of its creation until death, and may survive expecting the universal resurrection, when it will join the risen body and have with it a reward or a punishment. A reward or punishment according to the deeds accomplished in the earthly life. Do not think that Charity is unfair, and that only because many people do not belong to Israel or to Christ, although they are virtuous in the religion which they follow convinced that it is the true one, they are to remain for ever without reward.

After the end of the world no other virtue will survive except Charity, that is, the Union of all the creatures who lived in justice, with the Creator. There will not be several Heavens: one for Israel, one for Christians, one for Catholics, one for Gentiles, one for heathens. There will be one Heaven only. And likewise there will be one reward only: God, the Creator, Who rejoins His creatures who lived according to justice, and in whom, because of the beauty of the souls and bodies of saints, He will admire Himself with the joy of Father and of God. There will be one Lord only. Not one Lord for Israel, one for Catholicism, one for each of the other religions.

I will now reveal a great truth to you. Remember it. Hand it down to your successors. Do not always wait for the Holy Spirit to clarify the truth after years or centuries of darkness. Listen. You may say: "Then, what justice is there in belonging to the holy religion, if at the end of the world we shall be treated exactly as the Gentiles?". I reply to you: the same justice which there is and it is true justice - for those who, although they belong to the holy religion, will not be beatified, because they they did not lead a holy life. A virtuous heathen, only because he lived according to choice virtue, convinced that his religion was good, will have Heaven at the end. When? At the end of the world, when of the four abodes of the dead, two only will remain: that is, Paradise and Hell. Because Justice, at that time, will only be able to keep and give the two eternal kingdoms to those, who from the tree of free will, chose good fruits or wanted wicked ones. But what a long expectation before a virtuous heathen achieves that reward!... Do You not think so? And that expectation, particularly from the moment when Redemption will have taken place with all its consequent wonders and the Gospel will have been preached all over the world, will be the purgation of the souls which lived with justice in other religions, but were not able to enter the true Faith, after

they became acquainted with its existence and the proof of its reality. Their abode will be Limbo for centuries and centuries, until the end of the world. The believers in the true God, who were not heroically holy, will have a long Purgatory, which may last until the end of the world for some of them. But after expiating and waiting, the good, irrespective of their provenance, will all sit at the right hand of God; the wicked, whichever their provenance may be, at the left hand and then in the dreadful Hell, while the Saviour will enter the eternal Kingdom with all the good souls. »

« Lord, forgive me if I do not understand. What You say is very difficult... at least for me... You always say that You are the Saviour and that You will redeem those who believe in You. So those who do not believe, either because they did not know You, as they lived before You, or because - the world is so large! - they had no news of You, how can they be saved? » asks Bartholomew.

« I told you: because of their just lives, of their good deeds, and through their faith which they believe is the true one. »

« But they did not have recourse to the Saviour... »

« But the Saviour will suffer also for them. Do you not consider, Bartholomew, what ample value My merits of Man-God will have? »

« My Lord, they will always be inferior to those of God, to those You have always had. »

« Your reply is and is not correct. The merits of God are infinite, you say. Everything is infinite in God. But God does not have any merits in the sense that He has not merited. He has attributes, virtues of His own. He is He Who is: Perfect, Infinite, Almighty. But to merit, it is necessary to do something, and with effort, superior to our nature. For instance, to eat is not a merit. But to eat frugally can become a merit, if we make real sacrifices, in order to give to the poor what we save. It is no merit to be silent. But it becomes a merit if we are quiet instead of retorting an insult. And so forth. Now, you know that God does not need to make any effort, because He is Perfect, Infinite. But the Man-God can make an effort by humiliating His infinite divine Nature within human limitations, by defeating human nature, which is not absent or metaphorical, but real, in Him, with all its senses and feelings, with its possibility of suffering and dying, with its free will. No one loves death, particularly when it is painful, untimely and undeserved. No one loves it. And yet, every man must die. So man ought to look at death with the same calm with which he sees every living being come to an end. Well, I force my Humanity to love death. Not only. But I chose life to be able to have death. For the sake of Mankind. Thus, in my condition of Man-God I gain those merits which I could not have gained if I had remained God. And through them, which are infinite, because of the manner in

which I gain them, because of the divine Nature joined to the human nature, because of the virtues of Charity and Obedience, with which I put Myself in condition to deserve them, because of Fortitude, Justice, Temperance, Prudence, because of all the virtues which I put in My heart to make it acceptable to God, My Father, I will have infinite power, not only as God, but also as Man, Who sacrifices Himself for the sake of everybody, that is, Who reaches the extreme limit of Charity. It is sacrifice which gives merit. The greater the sacrifice, the greater the merit. A complete merit for a complete sacrifice. Perfect merit for a perfect sacrifice. And it may be used according to the holy will of the victim, to whom the Father says: "Let it be as you wish!", because the victim has loved both God and his neighbour measurelessly. I tell you. The poorest man can be the richest and benefit countless brothers, if he can love to the extent of sacrifice. I tell you: even if you did not have a crumb of bread, a glass of water, a ragged garment, you can always help. How? By praying and suffering for your brothers. Help whom? Everybody. In which way? In a thousand holy ways, because if you can love, you will be able to act, teach, forgive, administer as God does, and to redeem, as the Man-God redeems. »

« O Lord, grant us that charity! » says John with a sigh.

« God gives you it, because He gives Himself to you. But you must receive it and practise it more and more perfectly. No event is to be separated from charity, as far as you are concerned. Both with regard to material and to spiritual events. Everything is to be done with charity and for Charity. Sanctify your actions, your days, put salt in your prayers, and light in your actions. Light, flavour, sanctification are Charity. Without it rites are of no value, prayers are vain, offerings false. I solemnly tell you that the smile with which a poor man greets you as brothers is of greater value than a sack of money which one may throw at your feet only to be noticed. Love, and God will always be with you. »

« Teach us how to love thus, Lord. »

« I have taught you for two years. Do what you see Me do and you will be in Charity and Charity will be in you, and on you there will be the seal, the chrism, the crown, which will really make you known as the ministers of God-Charity. Let us stop now in this shady place. The grass is thick and long and the trees mitigate the heat. We will proceed in the evening... »

#### **443. Arrival at Tiberias. Parable of the Rain on the Vine.**

3rd June 1946.

Jesus arrives at Tiberias with His apostles on a stormy morning. He has come along the short route from Tarichea to Tiberias, with

the boats tossing terribly on the very rough lake which is greyish like the sky, where large clouds chase one another threateningly.

Peter scans the sky and the lake and orders the servants to put the boats in a safe place: « Before long you will hear some fine music! I am no longer Peter the fisherman, if the downpour and the billows of the lake do not cause damage shortly. Is there anybody on the lake? » he asks himself scanning the heavy sea of Galilee. And he sees that it is deserted, with billows sweeping it more and more violently, under the vault of heaven which is becoming more and more threatening. He takes comfort seeing that it is deserted and thinking that it will not cause any harm to human beings, and he happily follows the Master, Who is proceeding among such strong gusts of wind, that the apostles walk with difficulty in clouds of dust, while their garments flap fiercely in the storm.

In Tiberias, in this part of the town where ordinary people live, families of fishermen or of poor workmen employed in jobs connected with fishing, people are busy coming and going to put back in the houses what could be damaged by the storm. Some run laden with nets, some with the oars from boats which have already been beached safely, and some drag their working tools into the houses, and all this takes place in the howling wind which raises clouds of dust and makes doors bang. The other part of Tiberias, the northern one, with buildings lined along the lake and beautiful parks visible along the curved shore, is sleeping idly. Only some servants or slaves, according to whether the house belongs to Israelites or to Romans, are busy removing curtains from roof-terraces, beaching sport-boats, and taking away chairs lying about in gardens...

Jesus, Who has come to this part, says to Simon Zealot and to His cousin Judas: « Go and ask the door-keeper of Johanna of Chuza whether any of our friends have been looking for us. I will wait here. »

« All right. And what about Johanna? »

« We will see her later. Go and do what I told you. »

The two go away quickly, and while the others are awaiting their return, Jesus sends them, some here, some there, to get a little food « for themselves and for the women, because it is not fair to be a burden to the family of the disciple » says Jesus. And He remains alone, leaning against the wall of a garden, from which comes the roar of a hurricane, so violent is the struggle of its tall trees against the wind.

Jesus is engrossed in thought, enveloped in His clothes, which He holds tight under His mantle, the top part of which He has pulled over His head like a hood, to protect Himself against the wind, which blows His hair in His eyes. And thus, covered in dust, with His face half hidden by the edge of His mantle, leaning against a

wall almost at the corner of a road, which crosses a beautiful thoroughfare coming from the lake towards the town centre, He looks like a beggar waiting for alms. Some people pass by and look at Him. But since He does not say anything and does not ask for anything and is keeping His head lowered, no one stops to give Him anything or to speak to Him. The storm in the meantime has become more violent and the noise of the lake stronger, filling the whole town with its roar.

A tall man, who is walking stooped to defend himself from the wind - he also is completely enveloped in his mantle, which he is holding tight under his chin with one hand - is coming from the internal road towards the coast one, and, on looking up to avoid a file of donkeys of market-gardeners who, after leaving the vegetables at the market, are going back to their gardens, he sees Jesus (and I see that the young man is Judas of Kerioth).

« Oh! Master! » he exclaims from the other side of the donkey file. « I was just coming to Johanna's looking for You. I was at Capernaum looking for You, but... » The last donkey has gone by and Judas rushes towards the Master, ending his speech: «... but there was nobody at Capernaum. I waited for days, then I came back here, and I went to Joseph's and to Johanna's every day looking for You... »

Jesus looks at him with His piercing eyes, and stops those impetuous words by saying simply: « Peace be with you. »

« It's true! I did not even greet You! Peace be with You, Master. But You always have such peace! »

« And have you not? »

« I am a man, Master. »

« A just man has peace. Only the guilty man is upset. Are you such? »

« I... No, Master. At least... Of course, if I have to tell You the truth, the fact that I was far from You did not make me happy... but that was not exactly being deprived of peace. I missed You, because I am fond of You... But peace is something different, is it not?... »

« Yes. It is. Separations do not impair the peace of the heart, if the heart of the separated person does not do things which his conscience tells him to be such as to grieve the person he loves, if the latter should hear of them. »

« But those who are absent do not know... Unless somebody tells them. »

Jesus looks at him and is silent.

« Are You alone, Master? » asks Judas trying to change the subject to more usual topics.

« I am waiting for those whom I sent to Johanna to find out whether My Mother has come from Nazareth. »

« Your Mother? Are You making Your Mother come here? »

« Yes, I am. I will stay with Her at Capernaum for the whole month, and I will go by boat to the villages on the banks of the lake, returning every day to Capernaum. There must be many disciples... »

« Yes... Many... » Judas has lost his gift of the gab. He is pensive...

« Have you nothing to tell Me, Judas? We are alone now... Has nothing happened to you, during the time of this separation, no incident about which you feel the need of a word of your Jesus? » Jesus asks kindly, in such a manner as to help the disciple to confess by making him feel all His merciful love.

« And do You know of anything in me which needs Your word? If You know - and I really do not know of anything which deserves such word - speak up. It is burdensome for a man to have to remember his sins and faults and confess them to another man... »

« I, Who am speaking to you, am not another man, but... »

« No. You are God. I know. That is why it is not even necessary that I should speak. You know... »

« I was saying that I am not another man, but I am your most loving Friend. I am not saying your Master, your superior, I am saying: your Friend... »

« It's still the same thing. And it is always boring to pry into what one has done in the past, as such confession may cause reproaches. But the annoying part is not so much to be reproached, as to lose a friend's esteem... »

« At Nazareth, the last Sabbath I was there, Simon Peter inadvertently told a companion something which he should not have mentioned. It was not a voluntary disobedience, it was not slander, it was not anything which might have injured his neighbour. Simon Peter had mentioned it to an honest heart and to a serious man, who realising that he had become acquainted with a secret, although neither he nor Peter wished so, swore that he would not repeat the secret to anybody else. Simon could have set his mind at rest... But he did not resign himself until he confessed his fault to Me. At once... Poor Simon! He called it a fault! But if in the hearts of My disciples there were only such faults, and so much humility, so much confidence, so much love, as Peter has, oh! I should proclaim Myself the Master of a crowd of saints!... »

« And so You want to tell me that Peter is holy and I am not. It's true. I am not a saint. Send me away, then... »

« You are not humble, Judas. Pride is ruining you. And you do not know Me yet... » concludes Jesus most sadly.

Judas perceives His grief and whispers: « Forgive me, Master!... »

« Always. But be good, son! Be good! Why do you want to harm yourself? »

Tears well up in Judas' eyes, whether they are true or not I do not know, and he seeks shelter in Jesus' arms, weeping on His shoulder.

And Jesus caresses his hair whispering: « Poor Judas! Poor Judas, who is seeking elsewhere, where he cannot find it, his peace and who may understand him... »

« Yes. It is true. You are right, Master. Peace is here... In Your embrace... I am a wretch... You are the only one who understands and loves me... You alone... I am the fool... Forgive me, Master. »

« Yes, be good, be humble. If you fall, come to Me and I will raise you. If you are tempted, run to Me. I will defend you, from yourself, from those who hate you, from everything... But stand up. The others are coming... »

« A kiss, Master... A kiss... »

And Jesus kisses him... And Judas recomposes himself... But in the meantime he has not confessed his faults at all, at least I do not think so...

« We are a little late because Johanna was already up and the door-keeper wanted to tell her. She will come today, to pay her respects to You, at Joseph's house » says Thaddeus.

« At Joseph's? If we get all the rain which heaven is promising, those streets will be like quagmires. Johanna will certainly not come to that hovel and along those streets. We had better go to her house... » says Judas who has already become sure of himself once again.

Jesus does not reply to him, but He replies to His cousin asking: « Did any of our friends look for us at Johanna's? »

« No, not yet. »

« All right. Let us go to Joseph's house. The others will join us... »

« If I were sure that our mothers are on the way here, I would go and meet them... » says Judas of Alphaeus.

« It would be a good thing. But there are several roads from Tiberias. And perhaps they did not take the main one... »

« That's true, Jesus... Let us go... »

They walk away fast, while the first thunder and lightning furrow the leaden sky, rumbling in the gorges of the hills which surround the lake almost completely. They enter Joseph's poor house, which in the stormy atmosphere looks poorer and darker. There is only one bright thing, the face of the disciple, and those of his relatives, who are so happy to have the Master in their house.

« But You are unlucky, Lord » apologises the boatman. « I could not go out fishing on a lake like this and I have nothing... but vegetables... »

« And your kind heart. But I have provided. Our companions are coming now with what is necessary. Do not tire yourself, woman... We can sit also on the floor. It is so clean. You are a clever woman, I

know. And the tidiness which I see here confirms it. »

« Oh! my wife! She is really a strong woman! My, nay, our joy » proclaims the boatman, who is thrown into a transport of delight by the praise of the Lord, Who has sat down peacefully on the lower edge of the fireplace in which no fire is lit, almost on the floor, holding between His legs a little boy, who looks at Him full of amazement.

Those who had gone to do the shopping arrive at the moment of the first downpour and they shake mantles and sandals on the threshold, to avoid carrying water and mud into the house. It seems the end of the world because of thunder, lightning, rain and wind. The roaring of the lake sounds like an accompaniment to the soli of thunderbolts and howling wind.

« Good health! Summer is wetting its feathers and drenching the fireplace... We will feel better afterwards... Providing it does not damage the vines... May I go upstairs to have a look at the lake? I want to see in what mood it is... »

« Go. The house is yours » the disciple replies to Peter.

And Peter, wearing only his tunic, goes out happily to enjoy the storm. He climbs up the outside staircase and remains on the terrace to freshen himself and to give his responses to those inside the house, as if he were on the deck of his boat giving orders for manoeuvres.

The others are sitting about in the kitchen, where they can hardly see, as they are compelled to keep the door ajar because of the rain, and only a thread of greenish light comes in through the fissure, interrupted by the short dazzling flashes of lightning...

Peter comes back in, wet through as if he had fallen into the lake and he states: « It's above our heads now. It's moving away towards Samaria. It's going to drench all there... »

« It has already soaked you! You are running like a fountain » remarks Thomas.

« Yes. But I feel so well after so much heat. »

« Come inside. It will do you no good to stand at the door wet as you are » advises Bartholomew.

« No! I am like seasoned wood... I was not yet able to say "father" well, when I began to remain in dampness. Ah! How well one breathes!... The street, however, is like... a river... You should see the lake! It's all the colours of the rainbow and is boiling like a pot. You cannot even see which way the billows are running. They boil on the spot... But it was needed... »

« Yes, we needed rain. The walls were not cooling down any more, they were so heated by the sun. The leaves of my vines were curled up and dusty... I watered the roots... but... What can a little water do when all the rest is like fire? » says Joseph.

« It does more harm than good, my friend » states Bartholomew.

« Plants need water from heaven, because their leaves also drink it, eh?! It does not seem so, but it is true. Roots, roots! Very well. But leaves are there, too, for some reason and they have their rights... »

« Master, do You not think that Bartholomew is proposing the subject for a beautiful parable? » asks the Zealot provoking Jesus to speak.

But Jesus, Who is lulling the little boy frightened by the thunder, does not relate the parable, however, He agrees saying: « And how would you propose it? »

« Badly, certainly, Master. I am not You... »

« Tell it as best you can. It will be a great help to you to preach by means of parables. Get accustomed to doing it. I am listening, Simon... »

« Oh!... You are the Master, I... a fool... But I will obey. I would say this: "A man had a beautiful vine. But as he did not own a vineyard, he had planted the vine in the little kitchen garden near his house, so that it might climb up to the terrace to give shade and grapes, and he took great care of his vine. But it was growing amid houses, near the street, so the smoke of kitchens and ovens and the dust of the road began to molest it. And while the rain still descended from heaven in the month of Nisan, the leaves of the vine were cleaned of impurities and enjoyed sunshine and air without any ugly crust of dirt on their surfaces preventing it. But when summer came and no more water descended from heaven, smoke, dust, excrement of birds formed thick layers on the leaves, while the sun, which was too strong, dried them up. The owner of the vine watered the roots deeply set in the ground, and thus the plant did not die, but it vegetated with difficulty, because the water sucked by the roots nourished only the central part, and the poor leaves did not enjoy any of it. On the contrary, fumes of fermentation rose from the torrid soil, wetted with little water and spoiled the leaves with spots resembling malignant pustules. But at last a torrential rain came from heaven and the water descended on the leaves, it ran along the branches, the trunk, the grapes, it quenched the fierce heat of walls and ground, and after the storm, the owner of the vine saw that his plant was clean, fresh, enjoying and giving joy under the serene sky". That is the parable. »

« Good. But what about the comparison with man?... »

« Master, do it Yourself. »

« No. You must do it. We are among brothers, so you must not be afraid of cutting a bad figure. »

« I am not afraid of a bad figure, as if it were something grievous. On the contrary I love it, because it helps me to be humble. But I Would not like to say anything wrong... »

« I will correct you. »

« Oh! In that case I would say: "The same applies to a man who does not live isolated in the garden of God, but lives in the midst of the dust and smoke of worldly things. They, in fact, encrust him slowly, almost inadvertently, and he finds that his spirit is sterilised under such a thick layer of humanity, that the breeze of God and the sun of Wisdom can no longer be of any avail to him. And in vain he tries to make up for it with a little water drawn from practices, and given with so much humanity to the inferior part, that the superior part does not enjoy any of it... Woe to the man who does not cleanse himself with the water from Heaven, as it cleans out impurities, it extinguishes the ardours of passions, and gives true nourishment to his whole ego". I have spoken. »

« You have spoken well. I would also say that, unlike plants, which have no free will and are fixed to the ground, and consequently they are not free to go and look for what helps them and shun what is harmful for them, man can go and look for the water of Heaven and avoid the dust, the smoke and the ardour of the flesh, of the world and of the demon. The teaching would then be more complete. »

« Thank You, Master. I will remember that » replies the Zealot.

« We do not live a solitary life... We live in the world... So... » says Judas of Kerioth.

« So what? Do you mean that Simon has spoken foolishly? » asks Judas of Alphaeus.

« I don't mean that. I am saying that as we cannot live all alone... we are bound to be covered with things of the world. »

« The Master and Simon are just saying that we must seek the water of Heaven to keep ourselves clean notwithstanding that the world is around us » says James of Alphaeus.

« Sure! But is the water of Heaven always available to cleanse us? »

« Of course it is » replies John sure of himself.

« Is it? And where do you find it? »

« In love. »

« Love is fire. It will bum you even more. »

« Yes, it is fire. But it is also water which cleanses. Because it removes everything which belongs to the Earth and gives all the things which come from Heaven. »

«... I do not understand these operations. It removes, it gives... »

« No. I am not mad. I say that it removes what is humanity and it gives you what comes from God and is therefore divine. And a divine thing can but nourish and sanctify. Day after day love cleanses you of what the world gave you. »

Judas is about to reply, but the little child who is in Jesus's lap says: « Another parable, a beautiful one... for me... » which puts an end to the argument.

« On what, child? » asks Jesus condescending.

The little fellow looks around and he finds it. He points at his mother and says: « On mothers. »

« A mother is for the soul and the body what God is for them. What does a mother do for you? She looks after you, she takes care of you, she teaches you, she loves you, she watches that you do not hurt yourself, she keeps you under the wings of her love, just as a dove does with its little ones. And a mother is to be obeyed and loved, because everything she does, she does it for our good. Good God also, and much more perfectly than the most perfect of mothers, keeps His children under the wings of His love, He protects them, He teaches them, He helps them and He thinks of them day and night. But also good God, just like, even much more than a mother - because a mother is the greatest love on Earth, but God is the greatest and eternal love on Earth and in Heaven - is to be obeyed and loved, because everything He does, He does it for our good... »

« Also thunderbolts? » interrupts the boy who is frightened of them.

« Yes. »

« Why? »

« Because they clean the sky and the air and... »

« And then appears the rainbow!... » exclaims Peter, who, half inside and half outside the house, has listened and been quiet. And he adds: « Come, little dove, and I will show it to you. Look how beautiful!... »

In fact the weather is clearing up, as the storm is over, and a huge rainbow, from the shores of Hippo, stretches its arched ribbon across the lake, disappearing beyond the mountains behind Magdala.

They all go to the door, but in order to see the lake, they have to take off their sandals, because the yard is a little pond of yellowish water, which is slowly decreasing. The only remembrance of the storm is the lake, that has become yellowish, while its waves are beginning to calm down. But the sky is clear and the air fresh. The shades of leaves have brightened up.

And Tiberias becomes busy again... And along the road still full of water and mud, they soon see Johanna come with Jonathan. She looks up to greet the Master, Who is on the terrace, where she climbs up quickly to prostrate herself, full of happiness... The apostles are speaking to one another, with the exception of Judas, who, half way between Jesus and Johanna on one side and the apostles on the other, is absent-minded, pensive. I wager that he is all ears listening to the words of Johanna, whose attitude towards Judas is not known, as she greeted all the apostles, just saying: « Peace to you. » But Johanna is speaking only of the children and of

the permission she got from her husband to go to Capernaum by boat while the Master is there. And Judas' suspicions subside and he joins his companions...

With the lower parts of Her garments splashed with mud, but dry elsewhere, there appears the Most Holy Virgin Mary coming forward with Mary of Alphaeus and the five who had gone to bring Her here. Mary's smile while She goes up the short staircase is more beautiful than the rainbow still visible in the sky.

« Your Mother, Master! » announces Thomas.

Jesus goes to meet Her, followed by all the others. And they congratulate the women on their having had no other trouble but a little mud on the edges of their garments.

« As soon as it began to rain we stopped at a market-gardener's » explains Matthew. And he asks: « Have you been waiting long for us? »

« No. We arrived at dawn. »

« We are late, because of a poor wretch... » says Andrew.

« Well. Now that you are all here and that the weather is clearing up, I would say that we should leave for Capernaum this evening » says Peter.

Mary, Who is always agreeable, this time objects: « No, Simon. We cannot leave, if first... Son, a mother has implored Me to ask You - as You are the only one who can do it - to convert the soul of her only son. I beg You, listen to Me, because I promised... Forgive him... Your forgiveness... »

« He has already forgiven, Mary. I have already spoken to the Master... » interrupts Judas thinking that Mary is referring to him.

« I am not speaking of you, Judas of Simon. I am referring to Esther of Levi, a woman of Nazareth, a mother killed by the behaviour of her son. Jesus, she died the night You left. Her invocations to You were not for herself, a poor mother martyr of a disgraceful son, but for her son... because we mothers are solicitous about you sons, not about ourselves... She wants her Samuel to be saved... But now that she is dead, Samuel, a prey to remorse, seems mad and will not listen to reason... But You, Son, can cure his intellect and spirit... »

« Is he repentant? »

« How can You expect him to be so if he is desperate? »

« In fact to have killed one's mother by grieving her continuously, must make one desperate. The first commandment of love for our neighbour cannot be infringed with impunity. Mother, how can You expect Me to forgive and God to give peace to this impenitent matricide? »

« Son, that mother is asking for peace from the other life... She was good... she suffered so much... »

« She will have peace... »

« No, Jesus. There is no peace for the spirit of a mother, if she sees that her child is deprived of God... »

« It is just that he should be deprived. »

« Yes, Son. Of course. But for poor Esther's sake... Her last word was a prayer for her son... And she asked Me to tell You... Jesus, during her lifetime Esther never had any joy, You know that. Give her this joy now that she is dead, give it to her spirit which is suffering because of her son. »

« Mother, I tried to convert Samuel when I stopped at Nazareth. But I spoke to him in vain because love was extinguished in him... »

« I know. But Esther offered her forgiveness, her sufferings, that love might revive in Samuel. And, who knows? Could his present torment not be love coming back to life again? A painful love, and one could say: a useless love, since his mother can no longer enjoy it. But You... but I, we know, I through faith, You by knowledge, that the charity of the dead is vigilant and close at hand. They do not lose interest, neither do they ignore what happens to the beloved ones they left here... And Esther may still enjoy this late love which her ungrateful son, now tortured by remorse, has for her. My Jesus, I know, this man fills You with disgust because of the enormity of his sin. A son who hates his mother! A monster, for You, Who are full of love for Yours. But just because You are full of love for Me, listen to Me. Let us go back to Nazareth together, at once. The road is no burden to Me, nothing is of any trouble to Me, if it helps to save a soul... »

« All right. You have won, Mother... Judas of Simon, take Joseph with you and leave for Nazareth. You will bring Samuel to Me at Capernaum. »

« I, Why I? »

« Because you are not tired. The others are. They walked for such a long time, while you were resting... »

« I have walked, too. I went to Nazareth looking for You. Your Mother can tell You. »

« Your companions went to Nazareth every Sabbath and they have just come back from a long tour. Go and do not argue... »

« The fact is... they do not like me at Nazareth... Why send me? »

« They are not fond of Me either, and yet I go to Nazareth. It is not necessary to find love in a place to go there. Go and do not argue, I am telling you again. »

« Master... I am afraid of madmen... »

« The man is deranged by remorse, but he is not mad. »

« Your Mother said that he is... »

« And for the third time I say to you: go and do not argue. It will do you nothing but good to ponder on the consequences which may be brought about by making a mother suffer... »

« Are You comparing me with Samuel? My mother is the queen in

her house. I am not even close to her to control her or to be a burden to her by keeping me... »

« Such things are no burden to mothers. But the lack of love of their sons, the fact that they are imperfect in the eyes of God and of men... are rocks that crush them. Go, I tell you. »

« I am going. But what shall I tell the man? »

« To come to Capernaum, to Me. »

« If he never obeyed even his mother, do You expect him to obey me, particularly now, that he is so desperate? »

« And have you not yet understood that if I am sending you, it means that I have already worked on the spirit of Samuel, freeing him from the delirium of desperate remorse? »

« I am going. Goodbye, Master. Goodbye, Mary. Good bye, friends. » And he leaves, not at all enthusiastic, followed by Joseph, who, on the contrary, is overjoyed at being chosen for that mission.

Peter sings something softly between his teeth...

Jesus asks him: « What are you saying, Simon of Jonah? »

« I was singing an old lake song... »

« Which is? »

« It says: "Always so! Farmers like fishing, fishermen don't!". And here, truly, we have seen that the disciple was more anxious to go fishing than the apostle... »

Many laugh. But Jesus does not laugh, He sighs.

« Have I grieved You, Master? » asks Peter.

« No. But do not criticise all the time. »

« My Cousin is grieved because of Judas » says Judas of Alphaeus.

« Will you be silent, too, and above all in the bottom of your heart. »

« But has Samuel really received a miracle already? » asks Thomas who is curious and somewhat incredulous.

« Yes, he has. »

« Then there is no need for him to come to Capernaum. »

« It is necessary. I have not cured his heart completely. He must seek to be cured, by himself, that is, he must ask for forgiveness through holy repentance. But I have enabled him to reason again. It is for him to achieve the rest through his free will. Let us go downstairs. We will go among the humble people... »

« Not to my house, Master? »

« No, Johanna. You can come to Me whenever you wish so. They are tied to their work and I am going to them... »

And Jesus descends from the terrace and goes out into the street followed by the others, also by Johanna, who has sent Jonathan home and who is quite determined not to part from Jesus, since Jesus is not willing to go to her house.

They go among poor little houses, towards poorer and poorer

suburbs... And the vision ends thus.

#### **444. Arrival at Capernaum.**

4th June 1946.

I do not know whether spontaneously or because she was informed by somebody, Porphirea is on the little shore of Capernaum when the boats arrive there, and they are three instead of two, which makes me think that someone went to Capernaum ahead of the others, to inform that the Master was arriving, and to get another boat for the women and Marjiam. And with Porphirea are the daughters of Philip and Mirjiam of Jairus, in addition to the mother of James and John.

But my attention is attracted by Porphirea who, ignoring the wavelets which beat upon the shore with merry and somewhat cheeky laps, as the lake is not yet completely calm, goes into the water, up to her knees, and she leans on the boat, in which Marjiam is, and kisses him saying: « I will love you also on his (1) behalf. My dear son, I will love you on behalf of everybody! » and she is deeply moved when saying so. And as soon as the boat stops, and the people in it land, Porphirea embraces Marjiam, as she does not wish to cede to anybody the task of making the boy feel that he is deeply loved.

She then joins the group of the other boat to venerate the Master and be able to do so before the people of Capernaum and the many disciples, who have been waiting for the arrival of the Master for a long time, may take possession of Jesus, depriving the women disciples of the joy of having Him to themselves. The women crowd around the Master, and only the children of Capernaum can break their circle squeezing their slim bodies between the women and thus arrive at Jesus, Who is going slowly towards the house.

As it is early morning, there are not many people in the streets; they are mostly women going to the fountain or to the market, surrounded by their host of children, or some fishermen, who are coming back taking oars and nets to the boats, to prepare them to go out fishing in the evening. But there are no notables, with the exception of Jairus, who comes forward respectfully to venerate Jesus and to express his happiness, as he has heard that the Master will be staying for some weeks, going at night to the towns on the lake, to speak there in the morning, coming back to Capernaum to rest during the day. And it is Jairus, on account of the respect which he inspires in his fellow citizens, who is the first to succeed in placing himself beside Jesus. And he is successful because he Pushes aside his daughter with paternal authority. After him the

(1) Porphirea is referring to Marjiam's grandfather, who had died recently.

more influential disciples are able to join Jesus, that is, those to whom, out of instinctive motion of justice, the others surrender the first places after the apostles, that is the old priest John (the ex leper), Stephen, Hermas, Timoneus, Naomi's son John, Nicolaus and the shepherd disciples, who are all present, with the exception of the two who went towards Lebanon.

Jesus takes an interest in the others, those who are absent, and He inquires after them of their companions. Are they still fervent? Oh! very! Are they resting at home? No. They are working in their towns or in nearby villages making new disciples. And what about Ermasteus? Ermasteus has gone along the coast and is going down to his own town. He is with Joseph, the disciple from Emmaus, and they want to speak of the Saviour along all the coasts, and they have been joined by their two friends Samuel and Abel, who want to show what the Lord can do, as one was a cripple and the other a leper.

Questions and answers, and the road is not sufficient to exhaust them, neither can Thomas' house in Capernaum receive so many people who are now pressing around the Master, Who has come back after such a long absence. And Jesus decides to go towards the country, so that He may stay with them all, without any preferences.

#### **445. Preaching at Capernaum.**

22nd June 1946.

It is the Sabbath. I think it is, because I see people gathered in the synagogue. But they may have gathered there to avoid being in the sun, or to be more tranquil in Jairus' house. And the people are pressing, paying attention, notwithstanding the heat which not even the doors and windows left open to have currents of air can alleviate. Those who have not been able to enter the synagogue, in order not to be roasted in the sun outside, have taken shelter in the shady garden behind the synagogue, Jairus' garden rich in thick pergolas and leafy fruit-trees. And Jesus is speaking near the door opening onto the garden, so that He may be heard both by these listeners and by those inside the synagogue. Jairus is beside Him, listening attentively. The apostles are in a group near the door which opens onto the garden. The women disciples, with Mary in the middle, are sitting under a pergola, which almost touches the house. Mirjiam of Jairus and Philip's two daughters are sitting at Mary's feet.

From the words I hear I gather that there has been an incident between the usual Pharisees and Jesus and that the people are upset because of that. Jesus in fact is exhorting them to be peaceful and to forgive, saying that the word of God cannot bear fruit in

hearts which are upset.

« We cannot bear You to be insulted » shouts someone from the crowd.

« Leave it to My Father and yours and imitate Me. Be patient, and forgive. Enemies are not convinced by returning insult for insult. »

« They are not convinced either by continual meekness. You are letting them tread upon You » shouts the Iscariot.

« My apostle, do not cause scandal by setting an example of wrath and criticism. »

« Your apostle, however, is right. His words are just. »

« The heart which utters them is not just, neither is the heart which listens to them. He who wants to be My disciple must imitate Me. I tolerate and I forgive. I am meek, humble and peaceful. The children of wrath cannot stay with Me, because they are the children of the century and of their passions. Do you not remember the fourth Book of Kings? In a passage it says that Isaiah spoke against Sennacherib who thought he could attempt everything, and prophesied that nothing would save him from God's punishment. He compares him with an animal, through the nostrils of which a ring is put and a bit through its lips to subdue its wicked fury. You know how Sennacherib perished by the hands of his own sons. In fact cruel people perish through their own cruelty. They perish both in their bodies and in their souls. I do not love cruel people. I do not love proud people. I do not love wrathful, greedy, lustful people. I have not confirmed by word or set an example for you of such things, on the contrary I have always taught you the virtues which are the opposite of such evil passions. How beautiful is the prayer of our king David, when, re-sanctified by sincere repentance of past sins and by years of wise behaviour, he praised the Lord, meek and resigned to the decree by which he was not allowed to be the builder of the new Temple! Let us say it together, praising the Most High Lord... » And Jesus intones the prayer of David (1 Paralipomena 29, 10-19), while those who are sitting stand up and those leaning against the wall assume an attitude of respect moving away from their support.

Then, in His habitual tone, Jesus resumes: « You must always remember that everything is in the hands of God, every enterprise, every victory. Magnificence, power, glory and victory belong to the Lord. And He grants this or that thing to man, if He deems that it is the right time to grant it for a certain good purpose. But man cannot pretend anything. God did not allow David to build the Temple, although he had been forgiven, as he was still in need of victory over himself, after his past errors: "You have shed much blood and fought too many battles; it is not for you to build a house for My Name since you have shed so much blood in My

presence. But a son will be born to you and he will be a man of peace... he will therefore be named Peaceful (1)... he shall build a house for My Name". That is what the Most High said to His servant David. I say the same to you. Are you willing, because of your wrath, not to deserve to build in your hearts the house for the Lord your God? Reject, therefore, every feeling which is not love. Have perfect hearts, as David invoked for his son, the builder of the Temple, so that, by keeping My commandments and doing everything according to what I taught you, you may succeed in building within your hearts the abode of your God, while waiting to go yourselves to His eternal joyful house. Give Me a parchment, Jairus. I will explain to them what God wants. »

Jairus goes where the rolls are piled and he takes one at random in the middle of the pile, and after dusting it, he hands it to Jesus, Who unrolls it and reads: « "Jeremiah, chapter 5. Rove to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, look, watch, search her squares, if you can find one man who does right and tries to be faithful, and I will be merciful unto her". » (The Lord says to me: « Do not continue. I will read the whole chapter. »)

Jesus, after reading it all, hands the roll back to Jairus and speaks.

« My children. You have heard which dreadful punishments are laid aside for Jerusalem, for Israel, for not being just. But do not rejoice at that. She is our Fatherland. Do not rejoice thinking: "Perhaps we shall no longer be here". She is always full of your brothers. Do not say: "Serves her right, because she is cruel with the Lord". The misfortunes of the Fatherland, the sorrows of fellow-citizens must always grieve those who are just. Do not measure as other people do, but as God measures, that is, mercifully. What are you, therefore, to do with respect to this Fatherland and these fellow-countrymen, whether by Fatherland and fellow-countrymen you mean the great Fatherland and its inhabitants, the whole of Palestine, or this little one, that is, Capernaum, your hometown, whether you mean all the Hebrews, or these few, who are hostile to Me, in this little town of Galilee? You must accomplish deeds of love. Endeavour to save Fatherland and fellow-countrymen. How? Perhaps through violence? With scorn? No. By love, by patient love to convert them to God. You have just heard. "If I find one man who does right, I will pardon him". Strive, therefore, so that hearts may come to justice and become just. In actual fact in their injustice they say of Me: "It is not Him", and they thus believe that by persecuting Me, no harm will befall them. They really say: "Such things will never happen. The prophets spoke at random". And they will try to make you speak as

(1) Peace is shalom; « Solomon » is derived from it.

they do. You who are present here, are faithful. But where is Capernaum? Is this all Capernaum? Where are those whom the other times I saw crowd around Me? So the yeast, which fermented the last time I was here, has ruined many hearts? Where is Alphaeus? Where is Joshua with his three sons? Where is Haggai of Malachi? Where are Joseph and Naomi? Where is Levi, Abel, Saul, Zacharias? Have they forgotten the undeniable help they received, because false words overwhelmed it? But can words destroy facts? You can see! This is only a small place. In this place, where is the largest number of people assisted, envious malice has been able to devastate faith in Me. I see gathered here only those who are perfect in faith. And could you expect remote events, remote words to keep all Israel faithful to God? That should be the case, because faith must be such also without the support of facts. But it is not so. And the greater is science, the smaller is faith, because learned people think that they are exempted from simple sound faith, which believes through the strength of love and not by means of the assistance of science. It is love which you must hand down to posterity and inflame. And to do that you must be inflamed. You must be convinced, heroically convinced, in order to convince. In place of ill manners, in reply to insults, you must have humility and love. And with them you must go and remind of the words of the Lord those who no longer remember them: "We must fear the Lord Who gives us the rain of the early and later season". »

« They would not understand us! On the contrary they would offend us saying that we are sacrilegious, teaching without the right to do it. You know who are the scribes and Pharisees!... »

« Yes. I know. But even if I had not known, I would know now. But it does not matter what they are. It matters what we are. If they and priests clap their hands to false prophets who prophesy what gives them some profit, forgetting that hands should be clapped only to the good deeds which the Decalogue commands, that is no reason why my faithful believers should imitate them or feel discouraged and just stand looking, as if they had been defeated. You must work as hard as Evil works... »

« We are not Evil » shouts from the threshold, on the street, the husky voice of Eli the Pharisee, who tries to enter shouting all the time: « We are not the Evil ones, instigator. »

« Man, you are the disturber, go away! » says at once a centurion who must have been there watching, as his intervention is so fast.

« You, a pagan, you dare impose on me... »

« I, a Roman, do. Go out! The Rabbi is not disturbing you, but you are disturbing Him. You cannot... »

« We are the Rabbis, not the Galilean carpenter » cries the old man, who resembles more a barrow woman than a master.

« One more, one less... You have hundreds of them, and they are

all wicked teachers. Here is the only virtuous one. I order you to go out. »

« Virtuous, eh?! Virtuous the man who pays Rome for His safety! Sacrilegious! Unclean! »

The centurion utters a cry and the heavy steps of soldiers mingle with Eli's shrill insults. « Take that man and throw him out! » orders the centurion.

« Me? Pagan hands touching me? The feet of pagans in one of our synagogues! Anathema! Help! They are polluting me!... »

« I beg you, soldiers. Let him go! Do not come in. Please respect this place and his old age » says Jesus from His place.

« As You wish, Rabbi. »

« Ha! Ha! Intriguer! But the Sanhedrin will be informed. I have the proof! Now I believe the words which were related to us. I have the proof. Anathema on You! »

« And my sword on you if you say another word. Rome defends what is right. She does not intrigue, you old hyena, with anybody. The Sanhedrin will be informed of your lies. The Proconsul will have my report. I am going to write it at once. Go home and remain there at the disposal of Rome » and the centurion makes a perfect right-about turn and goes away followed by four soldiers, leaving Eli astounded and trembling cravenly...

Jesus resumes speaking as if nothing had interrupted Him: « You must work as hard as Evil works, to build within you and around you the house of the Lord, as I was saying at the beginning. You must act with great holiness so that God may descend again into hearts and on our dear Fatherland, which is already punished so severely and does not know which clouds of misfortune are piling up for her in the north, in the strong country which already rules over us and will rule more and more, because the deeds of citizens are such as to disgust the Most Kind Lord and to arouse the strong ruler. And with the indignation of God and of the ruler, do you expect perhaps to have peace and welfare? Be good, children of God. Strive to have not one, but hundreds of good people in Israel, to ward off the dreadful punishments of Heaven. I told you at the beginning that where there is no peace, there can be no word of God, which heard peacefully may yield fruit in hearts. And you know that this meeting has been neither tranquil nor fruitful. There is too much agitation in hearts... Go. We will still have some hours to be together. And pray, as I do, that those who upset us, may mend their ways... Let us go, Mother » and squeezing through the crowd, He goes out into the street.

Eli is still there and, as white as death, he throws himself at Jesus' feet. « Have pity! You saved my grandson once. Save me, that I may have time to mend my ways. I have sinned! I confess it. But You are good. Rome... Oh! what will Rome do to me? »

« She will remove the summer dust from you with a good thrashing » shouts one, and the people laugh while Eli utters a painful groan as if he already felt the scourge, and he moans: « I am old... aching all over... Alas! »

« The cure will do you good, you old jackal! »

« You will be restored to youth and will be able to dance... »

« Silence! » Jesus orders the scoffers. And He says to the Pharisee: « Stand up. Be dignified. You know that I do not conspire with Rome. So, what do you want Me to do for you? »

« That is true. Yes. It is true. You do not conspire. Nay, You disdain the Romans, You hate them, You c... »

« Nothing of the kind. Do not lie praising Me, as you lied previously accusing Me. And you had better know that it would be no praise to Me to say that I hate this one or that one, or I curse this or that one. I am the Saviour of every soul, and there are no races or faces in My eyes, but souls only. »

« That is true! Very true! But You are just and Rome knows and that is why she defends You. You keep the crowds calm, You teach them to respect the laws and... »

« Is that perhaps a fault in your eyes? »

« Oh! no! It is justice! You know how to do what we should all do, because You are just, because... »

The crowds sneer and murmur. Several epithets, such as « Liar! Coward! This very morning he spoke differently! » and so forth can be heard, although spoken in a low key.

« Well? What shall I do? »

« Go! Go to the centurion. Quick! Before the messenger leaves. See? They are getting the horses ready! Oh! Have mercy! »

Jesus looks at him: small, trembling, wan with fear, miserable... and examines him... compassionately. Only four eyes look at him pitifully: those of Jesus and of His Mother. All other eyes are either ironical, or severe, or upset... Even the eyes of John and Andrew are stern with disdainful severity.

« I have pity. But I will not go to the centurion... »

« He is Your friend... »

« No. »

« He is grateful to You, I mean... because You cured his servant. »

« I cured also your grandson. And you are not grateful to Me, although you are an Israelite like Me. Beneficent help creates no obligation. »

« Yes, it does. Woe to those who are not thankful to... » Eli realises that he is condemning himself and becomes quiet, stammering. The crowds sneer at him.

« Quick, Rabbi. Great Rabbi! Holy Rabbi! He is giving orders, see?! They are on the point of leaving! You want me to be laughed at! You want me dead! »

« No. I am not going to remind him of a favour. Go and say to him: "The Master tells you to be merciful". Go! »

Eli runs away and Jesus sets out in the opposite direction towards His house.

The centurion must have agreed, because I see the soldiers, who had got into the saddles, dismount and hand back a wax tablet to the centurion and then take the horses away.

« What a pity! It would have served him right! » exclaims Peter, and Matthew replies to him: « Yes. The Master should have let him be punished! A blow for each insult to us. Hateful old man! »

« And so he is ready to start all over again! » exclaims Thomas.

Jesus turns round severely: « Have I followers, or have I demons? Go away, you with merciless hearts! Your presence is unpleasant to Me. »

The three remain where they are, petrified by the reproach.

« Son! You are already so grieved! And I am in such great pain! Do not add this one... Look at them! ... » implores Mary.

And Jesus turns round to look at the three. Three desolate faces, with eyes full of hope and of sorrow. « Come! » orders Jesus.

Oh! Swallows are not as swift as the three.

« And let it be the last time that I hear you speak such words. You, Matthew, have no right to speak thus. You, Thomas, are not yet dead, to judge who is imperfect, thinking that you are saved. And you, Simon of Jonah, behaved like a rock carried with great difficulty to a mountain top and then rolled down to the valley. Understand Me for what I mean... And now listen. It is useless to speak here in the synagogue, or in town. I will speak from the boats on the lake, now here, now there. Prepare the boats, as many as are needed and we will go out in the placid evenings or at the cool dawns... »

#### **446. At Magdala. Parable on Good and Bad Will.**

24th June 1946.

« Where, Master? » asks Peter who has completed the manoeuvres and preparations for navigation and is with his boat at the head of the little flotilla which, laden with people, is ready to follow the Master.

« To Magdala. I promised Mary of Lazarus. »

« All right » replies Peter and he manoeuvres the rudder in order to tack in the right direction.

Johanna is in the boat with the Master, the Blessed Virgin, Mary of Clopas, Marjiam, Matthew, James of Alphaeus and a man whom I do not know: she points at the many boats on the lake in the quiet summer evening, which softens the glow of sunset with cascades of purple veils, as if heaven rained showers of amethysts or of trusses

of wistaria in bloom. She remarks: « Perhaps the boats of the Roman ladies are among those. It is one of their favourite amusements to simulate fishing in these placid evenings. »

« But they will be farther south » observes the man whom I do not know.

« Oh! no, Benjamin. They have fast craft and experienced sailors. They come up as far as here. »

« For all they have to do... » grumbles Peter, and he continues through his beard, as he is an intolerant fisherman who considers navigation and fishing a profession, not a pastime, almost a religion completely regulated by severe useful laws, and its improper usage seems a profanation to him: « With their incense, their flowers and perfumes and other demoniacal things they contaminate the water; with their music, loud cries and language they disturb the fish; with their smoky lamps they frighten them; with their cursed nets cast inconsiderately they spoil the bottom and damage reproduction... It should be forbidden. The Sea of Galilee belongs to Galileans, who are also fishermen, not to prostitutes and their partners... If I were the master! I would fix you, you filthy heathen boats, you floating sinks of vice, alcoves sailing to bring here, on these waters of God, of our God, to His children, your... Oh! look! They are coming straight here! Can one stand that!... Can one allow... Can... »

Jesus interrupts the accusatory oration, by which Peter gives vent to his spirit of Israelite and fisherman, flushing, suffocating with rage, panting as if he were struggling against infernal forces, and He says with a peaceful smile: « It is a good job that you are not the master. Fortunately you are not! For them and for yourself. Because you would prevent them from following a good impulse, thus an impulse impressed on their spirits - pagan, I agree, but naturally good - impressed on their spirits by the Eternal Mercy which guides these creatures, who are not guilty of being born Romans and not Jews. And God looks at them with merciful eyes because He sees that they tend to what is good. And you would harm yourself because you would commit an act against charity and one against humility... »

« Humility I don't understand... Being the master of the lake, it would be lawful for me to dispose of it as I like. »

« No, Simon of Jonah. No. You are wrong. Also the things which belong to us, belong to us because God grants them to us. So, even if we possess them for a limited period of time, we must always consider that He Who possesses everything without any limitation of time or measure is One only. One only is the Master. Men... Oh! they are only administrators of crumbs of the great Creation. But He is the Master, My Father and yours and of all living beings. Further, He is God, thus most perfect in all His thoughts and actions.

Now: if God looks benignly at the movement of these heathen hearts towards the Truth, and does not only look, but encourages such movement, communicating to it a stronger and stronger motion towards Good, do you not think that you, a man, by wanting to stop it, actually want to prevent God from doing something? And when do you stop anything? When you do not consider it good. So this is what you would be thinking of your God: that He is doing a deed which is not good. Now, if it is not right to judge our brothers, because every man has his faults and his faculty of knowing and judging is so limited that seven times out of ten his judgement is wrong, it is absolutely wicked to judge God in His action. Simon, Simon! Lucifer wanted to judge God in one of His thoughts and he considered it wrong and wanted to take the place of God, thinking that he was more just than God. You know, Simon, what Lucifer achieved. And you know that all the pains we suffer have come because of that pride... »

« You are right, Master! I am a poor wretch! Forgive me, Master! » And Peter, who is always impulsive, leaves the tiller of the rudder to throw himself at Jesus' feet, while the boat, suddenly left to itself, and just on the crest of a wave, yaws and heels in a fearful manner amidst the screams of Mary of Clopas and Johanna and the shouts of those in the light twin boat, when they see Peter's heavy boat coming straight for them.

Fortunately Matthew is quick in taking the rudder, and the boat resumes its course after pitching dreadfully, also because the others, to keep away from it, have used their oars with vigorous strokes, thus agitating the water.

« Hey! Simon! Once you were insolent to the Romans, whom you treated as landlubbers, because they were coming straight for us. But now you are cutting a bad figure... and, what is more, in their presence. Look how they are all standing in their boats to see... » says the Iscariot teasing Peter and pointing at the Roman boats, which are now so close, in the sheet of water before Magdala, that those on board are able to see clearly, notwithstanding that the purple veils of the evening have become darker and darker dimming daylight.

« You have also lost a hamper and a small bucket, Simon. Shall we try to fish them up with the hooks? » says James of Zebedee, from another boat, which is now close at hand, because, after the incident, they have all crowded round Peter's boat.

« But how did you manage to do that? It never happens to you! » exclaims Andrew from another boat.

Peter replies to them all, one after the other, whilst they have almost spoken all together. « Have they seen me? It does not matter! I wish they had seen also my heart in the same way and... Well, better not say that, Peter... But you must know that you are not hurting me. It was not a wrong manoeuvre, it happened for a good

purpose, one that can mortify me... Don't worry, James! Old things went to the bottom... I wish I could throw out after them also the old man persisting in me! I would be prepared to lose everything, even my boat, to be just as the Master wants me... How did I manage? Eh! I proved to myself, to my pride, which wants to teach even God things of the spirit, that I am an utter beast also in matters concerning boats... It serves me right. I made a parable of myself for myself... Didn't I, Master? »

Jesus smiles nodding... Sitting astern, in His habitual place, white against the darkening air, tranquil, His hair blowing gently in the evening breeze, He stands out in the twilight like an angel of peaceful brightness.

The Roman boats have reached them.

« They have very good boats and perfect sails... not to mention the sailors! They go as fast as halcyons! They exploit every puff of wind and even the slightest currents... »

« Almost all the oarsmen are from Crete or from the Nile region » explains Johanna.

« The sailors of the delta are most skilled, and so are those from Crete. But also those from Italy are very good... They pass through Scylla and Charybdis... and that is enough to say that they are very good » admits the unknown man whose name is Benjamin.

« Where are we going, Lord? To Magdala, or... Look! Those of Magdala are coming here... »

In fact all the little boats of that village hasten to depart from the shingly shore and the little harbour, laden, nay, frightfully overladen with people, so much so that the gunwales are almost on a level with the surface of the water and they are steering with difficulty towards the boats from Capernaum.

« No. Let us stop here offshore from the town. I will speak from the boat... »

« The trouble is that... Those imprudent people want to be drowned. Look, Master! It is true that the lake is as smooth as a millpond... but water is always water... and weight is weight... and there... they seem to think that they are on land and not on water... Tell them to go back... They will be drowned... »

« Man of little faith! Do you not remember that while you believed in My invitation, you walked on water as on solid ground? They have faith. And thus, in spite of the laws of balance between weight and density, the waters will support those overloaded boats. »

« If that happens... this is really the evening of a great miracle... » murmurs Peter shrugging his shoulders, casting the little anchor to secure the boat, which remains thus in the centre of a circle of boats, some from Capernaum, some from Magdala and some from Tiberias. These last ones are those of the Roman ladies, and they

prudently remain behind those from Capernaum, towards the centre of the lake.

Jesus faces away from them. He looks towards those of Magdala, towards the large shady garden of Mary of Lazarus, towards the little houses, the whiteness of which, spread as they are along the shore, stands out in the night.

The lake, no longer agitated by prows and oars, has become calm again: a large sheet of plateglass veined with silver in the early moonlight and strewn with scales of topazes and rubies where the flames of torches or the light of lamps, placed on every prow, are mirrored in the lake.

Faces look strange in the contrast of the red-yellow lights or of the moonbeams; some appear very clear, some can hardly be seen as they are, some seem cut into two, lengthwise or horizontally, with only the forehead or only the chin lit up, or with one cheek only, half a face, with a clean-cut profile, as if there was nothing on the other side. Some eyes are shining, some look like empty eyesockets, and likewise, some mouths are seen smiling cheerfully displaying strong teeth, while others seem to be erased from the shaded faces.

But to make it possible for everybody to see Jesus, the boats from Capernaum and Magdala hand over a large number of lamps, which -are placed at Jesus' feet, on the little benches, while some are hung on the inactive oars, some are placed in the bow and stern, and some are even hung up in clusters on the mast, the sail of which has been struck. Jesus' boat is thus resplendent in a circle of boats left without lamps, and He is now clearly visible, as He is floodlit. Only the Roman boats still look reddish because of their red torches, the flames of which flicker in the very light breeze.

« Peace be with you! » begins Jesus standing up, steady notwithstanding the light pitching of the boat, and stretching out His arms to bless. He then goes on, speaking slowly, to be heard by everybody, and His voice carries powerfully and harmoniously over the silent lake.

« A short time ago one of My apostles suggested a parable to Me which I will now propose to you and it may be useful to everybody, as everybody can understand it. Listen to it.

A man, sailing on the lake on a calm evening like this and feeling sure of himself, presumed that he was faultless. He was most skilled in manoeuvring and consequently he considered himself superior to all the other people he met on the lake, many of whom were on it to amuse themselves and thus they lacked the experience which comes from habitual work done to earn one's living. Further, he was a good Israelite and so he thought that he possessed all virtues. Finally, he was really a good man. Now, one evening when he was sailing confidently, he took the liberty of

passing judgement on his neighbour. A neighbour, according to him, so remote as not to be considered as neighbour. No tie of nationality, or of trade or faith joined him to that neighbour and thus, without any restraint of national, religious or professional solidarity, he derided him frankly, nay, severely, and he complained at not being the master of the place, because, if he were, he would drive his neighbour from it, and in his intolerant faith, he almost reproached the Most High for allowing those other people, who were different from him, to do what he did and to live where he lived.

In his boat was a friend, a good friend who loved him with justice and therefore wanted him to be wise and, when necessary, corrected his wrong ideas. So that evening, this friend said to the boatman: "Why such thoughts? Is not the Father of men one only? Is He not the Lord of the Universe? Does perhaps His sun not shine on all men to warm them, and do His clouds perhaps not rain on the fields of Gentiles as they do on those of Hebrews? And if He does that for the material needs of man, will He not provide likewise for their spiritual necessities? And would you suggest to God what he must do? Who is like God?"

The man was good. In his intolerance there was much ignorance, many wrong ideas, but his will was not evil, he had no intention of offending God, on the contrary it was his intention to defend His interests. Upon hearing those words he threw himself at the feet of his wise friend and asked him to forgive him for speaking foolishly. He asked him so impetuously, that he almost caused a disaster, sinking the boat and drowning those in it, because in his anxiety to ask for forgiveness, he neglected rudder, sails and currents. Thus after his first mistake of evil judgement, he made another error of wrong maneuver, and proved to himself that he was not only a poor judge but also a clumsy sailor.

That is the parable. Now listen. According to you, was that man forgiven by God or not? Remember: he had sinned against God and his neighbour by judging the actions of both and he almost became the homicide of his companions. Meditate and reply... »

And Jesus folds His arms and looks around at all the boats, as far as the most remote ones, at the Roman boats, which display a line of attentive faces of patricians and oarsmen, looking over the gunwales...

The people speak in low voices and confer with one another... A hardly audible murmur of voices which mingles with the barely sensible lapping of the water against the hulls. The judgement is a difficult one. The majority, however, are of the opinion that the man was not forgiven because he had sinned. No, he was not forgiven at least as far as the first sin was concerned...

Jesus hears the murmur become louder in that sense and smiles

while His most beautiful eyes shine even at night like two sapphires in the rays of the moon, which is more and more beautiful and bright, so much so that many Put out torches and lamps and remain with only the phosphorescent moonlight.

« Put out these lights as well, Simon. They are as tiny as sparks when compared with the stars and planets with which this sky is strewn » says Jesus to Peter who is in suspense waiting to hear the judgement of the crowds. And Jesus caresses His apostle, while the latter stretches out to detach the lamps, and He asks him in a low voice: « Why do you look so upset? »

« Because this time You are having me judged by the people... »

« Oh! Why are you afraid of them? »

« Because... like me... they are unfair... »

« But it is God Who judges, Simon! »

« Yes. But You have not yet forgiven me and You are now awaiting their judgement to do so... You are right, Master... I am incorrigible... But... why this judgement of God for Your poor Simon?... »

Jesus lays His hand on his shoulder and He does so easily because Peter is in the lower part of the boat and Jesus is standing on a stem board, thus much above Peter. And He smiles... but does not reply to him. He instead asks the people: « Well? Speak up. Boat by boat. »

Alas! Poor Peter! If God had judged him according to the opinion of the people who are present, He would have condemned him. With the exception of three boats, all the others, including the apostolic ones, condemn him. The Romans do not give their opinions, and they are not asked to do so, but it is obvious that they also judge that the man is to be condemned, because they wave from one boat to the other - there are three of them - with thumbs down.

Peter's frightened rolling eyes look up at Jesus' face and they meet an even kinder glance coming from His sapphire eyes, just like peace, and he sees a face bright with love bend over him while he feels being drawn against Jesus' side, so that his grey-haired head is against Jesus' chest, while the arm of the Master clasps him embracing his shoulder.

« That is how man judges. But God does not judge so, My children! You say: "He was not forgiven". I say: "The Lord did not even see in him anything to be forgiven". Because forgiveness presupposes fault. But in this case there was no fault. No, do not grumble, shaking your heads. I repeat: there was no fault here. When is it that a fault occurs? When there is the will to commit a sin, the knowledge of sinning and the persistence to want to sin also after knowing that a certain action is sinful. It all depends on the will by which one performs an action, whether it is virtuous or

sinful. When one does something which is apparently good, but does not know that it is a good action, nay, one believes that it is a bad action, one commits a sin as if one had performed a bad action, and viceversa.

Take, as an instance, a man who has an enemy who knows that he is ill. He knows that by the doctor's order his enemy must not drink any cold water, nay, any liquid whatsoever. He goes to visit him, feigning friendliness. He hears him moan: "I am thirsty! I am thirsty!" and simulating pity, he hastens to give him some icy water from a well, saying: "Drink, my friend. I love you and I cannot bear to see you suffer so much from thirst. Look. I brought you this water on purpose, it is so cool. Drink it, for a great reward is given to those who assist sick people and give drink to the thirsty" and by giving him to drink, he causes his death. Do you think that that action, good in itself because it comprised two works of mercy, is a good one now that it has been performed for a wicked purpose? No, it is not.

And again: a son who has a drunken father and who locks the wine-cellar so that he may not drink himself to death, takes his money and imposes himself severely on him so that he may not go about the village, drinking and ruining himself, do you think that he sins against the fourth commandment simply because he reproaches his father and he acts as head of the family also with regard to his father? To all appearance he makes his father suffer and seems to be guilty. In actual fact he is a good son, because his will is good, as he wants to save his father from death. It is always one's will which sets value on one's deeds.

And again: is the soldier who kills in war a homicide? No, if his spirit does not agree to slaughter and if he fights because he is compelled to do so, and he does so with the least humanity which the hard law of war and his subaltern situation impose.

Therefore that boatman, who through the good will of believer, patriot and fisherman, could not stand those who, according to him, were desecrators, did not sin against the love for his neighbour, but he only had the wrong idea of love for our neighbour. Neither did he sin against respect for God, because his resentment against God came from his good, but not well balanced or bright spirit of believer. And he did not commit homicide because he caused the boat to heel through his good will to ask for forgiveness.

So you must always distinguish. God is Mercy more than intransigence. God is good. God is a Father. God is Love. That is the true God. And the true God opens His heart to everybody, saying to everybody: "Come", pointing His Kingdom to everybody. And He is free to do so, because He is the Only, Universal, Creator, Eternal Lord.

I beg you, you people of Israel. Be just. Remember these things. Beware lest they should be understood by those whom you consider unclean, while they remain incomprehensible to you. Also excessive and disorderly love for religion and fatherland is sinful, because it becomes selfishness. And selfishness is always the reason and cause of sin.

Yes. Selfishness is a sin, because it sows in hearts an evil will, which makes people rebel against God and His commandments. The mind of a selfish person no longer sees God or His truth clearly. Pride exhales fumes in the egoist and dims the truth. The mind, which in the fog no longer sees the pure light of truth as it saw it before becoming proud, begins the process of queries, and from queries it passes on to doubt, from doubt to indifference not only with regard to love and trust in God and His justice, but also in respect of the fear of God and of His punishment. And thus the easiness to sin, and from such easiness the solitude of the soul which departs from God, and as it no longer has the will of God as guidance, it lapses into the law of its own will of sinner.

Oh! the will of a sinner is a nasty chain, one end of which is in the hands of Satan, and the other end is fastened together with a cannon ball to the feet of man to hold him there, a slave, in filth, bent, in darkness. Is it then possible for man not to commit mortal sins? Is it possible for him not to commit them, if he is urged only by his evil will? Only then God does not forgive. But when man is animated by good will, and performs also spontaneous acts of virtue, he certainly ends up by possessing the Truth, because good will leads to God, and God, the Most Holy Father, bends lovingly, pitifully, leniently to assist, to bless, to forgive His children who have good will.

So the man of that boat was fondly loved because, as he did not wish to sin, he had committed no sin.

Go in peace, now, to your homes. The stars have filled the whole sky and the moon is clothing the world with purity. Go, and be as obedient as the stars and become as pure as the moon. Because God loves those who are obedient and pure in spirit, and He blesses those who in all their actions apply their good will to love God and their brothers and to work for His glory and their benefit. Peace be with you! »

And Jesus stretches out His arms again blessing, while the circle of the boats move away, breaks up, and each boat resumes its course.

Peter is so happy that he does not think about moving.

Matthew shakes him: « Are you not moving, Simon? I am not very experienced... »

« That's true!... Oh! My Master! So You had not condemned me?' And I was so afraid... »

« Be not afraid, Simon of Jonah. I took you to save you, not to lose you. I took you because of your good will... Cheer up. Take the rudder and look at the North Star and go with confidence, Simon of Jonah. Never hesitate... In all your navigations... God, your Jesus, will always be standing beside you in the prow of your spiritual boat. And He will always understand you, Simon of Jonah. Do you understand? Always. And He will not have to forgive you because you may also fall, like a weak child, but you will never have the evil will to fall... Be happy, Simon of Jonah. »

And Peter nods... he is too moved to be able to speak, suffocated by love, and his hand is rather shaky on the rudder, but his face shines with peace, with confidence, with love, while he looks at His Master standing beside him, on the edge of the little boat, like a bright white archangel.

#### **447. Little Alphaeus of Meroba.**

25th June 1946.

« Take provisions and clothes for several days. We are going to Hippo and then to Gamala and Aphek, we will then go down to Gherghesa and come back here before the Sabbath » orders Jesus, standing on the threshold of the house and caressing absentmindedly some children of Capernaum, who have come to greet their great Friend, as soon as the setting sun is no longer deadly scorching and allows people to leave their houses. And Jesus is one of the first to do so in the little town which revives after the suffocating torpor of the hot hours of the day.

The apostles do not appear to be very enthusiastic about the order they have received. They look at one another, they cast glances at the sun, which is so pitiless, they touch the walls of the house and feel that they are still hot, with their bare feet they touch the ground and say: « It is as hot as a brick near the fire... » implying by such pantomime that one must be mad to go about...

Jesus stands off the door-post against which He was leaning lightly and He says: « Anyone who does not feel like coming may remain here. I do not force anybody. But I do not want to leave this area without My word. »

« Master... don't say that! We are all coming... Only... we thought it was still early to go about... »

« Before the Feast of the Tabernacles I want to go towards the north, so much farther and where boats cannot go. Consequently we must do this area now, as travelling by lake we can save much of the road. »

« You are right. I am going to prepare the boats... » and Simon of Jonah goes out with his brother and the two sons of Zebedee and some disciples, to prepare for departure.

Jesus is left with the Zealot, His cousins, Matthew, the Iscariot, Thomas and the inseparable Philip and Bartholomew, who are preparing their sacks and filling flasks, packing loaves of bread, fruit, everything that is needed.

A little child is whining leaning against Jesus' knees.

« Why are you weeping, Alphaeus? » asks Jesus, bending to kiss him...

No reply... He whimpers more loudly.

« He has seen the fruit and wants it » says the bored Iscariot.

« Oh! poor little fellow! He is right! One must not let children see certain things, without giving them some. Take this, son. Don't cry! » says Mary of Alphaeus, picking a golden bunch of grapes from a vine branch, placed in a basket with all the leaves and bunches still attached to it.

« I don't want the grapes... » and he cries louder.

« He wants honeyed water, certainly » says Thomas and he offers his little flask saying: « Children like it and it is good for them. Also my little nephews... »

« I don't want your water... » and his crying increases in tone and intensity.

« What do you want then? » asks Judas of Alphaeus half serious and half annoyed.

« Two slaps, that's what he wants! » says the Iscariot.

« Why? poor boy! » asks Matthew.

« Because he is a bore. »

« Oh! If we had to box all the boring persons' ears... we would have to spend our lives boxing our own » says Thomas very calmly.

« Perhaps he is not feeling well. Fruit and water, water and fruit... make tummies ache » states Mary Salome who is among the women disciples.

« If he gets bread, water and fruit, he is lucky... They are so poor! » says Matthew, who by his experience as tax collector is aware of all the financial situations in Capernaum.

« What is the matter with you, my little son? Is it sore here?... But you are not feverish... » says Mary of Clopas who is kneeling beside the little child.

« Oh! Mother! He is just being naughty!... Can't you see it? You would spoil everybody. »

« I did not spoil you, my dear Judas. But I loved you. And you did not realise, son, that I loved you to the extent of protecting you against the rigours of Alphaeus... »

« That's true, Mother... I was wrong in reproaching you. »

« No harm, son. But if you want to be an apostle, strive to have the heart of a mother for believers. They are like children, you know... and one must be patient and loving with them... »

« Well said, Mary! » says Jesus approvingly.

« We will end up by being taught by women » grumbles Judas Iscariot. « And perhaps even by pagan females... »

« Without any doubt. They will exceed you in many things, if you remain what you are, and you above all, Judas. You will certainly be surpassed by everybody, by little children, by beggars, by ignorant people, by women, by heathens... »

« You could say that I will be the abortion of the world and You would be quicker » replies Judas with a sneer.

« The others are coming back... and we had better leave, don't you think so? » says Bartholomew to put an end to the scene, which is grievous for many, although in different ways.

The crying of the little boy reaches its peak.

« Well, what is it that you want? What is the matter with you? » shouts the Iscariot shaking the boy rudely to take him away from Jesus' knees, to which the child is clinging, and above all to give vent to his anger on the innocent boy.

« With You! With You!... Go away... and blows, blows... »

« Ah!... Oh! poor child! It is true! Since his mother got married again, the children of her first husband... are like beggars... as if they were not born of her... She sends them about like beggars and... oh! there is no bread for them... » says the wife of the landlord and she seems to be well informed of facts and their protagonists. And she concludes: « It would be a good thing if someone adopted the three forlorn sons... »

« Don't tell Simon of Jonah, woman. You would get his mother-in-law to have a mortal hatred of you; she is very angry at him and at all of us. Even this morning she insulted Simon, Marjiam and me, as I was with them... » says Matthew.

« I will not tell Simon... But that is the situation... »

« And would you not take them? You have no children... » says Jesus gazing at her...

« I... oh! I would like... But we are poor... and then... Thomas... He has nephews... and I also... and... and... »

« And above all you do not want to help your neighbour... Woman, yesterday you criticised the Pharisees of Capernaum as being hard-hearted, you criticised your fellow-citizens for turning a deaf ear to My words... But in what are you behaving differently, having known Me for over two years?... »

The woman lowers her head teasing her dress with her fingers... But she does not speak one word in favour of the little child who is still crying.

« We are ready, Master » shouts Peter who is arriving.

« Oh! to be poor!... And persecuted!... » says Jesus with a sigh, raising His arms and shaking them in a gesture of discouragement...

« Son!... » says Mary, Who has been silent so far, to comfort Him. And Her word is sufficient to console Him.

« Go ahead with the provisions. I am going with My Mother to the boy's house » Jesus orders those who are arriving and those who are already with Him, and He sets out with His Mother, Who is carrying the child in Her arms...

They go towards the country.

« What will You tell her, Son? »

« Mother, what do You expect Me to tell a mother whose heart has no love even for the children who are the fruit of her womb? »

« You are right... So? »

« So... Let us pray, Mother. »

They walk praying.

An old woman asks them: « Are You taking Alphaeus to Meroba? Tell her that it is time that she should take care of them. They can but become thieves... They are like locusts wherever they happen to go... I am indignant at her, not at those three poor wretches... Oh! How unfair death is! Could Jacob not have survived, and could she not have died? You should make her die, so... »

« Woman, old as you are, are you not yet wise? And you say such words, while you may die any moment? In actual fact, you are as unfair as Meroba. Repent and sin no more. »

« Forgive me, Master... It's her guilty behaviour that makes me talk nonsense... »

« Yes, I forgive you. But never speak those words again, not even to yourself. You do not correct errors by cursing, but by loving. If Meroba died, would the fate of these children change? Perhaps the widower would get married again and he would have children of a third marriage and the boys would have a stepmother... Thus their destiny would be worse. »

« That is true. I am old and foolish. Here is Meroba. She is cursing already... I leave You, Master. I do not want her to think that I have been talking to You about her. She is a viper... »

But her curiosity is stronger than her fear for the « viper », and the little old woman, even if she moves away from Jesus and Mary, does not go far, instead she bends to root out on the roadside some grass, which a nearby fountain has moistened, in order to listen without being noticed.

« You are here? What have you done? Go home! You are always wandering about like stray animals, like dogs with no master, like... »

« Like children with no mother. Woman, are you aware that it is an adverse testimony for a mother the fact that her little children are not always close to her skirt? »

« It's because they are bad... »

« No. I have been coming here these last thirty months. Previously, when Jacob was alive and during the first months of widowhood, it was not so. Then you got married again... and with

the memory of your previous wedding, you lost also that of your children. But what is the difference between them and the one who is maturing in your womb? Did you not bear them as well? Did you not suckle them? Look at that dove over there... How tenderly it takes care of that little pigeon... And yet it is already sitting on other eggs... Look at that sheep. She no longer suckles the lamb of the previous litter because she is pregnant again. And yet see how she licks its little snout and she lets the lively little lamb bump against her side? Are you not replying to Me? Woman, do you pray the Lord? »

« Of course I do. I am not a heathen... »

« And how can you speak to the just Lord if you are unjust? And how can you go to the synagogue and listen to the rolls of parchment which speak of the love of God for His children, without feeling remorse in your heart? Why do you not speak, and your attitude is so arrogant? »

« Because I did not ask for Your words... and I do not know why You have come to annoy me... My condition deserves respect... »

« And does the condition of your soul not deserve any? Why do you not respect the rights of your soul? I know what you mean: that a fit of anger may risk the life of the unborn child... But do you not take care of the life of your soul? It is more valuable than the unborn child's... You know that... Death may be the end of your state. And do you want to face that hour with an upset, sick unjust soul? »

« My husband says that You are one to whom nobody should listen. I will not listen to You. Alphaeus, come... » and she is about to go away amidst the screams of the little boy who knows that he is going to get a thrashing and does not want to leave Mary's arms. And Mary sighing tries to persuade the woman and says to her: « I am a mother as well and I can understand so many things. And I am a woman... I can therefore pity women. You are going through a difficult period, are you not? You suffer but you are not good at suffering... you become embittered thus... Sister, listen. If I gave you little Alphaeus now, you would be unfair to him and to yourself. Leave him with me for a few days, oh! only a few days. You will see that when he is no longer with you, you will pine for him... because a son is such a dear thing, that when he is away from us, we feel poor, cold, with no light... »

« But take him! Take him! I wish You would take the other two as well! But I don't know where they are... »

« Yes, I will take him. Goodbye, woman. Come, Jesus. » And Mary turns round quickly and goes away sobbing...

« Do not weep, Mother. »

« Do not judge her, Son... »

The two sentences are uttered simultaneously and then, with one

thought only, their lips speak the same words: « If they do not understand natural love, can they understand the love which is in the Gospel? » and Son and Mother look at each other, over the little head of the innocent child who now relaxes confidently and happily in Mary's arms...

« We will have one disciple more than we foresaw, Mother. »

« And he will enjoy days of peace... »

« Have You seen, eh! She is as deaf as a door-post. I had warned You! And now? And later? »

« Now there is peace. Later God grant there may be a pitiful heart... Why not yours, woman? A glass of water given out of love is taken into account in Heaven. But for those who love an innocent child for My sake... oh! what beatitude for those who love the little ones and save them from evil!... »

The little old woman remains pensive... and Jesus takes a short cut to the lake. When He arrives there, He takes the little boy from Mary's arms to let Her get into the boat more easily, and He lifts the child up as far as He can, to show him and He smiles brightly saying to those who are already in the boats: « Look! This time our preaching will certainly be fruitful, because an innocent is with us » and He walks with steady steps on the board although it sways, He goes into the boat and sits beside His Mother, while the boat moves away from the shore, steering at once south-east, towards Hippo.

#### **448. At the Village before Hippo.**

26th June 1946.

Hippo is not on the shore of the lake, as I thought, when I saw some houses on the shore almost at the southeastern end. I realise that from the words of the disciples. That group of houses, I would say, is the forefront of Hippo, which is farther back in the hinterland. Like Ostia with regard to Rome, or the Lido with regard to Venice, it represents the outlet on the lake for the inland town which makes use of the lake routes for imports and exports, and also to shorten journeys from this area to the Galilean shores on the other side, and finally, as a place of amusement for the idle citizens of the town and for the supplies of fish procured by the many fishermen of the village.

In the calm evening they land here, near a little natural port formed by the bed of a torrent at present dry, and where the sky-blue water of the lake comes in calmly for a few metres, as it is no longer driven back by the water of the torrent. On the shore there are large and small houses of fishermen, who toil the waters abounding in fish, and of market-gardeners, who cultivate a strip of rich moist ground, which is irrigated by the nearby waters and

stretches from the shore inland, more northwards than southwards, ending sharply at the beginning of the high cliff, which rises almost sheer from the lake. It is the same cliff from which the pigs of the miracle of the Gerasenes rushed into the lake.

As it is evening, the inhabitants are on the terraces or in the kitchen gardens having supper. But as the kitchen gardens are surrounded by low hedges and the terraces by low walls, their inhabitants soon see the little flotilla of boats moor in the little harbour and many get up and go to meet those who have arrived, some out of curiosity, some because they know them.

« It's the boat of Simon of Jonah together with that of Zebedee. So it can be no one but the Rabbi Who has come here with His disciples » declares a fisherman.

« Woman, take the child at once and follow me. Perhaps it is Him. He will cure him. The angel of God has brought Him to us » a kitchen gardener orders his wife, whose face is tear-stained.

« As far as I am concerned, I believe. I remember that miracle very well! All those pigs! The pigs which extinguish with water the heat of the demons possessing them... The torture must have been dreadful, if the pigs, which are always so disdainful of cleanliness, threw themselves into the water... » says a man who hastens there in support of the Master.

« Oh! You are right! It must have been real torture. I was there as well, and I remember. The bodies exhaled fumes, so did the waters. The lake became warmer than the water of Hamatha. And the wood and the grass across which they ran were burnt. »

« I went there but I saw no change... » a third man observes.

« No change! Well your eyes are covered with scales! Look! You can see it from here. See over there? Where the dry river-bed is? Look a little farther away and you will see whether... »

« No! That devastation was brought about by the Roman soldiers when they were looking for that rogue in the cold nights of the month of Tebeth. They camped there and lit fires. »

« And did they burn all the wood to light fires? Look how many trees are missing there! »

« A wood! Two or three oak-trees! »

« And is that nothing? »

« No. But you know! As far as they are concerned, our property is of no account. They are the rulers and we the oppressed people. Ah! Until... » the discussion moves from the supernatural to the Political field.

« Who will take me to the Rabbi? Have mercy on a blind man! Where is He? Tell me. I looked for Him in Jerusalem, at Nazareth, at Capernaum. He had always left before I arrived... Where is He? Oh! Have mercy on me! » moans a man about forty years old groping about with a stick.

Those whose legs or backs are struck abuse him, but no one feels pity for him and everybody knocks against him passing by, without stretching out a hand to guide him. The poor blind man stops, frightened and depressed...

« The Rabbi! The Rabbi! Ahc-Ahc, il il leee! » (I am striving to reproduce... the word of a shrill cry of the women modulating it. But it is a cry, not a word! It resembles more the chirping of some birds than a human word.)

« He will bless our children! »

« His word will startle the fruit which I have in my womb. Rejoice, my creature! The Saviour is speaking to you » says a buxom wife caressing her swollen abdomen under her loose dress.

« Oh! Perhaps He will make mine prolific! It would be joy and peace between Elisha and me. I have been to all the places where they say that a woman becomes fertile. I drank the water of the well near Rachel's tomb and that of the stream in the grotto where His Mother gave birth to Him... I went to Hebron to take for three days the earth of the place where the Baptist was born... I fed on the fruit of Abraham's oak-tree and I wept invoking Abel where he was delivered and killed... I have tried all the holy things, all the miraculous things of Heaven and earth, as well as medicines, and doctors, and vows, and prayers, and offerings... but my womb has not opened to the seed, and Elisha can hardly put up with me and he finds it difficult not to hate me!!! Alas! » moans an already withered woman.

« You are old now, Sella! Resign yourself! » reply those women with pity mixed with slight contempt and evident triumphant mien - who pass by with their wombs swollen with maternity or with sucklings feeding at their flourishing mammae.

« No! Don't say that! He raised the dead! Will He not be able to give life to my womb? »

« Make room! Make room! Make room for my sick mother » shouts a young man who is holding the shafts of an improvised litter, which is held at the other end by a very depressed girl. On the litter is a woman, still young, but reduced to a yellowish skeleton.

« We will have to inform Him of poor John and show Him where he is. He is the most unhappy of all, because he is a leper and he cannot go looking for the Master... » says an authoritative old man.

« We are first! If He goes towards Hippo, we have no hope. The townspeople will take Him for themselves and we will be neglected as usual. »

« But what is happening there? Why are the women shouting thus over there, on the shore? »

« Because they are silly! »

« No. They are shouts of joy. Let's run... »

The road is thronged with people moving towards the shore and

the gravel-bed, where Jesus and His apostles have been blocked by the people who flocked there first.

« A miracle! A miracle! Eliza's son, who was given up by doctors, has been cured! The Rabbi cured him by putting some saliva in his throat. »

The « Ahc-Ahc-il-il-lee » of the women become more trilling and piercing, mingled with the loud hosannas of men.

Jesus is literally overwhelmed notwithstanding His height. The apostles do everything they can to make room for Him. Nothing doing! The women disciples with Mary in the middle of them are separated from the group of the apostles. The little boy is frightened and is crying in the arms of Mary of Alphaeus. And his weeping draws the attention of many people to the group of the women disciples, and there is the usual well-informed man who says: « Oh! there is also the Mother of the Rabbi and the mothers of the disciples!... »

« Which? Which are they? »

« The Mother is the pale fair-haired one wearing a linen dress, and the others are the old ones, the one with the little boy and the one with a basket on her head. »

« And who is the little boy? »

« Her son, eh! Can't you hear him call her mummy? »

« Whose son? The old woman's? Not possible! »

« The young woman's. Can't you see that he wants to go to her? »

« No. The Rabbi has no brothers. I know that for certain. »

Jesus, moving with difficulty, manages to reach the litter on which is lying the sick woman carried by her children and He cures her. Meanwhile some women, who have overheard the conversation, curious as they are, go towards Mary.

But one of them is not curious. She throws herself at Her feet saying: « For the sake of Your maternity, have mercy on me. » She is the barren woman.

Mary bends and asks: « What do you want, sister? »

« To be a mother... A son!... Only one!... I am hated because I am barren. I believe that Your Son can do everything, but I have such a great faith in Him, that I think that as He was born of You, He made You as holy and powerful as He is. Now I beg You... for Your joys of mother I beg You: make me fertile. Touch me with Your hand and I will be happy... »

« Your faith is great, woman. But faith is to be given to Him, Who is entitled to it: to God. Come, therefore, to My Jesus... » and She takes her by the hand asking with graceful insistence to be allowed to Pass until She reaches Jesus.

The other women disciples follow Her in the wake which opens in the crowd and the women who had approached Mary do likewise and in the meantime they ask Mary of Alphaeus who is

the little boy whom she is holding up above the crowds.

« A little boy who is no longer loved by his mother. He has come to the Rabbi seeking love... »

« A little boy no longer loved by his mother!?! »

« Have you heard, Susanna? »

« Who is the hyena? »

« Alas! And I am suffering agonies because I have none! Give him to me, give him to me, that a son may kiss me at least once!... » and Sella, the barren woman, almost tears the little child from the arms of Mary of Alphaeus and she presses him to her heart, still trying to follow Mary, Who has become separated from her the moment that Sella left Mary's hand to take the child.

« Jesus, listen. There is a woman asking a grace. She is barren... »

« Do not trouble the Master for her, woman. Her womb is dead » says one who is not aware that he is speaking to the Mother of God. Then, embarrassed because of his mistake about which he is warned, he endeavours not to be noticed and to disappear while Jesus replies both to him and to the suppliant woman saying: « I am the Life. Woman, let it be done to you what you have asked » and He lays His hand on Sella's head for a moment.

« Jesus! Son of David, have mercy on me! » shouts the blind man mentioned previously. He has slowly arrived near the crowd and from the outskirts of it he cries his invocation.

Jesus, Who had lowered His head to hear Sella's words of supplication, raises His head again and looks in the direction from which the voice of the blind man comes, syncopated like the cry of a shipwrecked person.

« What do you want Me to do for you? » He shouts.

« That I may see. I am in darkness. »

« I am the Light. I want it! »

« Ah! I see! I can see again! Let me pass! That I may kiss the feet of my Lord! »

« Master, You have cured everybody here. But there is a leper in a hut in the wood. He always begs us to take You to him... »

« Let us go! Please! Let Me go. Do not hurt yourselves! I am here for everybody... Please, make room. You are hurting women and children. I am not leaving yet. I will be here tomorrow and I will be in this area for five days. You can follow Me, if you wish so... »

Jesus tries to discipline the crowd, to ensure that the citizens, in order to benefit by His visit, may not harm themselves. But the crowd is like an elastic substance which dilates then presses round Him once again, it is like an avalanche, which by natural law can but become more compact the more it descends, it is like particles of iron attracted by a magnet... Thus progress is slow, encumbered, difficult... They are all perspiring, the apostles are bawling, elbowing their way through the crowd, kicking shins at the same

time... All efforts are vain! It takes them a quarter of an hour to cover ten metres.

A woman about forty years old succeeds through sheer perseverance in making her way as far as Jesus and touches His elbow.

« What do you want, woman? »

« That little boy... I heard about him... I am a widow and I have no children... Remember me. I am Sarah of Aphek, the widow of the mat vendor. Remember. My house is near the square of the red fountain. But I own also some vineyards and a wood. I can afford to assist those who are alone... and I would be happy... »

« I will remember that, woman. May your pity be blessed. »

The village, which stretches more parallelly than vertically to the lake, is soon crossed and they find themselves in the peaceful silent country at twilight. However, it does not get dark, as the transition from daylight to moonlight is imperceptible. They go towards the ramifications of the high cliff, which farther south stretches out as far as the lake. On the cliff there are some grottoes, I do not know whether they are natural ones or dug on purpose in the rock; many have been walled up and whitewashed outside and are certainly sepulchres.

« Here we are! Let us stop in order not to be infected. We are close to the leper's hideout and this is the time when he comes to that rock to collect offerings. He was rich, You know? We remember him. And he was also good. But now he is a holy man. The more sorrow struck him, the more holy he became. We do not know how it happened. They say that it was brought about by some pilgrims to whom he gave hospitality. They were going to Jerusalem, so they said. They appeared to be sound, but they were certainly lepers. The fact is that after they left, the wife and the servants first, then the children, finally he, became infected with leprosy. All of them. The first - and it was their hands that became infected - were those who had washed the feet and the clothes of the pilgrims, that is why we say that they must have been the cause of it all. The children: three, died soon. Then the wife, and she died more of grief than of disease... He... When the priest declared them all lepers, he bought this part of the mountain with his money which had now become useless and he had provisions stored there for himself and his family... including servants, together with hoes and picks... and he began to dig the sepulchres... and one by one he buried them all: his little children, then his wife, the servants... He is the only one left all alone, poor, because everything comes to an end, as time passes... and the situation has lasted fifteen years... And yet... never one complaint. He was a learned man: he repeats the Scriptures by heart. He repeats them to the stars, to herbs, to trees, to birds, he repeats them to us who have so much to learn

from him, and he comforts our sorrows... he, wonder of wonders! comforts our sorrows. People come from Hippo and Gamala and even from Gherghesa and Aphek to hear him. When he heard of the miracle of the two men possessed... oh! he began to preach faith in You. Lord, if men greeted You with Your name of Messiah, if women greeted You as victor and king, if children know Your name and that You are the Holy One of Israel, that is due to the poor leper » relates on behalf of everybody the old man who was the first to speak of John.

« Will You cure him? » ask many.

« And are you asking Me? I have mercy on sinners, so what will I have for a just man? But is it perhaps he who is coming? Over there, among those bushes... »

« It is certainly him. What wonderful sight You have, Lord! We can hear the rustling noise, but do not see anything... »

The rustling also stops. There is dead silence and expectation...

Jesus is clearly visible, alone, a little ahead of the others, because He has gone forward as far as the rock on which some provisions have been laid; the others disappear in the dim light of some trees, mingling with trunks and bushes of the unbroken ground. Children also are silent, either because they have fallen asleep in their mothers' arms, or because they are frightened of the silence, of the sepulchres, of the bizarre shadows which the moon casts illuminating trees and rocks.

But the leper must see, and see well, from his hiding-place. He must be able to see the tall solemn person of the Lord, handsome and all white in the white moonlight. The tired glances of the leper certainly meet Jesus' bright eyes. What language is spoken by those divine, wide eyes, as bright as stars? What language is uttered by the lips open in a smile of love? Above all, what does the heart of the Christ say? A mystery. One of the many mysteries between God and souls in their spiritual relationship. The leper certainly understands because he shouts: « Here is the Lamb of God! Here is He Who has come to cure all the sorrows of the world! Jesus, blessed Messiah, our King and Saviour, have mercy on me! »

« What do you want? How can you believe in the Unknown One and see in Him the Expected One? What am I for you? The Unknown... »

« No. You are the Son of the living God. How do I know and see? I do not know. Here, within me, a voice has shouted: "Here is the Expected One! He has come to reward your faith". Unknown? Yes. The face of God is not known to anybody. Thus You are the "Unknown One" in Your appearance. But You are the Known One because of Your Nature and Your Royalty. Jesus, Son of the Father, Word Incarnate and God like the Father. That is who You are, and I greet You and beg You, believing in You. »

« And if I were not able to do anything and your faith were disappointed? »

« I would say that that is the will of the Most High and I would continue to believe and love, always hoping in the Lord. »

Jesus turns to the crowds who are listening in suspense to the conversation and He says: « I solemnly tell you that this man has the faith which shifts mountains. I solemnly tell you that true charity, faith and hope are tested more in sorrow than in joy, because the excess of joy is often the ruin of a spirit not yet perfected. It is easy to believe and be good when life is a placid succession of days all alike, even if not a pleasant one. But he who is able to persist in faith, hope and charity, also when diseases, poverty, death, misfortunes cause him to be left all alone, forlorn, avoided by everybody, and he does nothing but say: "Let that be done, which the Most High deems is useful to me", he truly not only deserves help from God, but, I tell you, his seat is ready in the Kingdom of Heaven and he will suffer no delay in expectation, because his justice has cancelled all debts of his past life. Man, I say to you: "Go in peace, as God is with you!". »

He turns round in saying so and stretches His arms out to the leper, with His gesture He almost draws him towards Himself, and when he is close at hand and clearly visible, He orders: « I want it! Be cleansed!... » and with her silvery beams the moon seems to cleanse and wipe away the pustules, the wounds, the nodules and the scabs of the horrible disease.

The body recomposes its features and becomes sound. It is an old dignified man, ascetic in his leanness, who, as soon as he becomes aware of the miracle through the hosannas shouted by the crowd, bends to kiss the ground, as he cannot touch Jesus or any other man before the time prescribed by the Law.

« Stand up. They will bring you clean clothes so that you may present yourself to the priest. But always present yourself to your God in purity of spirit. Goodbye, man. Peace be with you! »

And Jesus joins the crowds and slowly goes back to the village to rest.

#### **449. Morning Sermon in the Village on the Lake.**

27th June 1946.

It is a cool morning when the people wait for Jesus to come out of a house in the lake village to begin His preaching.

I think that the inhabitants slept very little that night, deeply moved as they were by the miracles which had been worked, by the joy of having the Master with them, by their desire not to waste one moment of His presence. They were late in going to sleep, because of the long talking in houses, recapitulating the

events, examining whether their spirits were endowed with faith, hope and charity, firm against every painful event, praised by the Master and proclaimed sure means to obtain grace from God in this and in the next life. And they woke early fearing that the Master might come out and go away early in the morning and they might not be present when He departed. Thus houses opened early to let their inhabitants go out into the streets, where, seeing that they were so many, practically all, and all prompted by the same thoughts, they said to one another: « It is really the first time that one only thought has urged our hearts and united them » and with fresh, kind, brotherly friendship, by mutual consent, they all set out towards the house where Jesus has been given hospitality and they crowded round it, noiselessly, waiting patiently and untiringly, quite decided to follow the Master, as soon as He comes out.

And many market-gardeners have picked in their gardens the fruits still covered with dew and are protecting them from the rising sun, from dust and flies, by covering them with fresh vineleaves or large fig-leaves, through the indentations of which peep red apples, which seem to have been painted by a miniaturist, and grapes like amber or onyx, or soft round figs of all kinds, some firmly closed within their skin delicately withered on the sweet pulp, some turgid and smooth as if they were covered with well-ironed silk and decorated with diamond drops at their lower ends, some open in a smile of their blond, rosy, deep red fibres, according to qualities. And some fishermen have brought some fish in small baskets, fish which they certainly caught during the night, sacrificing their sleep, because some are still alive and are gasping in their last painful aspirations and spasms of agony, while their panting and faint wriggling increase the silvery or delicately blue hues of their stomachs and backs, lying on a bed of grey-green leaves of willow-trees or poplars.

The lake, in the meantime, has changed from the delicate milky hue which light bestows on waters at daybreak - a hue so pure, I would say so angelical, almost abstract, so calmly the water rests on the shingly shore, just murmuring delicately among the pebbles - to the resplendent, more human, I would say carnal hue of dawn, which tinges the water with red as the rosy clouds are reflected in the lake. And the lake becomes sky-blue in the pure light of dawn and begins to live again, to pulsate, with its wavelets which stir and run joyfully breaking into foam on the shore, then run back to dance with other wavelets, adorning the entire sheet of the lake with a light snow-white lace, thrown on the silky blue water, rippled by the morning breeze. Then the first ray of sunlight strikes the water over there, towards Tarichea, where it was so green-blue because of the woods which it reflected, and it

assumes a golden hue and shines like a broken mirror struck by the sun, and the mirror expands incessantly, tinged with gold and topazes waters still blue, cancelling the rosy hues of the clouds reflected in the water, enveloping the keels of the last boats which are returning to port after fishing, as well as the keels of the first boats going out, while the sails, in the triumphal light of the risen sun, are as white as the wings of an angel against the blue of the sky and the green of the hills. Magnificent lake of Galilee which with its fruitful shores reminds me of our Lake Garda, and with its mystical peace Lake Trasimeno, gem of Palestine, worthy surroundings for most of the public life of Jesus!

Jesus appears at the door of the hospitable house and He smiles, praising His arms to bless the patient citizens awaiting Him.

« Peace be with you all.

Were you waiting for Me? Were you afraid that I might run away without saying goodbye to you? I always keep My promises. I am with you today to evangelize you and I will remain with you as I promised, to bless your houses, your gardens and boats, so that each family may be sanctified, and your work may be sanctified as well. But, remember, My blessing is to be assisted by your good will in order to be fruitful. And you know which is the good will that must enliven a family so that the house sheltering it may be holy. The husband is to be the head, but not the despot, of the wife, of the children and of the servants, and at the same time he is to be the king, the true king in the biblical sense of word.

Do you remember chapter eight of the first Book of the Kings? The elders of Israel gathered together and went to Ramah, where Samuel lived and they said to him: "Look, you are old and your children do not follow your ways. So give us a king to judge us, like the other nations". King, therefore, means judge, and he should be a just judge in order not to make his subjects unhappy here on the earth with wars, abuse of power, unfair heavy taxes, or in eternal life with a kingdom permissive of lasciviousness and vice. Woe to those kings who fail in their ministry, who turn a deaf ear to the voices of their subjects, who turn a blind eye to the evils of the nation, who become responsible for the sufferings of the people through alliances formed against justice for the only purpose of strengthening their power with the help of allies! But woe also to those fathers who fail in their duties, who are blind and deaf to the needs and faults of the members of their families, who are the cause of scandal or grief for it, who stoop to arrange worthless marriages by compromise, in order to enter into an alliance with rich powerful families, without considering that matrimony is intended, besides procreation, for the elevation and comfort of man and woman; it is a duty, a ministry, not a bargain, it is not sorrow, it is not debasement of either husband or wife. It is love,

not hatred. The head of the family, therefore, must be just without excessive hardness or pretensions and without excessive compliance and weakness. But if you had to choose between the former excess and the latter, pick the latter, because God, with regard to it, may say to you: "Why were you so good?" and will not condemn you, because excess in kindness is already a punishment for man through the overbearing action which other people take the liberty of performing against good persons; whereas He would always reproach you for your hardness, which is lack of love for your closest neighbour.

And the wife at home must be just with her husband, her children and servants. She must obey, respect, console and help her husband. She is to be obedient, providing her obedience does not imply consent to sin. The wife must be submissive but not degraded. Beware, o wives, that the first to judge you, after God, for certain guilty condescensions, are your very husbands, who persuade you to comply. They are not always desires of love, but they are also tests for your virtue. Even if he does not think about it at the moment, the day may come when the husband may say to himself: "My wife is very sensual" and thence he may begin to be suspicious of her fidelity. Be chaste in your conjugality. Behave in such a way that your chastity may impose on your husbands that reservedness which one has for pure things, and they may consider you as their equals, not as slaves or concubines kept only for "pleasure" and rejected when they are no longer liked. The virtuous wife, I would say the wife who also after conjugality retains that virginal "something" in attitude, in words, in her transports of love, can lead her husband to an elevation from sensuality to sentiment, whereby the husband divests himself of lewdness and becomes really "one thing" with his wife, whom he treats with the same respect with which a man treats a part of himself, which is just, because the wife is "bone from his bones and flesh from his flesh" and no man ill-treats his bones or his flesh, on the contrary he loves them, and therefore husband and wife, like the first married couple, look at each other without seeing their sexual nakedness, but let them love each other because of their spirits, without degrading shame.

Let the wife be patient and motherly with her husband. Let her consider him as the first of her children, because a woman is always a mother and man is always in need of a patient, prudent, affectionate, comforting mother. Blessed is the woman who knows how to be the companion and at the same time the mother of her husband to support him, and his daughter to be guided by him. A wife must be industrious. Work, while it does away with daydreams, is good for honesty and to one's purse as well. She should not torture her husband with foolish jealousies, which serve no

purpose. Is the husband honest? A stupid jealousy, by driving him out of the house, exposes him to the danger of falling into the snares of a prostitute. Is he not honest and faithful? The fury of a jealous wife will not correct him, but her grave attitude, free from grudge and rudeness, her dignified and loving, still loving behaviour, will make him ponder and return to reason. Learn how to win back your husbands, when a passion separates them from you, through your virtue, just as you conquered them in your youth through your beauty. And, to gain strength for such duty, and resist the grief which might make you unfair, love your children and consider their welfare.

A woman has everything in her children: joy, a royal crown for the cheerful hours when she is really the queen of the house and of her husband, and a balm in sorrowful hours, when betrayal or other grievous experiences of married life scourge her forehead and above all pierce her heart with the thorns of her sad regality of martyr spouse. Are you so depressed as to wish to go back to your family, divorcing, or to find compensation in a false friend who craves for the female but feigns to feel pity for the heart of the betrayed wife? No, women, no! Your children, your innocent children, who are already upset and prematurely sad because of the domestic milieu, which is no longer serene or just, are entitled to their mother, to their father, to the comfort of a house, where, if one love has perished, the other remains vigilant to watch over them. Their innocent eyes look at you, they study you and they understand more than you think, and they mould their spirits according to what they see and understand. Never scandalise your innocent children, but take shelter in them, as in a bulwark of adamant lilies, against the weakness of the flesh and the snares of snakes.

And let the woman be a mother. The just mother who is the sister as well as the mother, who is the friend as well as the sister of her sons and daughters. And who, above all and in everything, is an example. She must watch over her sons and daughters, correcting them gently, supporting them, making them ponder, and all that without preferences; because the children were all born of the same seed and of the same womb and if it is natural that good children are well-liked, because of the joy they give, it is also fair that children who are not good should be loved as well, although with sorrowful love, bearing in mind that man must not be more severe than God, Who loves not only good people, but also those who are not good, and He loves them to try and make them good, to give them means and time to become so, and He is patient until the death of man, reserving to Himself the right to become just Judge when man can no longer make amends.

And let Me tell you now something which does not concern this

subject, but is useful for you to bear in mind. Very often, too often, we hear people say that wicked persons are better off than good persons and that that is not fair. First of all I say to you: "Do not judge by appearances and by what you do not know". Appearances are often misleading and the judgement of God is not known on the Earth. You will become aware of it in the next life and you will see that the fleeting welfare of the wicked was granted as a means to attract them to Good and as a reward for the little good which even the most wicked man may do. But when you see things in the right light of future life, you will realise that the joyful time of the sinner was shorter than the life of a blade of grass, which began to grow in spring in the gravel-bed of a torrent, which dries up in summer, whereas one moment of glory in Heaven is greater than the most triumphant life any man ever lived, because of the joy which it confers on spirits who delight in it. Therefore, do not envy the prosperity of the wicked, but strive, through good will, to possess the eternal treasure of the just.

And reverting to how the members of a family and the inhabitants of a house should be, so that My blessing may remain fruitful in it, I tell you, children, to be submissive to your parents, to be respectful and obedient, so that you may be so also with the Lord your God. Because if you do not learn to obey the simple orders of your fathers and mothers, whom you see, how will you be able to obey the commands of God, which are given to you in His name, but you neither see nor hear Him? And if you do not learn to believe that he who loves, as a father and a mother love, can but order good things, how can you believe that the things, which are related to you as commands of God, are good? God loves, you know? and is a Father. And just because He loves you and wants you to be with Him, dear children, He wants you to be good. And the first school where you learn to become so, is your family. You learn there to love and to obey and there begins for you the way that leads to Heaven. So be good, respectful, docile. Love your fathers also when they correct you, because they do so for your own good, and love your mothers if they restrain you from doing actions which by their experience they know are not good. Honour your parents and do not make them blush because of your wicked deeds. Pride is not a good thing, but there is a holy pride, the pride of saying: "I did not grieve my father or my mother". Such behaviour, which makes you enjoy their company while they are alive, is peace on the wound of their death, whereas the tears, which a son causes his parents to shed, scorch the heart of the wicked son like melted lead, and notwithstanding every effort to soothe the injury, it is painful, and all the more so when the parent's death prevents the son from making amends... Oh! children, be good, always, if you want God to love you.

Lastly, holy is that house in which, through the justice of the masters, the servants also become just. Masters should remember that bad behaviour exacerbates and spoils servants, and the servants should bear in mind that their bad behaviour disgusts masters. Let each stay in his own place, but with a tie of love for the neighbour to fill the division existing between servants and masters.

Then the house blessed by Me will keep its blessing and the Lord will dwell in it. And likewise, My blessing and thus My protection will remain on boats, kitchen gardens, working and fishing implements, when you lead your lives as fishermen or marketgardeners working holily on days permitted and holily devoted to worshipping God on holy Sabbaths, and you do not cheat when selling or weighing, and you do not curse your work, neither do you make it the sovereign of your lives by preferring it to God. Because if work gives you a profit, God gives you Heaven.

And now let us go and bless houses and boats and oars and kitchen gardens and hoes, then we will go and speak near the place where John is, before he goes to the priest. Because I will not come back here again, and it is fair that he should hear Me at least once. Take some bread, fish and fruit; we will take them into the wood and we will eat in the presence of the cured leper giving him the best bits, so that also his body may rejoice and he may feel that he is already a brother among the believers in the Lord. »

And Jesus sets out, followed by the people of the village and by other people who have come from nearby towns, where, during the night some inhabitants of this village perhaps went with the news that the Saviour is on this shore.

#### **450. Near the Place of the Leper. Parable on the Ten Commandments.**

29th June 1946.

« My Lord! » shouts the ex-leper dropping on his knees as soon as he sees Jesus appear in the unbroken ground in front of the rocky place, where he has lived for so many years. Then, standing up, he shouts again: « Why have You come back to me? »

« To give you the viaticum of My word after that of your health. »

« Viaticum is given to him who is about to depart, and in fact this evening I am leaving for my purification. But I am leaving to come back and join Your disciples, if You will accept Me. Lord, I no longer have home or relatives. I am too old to resume an activity in life. They will reinstate me in my property. But what will my house be like after fifteen years of neglect? What shall I find there? Perhaps dilapidated walls... I am a bird with no nest. Let me join the group which follows You. In any case... I no longer belong to

myself, I belong to You for what You have given me, I do not belong any more to the world, which cast me away for such a long time, and quite rightly as I was unclean. Now, after becoming acquainted with You, I find that the world is impure and I want to flee from it and come to You. »

« And I will not reject you. But I tell you that I would like you to stay in this area. Aera and Arbela have one of their sons who is a disciple and evangelizes there. I ask you to be such a disciple for Hippo, Gamala, Aphek and nearby villages. I will be going down to Judaea shortly and I will not come back to this area any more. But I want some evangelizers here. »

« Your will makes every renouncement dear to me. I will do what You wish. I will begin as soon as purifications are over. I had made up my mind not to take care of my house any more. Now instead I will have it repaired, so that I can live in it and receive during winter the souls which are anxious to hear of You. And I will ask one of the disciples who has been following You for years, to come with me, because if You want me to be a little master, I need to be taught by someone more learned than I am. And in spring I will go about like the others preaching Your Name. »

« That is a good plan. God will help you to fulfil it. »

« I have already begun it by burning everything I possessed: that is, my poor pallet and the utensils which I used, the clothes I wore until yesterday, everything that I had touched with my diseased body. The grotto in which I lived is black with the smoke of the fire which I lit in it to destroy and purify. Nobody will be infected going into it to take shelter in a stormy night. And then... (the man's voice becomes feeble, it almost breaks, his speech slows down... ) and then... I had an old chest, by now falling to pieces... worm-eaten... it seemed that leprosy had corroded it as well... But to me... it was more valuable than the wealth of the world... It contained my dear things... mementos of my mother... the wedding veil of my Anne... Ah! when I, so happy, took it off her the evening of our wedding and I contemplated her face, as beautiful and pure as lilies, who could have told me that a few years later I was to see it all covered with sores! And... the garments of my children... their toys... which their little hands had played with while they were able to hold... an object... and... oh! my grief is so deep... forgive my tears... It is so painful now that I have burned them for the sake of justice... without being able to kiss them any more... because they had belonged to lepers... I am unfair, Lord... I am showing You tears... But bear with me... I have destroyed the last memory of them... and now I am like a man lost in a desert... » The man collapses weeping near the heap of ashes, the remembrance of his past...

« You are not lost, John, and you are not alone. I am with you.

And your dear ones will soon be with Me, in Heaven, waiting for you. Those remains reminded you of them, disfigured by disease, or lovely and healthy before the calamity. Sorrowful remembrances all of them. Leave them among the ashes of the fire. Cancel them in My assurance that you will find them, happy and beautiful in the joy of Heaven. The past is dead, John. Do not mourn any more over it. Light does not delay to look at the darkness of the night, but it is happy to part from it and to shine climbing the sky behind the sun every morning. And the sun does not delay in the east, but it rises, springs and rushes until it shines high in the vault of heaven. Your night is over. Forget it. Rise with your spirit up there, where I, the Light, will lead you. Through sweet hope and beautiful faith, you will already find joy there, because your charity will be able to communicate with God and your beloved ones awaiting you. It is but a rapid climb... and you will soon be up there, with them. Life is a puff of air... eternity is the eternal present. »

« You are right, Lord. You are comforting and teaching me how to overcome this hour with justice... But You are standing in the sun to be as close to me as You are allowed. Withdraw, Master. You have given me enough. The sun, already strong, might harm You. »

« I have come to stay with you. We have all come for that. But you can move as well towards the trees and we will be near each other without any danger. »

The man obeys departing from the rock at the foot of which is the heap of ashes, his past, and he goes towards the spot, for which Jesus is making, where the apostles, deeply moved, are with the women and the people of the village and those who have come from other towns to hear the Master.

« Light the fires to cook the fish. We will share the food in a banquet of love » orders Jesus.

And while the apostles do so, He goes about under the trees which have grown in a disorderly way in this place, which everybody has shunned because of the presence of the leper. A thick wild tangle of trees unaware of pruning-knives or axes since they began to come up. People suffering or depressed are in the propitious shadow of the brushwood and they speak to Jesus of their distresses, and Jesus cures, advises or comforts, patiently and powerfully. Farther away, in a small meadow, the boy from Capernaum is playing with the children of the village and their joyful cries compete with the singing of many birds in the thick trees, while their many-coloured garments, waving while they run on the green grass, make them look like large butterflies fluttering from flower to flower.

The food is ready and they call Jesus. He kindly asks a basket of a peasant who had brought some figs and grapes, and He fills it with

bread, with the nicest fish, with tasty fruit, He adds His flask of water sweetened with honey, and He turns His steps towards the ex-leper.

« You will be left without a flask, Master » says Bartholomew warning Him. « He cannot give it back to You. »

And Jesus replies smiling: « There is still so much water for the thirst of the Son of man! There is the water which the Father put into deep wells. And the Son of man can drink from His cupped hands, while they are still free... The day will come when I will have neither free hands nor water... not even the water of love to give refreshment to the Thirsty One... Now I have so much love around Me... » and He goes on carrying with both hands the wide round low basket and laying it on the grass a few metres from John, to whom He says: « Take and eat. It is the banquet of God. »

He then returns to His place. He offers and blesses the food and has it handed out to the people present who add what they had of their own. They all eat with relish and in peaceful joy, and Mary takes care of little Alphaeus with motherly love.

When the meal is over, Jesus stands between the crowd and the ex-leper and He begins to speak, while mothers take in their laps the children satiated with food and tired of playing and they lull them to sleep, so that they may not disturb.

« Listen everybody. In a psalm David, the psalmist, asks: "Who will dwell in the Tabernacle of God? Who will rest on the mountain of God?". And he goes on to enumerate who will be the fortunate people and why they will be so. He says: "The man whose way of life is blameless and who does what is right. He who speaks the truth from his heart and does not plot deceit with his tongue, who does no wrong to his fellow, who does not listen to words discrediting his neighbour". And in a few lines, after describing those who will enter the dominions of God, he says what good these blessed souls do after having done no wrong. Here: "In his eyes the reprobate is nothing. He honours those who fear God. When he swears to his neighbour he stands by his pledge. He does not ask interest on loans, he will not be bribed to victimise the innocent". And he concludes: "The man who does all that will never waver". I solemnly tell you that the psalmist spoke the truth and I confirm with My wisdom that he who does such things will never waver.

The first condition to enter the Kingdom of Heaven: "To live without fault".

But can man, a weak creature, live without fault? The flesh, the world and Satan, in continuous ferment of passions, inclinations and hatred squirt out their spray to stain souls, and if Heaven were open only to those who lived without fault ever since the age of reason, very few men would enter Heaven, just as very few are

the men who arrive at death without experiencing more or less grave diseases during their lifetime. So? Are the children of God barred from Heaven? And will they have to say: "I have lost it" when an attack of Satan or a storm of the flesh causes them to fall and they see their souls stained? Will there be no more forgiveness for the sinners? Will nothing delete the stain which disfigures the spirit? Do not fear your God with unjust fear. He is a Father and a father always stretches out a hand to his wavering children, he offers help so that they may rise again, he comforts them with kind means so that their dejection may not degenerate into despair, but it may flourish into humility willing to make amends and thus become again pleasing to the Father.

Now. The repentance of the sinner, the good will to make amends, both brought about by true love for the Lord, cleanse the stain of fault and make one worthy of divine forgiveness. And when He Who is speaking to you has completed His mission on the Earth, the most powerful absolution which the Christ will have achieved for you at the cost of His sacrifice, will be added to the absolutions of love, of repentance and of good will. With souls purer than those of new-born babies, much purer, because from the bosoms of those who believe in Me, rivers of living water will spring deterring also the original sin, the first cause of weakness in man, you will be able to aspire to Heaven, to the Kingdom of God, to His Tabernacles. Because the Grace which I am about to restore to you will help you to practise justice which, the more it is practised, the more it increases the right, that a faultless spirit gives you to enter the joy of the Kingdom of Heaven. Infants will enter Heaven and they will rejoice, because of the beatitude given to them gratuitously, as Heaven is joy. But also adults and old people will enter it, those who have lived, fought, won and who to the snow-white crown of Grace will add the many-coloured one of their holy deeds, of their victories over Satan, the world and the flesh, and great, very great will be their beatitude of winners, so great, that man cannot imagine it.

How does one practise justice? How does one gain victory? Through honesty of words and deeds, through charity for one's neighbour. Acknowledging that God is God, not placing the idols of creatures, money, power in the place of the Most Holy God. By giving everybody the place to which they are entitled, without trying to give more or to give less than what is right. He who honours one because he is a friend or a mighty relative and serves him also in evil deeds, is not just. On the contrary, he who harms his neighbour because he has no hope of receiving any kind of profit from him and bears false witness against him on oath, or is bribed to testify against the innocent or to judge partially, not according to justice but according to the profit he may gain with his unfair

judgement from the more powerful of the competitors, is not just and vain are his prayers and offers, because they are stained with injustice in the eyes of God.

You can see that what I am telling you is the Decalogue. The word of the Rabbi is always the Decalogue. Because good, justice, glory consist in doing what the Decalogue teaches and orders us to do. There is no other doctrine. In days gone by it was given amid the flashes of lightning on Mount Sinai, now it is given in the refulgence of Mercy, but the Doctrine is the same. It does not change. It cannot change. Many in Israel will say, as an excuse, to justify their lack in holiness, even after the passage of the Saviour on the Earth: "I did not have the possibility to follow and listen to Him". But their excuse is of no value. Because the Saviour did not come to impose a new Law, but to confirm the first, the only Law, nay, to reconfirm it in its holy plainness, in its perfect simplicity. To reconfirm with love and the promises of the assured love of God what previously was said with severity on one side and listened to with fear on the other.

To make you understand properly what are the ten Commandments and how important it is to abide by them, I will now tell you a parable.

The father of a family had two sons. He loved them both equally and wanted to be their benefactor impartially. This father, in addition to the house in which his sons lived, owned some property in which great treasures were hidden. The sons were aware of such treasures, but did not know the way to go there because the father, for reasons of his own, had not revealed the road which led there, and that had been the situation for many many years. But one day he called his sons and said: "The time has now come when you ought to know where the treasures are, which I laid aside for you, so that you may go there when I tell you. You had better know the road and the signals which I put on it, so that you may not go astray. So listen to me. The treasures are not in a plain where waters stagnate, where dog days scorch, where dust spoils everything, thorns and bramble suffocate, and where robbers can easily go and rob you. The treasures are on the top of that high rugged mountain. I put them on the top there and they are waiting for you up there. There is more than one path on the mountain, in actual fact there are many. But one only is the right one. Of the others some end up in precipices, some in caves with no exit, some in ditches full of muddy water, some in nests of vipers, some in craters of burning sulphur, some against insurmountable walls. The right road, instead is a difficult one, but it arrives at the top without any interruption of precipices or other obstacles. In order to enable you to recognise it, I placed along it, at regular intervals, ten stone monuments, on each of which is carved these three identification

words: 'Love, obedience, victory'. Follow that path and you will reach the place of the treasure. I will come along another road, which is known to me alone and I will open the doors to you, so that you may be happy".

The two sons said goodbye to the father who, as long as they could hear him, repeated: "Follow the path I told you. It's for your own good. Do not yield to the temptation to follow the others, even if they seem better to you. You would lose both the treasure and me..."

They arrive at the foot of the mountain. The first monument was there, at the beginning of the path, which was in the middle of several paths radiating in different directions towards the mountain top. The two brothers began to climb the good path. At first it was very good, although there was not the least shade. From the sky the sun darted down on it, flooding it with light and heat. The white rock in which the path had been dug, the clear sky above them, the warm sun embracing their bodies: that is what the brothers saw and felt. But still animated by good will, by the remembrance of their father and by his advice, they climbed joyfully toward the top. Then the second monument... and later the third one. The path had become more and more difficult, solitary, warm. They could not even see the other paths with grass, trees or clear waters, and above all, where the slope was more gentle, because it was not so steep and the tracks were laid on ground and not on rocks.

"Our father wants us dead when we get there" said one of the sons on arriving at the fourth monument. And he began to slacken his pace. The other encouraged him to go on saying: "He loves us as his very own and even more because he saved the treasure for us in such a wonderful way. He dug this path in the rock and it takes one from the foot of the mountain to its top without any risk of getting lost. And he put these monuments to guide us. Just consider that, my brother! He did all that by himself, for our sake! To give it to us! To ensure that we arrive there without the possibility of mistakes and without any danger".

They continued to walk. But the paths they had left down in the valley reappeared now and again close to the track in the rock and they did so more and more frequently as the cone of the mountain became narrower near the top. And how beautiful, shady and attractive they were!...

"I think I will take one of those" said the discontented brother, when he arrived at the sixth monument. "It goes to the top as well".

"You cannot be sure of that... You cannot see whether it goes up or down..."

"There it is, up there!".

"You do not know whether it is this one. In any case our father

told us not to leave this good path

The listless brother continued to climb against his will. At the seventh monument he said: "Oh! I am definitely going away".

"Don't, brother!".

They went on their way up the path, which was now very difficult, but the top was now close at hand...

They arrived at the eighth monument and very close to it was the flowery path. "Oh! you can see that this one goes up as well, although not in a straight line!".

"You don't know if it is the same one".

"I do. I recognise it".

"You are mistaken".

"No. I'm going".

"Don't. Think of father, of the dangers, of the treasure".

"They can all go to the dogs! What am I going to do with the treasure if I will be as good as dead when I get up there? Which danger is greater than this path? And which hatred is stronger than our father's, who fooled us with this track to let us die? Goodbye. I will arrive before you, and alive..." and he jumped on to the adjacent path, and disappeared with a joyful exclamation behind the tree trunks shading it.

His brother went his way sadly... Oh! the last part of the track was really dreadful! The man was exhausted. He felt worn out with fatigue and heat! At the ninth monument he stopped panting, leaning against the carved stone and reading the engraved words mechanically. Nearby there was a shady path with water and flowers... "I almost... No! It is written there, and it was my father who wrote it: 'Love, obedience, victory'. I must believe in his love, in his truthfulness, and I must obey to show my love... Let us go... May love support me He is now at the tenth monument... Exhausted, burnt by the sun, he walked stooping, as if he were under a yoke... It was the loving holy yoke of faithfulness, which is love, obedience, strength, hope, justice, prudence, everything... Instead of leaning on the monument he sat down in the narrow shade which it cast on the ground. He felt that he was dying... From the nearby path came the gurgle of streams and the smell of forests... "Father, help me with your spirit, in this temptation... help me to be faithful until the end!".

From afar the joyful voice of his brother shouted: "Come, I will wait for you. Eden is here... Come

"And if I went?..." and shouting loud: "Does it really go to the top?".

"Yes, come. There is a cool tunnel which takes one up. Come! I can already see the top beyond the tunnel, in the rock

"Shall I go? Shall I not?... Who will help me?... I will go He pushed his hands on the ground to help himself get up and while

doing so he noticed that the engraved words were not as clear as those on the first monument. "At each monument the words were less distinct... as if my father, being exhausted, had found it difficult to engrave them. And... look!... Here also is the dark red mark, which has been visible as from the fifth monument... The only difference is that here it fills the hollow of each letter and it has overflowed, furrowing the rock as if it were dark tears, tears... of blood With a finger he scratched a blotch as large as two hands. And the blotch crumbled into dust leaving uncovered and clear these words: "Thus I loved you. To the extent of shedding my blood to lead you to the Treasure".

"Oh! oh! Father! And I was thinking of not obeying your order?! Forgive me, father. Forgive me". The son wept leaning on the rock, and the blood filling the words became fresh and as bright as a ruby, and the tears became food and drink and strength for the good son... He stood up... out of love he called his brother aloud... He wanted to tell him of his discovery... of their father's love, and say to him: "Come back". But no one replied...

The young man resumed his way, almost on his knees on the hot rock, because his body was exhausted with fatigue, but his spirit was serene. There was the top... and his father.

"Father!".

"My beloved son!".

The young man threw himself on his father's breast, his father embraced him and kissed him fondly.

"Are you alone?".

"Yes... But my brother will soon be here

"No. He will never arrive. He left the way of the ten commandments. He did not come back to it after the first warning disappointments. Do you want to see him? There he is. In the abyss of fire... He persisted in his error. I would have forgiven and awaited him if, after realising his mistake, he had retraced his steps and, although late, he had passed where love had passed first, suffering to the extent of shedding the best part of his blood, the dearest part of himself for you".

"He did not know

"If he had looked with love at the words engraved in the ten monuments, he would have understood their true meaning. You read it as from the fifth monument and you called his attention to it when you said: 'Our father must have injured himself here!' and You read it in the sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth... clearer and clearer, until by instinct you discovered what was under my blood. Do you know the name of that instinct? 'Your true union with me'. The fibres of your heart, blended with my fibres, startled and they said to you: 'You will have here the measure of how much your father loves you'. Now, since you are affectionate, obedient, for

ever victorious, take possession of the Treasure and of me".

That is the parable.

The ten monuments are the ten commandments. Your God engraved them and placed them on the path that takes to the eternal Treasure, and He suffered to lead you to that path. Do you suffer? God does, too. Do you have to force yourselves? God has, too. Do you know to what extent? Suffering to separate Himself from Himself and striving to know what it means to be a human being with all the miseries of mankind: to be born, to suffer from cold, starvation, fatigue, to suffer sarcasm, affronts, hatred, snares, and at the end to die, shedding all His Blood to give you the Treasure. God, Who descended to save you, suffers all that. God suffers that in Heaven, allowing Himself to suffer it.

I solemnly tell you that no man, however laborious his path may be to reach Heaven, will ever follow a more laborious and sorrowful way than the one along which the Son of man has to go to come from Heaven to the Earth and from the Earth to the Sacrifice, to open the doors of the Treasure to you. On the tablets of the Law there is already My Blood. On the Way which I am tracing out for you there is My Blood. It is the gush of My Blood that opens the door of the Treasure. Your souls become pure and strong through the purification and nourishment of My Blood. But to prevent it from being shed in vain, you must follow the immutable way of the ten commandments.

Let us rest now. At sunset I will go towards Hippo, John will go to be purified, and you will go home. May the peace of the Lord be with you. »

#### **451. At Hippo. Love for the Poor. Cure of an Old Slave.**

Please excuse me if this notebook is particularly badly written. The episodes were seen when I was between life and death after the unlucky 2nd July 1946 I wrote them lying in bed with very high temperatures in addition to very severe pains

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2nd July 1946.

Jesus enters Hippo on a clear morning. He must have spent the night in the country house of an inhabitant of the town, who had gone to listen to Him, in order to go to town early in the morning of a noisy market-day. Many people of Hippo are with Him and many more run to meet Him when they are told that the Rabbi has arrived. But not only citizens of Hippo are around Jesus. Also those of the village on the lake are present. Only a few women are absent, whether because of their physical conditions or because their children are too young to allow them to leave their homes.

The town appears to be a nice one. It is situated a little above

lake-level and stretches out on the first undulations of the tableland, which lies beyond the lake and rises eastwards, extending to south-east as far as the mountains of Hauran, and to northeast as far as the mountain range dominated by the great Hermon. The town is important not only because of its flourishing trade and wealth, but also because it is a road junction linking many regions beyond the lake, as is evidenced by the road signs placed in its neighbourhood, bearing the names of Gamala, Gadara, Pella, Arbela, Bozrah, Gherghesa and others. It is densely populated and much frequented by foreigners who come from the nearby villages to purchase or to sell or on other business. I see that among the crowd there are many Romans, both civilians and soldiers and I notice that the people here, either because it is a characteristic of this town or it is typical of the whole region, do not appear to be so hostile or adverse to the Romans. Perhaps business relationships have linked them with bonds of expediency, if not of friendship, more than in any other area on the opposite shore.

The crowds increase as Jesus moves towards the town centre, where He stops in a large square planted with trees, in the shade of which the market takes place, that is, the more important business is negotiated, as retail selling and buying of foodstuffs and utensils is done beyond this square, on an embankment, on which the sun is already darting down and buyers and vendors protect themselves from it by means of sheets, which are stretched on small poles and cast small patches of shadow on the goods exposed on the ground. This place, covered as it is with sheets of all shades, set up not far from the ground and swarming with people wearing gaily-coloured garments, looks like a meadow adorned with huge flowers, partly immobile, partly moving around the tiny paths between the many-coloured sheets. The place has thus a pleasant sight, which, however, disappears when the old-fashioned booths are removed and the embankment appears in the yellowish desolation of a barren wild place. It is at present animated with people bawling. How loud these people yell and how many words they shout bargaining even for a wooden bowl, a sifter or a handful of seed! And the bawling of buyers and vendors is increased by a chorus of beggars who strain their voices to be heard above so much noise.

« You cannot speak here, Master! » exclaims Bartholomew. « Your Voice is powerful but it cannot overwhelm this noise! »

« We will wait. See? The market is about to end. Some people are already taking their goods away. In the meantime go and give alms to the beggars with the offerings of the local rich people. It Will be the prologue, to and the blessing on the sermon, because alms given with love passes from the degree of material relief to that of love of neighbour and attracts graces » replies Jesus.

The apostles go away to carry out the order.

Jesus continues to speak among the attentive crowds. « The town is rich and flourishing. At least this part of it. I see You wear beautiful clean garments. And you look well fed. Everything tells Me that you do not suffer poverty. I would now like to ask you whether those people, who are complaining over there, are from Hippo or are occasional beggars who have come here from other villages to have relief. Be sincere... »

« Well. We will tell You, although Your words already sound like a reproach. Some are foreigners, most of them are from Hippo. »

« And is there no work for them? I see that you are building many houses here, and there should be work for everybody... »

« It is mostly the Romans who engage workers... »

« Mostly. You are right. Because I have seen also some of the local people supervise jobs. And I have noticed that many of them have engaged foreigners. Why not help your fellow citizens first? »

« Because... It is difficult to work here because, particularly some years ago, before the Romans built good roads, it was a hard task to bring big rocks here and open new roads... And many were taken ill or became crippled... and they are now beggars, because they are no longer fit to work. »

« But you enjoy the work they did? »

« Certainly, Master! See how beautiful and comfortable the town is, with plenty water in deep cisterns and beautiful roads which connect this town with other rich ones. See what solid constructions. See how many laboratories. See... »

« I see everything. And you were helped to build these things by those, who now in a mournful voice ask you to give them a piece of bread? You say that you were? Well, then, if you now enjoy what they helped you to possess, why do you not give them a tiny bit of enjoyment? Some bread, without them asking for it. A bed, so that they may not be compelled to share dens with wild animals. Some assistance for their diseases, which, if cured, would no longer prevent them from still being able to do something, instead of losing heart in forced mortifying idleness. How can you sit happily at meals sharing with joy plentiful food with your smiling children, knowing that, not far from you, some of your brothers are hungry? How can you go and rest in a well protected bed, when you are aware that outside, in the night, there are men who have no beds and can get no rest? Are your consciences not tortured by those coins which you put away in safes, when you know that many people have not even a farthing to buy some bread?

You told Me that you believe in the Most High Lord and that you comply with the Law, that you are acquainted with the prophets and the Books of Wisdom. You told Me that you believe in Me and you are anxious to know My Doctrine. You must, therefore,

have kind hearts, because God is love and He prescribes love, because the Law is love, because the prophets and the Books of Wisdom advise love and My doctrine is a doctrine of love. Sacrifices and prayers are vain unless their base and altar is love for your neighbour and particularly for the poor and needy, to whom you can give all forms of love by means of bread, beds, clothes, comfort and doctrine, leading them to God. Poverty, by disheartening people, causes spirits to lose that faith in Providence, which is beneficial to resist the trials of life. How can you expect a poor man to be always good, patient, pious, when he sees that those who have received everything from life, and thus, according to common opinion, from Providence, are hard-hearted, without true religion - because their religion lacks the first and most essential part: love - they are without patience and, although they have everything, they cannot even tolerate the entreaties of a starving man? At times they curse God and you? But who induces them to such sin? Do you ever consider, o rich citizens of a rich town, that your duty is great: that is: to lead poor wretches to Wisdom through your own behaviour?

I have heard some of you say to Me: "We would all like to be Your disciples, in order to preach You". I say to you all: you can do so. Those who come here timidly, and are shy because of their ragged clothes, with emaciated faces, are the ones who are awaiting the Gospel, which is given above all for the poor, that they may have a supernatural comfort in the hope of a glorious life after the reality of their present sad life. You can practise this doctrine of Mine with less material fatigue, but with greater spiritual difficulty, because riches are dangerous to holiness and justice. They can do so with all kinds of difficulties. The lack of bread, insufficient garments, their being homeless, urge these people to ask themselves: "How can I believe that God is my Father, when I do not have what the birds of the air possess?". How can the hardness of neighbours make them believe that they must love one another like brothers? It is your duty to assure them that God is a Father and, through your active love, that you are their brothers. Providence does exist and you, the rich people of the world, are its ministers. The fact that you are its means is to be considered by You as the greatest honour granted to you by God and as the only way to make dangerous riches holy.

And behave as if in each of them you saw Me. I am in them. I wanted to be poor and persecuted to be like them and so that the remembrance of the Christ poor and persecuted may last throughout centuries, casting a supernatural light on those who are poor and persecuted like the Christ, a light that would make you love them as if they were Myself. I am in fact in the beggar Who has been given food, a drink, clothes, lodgings. I am in the orphan

who has been taken in out of love, in the widow who has been assisted, in the pilgrim who has been given hospitality, in the patient who is cured. And I am in the afflicted who are comforted, in the doubtful who are assured, in the ignorant who are instructed. I am wherever love is received. And anything done to a brother, who is poor in material or spiritual means, is done to Me. Because I am the Poor One, the Afflicted One, the Man of Sorrows, and I am thus, in order to give Wealth, Joy, supernatural Life to all men who many a time - they do not know but it is so - are rich and joyful only apparently, and are all poor in true riches and joys, because they are without Grace through the Original Sin which deprives them of it. You know that without Redemption there is no Grace, without Grace there is no joy or Life. And to give you Grace and Life I did not want to be born a king or a mighty man, but I chose to be poor, a common humble man, because crown, throne, power are nothing for Him Who comes from Heaven to lead souls to Heaven, whereas the all important thing is the example which a true Master must set in order to give strength to his Doctrine. Because the majority of people are poor and unhappy, whereas the powerful and happy are few. Because Goodness is Pity.

That is why I came and the Lord anointed His Christ: that I may announce the Gospel to meek people and cure those who are broken-hearted, that I may preach freedom to slaves, release to prisoners, that I may console those who weep and put on the children of God - the children who know how to remain such both in joy and in sorrow - their diadem, the robe of justice, and transform them from wild plants into trees of the Lord, into His champions and His glory. I am completely devoted to everybody and I want everybody with Me in the Kingdom of Heaven. It is open to everybody providing one lives in justice. Justice is in the practice of the Law and in the exercise of love. One does not enter that Kingdom by right of wealth, but by heroism in holiness. He who wants to enter it should follow Me and do what I do: he should love God above everything and his neighbour as I love him, he should not curse the Lord, he should observe holy days and honour his parents, he should not raise a violent hand on his fellow-man, he should not commit adultery, or rob his neighbour in any way, or give false testimony, or wish what he does not have and other people possess, but he should be satisfied with his destiny, always considering it a fleeting state, a way and means to conquer a better and eternal fate, he should love the poor, the afflicted, the least on the Earth, orphans, widows, and he should not practise usury. He who does that, whatever his nationality and language, his condition and wealth, will be able to enter the Kingdom of God: the gates of which I will open to you.

Come to Me, all you of good will. Be not afraid of what you are or you were. I am Water that cleanses the past and fortifies for the future. Come to Me, you who are poor in wisdom. Wisdom is in My word. Come to Me, start a new life on new ideas. Be not afraid of not knowing, of not being able to do it. My Doctrine is easy, My yoke is light. I am the Rabbi Who gives without asking for recompense, without asking for any recompense but your love. If you love Me, you will love My Doctrine and consequently your neighbour and you will have Life and the Kingdom. Rich people, divest yourselves of your attachment to riches, and buy with them the Kingdom by means of all the words of merciful love for your neighbour. Poor people, divest yourselves of your dejection and come onto the way of your King. With Isaiah I say: "Oh, come to the water all you who are thirsty, and you as well who have no money come and buy". With love you will buy what is love, what is unperishable food, the food which satisfies and fortifies.

I am going away, o rich, poor men and women of Hippo. I am going away to obey the Will of God. But I want to depart less afflicted than I was when I arrived. It is your promise which will relieve My affliction. For the welfare of you rich people, for the welfare of this town of yours, be and promise to be merciful towards the least among you in future. Everything is beautiful here. But as a dark stormy cloud frightens even the most beautiful town, so the hardness of your hearts is an impending danger here, like a shadow which causes beauty to fade away. Remove your hardness and you will be blessed. Remember: God promised not to destroy Sodom, if ten just people were found in it. You do not know the future. I do. And I solemnly tell you that it is more laden with punishments than a summer cloud is with hail. Save your town with your justice and your mercy. Will you do that? »

« We will, Lord, in Your name. Speak, please, go on speaking to us! We have been hard-hearted and sinners. But You are saving us. You are the Saviour. Speak to us... »

« I will be with you until evening. But I will speak through My deeds. Now, while the sun is flaming, go to your houses and meditate on My words. »

« And where are You going, Lord? Come to my house! To mine! » All the rich people in Hippo want Him and they almost contend with one another to justify the reason why Jesus should go with this man or that one.

He raises His hand imposing silence. He achieves it with difficulty. He says: « I am staying with these. » And He points at the poor People who, gathered in a group at the end of the crowd are looking at Him with the attitude of people who, although derided, feel that they are loved. And He repeats: « I am staying with them to comfort them and share our bread with them. I want to give them

an advance of the happiness of the Kingdom where the King will be sitting among His subjects at the same banquet of love. And in the meantime, as their faith is written on their faces and in their hearts, I say to them: "Let be done to you what your hearts desire, and may your bodies and souls rejoice in the first cure of Your health which the Saviour grants you". »

The poor people must number fully one hundred. At least two thirds of them are suffering from physical disability, or are blind, or clearly ill; the other third are children begging on behalf of their widow mothers or of their grandparents... Well: it is wonderful to see deformed arms, dislocated hips, misshapen backs, lifeless eyes, exhausted people dragging themselves along, all kinds of painful diseases and misfortunes, contracted through labour accidents or excess of fatigue and privations, be restored to normal healthy state, thus allowing the poor wretches to begin to live once again and feel that they are in a position to look after themselves. Their cries fill the large square and resound in it.

A Roman elbows his way through the delirious crowd and reaches Jesus while He, with as much difficulty, is going towards the poor people who have just been cured and are blessing Him from where they are standing, as it is impossible for them to squeeze through the compact mass of people.

« Hail, Rabbi of Israel. What You have done, is it only for the members of Your people? »

« No, man. Neither what I have done, nor what I have said. My power is universal, because My love is universal. And My doctrine is universal because there are no limitations of castes, religions or nations for it. The Kingdom of Heaven is for all Mankind who can believe in the true God. And I am here for those who can believe in the power of the true God. »

« I am a pagan. But I believe that You are a god. I have a slave, who is dear to me. An old slave who has followed me since I was a little boy. Paralysis is now killing him slowly and with great pain. But he is a slave and perhaps You... »

« I solemnly tell you that I know only one slavery which disgusts Me: the slavery of sin, and of obstinate sin. Because he who sins and repents meets with My pity. Your slave shall be cured. Go and get rid of your error by entering the true faith. »

« Are You not coming to my house? »

« No, man. »

« Actually... I have asked for too much. A god does not go to the houses of mortals. We read about that only in fables... But no man ever gave hospitality to Jupiter or Apollo. »

« Because they do not exist. But God, the true God enters the homes of those who believe in Him and bestows health and peace to them. »

« Who is the true God? »

« He Who is. »

« Not You? Do not lie! I feel You are god... »

« I am not lying. What you said is true: I am God. I am the Son of God Who has come to save also your soul as I saved your beloved slave. Is that not him coming shouting at the top of his voice? »

The Roman turns round, he sees an old man, who is followed by other people and is running, enveloped in a blanket, shouting: « Marius! Marius! My master! »

« By Jove! It's my slave! How!... I... said: Jove... No: I say: by the Rabbi of Israel. I... I... » the man does not know what to say...

The crowds open out willingly to let the old man, who has just been cured, pass through.

« I am well, master. I felt something like a fire in my limbs and I heard an order: "Get up!". I thought it was your voice. I got up... I could stand... I tried to walk... and I was able... I tried to touch my bedsores... they had disappeared. I shouted. Nereus and Quintus came. They told me where you were. I did not wait to get some clothes. Now I can still serve you... » the old man, on his knees, is weeping kissing the tunic of the Roman.

« Not me. This Rabbi cured you. We will have to believe, Aquila. He is the true God. He cured those people just with His voice and you... I do not know how... We must believe... Lord... I am a heathen, but... here... No. It's too little. Tell me where You are going and I will honour You. » He offers a purse, then puts it away.

« I am going with them under that dark porch. »

« I will send You an offering for them. Hail, Rabbi. I will tell those who do not believe... »

« Goodbye. I will wait for you on the ways of God. »

The Roman goes away with his slaves. Jesus goes away with His poor people, with His apostles and the women disciples.

The porch - it is more like a sheltered road than a porch - is shady and cool, and the joy is so great that even the place looks beautiful, although it is a very common one. Now and again a citizen comes and gives offerings. The slave of the Roman comes back with a heavy purse. And Jesus gives words of light and support in money, and when the apostles come back with a variety of foodstuffs, He breaks the bread and blesses the food, which He then hands out to the poor people, to His poor people...

#### **452. Towards Gamala. The Blessed Virgin's Love in Doing the Will of God.**

3rd July 1946.

Night is falling bringing cool breezes which refresh after so much heat, and also twilight which is a relief after so much bright

sunshine.

Jesus takes leave of the people of Hipponis as He is quite firm in His decision not to delay departure, in order to be at Capernaum for the Sabbath. The people depart from Him reluctantly and a few obstinate persons follow Him even out of town.

Among them is the woman from Bethsaida, the widow who in the village on the lake begged the Lord to choose her as guardian for little Alphaeus, who is not wanted by his mother. She has joined the group of the women disciples, as if she were one of them, and she has now become so familiar with them, that they regard her as one of the family. She is now with Salome, to whom she is speaking animatedly in a low voice.

Mary is farther back with Her sister-in-law, and they adapt their steps to the pace of the little boy who is walking hand in hand between them and enjoys himself jumping over every stone in the road, which, being paved with regular slabs, was certainly built by the Romans. And at each jump he laughs and says: « See how clever I am? Look, look again! ». It is a game which I think all children in the world have played when they are held by the hand by people who they perceive are fond of them. And the two holy women who are leading him by the hand show great interest in his game and praise him for being so clever in jumping. The poor little fellow has flourished in a few days of peaceful loving life, his eyes are cheerful like those of happy children and his silvery laughter makes him more beautiful and above all more puerile, without the expression of a sad little man, as he had looked the evening he left Capernaum.

Mary of Alphaeus, considering the situation, when she hears some words of Sarah, the widow, says to her sister-in-law: « That would be ideal! If I were Jesus, I would give her the boy. »

« He has a mother, Mary... »

« Mother? Don't call her that! A she-wolf is more motherly than that wretch. »

« That is true. But even if she does not feel any obligation towards her son, she always has a claim on him. »

« H'm! To make him suffer! Look how much he has improved! »

« I know. But... Jesus has no right to take children away from mothers, not even to give them to those who would love them. »

« Neither are men entitled to... Better not say more. I know what... »

« Oh! I understand You... You mean: neither are men entitled to take Your Son away from You, and yet they will do so... But by doing so - a cruel action from a human point of view - they will bring about infinite good. In this case, instead, I do not know whether it would do that woman any good... »

« But it would do the child much good. But why... did He tell us

that dreadful thing? I have had no peace since I heard of it... »

« And did you not know even previously that the Redeemer was to suffer and, die? »

« Of course I did! But I did not know that it was Jesus. I have been very fond of Him, You know? I loved Him more than my own sons. So handsome, so kind... Oh! I envied You Him, my dear Mary, when He was a boy, and always later... always... Even a puff of air worried me, lest it should harm Him and... I cannot believe that He will be tortured... » Mary of Clopas weeps under her veil.

And Mary, the Mother, comforts her. « Mary, My dear, do not look at the matter from a human point of view. Think of its fruits... You can imagine how I see daylight fading away every evening... When it dies out I say: one day less to have Jesus... Oh! Mary! For one thing above all I thank the Most High: for granting Me to achieve perfect love, as perfect as a creature can possess it, because such love allows Me to cure and fortify My heart saying: "His sorrow and Mine are useful to My brothers, therefore blessed be Sorrow". If I did not love My neighbour thus... I could not endure the thought that they will put Jesus to death... »

« So, what love is Yours? What love must a mother have to say such words? In... in order not to run away with her son, to defend him and say to her neighbours: "My first neighbour is my son and I love him above all things"? »

« He Who is to be loved above everything is God. »

« And He is God. »

« He does the Will of the Father and I do it with Him. What love is Mine? What love is required to be able to say those words? The love of fusion with God, complete union, total surrender, to be lost in Him, to be nothing but a part of Him, as your hand is part of you and does what your head commands. That is My love and such is the love which one must have to do always the Will of God willingly. »

« But You are You. You are the Blessed One among all creatures. You were certainly such even before You had Jesus, because God chose You to have Him, and it is easy for You... »

« No, Mary. I am the Woman and the Mother like every woman and mother. The gift of God does not suppress the creature. She is as human as any other creature, even if the gift gives her a very strong spirituality. You know, by now, that I had to accept the gift, of My own free will, and with all the consequences which it involved. Because each divine gift is a great beatitude, but also a great obligation. And God does not force any man to accept His gifts, but He asks man and if the latter replies: "No" to the spiritual voice speaking to him, God does not force him. Every soul is interrogated by God at least once in its lifetime whether... »

« Oh! I have not been! He never asked me anything! » exclaims

Mary of Alphaeus confidently.

The Blessed Virgin smiles kindly and replies: « You did not notice it and your soul replied without you being aware of it; and the reason for that is that you already love the Lord very much. »

« I am telling You that He has never spoken to me!... »

« Why, then, are you here, a disciple following Jesus? And why are you so anxious that your sons, all of them, should be followers of Jesus? You know what it implies to follow Him, and yet you want your sons to follow Him. »

« Certainly I would like to give them all to Him. I could then truly say that I bore my children to the Light. And I pray that I may give them to It, to Jesus, with true, eternal maternity. »

« You see! And why that? Because God interrogated you one day and He said: "Mary, would you give Me your sons to be My ministers in the new Jerusalem?". And you replied: "Yes, Lord". And even now that you are aware that a disciple is not superior to the Master, you reply to God, Who questions you again to test your love.- "Yes, my Lord. I now want them to be Yours!". Is it not so? »

« Yes, Mary, it is. That's true. I am so ignorant that I cannot understand what happens in a soul. But when Jesus or You make me ponder, I say that it is true. It is really true. I say that... I would rather see them killed by men than be hostile to God... Certainly... if I saw them die... if... oh! But the Lord... Eh! Would the Lord help me in that hour... or will He help You alone? »

« He will help all His faithful daughters, who are martyrs in the spirit, or in the spirit and in the flesh for His glory. »

« But who is to be killed? » asks the little boy, who has stopped jumping upon hearing their conversation, and has been all ears. And he asks again, partly out of curiosity, partly out of fear, looking about the lonely country which is growing dark: « Are there highwaymen about? Where are they? »

« There are no highwaymen, My child. And no one, for the time being, is to be killed. Jump, go on jumping... » replies the Most Holy Virgin.

Jesus, Who was far ahead, has stopped waiting for the women. Of the people who followed Him from Hippos, three men and the widow are still present. The others made up their minds, one after the other, to leave Him and go back to their town. The two groups come together again. Jesus says: « Let us wait here until the moon rises. We will then set out in order to arrive at the town of Gamala at dawn. »

« But Lord! Do You not remember how they drove You out of it? They begged You to go away... »

« So? I went away, now I am going back. God is patient and prudent. Then, in their excitement, they were not in a state to receive the Word, which, in order to be fruitful, is to be received with a

peaceful spirit. Remember Elijah and his meeting with the Lord on the Horeb and take into account that Elijah was a spirit beloved by the Lord and accustomed to hearing Him. Only in the peace of a gentle breeze, when, after being dismayed, his spirit was resting in the peace of creation and of his honest ego, only then the Lord spoke. And the Lord has waited for the fright, left by the legion of demons in remembrance of their passage through that region because if the passing of God is peace, the passing of Satan is perturbation - and the Lord has waited for such fright to come to an end and for their hearts and minds to become crystal clear, before going back to the people of Gamala, as they are still His sons. Be not afraid! They will do us no harm! »

The widow from Aphek comes forward and prostrates herself: « And are You not coming to my house, Lord? Aphek also is full of sons of God... »

« The road is a difficult one and our time is short. We have the women with us and we must go back to Capernaum for the Sabbath. Do not insist, woman » says the Iscariot resolutely, almost rejecting her.

« The fact is... I wanted Him to be convinced that I can keep the boy properly. »

« But do you not understand that he has his mother? » says the Iscariot once again, and he says so rudely.

« Do you know any short cuts between Gamala and Aphek? » Jesus asks the mortified woman.

« Oh! yes! There is a road across the mountains, but it is good and cool, because it runs through woods. And it is possible to hire some donkeys for the women, and I will pay for them... »

« I will come to your house to console you, even if I cannot give you the child, because he has a mother. But I promise you that in the event that God should judge that the innocent with no love should find love again, I will think of you. »

« Thank you, Master. You are good » says the widow, and she looks at Judas in a way that means: « And you are bad. »

The little boy, who has listened and understood, at least in part, and has grown fond of the widow, who has conquered him with caresses and dainties, both by natural instinct of reflection and by the spirit of imitation typical of children, repeats exactly what the widow has done, the only difference being that he does not prostrate himself at Jesus' feet, but he clings to His knees, raising his little face which looks bright in the moonlight, and he says: « Thank You, Master. You are good. » And he does not stop at that; he wants to make his mind quite clear and he concludes: « And you are bad » and to ensure that there is no error of person, he lightly kicks the Iscariot's foot.

Thomas bursts out laughing, which makes the others laugh as

well, while he says: « Poor Judas! It is really a fact that children do not like you! Now and again one of them judges you, and they always say that you are bad!... »

Judas has so little sense of humor that he shows his anger, an unfair anger, out of proportion to the cause and object giving rise to it and to which he gives vent by tearing the child away from Jesus, knees very coarsely and throwing him backwards, shouting: « This is what happens when in serious matters we have pantomimes it is neither decent nor useful to take with us a train of women and parentless children... »

« No, you can't say that. You met his father, too. He was the legitimate husband, and a just man » remarks Bartholomew severely.

« So? Is he not a tramp and a future thief? Is he not the cause of unpleasant remarks uttered behind our backs? Some people thought he was Your Mother's son... And where is Your Mother's husband to justify a son of his age? Or they suppose that he is the son of one of us, and... »

« Enough of that. You are speaking the language of the world. But the world speaks a filthy language to frogs, to water snakes, to lizards, to all unclean animals... Come, Alphaeus. Do not weep. Come to Me. I will carry you in My arms. »

The little boy is deeply grieved. All his sorrow of an orphan rejected by his mother and which had calmed down during the previous peaceful days, comes to light again, boils over and overflows. He is weeping not so much because of the bruises on his forehead and hands, which were injured when he fell on stoney ground, bruises which the women are cleaning and kissing to comfort him, as because of his grief of a son who is not loved. A long heart-rending weeping, during which he cries for his dead father, his mother... Oh! poor child!

And I weep with him, as men never care for me, and with him I take shelter in the arms of God, today, the anniversary of my father's funeral; today when an unfair decision deprives me of receiving Holy Communion frequently...

Jesus takes him, kisses him, lulls and comforts him, walking ahead of everybody, with the innocent child in His arms, in the moonlight... And as his weeping slowly abates and his sobbing becomes less frequent, in the silence of the night Jesus' voice can be heard saying: « I am here, Alphaeus. I am here for everybody. I will be father and mother to you. Do not weep. Your father is near Me and he kisses you with Me. The angels look after you like mothers. If you are good and innocent, all our love is with you... »

And the hoarse voice of one of the three men who came from Hippo is heard saying: « The Master is good and He attracts people. But His disciples are not. I am going away... »

And in a severe voice the Zealot says to the Iscariot: « Do you see what your behaviour does? »

Only the widow from Aphek remains with the women disciples and sighs with them. As the three men from Hippos have gone away, one can hear only the reduced shuffling of feet. The situation remains unchanged until they stop near a large grotto, where shepherds perhaps take shelter, because there is a layer of heather and ferns, which have been recently cut, laid on the ground to dry.

« Let us stop here. Let us assemble this bed of Providence for the women. We can lie down just outside, on the grass » says Jesus. And they do so, while the full moon sails in the vault of heaven.

### **453. Near Gamala, Jesus Entrusts the Church to the Blessed Virgin and Speaks of Mercy on Oppressed People.**

8th July 1946.

Day is just dawning when Jesus awakes and sits up on His rustic bed made of earth and grass. He then stands up, picks up His sandals and the mantle with which He had covered Himself as a protection from dew and the chill of the night, and cautiously steps over the tangle of legs, arms, bodies and heads of the apostles asleep around Him. He moves away a few steps, with keen eyes to see where He lays His feet in the subdued gleam of dawn, which under the leafy trees is barely a feeble light. He arrives at an open meadow, from which, through an opening between trees and rocks, one can catch a glimpse of a little strip of a lake which is waking up and a large piece of the sky which is becoming clearer, passing from the grey-blue hue typical of the vault of heaven at daybreak, to sky-blue, while to the east it is already fading into a light yellow shade which becomes more and more defined and deeper and deeper changing into a rosy yellow and finally into a most beautiful pale coral hue.

Dawn promises a lovely day, despite a very light haze which is reluctant to surrender the eastern sphere of the sky to daylight, and moves forward in such light veils of clouds that the blue sky does not suffer by it: on the contrary it is embellished as if it were an ornament of snow-white muslin fringed with gold and corals constantly changing, and becoming more and more beautiful, as if it were striving to reach the perfection of its fleeting beauty before being destroyed by daylight with its triumphant sunshine. To the west, on the other hand, a few stars are still visible, although deprived of their bright night twinkling as light increases, and the moon, about to set behind the tops of mountains, sails on looking very pale, with no moonbeams, like a dying planet.

Jesus, standing barefooted on the dewy grass, His arms folded

across His chest, His head raised watching the rising day, is pensive... or is speaking to the Father in a spiritual conversation. There is dead silence, so much so that the large drops of abundant dew can be heard falling on the ground.

Jesus, still standing with arms folded, lowers His head and becomes engrossed in an even deeper meditation. He is completely absorbed in Himself. His magnificent wide open eyes are fixed on the ground as if they wished to wring a reply from the herbs. But I am sure that they do not even see the slow movement of stems quivering in the cold breeze of dawn, like people who wake up, stretch, turn round, stir themselves in order to awake completely and be thus alert in all their nerves and muscles. He looks, but does not see the awaking of herbs and wild flowers, with their little branches, leaves, corollas shaped like umbrellas, or growing in clusters, spikes and tufts. Some of the flowers are isolated in calyces, some are shaped like radiant crowns or snapdragons, cornucopias, plumes or berries. Some are stiff on their stalks: some are soft, hanging from stems which are not their own and round which they have twined, some are lying and creeping on the ground: some are grouped in families of many little low humble plants: some are solitary, large, violent in hue and carriage: they are all intent on shaking off their petals the dew-drops, which they no longer want, eager as they are now for sunshine only, as whimsical in their desires as in their lay-out. They are thus very much like men, who are never satisfied with what they have.

Jesus seems to be listening. But He certainly does not hear either the rustling of the wind, which is becoming stronger and is amusing itself in shaking the dew-drops and making them fall, or the ever increasing whispering of little birds, which are awaking and telling one another their dreams of the night, or are exchanging their views on the warm canorous nests in which, among down and soft hay, nestlings so far bare, are beginning to show plumage or are opening their huge beaks wide showing their greedy red throats and screeching in their first exacting request for food. Jesus seems to be listening. But He certainly does not hear the first scoffing call of the blackbird, the first sweet song of the blackcap or the golden trilled note of the skylark, which rises joyfully towards the early sun, or the shrieking, which rends the quiet air, of the many swallows, which leave the rocks, where they built their nests, and begin to weave their untiring flights from the earth to the sky. Neither does He hear the wild cry of a magpie perched on a branch of an oak near Him and seems to be asking: « Who are You? What are You pondering? » deriding Him. Not even that interrupts His meditation.

But who does not know that magpies are spiteful? This one, tired of seeing an intruder on the little meadow which is perhaps its territory,

tears off the oak-tree two lovely acorns joined on one single stem, and with the precision of a first-class shot, drops them on Jesus' head. It is not a heavy shell, capable of hurting, but taking into account the height from which it is dropped, it is sufficiently solid to shake the Pensive One, Who looks up and sees the bird which, with its wings opened out and nodding in a funny way, rejoices at its shot. Jesus smiles gently, shakes His head, He sighs as a conclusion of His meditation and He moves away walking up and down. The magpie with a laugh and a mocking cry flies down to the meadow, flapping its wings, searching and scratching about the grass freed from the intruder.

Jesus looks for some water, but He does not find any. He resigns Himself to going back to the apostles, but birds teach Him where to find it. Flocks of them fly towards some very wide calyx-shaped flowers, which in actual fact are little cups containing water, or they alight on wide hairy leaves, where each hair has retained a drop of dew, and they quench their thirst there or have their ablutions. Jesus imitates them. He collects in the hollow of His hands the water of some calyces and refreshes His face, He picks some wide hairy leaves and with them He removes the dust from His bare feet, He cleans His sandals and puts them on, and with some more leaves He washes His hands until He sees that they are clean and He smiles whispering: « The divine perfections of the Creator! »

He is now refreshed, tidy, because with His wet hand He has tidied up His hair and beard and as the first sunbeams turn the meadow into a mat studded with diamonds, He goes to wake up the apostles and the women.

Both groups are hardly able to awaken, tired as they are. Mary is awake but She is unable to move because of the little boy who is sleeping clinging to Her breast, with his little head under Her chin. And the Mother, on seeing Jesus appear at the entrance of the grotto, smiles at Him with Her kind blue eyes, while Her face becomes rosy out of the joy of seeing Him. And She frees Herself from the child, who whimpers a little on being moved, She gets up and goes towards Jesus with Her silent slightly rolling gait of a modest dove.

« May God bless You, Son, today. »

« May God be with You, Mother. Was the night unpleasant for You? »

« No. On the contrary, very pleasant. I seemed to have You, a little Baby, in My arms... And I dreamed that a kind of golden river was flowing from Your mouth, emitting such a sweet sound that it cannot be described, and a voice said... oh! what a voice: "This is the Word which enriches the world and gives beatitude to those who listen to it and obey it. Without any limitation of power, time or space, It will save". Oh! My Son! And You, My Child, are that

Word! How will I be able to live so long and to do so much as to be able to thank the Eternal Father for making Me Your Mother? »

« Do not worry about that, Mother. Every beat of Your heart pleases God. You are the living praise of God, and You will always be so, Mother. You have been thanking Him since You... »

« I do not seem to be doing it sufficiently, Jesus. It is so great, so great what God did for Me! After all, what do I do more than all those good women do, who, like Me, are Your disciples? Son, tell our Father to give Me the opportunity to thank Him as His gift deserves. »

« Mother! And do You think that the Father needs Me to ask Him that for You? He has already prepared for You the sacrifice which You will have to consume for this perfect praise. And You will be perfect when You have accomplished it... »

« My Jesus!... I understand what You mean... But will I be able to think in that hour?... Your poor Mother... »

« The Blessed Spouse of the eternal Love! Mother, that is what You are. And the Love will be thinking in You. »

« You say so, Son, and I relax on Your Word. But You... pray for Me, in that hour that none of these understands... and which is already impending... That is true, is it not? »

It is impossible to describe the expression of Mary's face during this conversation. No writer can possibly translate it into words without spoiling it with mawkishness or uncertain hues. Only he who has a heart, a kind heart, even if a virile one, can mentally give Mary's face the real expression which it has in this moment.

Jesus looks at Her... Another expression untranslatable into poor words. And He replies to Her: « And You will pray for Me in the hour of death... Yes. None of these understands... It is not their fault. Satan is creating fumes so that they may not see, that they may be like drunken people who do not understand, and therefore unprepared... and easier to bend... But You and I will save them, despite Satan's snares. Mother, I entrust them to You as from this moment. Remember these words of Mine: I entrust them to You. I give You My inheritance. I have nothing upon the Earth, except a Mother, and I offer Her to God: Victim with the Victim; and My Church, and I entrust it to You. Be her Nurse. A short time ago I was wondering in how many people, in future, the man of Kerioth will be reviving with all his faults. And I was thinking that anyone, who were not Jesus, would reject that faulty being. But I will not reject him. I am Jesus. During the time that You will remain on the Earth, and You are second to Peter with regard to ecclesiastical hierarchy, he being the Head and You a believer, but first as Mother of the Church having given birth to Me, Who am the Head of this mystical Body, do not reject the many Judases, but assist and teach Peter, My brothers, John, James,

Simon, Philip, Bartholomew, Andrew, Thomas and Matthew not to reject, but to assist. Defend Me in My followers, and defend Me from those who want to disperse and dismember the dawning Church. And in future centuries, Mother, always be She Who pleads for and protects, defends and helps My Church, My Priests, My believers, from Evil and Punishment, from themselves... How many Judases, o Mother, in future centuries! And how many will be like half-wits who cannot understand, or like blind and deaf people who cannot see or hear, or like cripples and paralytic people who cannot come... Mother, let them all be under Your mantle! You alone can and will be able to change the punishment decrees of the Eternal Father for one soul or for many of them. Because the Trinity will never be able to deny its Flower anything. »

« I will do that, Son. As far as it depends on Me, You may go to your goal in peace. Your Mother is here to defend You in Your Church, always. »

« May God bless You, Mother... Come! I will pick for You some calyces of flowers full of scented water, and You will refresh Your face with it, as I did. Our Most Holy Father prepared them for us, and the birds have pointed them out to Me. See how everything is useful in the orderly Creation of God! This elevated tableland close to the lake, so fertile because of the mists which rise from the Sea of Galilee and of the tall trees which attract dew, allowing this luxuriance of herbs and flowers, even in the excessive summer heat. This abundant fall of dew to fill these calyces so that His beloved children may wash their faces... That is what the Father has arranged for those who love Him. Here. The water of God, in calyces of God, to refresh the Eve of the new Paradise. » And Jesus picks the very wide flowers, the name of which I do not know, and He pours into Mary's hands the water collected in them...

The others in the meantime have tidied themselves up and are coming looking for Jesus Who had moved a short distance away from the resting place.

« We are ready, Master. »

« All right. Let us go this way. »

« But is it the right one? The woods come to an end here; the last time we walked through woods... » objects James of Zebedee.

« Because we were coming up from the lake. But now we can take the right road. See? Gamala is over there, south-east, and this is the only road. The other three sides are impassable, except for wild goats. »

« You are right. We will avoid the deep barren valley, from which we saw the men who were possessed come » says Philip.

They walk fast and are soon out of the wood in which they slept, along a stoney path running beyond a little valley that grows Wider the more they approach the bizarre mountain to which

Gamala clings and which is very steep on three sides, that is, to the east, north and west and is linked to the remaining area only by this road which runs straight from south to north, and is elevated between two wild stoney valleys that separate it from the country on the eastern side and from woods of oak-trees on the western side.

Many swineherds pass by in the middle of their grunting herds, going to the oak-woods. Carts laden with squared stones pass squeaking, drawn by slow oxen yoked in pairs. Some horsemen pass at a trot raising clouds of dust. Teams of ragged emaciated diggers - I think most of them are slaves or men condemned to hard labour for some reason - pass by going to their work under the strict surveillance of supervisors.

As they draw closer to the mountain and the road begins to climb, they can see fortified ditches surrounding the mountain like rings fastened to its sides. It must be a difficult task to dig out those works, particularly in certain spots which are almost sheer. And yet many men are working to repair existing fortifications, to build new ones and are carrying on their bare shoulders stone cubes which bend the poor wretches and leave bleeding wounds on their naked shoulders.

« What are those citizens doing? It is perhaps wartime that they should work thus? They are mad » say the apostles to one another while the women pity the unhappy men who are half -naked, ill-fed and compelled to do works exceeding their strength.

« But who compels them to work? The Tetrarch or the Romans? » ask the apostles once again and they discuss the matter among themselves because it would appear that Gamala is, so to say, independent of the Tetrarchy of Philip and of that of Herod, and because it seems impossible to some of the apostles that the Romans should busy themselves in building in foreign countries fortifications which in future might be used against them. And the eternal idea, as fixed as a maniacal idea, of the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, is displayed as the insignia of already certain victory, of glory and national independence.

They shout so much that some supervisors approach them and listen. They are coarse men, clearly not of Jewish race, many are elderly, several of them have scars on their bodies. But their identity is clarified by the scornful remark of one of them: « "Our kingdom"! Did you hear that, Titus? O big-nosed people! Your kingdom is already crushed under these stones. He who uses the enemy to build against the enemy serves the enemy. Publius Corfinius tells you. And if you do not understand, live long enough; and the stones will explain the enigma to you » and he laughs raising his lash because he sees an exhausted workman stagger and sit down, and he would strike him if Jesus did not stop

him moving forward and saying: « You are not allowed to do that. He is a man like you. »

« Who are You Who meddle with and defend a slave? »

« I am Mercy. My name as a man would not mean anything to you. But My attribute reminds you to be merciful. You said: "He who uses the enemy to build against the enemy serves the enemy". You spoke a sorrowful truth. But I will tell you a bright one: "Who does not use mercy will not find mercy". »

« Are You a rhetor? »

« I told you, I am Mercy. »

Some people from Gamala, who are going towards their hometown, say: « He is the Rabbi of Galilee. He Who gives orders to diseases, to the winds, waters and demons, Who changes stones into bread and Whom nothing can resist. Let us run to town to tell the people. So that sick people may come! And we may hear His word. We belong to Israel, too! » and some of them run away, some gather round the Master.

The supervisor mentioned previously asks: « Is it true what they are saying about You? »

« Yes, it is. »

« Work a miracle and I will believe. »

« You do not ask for miracles to believe. You ask faith to believe, and thus obtain a miracle. Faith and pity for your neighbour. »

« I am a heathen... »

« That is not a valid reason. You live in Israel which gives you money... »

« Because I work. »

« No. Because you make people work. »

« I know how to make people work. »

« Yes, mercilessly. But have you never considered that if instead of being a Roman you were a Jew, you might have been in the place of one of these men? »

« Eh!... Of course... But I am not, through the protection of the gods. »

« Your vain idols could not protect you if the true God wanted to strike you. You are not dead yet. So be merciful in order to receive mercy... »

The man would like to retort and discuss, but he shrugs his shoulders disdainfully and turning his back he goes away and strikes a man who had stopped working with his pick in a hard rocky layer.

Jesus looks at the unhappy fellow who has been struck and He looks at the striker as well. Two glances of the same, and yet different, pity. And they are so deeply sad, that they remind me of certain glances of Christ during His passion. But what can He do? As He has no power to interfere, He resumes His way, with the

burden of the misfortunes just seen lying heavy on His heart.

But some citizens, certainly notables, run down from Gamala, and they reach Jesus before Whom they bow deeply inviting Him to enter their town and speak to the people, who are coming in flocks of their own accord.

« You can go wherever you wish. They (and He points at the workers) cannot. It is now cool and we are protected here from the sun. Let us go towards those poor wretches so that they may hear the Word of Life as well » replies Jesus. And He sets out first retracing His steps and taking an uneven path which leads down the mountain, where it is more painful to work. He then addresses the notables saying: « If it is in your power to do so, order the work to be stopped. »

« We certainly can! We are the ones who pay and if we pay some hours for nothing, no one can complain » reply the men from Gamala and they go to speak to the supervisors and a few moments later I see the latter shrug their shoulders, as if to say: « If you are happy, why should we worry? » They then whistle to the gangs, a signal which obviously means rest.

Jesus in the meantime has spoken to other people from Gamala, and I see them nod assent and walk away fast back to town.

The workers hurry around the supervisors looking frightened. « Stop working. Your noise is annoying the philosopher » orders one of them, probably the head of them all.

The workmen look with tired eyes at the one pointed out as the philosopher who is giving them the gift of a rest. And the philosopher looking at them pitifully, replies to their glances and to the words of the supervisor saying: « Their noise does not annoy Me, but their misery grieves Me. Come, My children. Rest your bodies and even more your hearts near the Christ of God. »

The population, the slaves, the condemned men, the apostles and disciples crowd in the free space between the mountain and the trenches, and those who do not find any room there, climb up to the upper trenches on the ground, and the less lucky ones resign themselves to going onto the road, where the sun is already shining. And more people come from Gamala and many travellers coming from other towns and going to Gamala stop as well.

There is a large crowd. And those who had gone away a short time before are elbowing their way through the crowd. They are carrying heavy baskets and containers. They push their way as far as Jesus, Who has instructed the apostles to bring the workmen to the front row. They lay baskets and amphorae at Jesus' feet.

« Give them the offerings of charity » orders Jesus.

« They have had their food and there is still some water mixed with vinegar and bread. If they eat too much, they will feel heavy at work » shouts one of the supervisors.

Jesus looks at him and repeats His order: « Give them food suitable for men, and bring Me their food. »

The apostles with the help of volunteers execute His order.

Their food! A kind of a hard dark crust, not suitable for animals, and some water mixed with vinegar. That is the nourishment of the convicts! Jesus looks at it and has the poor food placed near the mountain side. And He looks at those who were to eat it, underfed bodies in which only the muscles, overdeveloped through excessive fatigue, can hold out with sheaves of fibres swelling out from the flaccid skin, feverish frightened eyes, avid mouths which seem even bestial in biting the good, plentiful unexpected food, in drinking the real corroborating fresh wine...

Jesus waits patiently for them to finish their meal. And He does not have to wait long because their avidity is such that everything is soon consumed.

Jesus stretches out His arm in the habitual gesture when He is about to speak, to draw the attention of people and impose silence. He says:

« What do the eyes of man see in this place? Valleys dug deeper than they were created by nature, hills formed by man with massive ramparts, winding roads penetrating into the mountain like dens of animals. And why all that? To stop a danger which is not known whence it may come, but is felt impending like a hailstorm from a stormy sky.

In actual fact they have acted here in a human way, with human power and human means, at times also inhuman, to defend themselves and prepare means of offence, unmindful of the words of the Prophet, who teaches his people how it is possible to defend oneself from human misfortunes through superhuman means, the most valid ones. He cries: "Console my people... comfort Jerusalem, because her slavery is ended, her sin is atoned for, because she has received from the hand of the Lord double punishment for all her crimes". And after the promise he explains the way to make it become real: "Prepare the ways of the Lord, make straight the ways of God across the desert. Every valley will be filled in, every mountain will be laid low, the winding way will become straight, the hard one will become comfortable. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all men, without any exception shall see it, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken". Those words 'were taken up by the man of God, John the Baptist, and death only silenced them on his lips.

That is, o men, the true defence against the misfortunes of mankind. Not weapon against weapon, defence against offence, not pride, not fierceness. But supernatural weapons, but virtues achieved in solitude, that is, in the interior of the individual, all alone with himself, who works to sanctify himself, erecting mountains

of charity, lowering peaks of pride, straightening twisted ways of concupiscence, removing sensual obstacles from his way. Then the glory of the Lord will appear and man will receive the defence of God against the spiritual and material snares of enemies. What do you expect a few trenches, a few glacis, a few forts to be against God's punishment which the wickedness or just the tepidness of man draws upon himself? Against punishments which will be named: Romans, as in the past they were named: Babylonians, Philistines, or Egyptians, but in actual fact are divine punishments, and nothing else, deserved by the excessive pride, sensuality, greed, falsehood, selfishness, disobedience to the holy Law of the Decalogue. A man, even the strongest one, can be killed by a fly. Even the most fortified town can be taken by storm when neither man nor town enjoy God's protection, which vanishes or is driven away by the sins of man or of the town.

The Prophet goes on saying: "All flesh is grass and all its glory is like a wild flower. The grass withers, the flower fades as soon as the breath of the Lord blows on them".

Today, by My will, you are looking at these men with pity, whereas up to yesterday you had looked at them like machines compelled to work for you. Today, because I put them, brothers among brothers, amid you, who are rich and happy, today you see them for what they are: men. Contempt or indifference have disappeared from many hearts and pity has replaced them. But consider them more intimately, beyond their oppressed flesh. In it, in them, there is a soul, a thought, feelings as in you. Once they were like you: healthy, free, happy. Later they were no longer so. Because if the life of man is like grass which withers, his well-being is even more fragile. Those who are healthy today, may be taken ill tomorrow, those who are free today, may become slaves tomorrow, those who are happy today, may be unhappy tomorrow. Some of these men are certainly guilty. Do not judge their faults, do not rejoice at their expiation. For many reasons, you might be guilty yourselves tomorrow and compelled to make hard expiation. So be merciful, because you do not know your future, which may be so different from your present time, that you may need all divine and human mercy. Be prone to love and forgiveness. There is no man on the Earth who does not need to be forgiven by God and by some of his own fellow-men. So forgive, to be forgiven.

The Prophet goes on to say: "Grass withers, flowers fade; but the word of the Lord remains for ever".

That is the weapon and defence: the eternal Word which has become the law of all your actions. Raise that true bulwark against the impending danger and you will be saved. So accept the Word, Him Who is speaking to you, but do not receive it in a material way, just for one hour within the walls of the town, but in

your hearts, for ever, because I am He Who knows, Who acts and Who rules with power. And I am the good Shepherd, Who pastures the flock which relies upon Him, and I neglect nobody, not the little ones, or those who are tired, injured or hit by bad fortune, or those who bewail their errors, or those who, although rich and happy, disregard everything to achieve true riches and happiness: that is, to serve God until their death.

The Spirit of the Lord is over Me because the Lord has sent Me to announce the Good News to the meek, to cure those whose hearts are broken, to preach freedom to slaves and liberation to prisoners. Neither can anyone say that I am an instigator, because I do not instigate to rebellion, neither do I advise slaves and prisoners to evade, but I teach the man in chains and the slave true freedom and true liberation, which cannot be taken away from them or even limited, as the more man gives himself up to it, the greater it grows: spiritual freedom, liberation from sin, meekness in sorrow, I teach him to see God beyond men fettering prisoners, to believe that God loves those who love Him, and forgives when man does not forgive, to hope for an eternal place of reward for those who are successful in being good in misfortunes, who can repent their sins and be faithful to the Lord. Do not weep, men, to whom I am particularly referring. I have come to comfort, to gather those who have been rejected, to bring light to their darkness, peace to their souls, to promise a joyful abode both to those who repent and to those who are not guilty. There is no past which may prevent this Present that waits in Heaven for those who serve the Lord in the situation in which they are.

It is not difficult, My poor children, to serve the Lord. He has granted you an easy way to serve Him, because He wants you to be happy in Heaven. To serve the Lord is to love. To love the will of God because you love God. The will of God is hidden even in the most apparently human things. Because - I am speaking to you who have perhaps shed the blood of brothers - because if it certainly was not the will of God that you should be violent, it is now His will that through expiation you should cancel your debts towards Love. Because, if it was not God's will that you should rebel against your enemies, it is now His will that you should become as humble as once you were proud, to your own detriment. Because if it was not God's will that you should obtain by fraud, whether big or small, what did not belong to you, it is now God's will that you should be punished, so that you may not present Yourself to God with your sins in your hearts. And that should not be forgotten by those who are at present happy, by those who think that they are safe, and through such silly safety do not Prepare in themselves the Kingdom of God, and in the hour of the (trial will be like children remote from the house of the Father, at

the mercy of the storm, under the lash of pain.

You must act with justice, all of you, and raise your eyes to the house of the Father, to the Kingdom of Heaven, which, once its gates have been opened wide by Him, Who came to open them, will not refuse to accept anyone who has achieved justice. You, who are mutilated in your bodies, cripples, eunuchs; or you, who are mutilated in your spirits, cripples, eunuchs in the power of the spirit, rejected in Israel, be not afraid of having no place in the Kingdom of Heaven. Mutilations, crippling, impairment of bodies come to an end with bodies. The moral ones, such as prison and slavery, will come to an end one day as well; those of the spirit, that is the fruit of past faults, are mended through good will. And material mutilations do not count in the eyes of God, and spiritual ones are cancelled in His eyes when loving repentance covers them.

The fact that one does not belong to the holy People does not prevent one from serving the Lord. Because the time has come when all frontiers of the Earth disappear before the Only King, the King of all kings and peoples, the King who gathers all peoples into one only to make it His new People. That people from which only those will be excluded who try to deceive the Lord with false obedience to His Decalogue, which all men of good will can follow, whether they are Jews, Gentiles or idolaters. Because where there is good will, there is natural inclination to justice, and he who is prone to justice, will have no difficulty in adoring the true God, once he gets to know Him, in respecting His Name, in observing holy days, in honouring parents, in not killing, stealing, bearing false witness, in not being an adulterer or fornicator, in not desiring what does not belong to him. And he who has not done that so far, should do it as from now onwards, so that his soul may be saved and he may conquer his place in Heaven. It is written: "I will give them a place in My House if they keep My Covenant and I will make them joyful". And that is said with regard to all men of holy will, because the Holy of Holies is the common Father of all men.

I have finished. I have no money for these people. Neither would it be of any use to them. But I say to you, people of Gamala, who have made so much progress in the way of the Lord since the first time we met, that you should build the most valid defence for your town: that of love for one another and for these men, by assisting them in My Name while they work for you. Will you do that? »

« Yes, Lord » shout the crowds.

« Let us go then. I would not have entered your town if the hardness of your hearts had replied "no" to My request. May you, who are remaining here, be blessed... Let us go... »

And He goes back to the road, now flooded with sunshine and

goes up to the town which is almost built in the rock like a troglodytic town, but has well-kept houses and a most beautiful varied view, according to the direction in which one looks, to the mountains of Hauran or the sea of Galilee, to the remote Great Hermon or to the green Jordan valley. The town is cool because of the way it is built, high up, and with streets which protect from the hot sun. It looks more like a huge castle than a town, a chain of fortresses, because the houses, half brickwork and half dug in the mountain, seem forts.

In the main square, the highest of them all, in the highest part of the town - one's eyes therefore enjoy a vast panorama of mountains, forests, lakes, rivers, all lying underneath - are the sick people of Gamala. And Jesus passes curing them...

#### **454. From Gamala to Aphek.**

13th July 1946.

They must have spent the night at Gamala, because it is now morning, a windy morning. Perhaps the town enjoys the wind, so pleasant in eastern countries, because of its location and terraced construction from the top of the town down to the walls, which are massive and equipped with massive ironshod gates, typical of fortresses. If the town looked beautiful to me yesterday, when it was exposed to the sun, now it seems most beautiful. The houses, arranged as they are, do not obstruct the sight of the vast view, because the terrace of one house is on the same level as the upper street, so that each street looks like a long terrace from which it is possible to admire the horizon. The full circle of the horizon can be seen from the top of the mountain, whereas farther down it is a semicircle, but still vast and very beautiful.

At the foot of the mountain the greenery of the oak-groves and of the country form an emerald setting beyond the deep barren valley surrounding the mountain of Gamala. Then to the east, as far as the eye can see, the cultivations of the tableland, of the plateau. (I think that is the name of the large low elevations of the crust of the earth, but if I am wrong, please correct it in my name because I have no dictionary within reach. In fact I am alone in my room and it is impossible for me to take the dictionary which is on the writing-desk, less than three metres away from me. I am saying this to remind you that she who is writing is crucified to her bed.) Beyond the large plateau are the mountains of Hauran and farther back the highest peaks of Bashan; to the south the fertile strip between the blue Jordan and the continuous compact rising ground which is on the eastern side of the river and is similar to a buttress-like projection of the vast plateau, to the north the remote mountains of the Lebanese chain dominated by the imposing

Hermon adorned with countless shades in this early morning! And down, in the near west, the gem of the Sea of Galilee. A real gem fastened to a blue necklace of a different shade of the Jordan flowing into and out of the lake, narrower where it flows in, wider where it resumes flowing southwards, shining in the sun, placid between its green banks, really biblical. The little lake of Merom, instead, is not visible, hidden as it is behind the hills north of Bethsaida, but one can imagine where it is by the luxuriant greenery of the surrounding country, which stretches northwestwards between the Sea of Galilee and the lake of Merom, in the plain where Korazim rises. I think that in the past I have heard the apostles say that it is the plain of Gennesaret.

Jesus takes leave of the citizens, who, proud of their town, are busy showing Him the beautiful sights of the horizon and those of the town provided with aqueducts, thermal baths and beautiful buildings. « It was all done with our work and our money. Because we have learned from the Romans and we have followed their example as far as useful things are concerned, but we are not like the other peoples in the Decapolis! We pay the Romans and they serve us. But that's all! We are faithful. Also our isolation is a sign of faithfulness... »

« Ensure that your faithfulness is not just formal, but real, intimate, just. Otherwise your defence works will be of no avail. I repeat that. See? You have built this aqueduct. It is solid and useful. But if it were not fed by a remote spring, would it give you water for your fountains and thermal baths? »

« No. It would not give us anything. It would be quite useless. »

« You have said it: useless. Likewise natural or artificial defences are useless unless those who build them make them powerful by means of the help of God, and God does not help those who are not His friends. »

« Master, You are speaking as if You knew that we have great need of God... »

« All men are in need of God, and for everything. »

« Yes, Master. But... it seems that we are going to have more need than any other town in Palestine and... »

« Oh!... » a sorrowful exclamation...

The people of Gamala look at Him disconcertedly. The boldest man among them asks: « What do You think? That we shall experience the old horrors once again? »

« Yes, and even more dreadful ones, and lasting longer... longer!... oh! My Fatherland! So much longer... And that will happen if you do not receive the Lord! »

« We have received You. So we are safe! The last time we behaved foolishly, but You have forgiven us... »

« Make sure that you persevere in your present justice towards

Me, and that you grow in justice according to the Law. »

« We will do that, Lord. »

They would like to follow Him and keep Him longer, but Jesus wants to join the women who have gone ahead on little donkeys and He tears Himself away from their insistence going quickly down the road by which He came up yesterday. He slows down only when He is where the labourers are working, to raise His hand to bless the unhappy men who look at Him as one looks at God.

At the foot of the mountain the road divides into two branches, one goes towards the lake, the other inland. The four little donkeys are on the latter and they are trotting along raising dust from the road parched by summer, and shaking their long ears. Now and again one of the women turns round to see whether Jesus is joining them, and they would like to stop to wait for Him, but with His hand He beckons them to proceed in order to get quickly off the uncovered stretch of the road on which the sun is already blazing down, and thus reach the woods which climb towards Aphek. It is cool in the woods which interlace a green vault over the track. They enter them happily, with exclamations of relief. Aphek is much further inland than Gamala. It is among the mountains and so it is no longer possible to see the lake of Galilee. In actual fact it is not possible to see anything because the road climbs between two ridges which are like screens.

The widow is ahead of them to point out the shortest way, that is, she leaves the track and takes a path which climbs up the mountain and is even cooler and shadier. But I understand the reason for the deviation when, turning round on her saddle, Sarah says: « Look. These woods are mine. Valuable trees. They come from as far as Jerusalem to buy them to make chests for rich people. And these are old trees; but I have also seedling nurseries. Come. See... » and she drives her little donkey down steep slopes, then up crests and then down once again, following a little path through her woods where are in fact zones with old trees, ready to be cut down, and zones with tender plants, at times only a few centimetres off the ground, among green herbs, smelling of all mountain aromas.

« This place is beautiful and well kept. You are a wise woman » says Jesus praising her.

« Oh!... But just for myself... I would take care of everything more willingly, if I had a son... »

Jesus does not reply. They go on. Aphek can now be seen in the middle of apple-orchards and other fruit trees.

« That orchard is mine as well. Too much for me alone!... It was already too much when I had my husband. In the evenings we used to look at each other in the house which was too empty, too large, with too much money and with accounts of crops too plentiful for

us and we used to say to each other: "And for whom?". And I say that even more now... » All the sadness of a sterile marriage stands out from the woman's words.

« There are always poor people... » says Jesus.

« Oh! yes! And my house is open to them every day. But afterwards... »

« Do you mean when you are dead? »

« Yes, Lord. It will be painful to leave, to whom?... the things I have taken care of... »

Jesus smiles faintly, a smile full of sympathy. But He replies kindly: « You are wiser with regard to the things of the Earth than you are for those of Heaven, woman. You take care to ensure that your trees grow well and that no glades are left in your woods. You grieve at the thought that afterwards they will not be looked after as they are now. But such thoughts are not very wise, nay they are completely foolish. Do you think that in the next life such poor things as trees, fruits, money, houses will be of any value? And that it will be distressing to see them neglected? Revise your ideas, woman. The ideas of this world do not exist there, in none of the three kingdoms. In Hell hatred and punishment dim minds savagely. In Purgatory the craving for expiation cancels every other thought. In Limbo the blissful expectation of the just is not profaned by any sensuality. The Earth is remote, with its miseries; it is instead close with its supernatural needs, the needs of souls, not with the needs of things. The dead, who are not damned, turn their spirits towards the Earth only out of supernatural love, and they address their prayers to God on behalf of those who are on the Earth, not for any other reason. And when the just will enter the Kingdom of God, what can you expect this miserable prison, this place of exile named: Earth, to be for a soul contemplating God? What, the things left there? Can daytime look back with regret on a smoky lamp, when it is lit up by the sun? »

« Oh! no »

« So? Why do you sigh for what you will leave? »

« But I would like an heir to continue to... »

« To enjoy earthly riches and be prevented by them from becoming perfect, whereas detachment from wealth is the means to possess the eternal riches? See, woman? The greatest obstacle preventing you from having this innocent boy is not his mother with her rights on her son, but your heart. He is an innocent, a sad innocent, but still an innocent who is dear to God because of his suffering. But if you made him avaricious, greedy, perhaps vicious, through the means which you possess, would you not deprive him of God's predilection? And since I take care of these innocent children, could I be a thoughtless master who allows one of his innocent disciples to go astray? Take care of yourself first,

divest yourself of your still exceedingly alive humanity, free your justice from the crust of humanity depressing it, and you will then deserve to be a mother. Because not only who gives birth to a child is a mother, or who loves an adopted son and takes care of him and looks after his needs of animal creature. Also the mother of this boy gave birth to him. But she is not a mother because she does not take care either of his body or of his spirit. A woman is a mother when she takes care above all of what does not die, that is of the spirit, not only of what dies, that is of material things. And believe Me, woman, those who love the spirit, will love also the body, because they possess the right love and therefore they will be just. »

« I see that I have lost the son... »

« Not necessarily. Let your desire urge you to become holy and God will satisfy you. There will always be orphans in the world. »

They are now at the first houses. Aphek is not a town which can compete with Gamala or Hippo. It is more rural than anything else, but perhaps because it is an important road junction, it is not a poor town. As a transit town for caravans travelling from the hinterland to the lake, or from the north southwards, it is bound to be equipped to supply pilgrims with lodgings, clothes, sandals and victuals, and consequently there are many stores and hotels.

The widow's house is near a hotel in the square and the ground floor is a large store with all kinds of goods and is run by an old big-nosed bearded man, who is shrieking like one of the damned at some stingy buyers.

« Samuel! » calls the woman.

« Mistress! » replies the old man bowing as low as the bales of goods piled up in front of him allow him.

« Send Elias or Philip here and meet me in the house » orders the widow and then, addressing the Master, she says: « Come. Come into my house and be my welcome guest. »

They all go in, passing through the warehouse, while the little donkeys are taken I do not where by a tall boy who has come for them. Beyond the warehouse, which does not give the house a very artistic appearance, is a fine yard with porches on two sides. In the middle there is a fountain, or, at least, a basin, because no water is running. Vigorous plane-trees at the sides shade the whitewashed walls. A staircase climbs to the terrace. Doors open into rooms on the porchless sides: the farthest from the warehouse.

« Previously, in the days of my husband, it was full here, and we gave lodgings to merchants overtaken by the night. The porches are for goods, there are stables for animals and the fountain over there to water them. Come into the rooms » and she crosses the yard diagonally going towards the nicest part of the house. She calls: « Mary! Johanna! »

Two maid-servants come, one with her hands soiled with dough, the other with a broom in her hand.

« Mistress! Peace be with you and with us, now that you are back. »

« And with you. Any trouble these past days? »

« Joseph, that light-headed man, broke the rose-bush of which you were so fond. I gave him a good thrashing. You should thrash me for allowing him to go near the plant. »

« It is of no value... » but tears well up in the eyes of Sarah who justifies them saying: « My husband brought me it the last spring that he was healthy... »

« And Elias broke his leg, which has made Samuel furious, because he has no help in these days of busy markets... He fell from the staircase on the other side of the house, while he was hanging out to have the walls whitewashed for you » says the other woman and she concludes: « He is suffering very much and he will remain lame. And you, mistress, did you have a pleasant journey? »

« As I could never have hoped. I have come back with the Rabbi of Galilee. Quick! Make preparations for my guests. Come in, Master! »

They enter the house passing before the two dumbfounded maidservants.

They are received in a large cool room, in dim light, furnished with seats and chests. The widow goes out to give instructions, and Jesus calls the apostles to send them through the town to prepare people for His coming. Samuel comes in, transformed from salesman to butler, followed by maid-servants with amphorae and basins, for the purifications before taking food, which is carried in large trays: bread, fruit, milk.

The mistress comes back: « I told my servant that You are here. He begs You to be merciful to him and I ask You to be merciful to me as well. Many people pass through here for the Feast of the Tabernacles. And the traffic begins immediately after the new moon of Tishri. I do not know how we will manage, if he is not well... »

« Tell him to come here. »

« He cannot. He cannot stand. »

« Tell him that the Rabbi is not going to him, but wants to see him. »

« I will get Samuel and Joseph to bring him. »

« That would be the last straw! I am old and tired » grumbles Samuel.

« Tell Elias to come on his own legs. I want it. »

« A poor rabbi! Not even Gamaliel could do that » mumbles again the old servant.

« Be quiet, Samuel!... Forgive him, Master! He is a faithful servant.

He was born here of servants of my husband's family, he is diligent and honest... but stubborn in his ideas of an old Israelite... » explains the widow in a low voice to excuse him.

« I understand his spirit. But the miracle will change him. Go and tell Elias to come and he will come. »

The widow goes and comes back: « I told him. And I ran away at once as I did not want to see him put his black swollen leg on the floor. »

« Do you not believe in a miracle? »

« Yes, I do. But that leg is horrifying... I am afraid that it will become gangrenous and rot completely. It is shiny, so shiny... horrible and... Oh! »

Her interruption and exclamation are due to the fact that she sees Elias run towards them, more nimbly than a healthy man, and throw himself at Jesus' feet saying: « Praised be the King of Israel. »

« Praised be God alone. How did you come? How did you dare? »

« I obeyed. I thought: "The Holy One cannot lie. Neither can He order foolish things. I have faith, I believe" and I moved my leg. It was no longer sore, I could move it. I put my foot on the floor, my leg was firm. I took a step. I was able to walk. I ran here. God does not disappoint those who believe in Him. »

« Stand up, man. I solemnly tell you that few people have faith like this man. From whom did it come to you? »

« From Your disciples who came here preaching You. »

« Were you the only one who heard them? »

« No, everybody heard them, because they were our guests here after Pentecost. »

« And you alone believed... Your spirit is well advanced in the ways of the Lord. Proceed... »

Old Samuel is drawn this way and that by conflicting sentiments... But, like many in Israel, he cannot detach himself from the old mentality for the new one, and he remains firm in his standpoint saying: « Magic! Magic! It is written: "My people shall not be contaminated by magicians and diviners. If a man has recourse to them, I shall set My face against him and destroy him". Tremble with fear, mistress, lest you should be unfaithful to the laws! » and he goes away with a stem shocked look, as if he had seen the demon installed in the house.

« Do not punish him, Master! He is old! He has always believed thus... »

« Be not afraid. If I had to punish all those who say that I am a den-ion, many sepulchres would open to swallow the preys. I can wait... I will speak at sunset... Then I will leave Aphek. I now agree to remain under your roof. »

#### **455. Preaching at Aphek.**

15th July 1946.

Jesus is speaking to the people of Aphek from the doorstep of Sarah's warehouse. And He is addressing a mixed crowd, which is more curious than attentive and in which the Jews are not as numerous as the other people, mainly merchants and pilgrims who are passing through, some going towards the lake, some ready to go down to the Jericho ford, some coming from eastern towns on their way to coastal-towns.

At present it is not really a speech, but replies of Jesus to this man and that one, dialogue to which everybody listens, although with different feelings, clearly shown by their countenances and by their words, which make me understand who they are and where they are going. The dialogue at times changes in tone and interlocutors, because, while Jesus is left aside, it becomes a debate among the people present for reasons of race and difference of opinions.

Thus an old man of Joppa quarrels with a merchant from Sidon, as the latter defends the Master against the disbelief of the Jew, who will not admit that Jesus is the One Expected by nations. And there is a turmoil of quotations from the Holy Scriptures, applied rightly or wrongly, confuted by a simple statement of the Syro-Phoenician who says: « I am not interested in those words, but I say that it is He, because I have seen His miracles and heard His words. » The dispute expands, as other people take part in it, and those against Christ shout: « Beelzebub helps Him. The Holy Man of God is not like that. He is a King. He is not a false rabbi and a beggar », whilst those who are of the same opinion as the man from Sidon reply: « Wise people are poor because they are honest. Philosophers are not clad in gold and arrogance like your false rabbis and priests. » And one gathers that they say so because they are not Jews, but Gentiles from various countries, who are by chance in Palestine or naturalised there, but still pagan-minded.

« Impious people! »

« You are impious, because you do not even perceive the divinity of His thought » reply some.

« You do not deserve to have Him. But, by Jove! We condemned Socrates and we suffered the consequences of that. I say, mind what you do. Be careful lest you should be struck by the gods, as we were several times » shouts one, certainly a Greek.

« Ah! Gentiles defending the king of Israel! »

« And some Samaritans! And we are proud of being so, because we would look after the Rabbi better than you do, if He came to Samaria. But you... You have built the Temple. It is beautiful, but it is a sepulchre full of rotteness even if you have covered it with gold and valuable marbles » shouts from the end of the crowds a

tall personage dressed in linen, with flounces and embroidery work, with sashes round his waist, ribbons, bracelets...

« Ah! a Samaritan! » and they seem to be saying: « the devil » so loud the intolerant horrified Jews shout stepping aside as if the man were a leper. And running away they shout to Jesus: « Drive him away! He is impure... »

But Jesus does not drive anybody away. He tries to impose order and silence, with the help of the apostles, without much success. Thus, to put an end to disputes, He begins His sermon.

« When the people of God, after Miriam's death at Kadesh, rebelled in the desert because of lack of water and shouted against Moses, their saviour and leader from the land of sin to the promised land, as if he were their mad destroyer, and they inveighed against Aaron as a useless priest, Moses entered the Tabernacle with his brother and they spoke to the Lord requesting a miracle to stop the complaining of the people. And the Lord, although He is not obliged to yield to every request, particularly if the request is a violent one coming from spirits who have lost holy trust in the Father's Providence, spoke to Moses and Aaron. He could have spoken to Moses only, because Aaron, although High Priest, one day had forfeited God's favour by adoring the idol. But God wanted to try him again and give him the opportunity to increase in grace in His eyes. And He ordered them to take Aaron's branch, which had been deposited in the Tabernacle after it had bloomed in open flowers and leaves, which later turned into almonds, and to go with it and speak to the rock, as the rock would give water for men and animals. And Moses with Aaron did what the Lord commanded but both of them did not believe in the Lord completely. And the one who believed less was the High Priest of Israel: Aaron. The rock, struck by the branch, split and poured out so much water as to quench the thirst of people and animals. And that water was called the water of Contradiction, because the Israelites contended there with the Lord and censured His actions and orders and they were not all equally loyal, on the contrary, it was the very High Priest who gave rise to doubt about the truth of God's divine words. And Aaron was removed from the living and was not allowed to reach the Promised Land.

Also now the people rebel against the Lord saying: "You have brought us here to die, both as people and as individuals, under the rule of oppressors". And they shout to Me: "Make Yourself our king and free us". But of which freedom 'are you speaking? Of what punishment? Of material ones? Oh! in material things there is neither salvation nor punishment! A much greater punishment and a much greater salvation is within your free will's reach and You can make your choice. God allows you. I am saying this for the Israelites who are present here, for those who should be able to

read the figures of the Scriptures and understand them. But as I feel pity for My people whose spiritual King I am, I want to help you to understand at least one figure, so that it may assist you to realise Who I am.

The Most High said to Moses and Aaron: "Take the branch and speak to the rock and streams of water will gush out to quench the thirst of the people so that they may complain no longer". The Most High, to put an end to the complaints of His people, has said once again to the Eternal Priest: "Take the branch which germinated from the stock of Jesse and a flower, untouched by human filth, will spring from it and it will become a fruit: a sweet almond full of unction. And with that almond of the root of Jesse, with its wonderful shoot upon which the Spirit of the Lord will descend with its seven gifts, strike the stone of Israel so that copious water may gush for its salvation". The Priest of God is Love Himself. And Love formed a Body making its shoot germinate from the root of Jesse, which no dirt had soiled, and it was the Body of the Word Incarnate, of the expected Messiah Who had been sent to speak to the rock so that it might split. That it might split its hardcrust of pride and greed and might receive the waters sent by God, the waters gushing from His Christ, the sweet oil of His love and thus become malleable, kind and holy, receiving in its heart the gift of the Most High to His people. But Israel does not want the living Water in her bosom. She remains closed and hard, particularly in her great people to whom the branch which bloomed and bore fruit speaks in vain and whom it strikes uselessly. And I solemnly tell you that many who belong to this people will not enter the Kingdom, whereas many who do not belong to it, will enter it, because they will believe what the priests of Israel refused to believe. That is why I am among you like a sign of contradiction and you will be judged according to the manner in which you have understood Me. To the others who do not belong to Israel I say: the house of God, lost by the children of His people, is open to those seeking Light. Come. Follow Me. If I am placed as a sign of contradiction, I am placed also as a sign for all Nations and those who love Me will be saved. »

« You love foreigners more than You love us. If You evangelized us, we would end up by loving You! But You are everywhere except in Judaea » says a Judaeen moved by Jesus' words.

« I will come down to Judaea as well, and I will stop there for a long time. But that will not change the stones in the hearts of many. They will not even change when the Blood will fall upon them. You are the head of a synagogue, are you not? »

« Yes, I am, how did You know? »

« I know. Well, you can thus understand what I am saying. »

« The blood must not fall on the stone. It is a sin. »

« You will pour the Blood on the stone with joy, that it may remain there. And the stone on which the Blood of the true Lamb will be poured will seem a trophy of victory to you. Then the day will come when you will understand... You will understand the real punishment and which was the true salvation offered to you. Let us go... »

A man elbows his way forward: « I am Siro-Phoenician. Many of us believe in You, although they have never met You... and we have many sick people... Will You not come to us? »

« No, I will not come to you. I have no time. But now, after the Sabbath, I will leave this place and I will go towards your borders. Whoever is in need of graces should wait at the border passes. »

« I will tell my fellow-countrymen. God be with You, Master. »

« Peace to you, man. »

Jesus takes leave of the widow, that is, He would like to take leave of her, but she kneels down and declares her decisions: « I have decided to leave Samuel here - he is better as a servant than as a believer - and I will come to Capernaum to be near You. »

« I will be leaving Capernaum soon, and for good. »

« But You have good disciples there. »

« That is true. »

« That is my decision... I will thus prove to You that I can become detached from riches and love with justice. I will use the money which accumulates here for Your poor people and I will consider the boy as the first of the poor, if his mother wants to keep him, even if she does not love him. In the meantime, take this » and she offers a heavy purse to Jesus.

« May God bless you with His blessings and with those of the people you assist. You have made much progress in a few hours. »

The woman blushes. She looks round, then she avows: « It was not I who made so much progress. Your apostle taught me. That one over there, the one who is hiding behind the dark-haired young man. »

« Simon Peter. The Head of the apostles. So, what did he tell you? »

« Oh! he spoke to me in such a simple manner and so well! He humbled himself, he the apostle, admitting that he also was like me, unfair in his desires. Oh! I cannot believe that! But he said that he strove to become good in order to deserve what he wanted and that he strives more and more to become so, as he does not want to turn into evil the good that he has received. You know, the things said among ourselves, poor people, are understood better... Am I offending You, Lord? »

« No. You are giving glory to God through your sincerity and Your praises for My apostle. Do as he advised you and may God be always with you who are tending to justice. »

He blesses her and is the first to set out, going north-west, under green orchards rustling in the wind which has risen suddenly.

#### **456. At Gherghesa and Return to Capernaum.**

16th July 1946.

They arrive on the shore of the lake, in the immediate neighbourhood of Gherghesa, when the red sunset is changing into a violet peaceful twilight. The shore is crowded with people preparing their boats for night fishing or bathing joyfully in the lake, lightly rippled by the wind blowing over it.

Jesus is seen and recognised at once, so that before He enters the town, the people know that He has come and crowds rush as usual to hear Him.

A man elbows his way through the crowd saying that some people had come in the morning from Capernaum looking for Him and that He was to go there as soon as possible.

« This very night. I am not stopping here, and as our boats are not here, I ask you to lend Me yours. »

« As You wish, Lord. But will You speak to us before You depart? »

« Yes, I will, also to say goodbye to you. I will be leaving Galilee soon... »

A woman, who is weeping, calls Him from the middle of the crowd, begging the people to let her pass, so that she may go to the Master.

« It is Arria, the Gentile who has become a Jewess out of love. You have already cured her husband once. But... »

« I remember. Let her pass! »

The woman comes forward. She throws herself at Jesus' feet weeping.

« What is the matter with you, woman? »

« Rabbi! Rabbi! Have mercy on me. Simeon... »

A man from Gherghesa helps her to speak: « Master, he misuses the health You gave him. He has become hard-hearted and greedy and does not even look like an Israelite any longer. The woman is really much better than he is, although she was born in a heathen country. And his hardness and greed cause brawls and draw hatred upon him. His head was seriously injured in a fight and the doctor says that he will almost certainly become blind. »

« If that is the case, what can I do? »

« You... cure... She, as You can see, is in despair... She has many children, and they are still young. The blindness of her husband would mean poverty for the family... It is true that it is money earned through evil deeds... But his death would be a disaster because a husband is always a husband, and a father is always a

fat her, even if in place of love and bread he gives infidelity and blows... »

« I cured him once and I said to him: "Sin no more". He has sinned even more. Had he perhaps not promised that he would not sin any more? Had he not vowed that he would no longer be a usurer and thief, if I cured him, that where possible, he would give back what he had usurped, and where it was not possible he would use it for the poor? »

« Master, that is true. I was present. But... the man is not firm in his purposes. »

« What you said is true. And Simeon is not the only one. As Solomon says, many have two weights and false scales, not only in a material sense, but also in the way they judge, act and behave towards God. And Solomon again says: "It is ruinous for man to devour saints; and to repent after making a vow". But too many people do that... Woman, do not weep. Listen to Me and be just, because you have chosen the religion of Justice. If I proposed two alternatives to you, which one would you choose? Here they are: that I should cure your husband and let him live so that he may continue to mock God and pile up sins on his soul, or I should convert him, forgive him and then let him die? Make your choice. I will do whatever you decide. »

The poor woman is in a dire struggle. Natural love, the necessity of a man who somehow or other earns a living for his children, would urge her to ask for « life ». Her supernatural love for her husband incites her to ask for « forgiveness and death ». The crowds are silent, attentive, moved, awaiting her decision

At last the poor woman, throwing herself once again on the ground, grasping Jesus' tunic as if she wished to draw strength from it, moans: « Eternal Life... But help me, Lord... » and she collapses with her face on the ground as if she were about to die.

« You have chosen the better part. May you be blessed. Few people in Israel would equal you in fear of God and justice. Stand up. Let us go to your husband. »

« But will You really make him die, Lord? And what shall I do? » The human creature rises once again from the fire of the spirit like the mythological phoenix; and she suffers and is dismayed humanly...

« Be not afraid, woman. You, I, we all entrust everything to the Father in Heaven and He will act with His love. Can you believe that? »

« Yes, my Lord... »

« Well, let us go, saying the prayer of all petitions and of all consolations. »

And while walking, surrounded by the crowd and followed by a train of people, He says the Our Father slowly. The apostolic

group joins in and the harmonious chorus raises the words of the prayer above the buzz of the people who, wishing to hear the Master pray, become silent little by little, so that the last petitions can be heard very clearly in the solemn silence.

« The Father will give you your daily bread. I can assure You in His Name » says Jesus to the woman and addressing not only her but all the people, He goes on to say: « And your sins will be forgiven, if you forgive this man who has offended and harmed you. He needs your forgiveness to be forgiven also by God. And everybody needs the protection of God in order not to fall into sin as Simeon did. Bear that in mind. »

They have now arrived at the house which Jesus enters with the woman, Peter, Bartholomew and the Zealot.

The man, lying on a little bed, his face covered with bandages and wet pieces of cloth, is restless and delirious. But Jesus' voice, or His will, make him come round again and he shouts: « Forgive me! Forgive me! I will not fall into sin again. Forgive me as You did the last time! And cure me, as the last time! Arria! Arria! I swear it. I will be good. I will no longer make use of violence or fraud, I will not... » the man is willing to make all kinds of promises, afraid as he is of death...

« Why do you want all that? » asks Jesus. « To expiate or because you are afraid of God's judgement? »

« That, that! Not to die now! Hell!... I have stolen, I have stolen the money of poor people! I have lied. I hit my neighbour and I have made my relative suffer. Oh!... »

« Fear is not sufficient. Repentance is required. Sincere firm repentance. »

« Death or blindness! Oh! what punishment! Not to be able to see any more! Darkness! Darkness! No! ... »

« If blindness of the eyes is dreadful, is the blindness of the heart not more horrible? And are you not afraid of the eternal horrible darkness of Hell? Of the perpetual privation of God? Of continuous remorse? The grief of having killed yourself for ever, in your spirit? Do you not love this woman? Do you not love these children? And your father, mother, brothers, do you not love them? Well, do you not consider that you will not have them with you any longer if you are damned? »

« No! No! Forgive me! Forgive me! Expiation here, yes, here... Also blindness, Lord... But Hell no... Do not let God curse me! Lord! You expel demons and forgive sins. Do not raise Your hand to cure me, but to forgive me and free me from the demon possessing me... Lay Your hand on my heart, on my head... Free me, Lord... »

« I cannot work two miracles. Consider that. If I free you from the demon, I will leave you with your illness... »

« It does not matter! Be the Saviour. »

« Let it be as you wish. Make sure that you avail yourself of My grace, which is the last I will grant you. Goodbye. »

« You have not touched me. Your hand! Your hand! »

Jesus pleases him by laying His hand on the head and chest of the man who, blinded by bandages and the wound, gropes convulsively for Jesus' hand, and having found it, weeps on it, reluctant to leave it, until he falls asleep like a tired child, still holding Jesus' hand pressed against his feverish cheek.

Jesus withdraws His hand cautiously and goes out of the room noiselessly, followed by the woman and the three apostles.

« May God reward You, Lord. Pray for Your servant. »

« Continue to grow in justice, woman, and God will always be with you. » He lifts His hand to bless the house and the woman and goes out into the street.

The buzz of the crowd becomes louder when countless curious questions are asked. But Jesus beckons them to be quiet and to follow Him. He goes back to the main road. Night is falling slowly. Jesus gets into a boat which is bobbing up and down near the shore and He speaks from there.

« No. He is not dead and he has not been cured, according to the flesh. His spirit has meditated on his sins and has indicated the right direction to his thoughts, he has been forgiven because he asked to expiate in order to be forgiven. You, all of you, must support him in his journey towards God.

Consider that we are all responsible for the soul of our neighbour. Woe to those who scandalise! But woe betide also those who through their intolerant behaviour frighten a man just reborn to Good and with their intransigence drive him away from the path on which he has set out. Every man can somehow be a master and a kind master to his neighbour and all the more so when his neighbour is weak and unaware of the wisdom of Good.

I exhort you to be patient, docile and longanimous with Simeon. Do not show hatred, grudge, contempt, irony. Forget his past and do not remind him of it. A man who rises after being forgiven, after repenting, after sincere resolutions, is willing, but he is also burdened by the weight, by the heritage of passions and habits of his past life. It is necessary to help him to get rid of them. And very discreetly. Without making allusions to his past: they are imprudent both with regard to charity and to the human being. To remind a repentant culprit of his faults is to dishearten him. His awakened conscience is sufficient for that. To remind a man of his past, is to give rise to revivals of passions and, at times, to returns to passions already overcome, to fresh consent. In the best of cases it always implies leading into temptation.

Do not tempt your neighbour. Be prudent and charitable. If God

has preserved you from certain sins, praise Him. But do not ostentate your justice in order to humiliate whoever has not been just. Learn to understand the imploring look of a repentant man who would like you to forget and who, in the event that he is aware that you have not forgotten, implores you at least not to mortify him by reminding him of his past. Do not say: "He was a leper in his soul" to justify the fact that you have forsaken him. A man affected with leprosy, after the purifications following his recovery, is readmitted among the people. Let the same apply to him who has been cured of sin. Do not be like those who consider themselves perfect, whilst they are not such because they lack charity towards their brothers. On the contrary, with your love you are to surround your brothers who have risen again to grace, so that good companionship may prevent fresh failures.

Do not wish to be more exacting than God, Who does not reject the sinner who repents, but forgives him and readmits him to His company. And even if that sinner caused you a damage which can no longer be mended, do not revenge yourselves now that he is not an overbearing fellow to be frightened of; but forgive him and take much pity on him because he lacked the treasure which every man can have, if he only wishes so: goodness. Love him because by grieving you he has given you the means to deserve a greater reward in Heaven. Join your means to his forgiveness, and your prize will grow even more in Heaven. And do not despise anybody, not even if they belong to another race. You can see that when God attracts a spirit, even the spirit of a heathen, He transforms it in such a way that it exceeds many of the chosen people in justice.

I am going. Remember now and always these words and the others which I have spoken to you. »

Peter, who was ready, pushes the boat away from the bank with the oar and starts on the voyage followed by the other two boats. The lake, which is not very calm, causes the boats to roll, but no one is frightened because the voyage is a short one. The red lamps are reflected like red rubies on the dark water or they tinge the white foam with a red hue.

« Master, will that man recover or not? I have not understood anything » asks Peter after a short time, without taking his hand off the rudder.

Jesus does not reply. Peter beckons to John who is sitting at the end of the boat at Jesus' feet, with his head reclined on Jesus knees. And John repeats the question in a low voice.

« He will not recover. »

« Why, Lord? According to what I heard, I thought that he would recover in order to expiate. »

« No, John. He would sin again, because his spirit is weak. »

John rests his head again on the Master's knees saying: « But You

could have made him strong... » and it sounds like a kind reproach.

Jesus smiles running His fingers through John's hair and raising His voice so that everybody can hear Him, He gives the last lesson of the day: « I solemnly tell you that also when granting a grace, it is necessary to take into account its opportunity. Life is not always a gift, wealth is not always a gift, a son is not always a gift, yes, even an election is not always a gift. They become gifts and remain such when he who receives them uses them rightly and for supernatural aims of sanctification. But when good health, wealth, affections, mission are used to ruin one's spirit, it would be better not to have them. And at times God gives such a great gift that He could not grant a greater one, by not giving what men would like to have or would think it was right to have as being a good thing. The father of a family or a wise doctor knows which things are to be given to the children or to sick people in order not to make them more sick or not to let them be taken ill. Likewise God knows what is to be given for the well-being of a spirit. »

« So that man will die? Unhappy household! »

« Would it be happier if a reprobate lived in it? And would he be happier if, while living, he should continue to sin? I solemnly tell you that death is a gift when it serves to prevent more sins and a man dies while he is reconciled with his Lord. »

The keel rubs against the sandy bottom of the lake at Capernaum.

« Just in time. There will be a storm tonight. The lake is raging, the sky is starless, it is as black as pitch. Can you hear the roar behind the mountains? Can you see those lights? Thunder and lightning. There will be a downpour any moment now. Quick! Let us beach the boats which do not belong to us! Let the women and the boy go away before it starts raining. Hey, you! Give us a hand! » shouts Peter to other fishermen who are drawing nets and baskets.

With the strength of their arms they beach the boats as the first billows come to lash their half-naked bodies and the gravel on the shore. They then run home while the first large drops of rain raise the dust of the parched land giving off a strong smell, and it is flashing already above the lake and the basin formed by the hills around the lake are full of the roar of thunder.

#### **457. Be as Wise as Serpents and as Simple as Doves.**

17th July 1946.

« In the room upstairs there are some men from Nazareth. And your brothers came yesterday looking for You. And then some Pharisees came, and many sick people. And a man from Antioch » says the Iscariot as soon as he sees them enter the house.

« Have they gone away, perhaps? »

« No. The man from Antioch has gone to Tiberias, but he is coming back after the Sabbath. The sick people are scattered in various houses. But the Pharisees wanted your brothers as their guests and paid much honour to them. They are now in the house of Simon, the Pharisee. »

« H'm!... » mumbles Peter.

« What's the matter with you? Are you not glad that they honour the Master in His relatives? » asks the Iscariot.

« Oh! if it is true honour and a useful meeting... I am very happy! »

« To mistrust is to judge. The Master does not want us to judge. »

« Of course! But to be certain I will wait before judging. I will thus avoid being a fool and a sinner. »

« Let us go upstairs, to see the people from Nazareth. We will go to the sick people tomorrow » says Jesus.

The Iscariot addresses Jesus: « You cannot. It is the Sabbath. Do You want to be reproached by the Pharisees? If You are not concerned about Your honour, I am » says Judas very theatrically. And he concludes: « By the way, as I realise that You are anxious to cure at once those who are looking for You, well, we will go and impose our hands on them in Your Name and... »

« No. » A very sharp « no » allowing no discussion.

« You do not want us to work miracles? You want to work them Yourself? Well... we will go and tell them that You are here and that You promise to cure them. They will be happy... »

« It is not necessary. The fishermen have seen us. So it is already known that I am here. And they know that I cure those who have faith in Me, in fact they have come looking for Me. »

Judas is silent, dissatisfied, his face momentarily dark and unpleasant.

Jesus goes outside, heedless of the storm and of the heavy showers of rain, and He goes upstairs. He pushes the door and goes inside. The apostles follow Him. The women are already up there talking to the Nazarenes. In a corner there is a man unknown to me.

« Peace to you. »

« Master! » The Nazarenes bow and then they say: « Here is the man » pointing at the unknown person.

« Come here » orders Jesus.

« Do not curse me! »

« To do that it was not necessary to tell you to come here. Is that the only word you have for the Saviour? » Jesus is austere, but encouraging at the same time.

The man looks at Him... He then bursts into tears and throwing himself on the ground he shouts: « If You do not forgive Me, I will have no peace... »

« Why did you reject Me, when I wanted to make you good? Now

it is late to make amends. Your mother is dead. »

« Ah! don't tell me! You are cruel! »

« No. I am the Truth. And I was the Truth when I told you that you would kill your mother. And I am the Truth now. And you laughed at Me then. Why are you looking for Me now? Your mother is dead. You have sinned and you have continued to sin although you knew that you were sinning. I had told you. That is your grave sin: you wanted to sin rejecting the Word and Love. Why complain now that you have no peace? »

« Lord! Lord! Have mercy on me! I was insane and You cured me, I have hoped in You, before I had lost all hope, in everybody. Do not disappoint my hope... »

« And why had you lost all hope? »

« Because... I caused my mother to die of grief... also the last evening... she was exhausted... and I was merciless... I hit her, Lord!!! » A cry of real despair fills the room. « I struck her! She died during the night! And she had only told me to be good My mother!... I killed her »

« You killed her years ago, Samuel! Since you stopped being just. Poor Esther! How many times have I seen her weep! And how many times she asked Me to caress her in your place... And you know that I used to come to your house not because I was friendly with you, who are My age, but out of pity for her... I should not forgive you. But two mothers have begged Me to help you, and your repentance is sincere. So I forgive you. With an irreproachable life you must obliterate from the hearts of your fellowcitizens the memory of Samuel sinner and win back your mother. You will achieve that if through a life of justice you conquer Heaven and your mother at the same time. But remember - and bear this very clearly in mind - that your sin was very grave and consequently your justice must be great in proportion in order to cancel your debt. »

« Oh! You are good! You are not like that disciple of Yours who went out immediately after he came in. And he came to Nazareth only to terrify me! These people can tell You... »

Jesus turns round... Of all the apostles only the Iscariot is missing. So it is he who ill-treated Samuel. What is Jesus to do? In order not to have the apostle criticised, as apostle if not as man, he says: « Every man can but be severe with regard to your sin. When one commits an evil deed one ought to consider that men judge the evil-doer, and that one gives them the opportunity to judge... But one must bear no grudge. Put the mortification you receive on the scales of God as expiation. Let us go. Here, the just are rejoicing because of your redemption. You are among brothers who do not despise you. Because every man can sin, but a man is contemptible Only when he persists in sinning. »

« I bless You, Lord. I ask You to forgive me also for all the times I sneered at You... I do not know how to thank You... Peace, You know?, is coming back to me » and he weeps calmly...

« Thank My Mother. If you have been forgiven, if I have cured your delirium to enable you to repent, it was through Her intercession. Let us go downstairs. Supper is ready and we will share the food. » And He goes out holding the man by the hand.

Supper is in fact ready. But Judas is not even downstairs. He is not in the house. The landlady explains: « He went out. He said: "I will be back soon". »

« All right. Let us sit down and have our meal. »

Jesus offers, blesses and hands out the food. But a glacial shadow is in the room lit up by two lamps and the fireplace. Outside the storm is still raging...

Judas comes back, panting, soaked through as if he had fallen into the lake. Although he had covered his head with his mantle, his hair looks smooth, wet, sticking to his cheeks and neck, when he throws the drenched cloak on the floor. They all look at him. But no one speaks. Although no one asks him anything, he wants to apologise saying: « I ran to Your brothers to tell them that You are here. But I obeyed You. I did not go to the sick people. It was not possible, in any case. What a downpour!... But I wanted to honour Your relatives at once... Are You not glad, Master? You are not speaking!... »

« I am listening. Take this and eat. And while waiting to go and rest, let us talk among ourselves.

Listen: it is written that we must not confide secrets to a foreigner, because we do not know his habits. But can we say that we know the hearts even of our fellow-citizens? Or the hearts of our friends? Or of our relatives? God alone has perfect knowledge of the heart of man, and man has one means only to know the heart of a fellow-man and understand whether he is a true fellow-countryman, or a true friend and relative. Which is the means? Where is it to be found? In our neighbour and in ourselves. In his actions and words and in our upright judgement. When through our honest judgement we perceive that there is no good in the words or actions of our neighbour, or in the actions required of us, then we can say: "This man has not an honest heart and I must distrust him". But he is to be treated charitably, because he is a poor wretch affected by the gravest unhappiness: that of a diseased spirit, but his actions are not to be imitated, his words are not to be, taken as true and wise, least of all is his advice to be followed.

Do not allow yourselves to be harmed by the following proud thoughts: "I am strong and the evil of other people will not affect me. I am just, and even if I listen to unjust people, I will remain just". Man is a deep abyss in which all the elements of good

and evil can be found. The former, that is, the help of God, assists us in improving and becoming kings; the latter, that is, evil passions and bad friendship help men to grow more wicked and to reign noxiously. All the germs of evil and all the longing for good are latent in man by God's loving will, and by the wicked will of Satan, who influences, tempts and instigates, whereas God attracts, comforts and loves. Satan tries to seduce, he works to conquer God. And God does not always win, because creatures are heavy until they choose love as their law, and being heavy they debase themselves and crave more easily for anything which is immediate satisfaction and gratification of the lowest instincts of man.

From what I am telling you about human weakness, you can understand how necessary it is not to trust yourselves and to watch your neighbour very carefully, lest you should join the poison of an impure conscience to that already fermenting in you. When you understand that a friend is the ruin of your hearts, when his words upset your consciences, when his advice is the cause of scandal, you must forsake the harmful friendship. If you persist you would end by seeing your souls perish, because you would pass on to actions which remove from God and prevent a hardened conscience from understanding God's inspirations. If every man guilty of grave sins could or wanted to speak explaining how he came to commit such sins, one would see that there is always a bad friendship at the origin... »

« That is true! » admits Samuel of Nazareth in a low voice.

« Do not trust those who after fighting you without any reason, load you with honours and gifts. Do not trust those who praise every action of yours and who praise everybody and everything: they commend loungers as being hard workers, adulterers as faithful husbands, thieves as honest people, violent fellows as being meek, liars as being sincere, wicked people as being loyal and they point out the worst disciples as exemplary ones. They do so to ruin you and to make use of your downfall for their artful aims. Shun those who want to intoxicate you with praises and promises to make you do things, which you would refuse to do if you were not intoxicated. And when you have sworn loyalty to a man, have nothing to do with his enemies. They would approach you only to harm him whom they hate and do so through your very help. Keep Your eyes open. I said: be as wise as serpents besides being as simple as doves. Because simplicity is holy when dealing with spiritual matters, but to live in the world without damaging oneself and one's friends, it is necessary to possess the cunning which is capable of finding out the artfulness of those who hate saints. The world is a nest of snakes. You must become acquainted with the world and its systems. And then, staying like doves not in the Mire where serpents are, but in the shelter of a high cliff, have

the simple hearts of the children of God. And pray and pray, because I solemnly tell you that the great Serpent is hissing around you, and you are therefore in great danger and those who are not vigilant will perish. Yes, among the disciples there are some who will perish with great joy of Satan and infinite grief of the Christ. »

« Who, Lord? Perhaps one who does not belong to us, a proselyte, one... who is not from Palestine, one... »

« Do not investigate. Is it not written that abomination will enter, and has already entered the Temple? Now, if it is possible to sin in the Holy Place, will a Galilean or a Judaeon among My followers not be able to sin? Be vigilant, My friends. Watch over yourselves and other people, take heed of what other people say to you and of what your consciences tell you. And if you cannot see clearly by yourselves, come to Me, for I am the Light. »

Peter bustles and whispers something standing behind John who shakes his head in denial. Jesus turns His eyes and sees... Peter strikes an attitude and feigns to be going away. Jesus stands up, He smiles gently... He then intones the prayers, He blesses and dismisses the crowds. And He remains alone to go on praying.

#### **458. The Sabbath at Capernaum.**

18th July 1946.

« Are You not taking the boy back to his mother? » Bartholomew asks Jesus, when he sees Him on the terrace deeply engrossed in prayer.

« No. I will wait until she comes back from the synagogue... »

« Are You hoping that the Lord will speak to her there... and that she... will understand her duty? You are thinking wisely. But she is not wise. Any other mother would have run here yesterday evening to get her child. After all... we had been sailing on a stormy sea... she did not know whence we came... Was she anxious to ascertain whether her child had suffered? Will she be coming this morning? Look how many mothers are already up, although it is so early, as they are anxious to hang out the best clothes and dry them thoroughly so that they may be clean and ready to be worn by the children on the Lord's day. A Pharisee might say that they are doing servile work by hanging out those little garments. I say that they are doing a work of love, towards God and towards their children. They are mostly poor women. Look, over there is Mary of Benjamin and Rebecca of Micah. And on that poor terrace Johanna is patiently disentangling the fringe of the old mantle of her son so that it may look less shabby when he goes to the holy ceremony. And over there, on the shore which will soon be completely exposed to the sun, Selida is spreading out coarse cloth so that it may

look finer, whereas it is beautiful only on account of the sacrifice it costs her: so many morsels of bread, of which she deprived her hungry stomach, to change them into tows of hemp. And is that not Adina who is rubbing her daughter's discoloured dress with greens in order to make it look more colourful? But I cannot see her... »

« May the Lord change her heart! There is nothing else to be said... »

They remain leaning on the low wall of the terrace, looking at nature refreshed by the storm which has cleaned both atmosphere and greenery. The lake, which is not yet completely calm, is not as blue as usual, because it is streaked with the waters of torrents which, in flood for a few hours, have dragged down the dust of their parched beds, but is beautiful despite those ochre infusions. It looks like a huge lapis-lazuli striped with pearls, and it smiles in the serene sun which is shining at present from behind the western mountains and is glittering in all the rain drops still hanging from branches and leaves. Swallows and doves are joyfully furrowing the purified air and all kinds of birds are trilling and chirping in the leafy branches.

« The warm season is ending. And this season is beautiful, rich and beautiful. Like ripe age. Isn't it, Master? »

« Yes... lovely... » But Jesus is obviously lost in thought.

Bartholomew looks at Him... He then asks: « What are You thinking about? Of what You will be saying in the synagogue today? »

« No. I was thinking that the sick people will be waiting for us. Let us two go and cure them. »

« Just the two of us? »

« Simon, Andrew, James and John have gone to haul the lobsterpots which Thomas cast foreseeing our return. The others are sleeping. Let us two go. »

They go down towards the country, to the houses scattered among vegetable-gardens, or in the fields, looking for sick people sheltered in the houses of poor people, who are always hospitable.

But some people run ahead of Him, guessing where He is going and some say to Him: « Wait here, in my kitchen garden. We will bring them to You here... » And soon, like the waters of tiny brooks which gather in one pond only, the sick people come from all directions or are brought to Him, Who cures them. The miracles have been worked.

Jesus dismisses them saying: « If anybody should question you, do not say that I cured you. Go back to the houses where you were. This disciple of Mine will bring some assistance to the more needy ones before sunset. »

« No, do not mention Him, because you would harm Him. Remember that this is the Sabbath and many people hate Him »

corroborates Bartholomew.

« We will not harm Him Who has helped us. We will tell the people in our villages, without mentioning the day on which we were cured » says a man who was previously a paralytic.

« Nay, I would say that we should spread out in the country awaiting sunset. The Pharisees know where we were given hospitality and they might come to see... » says one whose diseased eyes have been cured.

« You are right, Isaac. Yesterday we were asking for too much and too many things... They will think that, being tired of waiting, we left before sunset. »

« But did the apostle see us yesterday evening? » asks one who was blind. « Was it not him who was speaking? »

« No. It was one of the Lord's brothers. He will not betray us. »

« Just tell me where you are going so that I may find you when I come » says Bartholomew.

The sick people consult with one another. Some would like to go towards Korazim, some towards Magdala. They leave it to Jesus to decide.

And Jesus says: « Go to the fields along the road to Magdala. Follow the second torrent and shortly afterwards you will find a house. Go there and say: "Jesus sent us". They will receive you as brothers. Go and God be with you and you with God, not committing any sin in future. »

And Jesus sets out again, but He does not go straight back to the village by the way He came. Walking along a semicircular lane among the kitchen gardens He arrives at the spring near the lake, while the women have assailed it wishing to get their supplies of water when it is still cool and the sun is not high in the sky.

« The Rabbi! The Rabbi! » There is a rush of women, children and also of men, mainly old ones, who are idle because of the Sabbath.

« A word, Master, to make this day a happy one » says an old man, who is holding a boy by the hand, perhaps a grandchild, because if the man is certainly almost one hundred years old, the little boy is not more than six.

« Yes, please old Levi, and us at the same time. »

« You will have Jairus' explanation today. I am here to hear him You have a wise synagogue leader... »

« Why do You say that, Master? You are the head of all synagogue leaders, the Master of Israel. We acknowledge but You. »

« No, you must not do that. The synagogue leaders have been appointed as your masters, to practise the cult with you, setting a good example, in order to make you faithful Israelites. There will still be synagogue leaders when I am no longer here. They will have a different name and their ceremonies will be different, but they will still be the ministers of the cult. You must love them and

pray for them. Because where is a good synagogue leader there are good believers and, consequently, God is there. »

« We will do that. But speak to us now. We have been told that You are about to leave us... »

« I have so many sheep scattered throughout Palestine. They are all waiting for their Shepherd. But you have My disciples, who are becoming more and more numerous and wise... »

« Yes, but what You say is always good and easy to be understood by our ignorant minds. »

« What shall I tell you?... »

« Jesus, we have been looking for You everywhere! » shouts Joseph of Alphaeus, who has just arrived with his brother Simon and a group of Pharisees.

« And where can the Son of man be if not among the humble and simple-hearted people? Did you want Me? Here I am. But allow Me to say a word to these people first... Listen. You have been told that I am about to leave you. It is true. I have not denied it. But before leaving you I give this commandment to you: watch over yourselves very carefully in order to know yourselves well, and approach the Light more and more so that you may see. My word is Light. Preserve it in your hearts and when in its light you discover stains or shadows, persecute them to drive them out of your hearts. You must no longer be what you were before I met you. You must be much better because now you know much more. Previously you were in a kind of twilight, now you have the Light within you. You must thus be the children of Light. Look at the sky in the morning when it clears up at dawn: it may seem clear only because it is not completely covered with storm-clouds, but as the light increases and the bright sun appears from the east, then our surprised eyes see rosy spots in the blue sky. What are they? Oh! little light clouds, so light that they did not seem to be there while the light was faint, but now, lit up by the sun, they are like light foam in the vault of heaven. And they remain there until the sun melts them dispelling them with its splendour. Do likewise with your souls. Take them closer and closer to the light to discover even the lightest mist and then keep them under the great Sun of Charity. It will consume your imperfections as the sun evaporates the light humidity condensed in those flimsy little clouds which the sun dissolves at dawn. If you remain firmly in Charity will work continuous wonders in you. Go now and be good... »

He dismisses them and goes towards His two cousins, whom He kisses after giving low bows to the Pharisees present, among whom is Simon the Pharisee of Capernaum. The others are unknown to me.

« We have been looking for You more on behalf of these people

than for ourselves. They came from Nazareth looking for You, so... »

« Peace to you. What do you need? »

« Oh! nothing. We only wanted to see You, listen to You and hear the wisdom of Your words... »

« Just for that? »

« Actually, to give You some advice as well... You are too good and the people take advantage of it. These people are not good. And You know that. Why do You not curse sinners? »

« Because the Father orders Me to save them, not to lose them. »

« You will get into trouble... »

« It does not matter. I cannot disobey the order of the Most High for any human profit. »

« And if... You know... It is murmured that You caress the crowds to make use of them in a rebellion. We have come to ask You whether it is true. »

« Have you come or have you been sent? »

« It is the same thing. »

« No, it is not. But I reply to you and to those who have sent you that the water overflowing from My bucket is water of peace, that the seed which I spread is the seed of renunciation. I trim proud branches. I am ready to bare the roots of evil trees, so that they may not harm good ones, if they are unsuitable to be grafted. But what I call "good" is not what you say is good. Because I call good obedience, poverty, renunciation, humility and the charity which embraces all humble and pitiful situations. Fear no one. The Son of man does not lay snares for the powers of men, but has come to inculcate strength into souls. Go and relate that the Lamb will never be a wolf. »

« What do You mean? You are misunderstanding us and we are misunderstanding You. »

« No. We understand each other very well... »

« Well, in that case do You know why we came? »

« Yes, to tell Me that I must not speak to the crowds. And you do not consider that you cannot interdict Me from going, like every Israelite, where the Scriptures are read and explained and where every circumcised man is entitled to speak. »

« Who told You! It was Jairus, was it not? We will report that. »

« I have not seen Jairus yet. »

« You are lying. »

« I am the Truth. »

A man in the crowd which has gathered again says: « He is not lying. Jairus left before sunset with his wife and daughter; he took them to see his mother, who is dying and he will come back only after the purifications. He left his assistant here. »

The Pharisees do not have the pleasure of proving that Jesus is

lying, but they rejoice finding out that He is without His most powerful friend in Capernaum. They look at one another: a display of meaningful glances.

Joseph of Alphaeus, the eldest son in the family, feels it is his duty to defend Jesus and he addresses Simon the Pharisee saying: « You honoured me by sharing your bread and salt with me and the Most High will take into account such honour paid to the offspring of David. You showed yourself to be just. My brother is being accused by these Pharisees. Yesterday they said to me, the head of the family, that their only grief was that Jesus neglected Judaea, because, as the Messiah of Israel it was His duty to love and evangelize the whole of Israel in the same manner. I found their argument just and I was going to tell my brother. But why are they speaking so differently today? They should at least say why He must not speak. As far as I know He does not say anything against the Law or the Books. Tell me the true reason and I will convince Jesus to speak differently. »

« What you say is right. Reply to the man... » says Simon the Pharisee. « Has He said... anything sacrilegious? »

« No. But the Sanhedrin accuse Him of dividing, of trying to divide the Nation. The King must be the King of Israel, not of Galilee alone. »

« Dear is all the Fatherland, most dear, in the Fatherland, is the birthplace. His love for Galilee is not such a grave reason as to deserve to be punished. In any case, we belong to David, so... »

« Let Him come to Judaea then. And tell Him not to despise us. »

« Have You heard that? That is an honour for You and for the family! » says Joseph half severely and half haughtily.

« Yes, I have. »

« I advise You to yield to their desire. It is good and honourable. You say that You want peace. Put an end, then, to the variance between the two regions, since You are loved by both of them. You will certainly do it. Oh! He will certainly do it. I can assure you on His behalf as He is obedient to His elders. »

« It is written: "There is no one greater than I am. There is no other god except Me". I will always do what God wants. »

« Have you heard Him? So, you may go in peace. »

« We have heard Him. But, Joseph, before going away, we want to know what He means by "what God wants". »

« What God wants is that I do His will. »

« Which is? Tell us. »

« That I may gather the sheep of Israel and unite them in one flock only. And I will do that. »

« We will bear Your words in mind. »

« That is good. May God be with you » and Jesus turns away from the group of Pharisees and goes towards the house.

His cousin Joseph stands beside Him, half happy, half unhappy, and with a patronising attitude points out to Him that if one knows how to deal with them (as he did), if one relies on relatives (as was the fortunate case today), if one remembers one's right to the throne (as David's offspring), and so forth, even Pharisees become good friends.

Jesus interrupts him saying: « And you believe that? You believe their words? Truly, pride and false praises are sufficient to make people absolutely blind. »

« But I would... please them. You cannot expect them to carry You shoulder-high shouting hosanna, all of a sudden... You must conquer them, Jesus, with a little humility, a little patience. Honour deserves every sacrifice... »

« Enough of that! You are speaking human words, and even worse. May God forgive you, and give you light, brother. But go away, because you are grieving Me. And do not mention such silly advice to your mother and brothers or to My Mother. »

« You want to be ruined! You are the cause of our ruin and of Your own! »

« Why have you come if you are still the same? I have not yet suffered for you. But I will, and then... »

Joseph has gone away... upset.

« You disgust him... He is like our father, You know. He is an old Israelite... » whispers Simon.

« When he understands, he will see that My action, which he now considers disgusting, was holy... »

They are at the door of the house. They go in. Jesus says to Peter: « Have the boat ready at sunset. We will take the two Maries to Tiberias and Simon will see them home. Matthew will come with you in addition to your companions, the fishermen. The others will remain here and wait for us. »

Peter draws Jesus apart: « And if the man from Antioch comes? I am asking You because of Judas of Kerioth... »

« Your Master tells you that we will meet him on the pier at Tiberias. »

« Oh! well! » and in a loud voice: « The boat will be ready. »

« Mother, come upstairs with Me. We will be together during these hours. »

Mary follows Him without speaking. They go upstairs into a room which is cool and shady because it is covered by a vine and is protected from the sun by curtains.

« You are going away, My Jesus!? » Mary is very pale.

« Yes. It is time. »

« And have I not to come for the Tabernacles? Son!... » says Mary with a sob.

« Mother! Why? It is not the first time that we part! »

« No, that is true. But... Oh! I remember what You told Me in the wood near Gamala... Son! Forgive a poor woman. I will obey... With the help of God I will be strong... But I want a promise from You... »

« Which, Mother? »

« That You will not conceal the dreadful hour from Me. Not out of pity, not out of mistrust of Me... It would be too grievous... and too much torture... Grief because... I would learn everything all of a sudden and not from people who love Me as You love this poor Mother... And it would be a torture if I were to think that while I am spinning, or weaving or looking after the doves, You, My Creature, are put to death... »

« Be not afraid, Mother. You will know... But this is not our last farewell. We shall meet again... »

« Really? »

« Yes. We shall meet again. »

« And will You say to Me: "I am going to fulfil the Sacrifice"? Oh!... »

« I will not say so. But You will understand... And then it will be peace. So much peace... Just consider: to have done everything that God wants from us, His children, for the welfare of all the other children. So much peace... The peace of perfect love... » He holds Her to His bosom, holding Her tight in a filial embrace: He so much taller and stronger, She smaller, young in Her incorrupt youth of body and countenance, added to the eternal youth of Her immaculate spirit.

And She repeats heroically, so heroically: « Yes. What God wants... »

There are no other words. The two Perfect Ones are already consuming the sacrifice of their hardest obedience. No tears are shed. No kisses are given. There are only Two Who love perfectly and lay their love at the feet of God.

#### **459. At Johanna of Chuza's. Letters from Antioch.**

23rd July 1946.

All the inhabitants of Tiberias have rushed on to the lake shores or to the lake itself to find relief in the breeze blowing over the water and stirring the foliage of trees in the gardens along the shore. The rich people of this town, where many races have gathered and mingled for many reasons, are finding comfort in comfortable sport boats, or from the shade of their green gardens they are watching the movements of boats on the turquoise waters, which have already been cleared of the yellowish hue ensuing from the downpour of the previous evening. The poor people, and children in particular, are romping on the shore, where

the wavelets come to die, and their shrill screams, when the cold water wets them higher up than they would wish, sound like the screeching of swallows.

The boats of Peter and James come close to the shore and steer towards the little pier.

« No. To Johanna's garden » orders Jesus.

Peter obeys without speaking and the boat, followed by her twin sister, veers round perfectly leaving a foamy wake, shaped like a question mark, and steers towards the landing place at Chuza's garden, which it approaches and stops. Jesus is the first to land and gives a hand to the two Maries helping them to disembark on the pier.

« You will now go to the main mole and preach the Lord there. You will see a man, who will approach you, asking where I am. He is the man from Antioch. Bring him to Me after you have dismissed the crowds. »

« Yes... but... What are we to tell the people? Are we to tell them that You have come, or preach Your doctrine? »

« That I have come. Tell them that at dawn I will speak at Tarichea and I will cure the sick people. One of you should look after the boats, or get one of the disciples to do that, so that they may be ready to depart. Go, and peace be with you. » And He sets out towards the gate which closes on the landing-stage. The two Maries follow Him in silence.

There is no one to be seen in the large garden, in which some tenacious roses are still blooming, although very sparsely. But one can hear the happy cries of the two little ones who are playing.

Inserting His hand through the arabesques of the gate, Jesus tries to make the bolt slide without success. He looks for something with which to make a noise and attract attention, but does not find anything. Then, hearing the voices of the two children closer, He calls in a loud voice: « Mary! ». The two voices become silent all of a sudden... Jesus repeats: « Mary! »...

Then in the middle of the lawn, which is as smooth as a carpet with the well kept rose-bushes rising from it, a little girl appears, walking with short wary steps, a little finger pressed on her lips, her searching eyes scanning in all directions, then a few steps behind her there is Matthias, followed by a little lamb as white as foam.

« Mary! Matthias! » shouts Jesus.

His voice guides the innocent eyes. The two children look towards the gate and they see Jesus, His face against the bars, smiling at them.

« The Lord! Run, Matthias, call mother... Tell Elias or Micah to come and open... »

« You can go. I am going to the Lord... » and they both start running

with their arms stretched out, like two butterflies, one white, the other rosy with a little dark head.

But, fortunately, while running they call the servants, who rush out still holding watering-cans and rakes, so that at last the gate is opened and the children take shelter in the arms of Jesus, Who kisses them and crosses the threshold holding them by the hands.

« Mummy is in the house with her friends. They always send us away, because they do not want us » says Matthias promptly.

« Don't speak so harshly. Mummy sends us away because those ladies are Romans and they still speak of their gods and we, who have been saved by Jesus, must know Him only. That is why, Lord. Matthias is still too young and he does not understand » she says gracefully with the wisdom of a creature who has suffered and is thus more mature and more adult than her age would suggest.

« Father also sends us away when those of the Court come. And I would like to stay because almost every one is a soldier... a warrior... War! War is beautiful! It makes one win! It sends the Romans away. Down with Rome! Hurrah for the Kingdom of Israel » shouts the boy proudly.

« War is not beautiful, Matthias, and very often one does not win the war and then one from subject becomes a slave. »

« But Your Kingdom must come. And to make it come a war will be waged. And everybody will be sent away, also Herod, and You will be king. »

« Be silent, silly boy. You know that you are not to repeat what you hear. They are right in sending you away. Don't you know that you can harm father, mother and also Jesus by saying that? » says Mary. And then she explains: « One day, that man who is like a prince and is a relative of Herod and is also Your disciple came to speak to father. And they shouted so much, they were not alone, but with many more people... »

« They were all handsome, with lovely swords and they spoke of war... » interrupts Matthias.

« Be quiet, now! They shouted so much that we could hear them, and since then this fool does nothing but speak of it. Tell him that he must not... Mummy told him and father has threatened to take him to the top of the Great Hermon, and leave him in a grotto with a deaf and dumb slave, until he learns to be silent. And he would have to be silent there, because if he speaks to the slave, the latter will not hear him and will not reply to him, and if he shouts, eagles and wolves will come to eat him... »

« A really terrible punishment » says Jesus smiling and caressing the child who has lost his boldness and presses against Jesus as if he already saw eagles and wolves ready to devour him completely, including his little imprudent tongue. « A really dreadful punishment! » He repeats.

« Yes, and I am afraid that that is what is going to happen to him and that I will be left without Matthias, and I cry... But he feels no pity for me or for mummy and will make us die broken-hearted... »

« I don't do it deliberately... I say... what I hear... It is so nice... to think that the Romans are defeated, that Herod and Philip are expelled and that Jesus is the King of Israeli he concludes in a whisper concealing his face against Jesus' tunic to deaden even more the sound of his voice.

Matthias will never say these things again. He will promise Me and will keep his promise. Is that right? So he will not be devoured and Johanna and Mary will not die broken-hearted. Chuza will not be upset and I will not be hated. Because, see, Matthias? You have Me hated, by saying such things. Are you glad if Jesus is persecuted? Just imagine how remorseful it would be if one day you had to say to yourself: "I made people persecute Jesus Who saved me, because I repeated what I heard people say by chance". They were men. And men often lose sight of God because they are sinners. As they do not see God, they do not see Wisdom and they make well-intentioned mistakes, or what they think such. But children are good. Their spirits see God and God rests in their hearts. Thus they must understand things in a wise manner and say that My Kingdom will not be established through violence on the Earth, but with love, in the hearts of men. And they must pray so that men may understand this Kingdom of Mine as children understand it. The prayers of children are taken to Heaven by their angels and the Most High converts them into graces. And Jesus needs such graces to change men, who think of war and of a temporal kingdom, into apostles who understand that Jesus is peace and that His Kingdom is spiritual and heavenly. See this little lamb? Could it tear anything to pieces? »

« Eh! no! If it could do that, father would not have given it to us not to have us torn to pieces. »

« Exactly, you are right. Also the Father Who is in Heaven would never have sent Me if I had had the power and will to tear to pieces. I am Lamb and Shepherd. And I am as meek and docile as a lamb and I am He Who gathers with love, with the crook of a good Shepherd and not with the lance and sword of a warrior. Have you understood? And will you promise Me, just Me, that you will never speak of these things again? »

« Yes, Jesus. But... help me... because by myself... »

« I will help you. Look, I will caress your lips and thus they will be able to remain closed. »

« My Master. This is a holy evening, as it allows me to see You! » says Jonathan coming from the house and prostrating himself at Jesus' feet.

« Peace to you, Jonathan. Can I see Johanna? »

« She is coming. She has dismissed the Roman ladies to come to You. »

Jesus looks at him inquisitively but does not ask anything. He walks towards the house listening to Jonathan who is speaking of Chuza « much disgusted with Herod » and who says: « For my mistress' sake I beg You to stop him, because he wants to do things which... would not do any good to You or to him, above all to You. »

Johanna hastens towards the Lord and heedless of her beautiful dress she prostrates herself in the dust of the path and kisses Jesus' feet. She is wearing a splendid white dress, over which from her head hangs a veil that looks like silver filigree so closely is it embroidered with silver threads - and I do not know how such light cloth can support that silver brocade embroidery - and on her head a thin diadem point-shaped in front, like a mitre studded with pearls, heavy pearl earrings, a pearl necklace and pearl bracelets and rings: an appearance of beauty, purity and grace.

« Peace to you, Johanna. »

« When You are with me there is always peace in me and in my house... Mother!... » and she wants to kiss the feet of Mary, Who, instead, receives her in Her arms kissing her. A kiss is exchanged with Mary of Alphaeus as well.

After the greetings, Jesus says: « Johanna, I must speak to you. »

« Here I am, Master. Mary, my house is Yours. Order what You need. I am going with the Master... »

Jesus has already gone onto the lawn, where He can be seen by everybody, but is so isolated that no one can hear Him. Johanna joins Him.

« Johanna, I have to receive a messenger from Antioch, who is certainly coming from Syntyche. I was thinking of doing so in your house. Here, in your garden... »

« You are the master of everything that belongs to Johanna. »

« Also of your heart? » Jesus stares at her.

« You know already, Master! I was almost certain. Now I am completely sure. Chuza... The incoherency of men is really great! Their attachment to interests is very strong! And their pity for their wives is really so faint! We are... Even we, the wives of the best husbands, what are we? A jewel which is displayed or concealed according to its usefulness... A mime who must laugh or weep, attract or reject, speak or be silent, show or hide herself in compliance with her man's wishes... always in his interest... Our destiny is a sad one, Lord! And degrading as well! »

« As compensation your spirits are enabled to climb higher. »

« That is true. Did You find out by Yourself or did they speak to You about it? Have You seen Manaen? He was looking for You... »

« No. I have not seen anybody. Is he here? »

« Yes, we are all here... I mean: all the courtiers of Herod... and

many to hate him. Among them there is also Chuza since Herod, by Herodias's will, delighted in mortifying his superintendent... Lord, do You remember that at Bethel I told You that he wanted to separate me from You because he was afraid of falling into Herod's disfavour? Only a few months have gone by... And he now wants me to... Yes, Lord. He would like me to persuade You to accept his help to become king in place of the Tetrarch... I must tell You because I am a woman, thus subject to man, and a Jewish woman over and above, thus subject to the will of her husband more than ever. And I am telling You... And I do not advise You... because I hope that I am already aware that You... oh! You will not make Yourself king with the help of hired lancers. Oh!... what have I said! I should not have spoken thus... I should have let You listen to Chuza, Manaen and others first... And if I had kept silent, would I not have done the wrong thing?... Lord, help me to see what is just... »

« What is just is in your heart, Johanna. Neither with Roman cohorts, nor with Israelite lancers will I make Myself king, even if Rome and Israel decided to pacify this region through Me. I have already understood enough to reconstruct facts. Matthias has spoken imprudent words. Jonathan has mentioned people being disgusted. You are telling the rest. I will complete the picture thus: a foolish idea of My kingdom is inducing good people, who are not yet just, like Manaen, to create risings capable of establishing the kingdom of Israel according to the fixed idea of the majority of people. A sharp passionate need to revenge themselves of an affront is urging others, among whom your husband, to do the same thing. The shrewdness of Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes and also of Herod plays on those two motives to succeed in getting rid of Me, by making Me appear in the eyes of our rulers what I am not. You have dismissed the Roman ladies to tell Me this, in order not to betray Chuza, Manaen or the others. But I tell you that in actual fact the Gentiles have understood Me more than anybody else. They call Me a philosopher, perhaps they consider Me a dreamer, an unrealist, an unhappy man, according to their mentality which bases everything on violence. But they have understood, at least they have understood this: that I do not belong to the Earth, that My Kingdom does not belong to the Earth. They are not afraid of Me, but of My followers. They are right. My followers, some out of love, some out of pride, would be quite capable of doing anything to realise their idea: to make of Me, Who am the King of kings, the universal King, the poor king of a small nation... I really must watch this snare very carefully, as it works in the shade, instigated by My true enemies, who are not in the proconsular building at Caesarea, or in that of the Governor in Antioch, or in the Antonia. They are under the tephilim, the fringes and zizith of

Jewish garments and particularly under the wide tephilim and the fluffy zizith attached to the large garments of Pharisees and scribes to prove their even greater compliance with the Law. But the Law is in hearts, not on garments... If it were in their hearts, those who hate one another, but who are now united forgetting their hatred in order to do harm - the hatred which digs deep ravines between one cast of Israel and another and which now is no longer separated but has been levelled because the ravines have been filled with hatred for Me - if the Law were in their hearts, and riot hanging or attached to their garments, foreheads, hands, just as a savage wears amulets, shells, bones, beaks of vultures out of superstition or as ornaments, if this Law were in their hearts, if Wisdom were not written in the tephilim but on the fibres of their hearts, they would understand who I am and that they cannot go against Me to destroy Me as Word and as Man. I must therefore defend Myself from friends and from enemies, unfair equally in their hatred and in their love. I must try to guide their love and appease their hatred. I do so, to do My duty. And I will do so until I build My Kingdom, wetting the stones with My Blood to cement them. When I have sprinkled you with My Blood, Your hearts will no longer vacillate. I am speaking of hearts faithful to Me. Of yours, Johanna, who are struggling between two forces and two loves which are on you and in you: Chuza-I. »

« But You will win, Lord. »

« Yes, I will win. »

« But try to save Chuza as well... Love whom I love. »

« I love him who loves you. »

« Love Chuza who loves You... »

Falsehood does not befit that forehead which is as pure as the pearls adorning it and is now blushing in the effort of wishing to persuade itself and Me of Chuza's love for Me. »

« And yet he loves You. »

« Yes. For his own interest. As for his interest he did not love Me at Zio and Siram... But here is Simon of Jonah with the stranger. Let us go and meet them... »

They go as far as the large vestibule at the rear of the house, rather a semicircular porch than a vestibule, open on the park, which extends as far as the house. The semicircular vestibule, open on the garden, is adorned with columns with branches of rosebushes at present without flowers and delicate branches of jasmines full of flowers, and with other purple creepers, the names Of which I do not know.

« Peace be with you, foreigner. Did you want Me? »

« Health and glory, Lord. I wanted You. I have a letter for You. A Greek woman gave it to me at Antioch. I am... No, I am no longer Greek, because I became a Roman citizen to continue my contract

work. I am purveyor to the Roman troops. I hate them. But it is profitable to supply them with provisions. For what they have done to us, I should mix hemlock with their flour. But they should all be poisoned. A few is of no avail. It would be worse... They think that they are allowed to do anything because they are strong. They are barbarians, as compared with the Greeks. They have robbed us of everything to adorn themselves with our art and appear civilised. But if you scratch the crust which is Coloured with the hue of our civilization, you will always find an Amulius, a Romulus, a Tarquinius... You always find a Brutus, the murderer of his benefactor. At present they have Tiberius! Still not enough for them! They have Seianus. They have what they deserve. Swords, chains, crimes committed by them are turning against them and biting the flesh of the Roman brutes. Still too little. But the law will not fail. When the monster becomes huge, it will collapse because of its own weight and will rot. And the vanquished will laugh at the enormous corpse and will become once again the winners. Let it be so. May the feet of all the conquerors crush her who crushed everything in her brutal expansion... But forgive me, Lord. I have been carried away once again by my perpetual grief... I was saying that a Greek woman gave me a letter for You and she told me that You are the perfect Virtuous Man. Virtuous... You are young to be so... The great spirits of Hellas spent all their lives to become a little virtuous... And yet the woman informed me of Your Idea. If You really believe in what You teach, You are great... Is it true that You live to prepare Yourself to die in order to give the world the wisdom of living as gods and not as brutes, as men do at present? Is it true that You maintain that there is only one wealth worth achieving: that of virtues? Is it true that You have come to redeem but that redemption begins in ourselves, following Your teaching? Is it true that we have a soul and that we must take care of it, as it is a divine thing, everlasting, incorruptible by its nature, but that we, by living as brutes, can deprive it of its divine character, although we cannot destroy it? Answer, o Great One! »

« It is true. It is all very true. »

« By Jove! Also our Greatest One said so. But it sounded like music lacking a note, like a lyre lacking a chord. Now and again one perceived an empty space, which the philosopher never crossed. You have filled it up, if You have really come not only to teach but also to die, not compelled by anybody, but through Your own will to obey God, which changes Your death from suicide to sacrifice... By divine Pallas! None of our gods ever did that. I infer" therefore, that You are above them. The Greek woman says that they do not exist, and that You only are... So am I speaking to a God? And can a God listen thus to a purveyor, to a miserable thief who hates his

enemies? Why do You listen to me? »

« Because I see your soul. »

« You see it?!?! What is it like? »

« Twisted, dirty, snake-haired, bitter, ignorant, although your intellect is quite different from that of a barbarian. But within your ugly temple you have an altar which is waiting, like the one in the Aeropagus, and it is waiting for the same thing: the true God. »

« For You, then, because the Greek woman says that You are the true God. But, by Jove, what You say of my soul is true. You are more explicit and certain than the Delphic oracle. But You preach peace, love and forgiveness. Difficult virtues. And You preach continence and all kinds of honesty... To be all that is to be gods greater than the gods, because they... oh! they are not pacific, honest, generous!... They are the perfection of the wicked passions of men, with the exception of Minerva who is at least wise... Even Diana!... Pure but cruel... Yes, to be what You preach is to be greater than the gods. If I became so... by the most beautiful Ganymede! He: he was abducted by the Olympic eagle and became a divine cup-bearer. But Zeno from supplier of fodder to barbarian rulers will become god... But let me dwell on this thought, and in the meantime You can read the letter of the woman... » and the man begins to walk up and down like a peripatetic.

Peter, being tired and seeing that the conversation was a long one, has sat down comfortably on a seat in the hall, and has begun to doze peacefully in the cool place, on the soft cushions lying on the seat... But he must have been sleeping with one eye open, because he is roused by the noise of the seal being broken and of the unrolling parchment, and he rises to his feet, rubbing his sleepy eyes. He approaches the Master, Who is reading standing under a chandelier made of mica plates of a delicate violet hue. As the light is faint, suitable to light up the place without depriving it of the charm of moonlight in clear nights, Jesus is holding the parchment high up in order to see the words, and Peter, who is much smaller than the Master, standing beside Him, tries to stretch his neck, standing on the tips of his toes, in order to see, but without success.

« It's Syntyche, eh? What does she say? » he asks twice and he begs: « Read in a loud voice, Master! »

And Jesus replies: « Yes, it is she... Later... » and He goes on reading, and when He finishes the first sheet, He rolls it up, He Puts it in the folds of His belt and begins to read the second sheet.

« What a long letter she has written, eh? How is John? And who is that man? » Peter is as insistent as a boy.

Jesus is so engrossed that He no longer listens to him. Also the second sheet is finished and is put away as the first one. « They will get spoilt there. Give them to me. I will keep them... »

and he certainly thinks: « and I will have a look at them. » But when he raises his eyes to look at Jesus' hand unrolling the third and last sheet, he sees a tear shine on Jesus' fair eyelashes. « Master?! Are You weeping?! Why, Master? » he says, and he presses against Him embracing Him with his short muscular arm.

« John is dead... »

« Oh! poor man! When did he die? »

« At the beginning of summer... wishing so much to see us... »

« Oh! poor John... Of course... he was already at his end!... And his grief in parting... All because of some snakes! I wish I knew their names!... Read aloud, Lord. I was fond of John! »

« Later. I will read it to you later. Be quiet now. »

Jesus reads attentively... Peter stretches himself even more to see... The reading is over. Jesus rolls the sheet and says: « Call My Mother. »

« Are You not going to read? »

« I am waiting for the others... In the meantime I will dismiss that man. »

And while Peter goes into the house where the women disciples are with Johanna, Jesus approaches the Greek: « When are you leaving? »

« Oh! I have to go to the Proconsul at Caesarea and then to Joppa after I purchase some goods. I will be leaving in a month's time, in time to avoid the November storms. I am going by sea. Do You need me? »

« Yes, to send a reply. The Greek woman says that I can trust you. »

« They say that we are false. But we are also able not to be so. You can trust me. You can prepare Your letter and look for me at the Tabernacles at Cleanthes' house; he supplies me with the cheese of Judaea for the tables of the Romans. It is the third house after the fountain in the village of Bethphage. You cannot go wrong. »

« You cannot go wrong either if you proceed along the path on which you have set foot. Goodbye, man. Greek civilization leads you to the Christian one. »

« Are You not reproaching me for hating? »

« Do you feel that I should? »

« Yes, because You disapprove of hatred as being a contemptible passion and You abhor vengeance. »

« And what is your opinion on the matter? »

« I think that he who does not hate and forgives is greater than Jupiter. »

« Achieve, then, that greatness... Goodbye, man. May your family love Syntyche, and in the exile in which you are at present take the paths that lead to the eternal Fatherland: Heaven. Those who believe in Me and practise My words will have that Fatherland. May Light enlighten you. Go in peace. »

The man says goodbye and goes away. He then stops, comes back and asks: « Will I not hear You speak? »

« I will speak at dawn, at Tarichea. Then I will be going towards Syro-Phoenicia and later, I do not know by which road, to Jerusalem. »

« I will look for You. And I will be at Tarichea tomorrow to see whether You are as eloquent as wise. »

He goes away finally.

The women are in the hall and with Peter they are commenting on John's death. Also the other apostles have come, the ones who had been left in town to inform the people that the Rabbi would be at Tarichea the following morning. They all speak of poor John of Endor and are anxious to know.

« He died, Son! »

« Yes. He is in peace. »

« He has really finished suffering. »

« He has been freed from prison definitely. »

« He should not have suffered the last affliction of exile. »

« An additional purification. »

« Oh! I would not like that kind of purification for myself. Any other... but not to die far from the Master! »

« And yet... we shall all die thus... Master... take us away with You! » says Andrew after the others have spoken.

« You do not know what you are asking, Andrew. This is your place until I call you. But listen to what Syntyche writes.

"Syntyche of Christ greets Christ Jesus.

The man who will bring You these sheets is a compatriot of mine. He has promised to look for You until he finds You, using as last resort Bethany, where he will leave the letter with Lazarus, in the event he should not succeed in finding You anywhere. He is one who is making up, as best he can, for all the wrong he and his ancestors have received from Rome. Rome has struck them three times, in many ways and with her usual methods. He says, with Greek humour, that he is now milking the cows of the Tiber to make them spit out the Greek goats. He is purveyor to the Governor and to many Roman families of this little Rome and great town queen of the East. Further, after the delicatessen for rich people, with his astute manners of servile flattery concealing his incurable hatred, he has been successful in securing the contract for supplying the Eastern cohorts. I do not approve of his methods. But everybody has his own ways. I would have preferred the bread begged in the street to the gold coffers given to him by the oppressor. And I would have always behaved thus, if I were not urged by another reason, which brings no profit to me, to imitate the Greek for my own purpose.

After all, he is a good man and his wife is good as well as his

three daughters and his son. I met them at the little school at Antigonea and with the balm I cured the mother who had been taken ill at the beginning of spring and so I began to go to their house. Many families would have welcomed me with pleasure as a teacher and embroideress: noble families and business people, but I preferred this one for a reason which has nothing to do with their being Greeks. I will explain the situation to You.

I beg You to bear with Zeno, even if You cannot approve of his mentality. He is like certain arid grounds, which are quartziferous on the surface, but very good under the hard crust. I hope to succeed in removing this hard crust brought about by so much grief and thus lay bare the good soil. It would be of great assistance to Your Church, as Zeno is well known and in touch with many people in Asia Minor and Greece, in addition to Cyprus and Malta and even in Iberia, where he has relatives and friends everywhere, Greeks persecuted like himself, as well as Roman soldiers and magistrates, who could be very useful to Your cause one day.

Lord, while writing, from the terrace of the house I can see Antioch with her wharves on the river, the Governor's building in the island, her regal streets and walls with hundreds of powerful towers, and if I turn round I can see the top of Sulpius dominating me with its barracks, and the other building of the Governor. I am thus between the two displays of Roman power, I, a poor woman, all alone. But they do not frighten me. On the contrary I think that what the fury of the elements and the strength of a rebelling nation cannot do, will be done by the weakness which does not outshine anybody, by an apparent weakness despised by the mighty ones, the weakness of Him Who is true strength because He possesses God: You.

I think, and I tell You, that this Roman strength will be Christian strength when it becomes acquainted with You and that our work should begin from the citadels of heathen Roman spirit, because they will always be the masters of the world and a Christian Roman spirit will mean universal Christendom. When? I do not know. But I feel that it will happen. So I look at these witnesses of Roman power smiling, thinking of the day when they will place their insignia and their power at the service of the King of kings. I look at them as one looks at helpful friends who are not yet aware of their usefulness, and who will cause sufferings before they are conquered, but once they have been conquered, they will take You and the knowledge of You as far as the end of the world.

I, a poor woman, dare say to my older brothers in You, that when the time comes, the conquest of the world to Your Kingdom will have to begin not from Israel, too closed in its mosaic rigorism exacerbated by the Pharisaic one and by the other castes to be conquered, but from here, from the Roman world and from its

ramifications. The conquest of souls to the Truth must begin from the tentacles by which Rome strangles every faith, every love, every freedom which is not as she wants and is not useful to her.

You know that, Lord. But I am speaking for my brothers who cannot believe that we also, the Gentiles, yearn after Good. I say to my brothers that under the heathen cuirass there are hearts disappointed of heathen emptiness, sick of the life they lead simply because such is the custom, tired of hatred, of vice, of harshness. There are honest spirits who do not know on what to rely to find satisfaction to their yearning for Good. Give them a faith which may satisfy them. They will die for its sake, carrying it further and further ahead, like a torch in darkness, as the athletes of the Hellenic games do". »

Jesus rolls up the first sheet and while the listeners comment on the style, strength and ideas of Syntyche, and they wonder why she is no longer at Antigonea, Jesus unrolls the second sheet.

Peter, who has remained seated so far, comes closer once again as if he wanted to hear better and he begins to stand on the tips of his toes to see, pressing against Jesus.

« Simon, it is so warm, and you are oppressing Me » says Jesus smiling. « Go back to your place. Have you not heard so far? »

« Heard? Yes, I have. But I have not seen. And now I want to see because it was at this sheet that Your countenance changed and You wept... And not only because of John... We knew that he was about to die... »

Jesus smiles, but to prevent Peter from casting side glances at the sheet from behind His back, He leans against the nearest column, ignoring that He is moving away from the light of the chandelier which, as compensation, illuminates Jesus' face brightly, if it no longer lights up the sheet.

Peter, who is thoroughly determined to see and understand, drags a stool in front of Jesus and sits down staring at the Master's face.

« "I am so convinced of this that when I remained alone, I left Antigonea for Antioch, as I was sure that I could work more in this area, where, as in Rome, all races blend and mingle, than where Israel rules... I, a woman, cannot set out to conquer Rome. But if Rome is out of my reach, I will scatter the seed from the most beautiful daughter of Rome, the city most like her mother in the Whole World... On how many hearts will it fall? In how many will it germinate? In how many will it be carried elsewhere awaiting the apostles to germinate? I do not know. I do not ask to be told. I Will work and I offer my work to the God, Whom I have known and Who gratifies my spirit and my intellect. I believe in this God as the only almighty God. I know that He does not disappoint those who are full of good will. That suffices for me and supports

me in my work.

Master: John died on the sixth day before the nones of June according to the Romans, almost at the new moon of Tammuz according to the Jews. Lord... Why tell You what You know? I am saying so for my brothers. John died as a just man, and considering what he really suffered, I should say as a martyr. I assisted him with all the pity which a woman can have, with all the respect which one has for a hero, with all the love which one has for a brother. But that did not prevent me from suffering so much, that I, not out of disgust or tiredness, but out of pity, I prayed the Eternal Father to call him to peace. He used to say: 'To freedom'.

What words he spoke! Can a man, who had fallen so low in the underworld, as he used to say, rise to so much light of Wisdom? Oh! death is really the mystery which reveals our origin, and life is the scenery which conceals the mystery. A scenery which is given to us without any drawing and on which we can work whatever we wish. He had written many things on it, but they were not all beautiful. The last ones, however, were sublime. From the dull sky of the underworld, on which were drawings of human sorrow and human violence, he passed, like a wise craftsman, to more and more luminous signs, adorning with virtue the end of his Christian life and attaining the refulgent brilliancy of a soul lost in God. I tell You: he did not speak, but he sang his last poem. He did not die: he rose. And I was not able to tell exactly when it was the man who spoke or when it was already the spirit son of God speaking.

Lord, You know that I have read all the works of philosophers searching for a pasture for my soul tied with the double chain of slavery and heathenism. But they were the works of men. Here it was not the voice of man: they were the words of a super-man, of a royal spirit, even more: of a semi-divine spirit. I watched over the mystery, which on the other hand, would not have been understood by those who gave us hospitality: they were kind to the man but they were Israelites in the most wide and complete sense of the word... And when in the last touches of love John was nothing but an expression of love, I sent everybody away and I alone received what You certainly know...

Lord... that man is dead, and 'having come out at last from prison, has entered freedom' as he used to say beneath his breath in his last days, and with his eyes enraptured, pressing my hand and revealing Paradise to me with his words. That man died teaching me how to live, to forgive, to believe, to love. He died preparing me for the last period of Your life. Lord, I know everything. In the winter evenings he instructed me in the prophets. I know the Book like a true Israelite. But I know also what is not specified in the Book... My Master and my Lord... I will imitate him! And I would like to have the same favour, but I think

that it is more heroic not to ask it, and to do Your will... " »

Jesus rolls up the sheet and is about to take the third one.

« No, Master! It cannot be... There is something else. It is not possible that the sheet finished so soon! » exclaims Peter. « You are not reading everything! Why, Lord? You, all of you! Protest. Syntyche has written more for us than for Him and He is not reading the letter to us. »

« Do not insist, Peter! »

« I do insist! Of course I do! I noticed, You know, that Your eyes went to the bottom of the sheet all of a sudden; the sheet is transparent and You have not read the last lines. I will not be quiet until You read again the end part of that sheet. Before... You were weeping!... What? Is there any reason for weeping in what You have read? Of course we are sorry to hear that he is dead... but such a death does not make people weep! I thought that he had died an evil death, losing his spirit... Instead... Come on, read it! Mother! John! You who obtain everything... »

« Hear him, Son, and if it is something sorrowful to learn, we will all drink the chalice... »

« Let it be as you wish... »

"I know the Book like a true Israelite. But I know also what is not specified in the Book, that is, that Your Passion will not be delayed, because John is dead, and You promised him a short expectation in Limbo. He told me. He told me that You had promised to take him before he knew how far the hatred of Israel against You could go and thus prevent him from hating Your torturers out of love for You. He is now dead... and You are therefore about to die... No. To live. To really live through Your Doctrine, with Yourself in us, with Your Divinity in us after Your Sacrifice has given us the life of our souls, Grace, union with the Father, with the Son, with the Holy Spirit.

Master, my Saviour, my King, my God... I am strongly tempted, nay I have been strongly tempted to join You now that John is sleeping with his body in the tomb and is resting with his soul in expectation. I would like to come to You to be with the other women near Your altar. But altars are to be adorned not only with the victim, but also with garlands in honour of the God in Whose honour the sacrifice is celebrated. I lay my violet garland of a remote disciple at the foot of Your altar. I lay there the obedience, the work, the sacrifice of not seeing and hearing You... Ah! It will really be hard! It is really hard now that Your supernatural conversations with John are over and I no longer enjoy them!... Lord, raise Your hand on Your servant that she may be able to do only Your Will and she may know how to serve You". »

Jesus rolls up the sheet and looks at the faces of the listeners. They are pale. But Peter whispers: « I do not understand why You

were weeping... I thought that there was something else... »

« I was weeping because I was comparing the uxoricide, the galley slave of the past and the heathen slave woman with too many people in Israel. »

« I see! It grieves You that Hebrews are inferior to Gentiles, and priests and princes to galley slaves. You are right. It was foolish of me! What a woman she is! It's a pity that she had to go away... »

Jesus unrolls the third sheet.

« "And that she may imitate in everything the disciple and brother who is already in peace, and is resting there after accomplishing every purification... in Your honour and to alleviate Your sufferings". »

« Ah! certainly not! » Peter has jumped with agility on to the seat before Jesus can move aside, and sees that it is not possible to be already where Jesus is looking. It is to be borne in mind that the parchment rolls up as its upper part is released and thus many lines are hidden at the top of the sheet.

Jesus raises His head, and with a more melancholy than sad countenance, He gently but firmly repels His apostle and says: « Peter, your Master knows what is good for you! Let Me give you what will do you good... »

Peter is moved by those words and even more by the way Jesus looks at him, so imploringly, His eyes shining with tears about to stream down His face. He descends from the stool saying: « I obey... But what can ever be there?! »

Jesus resumes reading:

« "And now that I have written about other people I will write about myself. I left Antiochia after John's burial. Not because I was ill-treated. But because I felt that it was not my place. Why did I feel that? I do not know. I felt it. As I told You, I had become acquainted with many families, because many people had come to us. I preferred to settle down with Zeno's family, because it is in the environment in which I intend to work.

A Roman woman wanted me in her magnificent house near Herod's Colonnades. A very rich Syrian woman invited me as teacher to the textile factory which her husband, a man from Tyre, has set up in Seleucia. A widow proselyte, the mother of seven daughters, living near the Seleucus bridge, wanted me out of respect for John, the teacher of her sons. A Greek-Assyrian family with stores in a street near the Circus asked me to stay with them because I could have been useful when games are on. Finally Roman, a centurion I think, certainly a soldier, who has remained here with I do not know exactly what task and who was also cured with the balm, insisted on having me. No. I did not want rich people or merchants. I wanted souls, Greek and Roman souls, because I feel that the spreading of Your Doctrine in the world must begin

with them.

And here I am in Zeno's house, on the slopes of mount Sulpius, near the barracks. The citadel impends threateningly from its top. And yet, coarse as it is, it is better than the rich buildings of the Onpholus and Nympeus and I have friends there. A soldier, whose name is Alexander, knows You. The simple heart of a child enclosed in the huge body of a soldier. And the very tribune, who came here recently from Caesarea, has a righteous heart under his chlamys. Alexander is closer to the Truth in his coarse simplicity. But also the tribune, who admires You as a perfect rhetor, as a 'divine' philosopher, as he says, is not hostile to Wisdom, even if he cannot as yet accept the Truth. But to conquer these men and their families through the least knowledge of You means to scatter the seed of such knowledge north, south, east and west, because soldiers are like grains stirred by the winnowing-fan, or rather, like chaff which the whirlwind, in our case the will of the Caesars and the demands of dominion, scatter everywhere.

When one day Your apostles, like birds set free to fly, will spread throughout the world, it will be of great help to them to find in the places of their apostolate one, one only, even only one person who knows that You existed. For this idea I treat also the aching limbs of old gladiators and the wounds of young ones. That is why I no longer shun Roman women and I put up with people who grieved me... Everything. For You. If I am wrong, advise me with Your wisdom. I only ask You to consider - and You know that my mistakes are caused by incapacity and not by wickedness.

Lord, Your servant has told You so much... a mere nothing of what I have in my heart. But You see my spirit. Lord... When shall I see Your face? When shall I see Your Mother? My brothers?... Life is a passing dream. Our separation will pass. I will be in You, and with them, and it will be joy and freedom for me, also for me, as for John.

I prostrate myself at Your feet, my Saviour. Bless me with Your peace. To Mary of Nazareth, to the women disciples, peace and blessings. To the apostles and disciples, peace and blessings. To You, Lord, glory and love".

I have finished reading. Mother, come with Me. You can wait for Me, or rest. I am not coming back in. I am staying with My Mother to pray. Johanna, should anybody look for Me, I am in the bower near the lake. »

Peter has- taken Mary aside and speaks to Her excitedly, but in a low voice. Mary smiles at him and whispers something. She then joins Her Son Who is going along the path hardly visible in the night.

« What did Simon of Jonah want? »

« He wanted to know, Son. He is like a boy... a big boy... But he is

so good. »

« Yes, very good. And he begged You, Who are very good, to know... He has found out the weak points: You and John. I know. I pretend I do not know, but I know. But I cannot always give in, to please him... It was not necessary, Jonathan. We could have stayed also in the dark » Jesus says seeing Jonathan hurrying towards Him with a silver lamp and some cushions which he lays on the table and the seats in the bower.

« Johanna told me to bring them. Peace to You, Master. »

« And to you. »

They remain alone.

« I was saying that I cannot always please him. This evening it was impossible. You are the only one who can be informed of what I omitted. That is why I wanted You with Me, also to be with You, Mother... To be with You in the last hours before parting is to gather so much gentle strength as to have enough for many hours of solitude in the world which does not understand Me or misunderstands Me. And to be with You in the first hours when I come back is to acquire new strength at once through Your kindness, after all the chalices I have to drink in the world... and which are so bitter and disgusting. »

Mary caresses Him without speaking. Standing beside Him, while He is seated, She is the Mother Who comforts Her Son. But He makes Her sit down and says: « Listen... » and then Mary, in attentive attitude, sitting in front of Him, becomes the disciple hanging on the lips of Jesus Master.

« Speaking of Antioch Syntyche writes: "I am not wise and so I cannot tell where the will of men ends and the will of God begins, but a will, stronger than my desire, has brought me here and I wonder whether it was the will of God. One thing is certain - and I am almost sure it is by the grace of Heaven - I love this town now, as with the summits of Casius and Amanus watching over it on two sides and the green crests of the black Mountains farther away, it reminds me of my lost Fatherland. And this seems to me the first step back to my land, not the tired step of a weary pilgrim returning to die, but of a messenger of life coming to give life to her who was her mother. It seems to me that from here, well rested like a swallow before resuming its flight and nourished with Wisdom, I am about to fly back to the town where I was born and from which I want, I would like to rise towards the Light after giving that Light which was given to me.

I am aware that my brothers in You would not approve of this idea. They want Your Wisdom exclusively for themselves. But they are wrong. One day they will understand that the world is waiting and that the world which is now despised is the better one. I am preparing the way from them. Not only here, but with all

those who come here and then depart for other countries and it makes no difference to me whether they are Gentiles or proselytes, Greeks or Romans, or whether they belong to other colonies of the empire or of the Diaspora. I speak to them, I excite in them the desire to know You... The sea is not made by one cloud pouring its water into it. It is made by clouds and clouds and clouds which pour their waters onto the Earth and flow into the sea. I will be a cloud. The sea will be Christendom. I want to spread the knowledge of You to contribute to form the sea of Christendom. I, a Greek woman, know how to speak to Greeks, not so much through their language as by understanding them... I, previously the slave of Romans, know how to deal with Romans, of whose sensitive points I am aware. And since I lived among the Hebrews I know also how to deal with them, particularly here where there are many proselytes. John died for Your glory. I will live for Your glory. Bless our spirits".

And farther down, where she speaks of John's death, where I did not let Simon read, she writes: "John died after accomplishing every purification, also the last one, by forgiving those who killed him through their behaviour and compelled You to send him away. I know their names, at least the name of the main one. John revealed it to me saying: 'Never trust him. He is a traitor. He betrayed me, he will betray Him and his companions. But I forgive the Iscariot as Jesus will forgive him. The abyss in which he lies is already so deep that I do not want to make it any deeper by not forgiving him for killing me by separating me from Jesus. My forgiveness will not save him. Nothing will save him, because he is a demon. I should not say that, as I was an assassin, but in my case an offence had driven me mad. He inveighs against those who have done him no harm and he will end up by betraying his Saviour. But I forgive him because God's kindness has turned his hatred against me into good for me. See? I have expiated everything. He, the Master, told me yesterday evening. I have expiated everything. I am now going out of prison. I am now really entering freedom, free even of the weight of the remembrance of Judas of Kerioth's sin towards a poor wretch, who had found peace near his Lord'.

I also, following John's example, forgive him for tearing me away from You, from Your blessed Mother, from my sister disciples, from listening and following You until death, to be present at Your triumph of Redeemer. And I do so for Your sake, in Your honour and to alleviate Your sufferings. Be in peace, my Lord. The name of the disgraceful man among Your followers will never pass my lips, neither will anything pass of what I heard from John when his ego spoke with Your invisible gladdening Presence. I was in doubt whether I should come to see You before

settling in my new residence. But I felt that I would betray myself with my horror for the Iscariot and that I might damage You with Your enemies. So I made a sacrifice also of that consolation... feeling certain that the sacrifice would not be without fruit and without reward".

There You are, Mother. Could I have read that to Simon? »

« No. Neither to him nor to the others. In My grief I am happy for John's holy death... Son, let us pray that he may feel our love and... and that Judas may not be the shame... Oh! it is dreadful!... And yet... we will forgive... »

« Let us pray... » They stand up and pray in the flickering light of the lamp in the middle of screens of hanging branches, while the surf breaks rhythmically on the shore...

#### **460. At the Thermal Baths of Emmaus of Tiberias.**

26th July 1946.

The lake is just like a huge sardonyx within the setting of the hills, hardly visible in the starlight, as the moon has already set. Jesus is alone in the green bower with His head reclined on His forearms which are resting on the table near the lamp, which is about to go out. But He is not sleeping. Now and again He raises His head, He looks again at the sheets unrolled on the table, held thus by the lamp placed at the top of the sheet and by His forearms at the other end, and He reclines His head once again.

Silence is unbroken. Even the lake seems to be asleep in the dead sultry calm. And then suddenly and all at the same time, the wind rustles among the leaves, a solitary wave laps the shore, there is a change in nature, I would say that it is the creaking of awakening elements. The very dim light at the beginning of dawn, when day is about to break, is already light, although one's eyes do not yet perceive it when one looks round the deserted garden. It is the sheet of the lake which gives an indication of the first appearance of light, because its black, leaden sardonyx becomes clearer and reflecting the whitening sky, from leaden it slowly becomes slategrey and then iron-grey, then opal and finally it reflects the sky and its waters become paradisiacal blue.

Jesus stands up, He picks up the sheets, takes the lamp which has gone out at the first whiff of breeze, and He goes towards the house. He meets a maid-servant who bows, then a gardener, who is going towards the flower-beds and He exchanges greetings with him. He enters the hall where other servants are accomplishing the first tasks of the day.

« Peace to you. Could you call My apostles? »

« They are already up, Lord. And the wagon for the women is ready. Johanna also is up. She is in the inner hall. »

Walking through the house Jesus goes to the hall which is on the street side. They are in fact all gathered there.

« Let us go. Mother, the Lord be with You. Mary, and with you, and may My peace accompany you. Goodbye, Simon. Take My peace to Salome and the children. »

Jonathan opens the heavy gate. A covered wagon is on the road. The road between the houses is still almost dark and it is completely deserted. The women get in the wagon with their relative and they set out.

« Let us leave at once as well. Andrew, run to the boats and tell the servants to meet us at Tarichea. »

« What? Are we going on foot? We shall be late... »

« It does not matter. You may go ahead while I take leave of Johanna. »

The apostles set out...

« I will follow You, Lord. Or rather: I will precede You because I am coming by boat. »

« You will have to wait for a long time... »

« It does not matter. Let me come. »

« As you wish. Is Chuza here? »

« He did not come home, Lord. »

« Give him My regards and tell him that I exhort him to be just. Caress the children on My behalf. And... since you have understood your Master, convince Chuza that he and all those who want to make a temporal king of the Christ, are in error. »

Jesus also goes out and He soon joins the apostles. « Let us go along the Emmaus road. Many unhappy people go to the springs, some to be cured, some to receive assistance. »

« But we do not have a farthing... » objects James of Zebedee.

Jesus does not reply.

The roads are soon crowded with two very different classes of people, that is, with market-gardeners, vendors, servants, slaves, common people hurrying to the market, and with rich pleasureseekers who in litters or on horseback are also going towards the springs, which I suppose are hot ones, if they are curative.

Tiberias must be really a rather cosmopolitan city because people of various nations can be seen amongst its inhabitants. Romans who have become corpulent through an idle vicious life, smartly dressed Greeks as dissolute as the Romans, but with masks of vice which differ in expression from those of the Latins, people from the Phoenician coast, Hebrews, mainly elder ones, people speaking different languages with different accents, and wearing different clothes, pale faces of sick men and women, or the tired faces of noble women... or the faces of hedonists of both sexes proceeding in groups on horseback near litters or in litters, joking, talking of frivolous subjects, making wagers...

The street is a beautiful one. A shady avenue from which, through the gaps between the trees it is possible to see the lake on one side and the country on the other. The sun which has now risen brightens up the hues of the waters and greenery.

Many people turn round to look at Jesus Who is followed by whispers: admiring words of women, satires of men, at times sneering words or grumbling ones, a few entreaties of suffering people, the only ones, among the many, to whom Jesus listens and whom He satisfies.

When He restores agility to the limbs stiffened by arthritis of a man from Tyre, the ironical indifference of many Gentiles is roused.

« Eh! » exclaims an old Roman with the debauched face of a reveller. « Eh! It is lovely to be cured like that. I will call Him. »

« It is not for you, old Silenus. What would you do in the event that you were cured? »

« I would begin to enjoy myself all over again! »

« In that case there is no sense in going to the sad Nazarene. »

« I will go and I bet everything I have that... »

« Don't bet. You'll lose. »

« Let him wager. He is still drunk. We will have a good time with his money. »

The old man staggers out of his litter and reaches Jesus, Who is listening to a Jewish mother speaking to Him of her daughter, a deadly pale girl whom she is leading by the hand.

« Be not afraid, woman. Your daughter will not die. Go back home. Do not take her to the springs. She would not recover the health of her body there, but she would lose the purity of her soul. It is a place of degrading licentiousness » and He says so in a very loud voice, so that everybody may hear.

« I have faith, Rabbi. I am going back home. Bless Your servants, Master. »

Jesus blesses them and is about to set out.

The Roman plucks His sleeve: « Cure me » he orders.

Jesus looks at him and asks: « Where? »

The Romans, with some Greeks and Phoenicians, have gathered together and are sneering and betting. Some Israelites, who have moved aside grumbling: « Desecration Anathema! » and other similar words, stop, however, inquisitively...

« Where? » asks Jesus.

« Everywhere. I am unwell... oh! oh! oh! » I do not know whether he is laughing or weeping, so strange is the sound passing his lips. It sounds as if the flaccid fat, accumulated in years of vicious living, affects even his vocal chords. The man enumerates his troubles and expresses his fear of dying.

Jesus looks at him severely and replies: « You must in fact fear death because you have killed yourself » and turns His back on

him. The Roman tries to pull Him once again by His clothes, while the people present laugh scornfully. But Jesus frees Himself from the man's grasp and goes away.

« Thumbs down, Appius Fabius! Thumbs down! The so called king of the Jews has not granted you the grace. Give us your purse you lost the bet. » The Greeks and Romans make a terrible din surrounding the disappointed man who pushes them aside and begins to run, as best he can, being so obese, pulling up his clothes and lurching with all his tallowish mass. But he stumbles and falls in the dust amid the guffaws of his friends who drag him towards a tree, against the trunk of which the drunk man presses weeping the silly tears of drunkards.

The springs must be close at hand now because the crowd is becoming larger and larger as people flow from many streets towards the same spot. The smell of sulphurous water stagnates in the air.

« Shall we go down towards the shore to avoid these unclean people? » asks Peter.

« They are not all unclean, Simon. There are many people from Israel as well among them » says Jesus.

They arrive at the thermal baths. A series of white marble buildings, separated by avenues, facing the lake from which they are separated by a kind of large square planted with trees, under which people are taking a walk awaiting a bath or relaxing during its reaction after it. Bronze heads of Medusa, protruding from the wall of a building, pour steaming water into a marble basin, which is white outside and reddish inside, as if it were covered with rusty iron. Many Jews go to the fountains and drink the mineral water out of chalices. I can see Jews only do that in this pavilion believe that I am right in guessing that observant Israelites have demanded a place of their own to avoid contact with Gentiles.

Many sick people are on litters awaiting treatment and seeing Jesus many of them shout: « Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. »

Jesus turns His steps towards them: people suffering from paralysis, arthritis, ankylosis; with fractured bones which will not knit, or suffering from anaemia, glands, women withered before time, children prematurely adults. And under the trees beggars who moan asking for alms.

Jesus stops near the sick people. The rumor spreads that the Rabbi will speak and cure. People, also those belonging to other races, come close to see.

Jesus looks around. He smiles seeing the Greek sent by Syntyche Coming out of the baths with his hair still wet after a shower. He raises His voice at once to make Himself heard: « Mercy opens the door to grace. Be merciful in order to receive mercy. Every man is

poor in something: some in money, some in affection, some in freedom, some in health. And all men are in need of help from God, Who created the universe and Who, being the only Father, can assist His children. »

He stops, as if He wanted to give people time to make up their minds whether they should come to listen to Him or go to the baths. Most of them forget about the baths. Israelites or Gentiles crowd to listen and some sceptical Romans conceal their curiosity saying jokingly: « We have a rhetor today to make this place resemble Roman thermal baths. »

Zeno, the Greek, elbows his way through the crowd shouting: « By Jove! I was about to go to Tarichea and I find You here! »

Jesus continues: « Yesterday they said to Me: "It is difficult to accomplish what You do". No, it is not difficult. My doctrine is based on love, and love is never difficult to be accomplished. What does My doctrine preach? The cult of a true God, love for our neighbour. Man, the eternal child, is afraid of shadows and follows chimeras because he does not know love. Love is wisdom and light. It is wisdom because it descends to teach. It is light because it comes to enlighten. Where there is light shadows disappear, and where there is wisdom chimeras die. There are Gentiles among those who are listening to Me. They are saying: "Where is God?". They are asking: "Who can assure us that Your God is the true one?". Or: "How can You assure us that You are speaking the truth?". And the Gentiles are not the only ones to say so. Other people ask Me: "With what power do You do these things?". With the power that comes to Me from the Father, from that Father Who has placed everything at the service of man, His favourite creature and Who sends Me to teach men, My brothers. Can the Father, Who gave power to the bowels of the Earth to make spring water medicinal, can He have limited the power of His Christ? And who, which God, but the true God, can grant the Son of man to work miracles which recreate destroyed limbs? In which temple of idols do you ever see blind people recover their sight and paralytics motion, in which temple do dying people, at the command: "I want" of a man, rise healthier than healthy people? Well, I, in order to praise the true God and have Him known and praised by you, I say to all those who are gathered here, whichever their religion and race may be, that they will recover the health which they expected from water, and they will receive it from Me, the living Water, as I give the life of the body and of the spirit to those who believe in Me and I work deeds of mercy with righteous hearts. I do not ask for difficult things. I ask for a motion of faith and one of love. Open your hearts to faith. Open your hearts to love. Give in order to receive. Give poor coins to have help from God. Begin to love your brothers. Learn how to be merciful. Two thirds of you are sick

because they are selfish and lustful. Demolish selfishness, repress just. You will gain physical health and wisdom. Crush pride. And you will receive help from the true God. I ask you to give Me alms for the poor and then I will give you the gift of good health. »

And Jesus raises the hem of His mantle and holds it out to receive the money: the large number of coins which heathens and Israelites hasten to throw into it. And not only coins, but also rings and other jewels are thrown freely by Roman women who look at Jesus when they approach Him and some of them whisper a few words to which Jesus nods assent or replies briefly.

The offering is over. Jesus calls the apostles and tells them to bring the beggars to Him and the whole amount disappears as quickly as it was put together. Some jewels remain and Jesus hands them back to the donors because there is no one who can buy them and thus change them into money. And to comfort the women who offered them He says: « Your desires are as good as accomplished actions. The offerings you made are as precious as if they had been distributed, because God sees the thoughts of men. »

He then stands up and shouts: « From whom does My power come? From the true God. Father, let Your power shine brightly in Your Son. In Your name I give this order to diseases: go away! »

And there is the usual sight which has been seen so often: crippled people stand up straight, paralytics move, faces become healthily coloured, eyes begin to shine, shouting of hosannas, reciprocal congratulations of Romans, among whom two women and a man have been cured and they want to imitate the cured people of Israel; but as they are not yet prepared to humble themselves like the Hebrews by kissing Jesus' feet, they stoop, take the hem of His mantle and kiss it.

Jesus then sets out eluding the crowds. But He cannot evade them because, with the exception of a few stubborn Gentiles and some Hebrews even more guiltily obstinate, they all follow Him along the road to Tarichea.

#### **461. At Tarichea. Galatia, the Sinner.**

27th July 1946.

The little peninsula of Tarichea stretches out on the lake forming a deep creek south-westwards, so that it is correct to say that, rather than a peninsula, it is an isthmus almost completely surrounded by water, only a small strip being joined to the mainland. At least it was so in Jesus' days, in which I see it. I do not know whether later, in the course of twenty centuries, sand and pebbles carried by a little torrent which flows just into the southwestern inlet may have altered the aspect of the place, silting up the little bay and widening the strip of land of the isthmus. The bay is calm,

clear blue with jade streaks where it reflects the green trees leaning from the coast towards the lake. Many boats undulate gently on the almost calm water.

What surprises me is a strange dam which, with its arches based on the gravel of the shore, forms a kind of promenade, a pier, I would say, extending westwards. I do not understand whether it is an ornament or whether it was built for some useful purpose of which I am unaware. The promenade, or dam or pier, is covered with a thick layer of earth in which trees have been planted so thickly that, although they are not large ones, they form a green gallery above the road. Many people wander idly under the rustling gallery, which is pleasantly cooled by the breeze, the water and the leafy branches.

One can clearly see the mouth of the Jordan and the water of the lake flowing into the river-bed, forming whirlpools and obstructions near the piers of a bridge, which I would say is a Roman one, judging by its architecture with robust pillars, placed like breakwaters, against the corners of which the current breaks up with a pearly play of light of the spray in the sunshine, while the water forces its way into the deeply embanked gorge of the river, after having so much space in the lake. Almost at the end of the bridge, on the opposite shore, is a little white town spread out in the green fertile country. And farther up, to the north, on the eastern coast of the lake, is the village preceding Hippo and woods high above the cliff, beyond which is Gamala clearly visible on top of the hill.

Jesus, with a train of people who have followed Him from Emmaus and who have increased in numbers with, those already waiting for Him at Tarichea - among whom is Johanna who came by boat - directs His steps towards the dam planted with trees. And He stops in the middle of it, with the lake on His right hand side and the shore on His left. Those who can find room on the shady road stop there, otherwise they go down to the shore, which is still somewhat damp after the high tide of the previous night or for other reasons, and is partly shaded by the leafy branches of the trees on the dam. Other people ask the boatmen to come close to the shore and they sit in the shade of the sails.

Jesus raises His hand indicating that He wants to speak and everybody becomes silent.

« It is written: "You marched to save Your people, to save them through Your Christ". It is written: "And I will rejoice in the Lord and I will exult in God my Jesus". The people of Israel have taken these words for themselves and have given them a national, personal selfish meaning, which does not correspond to the truth concerning the person of the Messiah. They have given those words a restricted meaning which degrades the greatness of the Messianic idea to a common display of human power and of overwhelming

victory over the rulers found by the Christ in Israel.

But the truth is different. It is great, unlimited. It comes from the true God, from the Creator and Lord of Heaven and Earth, from the Creator of Mankind, from Him Who multiplied the stars in the vault of heaven and covered the Earth with all kinds of plants, and peopled it with animals and placed fish in the waters and birds in the air, and likewise He multiplied the children of Man created by Him to be the king of Creation and His favourite creature. Now, how could the Lord, the Father of all mankind, be unfair to the children of the children of the children born of the Man and the Woman, formed by Him with matter: the earth, and with soul: His divine breath? And how could He treat these differently from those, as if they did not come from one only source, as if other branches had been created by some other supernatural antagonist, not by Him, and were consequently strangers, illegitimate, contemptible?

The true God is not a poor god of this or of that people, an idol, an unreal figure. He is the supreme Reality, the universal Reality, the Only Supreme Being, the Creator of all things and of all men. He is therefore the God of all men. He knows them even if they do not know Him. He loves them: even if they, not knowing Him, do not love Him, or if they do not know Him well and they do not love Him well, or even if they know Him, they do not know how to love Him. Paternity does not cease when a son is ignorant, silly or wicked. A father strives to teach his son, because it is love to instruct him. A father works hard to make a mentally deficient son less silly. A father tries to correct a wicked son and make him good with tears, being indulgent, with beneficial punishments and forgiving him mercifully. That is what a man-father does. And will the God-Father be perhaps inferior to the man-father? So the God-Father loves all men and wants their salvation. He, the King of an infinite Kingdom, the eternal King, looks at His people, which comprises all the peoples spread all over the Earth, and He says: "This is the people of those I created, the people to be saved through My Christ. This is the people for whom the Kingdom of Heaven was created. It is now time to save them by means of the Saviour".

Who is the Christ? Who is the Saviour? Who is the Messiah? There are many Greeks here, and many, even if they are not Greeks, know what the word Christ means. Christ is therefore the consecrated person, the person anointed with regal oil to fulfil His mission. Consecrated to what? Perhaps to the fleeting glory of a throne? Perhaps to the greater glory of priesthood? No. He is consecrated to gather under one only sceptre, into one only people, in one only doctrine, all men, so that they may be brothers to one another and children of one only Father, children who know their

Father and comply with His Law to take part in His Kingdom.

Christ, a king in the name of the Father Who sent Him, reigns as it becomes His Nature, that is, divinely, as God. God has placed the world as the foot-stool of His Christ, not because He should oppress, but that He may save. His name is in fact Jesus, which in Hebrew means Saviour. When the Saviour saves His people from the fiercest snare and wound, a mountain will be under His feet and a multitude of people of every race will cover the mountain to symbolise that He reigns and rises above the whole Earth and above all peoples. But the King will be bare without any riches, except His Sacrifice, to symbolise that He tends only to spiritual things, and that spiritual things are conquered and redeemed with spiritual bravery and heroic sacrifice, not with violence and gold. He will be like that to reply to those who fear Him and also to those who through false love exalt and degrade Him while wishing Him to be king according to the world. He will be like that to those as well who hate Him solely for fear of being deprived of what is dear to them. For His response is that He is a spiritual King and nothing else, sent to teach spirits how to conquer the Kingdom, the only Kingdom that I have come to establish.

I will not give you new laws., I confirm the Law of Sinai for Israelites; to Gentiles I say: the law to possess the Kingdom is nothing but the law of virtue which every man of noble morals imposes on himself and which, through faith in the true God, from moral law and human virtue becomes a superhuman moral law.

O Gentiles! It is your custom to proclaim gods the great men of your countries, and you place them among the many unreal gods with whom you people Olympus, created by you to have something in which to believe, because religion is a necessity for man, exactly as faith is a necessity, because faith is the permanent state of man and incredulity is the accidental abnormality. And those men raised to the rank of gods are not always worthy even as men, as at times they are great because of their brutal strength, at times through powerful cunning, at times also because of the power which they somehow achieved. So they carry with themselves, as qualifications of supermen, certain miseries which a wise man recognises for what they are: the rottenness of unrestrained passions. That I am speaking the truth is proved by the fact that in your chimerical Olympus you have not put a single one of those great spirits who sensed by intuition the supreme Being and were the intermediate agents between man and Divinity, which was instinctively perceived by them through their contemplative virtuous spirit. Between the reasoning spirit of a philosopher, of a true great philosopher, and the spirit of a true believer who worships the true God, the gap is small, whereas between the spirit of the believer and the ego of a cunning or overwhelming man, or of a

man who is a hero only in a material way, there is an abyss. And yet you have not placed in your Olympus those who had been elevated by their virtuous lives so much above the human mass that they approached the kingdoms of the spirit, whereas you have put those whom you feared as cruel masters, or whom you adulated as servile slaves, or you admired as living examples of those free animal instincts which your abnormal appetites consider as the aim and purpose of life. And you have envied those who have been numbered among the gods, neglecting those who were closer to divinity because of their honest practices and of the doctrine, which they taught and according to which they lived virtuously.

I now solemnly tell you that I will give you the means to become gods. He who does what I say and believes in what I teach, will climb the true Olympus and will be god, god son of God, in a Heaven where there is no corruption whatsoever and where Love is the only law. In a Heaven where we love one another spiritually, without the dullness and snares of senses making its inhabitants hostile to one another, as it happens in your religions. I have not come to request deeds which are noisily heroic. I have come to say to you: live as becomes creatures gifted with soul and reason, not as brutes. Live in such a way as to deserve to live, to really live, with your immortal part, in the Kingdom of Him Who created you. I am the Life. I have come to teach you the Way to go to Life. I have come to give Life to you all, and I give it to you that you may rise from death, from your sepulchres of sin and idolatry. I am Mercy. I have come to call you and gather you all together. I am the Christ Saviour. My Kingdom does not belong to this world. And yet a kingdom is established in the hearts of those who believe in Me and in My word, even from the present days, and it is the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of God within you.

It is written of Me that I am He Who will bring justice among nations. It is true. Because if the citizens of each nation did what I teach, hatred, wars, overbearing actions would come to an end. It is written of Me that I would not raise My voice to curse sinners or My hand to destroy those who are like cracked canes and smoky wicks because of their unbecoming way of living. It is true. I am the Saviour and I have come to strengthen those who are weak, to give humour to those whose light is smoky through lack of the necessary essence. It is written of Me that I am He Who opens the eyes of blind people, and frees prisoners from jail and takes light to those who were in the darkness of prison. It is true. The blindest of blind people are those who cannot see the Light, that is, the true God, even with the sight of their souls. I, the Light of the world, have come that they may see. The most imprisoned prisoners are those whose chains are their wicked passions. Every other chain

vanishes with the death of the prisoner. But the chains of vice last and enchain even after the death of the body. I have come to loosen them. I have come to relieve from the darkness of the dungeons of ignorance of God all those whom paganism smothered under the mass of its idolatries.

Come to Light and to Salvation. Come to Me because My Kingdom is the true one and My Law is good. All I ask of you is to love the Only God and your neighbour, and consequently to repudiate the idols and passions which harden your hearts and make you arid, sensual, thieves, homicides. The world says: "Let us oppress the poor, the weak, the lonely. Let force be our right, harshness our habit, intolerance, hatred, ferocity, our weapons. Let us crush the just man, since he does not react, let us oppress the widow and the orphan whose voices are weak". I say: be kind and meek, forgive your enemies, assist the weak, be honest in selling and purchasing, be generous also when asserting your rights, without taking advantage of your possibility to crush those who are oppressed. Do not avenge yourselves. Leave to God the care of protecting you. Be sober in all your dispositions, because moderation is proof of moral strength, whilst lust is proof of weakness. Be men and not brutes, and never fear of having fallen so low that you cannot rise again.

I solemnly tell you that as muddy water can become pure again evaporating in the sun, which purifies it by heating it, so that it may rise to the sky and fall as beneficial rain or dew, free from defilement, providing it is exposed to the sun, so the spirits which approach the great Light which is God and shout to Him: "I have sinned, I am filth, but I yearn for You, o Light" will become purified spirits which ascend to their Creator. Remove horror from death converting your lives into money to purchase the Life. Divest yourselves of your past as if it were a dirty garment and clothe yourselves with virtue. I am the Word of God and in His Name I tell you that those who have faith in Him and good will, those who repent of their past and make righteous resolutions for the future, whether they are Hebrews or Gentiles, will become the children of God and will possess the Kingdom of Heaven.

At the beginning of My speech I asked you: "Who is the Messiah?". I now say to you: It is I Who am speaking to you and My Kingdom is Your hearts if you are willing to receive it, and then it will be in Heaven, which I will open to you, if you persevere in My Doctrine. That is the Messiah and nothing else. He is the King of a spiritual kingdom, the gates of which He will open to all men of good will through His Sacrifice. »

Jesus has finished speaking and is about to go towards a short flight of stairs which takes one from the dam to the shore. Perhaps He wants to go to Peter's boat which is pitching near a rough

landing-place. But he suddenly turns round, looks at the crowds and shouts: « Who has invoked Me for the spirit and body? »

Nobody replies. He repeats the question and casts His beautiful eyes round at the crowds who have crowded round His back, not only on the road, but also down on the shore. Still no reply.

Matthew remarks: « Master, who knows how many have sighed for You under the emotion of Your words... »

« No. A soul has cried: "Mercy" and I heard it. And to tell you that it is true I reply: "Let it be done to you as you have asked because the motion of your heart is fair". » And tall as He is, He looks wonderful as He stretches His hand imperiously towards the shore.

He tries once again to set out towards the short flight of steps, but Chuza, who has obviously come off a boat, stands in front of Him and greets Him bowing low. « I have been looking for You for many days. I have made the tour of the lake following You all the time, Master. I must speak to You urgently. Be my guest. I have many friends with me. »

« I was at Tiberias yesterday. »

« They told me. But I am not alone. See those boats sailing towards the other shore? There are many in them who want You, including some of Your disciples. Please, come to my house, beyond the Jordan. »

« It is useless, Chuza. I know what you want to tell Me. »

« Come, Lord. »

« Sick people and sinners are waiting for Me; leave Me... »

« We also are waiting for You and we are sick with anxiety for Your welfare. And there are some people who are physically sick, also... »

« Have you heard My words? So why do you insist? »

« Lord, do not reject us, we... »

A woman has elbowed her way through the crowd. I am by now sufficiently familiar with Jewish garments to realise that she is not a Jewess, and I know enough of... decent dresses to understand that she is indecent. But to cover her features and her charms, perhaps too immodest, she has enveloped herself in a veil, which is sky-blue like her wide dress, but still provoking because of its shape which leaves her beautiful arms uncovered. She throws herself on the ground, creeping on the dust until she reaches Jesus' mantle, which she clasps with her fingers, kissing its hem and weeps, sobbing convulsively.

Jesus, Who was about to reply to Chuza saying: « You are wrong and... » casts down His eyes and says: « Was it you who invoked Me? »

« Yes... but I am not worthy of the grace which You granted me. I should not have called You even with my soul. But Your word...

Lord... I am a sinner. If I uncovered my face, many people would tell You my name. I am... a courtesan... an infanticide... and because of my vice I became diseased... I was at Emmaus, I gave You a jewel... You gave it back to me... and Your glance... pierced my heart... I have followed You... You have spoken. I repeated to myself Your words: "I am filth, but I yearn after You, the Light". I said: "Cure my soul, and then, if You wish so, my body". Lord, my body has been cured... and what about my soul?... »

« Your soul has been cured by your repentance. Go and sin no more. Your sins have been remitted. »

The woman kisses the hem of Jesus' mantle once again and stands up. In doing so her veil slips off her face.

« Galatia! Galatia! » shout many and cast contumelies on her, they pick up pebbles and sand and throw them at the woman who stoops frightened.

Jesus raises a hand severely and imposes silence. « Why are you insulting her? You did not do so when she was a sinner. Why do it now when she is redeeming herself? »

« She is doing that because she is old and ill » shout many sneeringly.

Actually, although the woman is no longer very young, she is far from being old and ugly, as they say. But crowds are like that.

« Go ahead of Me and get into that boat. I will take you home along a different way » orders Jesus and He says to His apostles: « Keep her in the middle of you and accompany her. »

The anger of the crowd, instigated by some intolerant Israelites, explodes against Jesus and amidst shouts of: « Anathema! False Christ! Protector of prostitutes! Who protects them, approves of them! Worse! He approves of them because He enjoys them » and similar phrases shouted or rather howled particularly by a small group of Hebrew madmen, I do not know of which caste, amidst such howling, they throw handfuls of damp sand which strikes Jesus on the face soiling it.

He lifts His arms and cleans His cheek without any protest. Not only, but with a gesture He stops Chuza and some other people who would like to react defending Him and He says: « Leave them. I would stand much more for the salvation of a soul! I forgive them! »

Zeno, the man from Antioch, who had never moved away from the Master, exclaims: « Now I really know who You are! A true god and not a false rhetor! The Greek woman told me the truth! Your words at the thermal baths had disappointed Me, but the present ones have conquered me. The miracle amazed me, Your forgiving the offenders has conquered me. Goodbye, Lord. I will think of You and of Your words. »

« Goodbye, man. May the Light enlighten your heart. »

Chuza insists once again while they are going towards the landing-place, and while there is a violent quarrel on the dam between Romans and Greeks on one side and Israelites on the other.

« Come! Only for a few hours. It is necessary. I will bring You back myself. You are kind to prostitutes and do You want to be inflexible with us? »

« All right. I will come. It is in fact necessary... » He addresses the apostles who are already in the boats: « You can go now. I will join you... »

« Are You going alone? » asks Peter who is not very happy.

« I am with Chuza... »

« H'm! And can we not come? Why does he want You with his friends? Why did he not come to Capernaum? »

« We did come. You were not there. »

« You could have waited for us. That's all! »

« Instead we decided to follow your tracks. »

« Come to Capernaum now. Why must the Master come to you? »

« Simon is right » say the other apostles.

« But why do you not want Him to come with me? Is it perhaps the first time that He comes to my house? Do you perhaps not know me? »

« Yes, we know you. But we do not know the others. »

« And of what are you afraid? That I am a friend of the Master's enemies? »

« I know nothing! But I remember the end of John, the prophet! »

« Simon! You are offending me. I am a man of honour. I swear to you that I would let them pierce me through before they dare touch a hair of the Master's head. You must believe me! My sword is at His service... »

« Eh!... If they pierced you... What purpose would it serve? Afterwards... Yes, I believe that, I believe you... But once you are dead, it would be His turn. I prefer my oar, my poor boat to your sword, and above all our simple hearts at His service. »

« But there is Manaen with me. Do you trust Manaen? And there is also Eleazar, the Pharisee, the one you know, and Timoneus, the head of the synagogue, and Nathanael ben Fada. You do not know him, but he is an important leader and he wants to speak to the Master. And there is John, named Antipas from Antipatris, a favourite of Herod the Great, now old and powerful, the owner of the whole valley of Gaash, and... »

« That's enough! You are mentioning great names, but they mean nothing to me, with the exception of two... and I will come as well... »

« No. They want to speak to the Master... »

« They want! And who are they? They want?! And I don't want. Get in the boat, Master, and let us go. I will not hear of anybody, I

won't, I trust no one but myself. Come on, Master. And you can go in peace and tell those people that we are not vagabonds. They know where they can find us » and he pushes Jesus rather coarsely while Chuza protests in a loud voice.

Jesus settles the matter definitely saying: « Be not afraid, Simon. No harm will happen to Me. I know. And it is better that I should go. For My own sake. Try to understand Me... » and He stares at him as if He wanted to say: « Do not insist. Understand Me. There are reasons which advise Me to go. »

Simon yields unwillingly. But he gives in, as if he were subdued... Nevertheless he grumbles between his teeth with a dissatisfied expression.

« Go without worrying, Simon. I will personally bring you back your Lord and mine » promises Chuza.

« When? »

« Tomorrow. »

« Tomorrow?! Does it take so long to exchange a few words? We are now between the third and the sixth hour... If He is not with us before evening, we will come to you, bear that in mind. And we will not be alone... » and he says so in a tone of voice which leaves no doubt about his intentions.

Jesus lays a hand on Peter's shoulder. « I am telling you, Simon, that they will do Me no harm. Bear evidence that you believe in My true nature. I am telling you. I know. They will do Me no harm. They only want to explain things to Me... Go... Take the woman to Tiberias, you may stop at Johanna's, you will thus be able to see that they are not abducting Me with boats and armed men... »

« Right, but I know his house (and he points at Chuza). I know that there is land behind it, it is not an island, there is Galgala and Gamala, Aera, Arbela, Gerasa, Bozrah, Pella and Ramoth and many more towns!... »

« But do not be afraid, I tell you! Be obedient. Give Me a kiss, Simon. Go! And you, too » and He kisses and blesses them. When He sees the boat depart He shouts to them: « It is not My hour. And until that moment, nothing and no one will be able to raise a hand against Me. Goodbye, friends. »

He turns towards Johanna who clearly looks upset and worried and He says to her: « Be not afraid. It is a good thing that this should happen. Go in peace. » And He says to Chuza: « Let us go. To show you that I am not afraid. And to cure you... »

« I am not ill, Lord... »

« You are. I tell you. And many with you. Let us go. »

He gets into the fast rich boat and sits down. The oarsmen begin to row on the calm waters making a detour to avoid the strong current at the end of the lake, where the water flows into the riverbed.

#### **462. In Chuza's Country House. The Tempting Proposal Made to Jesus and Made Known by the Disciple Jesus Loved.**

30th July 1946.

On the other shore, at the end of the bridge, a covered wagon is already waiting.

« Get in, Master. You will not get tired although the journey is a long one, because I gave instructions to have yokes of oxen here all the time in order not to give offence to guests more observant of the Law... They are to be pitied... »

« But where are they? »

« They have preceded us in other wagons. Tobit! »

« Master? » says the driver who is yoking the oxen.

« Where are the other guests? »

« Oh! Far ahead. They must almost be at the house. »

« Do You hear that, Master? »

« And if I had not come? »

« Oh! We were certain that You would come. Why should You not have come? »

« Because!! Chuza, I have come to prove to you that I am not a coward. Only wicked people are cowardly, those who are at fault and consequently are afraid of justice... Of the justice of men, unfortunately, whereas they ought to be afraid first of all of the only one, of God's justice. But I am not in the wrong and I am not afraid of men. »

« But Lord! All those who are with me revere You! As I do. And there is no reason whatsoever why we should frighten You! We want to honour You, not to insult You! » Chuza is grieved and almost angry.

Jesus, Who is sitting in front of him, while the wagon proceeds slowly creaking amidst the green countryside, replies: « Rather than the open war of enemies I must fear the underhand one of false friends, or the unjust zeal of true friends who have not yet understood Me. And you are one of them. Do you not remember what I said at Bether? »

« I have understood You, Lord » whispers Chuza, but he is not very sure of himself and does not answer the question directly.

« Yes. You have understood Me. During the wave of sorrow and joy your heart had become as clear as the sky with a rainbow after a storm. And you saw things in a just manner. Then... Turn round, Chuza, and look at our Sea of Galilee. It looked so limpid at dawn! During the night the dew had cleansed the atmosphere and the cold air had mitigated the evaporation of the waters. Sky and lake were two sheets of clear sapphire reflecting their respective beauties, and the hills, all around, were fresh and clean as if God had created them during the night. Look now. The dust of the coastal roads, trodden by people and animals, the heat of the sun,

which makes woods and gardens steam like boilers on a hearth and inflames the lake making its water evaporate, look how they have disturbed the view. The shores previously looked close at hand, so neat they were in the very clear air; but look now... They look dimmed, blurred and seem to be trembling, like objects seen through a veil of impure water. The same has happened to you. Dust: humanity. Sun: pride. Chuza, do not upset yourself... »

Chuza lowers his head, toying mechanically with the ornaments of his robe and with the buckle of his rich sword-belt. Jesus is silent, with His eyes almost closed as if He were sleepy. Chuza respects His sleep or what he thinks is such.

The wagon proceeds slowly south-eastwards, towards the light undulations which form, at least I think so, the first terraces of the tableland that circumscribes the Jordan valley on this eastern side. The country is fertile and beautiful owing to the abundance of underground waters or to some stream; grapes and fruit are hanging on every tree.

The wagon leaves the main road and takes a private one, entering an avenue thick with trees, under which is shade and cool air, at least relatively cool, as compared with the sunny main road which is like a furnace. A low white magnificent looking house is at the end of the avenue. More modest houses are scattered here and there in the fields and vineyards. The wagon crosses a little bridge and a borderline, beyond which the orchard changes into a garden with an avenue strewn with pebbles. Jesus opens His eyes at the different noise of the wheels on the pebbles.

« We have arrived, Master. Here are the guests, who have heard us and are now coming » says Chuza.

And in fact many men, all well off, crowd at the beginning of the avenue and with ostentatious bows greet the Master Who is arriving. I see and recognise Manaen, Timoneus, Eleazar and I think I can see other people, who are not new to me, but whose names I do not know. And there are many more whom I have never seen or at least I have never noticed them particularly. Many are wearing swords, others in the place of swords display the plentiful Pharisaic and priestly or rabbinical furbelows.

The wagon stops and Jesus is the first to get off bowing in a collective greeting. The disciples Manaen and Timoneus move forward and exchange personal greetings with the Master. Then Eleazar (the good Pharisee at the banquet in Ishmael's house) comes forward with two scribes who push through the crowd to make themselves known. One is the man whose son was cured at Tarichea on the day of the first multiplication of loaves, and the other offered food to everybody at the foot of the mountain of beatitudes. And another man pushes his way through: the Pharisee, who in Joseph's house, at harvest time, was instructed

by Jesus on the real reason for his unjust jealousy.

Chuzza proceeds with introductions which I will omit for the benefit of everybody. Because one would lose one's head with all the Simons, Johns, Levis, Eleazars, Nathanaels, Josephs, Philips and so forth; Sadducees, scribes, priests, Herodians mostly, nay I would say that the Herodians are the most numerous, a few proselytes and Pharisees, two members of the Sanhedrin and four heads of synagogues and one Essene, who got in here I know not how.

Jesus bows at each name, casting a sharp glance at each face, and at times smiling gently when someone, to be more clearly identified, mentions the circumstances of a previous contact with Jesus.

Thus a Joachim from Bozrah says: « My wife Mary was cured by You of leprosy. May You be blessed. »

And the Essene says: « I heard You when You spoke near Jericho and one of our brothers left the shores of the Salt Sea to follow You. And I also heard of You with regard to the miracle for Elisha of Engedi. We also live in that part of the country, awaiting... »

What they are awaiting I do not know. But I know that while saying so the Essene looks with a rather elated superior air at the others who certainly do not pose as mystics, as most of them seem to enjoy merrily the wealth which their positions afford them.

Chuzza takes his Guest away from the ceremonial greetings and leads Him to a comfortable bathroom where He leaves Him to the customary ablutions, certainly pleasing in so much heat, and he goes back to his guests, with whom he talks animatedly, in fact they almost come to an altercation, because of their different opinions. Some want to start the conversation at once. Which? Some instead suggest that the Master should not be assailed immediately but that He should be persuaded beforehand of their deep respect. The latter suggestion prevails as it is supported by the majority and Chuzza, the landlord, calls some servants to order a banquet for the evening, leaving time to Jesus, « Who is tired, as everybody can see, to rest. » This decision is accepted by everybody, and in fact when Jesus appears, all the guests take their leave bowing low, leaving Him with Chuzza, who takes Him to a shady room where there is a low couch covered with rich rugs.

But Jesus, Who has been left all alone after He handed a servant His sandals and tunic so that they might be brushed and tidied after the journey of the previous day, does not sleep. Sitting on the edge of the couch, His bare feet on the floor-mat, a short tunic or vest covering His body as far as His elbows and knees, He is engrossed in thought. And if His scanty attire makes Him look younger in the splendid perfect harmony of His virile body, the intensity of His thoughts, which are certainly not joyful, wrinkle

and contract His face in a painful expression of tiredness, which makes Him look older.

There is no noise in the house, and there is nobody in the country, where the grapes are ripening in the oppressive heat. The dark curtains hanging at doors and windows are motionless.

Hours pass thus... Twilight increases as the sun sets. But the heat persists. And Jesus' meditation persists as well.

At last the house appears to be awaking. One can hear voices, shuffling of feet, orders.

Chuzza slowly moves the curtain aside to see without disturbing.

« Come in! I am not sleeping » says Jesus.

Chuzza goes in: he is already wearing a trimmed robe for the banquet. He looks and realises that the couch shows no sign that anyone has lain on it. « Have You not slept? Why? You are tired... »

« I have rested in the silence and the shade. It is enough for Me. »

« I will have a tunic brought to You... »

« No. Mine is certainly dry. I prefer it. I intend to leave as soon as the banquet is over. I beg you to have a wagon and boat ready for Me. »

« As You wish, Lord I would have liked to keep You here until dawn tomorrow... »

« I cannot. I must go... »

Chuzza goes out bowing... I can hear many people talk in low voices...

More time passes. The servant comes back with the linen garment, which has just been washed, sweet-smelling of sunshine, and with the sandals, which have been brushed and softened with oil or fat, and are thus shiny and flexible. Another servant follows him with a basin, an amphora and some towels and he leaves everything on a low table. They go out...

... Jesus joins the guests in the hall that divides the house from north to south, forming a pleasantly ventilated room, provided with seats and adorned with light variegated curtains, which modify the light without interfering with the air. As they are now drawn, one can see the green border surrounding the house.

Jesus is imposing. Although He has not slept, He seems to be full of energy and His gait is as majestic as a king's. The linen garment, which He has just put on, is snow-white and His hair, bright after the bath in the morning, shines gently framing His face with its golden hue.

« Come, Master. We were waiting for You only » says Chuzza and leads Him before everybody into the room where the tables are laid.

They sit down after the thanksgiving prayer and a supplementary ablution of hands, and dinner begins, as pompous as usual, in silence at first. Then the ice is broken.

Jesus is near Chuza and Manaen is on the other side with Timoneus as companion. The others have been placed by Chuza, with the experience of a courtier, on the sides of the U-shaped table. The Essene only has obstinately refused to take part in the banquet and sit at the table with the others, and only when a servant, on instructions from Chuza, offers him a precious basket full of fruit, he agrees to sit at a low table, after I do not know how many ablutions, and after rolling up the wide sleeves of his white tunic lest he should stain them, or for some rite, I do not know.

It is a strange banquet as they communicate with one another by means of glances rather than by words. They only exchange few words of courtesy and scrutinise one another, that is, Jesus studies His fellow-guests and is studied by them.

At the end Chuza beckons to the servants to withdraw after laying on the table large trays of fruit, which is fresh and cool having probably been kept in a well, and is really beautiful, I would say that it is almost frozen as it is covered with that kind of hoar-frost that is typical of fruit kept in ice-boxes. The servants go out after lighting also the lamps, which are at present not required as it is still clear in the long summer sunset.

« Master » begins Chuza « You must have wondered why we held this meeting and why we have been so silent. But what we have to tell You is very grave and is not to be heard by imprudent ears. We are now alone and we can speak. As You can see, all the people present have the greatest respect for You. You are among men who venerate You as Man and as Messiah. Your justice, Your wisdom, the gifts of which God has made You master, are known and admired by us. You are for us the Messiah of Israel. Messiah according to the spiritual idea and the political one. You are the Expected One who will put an end to the grief and dejection of a whole population. And not only of this people within the borders of Israel, or rather, of Palestine, but of the People of all Israel, of the countless colonies of the Diaspora, spread all over the Earth, which make the Name of Jehovah resound under every sky and make known the promises and hopes, which are now being fulfilled, of a Restorer Messiah, of a Revenger, of a Liberator and creator of true independence and of the Fatherland Israel, that is, of the greatest Fatherland in the world, the Fatherland, queen and ruler, which will cancel all remembrance of the past and every existing sign of servitude, Hebraism triumphing over everybody and everything, and for ever, because that was said and that is being accomplished. Lord, You have here, before You, all Israel in the representatives of the several classes of this eternal people, Punished but beloved by the Most High Who proclaims it "His". You have the pulsating wholesome heart of Israel with the members of the Sanhedrin and the priests, You have power and

holiness with Pharisees and Sadducees, You have wisdom with scribes and rabbis, You have politics and value with Herodians, You have wealth with rich people, the population with merchants and landowners, You have the Diaspora with proselytes, You have even those who are separated, as they are now inclined to become united since they see in You the Expected One: the Essenes, the unreachable Essenes. Look, o Lord, at this first wonder, at this great sign of Your mission, of the truth concerning You. Without violence, without means, without ministers, without troops, without swords, You are gathering together all Your people, as a reservoir collects the waters of countless springs. Almost without any word, without whatever imposition You have gathered us, a people divided by misfortunes, by hatred, by political and religious ideas, and You have reconciled us. O Prince of Peace, rejoice at having redeemed and restored even before assuming sceptre and crown. Your kingdom, the expected Kingdom of Israel, has begun. Our wealth, our power, our swords are at Your feet. Speak! Order! The hour has come. »

Everybody approves of Chuz'a's speech. Jesus, His arms folded on His chest, is silent.

« Are You not speaking? Are You not replying, Lord? You are perhaps amazed at the situation... Perhaps You feel unprepared and You doubt above all whether Israel is prepared... But it is not so. Listen to our voices. I am speaking, and Manaen with me, with regard to the Court. It no longer deserves to exist. It is the rotten disgrace of Israel. It is shameful tyranny which oppresses the people and stoops servilely to flatter the usurper. Its hour has come. Rise, o Star of Jacob, and dispel the darkness of that chorus of crimes and shame. Here are present those who are called Herodians: they are the enemies of the profaners of the name of the Herods, which is sacred to them. My friends, it is for you to speak now. »

« Master. I am old and I remember the splendour of days gone by. To call the degenerate descendants of Herod after him, is like calling a stinking carrion after a hero, so much are they disgracing our people. It is time to repeat the gesture made several times by Israel when unworthy monarchs reigned over the suffering people. You alone are worthy of accomplishing such gesture. »

Jesus is silent.

« Master, do You think that we can possibly be doubtful? We have scrutinised the Scriptures. You are the promised one. You must reign » says a scribe.

« You must be King and Priest. A second Nehemiah, greater than the first one, You must come and purify. The altar is desecrated. May the zeal of the Most High urge You » says a priest.

« Many of us have fought against You. Those who are afraid of

Your wise manner of reigning. But the people is with You and the best of us are with the people. We are in need of a wise man. »

« We need a pure man. »

« A true king. »

« A saint. »

« A Redeemer. We are more and more enslaved to everything and to everybody. Defend us, Lord! »

« We are trodden down in the world because although we are great in number and wealth, we are like sheep without a shepherd. Rally Your people with the old cry: "Return to your tents, Israel!", and from every spot of the Diaspora Your subjects will spring up like a lever, overthrowing the tottering thrones of the mighty ones who are not loved by God. »

Jesus is still silent. He is the only one to be sitting calmly, as if the matter did not concern Him, in the middle of about forty hotheaded men, of whose arguments I can grasp only a tiny part as they are all speaking at the same time making a terrible din. He maintains His attitude and remains silent.

They all shout: « Say a word! Answer! »

Jesus stands up slowly, pushing His hands on the edge of the table. There is dead silence. While eighty eyes aflame with curiosity stare at Him, He opens His lips and the others do likewise, as if they wanted to inhale His reply. And the reply is short, but resolute: « No. »

« What? Why? Are You betraying us? You are betraying Your people! He is disowning His mission! He is repudiating God's order!... » What a hullabaloo! What an uproar! Many faces become crimson while eyes are inflamed and hands are agitated threateningly... Rather than loyal supporters they look like enemies. But such is life: when hearts are dominated by political ideas, also meek people become like wild animals against anyone opposing their ideas.

A strange silence follows the uproar. It looks as if, having exhausted their strength, they all feel worn out and overwhelmed. They look at one another inquisitively, desolately... some are upset...

Jesus looks around and says: « I knew that this was the reason why you wanted Me. And I knew that your attempt was useless. Chuza can confirm that I told him at Tarichea. I came to prove to You that I am not afraid of any deceit, because My hour has not come yet. Neither will I be afraid when the ambush against Me takes place, because I came just for that. And I came to convince you. Not everybody, but many of you are in good faith. But I must correct the error into which you have fallen in good faith. See? I do not reproach you. I do not reproach anybody, not even those, who being My faithful disciples, ought to act with justice and control

their passions with justice. I do not reproach you, My just Timoneus; but I tell you that at the bottom of your love that is anxious to honour Me there is still your ego that is excited and dreams of better days, when you may see those struck who struck you. I do not reproach you, Manaen, although you appear to have forgotten the wisdom and the completely spiritual examples you had from Me and from the Baptist before Me; but I say that in you as well there is a root of humanity which flourishes again after the ardour of My love. I do not reproach you, Eleazar, so just because of the old woman left to you, always just, but not now; neither do I reproach you, Chuza, although I ought to, because in you, more than in all those who want Me to be king in good faith, is your ego alive. Yes, you want Me to be king. There is no deceit in what you say. You have not come to catch Me out, to denounce Me to the Sanhedrin, to the King, to Rome. But rather than out of love - you think that everything is love but it is not so - rather than out of love you are acting to avenge yourself for the offences given to you by the court. I am your guest. I should not mention the truth concerning your feelings, but I am the Truth in everything, and I am speaking for your own good. And the same applies to you, Joachim of Bozrah, and to you, scribe John, and to you, to you, to you. » And He points at this one and that one, without resentment, but with sadness... and He continues: « I do not reproach you, because I know that you do not want this, spontaneously. It is Deceit, it is the Enemy who is working in you, and you are, without being aware of it, entirely dominated by him. Also of your love, o Timoneus, o Manaen, o Joachim, and you all who really love Me, also of your veneration, you who feel that I am the perfect Rabbi, also of all that, he, the Cursed One, makes use to harm people and to harm Me. But I say to you, and to those who do not share your feelings and, with aims which sink lower and lower, to the extent of becoming treason and crime, would like Me to agree to become king, I say: No. My Kingdom is not of this world. Come to Me, that I may establish My Kingdom in you, and nothing else. And now let Me go. »

« No, Lord. We are quite determined. We have already made our wealth available, we have prepared plans and decided to get out of this uncertainty, which is upsetting Israel, and of which other people are taking advantage to harm Israel. Snares are being laid for You, that is true. You have enemies in the very Temple. I, an Elder, do not deny it. But there is means to put an end to that: Your unction. And we are willing to do that. It is not the first time that in Israel a man is proclaimed king thus, to put an end to national calamities and contentions. There is here who can do that in the name of God. Let us do so » says one of the priests.

« No. It is not lawful. You do not have such authority. »

« The High Priest is the first to want that, contrary to appearances. He can no longer allow the present situation of Roman rule and royal scandal. »

« Do not lie, priest. Blasphemy is twice impure on your lips. Perhaps you do not know and you are deceived. But in the Temple they do not want that. »

« Do You consider our assertion to be a false one? »

« Yes, I do. If not of all of you, of many among you. Do not lie. I am the Light and I enlighten hearts... »

« You can believe us » shout the Herodians. « We do not like Herod Antipas or anybody else. »

« No. You love no one but yourselves. That is true. And you cannot love Me. I would be used as a lever to overthrow the throne and thus open for you the way to greater power and to let you oppress the people more sorely. A deceit for Me, for the people and for yourselves. Rome would crush everybody after your crushing. »

« Lord, among the colonies of the Diaspora there are many ready to rise... our wealth will support them » say the proselytes.

« And mine and the full support of Hauran and Trachonitis » shouts the man from Bozrah. « I know what I am saying. Our mountains can keep an army free from snares, and then launch it like a flock of eagles at Your service. »

« Perea as well. »

« And Gaulanitis. »

« The valley of Gaash is with You! »

« And with You are the shores of the Salt Sea with the nomads who believe that we are gods, if You agree to join us » shouts the Essene and he continues with a long-winded harangue typical of hot-headed people, but his words are lost in the uproar.

« The mountaineers of Judaea belong to the race of strong kings. »

« And those of High Galilee are heroes of the same temperament as Deborah. Also women, even children are heroes! »

« Do You think we are too few? We form numerous troops. All the population is with You. You are the king of the stock of David, the Messiah! This is the cry on the lips of wise and of ignorant people, because it is the cry, of their hearts. Your miracles... and Your words... The signs... » The confusion is such that I cannot follow what they say.

Jesus, like a Solid rock in a windstorm, does not move, He does not even react. He is impassive. And the confusion of prayers, impositions, reasons, goes on.

« You are disappointing us! Why do You want our ruin? Do You want to do it by Yourself? You cannot. Mattathias Maccabee did not refuse the help of the Hasidaeans and Judas freed Israel with their assistance... Accept!!! » Now and again they all shout this word together.

Jesus does not yield.

One of the Elders, a very old man, talks in a low voice to a priest and a scribe, both older than he is. They come forward and impose silence. The old scribe, who has called near him also Eleazar and the two scribes named John, begins to speak: « Lord, why will You not put on the crown of Israel? »

« Because it is not Mine. I am not the son of a Hebrew prince. »

« Lord, perhaps You do not know. One day I was summoned with these two because three Wise Men had come asking where was He Who was born king of the Jews. See? "Born king". We, the chief priests and scribes of the people, were summoned by Herod the Great, to give the reply. And Hillel the Just was with us. Our answer was: "at Bethlehem in Judah". We are told that You were born there and great signs occurred at Your birth. Among Your disciples are some witnesses of them. Can You deny that You were worshipped as King by the three Wise Men? »

« I do not deny it. »

« Can You deny that miracles precede You, accompany You and follow You as a sign from Heaven? »

« I do not deny it. »

« Can You deny that You are the promised Messiah? »

« I do not deny it. »

« Well then, in the name of the living God, why do You want to deceive the hopes of the people? »

« I have come to accomplish the hopes of God. »

« Which? »

« The redemption of the world, the formation of the Kingdom of God. My Kingdom is not of this world. Lay aside your wealth and your weapons. Open your eyes and spirits to read the Scriptures and Prophets and to receive My Truth and you will have the Kingdom of God within you. »

« No. The Scriptures mention a King liberator. »

« From satanic slavery, from sin, from error, from the flesh, from Gentilism, from idolatry. Oh! what did Satan do to you, o Hebrews, wise people, to make you fall into error concerning the prophetic truths? What is he doing to you, o Hebrews, My brothers, to make you so blind? What is he doing to you, My disciples, that you, as well, no longer understand? The greatest misfortune of a people and of a believer is to fall into false interpretation of signs. And such misfortune is taking place now. Personal interests, prejudice, craziness, false love of the fatherland, everything helps to create the abyss... the abyss of error in which a people will perish failing to recognise its King. ».

« You are failing to recognise Yourself. »

« You are failing to recognise yourselves and Me. I am not a human king. And you... Three quarters of you who are gathered

here, want to harm Me, not to help Me, and you are aware of that. You are acting out of hatred, not out of love. But I forgive you. I say to honest-hearted people: "Come to your senses, do not be the unconscious servants of evil". Let Me go. There is nothing further to be said. »

They all become silent, greatly surprised...

Eleazar says: « I am not hostile to You. I thought I was doing the right thing. And I am not the only one... Some good friends think as I do. »

« I know. But tell Me, and be sincere: what does Gamaliel say? »

« The rabbi?... He says... Yes, he says: "The Most High will give the sign if He is His Christ". »

« He is right. And what does Joseph the Elder say? »

« That You are the Son of God and will reign as God. »

« Joseph is a just man. And Lazarus of Bethany? »

« He suffers... He does not say much... But he says... that You will reign only when our spirits receive You. »

« Lazarus is wise. When your spirits receive Me. For the time being you, as well as those whom I considered to be well disposed spirits, are not accepting the King and the Kingdom, and that is what grieves Me. »

« In brief, are You going to refuse? » shout many. « You have said it. »

« You have made us compromise ourselves, You are harming us, You... » shout others: Herodians, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, priests...

Jesus leaves the table and goes towards the group darting glances at them. What flashing eyes! They unintentionally become silent and press against the wall... Jesus goes really face to face with them and in a low voice, but with incisiveness cutting like a slash, He says: « It is written: "A curse on him who strikes down his neighbour in secret and accepts a bribe to take an innocent life". I say to you: I forgive you. But your sin is known to the Son of man. If I did not forgive you... Many people in Israel were incinerated by Jehovah for much less. » But He is so terrible in saying so, that no one dare move, and Jesus moves aside the double heavy curtain and goes out into the hall without anyone daring to make a gesture.

Only when the curtain stops waving, that is, after a few minutes, they rouse.

« We must reach Him... We must hold Him... » say the most enraged ones.

« We must get Him to forgive us » say with a sigh the better ones, that is, Manaen, Timoneus, some proselytes, the man from Bozrah, in brief, the honest-hearted ones.

They rush out of the room. They look for Him, they ask the servants:

« The Master, where is He? »

The Master? No one has seen Him, not even those who were at the two doors in the hall. He is nowhere... With torches and lamps they search for Him in the shadows of the garden, in the room where He had rested. He is not there, neither can they find the mantle He had left on the bed, or the bag which had been left in the hall...

« He has escaped from us! He is a Satan! No. He is God. He does what He likes. He will betray us! No. He will know us for what we are. » The clamour of different opinions and reciprocal insults. The good ones shout: « You have led us astray. Traitors! We should have imagined all this! » The wicked ones, that is, the majority, reply threateningly, and having lost the scapegoat and thus being unable to assail it, the two groups fight against each other...

And where is Jesus? I see Him, of His own accord, when He is very far away, near the bridge across the inlet of the Jordan. He is walking fast, as if He were carried by the wind. His hair is waving round His pale face and His mantle is flapping like a sail as He walks with vigorous strides. Then, when He is sure that He is at a good distance, He plunges into the bog grass near the shore and takes the eastern bank and as soon as He finds the first rocks of the high cliff, He begins to climb up, heedless of the danger in climbing the cliffy coast in faint light. He climbs up as far as a rock jutting out over the lake and watched over by an age-old oak-tree. He sits down there, He rests an elbow on one of His knees and His chin in the palm of His hand, and staring with His eyes at the darkening vast expanse, just visible mainly because of His white garments and the pallor of His face, He keeps still...

But someone has followed Him: John. John is half-naked, that is, he is wearing the short tunic of fishermen, his hair is stiff and smooth as is typical of people who have been in water, he is panting and nevertheless wan. He approaches his Jesus slowly: he seems a shadow sliding on the rugged cliff. He stops not very far away. He watches Jesus... He does not move. He looks like a rock fixed to the rock. His dark tunic makes him even more inconspicuous: only his face and bare legs and arms can just be seen in the darkness of the night.

But when he hears, rather than sees Jesus weep, he can resist no longer and he approaches Him and then calls Him: « Master! »

Jesus hears the whisper and looks up: He gathers His clothes ready to flee.

But John shouts: « What have they done to You, Master, that You no longer recognise John? »

And Jesus recognises His Beloved. He stretches out His arms and John throws himself into them and they both weep over two different sorrows and one only love.

When their weeping subsides Jesus is the first to see things clearly. He feels and sees John half-naked, with a damp tunic, frozen and barefooted. « How come you are here in this state? Why are you not with the others? »

« Oh! Don't scold me, Master. I could not stay... I could not let You go... I took my clothes off, everything except this, I dived into the lake and I swam back to Tarichea, and from there I ran along the shore to the bridge and then I followed You. I remained in the ditch near the house, ready to come to help You, or at least to know whether they abducted or harmed You. And I heard many voices quarrelling, then I saw You run past me. You looked like an angel. To follow You without losing sight of You I fell into ditches and bogs and I am all covered in mud. I must have soiled Your mantle... I have been watching You since You came here... Were You weeping?... What have they done to You, my Lord? Did they insult You? Did they strike You? »

« No. They wanted to make Me king. A poor king, John! And many were in good faith, they were acting out of love, for a good purpose... Most of them... to be able to denounce Me and get rid of Me... »

« Who are they? »

« Do not ask. »

« And the others? »

« Do not ask their names either. You must not hate or criticise... I forgive... »

« Master... were there any disciples?... Tell me just that. »

« Yes, there were. »

« And apostles? »

« No, John. No apostle. »

« Really, Lord? »

« Really, John. »

« Ah! May the Lord be praised for that... But why are You still weeping, Lord? I am with You. I love You on behalf of everybody. And also Peter, Andrew and the others... When they saw me dive into the lake they said that I was mad and Peter was furious, and my brother said that I wanted to get drowned in the whirlpools. But later they understood and they shouted to me: "May God be with you. Go. Go... We love You. But no one loves You as much as I do, although I am only a poor boy. »

« Yes. No one like you. You are cold, John! Come here, under My mantle... »

« No, at Your feet, thus... My Master! Why does everybody not love You as much as the poor boy who is I? »

Jesus draws him upon His heart, sitting beside him. « Because they do not have your heart of a child... »

« They wanted to make You king? But have they not understood

yet that Your Kingdom is not of this Earth? »

« They have not understood! »

« Without mentioning any names, tell me all about it, Lord... »

« But will you not tell what I tell you? »

«If You do not want, Lord, I will not mention it... »

« You will make no mention of it, except when men want to present me as a common popular leader. That will happen one day. You will be there and you shall say: "He was not a king of the Earth because He did not want to be one. Because His Kingdom was not of this world. He was the Son of God, the Incarnate Word, and He could not accept what belongs to the earth. He wanted to come into the world and take a body to redeem bodies and souls and the world, but He was not subjected to the pomp of the world or to the incentives of sin, and there was nothing sensual and worldly in Him. The Light was not enveloped in Darkness, the Infinite did not accept finite things, but of creatures limited by flesh and sin, He made creatures more like Himself by elevating those who believed in Him to true royalty, and founding His Kingdom in the hearts of men, before founding it in Heaven, where it will be complete and eternal with all those who have been saved". You shall say that, John, to all those who consider Me entirely a human being and to those who maintain that I am entirely spiritual, to those who deny that I was subject to temptation... and to grief... You shall tell men that the Redeemer wept... and that they, men, were redeemed also by My tears... »

« Yes, Lord. How much You are suffering, Jesus!... »

« How much I redeem! But you console Me in My suffering. We shall depart from here at dawn. We shall find a boat. If I say to you that we shall be able to proceed without oars, will you believe Me? »

«I would believe You even if You said that we can go without a boat... »

They remain embraced, enveloped only in Jesus' mantle, and John, tired as he is, ends up by falling asleep in the warmth, like a child in its mother's arms.

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31st July 1946.

Jesus says:

« It is for upright-hearted people that this evangelical page, unknown and so explanatory, is given. John, when writing his Gospel after many years, alludes briefly to the fact. He reveals to men this detail, of which they were unaware, and he thus obeys the wish of his Master, Whose divine nature he illustrates more clearly than any other evangelist, and he reveals it with the virginal demureness which enveloped all his actions and words with discreet humble modesty.

John, to whom I confided the gravest events of My life, never made any pretentious displays of My favours. On the contrary, if you read him properly, you will see that he seems to suffer in revealing them and to say: "I must say this because it is true and it exalts my Lord, but please forgive me if I have to appear as being the only one aware of it" and he concisely mentions the detail known to him alone.

Read the first chapter of his Gospel, in which he tells of his meeting with Me: "John the Baptist was once again with two of his disciples... Hearing this, the two disciples... Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who had heard the words of John and had followed Jesus. The first to be met by Andrew... He makes no mention of himself, on the contrary he hides behind Andrew, whom he brings into prominence.

He was with Me at Cana, and he says: "Jesus was with His disciples... and His disciples believed in Him". It was the others who were in need to believe. He already believed. But he puts himself with the others, as if he needed to see miracles in order to believe.

Although he was a witness to the first expulsion of dealers from the Temple, to the discourse with Nicodemus, to the episode of the Samaritan woman, he never says: "I was there", but he maintains the policy he had adopted at Cana and says: "His disciples" also when he was alone or with another companion. And he continues thus, never mentioning his name, always putting his companions forward, as if he had not been the most faithful, the always faithful and perfectly faithful disciple.

Remember how delicately he refers to the episode of the Last Supper, as it shows that he was the favourite and was recognised as such also by the others who apply to him when they want to be informed of the secrets of the Master: "So the disciples began to look at one another wondering which He meant. One of the disciples, the one Jesus loved, was leaning on His breast. Simon Peter signed to him and asked: 'To whom is He referring?'. And he, leaning as he was on Jesus' breast, asked Him: 'Who is it, Lord?'".

Neither does he mention his name as being called into Gethsemane with Peter and James. He does not even say: "I followed the Lord". He says: "Simon Peter and another disciple followed Him, and as this disciple was known to the high Priest, he went with Jesus into the high Priest's palace". Without John I would not have had the comfort of seeing him and Peter during the first hours after I had been captured. But John does not boast about it.

One of the main personages during the hours of My Passion, the only apostle to be lovingly, pitifully, heroically present near the Christ, near His Mother, in front of the unchecked fury of Jerusalem, he leaves out his name also in the outstanding episode of the

Crucifixion and of the words of the Dying Christ: "Woman, this is Your son", "This is your mother". He is the "disciple", the nameless one, with no other name but the one which is his glory after being his vocation: "the disciple".

Even after the honour of becoming the "son" of the Mother of God he does not become elated and describing the Resurrection he says once again: "Peter and the other apostle (who had been informed by Mary of Lazarus of the empty tomb) came out and went... They ran... but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived first, and he bent down and saw... but did not go in... A gesture of gentle humility! He, the favourite, the faithful disciple, lets Peter, the chief, although a cowardly sinner, enter first. He does not judge him. He is his Pontiff. Nay, he supports him with his holiness, because also "chiefs" may need, they do actually need subjects to support them.

How many subjects are better than their "chiefs"! O holy subjects, never refuse to be pitiful towards your "chiefs", who bend under the weight which they cannot bear, or who are made blind or inebriated by the vanity of honours. O holy subjects, be the Simons of Cyrene for your Superiors, and you, too, My little John, because I am speaking to you on behalf of everybody, of all the "Johns" who run ahead and lead the "Peters", and then stop letting them go in, out of respect for their office, and who - oh! what a masterpiece of humility! - in order not to mortify the "Peters" who, are not capable of understanding and believing, go as far as to appear and make people believe that they also are as dull and incredulous as the "Peters".

Read the last episode on the lake of Tiberias. Once again it is John who, repeating the gesture made several times, recognises the Lord in the Man standing on the shore, and after sharing the food together, in Peter's question: "And what about him?", he is still "the disciple", nothing else.

He humbles himself in everything concerning him. But when there is something to be said which may make the Incarnate Word of God shine with a brighter and brighter divine light, then John lifts the veils and reveals a secret.

In the sixth chapter of his Gospel he says: "When He realised that they wanted to abduct Him to make Him king, He escaped back to the hill by Himself". And that hour in the life of the Christ is made known to believers so that they may know that the Christ was subjected to manifold and complex temptations and struggles in His several distinctive features of Man, Master, Messiah, Redeemer, King and that men and Satan - the eternal instigator of men - spared the Christ no deceit to diminish, demolish and destroy Him. Satanic and human wickedness assailed the Man, the Eternal Priest, the Master as well as the Lord, disguised with

pretexts most acceptable as good ones and they teased and tempted all the passions of the citizen, of the patriot, of the son, of the man, to find a weak spot upon which they might act.

Oh! My children, who ponder only on the initial temptation and the last one, and consider only the last part of My work of Redeemer to be "fatigue", and only My last hours to be grievous, and My last experience bitter and disappointing, take My place for an hour, and imagine that it is to you that they propose peace with compatriots, their help, the possibility of accomplishing the necessary purifications to impart sanctity to your beloved Country, the possibility of restoring and gathering together the scattered limbs of Israel, to put an end to sorrow, serfdom and sacrilege. And I do not mean: replace Me, thinking that you have been offered a crown. I only ask you to have My Heart of Man for one hour and tell Me: how would you feel after the alluring proposal? Triumphers faithful to the divine Idea, or rather defeated? And would you come out of it more holy and spiritual than ever, or would you destroy yourselves by assenting to temptation or yielding to threats? And with what heart would you come out of it, after verifying to what extent Satan urged his armies to wound Me in My mission and in My affections, leading astray, on the wrong way, My good disciples and compelling Me to openly fight My enemies, by now unmasked and made furious by the fact that their plots had been found out?

Do not stand with compasses and small measuring vessels, with microscope and human science, with pedantic reasoning of scribes trying to measure, compare and discuss whether John has spoken the truth and to what extent this or that is true. Do not superimpose John's sentence on the episode shown yesterday to ascertain whether the outlines fit properly. John did not make a mistake out of senile weakness, neither did little John make a mistake out of weakness in illness. The latter related what she saw. Great John, many years after the event told what he knew and subtly linking together places and events he revealed the secret, of which he alone was aware, of the attempt perpetrated maliciously at the incoronation of the Christ.

At Tarichea, after the first miracle of the loaves, the people began to think of making the Rabbi from Nazareth king of Israel. Manaen, the scribe and many more people were present and as they were still spiritually imperfect but honest-hearted, they picked up the idea and supported it to honour the Master, to put an end to the unfair fight against Him, owing to an error in interpreting the Scriptures, an error spread all over Israel blinded with dreams of human regality. They also hoped to sanctify the Fatherland contaminated by many things.

And many, as was natural, welcomed the idea in a simple manner.

And many pretended underhand to welcome it in order to harm Me. Hatred against Me joined the latter together, making them forget their hatred of castes which had always divided them, and they entered into an alliance to tempt Me in order to give a legal appearance to the crime already settled in their hearts. They were hoping in My weakness and in My pride. And My pride and weakness, and My consequent acceptance of the crown they offered Me, would justify the charges they wanted to bring against Me. And later... And later they would serve to give peace to their sly spirits feeling remorse, because they would say to themselves, hoping to be able to believe it: "It was Rome, not us, who punished the Nazarene agitator". The legal elimination of their Enemy, such was the Saviour to them...

Those are the reasons for the attempted proclamation. That is the explanation of their subsequent more bitter hatred. And that, finally, is the sublime lesson of the Christ. Do you understand it? It is a lesson of humility, of justice, of obedience, of strength, of prudence, of loyalty, of forgiveness, of patience, of vigilance, of endurance, towards God, towards one's mission, towards friends, towards day-dreamers, towards enemies, towards Satan, towards those men who are his instruments of temptation, towards things, towards ideas. Everything is to be contemplated, accepted, rejected, loved or not loved, looking at the holy aim of man: Heaven, the Will of God.

Little John. This has been one of Satan's hours for Me. As the Christ had them so, will the little Christs have them. One must suffer them and overcome them with humility and confidence. They are not without a purpose. And a good purpose. But be not afraid. During such hours God does not forsake, but He supports those who are faithful. Then Love descends to make the faithful ones kings. And even more, when the hour of the Earth is over, the faithful ones ascend to the Kingdom, in peace for ever, victorious for ever...

My peace, little John, crowned with thorns... My peace... »

#### **463. At Bethsaida and Capernaum. Departure on a New Journey.**

1st August 1946.

« Steer the boat towards Bethsaida » orders Jesus Who is with John in a little boat, a real nutshell, in the middle of the lake, which is becoming clear as day breaks.

John obeys without speaking. A rather strong breeze fills the little sail and drives the boat so fast that the latter heels. The eastern coast passes by rapidly and the curve of the northern side of the lake comes nearer and nearer.

« Land before the village. I want to go to Porphyrea without being seen by anybody. You can meet Me at the usual place and wait for Me in the boat. »

« Yes, Master. And if anybody should see me? »

« Converse with everybody without saying where I am. I will not be long. »

John finds a good landing spot on the shore as he remembers a sandy stream from which men have taken away sand for their needs, forming thus a small gulf a few meters wide where a boat can reach the shore, which is about half a meter above water level. He steers the boat there. The boat rubs lightly on the shingly shore but it can reach the dry beach where John holds it fast grasping a root sticking out of the sand. Jesus jumps on the beach. John presses an oar against it making an effort to push the boat back on the lake. He is successful. He raises his face, bright with his good smile and says: « Goodbye, Master. »

« Goodbye, John » and Jesus sets out among the trees while John steers his little boat along the coast.

Jesus turns towards the inland and passes through the vegetable gardens at the rear of Bethsaida. He is walking fast to enter the village before it rouses. He arrives at Peter's house without meeting anybody. He knocks at the kitchen door. After a moment Porphyrea's head looks out cautiously above the little wall of the terraced roof. When she sees Jesus she utters an « Oh! » of surprise. With one hand she collects her beautiful hair - her only beauty - falling loose on her shoulders and runs down the little staircase, barefooted as she is, in her hurried morning toilet.

« Lord, You! All alone? »

« Yes, Porphyrea. Where is Marjiam? »

« He is sleeping. He is still sleeping. The boy has been somewhat sad, rather languid... and I spare him a little. It is also his age... he is growing... While sleeping he does not think and does not weep. »

« Does he weep often? »

« Yes, Master. I think that it is his present weakness. And I try to strengthen him... and comfort him... But he says: "I am left alone. All those whom I love go away. When Jesus is no longer with us..." and he says so as if You were about to leave us... Of course... he has suffered much in his lifetime... But Simon and I love him... so much, Master, believe me. »

« I know. But his soul is sensitive... Porphyrea, I must speak to you just about this. That is why I came, without Simon, at this time of the day. Where can we go and speak so that Marjiam may not hear us and nobody will disturb us? »

« Lord... I have but my bedroom, or the room where the nets are stored... Marjiam is upstairs, I was up there as well, because to escape the heat, we went to sleep up there... »

« Let us go into the room where the nets are. It is farther away and Marjiam will not hear us even if he should wake. »

« Come, Lord » and Porphyrea leads Him into the large rustic room encumbered with all sorts of things: nets, oars, provisions, hay for the sheep, a loom...

Porphyrea hastens to clear a kind of table placed against the wall, dusting it with a flock of tow so that the Master may sit on it.

« It does not matter, woman. I am not tired. »

Porphyrea raises her mild eyes towards Jesus' depressed tired face and she seems to be saying: « Of course You are. » But, being accustomed to be silent, she does not speak.

« Listen, Porphyrea. You are a clever woman and a good disciple. I have been very fond of you since I met you and it was with great joy that I accepted you as a disciple and I entrusted the boy to you. I am aware that only few women are as wise and prudent as you. And I know that you can keep silent: a very rare virtue in women. For all those reasons I have come to speak to you secretly and confide to you something of which no one is aware, not even the apostles, not even Simon. I am confiding it to you because I must tell you how you are to behave in future with Marjiam... and with everybody... I am sure that you will meet your Master's request and that you will be as prudent as ever... »

Porphyrea, who has really become purple on hearing the praise of her Lord, can only nod assent, as she is too moved to be able to utter any word expressing her agreement; she is in fact so timid and accustomed to being pressed by overbearing people giving her orders without knowing whether she is disposed to agree...

« Porphyrea... I will never come back again to this part of the country. Never again, until everything is accomplished... You are aware of what I must accomplish, are you not?... »

At these words Porphyrea drops her hair, which she was still holding against the nape of her neck with her left hand and emits a sound which is more like a sob than a cry and which she stifles pressing her face with both hands while she falls on her knees moaning: « I know, Lord, my God... » And weeps so silently that her weeping is revealed only by the tears falling on the floor through her fingers compressing her face.

« Do not weep, Porphyrea. I came just for that. I am ready... and ready are those who, by serving Evil, will serve Good, in actual fact, because they will cause the hour of Redemption to begin. It could be fulfilled even now because both they and I are ready... and every further hour that passes or event which takes place will do nothing but... perfect their crime... and My Sacrifice. But also these hours, and they will be numerous, which are to pass before that hour, will serve... There is still something to be done and said, so that all the things which were to be accomplished to make Me

known, may be done... But I will not come back here again... I am looking at this place for the last time... and I have come into this honest house for the last time... Do not weep... I did not want to go away without saying goodbye to you and giving you the blessing of your Master. I will take Marjiam with Me. I will take him with Me now while going towards the Phoenician borders and also later when I go down to Judaea for the feast of the Tabernacles. There will be no problem in sending him back here before the depth of winter. Poor boy! He will enjoy My company for some time. And then... Porphyrea, it is not right that Marjiam should be present at My hour. So you shall not let him depart for Passover... »

« The precept, Lord... »

« I absolve him from the precept. I am the Master, Porphyrea, and I am God, as you know. As God, I can absolve, in advance, from an omission which is not even such, because I am commanding it out of justice. Obedience to My command is by itself absolution from the omission of the precept, because obedience to God which is also a sacrifice for Marjiam - is always superior to everything else. And I am a Master. He who cannot measure the capability and reactions of a disciple and does not consider the consequences which an effort greater than that which the disciple can stand may cause him, is not a good Master. Also when imposing virtuous deeds one must be prudent and not exact a maximum which the spiritual perfection or the general strength of the person involved cannot give. By exacting too great a virtue or spiritual control as compared with the degree of spiritual, moral and also physical strength attained by a person, one can cause a loss of the strength already stored up as well as the shattering of the human being in its three degrees: the spiritual, moral and physical ones. Marjiam, poor boy, has already suffered too much and is too familiar with the brutality of his fellow-creatures, to the extent of almost hating them. He would not be able to bear what My Passion will be: a sea of grievous love in which I will wash the sins of the world, and a sea of satanic hatred which will try to overwhelm all those whom I loved and to destroy all My work as a Master. I solemnly tell you that also the strongest ones will bend under the pressure of Satan, at least for a short time... But I do not want Marjiam to bend or to drink of that distressing water... He is innocent... and is dear to Me... I feel pity, much pity, for those who have already suffered more than their strength would permit... I have called back to the hereafter the soul of John of Endor... »

« Is John dead? Oh! Marjiam had written many rolls for him... Another sorrow for the child... »

« I will inform him of John's death... I was saying that I took him away from this world to preserve him as well from the impact of

that hour. John also had suffered too much from men. Why awake appeased feelings? God is good. He tries His children, but He is not a rash experimenter... Oh! if men were able to do as much! How fewer hearts would be ruined, or simply, how many fewer dangerous storms in hearts!... But reverting to Marjiam, he must not come to the next Passover. Say nothing for the time being. When the time comes, say to him: "The Master ordered me not to send you to Jerusalem. And He promises you a special reward if you will obey Him". Marjiam is good and will obey... Porphyrea, that is what I want from you. Your silence, your loyalty, your love. »

« Anything You want, my Lord. You honour Your poor servant too much... I do not deserve so much... Go in peace, Master and God. I will do what You want... » but sorrow overwhelms her and she collapses with her face on the floor - she had been kneeling all the time, relaxing on her heels, staring at Jesus' face - she collapses on the floor completely covered by the mantle of her raven hair sobbing in a loud voice: « How grievous, Master! Oh! How grievous! What is coming to an end! What is coming to an end for the world! Particularly for us who love You! And for Your servant! The Only One! The Only One Who really loved me! Who never despised me! Who has never been overbearing with me! Who treated me like the others, although I am so ignorant, poor and stupid! Oh! Marjiam and I - because Marjiam was the first to tell me - had set our minds at rest... Everybody said that it could not be true... Everybody: Simon, Nathanael, Philip... and their wives... and they know, they are learned... and Simon yes! my Simon, if You chose him, he must be worth something! and they all said that it is not possible But now You are saying it is... and we cannot doubt Your word » She is really desolate and moving in her grief.

Jesus stoops to lay a hand on her head: « Do not weep thus... Marjiam will hear you... I know... No one believes it, no one wants to believe it... and their very learning and love are the reason of their not believing... But it is so... Porphyrea, I am going away. Before leaving you I bless you now and for ever. Always remember that I loved you and that I am pleased with your love for Me. I will not say: persevere in it. I know that you will, because the remembrance of your Master will always be your solace and you will take shelter in it. Your solace and peace, also at the hour of death. Consider then that your Master died to open Paradise to you and that He is waiting for you there... Now, stand up. I will go and wake Marjiam and speak to him. Remove the traces of your tears and join us. John is waiting for Me to take Me to Capernaum. If you have something to send to Simon, prepare it. Remember that he will need his heavy clothes... »

Porphyrea, a true submissive and obedient person, kisses Jesus' feet, and is on the point of standing up when a wave of love makes her lose her head and, blushing deeply, takes Jesus' hands and kisses them once, twice, ten times. She then stands up and lets Him go...

Jesus goes out and up to the terrace, He passes under a kind of canopy formed by sails stretched on ropes, under which are two little beds. Marjiam is still sleeping with his face downwards, pressed against the little pillow. Only one cheek-bone of his little dark face and a long lean arm can be seen outside the sheet which covers him.

Jesus sits on the floor near the little bed and gently caresses the ruffled locks which fall on the pale cheek of the sleeping boy, who stirs but does not wake up as yet. Jesus repeats His gesture and bends to kiss on the forehead the face which is now uncovered.

Marjiam opens his eyes and sees Jesus beside him, bending over him. He can hardly believe it, perhaps he thinks that he is dreaming, but Jesus calls him and the youth then sits up and throws himself into Jesus' arms and takes refuge there... « You are here, Master? »

« I have come to take you away with Me for some months. Are you glad? »

« Oh! And Simon? »

« He is at Capernaum. I came with John... »

« Has he come back as well? He will be happy! I will give him what I wrote. »

« I am not speaking of John of Endor, but of John of Zebedee. Are you not glad? »

« Yes. I am fond of him. But I am fond also of the other one... almost more... »

« Why, Marjiam? John of Zebedee is so good. »

« Yes, but the other one is so unhappy and I was unhappy, too, and I still am a little... People who suffer understand and love one another... »

« Would you be happy to learn that he no longer suffers and that he is very happy? »

« Of course I would. But he cannot be happy unless he is with You. Or... Is he perhaps dead, Lord? »

« He is in peace and we must be pleased with that, without being selfish, because he died as a just man and because his spirit is no longer separated from ours. We have another friend praying for us. »

Two large tears stream down Marjiam's very thin pale face and he whispers: « It is true. »

Jesus says nothing further, neither does He make any remark concerning the physical and moral state of Marjiam, who has clearly

grown weaker. On the contrary He says: « Let us go. I have already spoken to Porphyrea. She has certainly prepared your clothes. Tidy yourself up, because John is waiting for us. We will give Simon a surprise. Is that not his boat coming back to Capernaum? Perhaps he has been fishing on his way back... »

« Yes, it is that one. Where are we going, Lord? »

« To the north and then to Judaea. »

« For a long time? »

« Yes, for a long time. »

Marjiam, excited by the idea of being with Jesus, gets up quickly and runs down to wash himself in the lake, and he goes back with his hair still wet, shouting: « I have seen John. He waved to me. He is at the mouth of the stream, among the reeds... »

« Let us go. »

They go downstairs. Porphyrea is closing two bags and she says: « I have decided to send the heavy garments later, by my brother who will be coming to Gethsemane for the feast of the Tabernacles. Both you and your father will be able to walk more quickly » and while she finishes tying the straps, she mentions what she has prepared: milk, bread, fruit...

« We will take everything and eat in the boat. I want to go before the shore becomes crowded. Goodbye, Porphyrea. May God bless you always and may the peace of the just be always with you. Come, Marjiam. »...

They cover the short stretch of the road quickly and while Marjiam goes to John, Jesus goes to the boat, where He is soon joined by the two who run through the reed-thicket and jump into the boat and at once press an oar against the shore to push the boat out into deep water.

The short voyage is soon over and they stop at the little beach of Capernaum awaiting Peter's boat, which is just arriving. The early hour saves them from being assailed by the crowds and they can eat their bread and fruit in peace, lying on the sand in the shade of the boat.

Simon does not know to whom the little boat belongs and thus only when he sets foot on the shore and sees Jesus stand up from behind it, he notices Him. « Master! and you, Marjiam! How long have you been here? »

« Just now. I called at Bethsaida. Be quick. We must leave at once... »

Peter looks at Him but does not say anything. With his companions he unloads the catch, the bags of garments, including John's, who at last can get dressed. And Simon asks something of his companion, who makes a gesture meaning: « Wait... »

They go to the house and enter. The remaining apostles gather there.

« Make haste. We are going away at once. Take everything because we are not coming back here » orders Jesus.

The apostles cast sidelong glances at one another and one group gesticulates to the other. But they obey. Actually I think that they act quickly to be able to speak among themselves in the other rooms...

Jesus remains in the kitchen with Marjiam and He takes leave of the landlords. But He does not say to them: « I will not come back again » neither does He say so to the people of Capernaum who meet Him in the streets and greet Him. He greets them in a simple manner, as He always does when departing. He stops only at Jairus' house. But Jairus is not back yet...

At the fountain He meets the little old woman who lives near the house of little Alphaeus' mother and He says to her: « A widow will be coming here shortly. She will look for you. She is going to settle here. Be friendly to her and be very good to the boy and to his brothers... Do it in a holy way, in My name... »

He proceeds saying: « I would have liked to say goodbye to all the children... »

« You can do so, Master. Why did You not take a rest? You are very tired. You look pale and Your eyes are tired. It is not good for You... It is still warm and You certainly did not sleep either at Tiberias or at Chuza's... »

« I cannot, Simon. I have to go to certain places and time is short... »

They are near the shore. Jesus calls Peter's workmen and says goodbye to them instructing them to take the little boat to the village before Hippo and give it to Saul of Zacharias.

He takes the shady road along the river. He continues on it as far as a cross-road and proceeds along the latter.

« Where are we going, Lord? » asks Simon who had spoken so far to his companions in a low voice.

« To Judas and Anne and then to Korazim. I want to say goodbye to My good friends... »

The apostles cast more sidelong glances at one another and talk in low voices.

Finally James of Alphaeus moves forward and joins Jesus Who is ahead of them all with Marjiam. « Brother, are we not coming back any more to these parts, since You say that You wish to say goodbye to Your friends? We wish to know. »

« Of course, you will come back. But after many months. »

« And what about You? »

Jesus makes an evasive gesture... Marjiam withdraws discreetly and joins the others, that is, everybody, with the exception of James of Alphaeus, who is with Jesus, and of the Iscariot who is alone, behind them all, somewhat gloomy, as if he were listless.

« Brother, what has happened to You? » asks James laying one hand on Jesus' shoulder.

« Why are you asking Me? »

« Because... I do not know. We are all wondering. You seem to be changed... You came with John only... Simon said that You had been Chuza's guest... You are not resting... You greet only few people... It would appear that You do not want to come back here... And Your face... Do we no longer deserve to be informed? Not even I... You were very fond of me... You told me things of which I only am aware... »

« I still love you. But I have nothing to say. I lost one day more than I expected. I must make up for it. »

« Was it necessary to go to the north? »

« Yes, brother, it was. »

« Then... Oh! You have suffered. I can see it... »

Jesus embraces him, passing His arm round His cousin's shoulder: « John of Endor is dead. Did you know? »

« Simon told me when I was preparing my clothes. What else?... »

« I parted from My Mother. »

« What else? » James, who is smaller than Jesus, looks up at Him, insistingly, inquiringly.

« And I am happy to be with you, with all of you, with Marjiam. I am going to keep him with Me for a few months. He needs it. He is sad and is suffering. Have you seen him? »

« Yes. But that has nothing to do with the matter... You do not want to tell me. It does not matter. I love You even if You do not treat me as a friend. »

« James, you are more than a friend to Me. But My heart is in, need of rest... »

« And therefore it is also in need of not speaking of what is grieving You. I see. Is it Judas who is grieving You? »

« Judas? Your brother? »

« No. The other one. »

« Why do you ask Me that question? »

« I do not know. While You were away, a messenger, we do not know whose, looked for Judas several times. He rejected him every time, but... »

« As far as you all are concerned, every action of Judas is always a crime. Why do you all lack charity? ... »

« Because he is so grim, upset. He avoids his companions. He is unwilling... »

« Leave him alone. He has been with us for over two years and has always been like this... Consider how happy the two old people will be. And do you know why I am going there? I want to recommend the little carpenter of Korazim to them... »

They move away speaking. Behind them, in a group, come the

apostles who have waited for Judas, in order not to leave him behind all alone, although he is so obviously unwilling as not to encourage anybody to share his company.

#### **464. In the House of Judas and Anne near Lake Merom.**

3rd August 1946.

When they arrive they are warm although they have walked among thick orchards bent under the weight of ripe fruit. From the numerous beautiful vineyards comes the typical aroma of vines when bunches are already ripe and leaves are beginning to wither in autumn.

The first people to be seen are two peasants who are coming back from the orchards laden with baskets of beautiful apples and they inform a servant who passes the news round. In the meantime the two peasants greet Jesus and tell Him that « many disciples who have come from the mountains of Gaulanitis and from Ituraea have stopped in the house on their way to Jerusalem » and that « their masters have decided to go with them to the Tabernacles through Decapolis and Perea. » But they have no time to finish their information as their lords rush out of the house to meet the Master, preceded and followed by many disciples.

Among the disciples are almost all those who were shepherds at Bethlehem and there are others as well, such as the first leper to be cured and his friend, the cripple, who was also restored to health, that is, those from beyond the Jordan, with the exception of Timoneus. I do not see Isaac, or Stephen or Hermas, or Hermasteus and Joseph from Emmaus, or Abel from Bethlehem, or Nicolaus from Antioch or John from Ephesus. They are joined by servants and peasants, among whom is the boy who was miraculously cured of paralysis during the previous vintage and his mother.

« Peace to you all and to this house » says Jesus raising His hand to bless them.

« Come in, Master, and rest under our roof. The season is still warm to walk during these hours. But we will give You refreshment and the rooms are cool at night. »

« I shall only stay here a few hours. I shall leave in the evening. It will shortly be the feast of the Tabernacles and I have still to call at many places. »

The landlords are disappointed but they do not insist. They only say: « We were hoping that You would wait for us. We are picking the grapes tomorrow and we have already begun to pick the fruit. After the wine-pressing we should have all left together, with these disciples of Yours. We are old and the roads are very unsafe since gangs of highwaymen have come, we do not know whence, to infest this bank of the Jordan. They hide in the mountains of Rabbah

Ammon and Gilead and along the Jabbok valley and they assault caravans. The Roman legionaries chase them... But... Is it pleasant to meet them? We prefer to be with these... They are Your disciples and God will certainly protect them. »

Jesus smiles wittily but does not say anything on the matter. He goes into the house and welcomes the refreshments which the hosts offer in the way of ablutions and drinks and He then listens to the disciples who inform Him of the work they have done in the mountains: « But with little fruit, Master. Little also at Caesarea Philippi, where, however, we were not molested. But we will go back with You. And then! »

Jesus looks at them, He does not disillusion them and replies: « If you persevere, you will certainly convert them. God always helps His servants. »

Jesus then leaves them and joins the landlady who is laying the tables herself and He invites her to go out with him, as He has to speak to her. The good old lady does not make Him repeat His request twice and to avoid going outside, where it is so warm, she leads Jesus into a long cool room in the northern side of the house.

« Anne, you always say that you would like to serve Me in every possible way... »

« Yes, my Lord. Both Judas and I. But You never apply to us. This is a great feast for us because Your disciples are somehow part of You, and having them in the house, we seem to be serving You. »

« It is in fact so, because what is done to a disciple is done to the Master and even one glass of water or a piece of bread given to assist those who work for Me will be rewarded by God Himself. The disciples take care of the spirits of believers and believers must love and assist disciples considering that they have given up everything and are ready to give up their lives in order to show believers the Way, Life and Truth which the Master taught them with instructions to give it to believers. »

« Oh! Lord, let me call my Judas. Your word is so holy!... »

« Call your Judas » agrees Jesus smiling. And the woman goes out and comes back again with her husband to whom she is repeating the Master's words.

« Believe me, we would do it willingly. But we are out of the way, and that is certainly the reason why Your disciples seldom come here » says the old man and I feel that he regrets being left aside.

« I will tell them to come here frequently. In the meantime I ask you to grant me a grace... »

« You? It is a grace for us to serve You! Give us Your order, Lord. We are old and we cannot follow You as many people do. But we are anxious to serve You. What is it that You want? If these

vineyards and this house, which are so dear to us because they belonged to my father and our children were born here, are to Your liking and if You want them, we will give them to You. We only ask You to promise us divine mercy on our spirits. »

« You can be sure that it will be with you. But I am not asking for such a sacrifice. Listen. I am going to Judaea and winter is drawing near. At Korazim there is a widow with many children and the oldest is little more than a boy. His father was a carpenter... »

« Ah! The carpenter! Oh! everybody has spoken about Your action... But Korazim was not converted, although Your deed more than Your word should have achieved that. Their mother worked here at harvest time... But she is not healthy... We know, we know. »

« Well, I am not asking you to let them lead an idle life, but to assist them. You will always need someone to repair this thing or that one. Think of Joseph and let his fair reward be completed by your pity and love. »

« Oh! Master! Is that all? I would say, what do you say, woman? I think we should take the two little girls who gleaned here. The house is large and you are old, and Mary and Naomi are also old... For little things... »

« That is what we will do, Judas. In remembrance of our little girl... Our only daughter, Lord... She flourished for three years... and then... So many years have gone by... but my heart still aches... If You had been here with us, she would not have died... I would not have lost her... A daughter is always a smile... » The old woman is moved and the old man sighs.

« She is not lost... She is waiting for you... She is an innocent soul and you may be sure that you will find her. It is necessary to be more afraid for those children who are adult but do not live completely in the ways of the Lord... »

« That is true! It is true!... You are aware, Lord... You know everything. In this house, which is so peaceful, there is such sorrow... Master, can a sacrifice obtain a grace at times? »

« Not at times. Always. »

« Ah! it is pleasant to hear You say so. Go in peace, Master. The widow of Korazim will be helped and You will find them to be happy at springtime. Because if You recommend them for the winter months, it means that You are not coming back until spring. »

« I am not coming back... I am going down to Judaea and I am not coming back. »

« And is also the little disciple coming to Judaea? »

« Yes, Marjiam is coming to Judaea... »

« A long journey, Master. He looks very sickly... »

« He lost his last relative. You know his story... and this new

grief has debilitated him. »

« It is also his age and his growing... But we know... we are aware of the good he does. A little master, a real little master... His relative was in the plain of Esdraelon, was he not? And did he die there? And did he suffer there? »

« Yes, woman. Why are you asking? »

« Because... Master, I should not be telling You, Who are a Master. But I am a woman and a mother and I have wept... I say: why do You want to take him towards those places? Leave him with me as far as Jerusalem... I will feel as if I were going down to the holy City with my young sons once again... and he will not get tired and will not suffer any longer. The other disciples are coming as well... »

Jesus is pensive. He objects: « Marjiam is happy to be with Me and I with him. »

« Yes, but if You tell him, he will be happy to obey. You will be separated only for a few days. What is a little more than two weeks for one who is so young? He has time to enjoy Your company... »

Jesus looks at her and at the old man, who are so unaware that the time left to enjoy the Saviour is not very long. But He does not say anything. He stretches out His arms as if to say: « Let it be done as you wish » and He only says: « Then, call Marjiam and Simon. »

The old man goes out and comes back with the two. Simon looks around inquiringly. He seems to be suspicious of who knows what. But when he hears the reason he calms down and says: « May God bless you! The boy is run down and, to tell you the truth, I thought it was imprudent to make him walk so far... »

« But I was willing to come! I was with the Master, and if the Master was taking me with Him it means that I was fit to go... He does everything well... » and Marjiam's voice is almost choked by tears.

« That is true, Marjiam. But one must be compliant. These are two good friends: to Me and to all My friends. I agree to their wish and you... »

« As You wish, my Master. But at Jerusalem... »

« At Jerusalem you will come with Me » promises Jesus. And Marjiam, a good boy, does not reply.

They leave the room and Jesus joins the disciples who are so happy because of the unexpected meeting.

The old landlord loiters round the group. Jesus notices it and interrogates him.

« Well, the fact is that I would like to hear You speak. You are tired, I can see that. But before the meal, before we withdraw to rest, because You will be resting at least until evening, will You not say anything? »

« I will speak before I leave. So also the servants of the house and

of the fields will be able to hear Me. Your wife is calling us now, see?... »

And Jesus stands up and goes into the room where the tables have been laid for the blessed guests.

#### **465. Parable on the Distribution of Waters.**

5th August 1946.

The news that the Master is there and that He is going to speak before evening has certainly spread and the surroundings of the house are crowded with people speaking in low voices, because they are aware that the Master is resting and they do not want to wake Him. They are waiting patiently under the trees, which protect them from the sun but not from the heat which is still strong. There are no sick people, at least I think so, but, as usual, there are children and Anne, to keep them quiet, has some fruit given to them.

But Jesus does not sleep for long and the sun is still high when He appears pushing aside the curtain and smiling at the crowds. He is alone. The apostles are probably still sleeping. Jesus goes towards the people and stops near the lower edge of a well which is certainly used to water the trees of the orchard, because little irrigation canals depart radially from the well spreading out among the trees. He sits on the lower edge and begins to speak at once.

« Listen to this parable.

A wealthy man had many subordinates in numerous places of his estate, but not every place was rich in water and fertile soil. Several places suffered from lack of water, and people suffered even more because if the ground was cultivated with trees which could withstand the drought, people suffered very much from the shortage of water. The rich owner instead had, close to the house in which he lived, a lake rich in water which gushed from underground springs.

One day he decided to make a tour of his estate and he saw that some places, those closest to the lake, were rich in water, whereas others, which were remote, had none, except the small quantity which God sent as rain. And he also noticed that those who had plenty water were not kind to their brothers who were deprived of it, and grudged them even a pail of water with the excuse that they were afraid of being left without. The lord meditated on the situation. And he decided thus: "I will divert the waters of my lake towards those who are closer to it and I will order them not to refuse water any longer to my distant servants who are suffering because of the parched land".

And he undertook the work at once and had canals dug to take the good water of the lake to the nearest parts of his property,

where he dug large cisterns so that abundant water should gather there increasing the supplies already existing, and from each part he had smaller canals built to feed other more remote cisterns. He then summoned the people living in those places and said to them: "Remember that I have not done all this work to give you superfluous quantities of water, but I did it to assist, with your help, those who lack also what is necessary. Be, therefore, as Merciful as I have been" and he dismissed them.

Some time passed and the rich owner wished to visit all his possessions once again. He saw that the nearest ones had become more beautiful and abounded not only in useful plants, but also in ornamental ones, in vats, swimming-pools, fountains placed everywhere around the houses.

"You have turned these houses into abodes of rich people" remarked the lord. "I do not have so much superfluous beauty myself ", and he asked them: "Do the others come? Have you given them plenty water? Are the smaller canals fed?"

"Yes. They have been given as much as they asked. And they are over particular, they are never pleased, they are neither prudent nor moderate, they come and ask at any time, as if we were their servants and we have to defend ourselves to protect what belongs to us. They were no longer satisfied with the small canals and cisterns. They come as far as the large ones".

"Is that why you have enclosed these places and placed these wild dogs in each of them?"

"Yes, that is the reason, sir. They used to come in without any consideration and pretended to take everything away and they spoiled..."

"But have you really given water to them? Do you realise that I did all this for them and I used you as an intermediate link between the lake and their parched land? I do not understand... I had as much water diverted from the lake as to satisfy everybody, without any waste".

"And yet you must believe us: we never denied them water".

The lord set out towards his remote possessions. The tall trees fit for arid ground were green and leafy. "They have spoken the truth" said the lord seeing them rustling in the distance. But when he approached them and walked under them he saw the parched soil, the almost withered grass on which emaciated sheep grazed with difficulty, the sandy vegetable gardens near houses, and then the first farmers: sickly, with feverish eyes, downhearted... They looked at him and lowered their heads withdrawing as if they were frightened.

He was surprised at their behaviour and he called them. They approached him trembling. "What are you afraid of? Am I no longer your good master who has taken care of you and with provident

work has relieved you of the shortage of water? Why are your faces so sickly looking? Why is this land so arid? And the sheep so lean? And why do you seem to be frightened of me? Speak without fear. Tell your master what is afflicting you".

One man spoke on behalf of everybody. "Lord, we have been badly disappointed and deeply grieved. You promised to help us and we have lost also what we had previously and we have given up every hope in you".

"How? Why? Did I not let water come abundantly to the nearest people with instructions that the abundance was for you?".

"Is that what you said? Really?".

"Most certainly. The level of the ground prevented me from bringing the water here directly. But with good will you could have gone to the little canals of the cisterns with goatskins and donkeys and taken as much as you wanted. Did you not have enough donkeys and goatskins? And was I not there to give you some?".

"There you are! I told you! I said: 'It is not possible that the lord has given instructions to deny us water'. I wish we had gone for it!".

"We were afraid. They told us that the water was a reward for them and that we were to be punished". And they informed the good master that the tenant farmers of the privileged possessions has told them that the landlord, in order to punish the servants of the arid fields because they were not producing more, had given instructions to measure not only the water of the cisterns but also that of the old wells, so that while previously they had two hundred baths of water a day for themselves and the land, and they had to carry it with much fatigue for a long distance, now they did not even have fifty and to have enough for men and animals they had to go to the brooks at the borders of the fortunate places, where water overflowed from gardens and baths and take that muddy water, and they were dying. They were dying of diseases and thirst, and vegetables and sheep were also perishing...

"Oh! that is too much! And I must stop it. Take your goods and chattels and your animals and follow me. You will fatigue a little, worn out as you are, but then you will have peace. I shall proceed slowly to allow you to follow me, in spite of your weakness. I am a good master, a good father to you and I see to my children". And he sets out slowly, followed by the sad crowd of servants and animals who, however, were already rejoicing in the solace of their good master's love.

They arrived at the possessions very rich in water. When they were at the borders, the master took some of the strongest men and said to them: "Go and ask for some water in my name".

"And if they set the dogs on us?".

"I shall be behind you. Be not afraid. Go and say that I sent you

and tell them not to close their hearts to justice, because the water belongs to God and all men are brothers. Tell them to open the canals at once".

They went and the landlord followed them. They stopped at a gate and the master hid himself behind the enclosure wall. They called and the tenant farmers went to the gate.

"What do you want?".

"Have mercy on us. We are dying. The landlord has sent us with instructions to take the water which he brought here for us. He says that God gave the water to him, he gave it to you for us because we are brothers and that you are to open the canals at once".

"Ha! Ha!" laughed the cruel people. "These ragged people are our brothers? You are dying? So much the better. We will take over your places, and we will take water there. We will certainly take it there in that case! And we will make the soil fertile. Water for you? You are stupid! The water is ours".

"Have mercy. We are dying. Open the canals. It's the master's order".

The wicked tenants consulted with one another, and then they said: "Wait a moment" and they went away. They then came back and opened the gate. But they had dogs with them and heavy clubs... The poor people were afraid. "Come in, come in... Are you not coming in now that we have opened the gate? And then you will say that we were not generous... One of the men went in imprudently and a shower of blows rained on him while the unleashed dogs rushed upon the others.

The landlord appeared from behind the wall. "What are you doing, you cruel people? Now I know you and your animals and I will strike you" and he shot arrows at the dogs and he went in. He was severe and angry. "Is that how you carry out my orders? Is that why I gave you this wealth? Call all your people. I want to speak to you. And you" he said to the parched servants "come in with your women and children, with your sheep and donkeys, with your doves and all your animals, and drink and refresh yourselves, and pick this juicy fruit and you, little innocent children, play among the flowers. Enjoy yourselves. There is justice in the heart of your good master and there will be justice for everybody".

And while the thirsty people ran to the cisterns, dived into the swimming-pools, and the cattle went to the vats and they were all full of joy, the others came from all directions looking frightened.

The landlord climbed on to the edge of a cistern and said: "I had all this work done and I made you trustees of my order and of this treasure, because I had chosen you as my ministers. But you failed in the test. You appeared to be good. You should have been good, because welfare makes people good, grateful to their benefactor

and I had always assisted you by giving you the tenancy of this well-watered land. Such wealth and choice has made you hardhearted, more arid than the land which you have made completely arid, and more sick than these people parched with thirst. Because water can cure them, whereas you, with your selfishness, have parched your spirits which are not likely to recover, and the water of charity will flow back into you with great difficulty. I will now punish you. Go into their lands and suffer what they suffered".

"Mercy, lord! Have mercy on us! Do you want us to perish? Are you less compassionate towards us men than we are towards animals?".

"And who are these? Are they not men, your brothers? What mercy did you have on them? They were asking for water and you gave them blows with clubs and treated them sarcastically. They were asking for what was mine and which I had given, and you refused them saying that it was 'yours'. Whose water is it? Even I will not say that the water of the lake is mine although the lake is mine. Water belongs to God. Which of you has created one single drop of dew? Go!... And to you, to you who have suffered, I say: be kind. Do to them what you would have liked done to you. Open the canals which they closed and let the water flow towards them, as soon as possible. I make you my dispensers to these guilty brothers to whom I leave means and time to redeem themselves. And the Most High entrusts you with the wealth of His water. More than I do, so that you may be providential for those who have none. If you can do this with love and justice, being satisfied with what is necessary, giving what is superfluous to the poor, being honest, not calling yours what is a gift given to you, a deposit more than a gift, great will be your peace and God's love and Mine will always be with you".

That is the end of the parable and everybody can understand it. I only say to you that rich people are only the depositaries of the wealth granted to them by God with instructions to distribute it to those who suffer. Consider the honour which God grants you by calling you to be partners in the work of Providence in favour of poor and sick people, of widows and orphans. God could rain money, garments, food on poor people. But in that case He would deprive rich people of great merits: those of charity towards their brothers. Not all rich people can be learned, but they can all be good. Not all rich people can take care of sick people, bury the dead, visit invalids and prisoners. But all rich people, and even those who are not poor, can give a piece of bread, a drop of water, cast-off garments, and they can welcome to their fireplaces those who are shivering, and can give hospitality to those who are homeless, and are exposed to rain and dog-days. He is poor who lacks what is necessary to live. The others are not poor, they have

scanty means, but they are still rich as compared with those who die of starvation, privations and cold.

I am going away. I can no longer assist the poor people of this area. And My Heart suffers thinking that they are losing a friend... Well I Who am speaking to you, and you know Who I am, I ask you to be the providence of the poor who are being left without their merciful Friend. Give them alms and love them in My name and in memory of Me... Be My continuators. Relieve My depressed heart with this promise: that you will always see Me in the poor and that you will receive them as the most true representatives of Christ Who is poor, Who wanted to be poor out of love for the most unhappy people on the Earth, and to expiate, through His own indigence and ardent love, the unfair prodigality and selfishness of men.

Remember! Charity and mercy are rewarded for ever. Remember! Charity and mercy are absolution from sins. God remits very much to those who love. And love for the poor who cannot reciprocate is the most deserving in the eyes of God. Remember these words of Mine until the end of your lives and you will be saved and blissful in the Kingdom of God.

May My blessing descend upon those who accept the word of the Lord and practise it. »

The apostles and Marjiam have come out of the house quietly while He was speaking and are in a compact group behind the crowds. But they come forward when Jesus ends His speech, and while doing so they collect the alms offered by many people. And they take the money to Jesus.

A shabby sickly looking man follows them. He is walking with his head so bent that I cannot see his face. He approaches Jesus and striking his chest he moans: « I have sinned, Lord, and You punished me. I deserved it. But at least forgive me before You depart. Have mercy on Jacob, a sinner! » He raises his face and I recognise, rather because he mentions his name than by his worn-out appearance, the fanner who was helped first and later punished through his harshness towards the two little orphans.

« My forgiveness! Some time ago you wanted to be cured by this apostle. And you were worried because your corn was spoiled. And these apostles sowed for you (1). Are you perhaps without bread? »

« I have enough. »

« And is that perhaps not forgiveness? » Jesus is very severe.

« No. I would rather die of starvation but feeling that my mind is at rest. I tried to make amends as best I can... I have prayed and wept... But You only can forgive and give peace to my spirit. Lord, I ask but to be forgiven... »

Jesus stares at him... He makes him raise his face, which he had

(1) For full details on this incident see Vol. 3, Chapter 297.

bowed and pierces him with His bright eyes, bending slightly over him... He then says: « Go. You will or will not be forgiven according to how you live in the time left to you. »

« Oh! my Lord! Not thus! You have forgiven graver sins... »

« They were not persons who had been assisted like you and they had not sinned against innocent children. The poor are always sacred, but orphans and widows are the most sacred of all. Do you not know the Law?... »

The man is weeping. He wanted to be forgiven at once.

Jesus resists: « You have fallen twice and you have not been in a hurry to rise... Remember. What you, a man, allowed yourself, God can allow Himself. God is still very good if He tells you that He is not denying you forgiveness in an absolute manner, but He conditions it to the way you will live until your death. Go. »

« At least bless me... so that I may have more strength to be just. »

« I have already given My blessing. »

« No, not like that. Bless me in particular. See my heart... »

Jesus lays His hand on the man's head and says: « I have warned you. But may this caress convince you that, although I am severe, I do not hate you. My love is severe to save you, to treat you as an unhappy friend, not because you are poor, but because you have been bad. Remember that I loved you, that I had mercy on your spirit and may this remembrance make you anxious to have Me no longer as a severe friend. »

« When, Lord? Where shall I find You if You say that You are going away? »

« In My Kingdom. »

« Which one? Where are You establishing it? I will come there... »

« My Kingdom will be in your heart if you make it good and then it will be in Heaven. Goodbye. I must leave because it is getting dark and I must bless those whom I am leaving » and Jesus dismisses him turning to His disciples and to the landlord and landlady, and He blesses them one by one.

He then resumes His journey after giving the money to Judas... He disappears in the green country as He walks south-westwards towards Capernaum...

« You are walking too much, Master! » exclaims Peter. « We are tired. We have covered so many stadia... »

« Be good, Simon. We shall soon be in sight of Korazim. You will enter the town calling at the few houses which are friendly to us and in particular at the widow's. And tell little Joseph that I want to greet him at dawn. You will bring him to Me on the road which goes up to Giscala... »

« But are You not coming to Korazim? »

« No. I am going up the mountain to pray. »

« You are exhausted. You are pale. Why do You neglect Yourself? »

And why are You not coming with us? Why are You not coming to town? » They overwhelm Him with questions. Their fondness is at times heavy.

But Jesus is patient... and He replies patiently: « You know very well! Prayer is rest for Me. It is fatigue to be among people when I am not there to cure or to evangelize. So I will go up the mountain. Where I have been other times. You know the place. »

« On the path that takes one to Joachim's house? »

« Yes. You know where to find Me. At dawn I will come and meet you... »

« And shall we be going towards Giscala? »

« It is the right road to go towards the Syro-Phoenician borders. I told the people at Aphek that I would go there and I will go. »

« It's because... Don't You remember the last time? »

« Be not afraid, Simon. They have changed system. At present they honour Me... »

« Oh! So they love You. »

« No. They hate Me more than they did previously. But as they cannot overthrow Me by means of their strength, they try to do so by deceit. They are trying to seduce the Man... And to seduce one makes use of honours, even if they are false. Nay... Come here near Me, all of you » He says to the others who were proceeding in a group seeing that Jesus was speaking to Peter privately.

They gather together. Jesus says: « I was saying to Simon - and I will say it to everybody as I have no secrets for My friends - I was saying to Simon that those who are hostile to Me have changed their way to harm Me, but they have not changed their minds with regard to Me. So whilst previously they made use of insults and threats, now they have resort to honours. Not only with regard to Me, but also to you. So be strong and wise. Do not let their false words, their gifts and seductions deceive you. Remember what Deuteronomy says: "Gifts blind the eyes of wise men and alter the words of just people". Remember Samson. He was God's nazirite from his birth, from his mother's womb and she conceived and formed him in abstinence by order of the angel so that he might be a just judge of Israel. But where did so much good end? And how? And through whom? And was virtue not demolished many other times by means of honours, money and hired women to play into the enemies' hands? So be shrewd and vigilant in order not to be deceived and not to serve enemies even unawares. Strive to remain as free as birds, which prefer scanty food and a branch on which to rest to golden cages where food is plentiful and where they can rest comfortably, but where they are prisoners of the whims of men. Remember that you are My apostles, servants, therefore, of God only, as I am servant only of the Will of the Father. They will try to seduce you, perhaps they have already

done so, catching each of you by your weak points, because the servants of Evil are cunning as they are taught by the Evil One. Do not believe their words. They are not sincere. If they were, I would be the first to say to you: "Let us greet these people as good brothers of ours". Instead we must mistrust their deeds and pray for them, that they may become good. I do so. I pray for you, that you may not be deceived by the new form of war, and I pray for them, that they may stop laying snares for the Son of man and they may cease offending God His Father. Imitate Me. Pray the Holy Spirit fervently. That He may give you light to see. And be pure, if you want Him to be your friend. Before leaving you I want to fortify you. I absolve you if you have sinned up to the present time. I absolve you of everything. Be good in future. Good, wise, chaste, humble and faithful. May the grace of My absolution fortify you... Why are you weeping, Andrew? And why are you upset, My brother? »

« Because this sounds like a farewell... » says Andrew.

« And do you think that I would say goodbye to you so briefly? It is only a piece of advice for the present days. I see that you are all upset. That must not happen to you. Agitation upsets peace. Peace must always be with you. You are in the service of Peace and She loves you so much that She has chosen you as Her first servants. She loves you. Therefore you must consider that She will always help you, also when you are left alone. God is Peace. If you are faithful to God, He will be with you. And if He is with you, of what can you be afraid? And what can separate you from God, if you do not get into a situation whereby you may lose Him? Sin only separates from God. But the rest: temptations, persecutions, death, no, not even death separates from God. On the contrary, they join one more to God, because every temptation which is overcome raises man by one step towards Heaven, because persecutions achieve for you double protecting love of God and the death of a saint or of a martyr is but union with the Lord God. I solemnly tell you that with the exceptions of the children of perdition, none of My great disciples will die before I open the gates of Heaven. Consequently none of My faithful disciples will have to wait for the embrace of God after passing away from this dark exile into the light of the other life. I would not tell you this if it were not true. You can see it yourselves. Also today you have seen a man who after going astray has come back to the way of justice. One ought not to sin. But God is merciful and forgives those who repent. And he who repents can surpass also one who has not sinned, if his repentance is absolute and if his virtue, following his repentance, is heroic. It will be so pleasant to meet up there! To see you come up to Me, while I run to meet you and embrace you, taking you to My Father saying: "Here is one of My beloved. He always

loved Me and thus he always loved You since I spoke to him of You. He has come now. Bless him, Father, and may Your blessing be his bright crown". My friends... Friends here and in Heaven. Do you not think that every sacrifice is light if it achieves such eternal joy? You have cheered up now. Let us part here. I am going up there and you must be good... Let Me kiss you... » And He kisses them one by one.

Judas weeps when he kisses Him. He waited to be the last, although he usually seeks to be the first, and he clings to Jesus, kissing Him several times and whispering through His hair, close to His ear: « Pray, pray for me... »

They part, Jesus goes towards the hill and the others proceed towards Korazim, whose white houses already appear through the green trees.

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Jesus says: « You will put here the vision of 23rd September 1944. There is no better rest for Me than to say: "I have saved one who was perishing", and the dictation that follows. »

#### **466. Judas Iscariot Fills Jesus with Joy.**

23rd September 1944.

Jesus says:

« In the meantime I tell you that, if you are going to do a regular work, the episode of Wednesday 20th September is to be placed a year before My death [404], because it happened at harvest time in My 32nd year of age. The necessity to comfort and instruct you, My beloved, and others, has compelled Me to follow a special order when giving visions and relevant dictations. But in due course I will show you how to distribute the episodes of the three years of My public life.

The order of the Gospels is good, but not perfect as a chronological order. A diligent observer notices that. He who could have given the exact order of events, having been with Me from the beginning of the Evangelization to My Ascension, did not do so, because John, a true son of the Light, devoted himself to and worried about making the Light shine brightly through its appearance of a Body in the eyes of the heretics, who contested the truth of the Divinity enclosed in a human body. John's sublime Gospel achieved its supernatural purpose, but the chronology of My public life has not been improved by it. The other three evangelists show resemblances to one another with regard to events, but they alter their order with regard to time, because only one of the three was present at almost all My public life: Matthew, and he wrote it only fifteen years later, whilst the others wrote theirs even later, after hearing the story from My Mother, from Peter, from other apostles

apostles and disciples.

I want to give you a guide to collect together the events of the three years, year by year.

And now see and write. The episode follows that of Wednesday (20th September). »

I see Jesus walking slowly up and down a little country path in bright moonlight. The moon is full and shines with her smiling face in a very clear sky. By her position in the sky - she is beginning to set - I infer that it must be past midnight.

Jesus is certainly thinking and praying, although I do not hear any word. But He does not lose sight of what is around Him. He stops once and smiles listening to the loud song of a nightingale in love: the bird sings a melody with arpeggios and trills and a solo, notes which are held so well, so loud and for so long that it seems impossible that they come forth from that little bunch of feathers. In order not to disturb it with the shuffling of His sandals on the little stones of the path and with the rustling of His tunic on the grass, Jesus stops with folded arms and smiles raising His face. He even half-closes His eyes to concentrate better on hearing it, and when the nightingale comes to the end with a high note which rises and rises by thirds (I am not sure whether I remember correctly) and finishes with a very high note held as long as its breath allows, He expresses His approval and applauds silently nodding two or three times with a happy smile.

Now, instead, He bends over a tuft of honeysuckle in bloom, which exhales a strong scent from its numerous calyces like yawning serpents' mouths, in which the tongues of yellowish pistils tremble and a golden mark shines on the lower petal. The flowers look whiter, almost silvery, in the moonlight. Jesus admires and smells them and caresses them with His hand.

He retraces His steps. The place must be slightly high because in the moonlight one can see to the south something that shines like a wet piece of glass illuminated by the moon, certainly a tiny part of a lake, because it is neither a river nor the sea, as it is surrounded by hills on the side opposite to the one where Jesus is standing. Jesus looks at the placid calm waters sparkling in the peaceful summer night. He then turns round, from south to west, and looks at a village, standing out in its whiteness, about two kilometres away, probably less. It is quite a large village. He stops looking at it and shakes His head following a thought which distresses Him deeply.

He then resumes walking slowly and praying. Finally He sits on a large stone at the foot of a very tall tree, and assumes His usual posture, with His elbows 'resting on His knees, His forearms stretched out and His hands joined in prayer.

He remains thus for some time and would remain longer if a

man, like a shadow, did not come towards Him from the thicket calling Him: « Master? »

Jesus turns round, because the person is coming from behind Him, and He says: « Judas? What do you want? »

« Where are You, Master? »

« At the foot of the walnut-tree. Come here. » And Jesus stands up and goes onto the path, in the moonlight, so that Judas may see Him. « Have you come, Judas, to keep your Master company for a little while? » They are now close to each other and Jesus lovingly lays an arm on His disciple's shoulder. « Or am I needed at Korazim? »

« No, Master. There is no need for You. I wanted to come to You. »

« Come then. There is room for both of us on this stone. »

They sit down close to each other and remain silent. Judas does not speak, he looks at Jesus. He is struggling. Jesus wants to help him. He looks at him kindly, but keenly.

« What a beautiful night, Judas! Look how everything is pure! I do not think that the first night which smiled at the Earth and at Adam's sleep in the earthly Paradise was purer. Smell how scented are these flowers. Smell them. But do not pick them. They are so beautiful and pure! I also have refrained from picking them because to pluck them is to profane them. It is always wrong to do violence, to plants as to animals, to animals as to men. Why deprive them of their lives? Life is so beautiful when it is spent well!... And those flowers spend their lives well because they are sweet smelling, they cheer up people with their beautiful appearance and scents, they give honey to bees and butterflies and they transfer to the latter the gold of their pistils to place tiny drops of topaz on their pearly wings, and are used to make beds in nests... If you had been here a little while ago, you would have heard a nightingale sing so sweetly its joy of living and praising the Lord. Dear little birds! What an example they are for men! They are satisfied with little and only with what is legal and holy. A tiny grain and a little worm as given to them by the Father Creator; and if there is none, they do not become angry or irritated, but they deceive the hunger of their bodies with the ardour of their hearts, which makes them sing the praises of the Lord and the joy of hope. They are happy to be tired after flying from dawn to sunset to build a nest for themselves, a tepid, soft, safe nest, not out of selfishness, but out of love for their offspring. And they sing urged by the joy of loving each other honestly: the nightingale for its mate and both for their little ones. Animals are always happy because they have no remorse or reproach in their hearts. We make them unhappy, because man is bad, disrespectful, overbearing, cruel. And he is not happy to be so with his like. His wickedness overflows on inferiors. And the more he feels remorse,

the more his conscience spurs him and the more pitiless he is towards other people. I am sure, for instance, that that horseman who today was spurring his horse so cruelly, although it was wet with perspiration and tired, and he lashed it to the point of leaving swollen marks on the hair of its neck and sides, and even on its nostrils so tender, and on its dark eyelashes, which closed painfully on its eyes so resigned and mild, I am sure that his soul was not in peace. He was either going to commit a crime against Honesty, or he was coming from one. » Jesus becomes silent and pensive.

Judas is silent and pensive, too. He then says: « How beautiful it is, Master, to hear You speak thus! Everything becomes clear to the eyes, to the mind, to the heart... and everything becomes easy. Also to say: "I want to be good!". Also to say to You... also to say to You: "Master, my soul is upset as well! Do not be disgusted at me, Master, since You love so much those who are pure!". »

« Oh, Judas! I disgusted? My dear friend, My dear son, what is upsetting you? »

« Keep me with You, Master. Hold me tight... I have sworn to be good after You spoke to me so kindly. I have sworn to become the Judas of the first days, when I followed and loved You as a groom loves his bride and I yearned for nothing but You, as I found every satisfaction in You. That is how I loved You, Jesus... »

« I know... and that is why I loved you... But I still love you, My dear hurt friend... »

« How do You know that I am hurt? And do You know by what?... »

There is silence. Jesus looks at Judas so kindly... Tears seem to make His eyes wider and kinder, tempering their brightness: the eyes of an innocent defenceless child who gives himself completely in love.

Judas drops at His feet with his face on Jesus' knees and clasping His sides with his arms he moans: « Keep me with You, Master... keep me... My flesh is howling like a demon... and if I give in, then all evil befalls me... I know that you are aware of it, but You wait for me to tell You... But it is hard, Master, to say: "I have sinned." »

« I know, My friend. That is why one ought to act correctly. So that later one may not have to lower oneself saying: "I have sinned". But, Judas, that is also a very good medicine. The fact that one has to make an effort to confess one's sin restrains one from committing it; and if it has been committed the pain in accusing oneself is already redeeming repentance. And if one suffers not so much out of pride or for fear of punishment, but because one realises that by sinning one has caused sorrow, then I tell you that the sin is cancelled. It is love that saves. »

« I love You, Master. But I am so weak... Oh! You cannot love me! You are pure and You love the pure... You cannot love me because

I am... I am... Oh! Jesus, relieve me of the hunger of sensuality! Do You know what a demon it is? »

« I know. I did not listen to it, but I know what its voices sound like. »

« See? See? You are so much disgusted by it that by simply mentioning it You look very upset... Oh! You cannot forgive me! »

« Judas. And do you not remember Mary? Or Matthew? Or the publican who became a leper? Or that woman, the Roman prostitute, for whom I prophesied a place in Heaven, because being forgiven by Me she will have the strength to live holily? »

« Master Master... Oh! How sick at heart I am!... This evening I ran away from Korazim because if I had remained, I would have been lost. You know it is like one who drinks and is taken ill... The doctor forbids him to drink wine and any intoxicating drink and he recovers and is healthy as long as he does not taste such liquors... But if he gives in, once only, and he tastes them again he is thirsty... thirsty for such liquids... he no longer resists and drinks and drinks and is taken ill again for ever... mad... possessed by his demon by that demon of his Oh! Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!... Don't tell the others... Don't tell them... I blush with shame before them all... »

« But not before Me. »

Judas misunderstands. « That is true! I ought to blush more before You than anybody else, because You are perfect... »

« No, son. I did not mean that. Your grief, your distress, your dejection must not confound you. I said that you may blush before everybody, but not before Me. A son is not afraid or ashamed of a good father neither is an invalid of a clever doctor. And confession is to be made to both without any fear, as one loves and forgives, and the other understands and cures. I love and understand you. So I forgive and cure you. But tell Me, Judas. What is it that puts you into the hands of your demon? Is it I? Your brothers? Corrupt women? No. It is your will. I now forgive you and cure you... With what joy you have filled Me, My Judas! I was already rejoicing at this clear, scented night, which sweet songs made delightful, and I was praising the Lord for it. But the joy which you are now giving Me exceeds this clear moonlight, these scents, this peace, these songs. Can you hear it? The nightingale seems to join Me in telling you that it is glad of your good will, as the little singing bird is so willing to do that for which it was created. And likewise, this early morning breeze, which blows over flowers awaking them and letting dewy diamonds drop into the hollow calyces, so that butterflies and sunbeams may find them very soon, the former to refresh themselves, the latter to have their great brightness reflected by the tiny mirrors. Look: the moon is setting. Dawn is being announced by that cock crowing far away. The darkness and

phantasm of the night are vanishing. See how quickly and pleasantly time has passed, whereas, if you had not come to Me, you would have spent it in disgust and remorse? You ought to come to Me every time you are afraid of yourself. One's own ego!!! A great friend, a great tempter, a great enemy and a great judge, Judas! And see? While it is a sincere loyal friend if you have been good, it can be an insincere friend if you are not good, and after being your accomplice, it rises to the office of implacable judge and tortures you with its reproaches... It is cruel in reproaching... Not I! Well, let us go. The night is over... »

« Master, I did not let You rest... and today You have to speak so much... »

« I have rested in the joy which you gave Me. There is no better rest for Me than to say: "Today I have saved one who was perishing". Come... Let us go down to Korazim! Oh! if this town only knew how to imitate you, Judas! »

« Master... what will You tell my companions? »

« Nothing, if they do not ask Me... If they ask Me, I will say that we spoke of God's mercy... It is such a true and boundless subject that a very long life is not sufficient to treat it. Let us go... »

And they go down, both tall, differently handsome but equally young, One beside the other, and they disappear behind a group of trees...

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Jesus says:

« It is an episode of mercy like those of the Magdalene. But if you make a book, it will be better if you put the periods in orderly succession rather than the categories, simply stating at the beginning or end of each episode to which category it belongs.

Why do I elucidate Judas' figure? Many may wonder why.

I reply. Judas' figure has been distorted too much in the course of time. And lately it has been completely perverted. Some schools have sung his praises as if he had been the second and indispensable author of Redemption. Many also think that he succumbed to a sudden fierce assault of the Tempter. No. Every fall has premisses in time. The graver the fall, the more it is prepared. Antecedent factors explain the fact. One does not collapse or rise all of a sudden, either in Good or in Evil. There are long insidious factors in descents, and patient holy ones in ascents. Judas' unfortunate drama can teach you so well how to save yourselves and how to become acquainted with the method of God and His mercy in saving and forgiving those who descend towards the Abyss.

One does not arrive at the satanic delirium in which you saw Judas struggle after the Crime, unless one is completely corrupted by Hellish habits, which one has taken up voluptuously for years. When one commits a crime driven by a sudden event, which deranges

one's mind, one suffers but is capable of expiation, because some parts of the heart are still free from infernal poison. To the world denying Satan, because it has him so much in itself that it no longer notices him, it has absorbed him and has become part of his ego, I prove that Satan exists. He is eternal and immutable in the method employed to make you his victims.

That is enough now. Remain with My peace. »

#### **467. Farewell to the Few Believers in Korazim.**

6th August 1946.

It is not yet dawn when Jesus meets the eleven apostles and in the middle of them the little carpenter Joseph, who darts off like an arrow as soon as he sees Jesus, Whose knees he clasps with the simplicity of one who is still a child. Jesus bends to kiss his forehead and then, holding him by the hand, He goes towards Peter and the others.

« Peace be with you. I was not expecting to meet you here. »

« The boy woke when it was still dark and he wanted to come lest he might be late » explains Peter.

« His mother will be here soon with the other children. She wants to greet You » adds Judas of Alphaeus.

« Also the woman who was a cripple is coming, and Isaac's daughter, Elias' mother and others who were cured by You. They gave us hospitality... »

« And the others? »

« Lord... »

« Korazim perseveres in its harsh spirit. I understand. It does not matter. The good seed has been sown and it will germinate one day... thanks to these... » and He looks at the boy.

« Will he be a disciple and will he convert people? »

« He is a disciple, are you not, Joseph? »

« Yes. But I am not good at speaking, and as far as I know, they do not listen to me. »

« It does not matter. You will speak through your goodness. »

Jesus presses the child's little face in His long hands and bending lightly over his raised face He speaks to him.

« I am going away, Joseph. Be good and be a good worker. Forgive those who do not love you. Be grateful to those who help you. Always bear this in mind: that God is present in those who assist you and thus accept all assistance respectfully, without pretending, without saying: "I will idle about as there is someone who takes care of me", without spoiling the assistance you received. Work, because work is holy and you, a boy, are the only man in your family. Remember that by assisting your mother you honour her. Remember that to set a good example to your little

brothers and to watch over the honour of your sisters is a duty. Wish for what is just and work to have it, but do not envy the rich and do not wish to be wealthy to have a grand time. Remember that your Master taught you not only the word of God, but also love for work, humility and forgiveness. Be always good, Joseph, and one day we shall be together again. »

« But are You not coming back any more? Where are You going, Lord? »

« I am going where the will of the Father Who is in Heaven wants Me to go. His will must always be stronger than ours, and dearer to us than ours, because it is always a perfect will. You also, during your lifetime, are not to put your will before that of God. All the obedient people will meet in Heaven and it will be a great feast then. Give Me a kiss, child. »

A kiss! The boy gives Him many kisses shedding many tears, and his mother finds him thus, clinging to Jesus' neck, when she arrives with the crowd of her children and very few people, seven in all, from Korazim.

« Why are you weeping, son? » asks the woman after greeting the Master.

« Because every farewell is sorrowful. But even if we are separated we shall always be united if your hearts continue to love Me. You know how to love Me and in what your love for Me consists. In doing what I taught you, because he who does what someone has taught him, shows that he holds in high esteem that person, and esteem is always love. So do what I taught you with My words and examples, and do what My disciples will teach you in My name. Do not weep. Time is short and we shall soon be reunited and in a better manner. And do not weep out of selfishness. Think of how many people are still waiting for Me, of how many will die without seeing Me, of how many will have to love Me without ever knowing Me. You have had Me here several times and faith and hope are made easier for you by our mutual love. They instead will have to have a great faith, a blind faith, in order to be able to say: "He is really the Son of God, the Saviour, and His word is truthful". A great faith to be able to have the great hope of eternal life and immediate possession of God after a life of justice. They will have to love Him Whom they never met, Whom they never heard, Whom they never saw work miracles. And yet, only if they love thus, they will have eternal Life. You ought to bless the Lord Who has privileged you by granting you to know Me. Go now. Be faithful to the Law of Sinai and to My new commandment to love everybody like brothers, because there is God in love. Love also those who hate you, because God was the first to set the example of loving men who, through their sins, show hatred to God. Always forgive as God forgave men by sending His Word

Redeemer to cancel the Sin, the cause of grudge and separation. Goodbye. May My peace be with you. Let your hearts remember My deeds, to fortify them against the words of those who will try to convince you that I am not your Saviour. And keep My blessing for your strength in the trials of future life. »

Jesus stretches out His hands repeating the Mosaic blessing on the little herd prostrated at His feet. He then turns round and goes away...

#### **468. Jesus Speaks of Matrimony to a Mother-in-law.**

7th August 1946.

The fertile woody mountains where Giscala is situated afford refreshment of greenery, breezes, water and views which are varied and beautiful according to the different directions of the road. To the north is a series of wooded summits covered with the most varied green shades. I would say that the Earth seems to rise towards the blue vault of heaven, offering it, in grateful homage for the waters and sunbeams granted by it, all the vegetable beauties of nature. To north-east the eye stops fascinated contemplating the jewel of the Great Hermon which changes its colour according to time and light and raises its highest peak like a gigantic obelisk of diamond, of opal, of very pale sapphire, or of very delicate ruby, or of lightly hardened steel - according to whether the sun kisses it or leaves it and the ruffled clouds blown by winds cause play of light on its perpetual snow - then the eye descends along the emerald slopes of the tablelands, along ridges, gorges and peaks, which are at the base of the royal giant. Then turning farther eastwards one sees the green expanse of the plateaux of Gaulanitis and Hauran bordered at their eastern ends by mountains vanishing in distant haze, and delimited on the western side by the different shade of green which lies along the Jordan and marks its valley. And closer at hand, are two lakes, as splendid as two sapphires: the lake of Merom within the low circle of a well watered plain, and the lake of Tiberias, as graceful as a delicate pastel amid the hills surrounding it, different in shape and shades, with its shores perennially full of flowers: an eastern dream with groups of palm-trees waving their tops in the breeze from nearby mountains, the poetry of our lakes most beautiful for the calm of their waters and the cultivations of their shores. And then to the south, mount Tabor with its typical summit, and the little Hermon, completely green, watching over the plain of Esdraelon, the vast extent of which is revealed by the long horizon uninterrupted by mountain chains, and farther down, to the south, the high powerful mountains of Samaria stretching beyond man's sight towards Judaea. The only one which is not visible is the western

side, where mount Carmel must be and the plain stretching to the north, towards Ptolemais, both hidden by a mountain chain higher than this one, so that they cannot be seen. It is one of the most beautiful sights in Palestine.

Jesus is proceeding following the road among the mountains, at times all alone, at times joined by this or that apostle.

He stops once to caress a shepherd's children who are playing near the flock and He accepts the milk that the shepherd, who has recognised Him as the Rabbi described by other people who had seen Jesus, wants to give Him saying: « For You and for Your friends. »

He stops again to listen to an old woman who, not knowing who He is, tells Him her family troubles caused by a daughter-in-law who is shrewish and disrespectful.

Although He pities the old woman, Jesus exhorts her to be patient and to convince her daughter-in-law to be kind through her own kindness: « You must be a mother to her, even if she is not your daughter. Be sincere: if instead of being your daughter-in-law she were your daughter, would her faults appear to you so grave? »

The old woman ponders... and she then confesses: « No... But a daughter is always a daughter... »

« And if one of your daughters should tell you that in the house of her husband her mother-in-law ill-treated her, what would you say? »

« That she is bad. Because she ought to teach the customs of the house - as every house has its own - kindly, particularly if the wife is young. I would say that she should remember when she was a newly-wed bride herself, and how pleased she was to be loved by her mother-in-law, if she had been lucky to have a good one, and how she had suffered, if she had had a bad one. And that she should not make her daughter-in-law suffer what she had not suffered, or not make her suffer because she knows what it is to suffer. Oh! I would defend my daughter! »

« How old is your daughter-in-law? »

« She is eighteen years, Rabbi. She has been married to Jacob three years. »

« She is very young. Is she faithful to her husband? »

« Oh! yes. She is a stay-at-home and she is full of love for him and for little Levi and for the little girl, whose name is Anne, like mine. She was born at Passover... She is so beautiful!... »

« Who wanted her to be named Anne? »

« Mary did! Levi was the name of the father-in-law and Jacob called his first son after him, and when Mary had the girl she said: "We will give her the name of your mother". »

« And do you not think that that is love and respect? »

The old woman is pensive... Jesus insists: « She is honest, she is

fond of her home, she is a loving wife and mother, she is anxious to make you happy... She could have given her daughter the name of her own mother, instead she called her after you... she honours your house with her behaviour... »

« Oh! That is true! She is not like that wretch of Jezebel. »

« Well, then! Why do you complain and lay information against her? Do you not think that you are using two measures in judging your daughter-in-law in a different manner than you would judge a daughter of yours?... »

« The trouble is... is... that she has deprived me of the love of my son. Before he was all for me, now he loves her more than he loves me... » The real reason of prejudices of mothers-in-law overflows at last from the old woman's heart together with tears from her eyes.

« Does your son leave you wanting anything? Has he neglected you since he got married?... »

« No. I cannot say that. But, in brief, he belongs to his wife now... » and she weeps moaning more loudly.

Jesus smiles a quiet pitiful smile for the jealous old woman. But, being as kind as ever, He does not reproach her. He feels pity for the suffering mother and tries to cure her. He lays His hand on her shoulder as if He wanted to guide her, because she is blinded by tears, perhaps to make her feel, through His contact, so much love that she may be comforted and cured, and He says to her:

« Mother, and is it not right that it is so? Your husband did so with you, and his mother did not lose him, as you say and think, but she felt that he belonged less to her because your husband divided his love between his mother and you. And your husband's father, in his turn, stopped belonging completely to his mother, to love the mother of his children. And so on from generation to generation, going back in time to Eve: the first mother who saw her children divide with their wives the love which they previously had exclusively for their parents. But does Genesis not say: "This at last is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh... This is why a man will leave his father and mother and will join himself to his wife and they will become one body". You may object: "It was the word of a man". Yes, but of what man? He was in the state of innocence and grace. He thus reflected without any shadow the Wisdom which had created him and he was aware of its truth. Through Grace and his innocence he possessed also the other gifts of God in full measure. As his senses were subdued to his reason, his mind was not obscured by the fumes of concupiscence. And because science was proportionate to his state, he spoke words of truth. So he was a prophet. Because you know that prophet means a person who speaks in the name of another person. And as true prophets always speak of matters concerning the spirit and the future, even if relating apparently to the present time and the body

- because in the sins of the flesh and in the facts of the present time are the seeds of future punishments, or facts of the future have roots in ancient events: for instance the coming of the Saviour originates from Adam's sin, and the punishments of Israel, foretold by the prophets, were brought about by the behaviour of Israel - so He Who urges their lips to speak things of the spirit can but be the Eternal Spirit Who sees everything in an eternal present. And the Eternal Spirit speaks through saints, because he cannot dwell in sinners. Adam was a saint, because justice was complete in him and every virtue was present in him, because God had instilled the fullness of His gifts into His creature. Man has to work hard now, to attain justice and possess virtues, because the incentives of evil are in him. But such incentives were not in Adam, on the contrary Grace made him little inferior to God his Creator. So his lips spoke words of grace. And this is a truthful word: "A man will leave his father and mother for a woman and he will join himself to his wife and they will become one body". And it is so absolutely true, that the Most Good Lord in order to comfort mothers and fathers included the fourth Commandment in the Law: "Honour your father and your mother". A Commandment that does not end with the marriage of man, but lasts beyond marriage. Previously good people instinctively honoured their relatives also after they left them to set up a new family. Since Moses it is an obligation of Law. And the purpose of it is to mitigate the grief of parents who were too often forgotten by their children after they got married. But the Law has not cancelled the prophetic words of Adam: "Man will leave his father and mother for his wife". They were just words and they are still valid. They reflected the thought of God. And the thought of God is immutable because it is perfect. So, mother, you must accept without selfishness the love of your son for his wife. And you will be holy as well. On the other hand, every sacrifice is compensated on the Earth. Is it not pleasant for you to kiss your grandchildren, the children of your son? And will the evening of your life not be peaceful and your last sleep placid with the delicate love of a daughter near you, to take the place of those daughters who are no longer in your house?... »

« How do You know that my daughters, who are all older than my son, are married and live far away? ... Are You a prophet, too? You are a Rabbi. I can tell by the tassels of Your mantle and even if You did not have them, Your word reveals it. Because You speak like a great doctor. Are You perhaps a friend of Gamaliel? He was here just the day before yesterday. Now I do not know... And there were many rabbis with him, and many of his favourite disciples. Perhaps You have arrived late. »

« I know Gamaliel. But I am not going to him. I am not even going

into Giscala... »

« But who are You? You are certainly a rabbi. And You speak even better than Gamaliel... »

« Then... do what I told you. And you will have peace. Goodbye, mother. I am going on My way. You are certainly going to town. »

« Yes Mother!... The other rabbis are not so humble with a poor woman She Who bore You is certainly holier than Judith, if She gave You such a kind heart for every creature. »

« She is holy, indeed. »

« Tell me Her name »

« Mary. »

« And Yours? »

« Jesus. »

« Jesus!... » The little old woman is bewildered with astonishment. The news has paralysed her and riveted her where she heard it.

« Goodbye, woman. Peace be with you » and Jesus goes away quickly, He almost runs away before she may recover from the shock.

And the apostles follow Him with vigorous strides, amid much fluttering of garments, in vain chased by the shouts of the woman who implores: « Stop! Rabbi Jesus! Stop! I want to tell You something... » They slow down when the thick of the wooded mountains conceal them again and they can no longer see the road which takes one to Giscala and from which their mule-track branches off.

« How well You spoke to the woman » says Bartholomew.

« The lesson of a doctor! A pity that she was alone... » remarks James of Alphaeus.

« I want to remember those words... » exclaims Peter.

« The woman understood, or almost, after Your Name Now she will talk of You in town... » says Thomas.

« Provided she does not tease the wasps hurling them after us! » murmurs Judas of Kerioth.

« Oh! we are far away now!... And one does not leave traces in these woods, so we shall not be troubled » says Andrew optimistically.

« Even if we were!... I restored peace in a family » Jesus replies to everybody.

« How peculiar they are! Mothers-in-law are all alike! » says Peter.

« No. We have met some good ones. Do you remember the mother-in-law of Jerusa of Doco? And the mother-in-law of Dorcas from Caesarea Philippi? »

« Of course, James... There are some good ones... » agrees Peter; but he certainly thinks that his mother-in-law is a torture.

« Let us stop and eat. Then we will have a rest, so that we may arrive at the village in the valley before night » orders Jesus.

And they stop in a green dell, like the inside of a huge emerald green shell encrusted in the mountain and open to receive pilgrims in its peace. Light is mild, despite the time of the day, as tall mighty trees form a rustling vault over the meadow. And the temperature is mild because of the breeze blowing from the mountains. A little spring pours a silvery stream between two dark rocks and murmurs in a low voice disappearing among the thick herbs, in a tiny bed which it has dug, about a palm wide and all covered with the stalks growing on the banks, and waving in the light breeze; it then descends, in a tiny waterfall, on a rock below. The horizon, as seen between two large tree trunks, looks hazy and distant, towards the mountains of Lebanon, and is wonderful...

#### **469. Jesus Speaks to Barnabas of the Law of Love.**

10th August 1946.

It is pleasant to rest on the small tableland. But it is wise to descend to the valley while it is daylight, because it would be dark very early under the thick trees covering the mountain.

Jesus is the first to get up and He goes to freshen up His face, hands and feet in the tiny stream running from the little spring. He then calls His apostles, who are sleeping on the grass, and invites them to get ready to depart. And while they imitate Him, one after the other, washing themselves in the cool brook and filling their flasks at the fine stream flowing from the rock, He goes to the edge of the little meadow waiting for them near two age-old trees delimiting its eastern side, and He looks at the distant horizon.

Philip is the first to join Him, and looking in the same direction as his Master, he says to Him: « This sight is beautiful! You are admiring it... »

« Yes, but I was not looking only at its beauty. »

« At what, then? Were You perhaps thinking of the time when Israel will be great, of those places beyond Lebanon and Orontes, which in the course of centuries vexed us and are still distressing us, because the heart of the power which oppresses us through its Ambassador resides there? The prophecies concerning them made by several prophets are terrible indeed: "I will break Assyria in my country, I will crush him on my mountains... This is the hand stretched out against all the nations... And who will be able to hold it back?... Damascus is going to cease to be a city, she will become a heap of ruins... Such will be the lot of our plunderers". Isaiah speaks thus! And Jeremiah says: "I will light a fire inside the walls of Damascus, it shall devour the palaces of Ben-hadad". And that

will happen when the King of Israel, the Promised One, takes His sceptre, and God has forgiven His people by sending the King Messiah to them... Oh! Ezekiel says so: "Mountains of Israel, grow branches and bear fruit for my people Israel, who will soon return... I will lead my people back to you, and they will have you for their own domain... I shall never again let you hear the insults of the nations... And the psalms sing with Ethan the Ezrahite: "I have found my servant David and anointed him with my holy oil. My hand will assist him... His enemy will not be able to do anything against him... His fortunes shall rise in my name... He will stretch his hand over the sea and his right hand over rivers... And I will make him the first-born, the sovereign among the kings of the Earth". And Solomon sings: "He will endure like sun and moon... His empire shall stretch from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the Earth... All the kings of the Earth will do him homage, all nations will become his servants... You, Messiah, because all the signs of the spirit and of the flesh are in You, all the signs given by the prophets. Alleluia to You, Son of David, King Messiah, holy King! »

« Alleluia! » shout in chorus the others who have joined Jesus and Philip and have heard the latter's words. And alleluia echoes through gorges and hills...

Jesus looks at them very sadly... And He replies: « But do you not remember what David says of the Christ, and what Isaiah says of Him... You are taking the sweet honey and the inebriating wine of the prophets... but you are not considering that in order to be the King of kings the Son of man will have to drink bile and vinegar and dress Himself with the purple of His own Blood... But it is not your fault if you do not understand... Your error in understanding is love. I would like a different love in you. But for the time being you cannot... Ages of sin are against men preventing them from seeing the Light. But the Light will demolish the walls and will enter you... Let us go. »

They go back to the mule-path which they had left to go up to the remote plateau and they descend quickly towards the valley. The apostles speak to one another in low voices...

Then Philip runs ahead, joining the Master and asks: « Have I displeased You, Lord. I did not want to... Are You angry with me? »

« No, Philip, I am not. But I would like you at least to understand. »

« You were looking there with such keen desire... »

« Because I was thinking of how many places have not yet had Me... And will not have Me... because My time flies... How short is the time of man! And how slow man is in acting!... How much the spirit feels such limitations of the Earth!... But... Father, may Your will be done! »

« But You have covered all the regions of the old tribes, my Master. You have sanctified them at least once, so one can say that You gathered in Your hands the twelve tribes... »

« That is true. But, afterwards, you will do what time did not let Me do. »

« Since You can stop rivers and calm seas, could You not slow down time? »

« I could. But the Father in Heaven, the Son on the Earth, the Love in Heaven and on the Earth, are eager to accomplish Forgiveness... » and Jesus becomes engrossed in deep meditation which Philip respects leaving Him alone and joining his companions to whom he relates his conversation.

... The valley is now close at hand and a road can already be seen, a real main road, which from the south proceeds westwards, bending just at the foot of the mountain and running along its base. It then runs straight towards a fine village lying in the green near a little river, the bed of which is covered with stones, with a few resisting reeds here and there, particularly in the middle, where a little stream, just a tiny stream, persists in flowing towards the sea.

They all gather together before taking the main road, and they have only walked a few metres when two men come towards them waving their hands to greet them.

« Two disciples of rabbis, and one is a Levite. What do they want? » the apostles ask one another and they are not at all happy to meet them. I do not know how they can infer that the two are disciples and that one is a Levite. I do not yet understand the meaning of tassels and fringes and other secrets of Israelite garments.

When Jesus is about two metres away from the two men, and when no misunderstanding is possible as the road is now clear of wayfarers hurrying towards the village on foot or on horseback, He returns their repeated greetings and stops waiting.

« Peace to You, Rabbi » says the Levite who previously had just made low bows.

« Peace to you. And to you » says Jesus, addressing the other one.

« Are You the Rabbi named Jesus? »

« I am. »

« A woman came into town before the sixth hour and she said that she had spoken on the road to a rabbi greater than Gamaliel, because besides being wise He is good. The news reached us and our masters put off our departure for Jerusalem and sent us all out to look for You: two of us on each road going down from Giscala to the roads in the plain. In their names and through us they say to You: "Come into town, because we want to consult You". »

« Why? »

« That You may declare Your opinion on an event which took place in Giscala and of which the consequences are still lasting. »

« And have you not got the great doctors in Israel to give you their opinions? Why apply to the unknown Rabbi? »

« If You are He, Whom the rabbis say, You are not unknown. Are You not Jesus of Nazareth? »

« I am. »

« Your wisdom is known to the rabbis. »

« And their bitter hatred for Me is known to Me. »

« Not in all of them, Master. The greatest and just one does not hate You. »

« I know. But he does not love Me either. He studies Me. But is rabbi Gamaliel in Giscala? »

« No. He already left to be at Sephoris before the Sabbath. He left immediately after the sentence. »

« So why are you looking for Me? I have to keep the Sabbath as well and I can just reach that place in time. Do not keep Me any longer. »

« Are You afraid, Master? »

« I am not afraid because I know that so far no power has been given to My enemies. But I leave the joy of judging to wise people. »

« What do You mean? »

« That I do not judge. I forgive. »

« You can judge better than anybody else. Gamaliel said so. He said: "Only Jesus of Nazareth would judge with justice in this case". »

« All right. But you have already judged. And the matter can no longer be mended. My opinion would have been to calm passions before striking. If there was a fault the guilty man might have repented and redeemed himself. If there was no fault, there would have been no punishment, which according to some people is, in the eyes of God, the same as willful murder. »

« Master! But how do You know? The woman swore that You spoke with her only of her matters... and... You know... So are You really a prophet? »

« I am Who I am. Goodbye. Peace to you. The sun is descending to the west » and He turns round and goes towards the village.

« You have done the right thing, Master! They were certainly lying in wait for You! » The apostles are solid for the Master.

But their praises and reasons are cut short by the two previous men who reach them entreating Jesus to go up to Giscala.

« No. Sunset would overtake Me on the way. Tell those who sent you that I comply with the Law, I always do, when its observance is not prejudicial to the Commandment which is greater than the Sabbatic one- that of love. »

« Master, Master, we implore You. This is just a case of love and

justice. Come with us, Master. »

« I cannot. Neither can you go back up in time. »

« We have permission to do it in this case. »

« What? They reproached Me if I cured a sick man and absolved him on a Sabbath, and you are allowed to infringe the Sabbath for an idle discussion? Are there perhaps two measures in Israel? Go! Go and let Me go. »

« Master, You are a prophet and so You know. I believe it and this man believes it. Why are You rejecting us? »

« Because!... » Jesus stares at them and stops. His severe eyes, which pierce and penetrate beyond the veils of the body to read their hearts, scrutinise domineeringly the two men in front of Him. And then His eyes, so unsustainable in severity, so mild in love, change assuming such a loving and merciful expression that if previously a heart trembled with fear because of their powerful look, now it trembles with emotion in the presence of the bright love of the Christ. « Because! » He repeats... « Not I, but men reject the Son of man, and He must distrust His brothers. But to those whose hearts are without malice I say: "Come" and I also say: "Love Me" to those who hate Me... »

« So, Master... »

« So I am going to the village for the Sabbath. »

« At least wait for us. »

« I am leaving at sunset of the Sabbath. I cannot wait. »

The two men look at each other, they consult each other remaining behind; then the one whose face is more open and who has spoken almost all the time, runs back. « Master, I am staying with You until after the Sabbath. »

Peter, who is beside Jesus, plucks His tunic compelling Him to turn to his side and whispers: « No. A spy. » Judas Thaddeus who is behind his Cousin, says in a soft voice: « Don't trust him. » Nathanael, who had gone ahead with Simon and Philip, turns round and looks sternly meaning: « No. » Even the two most trustful ones, Andrew and John, shake their heads from behind the pestering fellow.

But Jesus does not pay attention to their suspicious fears and He replies briefly: « Stay » and the others must resign themselves.

The man is now happy and feels more at home. He also feels that he must tell his name, who he is, why he is in Palestine although he was born in the Diaspora, that he was consecrated to God from his birth, because he was « the consolation of his parents » who, grateful to the Lord for having him, entrusted him to relatives in Jerusalem, that he might be of the Temple. It was there, while serving the House of God, that he met Gamaliel and became his diligent and loved disciple. « They named me Joseph because like the ancient one, I relieved my mother of the grief of being barren.

But my mother always said "my consolation" when she fed me, so I became Barnabas for everybody. Also the great Rabbi calls me thus because he finds solace in his best disciples. »

« Ensure that God also may say that of you, and above all that He may call you so » says Jesus.

They enter the village.

« Are you familiar with this place? » asks Jesus.

« No, I have never been here. It is the first time that I come here, to Naphtali. The rabbi brought me here with other people, because I am all alone, I have no relatives... »

« Is God your Friend? »

« I hope so. I try to serve Him as best I can. »

« Then you are not alone. A sinner is alone. »

« I may sin, too. »

« As you are the disciple of a great rabbi, you are certainly aware of the conditions whereby an action becomes a sin. »

« Everything, Lord is sin. Man sins continuously, because the precepts are more numerous than the moments in a day. And consideration and circumstances do not always help us to avoid sin. »

« It is true that circumstances above all often lead us to sin. But have you a clear conception of the main attribute of God? »

« Justice. »

« No. »

« Power. »

« Neither. »

«... Severity. »

« Less than ever. »

« And yet it was so on Sinai and even later... »

« The Most High was then seen amidst lightning which encircled the face of the Father and Creator with awful haloes. You really do not know the true face of God. If you knew Him and His spirit, you would know that the main attribute of God is Love, and merciful Love. »

« I know that the Most High has loved us. We are the chosen people. But it is tremendous to serve Him! »

« If you know that God is Love, how can you say that He is tremendous? »

« Because by sinning we lose His love. »

« I have already asked you whether you know the conditions whereby an action becomes a sin. »

« When it is not an action of the six hundred and thirteen precepts, or of the traditions, decisions, customs, blessings and prayers, besides the ten commandments of the Law, or it does not comply with the teaching of the scribes, then it is a sin. »

« Even if man does not do it with full knowledge and perfect consent of will? »

« Yes, even so. Because who can say: "I do not sin"? Who can hope to have peace in Abraham after death? »

« Are the spirits of men perfect? »

« No, because Adam sinned and we have that fault in us. It makes us weak. Man has lost the Grace of the Lord, the only strength to support us... »

« And does the Lord know that? »

« He knows everything. »

« So, do you think that He has no mercy taking into account what makes man weak? Do you think that He exacts from the smitten descendants what He could exact from the first Adam? That is where lies the difference which you do not take into consideration. God is justice, I agree. He is Power, I agree. He may also be Severity with the unrepentant sinner who perseveres in his sin. But when He sees that one of His children - all men are children on the Earth which is one hour of eternity for the spirit, that becomes adult at its spiritual examination of eternal majority at the moment of the particular judgement - when He sees that one of His children errs because he is absent-minded, or slow in distinguishing, or not very well educated, or because he is very weak in one or more things, do you think that the Most Holy Father may judge him with inflexible severity? You said it yourself, that man lost Grace, the strength to react against Temptation and incentives. And God knows that. And one must not be afraid of God and shun Him as Adam did after his sin. But man ought to remember that He is Love. His face shines upon men, not to reduce them to ashes, but to comfort them as the sun comforts with its beams. Love, not severity radiates from God: sunbeams, not flashes of lightning. In any case... What did Love impose of His own will? A burden which cannot be carried? A code of numberless chapters easy to be forgotten? No. Just ten commandments, to bridle like a colt the animal man, who without bridle goes to rack and ruin. But when man is saved, when Grace is given back to him, when the Kingdom of God is established, that is, the Kingdom of love, the children of God and subjects of the King will be given one only commandment which will comprise everything: "Love your God with your whole self and your neighbour like yourself". Because, believe, o man, that God-Love can but alleviate the yoke and make it pleasant and love will make it pleasing to serve God, when He is no longer feared but loved. Only loved, loved for Himself and loved in our brothers. How simple the last Law will be! As God is, Who is perfect in His simplicity. Listen: love God with your whole self, love your neighbour as yourself. Meditate. Are the burdensome six hundred and thirteen precepts and all the prayers and blessings not already included in these two sentences, divested of useless cavils, which are not religion but slavery towards

God? If you love God you will certainly honour Him every hour of the day. If you love your neighbour, you will not do anything which may grieve him. You will not lie, steal, kill or injure, you will not commit adultery. Is it not so? »

« It is... Just Master, I would like to stay with You. But Gamaliel has already lost to You his best disciples... I... »

« It is not yet the hour for you to come to Me. When it comes, your very master will tell you, because he is a just man. »

« He is, is he not? Do You say so? »

« I say so because it is the truth. I am not one who knocks people down to rise above those who have been knocked down. I recognise everybody's rights... But they are calling us... They must have found lodgings for us. Let us go... »

#### **470. A Judgement of Jesus.**

12th August 1946.

« I am not at all happy to stay here with this man who has joined us... » grumbles Peter who is with Jesus in a thick orchard.

It must be the afternoon of the Sabbath, because the sun is still high, whereas it was already twilight when they arrived at the village.

« We shall depart after the prayers. It is Sabbath. We were not allowed to walk and this rest has done us good. We shall not stop any more until the next Sabbath. »

« But You have not rested very much. All those sick people!... »

« So many are now praising the Lord. To spare you so much road, I would have stopped here for two days to give the people whom I cured time to take the news beyond the borders, but you did not agree. »

« No! I would like to be already far away. And... do not trust people too much, Master. You talk and talk! But do You know that every word of Yours becomes poison against You on certain lips? Why did they send him to us? »

« You know why. »

« Yes, but why did he stay? »

« He is not the first one to remain with us after approaching Me. »

Peter shakes his head, he is not convinced. And he grumbles: « A spy!... A spy!... »

« Do not judge, Simon. You might repent of your present judgement one day... »

« I am not judging. I am afraid. For You. And that is love. And the Most High cannot punish me because I love You. »

« I am not saying that you would repent of that, but of having a bad opinion of a brother of yours. »

« He is the brother of those who hate You. So he is not my

brother. »

From a human point of view his logic is correct, but Jesus remarks: « He is a disciple of Gamaliel and Gamaliel is not against Me. »

« But he is not with You either. »

« He who is not against Me is with Me, even if he does not appear to be so. You cannot expect Gamaliel, the greatest doctor at present in Israel, a well of rabbinical knowledge, a real mine in which is all the... essence of rabbinical science, to disown everything at once to accept... Me. Simon, it is difficult even for all of you to accept Me, forsaking all your past... »

« But we have accepted You! »

« No. Do you know what it means to accept Me? It means not only to love Me and follow Me. That is very much the merit of the Man I am and Who is an attraction for you. To accept Me is to accept My doctrine, which is identical to the ancient one in the divine Law, but which is completely different from that law, from that heap of human laws which have been piling up in the course of ages forming a code and a formulary which has nothing divine. You, all the humble people in Israel and also some important very just people, complain of and criticise the formalistic subtleties of scribes and Pharisees, their intolerance and hardness... but you are not immune yourselves. It is not your fault. In the course of ages, you Hebrews have slowly absorbed the... the human exhalations of those who have adulterated the pure superhuman Law of God. You know. When a man continues to live for years in a way which is different from that of his native country, because he is in a foreign country and his children and the children of his children live there, it happens that his offspring end up by becoming like the people of the place where they are. They become so acclimatised that they lose even their national physical appearance, in addition to moral habits, and unfortunately, also the religion of their ancestors... But here are the others. Let us go to the synagogue. »

« Are You going to speak? »

« No. I am a simple believer. I spoke this morning through miracles... »

« Provided that it is not going to be detrimental... » Peter is really dissatisfied and worried, but he follows the Master Who has joined the other apostles and meets on the road with the man from Giscala and other people, probably from the village.

In the synagogue the minister, out of deference to Jesus, addresses Him asking: « Will You explain the Law, Rabbi? »

But Jesus refuses and like a simple believer follows all the ceremonies, kissing like the others the parchment presented to Him by the assistant (I call him thus because I do not know what name to give the assistant of the synagogue minister) and listening

to the explanation of the passage chosen by the minister. However, although He does not speak, His aspect is already a sermon owing to the way He prays... Many look at Him. Gamaliel's disciple does not lose sight of Him for one moment. And the apostles keep good watch on the disciple, suspicious as they are.

Jesus does not even turn round when some people speak in low voices at the entrance of the synagogue distracting many believers. But the rite comes to an end and the people go out into the square of the synagogue. Although Jesus was closer to the back than to the front of the synagogue, He is one of the last to come out and He goes towards the house to get His sack and depart. Many people of the town follow Him and among them is Gamaliel's disciple, who at a certain moment is called by three men leaning against the wall of a house. He speaks to them and then elbows his way with them towards Jesus.

« Master, these men wish to speak to You » he says attracting the attention of Jesus Who was speaking to Peter and His cousin Judas.

« Scribes! I told You! » exclaims Peter already upset.

Jesus bows to the three men who greet Him and He asks: « What do you want? »

The oldest man says: « As You did not come, we came. And that no one may think that we have infringed the Sabbath, we inform everybody that we covered the road in three different periods of time. The first until the last light of sunset lasted. The second, of six stadia, while moonlight illuminated the paths. The third ended just now and it did not exceed the legal measure. We say that for your souls and ours, but for our minds we apply to Your wisdom. Are You aware of what happened in the town of Giscala? »

« I came from Capernaum. I do not know anything. »

« Listen. A man who had been away from home for a long time on business, learned, when he came back, that during his absence his wife had been unfaithful to him, to the extent of giving birth to a child, who could not be of her husband, as he had been away for fourteen months. The man killed his wife secretly. But he was denounced by a man who had been informed by the maid-servant and was killed, according to the law of Israel. The lover, who according to the Law should be stoned, has taken shelter at Kedesh and he will certainly try to go to other places. The illegitimate child, whom the husband wanted to kill as well, was not handed to him by the woman who suckled him and she went to Kedesh to excite the pity of the true father and convince him to take care of his son, because her husband is opposed to keeping the illegitimate child in his house. But the man rejected her and his son stating that the latter would be a hindrance to him in his flights. What is Your opinion on the matter? »

« I do not think that it can be judged any more. All judgement, whether right or wrong, has already been given. »

« Which judgement, according to You, is just and which is unjust. There is disagreement among us concerning the punishment of the murderer. »

Jesus stares at them, one after the other. He then says: « I will speak. But first answer My questions, whatever their weight may be. And be sincere. Did the man who murdered his wife belong to this town? »

« No. He settled here when he married the woman who is from here. »

« Did the adulterer come from here? »

« Yes, he did. »

« How did the man find out that his wife had been unfaithful to him? Was their sin known in public? »

« Not really, and we do not know how the man was able to find out. The woman had been away for months saying that, as she did not want to be all alone, she was going to Ptolemais to stay with some relatives, and she came back saying that she had brought with her the little son of a relative of hers who had died. »

« When she was in Giscala was her behaviour impudent? »

« No. In fact we were all surprised to hear that Marcus had an affair with her. »

« My relative is not a sinner. He is accused but he is innocent » says one of the three men who had never spoken so far.

« Was he a relative of yours? Who are you? » asks Jesus.

« The first of the Elders of Giscala. That is why I wanted the life of the murderer, because he not only killed, but he killed an innocent » and he looks sullenly at the third man, who is about forty years old and who replies: « The Law says that the murderer is to be killed. »

« You wanted the lives of the woman and of the adulterer. »

« That is the Law. »

« Had there been no other reason, no one would have spoken. »

The dispute becomes animated and the two antagonists almost forget about Jesus. But the one who was the first to speak, the oldest man, imposes silence saying impartially: « It is not possible to deny that a homicide has been committed, neither can one deny that there has been a fault. The woman confessed it to her husband. But let the Master speak. »

« I say: how did the husband find out? You have not answered My question. »

The man defending the woman says: « Because someone spoke as soon as the husband came back. »

« In that case I say that his soul was not pure » says Jesus lowering His eyelids to veil His eyes so that they may not accuse.

But the forty year old man who wanted the death of the woman and of the adulterer exclaims: « I did not hunger for her. »

« Ah! it is clear now! It was you who spoke! I suspected that, but now you have betrayed yourself! Assassin! »

« And you are an accomplice of the adulterer. If you had not warned him, he would not have escaped us. But he is your relative! That is how justice is done in Israel! That is why you are defending also the memory of the woman: to defend your relative. If she were the only one involved, you would not worry about her. »

« And what about you, who hurled the man against the woman to take vengeance for her refusals? »

« And what about you, the only witness against the man, and you paid a maid-servant in that house to be helped by her? One witness only is not a valid one. That's the Law. » A terrible uproar!

Jesus and the old man try to calm the two men who represent two opposed interests and trends and who reveal an incurable hatred of two families. They succeed with some difficulty and Jesus now speaks calmly and solemnly, after defending Himself from the accusation of one of the two opponents, who said: « You Who protect prostitutes... »

« I not only say that consummated adultery is a crime against God and one's neighbour, but I say: also he who craves lustfully for the wife of another man commits adultery in his heart and commits a sin. It would be dreadful if every man who has craved for the wife of another man should be put to death! Lapidators would need to have stones in their hands all the time. But if the sin often remains unpunished on the Earth, it will be expiated in the next life, because the Most High said: "You shall not commit adultery and you shall not covet your neighbour's wife", and God's word is to be obeyed. But I also say: "Woe betide him who is the cause of scandal and him who informs against his neighbour". In this case everybody is guilty. The husband: was it really necessary for him to leave his wife for such a long time? Did he always treat her with the love that conquers the heart of a companion? Did he examine himself to ascertain whether the woman had not been offended by him before he was offended by her? The law of retaliation says: "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth". But if it says so to exact amends, are these to be given by one only? I am not defending the adulteress. But I say: "How many times could she have accused her husband of that sin?" »

The people whisper: « It is true! It is true! » and also the old man from Giscala and Gamaliel's disciple agree.

Jesus goes on: «... I say: why did he, who caused such a tragedy out of revenge, not fear God? Would he have liked all that to happen in his family? I say: the man who ran away and who after enjoying himself and causing ruin now disowns also the innocent

child, does he think that by fleeing he will escape the eternal Avenger? That is what I say. I also say: the Law exacted the lapidation of adulterers and the killing of murderers. But the day will come when the Law, necessary to control the violence and lust of men not fortified by the Grace of the Lord, will be modified, and if the commandments: "You shall not kill and you shall not commit adultery" remain, the sanctions against such sins will be referred to a higher justice than that of hatred and blood. A justice, compared with which, the surviving ever false undeserving justice of human judges, all of whom are adulterers, and perhaps several times adulterers, if not even killers, will be less than nothing. I am speaking of the justice of God Who will ask men also the reason for lustful desires which are the causes of revenge, delations, murders, and above all will ask them why they deny guilty people time to redeem themselves and why they compel innocent people to bear the burden of other people's faults. They are all guilty in this case. Everybody. Also the judges urged by opposing reasons of personal revenge. One only is innocent. And My pity is for him. I cannot go back. But which of you will be charitable to the baby and to Me Who am suffering for him? » Jesus looks at the crowd with eyes expressing sad prayer.

Many say: « What do You want? Remember: he is illegitimate. »

« There is a woman in Capernaum whose name is Sarah. She comes from Aphek. She is one of My disciples. Take the child to her and say: "Jesus of Nazareth entrusts him to you". When the Messiah, Whom you are expecting, establishes His Kingdom and issues His laws, which do not cancel the Word of Sinai but they complete it through charity, illegitimate children will no longer be motherless, because I shall be the Father of those who have no father and I will say to My believers: "Love them for My sake". And other things will be changed, because violence will be replaced by love.

Perhaps you were expecting Me to deny the Law when you questioned Me. And that is why you were looking for Me. Say to yourselves and to those who sent you that I came to perfect the Law, not to deny it. Say to yourselves and to the others that He Who preaches the Kingdom of God cannot certainly teach what in the Kingdom of God would be horror and consequently could not be accepted there. Say to yourselves and to the others that you must remember Deuteronomy: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet from your country, from your brothers. Listen to him. This is what you asked of the Lord your God at Horeb and you said: 'Do not let me hear again the voice of the Lord my God, nor look any longer on this great fire and I may not die'. And the Lord said to me: 'They have spoken well and I will raise up a prophet like yourself for them from their own brothers and I will

put My words into his mouth and he shall tell them all I command him. And if anyone does not listen to the words that he speaks in My name, I will avenge Myself on him".

God sent His Word to you that He might speak without killing you with His voice. God had already said so much to man and it was more than man deserved to hear from God. So much was said by means of the Law of Sinai and through the Prophets. But so much was still to be said and God kept it for His prophet of the time of Grace, for the One Promised to His people, in Him is the Word of God and through Him forgiveness will be accomplished. Founder of the Kingdom of God, He will codify the Law with new precepts of love, because the time of love has come. And He will not ask the Most High for vengeance on those who do not listen, but He will only beg that the fire of God may melt the hearts of stone and the Word of God may penetrate them and found in them the Kingdom which is the Kingdom of the spirit, just as its King is a spiritual King. To whoever loves the Son of man, the Son of man will give the Way, Truth, Life to go to God, to know Him and to live the eternal Life. Sources of light will be opened in whoever accepts My word, so that they may know the concealed meaning of the words of the Law and they may see that prohibitions are not threats but invitations of God, Who wants men to be happy, not damned, to be blessed, not cursed.

Once again you have made use of a question already resolved, but not as holiness would have resolved it, but as an inquisitive instrument to catch Me in sin. But I know that I am not sinning. And I am not afraid to speak My mind, which is: for making profit the aim of his life, the murderer has paid first with disgrace and then with death. The woman has paid for her sin with her death and this will surprise you but it is the truth - her confession to convince her husband to have pity for the innocent child, has diminished in the eyes of God the weight of her sin. The others: you and you, and he who fled with no pity even for his own child, are more guilty than the first two. Are you grumbling? You have not paid with your lives, neither have you the extenuating circumstances of the husband of the adulteress or those of the woman for being neglected and for her confession.

You have all committed a sin, all of you with the exception of the wet-nurse of the innocent child: the sin of rejecting the innocent like a shameful evil. You were able to kill the homicide. You would have been able to kill also the adulterers. You have been able to do and would have been able to do what is severe justice. But not one has been or is able to stretch out his arms and have pity for the innocent child. But you are not fully responsible. You do not know... You never know exactly what you do and what ought to be done. And that is your excuse. When this disciple of Gamaliel

came to Me, he said: "Come. They want to consult You with regard to a fact the consequences of which are still lasting". The consequences are the innocent child. Well, now that you are aware of My opinion, are you going to change your judgement where it is still changeable?

I said to this man: "I do not judge. I forgive". Gamaliel said: "Only Jesus of Nazareth would judge with justice in this case". I, as I told this man, would have advised everybody, I say everybody, not to strike until the matter had been carefully examined and passions had subsided. Many things could have been changed without infringing the Law. The matter is over now. And may God forgive those who repented or will repent. I have nothing else to say. Or rather, I have still one thing: may God forgive you once again for tempting the Son of man. »

« Not I, Master! Not I! I... I love Gamaliel as a disciple should love his master: more than a father. More, because a rabbi perfects the intellect, which is greater than the body. And... I cannot leave my rabbi to follow You. But to greet You, I can find no other words but those of Judith's canticle. They rise from the depth of my heart because I found justice and wisdom in all Your words. "Adonai, Lord, You are great and magnificent in Your power. No one can conquer You. No one can resist Your voice. Those who fear You will be great in Your eyes in everything!"... I will go to Capernaum to see the woman You mentioned... Pray for me that my stone may melt and may be pierced by the Word which establishes the Kingdom of God in us... Now I have understood. We are mistaken. And we disciples are the less guilty... »

« What are you saying, you fool? » interrupts violently the Elder of Giscala addressing Gamaliel's disciple.

« What am I saying? I am saying that my master is right. And that he who tempts Him to establish a temporal kingdom is a demon, because He is a true Prophet of the Most High and Wisdom speaks through His lips. Tell me, Master, what must I do? »

« Meditate. »

« But... »

« Meditate. You are an unripe fruit. And you need to be engrafted, too. I will pray for you. » He then tells the apostles to follow Him and when they have picked up their bags, He sets out with them leaving all comments behind.

#### **471. Cure of the Boy Born Blind from Sidon.**

15th August 1944.

I see Jesus come out of a synagogue surrounded by His apostles and by a crowd of people. I realise that it is a synagogue, because through the wide open door I can see the same furniture that I saw

in the synagogue of Nazareth, in one of the visions preparing for Passover.

The synagogue is in the main square of the village. A bare square, surrounded only by houses, with a basin in the centre nourished by a fountain pouring lovely clear water from only one jet of stone carved like a bent tile. The basin is used to water quadrupeds and many doves which fly about from house to house; the fountain to fill the jugs of women, beautiful copper amphorae, some of which are hammered, some smooth, all shining in the sun. Because it is sunny and warm. The earth of the square is dry and yellowish, as when it is parched by strong sunshine. There is not even one tree in the square. But branches of fig-trees and vineshoots hang out over the little walls of orchards along the four roads which depart from the square. It must be the end of summer and the end of a day, because ripe bunches of grapes are hanging from the pergolas, and sunbeams are not perpendicular but oblique as at sunset.

In the square some people are waiting for Jesus. But I do not see any miracle among them. Jesus passes, He bends over them, He blesses and comforts them, but does not cure them, at least for the time being. There are also women with children and men of all ages. They appear to be known to the Master, Who greets them calling them by their names and they crowd round Him with familiarity. Jesus caresses the children bending lovingly over them.

In a corner of the square is a woman with a little boy or girl (they are all dressed alike with light coloured little tunics). She does not seem to come from here. I would say that she is of higher social standing than the others. Her dress is more elaborate, with braids and folds; it is not the plain tunic of ordinary women with only a cordon to adorn and shape it. This woman, instead, is wearing an elaborate dress, which, although not a masterpiece like the garments of Mary Magdalene, is very graceful. She has a light veil on her head, much lighter than the other women's veils, which are made of thin linen fabric, whereas hers is almost muslin, so light it is. It is gracefully pinned at the middle of her head, displaying her well combed brown hair, with locks plaited in a simple fashion, but with more skilled care than those of the other women, whose tresses are in a knot on the napes of their necks or form a circle round their heads. On her shoulders she has a real mantle, that is, a cloth which I do not know whether it is sewn or woven in a round shape, with around the neck a braid ending in a silver clasp. The cloth of the mantle falls in beautiful wide folds down to her ankles.

The woman is holding by the hand the little boy or girl I mentioned previously. A lovely boy about seven years old. He is also strong, but not in the least lively. He is standing very quietly beside

his mother, his hand in hers, with his head lowered, without taking an interest in what is happening.

The woman is watching but she dare not approach the group which has gathered round Jesus. She seems undecided, as while she is urged by her desire to go, she is afraid of moving forward. She then decides to take a middle course: to attract Jesus' attention. She sees Him take in His arms a beautiful big rosy smiling baby whom a mother has offered Him and whom He dandles pressing him to His heart while speaking to a little old man. She bends over her little boy and says something to him.

The boy raises his head. I now see a sad little face, with closed eyes. He is blind. « Have mercy on me, Jesus! » he says. The infantile little voice cleaves the still air of the square and arrives as far as the group with its lament.

Jesus turns round and sees him. He moves at once with loving care. He does not even hand back to its mother the child He is holding in His arms. Tall and most handsome as He is, He goes towards the blind boy, who after crying, has lowered his head again, in vain urged by his mother to repeat the cry.

Jesus is now before the woman. He looks at her. She also looks at Him; then she timidly lowers her eyes. Jesus helps her. He has handed the child He had in His arms to the woman who gave it to Him.

« Woman, is this son yours? »

« Yes, Master, he is my first-born. »

Jesus caresses his bent head. Jesus does not seem to have noticed the blindness of the little one. But I think that He does so deliberately to let the mother make her request.

« So the Most High has' blessed your house with numerous children and giving you first the son sacred to the Lord. »

« I have only one son; this one and three girls. And I will not have any more... » She sobs.

« Why are you weeping, woman? »

« Because my son is blind, Master! »

« And you would like him to be able to see. Can you believe? »

« I do believe, Master. I was told that You have opened eyes which were closed. But my boy was born with dried eyes. Look at him, Jesus. There is nothing under his eyelids... »

Jesus raises towards Himself the little face prematurely serious and looks closer lifting the eyelids with His thumbs. There are empty spaces under them. He resumes speaking holding with His hand the little face raised towards Himself.

« Why have you come, then, woman? »

« Because... I know that it is more difficult for my boy... but if it is true that You are the Expected One, You can do it. Your Father created the worlds... Could You not make two eyes for my child? »

« Do you believe that I come from the Father, the Most High Lord? »

« I believe it and I believe that You can do everything. »

Jesus looks at her as if He wished to evaluate how much faith there is in her and how pure is her faith. He smiles. He then says: « Child, come to Me » and He takes him by the hand to a little wall, about half a metre high, built on the road against a house, a kind of parapet to protect it from the road, which has a bend just there.

When the boy is steady on the wall, Jesus becomes grave and imposing. The crowds press round Him, the boy and the anxious mother. I see Jesus from one side, in profile. He is all enveloped in His very dark blue mantle, which He wears over a tunic a little lighter in shade. His face is inspired. He looks taller and even sturdier, as is usual when the power of miracles emanates from Him. But this time He seems more imposing. He lays His hands open on the boy's head, and places His thumbs against the hollow eyesockets. He raises His head praying fervently, but without moving His lips: He is certainly conversing with His Father. He then says: « See! I want it! And praise the Lord! » and to the woman: « Let your faith be rewarded. Here is your son who will be your honour and your peace. Show him to your husband. He will love you once again and your house will be blessed with further happy days. »

The woman, who has uttered a shrill cry of joy when, the divine thumbs being removed, from the empty eye-sockets two deep blue wonderful eyes, like those of the Master, look at her full of wonder and happiness, under the fringe of dark hair, cries once again, and although she still presses her son against her heart, she kneels at Jesus' feet saying: « Are You aware also of that? Ah! You really are the Son of God. » And she kisses His mantle and sandals and then stands up transfigured with joy and says: « Listen, everybody. I have come from the distant land of Sidon. I came because another mother spoke to me of the Rabbi of Nazareth. My husband, a Jewish merchant, has stores in that town to trade with Rome. He is rich and faithful to the Law, but he has no longer loved me since I, after giving him an unhappy boy, gave birth to three girls and then I became barren. He left the house and although I had not been repudiated, I was living in the same situation as if I had been divorced, and I was already aware that he wanted to get rid of me to have from another woman an heir capable of carrying on his trade and enjoying his wealth. Before coming here I went to my husband and I said to him: "Wait, sir, wait until I come back. If I come back and my son is still blind, you may repudiate me. Otherwise do not break my heart and do not deny your children a father". And he swore to me: "By the glory of the Lord, woman, I swear to you that if you bring back my son cured - I do not know how you will be able to do that as your womb was not able to give

him eyes - I will come back to you as in the days of our first love". The Master did not know of my grief as a wife, and yet He comforted me also in that respect. Glory be to God and to You, Master and King. » The woman is on her knees once again and is weeping for joy.

« Go. Tell Daniel, your husband, that He Who created the worlds, has given two bright stars as eyes to the little one sacred to the Lord. Because God is faithful to His promises and has sworn that he who believes in Him will see all kinds of wonders. Let him now be faithful to his oath and let him not commit a sin of adultery. Tell Daniel that. Go. Be happy. I bless you and this child and with you I bless all those who are dear to you. »

The crowd is a chorus of praises and congratulations and Jesus goes into a nearby house to rest.

The vision ends thus. And I can assure you that I was deeply moved by it.

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Jesus says:

« God always surpasses the requests of His children, when they have faith in Him, and gives them even more. Believe it and let everybody believe it. To the woman who came to Me from Sidon with two swords piercing the secrets of her heart and who dared to tell Me the name of only one of them, I gave also a second miracle, because it is more grievous to reveal certain intimate misfortunes than to say: "I am not well".

In the eyes of the world it may have seemed and may still seem much easier to establish reconciliation between husband and wife separated by a reason which has been satisfactorily overcome, than to give two eyes to someone born without them. But it is not so. It is most simple for the Lord and Creator to make two eyes, just as simple as to give the breath of life back to a corpse. The Master of Life and of Death, the Master of everything there is in Creation does certainly not lack the breath of life to be instilled into dead bodies or two drops of humour for a dried eye. If He wants, He can. Because it depends exclusively on His power. But when it is a matter of reconciliation between men, the "will" of men is required together with the desire of God. God only rarely does violence to human freedom. As a rule He lets you act as you wish.

That woman, who lived in a country of idolaters and, like her husband remained faithful to the God of her fathers, already deserves benignity from God. And she deserved a double miracle, because she carried her faith beyond the limit of human measure and overcame the doubts and the denials of most Jewish believers, which is proved by what she said to her husband: "Wait until I come back", as she was certain of going back with her son cured. She deserved also the difficult miracle of opening the eyes of her

husband's spirit, as those eyes had become blind to love and to her grief, as they laid on her a blame, which is not a blame.

I would also like wives in particular, to meditate on the respectful humility of their sister.

"I went to my husband and I said to him: 'Wait, sir'". She was in the right because to blame a mother for a birth defect is foolish and cruel. Her heart was already rent by the sight of her unhappy child. She is doubly in the right because she was neglected by her husband since she became barren, and she was aware of his intention to divorce her, and yet she remained his "wife": that is, the faithful companion, submissive to her companion, as prescribed by God and taught by the Scriptures. She did not harbour thoughts of rebellion or thirst for revenge or intention to find another man in order not to be the "lonely woman". "If I do not come back with my son cured, you can repudiate me. Otherwise do not break my heart and do not deny your children a father". Do you not seem to be hearing Sarah and ancient Hebrew women speak thus?

How different, o wives, is your present language! And how different, too, is what you get from God and from your husbands. And families are ruined more and more.

As usual, in working the miracle, I had to give it a sign to make it more incisive. I had to persuade a world enclosed in the barriers of an age-old way of thinking, led by a sect hostile to Me. Hence the necessity for making My supernatural power shine clearly. But the teaching of the vision does not consist in that. It consists in the faith, humility, faithfulness to one's consort, in the right path undertaken, o wives and mothers, who have found thorns where you expected to have roses, to see new flowery branches grow on the thorns which prick you.

Turn to your Lord God Who created marriage so that man and woman might not be alone and might love each other, forming one only indissoluble body, since they were joined together, and Who gave you the Sacrament so that His blessing might descend upon your marriage, and through My merits you may have what you need in your new life of consorts and procreators. And in order to be able to turn to Him with confident faces and souls, be honest, good, respectful, faithful, true companions of your husbands, not just guests in their houses, or worse still, strangers which chance has gathered under one roof, like two who meet by chance in a hotel of pilgrims.

That happens too often nowadays. Does man make a mistake? He is wrong. But that does not justify the behaviour of too many wives. And you are even less justified when you do not render good for good and love for love to a kind companion. I will not even take into consideration the too common case of your carnal unfaithfulness which makes you like prostitutes with the aggravating

circumstance that you are hypocritically vicious, and you pollute the family altar around which are the angelical souls of your innocent children. But I refer to your moral unfaithfulness to the pact of love sworn before My altar.

Well: I said: "He who looks at a woman with lustful desire commits adultery in his heart"; I said: "He who dismisses his wife with a libel of divorce, exposes her to adultery". But now that too many wives are strangers to their husbands, I say: "Those who do not love their companions with their souls, minds and bodies, incite them to adultery, and if I ask such husbands why they committed adultery, I will also ask their wives the same question, because although they do not perform it, they cause it". It is necessary to understand the Law of God in its full extent and depth and it is necessary to live it in full truthfulness.

Remain with My peace, the above does not apply to you, and keep your heart fixed in Mine. »

#### **472. A Vision that Is Lost in a Rapture of Love.**

Jesus says:

« You will put here the vision of 15th August 1944: Jesus cures the boy born blind from Sidon. »

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15th August 1946.

As they often do while walking, perhaps to alleviate the monotony of their continuous travelling with this distraction, the apostles speak to one another recapitulating and commenting on the latest events, questioning now and again the Master, Who in general speaks very little, just not to be unkind, making such effort only when it is the case of teaching the crowds or His apostles, or correcting wrong ideas, or comforting unhappy people.

Jesus was the « Word », but He certainly was not a « chatterbox »! As patient and kind as nobody else, He never appeared to be bored when He had to repeat a concept once, twice, ten times, a hundred times to make it enter the heads hardened by pharisaical and rabbinical precepts, neglecting His own tiredness, at times so exhausting as to be painful, in order to relieve the moral or physical suffering of a person. But it is clear that He prefers to be silent, keeping aloof in quiet meditation which may last for many hours, if He is not distracted by someone questioning Him. He generally walks ahead of His apostles, with His head slightly bent, raising it now and again to look at the sky, the country, people, animals. I said to look. But that is wrong. I must say: to love. Because it is a smile, God's smile that from His eyes pours forth to caress the world and creatures: a love-smile. Because it is love that shines forth, spreads, blesses and purifies the light of His eyes, which are

so bright, most bright, when He comes out of intense concentration.

What are His concentrations like? I think - and I am sure that I am not mistaken, because it is enough to watch His countenance to see what they are - I think that they are much more than our ecstasies in which a human creature already lives in Heaven. They are the « sensible reunion of God with God ». Divinity is always present and united to the Christ, Who is God like the Father. On the Earth as in Heaven the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father, They love each other and by loving each other They generate the Third Person. The power of the Father is the generation of the Son and the act of generating and being generated creates the Fire, that is, the Spirit of the Spirit of God. The Power turns to the Wisdom Whom It generated and Who turns to the Power in the joy of being One for the Other and of knowing each other for what They are. And since all good reciprocal knowledge creates love - even our imperfect knowledge does - there is the Holy Spirit... There is the One Who, if it were possible to add perfection to divine perfections, ought to be called the Perfection of Perfection. The Holy Spirit! The simple thought of Him fills one with light, joy, peace...

In the ecstasies of the Christ, when the incomprehensible mystery of the Unity and Trinity of God was renewed in the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, what complete perfect, bright, sanctifying, joyful, peaceful production of love must have been engendered and must have spread like heat from a blazing furnace, like incense from a burning thurible, to kiss with the kiss of God the things created by the Father, made by means of the Son-Word, made for the Love, for the only Love, because all the operations of God are Love? And that is the look of the Man-God when as Man and as God He raises His eyes, which have contemplated in Himself the Father, Himself and the Love, to look at the Universe, admiring the creative power of God, as Man; rejoicing, as God, at being able to save it in the royal creatures of such creation: men.

Oh! no one can, no one will ever be able, neither poet, nor artist, nor painter, to make visible to the crowds that look of Jesus, when He comes off the embrace, from the sensible reunion with the Divinity, always united to the Man hypostatically, but not always so deeply sensible to the Man, Who was the Redeemer and Who thus, to His many sorrows, to His many annihilations had to add this one, this very deep grief, of no longer being always able to be in the Father, in the great vortex of the Love, as He was in Heaven: almighty... free... joyful. Wonderful is the power of His look in regard to miracles, most kind is the expression of His eyes as man, very sad the light of sorrow in the hours of grief... But they are still human, although perfect in expression. This look of God, Who has contemplated and loved Himself in the Triniform Unity is

beyond comparison, there is no adjective for it... And the soul prostrates itself before Him, worshipping, having become a mere « nonentity » in the knowledge of God, but blessed in contemplating His infinite love.

The torrents of delight are flowing into my soul... I am blessed! All grief, every memory is made void under the waves of the love of Jesus God... and these waves raise me to Heaven, to Heaven, to You!...

Thanks, my adorable Love!... Thanks!... Now I still serve You... The creature has become a woman again, she is once again the mouthpiece after being for an instant a « seraph ». She is once again a woman, a martyr, perhaps another torment is already behind my back... But the light You gave me is shining in my spirit, the blissful light of contemplating You; neither flood of tears nor cruel tortures will be able to put it out. Thank You, my Blessed One! You alone love me!

I now understand Paul as never before! « Who will be able to separate us from the love of Christ?... We triumph through these trials by the power of Him Who loved us... I am certain that neither death nor life, no angel, no prince, no virtue, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God that is in Jesus Christ our Lord ». It is the victorious jubilant paean blaring from the groups of the winners, of the lovers, of those saved by love, because this is holiness: salvation received because one has been loved and has loved. It is already blaring! And the spirit, even here, a prisoner on the Earth, hears it and sings its joy, its trust, its certainty... And light, even more light comes, and the luminous words of the Apostle brighten even more, even more... «... the love of God that is in Jesus Christ our Lord ».

Indeed, now I understand the words of Azariah, last winter: « Jesus is the compendium of the love of the Three ». Indeed! All Love is in Him. We men can find this love of God without waiting to go back to God, without awaiting Heaven, by loving Jesus. Yes! Springs of living water, sources of light, sources of love open for those who believe, because those who believe go to Jesus, because those who believe, believe that Jesus is in the Eucharist with His Body, Blood, Soul, Divinity, as He was on the Earth, as He is in Heaven, with His Heart, with His Heart! And in Jesus' Heart there is the love of God. And when a man receives the Most Holy Body of Jesus, he receives in himself the Heart of Jesus. Thus he has in himself not only Jesus, but he has the Love of God, that is, he has God the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, because the Love of God is the Most Holy Trinity that is one thing only: Love. The Love that divides into three flames to make us trebly happy. Happy to have a Father, a Brother a Friend. Happy to have who provides,

who teaches, who loves. Happy to have God!

Oh! I can no longer bear this!... Lord, Your gift is too great! Who obtains it for me from Heaven? Is it You, Most Blessed Mother, contemplated in Your splendour of Queen of Heaven, where You have been bodily received? Is it you, lover of Christ, kind John of Bethsaida, my friend? Is it you, amiable Patriarch protector of those who are persecuted, solicitous supplier of consolation, most venerable Joseph? Is it you, my great little sister, Therese of the Child Jesus, who obtain for me what I have been asking for these twenty-one years: that the waves of the Love may overflow into my soul? Oh! if it is you, complete the work. Obtain for me to die not in one of these assaults of love. I am a little soul, too, and I do not wish extraordinary things. But to die after one of these assaults of love, when I have become again a « little, very little soul », made even smaller by the knowledge of what is the Infinite Love, after one of these assaults, because after, it is as if one were baptised again by love and no shadows of stains are left in us. Love bums... Or is it you, Azariah, my good friend, who have obtained this hour of blessedness for me, because of all the tears you collected from my eyes and you took to Heaven? If it is you, may you be blessed for that!

But I do not ask you, Therese, Joseph, John and the Blessed Virgin to let me have that ecstasy again, to fill me with joy and fire. But I ask and implore you to let other hearts have it, particularly those known to you, those hearts that torture mine and displease God, Whom they cannot perceive or obey. If those hearts have one instant only of those assaults of love, they will be converted to the Love, to the true Love. They will love. With their whole selves. Above all with their intellects that will reject the barriers of rationalism, of human science, which deny and hamper simple good faith and set limits to the power of God. And with their hearts in which the crusts of selfishness, of envy, of hatred will melt like wax near a fire...

Do that, my dearest ones. I accept to never place my lips again on the refreshing chalice of love, I accept to drink for ever, until my return to God, the bitter chalice of all renunciations, but let them go back to the bright path, let them be sanctified in all their actions to deserve the sight of Jesus-God, as I was granted to enjoy it today. To deserve it here, to possess it for ever in Heaven, as I, hoping in my Lord, confide to possess it as well...

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The same day at 12 o'clock.

I read it again. I am thinking of the theologians who will read these pages. Perhaps they will find errors in my description of the ecstasies and of Jesus' concentration. Let them remember that I am a poor ignorant woman, that I know nothing about theology or

theological terms, and that I strive to say what I see as best I can and with the sentences that my poor mind can construct...

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16th August 1946

I say to Jesus: « Lord, yesterday You carried me away and everything was lost in You. The vision... ». He smiles with sweet divine joy and He replies caressing me:

« You sang instead of narrating. You sang. The whole of Paradise sang the glories of My Mother yesterday, and you sang with Paradise and at a certain moment Paradise listened to your "a solo". Do you know when? When you asked not to have the enjoyment, but that "they" should be invaded by love to be saved. Loving Heaven listened to you, because to renounce beatitude so that others may have Life is granted only to those who are on the Earth but are already citizens of Heaven. Owing to your singing the Saints remembered when they were the singers on the Earth. The Angels listened looking at your Azariah with brotherly satisfaction. Mary smiled offering your song to the Love. And the Love, oh! My Mary! and the Love kissed you... and still kisses you. Be happy. You have understood the Love. I am in you and, as you have understood, God One and Trine is in Me. Go along the roads of supernatural joy today, instead of the roads in Palestine towards Jesus' grief... Mary, are you not happy to be in the same condition as I was in my last year? That is also a gift, and a light to understand Me. Without a personal proportional experience, a human being could not understand what was My long Passion. But today, as yesterday, go along the paths of heavenly joy. God is with you. Be in peace. »

And thus the conversations of the apostles on the episode of Giscala, on the miracle of the blind boy, on Ptolemais to which they are directing their steps, on the road with steps cut in the rock which they climbed to arrive at the last village on the border between Syro-Phoenicia and Galilee - and it must be the one I saw when they went to Alexandrosene - on Gamaliel and so forth, are now over. Or rather, they are left, for what I heard of them, in my heart. I only say that I wanted to say this. That the apostles, who in the early days, when they were less spiritually perfected, used to disturb the Master for a trifle, now that they are more spiritually developed, respect His isolation and they prefer to speak among themselves, remaining a few steps behind Him. Only when they need some information, or His opinion, or they are urged by their love for the Master, do they approach Him.

### **473. Going towards Sephoris.**

17th August 1946.

« Get up and let us go » Jesus orders the apostles who are sleeping soundly on some hay - probably bog grass rather than hay - piled up near a little river, which is waiting for the autumn rains to fill its bed with water.

The apostles, still half asleep, obey without speaking. They pick up their sacks, put on the mantles which they had used as blankets during the night, and set out with Jesus.

« Are we going via the Carmel? »

« No, via Sephoris. We shall then take the road to Megiddo. We have just enough time... » replies Jesus.

« Yes. And the nights are becoming too damp and cold to sleep in the fields when for some reason no house gives us hospitality » remarks Matthew.

« Men! How easily they forget!... Lord? But will it always be like this? » asks Andrew.

« Yes. Always. »

« Well! If it is like this with You, when it is our turn, as soon as we turn our backs, everything will be cancelled » says Thomas downheartedly.

« But I say that there is someone who makes people forget. Because men, I agree, forget quite easily. But they do not always forget. I see that we men remember the things we have received and those which we have given. With regard to You, instead... No, it is always the same people who strive to cancel the memory of You » says Peter.

« Do not judge without a valid reason » says Jesus.

« Master, I have a good reason! »

« Have you? What have you discovered? » asks the Iscariot with keen interest, and at the same time other apostles ask the same question. But Judas is more eager, I would say that he is anxious.

Peter, who was looking at Jesus, turns round and looks at Judas... a quick, watchful suspicious glance, and he remains silent, while looking at him, for a moment. He then says: « Oh! nothing... and everything, if you do not mind being informed. Enough, if I were anxious to use every possible means to succeed, to go and report many facts to those who rule over us, and I am sure that someone would get into trouble. But I prefer not to be successful, rather than have help from that side. In matters concerning God I take only the help of God, and I would appear to be profaning the things of God if I should get them... to help to crush reptiles. They are reptiles themselves... and... I would not trust them... They are quite capable of crushing those who are denounced together with their denouncers... So... I act on my own. That's it! »

« But do you not realise that you are offending the Master? »

« I am? Why? »

« Because He approaches them. »

« He is He, and if He approached them He does not do it for any profit, but to take them to God. He can do it... and He does. But He does not run after them... You can see that... they have to come to Him to hear "the philosopher" as they say. But I don't think that they are so anxious now. And I am not weeping over it. »

« You seemed to be happy as well at Passover! »

« He seemed. Man is very often foolish. He no longer seems now, and he is not. And I am right. »

« As a person who does not mix human profit with spiritual matters, you are right, Simon. But as an apostle who rejoices at other people moving away from the Light, no, you are not right. If you considered that every soul won over to the Light is a glory for your Master, you would not speak thus » says Jesus.

Judas Iscariot looks at Peter with a sarcastic smile. Peter notices it... but he controls himself and does not say anything.

Jesus also notices it and, addressing Peter, but as if he were speaking to everybody He says: « You must know, however, that an excess of religious scruple, for a good purpose, is more justifiable than overlooking everything with indifference just to achieve a human aim. I have told you several times: it is the good will or the bad will which qualifies an action. And in this case it is good will, even if imperfect in its form, to oppose carrying human interests into superhuman matters, and what one considers unclean in the eyes of God. His intolerance is not fair because I have come for everybody. But his opinion is very close to perfection when he states that in the things of God one must have recourse only to His supernatural help, without begging for interested or utilitarian human help. » And with this impartial judgement Jesus puts an end to the argument.

They have crossed another river-bed parched by summer heat without getting wet, and they have reached the main road which from Sicaminon takes one towards Samaria, I think, if I remember correctly the place I saw previously. The road is very busy because of the oncoming festivity and it has already assumed the typical aspect of Palestinian roads when pilgrimages to the Temple are compulsory. There are wayfarers, donkeys, carts carrying people, tents, household furnishings for stops at halting-places and even in Jerusalem, which is always overcrowded at solemnities, so much so that it is advisable to camp on the surrounding hills, weather permitting. In the present festival of the Tabernacles the emigration of entire families is more noticeable, not because pilgrims are more numerous than at Passover and Pentecost, but as they are compelled to live in tents for some days, they have household furnishings which on the occasion of other solemnities they leave at

home. It is really the exodus of a people who rush from every direction towards the capital as blood, from every vein, flows towards the heart.

To understand even now the obstinate religion of Israel, so tenacious, so compact - whereby co-religionists help one another wherever they are, driven by destiny and, whatever the Country may be where they were born, that does not prevent another Jew of a different Country from always feeling that he is a brother and a fellow-country man of the co-religionist he meets - one must bear in mind that, although they are dispersed, persecuted, derided, apparently without a real Fatherland, they do not feel like that at all. They have their Fatherland, that their Jehovah gave them, they have their capital: Jerusalem, and from all over the world the best of their beings converges there: their spirits, their hearts. Have they sinned? Has God punished them? Have the prophecies come true? Yes, it is true. But they are still left with that bright cause of a shining hope: the reconstruction of the kingdom of Israel... of the Messiah Who is to come... And in the grief trembling with fear of having deserved to be censured by God, and in an everlasting question: « Was Jesus of Nazareth the true Messiah? » they try to be reconstituted as a Nation in order to have the Messiah; they try to keep their firm faith in their religion to deserve to be forgiven by God and see the promise accomplished.

I am a poor woman, I know nothing of political problems, I have never taken an interest in the present Jews and in their troubles, sometimes I even laughed at them as they are still awaiting Him Who has come and Whom they crucified, their tears seemed somewhat crocodilian to me, their actions did not seem and do not seem to be such as to deserve what they hope from God: not the Christ Who will come only on the Last Day, and not even the reconstruction of the scattered Jewish race as an independent Nation. But now that I spiritually see the ancestors of the present Jews, I understand their age-old tragedy and their tenacity, the source of their tenacity. They are still the People of God and by God's will they converge towards the land promised to their Fathers, to the Patriarchs, and for ages they have fulfilled the Mosaic rite, thinking of Jerusalem, of its Temple shining on the Moriah. Are they prevented from going there? Yes, they are. But their spirits go there.

Bayonets, guns, prisons serve against man, not against the spirit. Israel cannot perish because it has remained in its religion. A theoretic, Pharisaic, ritual religion devoid of what is the true life of a religion: the congruity of the spirit with the material rite? As you wish. But around the crumbled body that was a Nation, and is now numberless fragments scattered all over the Earth, there are ties of ideas, of rites, of age-old precepts, coming from

prophets and rabbis, to keep it together and, like a lighthouse visible from all over the world, a place shines: Jerusalem, and its name is like a cry to rally them all, it is like a flag waved to recall them, it is a memento, a promise. No. This people cannot be silenced by any human power. There is a strength in it greater than human power.

All this is understood when one watches these people go along impervious roads, in uncomfortable seasons, heedless of what is painful, cheerful with the joy of going to the Holy City. It is understood seeing them go, rich people with poor fellows, children with old men, from Palestine or from the Diaspora towards their heart: Jerusalem. It is understood hearing them sing their songs... And, I confess it, I wish we, Christians and Catholics, were like them, and we had for the heart of Catholicism, Rome, the Church, and for him who lives in it: the present Peter, the feelings of these people whom I see go on and on untiringly; I wish we had what they have, and in addition our Faith, which is perfect because it is Christian.

One may object: « They are full of faults. » And what about us? Are we faultless? We who have been fortified by Grace and the Sacraments? We who should be « perfect just as the Father Who is in Heaven is perfect »?

I have digressed. But, following the march of the apostles mingled with the other crowds of Israel, my mind is active... At a cross-roads a group of disciples sees the Master and they crowd round Him. Among them there is Abel of Bethlehem, who throws himself immediately at Jesus' feet saying: « Master, I have prayed the Most High so much that He might make me meet You. And I had given up hope. But He has heard me. I beg You now to hear Your disciple. »

« What do you want, Abel? Let us go over there, to the edge of the field. There are too many people here and we are causing trouble to them. »

They all go in a group to the spot pointed out by Jesus and Abel says what he wants. « Master, You saved me from death and from slander and You made me one of Your disciples. So do You love me very much? »

« How can you ask Me that? »

« I am asking You to be sure that You will hear my prayer. When You saved me, You punished my enemies with a terrible chastisement. You gave it, so it must be right. But, oh! Lord! it is so horrible! I looked for those three men. I looked for them every time I came to see my mother: in the mountains, in the caves near my town. But I could never find them. »

« Why were you looking for them.? »

« To speak to them of You, Lord. That believing in You, they

might invoke You and be forgiven and cured. I found them only in summer, but they were not together. One, the one who hated me because of my mother, left the others who went farther up, towards the highest mountains of Jiphthahel. They told me where he is staying... And I was given indications of their whereabouts by some shepherds of Bethlehem, the ones who gave You hospitality that night. Shepherds wander about quite a lot with their flocks, and they know many things. They knew that the two lepers I was looking for were in the mountain of the Beautiful Spring. I went there. Oh... » Horror appears on the face of the young man, who is still an adolescent.

« Go on. »

« They recognised me. But I could not recognise my fellowcitizens in those two monsters... They called me... and they prayed me, as if I were a god... The servant in particular aroused my pity, because of his sincere repentance. He wants nothing but Your forgiveness, Lord... Aser wants also to be cured. He has an old mother, Lord, an old mother who is dying broken-hearted in town... »

« And the other one? Why did he go away? »

« Because he is a demon. He is the most guilty one, he was already an adulterer when he became homicide, he incited Aser, he corrupted Joel's servant who is a bit silly and easily subdued, and he continues to be a demon. From his lips hatred and curses, from his heart hatred and cruelty. I saw him as well... I wanted to convince him to be good. He threw himself against me like a vulture and I found my salvation only in taking to flight, and as I am young and healthy I was able to run fast and for a good distance. But I have not lost all hope of saving him. I will go back... Once, twice, many times with succour and love and I will make him love me. He thinks that I go to sneer at his ruin. But I go to rebuild it. If he succeeds in loving me, he will listen to me, and if he listens to me he will end up by believing in You. That is what I want. Oh! it was easy with the others because they meditated and understood by themselves. And the servant has become the simple master of the other one, because there is so much faith in him and such a great desire to be forgiven. Come, Lord! I promised them that I would take You to see them whenever I met You. »

« Abel, their crime was a grave one, many crimes in one. They have expiated only for a short time... »

« Their torture has been great, and also their repentance. Do come. »

« Abel, they wanted your life. »

« It does not matter, Lord. I want to give them life. »

« Which life? »

« The life You give, the life of the spirit, forgiveness, redemption. »

« Abel, they were your Cains, and no one could have hated you more than they did. They wanted to deprive you of everything: of your life, honour and mother... »

« They have been my benefactors, because I had You through them. I love them because of that gift and I ask You to grant them to be where I am, among Your followers. I want their salvation like mine, more than mine, because their sin is greater. »

« What would you offer God in exchange for their salvation, if He should ask you for an offer? »

Abel thinks for a moment... then he says sure of himself: « Even myself. My life. I would lose a handful of rubbish to possess Heaven. A happy loss. A great, infinite gain: God, Heaven. And two sinners would be saved: the first-born of the flock, which I hope to lead and offer to You, Lord. »

Jesus makes a gesture which He never makes thus in public. He bends, because He is much taller than Abel, and taking his head with His hands, He kisses his lips saying: « Let it be so », at least I think that is what His « Maranatha » means. And He adds: « Because of your feeling let it be done to you according to the request of your words. Come with Me. You will lead Me. John, come with Me. And you can all go on, to Engannim via the Megiddo road. You will wait for Me there, if you do not meet Me before. »

« And we shall preach You and Your doctrine » says the Iscariot.

« No. You will wait. Nothing else, behaving like just and humble pilgrims, nothing else. And be like brothers to one another. And on your way you will call on Johanan's peasants and will give them what you have and tell them that, if possible, the Master will pass through Jezreel at dawn, in two days' time, as from today. Go. Peace be with you. »

#### **474. Jesus with the Leprous Sinners of Bethlehem in Galilee.**

19th August 1946.

The rough massif of Jiphthahel dominates to the north concealing the view. But where the steep slopes of this mountainous group begin, and they appear almost sheer to the caravan track running from Ptolemais towards Sephoris and Nazareth, there are many caves among the rocky blocks protruding from the mountain, hanging over the abyss, and placed like roofs and supports to the caverns.

As it is customary near the more important roads, there are some lepers who keep aloof but are sufficiently close to be seen and assisted by wayfarers. It is a small colony of lepers who give their scream of warning and invocation when they see Jesus pass with John and Abel. And Abel looks up at them saying: « This is He of

Whom I spoke to you. I am taking Him to the two men you know. Have you nothing to ask the Son of David? »

« What we ask everybody: bread, water, to eat our fill while pilgrims pass by. Later, in winter, we shall be starving... »

« I have no food today. But I have Health with me... »

But the suggestive invitation to have recourse to the Health is not accepted. The lepers turn their backs and withdraw from the cliff; they go round the spur of the mountain to see whether any pilgrims are coming from the other road.

« I think that they are heathen sailors or idolaters. They came a short time ago, driven out of Ptolemais. They came from Africa. I do not know how they were taken ill. I know that they were healthy when they left their country and after a long tour along the African coasts to get ivory, and I believe also pearls to be sold to Latin merchants, they arrived here and were diseased. The harbour officials isolated them and burned even their ship. Some took the roads to Syro-Phoenicia and some came here. These ones are more dangerously ill, because they can hardly walk any more. But their souls are even more diseased. I tried to instil some faith into them... They ask for nothing but food... »

« Perseverance is required in conversions. What does not succeed in one year, may succeed in two or more. One must insist speaking of God, even if they appear to be like the rocks sheltering them. »

« Am I wrong then in providing food for them?... I always brought them some food before the Sabbath, because the Jews do not travel on Sabbaths and no one thinks of them... »

« You did the right thing. You said it yourself: they are heathens, thus more anxious about their bodies and blood than their souls. The loving care you have for their hunger awakes their affection towards the unknown person who sees to them. And when they love you they will listen to you, also when you speak of something which is not food. Love precludes the desire to follow him whom one has learned to love. They will follow you one day in the ways of the spirit. Corporal works of mercy pave the way for spiritual ones, which make it so free and level, that the entry of God in a man prepared in such a way for the divine meeting takes place without the individual knowing it. He finds God within himself and he does not know whence He entered. Whence! At times behind a smile, behind a compassionate word, behind a piece of bread there is the initial opening of the door of a heart closed to Grace and the beginning of God's journey to enter that heart.

Souls! They are the most varied thing there is. No matter, and there are so many matters on the Earth, is so varied in its aspects as souls in their tendencies and reactions. See this mighty terebinth? It is in the middle of a wood of terebinths like it in species. How many are they? Hundreds and hundreds, perhaps  
a

thousand, perhaps more. They cover this rough slope of the mountain, exceeding with their sharp healthy smell of resins every other scent of the valley and mountain. But look. They are a thousand and more but, if you watch carefully, there is not one like any other in thickness, height, power, inclination, disposition. Some are as straight as blades, some face north, some south, some east, some west. Some have grown in deep earth, some on a protusion and no one knows how it can support the tree and how it can stand up itself, outstretched as it is over the abyss, almost forming a bridge, with the other versant, high above the torrent, which is now dry, but is so stormy in the rainy season. Some are twisted as if a cruel man had tortured them when they were tender plants, some are faultless. Some are leafy almost as far down as the ground, some are bare with just a tuft of leaves on their tops. Some have branches only on the right hand side. Some are leafy below while their tops have been burned by lightning. This one is withered and survives only in an obstinate branch, one only, which has come up almost from the root, sucking the surviving sap which dried up at the top. And this one, the first one I pointed out to you, as beautiful as a tree can be, has it perhaps a branch, a twig, a leaf - what do I say speaking of one leaf out of the thousands which it bears - which is like any other? They seem to be, but they are not. Look at this branch, the lowest one. Look at its top, just at the top of the branch. How many leaves are on that top? Perhaps two hundred thin green needles. And yet see? Is there one like any other in shade, size, freshness, flexibility, bearing, age? There is not.

It is the same with souls. As numerous as they are, as many are their differences in tendencies and reactions. And he who is not capable of understanding them and working on them according to their various tendencies and reactions, is not a good master and doctor of souls. It is not an easy task, My friends. One must study continuously and be accustomed to meditation which enlightens more than reading fixed texts for a long time. The book which a master and doctor of souls must study are the souls themselves. As many pages as souls and in each page many sentiments and passions of past and present times and in the embryo stage. So what is required is continuous, diligent, meditative study, constant patience, endurance, courage, in doctoring the most putrid wounds, to cure them without showing disgust, which disheartens the patient. And one must act without false pity, which in order not to mortify anybody by uncovering putrefaction and not removing it lest the rotten part might suffer, allows it to become gangrenous, poisoning the whole body. And at the same time prudence is needed to avoid irritating the wounds of hearts with too coarse manners and not to be infected by their contact: one must not be so

sure of oneself as to pretend that one is not afraid of being infected when dealing with sinners. And where do all these virtues, necessary to the master and doctor of souls, find light to see and understand, where do they find patience, which at times is heroic, to persevere although they are requited with indifference and often with insults, and their strength to doctor wisely, their prudence not to injure patients and themselves? In love. Always in love. It throws light on everything, it gives wisdom, strength and prudence. It preserves from the curiosity which causes people to take upon themselves the faults which have been cured.

When one is full of love one cannot have any other desire or science but love. See? Doctors say that when a man has been on the point of dying of a disease, it is most unlikely that he will catch the same disease again, because his blood has already been affected by it and has overcome it. The concept is not perfect, but it is not entirely wrong. But love, which is health and not a disease, does what doctors say and with regard to all bad passions. He who is deeply in love with God and his brothers, does not do anything which may grieve God and his brothers, consequently even if he approaches people with diseased spirits and he becomes acquainted with matters which love had so far concealed, he is not corrupted by them, because he remains faithful to love and does not commit sin. What do you expect sensuality to be when one has overcome it through charity? What are riches for those who find all treasures in the love of God and of souls? What are gluttony, avarice, incredulity, indolence, pride for those who crave only for God, for those who give themselves, even themselves to serve God, for those who find all their good in His Faith, for those who are urged by the untiring flame of charity and work indefatigably to give joy to God, for those who love God - to love Him is to know Him - and cannot become proud, because they see themselves as they are with regard to God?

One day you will be priests of My Church. You will therefore be the doctors and masters of spirits. Remember these words of Mine. It will not be the name you bear, or your garment, or the duties you perform that will make you priests, that is, ministers of Christ, masters and doctors of souls, but it will be the love which you possess to make you such. It will give you everything you need to be such, and the souls, although different one from another, will acquire one only likeness: that of the Father, if you know how to work on them with love. »

« Oh! what a beautiful lesson, Master! » says John.

« But shall we ever succeed in being such? » asks Abel.

Jesus looks at both of them, He then lays an arm round the neck of each and draws them towards Himself, one on His right, the other on His left hand side and kisses their hair saying: « You will

succeed because you have understood love. »

They go on walking for some time, with greater and greater difficulty because of the roughness of the path which is cut almost on the brink of the mountain. Below, in the distance, there is a road and one can see people walking along it.

« Let us stop, Master. See, over there, from that rocky platform the two lepers lower with a rope a basket to passersby, and their grotto is beyond the platform. I will call them now. » And he utters a cry moving forward, while Jesus and John remain behind, hidden among thick shrubs.

After a few moments a face appears... - let us call it a face because it is situated on top of a body, but it could be called also a snout, a monster, a nightmare... - and it looks down from a bush of blackberries.

« Is that you? But did you not leave for the Tabernacles? »

« I found the Master and I came back. He is here! »

If Abel had said: « Jehovah is hovering over your heads » very likely the cry, the gestures, the enthusiasm of the two lepers because while Abel was speaking also the other one appeared would not have been so sudden and respectful, in jumping out, onto the platform, in full sunshine, prostrating themselves on the ground and shouting: « Lord, we have sinned. But Your mercy is greater than our sin! » They shout so without even ensuring whether Jesus is really there, or whether He is still afar, on the way towards them. Their faith is such that it makes them see what their eyes - because of the sores on their eyelids and their prompt throwing of themselves on the ground - certainly did not see.

Jesus moves forward while they repeat: « Lord, our sin does not deserve to be forgiven, but You are the Mercy! Lord Jesus, for the sake of Your Name, save us. You are the Love which can overcome Justice. »

« I am the Love. That is true. But above Me is the Father. And He is the Justice » says Jesus severely, moving forward along the path with John.

The two raise their disfigured faces and look at Him through the tears streaming down their cheeks mingled with rotten matter. How horrible are those faces to be seen! Old? Young? Which is the servant? Which is Aser? It is impossible to say. The disease has assimilated them transforming them into two figures of horror and disgust.

I do not know how Jesus must seem to them, as He stands in the middle of the path, while the sun envelops Him with its beams and inflames his golden hair. I know that they look at Him and then they cover their faces moaning: « Jehovah! The Light! » Then they shout again: « The Father sent You to save. He calls You His Beloved One. He is pleased with You. He will not refuse You to

forgive us. »

« Forgiveness or health? »

« Forgiveness » shouts one. And the other: «... and then health. My mother is dying broken-hearted because of me. »

« If I forgive you, the justice of men will still remain, for you in particular. So of what avail is My forgiveness to make Your mother happy? » says Jesus temptingly, to make him say the words which He is waiting for in order to work the miracle.

« It is of great avail. She is a true Israelite. She wants the bosom of Abraham for me. And the place of expectation for Heaven is not for me because I have sinned too much. »

« Too much. You have said it. »

« Too much!... It is true... But You... Oh! Your Mother was there on that day... Where is Your Mother now? She felt pity for Abel's mother. I noticed that. And if She heard me now, She would have mercy on mine. Jesus, Son of God, in Your Mother's name, have mercy on me!... »

« And what would you do afterwards? »

« Afterwards? » They cast frightened glances at each other. The « afterwards » is the sentence of men, it is contempt, or flight, exile. They tremble before the prospect of recovery as if they were about to lose salvation. How attached are men to life! The two, caught in the dilemma of being cured and then being condemned by the law of men, or having to live as lepers, almost prefer to live as lepers. They admit it saying: « The punishment is dreadful! ». I realise that it is Aser in particular, one of the two homicides, to say so...

« It is dreadful. But at least it is justice. You were going to inflict it on this innocent man, you... with lustful aims, and you... for a handful of coins. »

« That is true! O my God! But he has forgiven us. We beg You to forgive us as well. It means that we shall die. But our souls will be saved. »

« Joel's wife was stoned because she was an adulteress. Her four children are living with her mother and are finding it difficult to make both ends meet, because Joel's brothers drove them out as illegitimate children and they took possession of their brother's property. Did you know that? »

« Abel told us... »

« And who will make amends for their misfortune? » Jesus' voice resounds like thunder, it is really the voice of God Judge and it is frightening. All alone in the sunshine, standing straight, He is the figure of terror. The two look at him with fear. Although the sunshine exacerbates their sores, they do not move, neither does Jesus, Who is completely enveloped in it. Elements lose their power in these hours of souls...

After some time Aser says: « If Abel wants to love me

thoroughly, let him go to my mother and tell her that God has forgiven me and... »

« I have not forgiven you yet. »

« But You will, because You can see my heart... And he will tell her that I want everything belonging to me to go to Joel's children. Whether I live or die, I renounce the wealth that made me vicious. »

Jesus smiles. He becomes transfigured in smiling, His countenance from severe becomes pitiful and in a changed voice He says: « I can see your hearts. Stand up. And raise your spirits to God blessing Him. As you are cut off from the world you may go away without the world knowing about you. And the world is waiting for you to give you the possibility to suffer and expiate. »

« Are You saving us, Lord?! Are You forgiving us?! Are You curing us?! »

« Yes, I am. I will let you live because life is painful particularly for those who have recollections like yours. But you cannot get out of here just now. Abel must come with Me, like all Hebrews he must go to Jerusalem. Wait for his return. It will coincide with your recovery. He will take you to the priest and will inform your mother. I will tell Abel what he must do and how to do it. Can you believe My words, even if I go away without curing you? »

« Yes, Lord, we can. But tell us once again that you are forgiving our souls. Do that. Then everything will happen when You wish. »

« I forgive you. May you revive with new spirits and sin no more. Remember that in addition to abstaining from sin, you must accomplish acts of justice directed at the complete cancellation of your debt in the eyes of God, and that consequently your penance is to be continuous, because your debt is a heavy one indeed! Yours in particular concerns all the commandments of the Lord. Think about it and you will see that not one of them is excluded. You forgot about God, you made sensuality your idol, you turned feast days into delirious idleness, you offended and dishonoured your mother, you helped in killing and you wanted to kill, you stole life and you wanted to rob a mother of her son, you deprived four children of their father and mother, you have been lustful, you bore false witness, you lewdly coveted the woman who was faithful to her dead husband, you coveted what belonged to Abel, so much so that you wanted to kill him to take possession of his property. »

Aser moans at each sentence: « It's true, it's true! »

« As you can see, God could have reduced you to ashes without resorting to human punishments. He spared you that I might save another man. But the eyes of God watch you and His Intelligence remembers. Go » and He turns round and goes back to the thicket near Abel and John, who had taken shelter under the trees on the mountain side.

And the two men, still disfigured, perhaps smiling - but who can tell when a leper smiles? - with the typical shrill metallic intermittent voice of lepers intone psalm 114 with sudden tone variations, while Jesus descends the mountain following the dangerous path...

« They are happy! » says John.

« I am happy, too » says Abel.

« I thought that You were going to cure them at once » says John again.

« So did I, as You usually do. »

« They were big sinners. This is a fair expectation for those who have sinned so much. Now listen, Ananias... »

« My name is Abel, Lord » says the surprised young man and he looks at Jesus, as if he were asking himself: « Why is He mistaking? »

Jesus smiles and says: « You are Ananias to Me, because you really seem to be born of the kindness of the Lord. Be so more and more. And listen. On the way back from the Tabernacles you will go to your town and tell Aser's mother what her son decided and that it is to be carried out as soon as possible, giving everything in atonement less one tenth. And that out of pity for the old mother who should leave Bethlehem of Galilee with you and go to Ptolemais, waiting for her son, who will join her and you with his companion. After leaving the woman with some disciple in town, you will go and get what is necessary for the purifications of lepers and you will leave only when everything is over. Make sure that the priest is not one who is aware of their past, and get one from a different town. »

« And then? »

« You will then go back home or join the disciples. And the two men who have been cured, will take the road of expiation. I am saying only what is essential. I leave man free to act afterwards... »

And they continue to go down, without tiring, despite the roughness of the road and the heat of the sun... without tiring and without speaking for a long time.

Then Abel breaks the silence saying: « May I ask a grace of You, Lord? »

« Which? »

« To let me go to my town. I am sorry to leave You. But that mother... »

« Go. But do not be late. You will get to Jerusalem just in time. »

« Thank You, Lord! I shall find but her, poor old soul, ashamed of everything, since Aser sinned. But she will smile once again. What shall I tell her in Your name? »

« That her tears and prayers have achieved grace and that God encourages her to hope more and more and that He blesses her. But

before parting, let us stop for an hour. Not more. It is not the time to stop. Then you will go your way, John and I Mine, taking short cuts. And you, John will go ahead of Me, to My Mother. You will take Her this bag containing linen garments and you will come with woollen ones. You will tell Her that I want to see Her and that I shall be waiting for Her in the wood of Mattathias, the one belonging to his wife. You know it. Speak to Her alone and come at once. »

« I know where is the wood. And what about You? Are You remaining alone? »

« I am remaining with My Father. Be not afraid » says Jesus raising His hand and laying it on the head of His beloved disciple, who is sitting on the grass beside Him. And He smiles at him saying: « But we ought to be there by the evening... »

« Master, when I have to make You happy, I do not get tired. You know that. And to go to Mother!... I feel as if angels were carrying me. But it is not very far. »

« What one does with joy is never far... But you will stay for the night at Nazareth. »

« And You? »

« And I... I will stay with My Father after being with My Mother for a short time. And I will set out at dawn, taking the road of the Tabor, without entering Nazareth. You know that I have to be at Jezreel at dawn the day after tomorrow. »

« You will be very tired, Master. You already are. »

« We shall have time to rest in winter. Do not worry. And do not hope to be able to evangelize all the time, in peace, as you do here. We shall meet with many delays... » Jesus lowers His head pensively, nibbling at His piece of bread more to keep the two disciples company - young as they are and happy to be with the Master they are eating with relish - than to satisfy His hunger. In fact He stops eating and becomes absorbed in deep silence, which the two respect resting quietly in the breeze of the mountain, with their bare feet in the cool grass which has grown round the feet of mighty tree-trunks. And they would also doze, but Jesus raises His head and says: « Let us go. We shall part at the cross-roads. »

And after tying their sandals they set out. The shadow in the wood and the wind blowing from the north help them to bear the sultry heat of the warm hour of the day, although it is not so torrid as in full summer months.

#### **475. Jesus and His Mother in the Wood of Mattathias.**

21st August 1946.

Jesus is alone. All alone in a slightly hollow-shaped tableland, which with slight but continuous undulations rises on the slopes of the hills surrounding the lake of Galilee, which I can see below, to the right, as its beautiful blue water becomes darker, because of the oncoming sunset which withdraws the brightly sparkling sunbeams from a wide surface of the lake. Behind the dell, to the north are the mountains of Arbela, and farther back, beyond the lake, the higher mountains of Meiron and Giscala. To north-east, in the distance, the mighty majestic, from whatever side one looks at it, Great Hermon, the highest peak of which is whimsically lit up by the setting sun, so that its western side is a pinkish topaz hue, whilst the rest is an opaline shade verging to the nondescript snowy blue nuance which I have seen at times on the tops of our Alps at the borders.

That is what I see looking north and if I turn to the right I can easily see the lake below, on the left, and the higher hills which obstruct the view of the plain along the coast. But if I face south I can see the Tabor behind smooth hills which are certainly the ones which surround Nazareth. There is a little town down, at the bottom, near a very busy road along which people are hurrying to reach their halting-places.

Jesus does not look at what I am looking. He is only seeking a place where to sit down and He chooses it at the foot of a very powerful holm-oak whose leafy branches have protected the grass growing on the ground around it from dog-days, so that it is fresh and thick, as if parching summer had never passed there. Thus the lake is in front of Jesus, and on His side, among trees, is the path on which He came up, on the opposite side the undulating ground surrounding the northern part of the dell covered with meadows and woods, where He is, and which is completely green, because most trees are holm-oaks, that is evergreens not affected by autumn. Only here and there they show blood-red spots, where leaves change their colour before falling, making room for fresh ones, which in the embryo state are already growing near the withering ones.

Jesus is very tired and leans against the powerful trunk and remains for some time with His eyes closed, to rest. He then takes His usual posture, detaching His back from the trunk, leaning slightly forward, His elbows resting on His knees, His forearms stretched forward, His hands joined and His fingers interlaced. He is pensive. He is certainly praying. Now and again when He hears a noise nearby - birds squabbling over a resting place for the night, some animal among the grass causing a stone, to roll down the mountain side, a branch blown by a solitary gush of wind

knocking against another branch - He raises His eyes, and with a pensive glance which certainly does not see, He looks in the direction of the sound, wondering if it comes from the little road that climbs among the holm-oaks. He then lowers His eyes again concentrating on Himself. Twice He looks attentively at the lake which is already in the shade, and then He turns His head looking westwards where the sun has already set behind the woody hills. The second time He stands up and walks towards the path to see whether anybody is coming up, and then He goes back to His place.

Finally the sound of footsteps is heard and two figures appear: Mary wearing a dark blue garment and John laden with bags. John calls twice: « Master! » and as soon as Jesus turns round he says: « Here is Your Mother » and he helps Her to cross a little stream and to step over some large stones placed on the path for the purpose of consolidating it and making it more comfortable for people going up or down, whereas in actual fact they are pitfalls for people wearing light sandals.

Jesus gets up at once to meet His Mother and helps Her with John to climb the stones of the collapsed dry wall, which was to support the plateau. In actual fact only the roots of the holm-oaks fulfil that function. Mary is now supported by Her Son Who looks at Her and asks: « Are You tired? »

« No, Jesus » and She smiles at Him.

« But I think that You really are tired. I am sorry that I made You come. But I could not come to You... »

« Oh! it does not matter, Son. I am a little hot. But it is pleasant here... But You are very tired, and poor John, as well... »

But John shakes his head smiling and putting down the new well-packed bag of Jesus and his own on the grass, at the foot of the holm-oak and he withdraws saying: « I am going down. I saw a little fountain. I am going to refresh myself in its water. But if You should call me, I shall hear You » and he goes away leaving the Two free.

Mary unfastens Her mantle and takes off Her veil wiping the perspiration beading Her forehead. She looks at Jesus and smiles at Him, and She drinks in His smile, as He also smiles at Her while caressing Her hand and pressing it against His cheek to be caressed. He is so « filial » in that gesture which I have seen Him make more than once! Mary frees Her hand and tidies up His hair, removing a tiny bit of the bark of a tree from His locks, and each movement of Her fingers is a caress, such is the love with which it is made. And She says: « You are in a sweat, Jesus. Your mantle is wet on the shoulders, as if You had been in the rain. But You can take another one now. I will take this one back. Sunshine and dust have discoloured it. I had everything ready, and... Wait! I know that

You have just had something to eat: a crust of stale bread and a handful of olives, which were so salt as to irritate Your throat. I was told by John who did nothing but drink as soon as he arrived. But I brought You some new bread. I had just taken it out of the oven, and a honeycomb which I took from the beehive yesterday, to give it to Simon's children. But I have more honeycombs for them. Take it, Son. It comes from our house... » and She bends to open the bag, in which, on top of all its contents, there is a low wicker basket with some fruit lying on which is a honeycomb enveloped in long vine leaves, and She offers everything to Her Son with some new crisp bread.

And while Jesus is eating, She takes out of the bag the garments which She prepared for the winter months; they are heavy and warm suitable to protect one from cold and rain and She shows them to Jesus, Who says: « How much work, Mother! I still had those of last winter... »

« When men are away from their women, they must have everything new, so that they do not need to have anything mended, in order to be properly dressed. But I have not wasted anything. This mantle of Mine is Your old one, which I shortened and redyed. It is still all right for Me. But not for You. You are Jesus... »

It is impossible to say what there is in this sentence. « You are Jesus ». A simple sentence. But all the love of the Mother, of the disciple, of the ancient Hebrew women for the Promised Messiah, of the Hebrew women of the blessed time in which Jesus lived, is in those few words. If the Mother had prostrated Herself worshipping Her Son as God, Her veneration would have been of a limited form. But Her words express something which is more than the formal adoration of knees that bend, of a back that bows, of a forehead that touches the ground: here it is Mary's whole being, Her flesh, blood, mind, heart, spirit, love, adoring the God-Man completely and perfectly.

I have never seen anything greater, more absolute than these adorations of Mary for the Word of God, Who is Her Son, and Who She always remembers is Her God. None of the people whom I see worship their Saviour, after being cured or converted by Jesus, not even the most fervent ones, not even those who inadvertently behave theatrically in their transport of love, have anything like this. They love completely, but always as creatures lacking something to be perfect. Mary loves, I dare say, divinely. She loves more than a creature. Oh! She really is the daughter of God free from sin! That is why She can love thus!... And I think of what man lost through the original Sin... I think of what Satan stole from us by overwhelming our First Parents. He deprived us of the power of loving God as Mary loved Him... He deprived us of the power of

loving well.

While I am meditating on these matters watching the perfect Couple, Jesus, at the end of His meal, has sat on the grass at Mary's feet, resting His head on Her knees like a tired sad child who takes shelter near the only person who can console him. And Mary caresses His hair, touching Jesus' smooth forehead lightly. She seems to be wishing to dispel all the tiredness and all the grief which are in Her Son by means of Her caresses. Jesus closes His eyes and Mary stops caressing Him; She remains with Her hand resting on His head, looking in front of Her, pensively, still. Perhaps She thinks that Jesus may fall asleep. He is so tired...

But Jesus opens His eyes again almost at once, He sees that it is growing dark, He realises that it is not possible to prolong that hour of solace, so He raises His head, still sitting where He is and He says: « Do You know, Mother, from where I come? »

« Yes, I know. John told Me. Two souls returning to God. A joy for You and for Me. »

« Yes. And I am going down to Jerusalem with that joy. »

« To make up for the disappointment You received the same day that we parted. »

« How do You know? Did John tell You? He is the only one who knows... »

« No. I asked him about it. But John replied: "Mother, You will be seeing Him before long. Ask Him". »

Jesus smiles saying: « John is faithful to a T. » There is a pause, then Jesus asks: « So, who spoke to You about it? »

« Not to Me. Some... men came to Your brother Joseph. And... he came to Me. He was still a little... Yes, Son. It is always better to speak the truth. He was somewhat upset after meeting You at Capernaum and especially after his discussion with Judas and James. They met during Your absence and James, too, nay James above all, was severe... Very severe... I would say too severe. But the Eternal Father, Who is always good, derived some good from their variance. Certainly because it was a variance originating from two sources of love. Different, of course, but still love. Imperfect, that is true. Because if they had been perfect, if at least one source were perfect, it would not have gone so far as to get angry... Anger is perhaps too strong a word to describe James' mood, but he was certainly very severe... You would have certainly reminded him to be charitable. I... did not approve, but I bore with him because I realised what was upsetting so much the ever patient James. One cannot expect him to be perfect... He is a man. And he is still very much of a man, too. Oh! there is still a long way to go before James becomes as just as was My Joseph! He... knew how to control himself and be always good...

But I am digressing! I was speaking of the imperfect love of the

two for You - because they love You so much. Also Joseph does, although at first sight he does not seem to. It is really love for You all the care he takes of Me, a poor woman. And it is love for You his way of thinking, as an old Israelite, firm in his ideas like his father. He would give anything to see You loved by everybody! His way... of course... -. But reverting to the fact, I must tell You that Joseph, whom James' firm behaviour did not harm, began to come to Me every day. And do You know why? That I may explain the Scriptures to him "as You and Your Son understand them" he said. To explain the Scriptures in the light of the Truth!... It is not easy when he who is listening to you is a Joseph of Alphaeus that is, one who firmly believes in the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, in His royal birth and in so many other things!

But it was his own pride that helped Me to make him accept the idea that the King of Israel is to be of royal descent, of David's stock, agreed, but that it is not necessary for Him to be born in a royal palace. He... oh! how proud he is of belonging to the stock of David! I told him many things in a kind way... and I got him to revise that idea. He now admits, in accordance with the prophecies, that You are the predicted one. But... oh! I would not have been successful in convincing him that Your true greatness consists exactly in being the King of the spirit, the only thing that can make You the universal and eternal King, if people had not come on two occasions looking for him... The first, still those from Capernaum with others, after tempting him with dazzling promises of grandeur for the whole household, seeing that he was less inclined to yield to their suggestions - they expected him to force You and to force Me to make You accept a crown - they betrayed themselves when they began to threaten him... The usual half-hidden threats which they use. Sharp knives enveloped in soft wool to make them seem harmless... And Joseph reacted saying: "I am the oldest, but He is of age and I have never been told that in our family there have been fools or madmen. For twenty years, since He became of age, He has been aware of what He does. So go to Him and ask Him, and if He refuses, leave Him in peace. He is responsible for His actions".

Then some of Your disciples came, it was just the eve of the Sabbath... Are You looking at Me, Son? Allow Me not to mention their names, but let Me tell You to forgive them... A son who should lift his hands against his old father, a levite who should desecrate the altar and be afraid of Jehovah's wrath, would not be like them... They came from Capernaum where they had been looking for You... They had come along the lake road from Capernaum to Magdala and then to Tiberias hoping to find You. And they had met with Hermas and Stephen, who were going down to Jerusalem with other people after being Gamaliel's guests for some days. I do

not want to repeat what they said, what they want to tell You and are anxious to tell You. But their words had increased even more the grief of the disciples who had been led astray to the extent of joining those who wished to betray You by means of a false unction. Joseph was with Me when they came. And it was a good thing. Oh! Joseph has not yet reached the Light, but he is already in the twilight of his dawn. Joseph understood the snare and... our Joseph is very fond of You now. He loves You, I dare not say in the right manner, but at least as an adult relative who suffers because of Your suffering, who watches over Your safety, who knows Your enemies...

That is why I know what they did to You, Son. A sorrow... and a joy because more than one recognised You for what You are. Such grief and joy for You and for Me. But we are forgiving everybody, are we not? I have already forgiven those who repented, as far as I am allowed to forgive. »

« Mother, You might have forgiven them also on My behalf. Because I had already forgiven them as I saw their hearts. They are men... What You said is correct!... But I have also the joy of seeing Joseph proceeding towards the dawn of the true Light... »

« Yes. He was hoping to see You. You ought to see him. He was absent today until sunset. And he will be grieved at not seeing You. But he will be able to see You in Jerusalem. »

« No, Mother. I will not be staying in Jerusalem so that people may see Me. I must evangelize the City and the villages in the neighbourhood, and I would be driven out at once if they found Me. So I will have to act like one doing evil, whereas I only want to do good... But it is so. »

« So, will You not see Joseph? He is leaving tomorrow for the Tabernacles. You could have travelled together... »

« I cannot... »

« Are they already persecuting You so fiercely, Son? » How much anxiety is in the Mother's voice!

« No, Mother. No. Not more than previously. Be reassured. On the contrary... kind spirits come to Me. Others, who are not good, stop and meditate, whilst previously they struck without any reason, the disciples are increasing, the older ones are improving in their spiritual training, the apostles are becoming more perfect. I am not referring to John: he has always been a grace granted to Me by the Father, I mean Simon of Jonah and the others. Simon is changing day by day from the man he was into an apostle, and You know what I mean. And he gives Me so much joy. And Nathanael and Philip are freeing themselves from the ties of their ideas. And Thomas and... But what am I saying? All of them. Yes, believe Me. They are all good at present: they are My joy. You must not worry since You know that I am with them: they are the friends, the comforters,

the supporters of Your Son. I wish You were so well defended and loved! »

« Oh! I have Mary, I have the wives of Joseph and Simon and them as well and their children. I have good Alphaeus. And then, who in Nazareth is not fond of Mary of Nazareth? You must not worry... A whole village loves Your Mother. »

« But they do not love Me as yet, with few exceptions. I know and I am aware that their love for You is imbued with the commiseration one feels for the Mother of a mad vagrant. But You know that I am not and that I love You. You know that to part from You is, I will not say the greatest, but the most lovingly sorrowful obedience which the Father requests of Me... »

« Yes, Son! I know. But I do not regret anything. I would certainly like to be with You, I would prefer to be with You, on muddy roads, exposed to winds, sleeping in the open, persecuted, tired, without a home and a fireplace, with no bread, as You are very often, rather than be in My house, while You are far away, and I do not know how You are, when I think of You. If You were with Me and I with You, You would suffer less and I would suffer less... Because You are My Son and I could always hold You in My arms and defend You from the cold, from hard stones, and above all from hardened hearts, with My love, My breast, My arms. You are My Son. I held You so long against My heart in the grotto, in the journey to Egypt, and on the way back, always when the dangers of season and the snares of men might have injured You. Why could I not do it now? Am I perhaps no longer Your Mother, because You are now the Man? So can a mother no longer be everything for her son, because he is no longer a little child? I think that if I am with You they will not be able to injure You... because nobody... No. I am silly... You are the Redeemer... and men - I have noticed it - have no mercy even for their own mothers... But let Me come with You. Everything is better for Me than being away from You. »

« If men were kinder I would come back to Nazareth again. But even Nazareth... It does not matter. They will come to Me. For the time being I am going to other people... And I cannot take You with Me. I will come back here only when they realise Who I am. I am now going to Judaea... I will go up to the Temple... I will then remain in that district... I will go through Samaria once again. I will work where there is more work to be done. So, Mother, I advise You to be ready to join Me early in spring and to settle near Jerusalem. It will be easier for us to meet. I will go up to the Decapolis again and we shall meet again... I hope so. But as a rule, I will remain in Judaea. Jerusalem is the sheep needing more care because she is really more stubborn than an old ram and more quarrelsome than a wild billy-goat. I am going there to spread the

Word like dew which never tires falling on her aridity... »

Jesus stands up, He stops and looks at His Mother Who gazes on Him attentively. He moves His lips and shaking His head He says: « There is still something to be said before the last thing... Mother, if Joseph wants to speak to Me, let it be at dawn the day after tomorrow on the road which from Nazareth goes to Jezreel via the Tabor. I shall be there alone or with John. »

« I will tell him, Son. »

There is silence, dead silence, because the birds have ceased quarrelling among the leafy branches and also the wind is quiet while twilight deepens. Then Jesus, Who seems to have found with difficulty the words to be spoken last, says: « Mother, My pause is over... A kiss, Mother. And Your blessing. » They kiss and bless each other.

Then Jesus, bending to pick up His Mother's veil and calling John as if He wished to make the words less grave, says: « When You come to Judaea bring Me My best tunic. The one which You wove for Me for solemn festivities. In Jerusalem I must be "Master" in the widest meaning and also more human sensitively, because those closed hypocritical spirits look more at the outside: one's garments, than the inside: one's doctrine. And thus also Judas of Kerioth will be happy... and Joseph will be satisfied seeing Me in a royal garment. Oh! it will be a triumph! And the garment woven by You will contribute... » and He smiles to mitigate the harsh truth concealed by those words.

But Mary is not deceived. She stands up and leans on Jesus' arm exclaiming: « Son! » with such heart-rending grief that makes me suffer. Jesus takes Her in His arms and She weeps against His heart...

« Mother, this is the reason why I wanted to speak to You in this hour of peace... I entrust You with My secret and what is dearest to Me here on the Earth. None of My disciples know that we shall not come back to these parts of the country until everything has been accomplished. But You... I have no secrets for You... I promised You, Mother. Do not weep. We still have many hours to spend together. That is why I say to You: "Come to Judaea". To have You near Me will requite Me for the fatigue of the most difficult evangelization of those stone-hearted people who are obstructing the Word of God. Come with the Galilean women disciples. You will be very helpful to Me. John will see to lodgings for You and for them. Let us pray together now, before He comes back. Then You will go back to the village, and I will come, too, during the night... »

They pray together and they are at the last words of the Our Father when John appears and in the dim light, when he is close at hand, he sees the traces of tears on Mary's face and is amazed. But

he makes no remark. He greets the Master and says: «At dawn I shall be on the road outside Nazareth... Come, Mother. Outside the wood it is still daylight and the road, below, is lit up by the lamps of the carts which are travelling... »

Mary kisses Jesus again, weeping under Her veil, and then supported by John who is holding Her by the elbow, She goes down to the path and descends towards the valley.

Jesus is left alone, to pray, to think, to weep. Because Jesus weeps watching His Mother descend. He then goes back to where He was previously and He assumes the same posture as before, while shadows and silence become deeper and deeper around Him.

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Jesus says:

« I did not forget this sorrow of Mary, My Mother, either. That I had to torture Her with the expectation of My suffering, that I had to see Her weep. That is why I deny Her nothing. She gave Me everything. I give Her everything. She suffered all sorrows. I give Her all joy.

When you think of Mary, I would like you to meditate on that agony of Hers that lasted thirty-three years and culminated at the foot of the Cross. She suffered that for your sake. For your sake She suffered the mockery of the crowds that considered Her the mother of a madman. For your sake She endured the reproaches of relatives and important people. For your sake She bore My apparent disavowal: "My Mother and My brothers are those who do the will of God". And who did His will more than She did, and a terrible Will, that imposed on Her the torment of seeing Her Son tortured?

For your sake She endured the fatigue of joining Me here and there. For your sake She made sacrifices, from the sacrifice of leaving Her little house and mingling with the crowds, to the sacrifice of leaving Her little fatherland for the tumult of Jerusalem. For your sake She had to be in touch with him who was brooding over betrayal in his heart. For your sake She suffered hearing Me accused of diabolical possession and heresy. Everything for your sake.

You do not know how much I loved My Mother. You do not consider how the heart of Mary's Son was sensitive to affections. And you think that My torture was purely physical, at most you add the spiritual torment of the final abandonment by the Father.

No, children. I experienced also the passions of man. I suffered seeing My Mother suffer, having to lead Her, like a meek ewelamb, to the torture, being compelled to torment Her with continual farewells, at Nazareth before evangelizing, with the one which I have shown you and which precedes My imminent Passion, with the one before the Supper, when Judas had already initiated,

My Passion with his betrayal, and with the dreadful one on Calvary.

I suffered seeing Myself derided, hated, slandered, circumvented by unwholesome inquisitiveness that did not evolve into good, but into evil. I suffered because of all the falsehood that I had to hear or see acting beside Me. The falsehood of the hypocritical Pharisees, who called Me Master and asked Me questions not because they believed in My intelligence but to lay snares for Me; the falsehood of those who had been benefited by Me and who became My accusers in the Sanhedrin and in the Praetorium; the long premeditated subtle falsehood of Judas who sold Me and continued feigning to be My disciple, and indicated Me to the executioners with the sign of love. I suffered because of the lie of Peter, who was seized with human fear.

How much falsehood and so revolting for Me, Who am the Truth! How much there still is, even now, with regard to Me! You say that you love Me, but you do not love Me. You have My Name on your lips, but you adore Satan in your hearts and you follow a law contrary to Mine.

I suffered thinking that with respect to the infinite value of My Sacrifice - the Sacrifice of a God - too few would be saved. All, I say: all those who in the course of the centuries of the Earth would prefer death to eternal life, making My Sacrifice vain, were present to Me. And with that knowledge I went to My death.

You can see, little John, that your Jesus and His Mother suffered bitterly in their moral egos. And for a long time. So be patient, if you will have to suffer. "No disciple is superior to his Master". I said so.

Tomorrow I will speak of the sorrows of the spirit. Rest now, peace be with you ».

#### **476. Jesus Converses with Joseph of Alphaeus.**

22nd August 1946.

The sun has just begun to shine on the country which is wet after a shower. It must have rained only recently because the dust on the road is still wet but has not turned into mud. That is why I say that it rained recently and that it was a brief fall. One of the first autumn showers foreshadowing the November rains which will turn the road of Palestine into slimy ribbons. But this shower, favourable to wayfarers, has only moistened the dust - the other calamity for Palestine reserved for summer months, as mud is for the winter ones - and it has washed the atmosphere, leaves and herbs, which are now shining, clean as they are, in the early sunshine. A pleasant clean breeze is blowing among the olive groves covering the hills of Nazareth, and a flight of angels seems to be

passing among the peaceful trees, as the rustling leafy branches resound like large wings in flight and their glossy silvery leaves gleam, when blown all to one side, as if a wake of heavenly light was left behind by the angelical flight.

The town has been left a few stadia behind when Jesus, Who has taken some short cuts along the hills, arrives at the main road which from Nazareth goes towards the plain of Esdraelon, the caravan route now becoming busier every minute with pilgrims. He walks a few more stadia on the road, when at a cross-road near a milestone on the opposite sides of which is inscribed: « Japhia Sidonia-Bethlehem Carmel » to the west, and « Xalot-Naim Scytopolis-Engannim » to the east, He sees, standing on the roadside, His cousins Joseph and Simon, who greet Him at once together with John of Zebedee.

« Peace to you! Are you already here? I was thinking of stopping here waiting for you and that I was going to be the first to arrive... and I find you already here » and He kisses them clearly happy to see them.

« It was not possible for You to be the first to arrive. As we were afraid that You might pass before we arrived, we left by starlight, which was soon dimmed by clouds. »

« I told you that you would see Me. So, John, you have had no sleep. »

« Little, Master, but certainly more than You had. But it does not matter » and a smile brightens John's serene face, a true mirror of his happy character which is always satisfied with everything.

« Well, brother. Did you want to speak to Me? » says Jesus to Joseph.

« Yes... Let us go into that vineyard. It will be more quiet there » and Joseph of Alphaeus is the first to advance between two rows of vines already stripped of their fruit. Only an odd small bunch of grapes is left on the vine-branches, among the yellowing branches about to fall, to satisfy the hunger of poor people and of pilgrims, according to Mosaic prescriptions.

Jesus follows him with Simon. John remains on the road, but Jesus calls him saying: « You may come, John. You are My witness. »

« But... » says the apostle looking perplexedly at Alphaeus' two sons.

« No. Do come. Nay, we want you to listen to our words » says Joseph and John then goes down into the vineyard where they all proceed so far, following the curve of the rows of vines, that they cannot be seen from the road.

« Jesus, I was happy to see that You love me » says Joseph.

« Could you doubt it? Have I not always loved you? »

« And I have always loved You. But... in our love, for some time,

we have not been understanding each other. I... could not approve of what You were doing, because I thought that You were ruining Yourself, Your Mother and us. You know... We, the elderly Galileans, we all remember how Judas the Galilean was struck and how his relatives and followers were scattered and their property confiscated. Those who were not killed were sent to the galleys and their goods were confiscated. I did not want that to happen to us. Because... Well, I thought that it was not true that just from us, of the stock of David, of course, but so... We are not short of bread, definitely not, and may the Most High be praised for that. But where is the regal grandeur which all the prophecies ascribe to Him Who will be the Messiah? Are You the rod that strikes in order to dominate? You were not the light when You were born. You were not even born in Your house!... Oh! I know the prophecies well! We are withered trees now, but nowhere it was said that the Lord would cover them again with leaves. And what are You but a just man? Those are the thoughts which made me oppose You moaning our ruin. And while I was moaning thus, tempters came to make my ideas of grandeur, of royalty flare up even-more... Jesus, Your brother was foolish. I believed them and I displeased You. It is hard to admit it, but I must acknowledge it. And consider that all Israel was in me, as foolish as I was, as certain as I was that the figure of the Messiah is not like the one which You give us... It is unpleasant to say: "I was wrong! We were wrong and we are wrong! We have been wrong for ages". But Your Mother explained the words of the prophets to me. Oh! yes! James is right. And Judas, too. When one hears the prophecies explained by Her, as they did when they were children, one sees that You are the Messiah. That is it. My hair is growing hoary, because I am no longer a boy, neither I was when Mary came back from the Temple and was engaged to Joseph. And I remember those days. And the astonished criticism of my father when he saw that his brother was not completing the marriage in a short time. He was amazed, and Nazareth was amazed. And people spoke slightly. Because it is not customary to let so many months pass before the wedding, putting oneself in condition of sinning and of... Jesus, I think highly of Mary and I honour the memory of my relative. But the world... It was not a good moment according to the world... You... Oh! now I know. Your Mother explained the prophecies. That is why God wanted them to delay the wedding, so that Your birth might coincide with the great Edict and You should be born in Bethlehem of Judah. And... yes... Mary explained everything to me and it was like a light that made me understand also what She did not mention, out of humility. And I say: You are the Messiah. That is what I said, that is what I will say. But to say that did not imply changing my mind... because my mind considers the Messiah a King. The

prophecies speak... and it is difficult to understand a different character in the Messiah than that of king... Are You following me? Are You tired? »

« No, I am listening. »

« Well... Those who were tempting my heart came back and wanted me to force You... And as I did not agree, the veil fell off their faces and they appeared as they are: false friends and true enemies... And more people came, weeping like sinners, and I heard them. They repeated the words which You spoke in Chuzza's house... Now I know that You will reign over spirits, that is, You will be the One in Whom all the wisdom of Israel will assemble so that You may give new universal laws. You have the wisdom of the patriarchs, of the judges, and of the prophets, and the wisdom of our ancestors David and Solomon, and the wisdom which led the kings, Nehemiah and Ezra and supported the Maccabees. All the wisdom of a people, of our people, of the People of God. I understand that You will give the world, completely subjected to Your power, Your very wise laws. And Your people will really be a people of saints. But, my dear Brother, You cannot do that by Yourself. Moses, for much less, chose some assistants. And it was but one people! You... All the world! All the world at Your feet!... Ah! But to do that You must make Yourself known... Why are You smiling with Your lips, and closing Your eyes? »

« Because I am listening and I am saying to Myself: "My brother is forgetting that he reproached Me because I was making Myself known, saying that I would harm the whole family!". That is why I am smiling. And I am also thinking that for two and a half years I have done nothing but make Myself known. »

« That is true. But... Who knows You? The poor. Peasants. Fishermen. Sinners. And women! You can count on the fingers of one hand those who are not valueless nonentities among those who know You. I say that You must make Yourself known to the great ones in Israel! To the Priests, to the High Priests, to the Elders, the scribes, the great Rabbis of Israel, to all those, who, although few, are worth a multitude. They must know You! They, those who do not love You, among their charges which I now realise are false, have one which is true and just: that You neglect them. Why do You not present Yourself for what You are and conquer them with Your wisdom? Go up to the Temple and install Yourself in Solomon's Porch - You are of the stock of David and a prophet, and You are entitled to that place and nobody is rightfully entitled to it as You are - and speak. »

« I did speak. That is why they hate Me. »

« Insist. And speak as a king. Do You not remember the power, the majesty of Solomon's deeds? If (what a wonderful "if"! ) You are really the One predicted by the prophets, as the prophecies

show if one looks at them with the eyes of the spirit, You are more than a Man. He, Solomon, was but a man. So show Yourself for what You are, and they will worship You. »

« Will the Hebrews, the princes, the heads of the families and the tribes of Israel adore Me? Not everybody, but some who do not adore Me, will adore Me in spirit and truth. But that will not happen now. First I must assume the crown, take the sceptre and put on the purple. »

« Ah! So You are king, You will soon be king! You are saying so! It is just as I thought! As many people think! »

« You really do not know how I shall reign. Only the Most High and I, and few souls to whom the Spirit of the Lord was pleased to reveal it, now and in the past, know how the King of Israel, the Anointed of God, will reign. »

« But listen also to me, Brother. Joseph is right. How can You expect them to love You or fear You if You always avoid astonishing them? Do You not want to call Israel to arms? Do You not want to utter the cry of war and victory? But at least become king by public acclamation, by being able to gain such an acclamation through Your power of Rabbi and Prophet, as it is not the first time that kings have been hailed thus in Israel » says Simon of Alphaeus.

« I already am king. I have always been king. »

« Yes. One of the Temple leaders told us. You were born king of the Hebrews. But You do not love Judaea. You are a deserter king, because You do not go there. You are not a holy king if You do not love the Temple, where the will of a people will anoint You king. Without the will of a people You cannot reign, unless You wish to impose Yourself on them through violence » replies Simon.

« You mean without the will of God, Simon. What is the will of the people? What is the people? For whom is the people? Who supports it as such? God. Do not forget that, Simon. And I shall be what God wants Me to be. By His will I shall be what I must be. And nothing can prevent Me from being so. It will not be My concern to utter the cry to gather the people. The whole of Israel will be present at My proclamation. Neither shall I have to go up to the Temple to be proclaimed. They will carry Me there. All the people will carry Me there that I may ascend My throne. You accuse Me of not loving Judaea... In its heart, in Jerusalem, I shall become the "King of the Jews". Saul was not proclaimed king in Jerusalem, neither was David nor Solomon. But I shall be anointed King in Jerusalem. But I will not go to the Temple in public now and I will not install Myself there, because it is not yet My hour. »

Joseph resumes speaking. « You are letting Your hour pass by. I am telling You. People are tired of foreign oppressors and of our leaders. This is the hour. I am telling You. The whole of Palestine,

with the exception of Judaea, but not all of it, is following You as a Rabbi, and even more than that. You are like a flag hoisted on a mountain top. Everybody is looking at You. You are like an eagle and everybody follows Your flight. You are like a revenger. And everybody is waiting for You to shoot the arrow. Go. Leave Galilee, the Decapolis, Perea, the other regions, and go to the heart of Israel, to the citadel in which all evil is enclosed and from which all good is to come, and conquer it. You have disciples there as well. But they are tepid because they do not know You well. They are few, because You do not stay there. And they are somewhat doubtful because You did not work there the deeds which You worked elsewhere. Go to Judaea so that they also may see who You are through Your deeds. You reproach the Hebrews for not loving You. But how can You expect to be loved by them if You hide Yourself from them? No man seeking or wishing to be acclaimed in public performs his works secretly, but he does them in such a way that people may see them. So if You can work wonders in hearts, bodies and elements, go there and make Yourself known to the world. »

« I told you: it is not My hour. My time has not yet come. You think that it is the right moment, but it is not so. I must act in My time. Not before. Not after. It would be useless before. I would make the world and hearts obliterate Me before I accomplish My work. And the work already done would bear no fruit because it is not completed and helped by God, Who wants Me to fulfil it without omitting one word or one deed. I must obey My Father. And I will never do what you hope for because it would prejudice the design of My Father. I understand you and I pity you. I bear you no grudge. I am not even tired of or annoyed at your blindness... You do not know. But I know. You do not know. You see the surface of the face of the world. I see its depth. The world shows you a face which is still kind. It does not hate you, not because it loves you, but because you do not deserve its hatred. You are a mere trifle. But it hates Me because I am a danger to the world. A danger to the falseness, the greed, the violence which is the world.

I am the Light and light enlightens. The world does not love light because it reveals the actions of the world. The world does not love Me, it cannot love Me because it knows that I have come to defeat it in the hearts of men and in the gloomy king who dominates it and leads it astray. The world does not want to convince itself that I am its Doctor and Medicine and like a madman it would like to destroy Me in order not to be cured. The world does not want to persuade itself yet that I am the Master because what I say is the opposite of what it says. And so it tries to stifle the Voice which speaks to the world in order to lead it to God and show it the true nature of its wicked actions. There is an abyss between Me

and the world. And it is no fault of Mine. I have come to give the world the Light, the Way, the Truth, the Life. But the world will not receive Me and My light becomes darkness for it because it will bring about the condemnation of those who rejected Me. In the Christ is all the Light for those men willing to receive it, but in the Christ is also all the darkness for those who hate Me and reject Me. That is why, at the beginning of My human life I was prophetically pointed out as a "sign of contradiction". Because according to how I am received, there will be salvation or condemnation, death or life, light or darkness.

But I solemnly tell you that those who receive Me will become the children of the Light, that is, of God, born to God, because they received God. So if I came to make men the children of God, how can I make Myself king, as many in Israel wish, out of love or hatred, out of simplicity or wickedness? Do you not realise that I would destroy Myself, the real Myself, that is, the Messiah, not the Jesus of Mary and Joseph of Nazareth, that I would destroy the King of kings, the Redeemer, the One born of a Virgin and called Immanuel, Admirable, Counsellor, Strong, the Father of the future century, the Prince of Peace, God, Whose empire and peace will have no end, sitting on the throne of David with regard to His human descent, but having as His footstool the world and all His enemies, and the Father at His side, as it is written in the book of Psalms, by the superhuman right of His divine origin? Do you not understand that God cannot be Man but through perfection of goodness, in order to save man, but He cannot and must not lower Himself to poor human things? Do you not understand that if I should accept the crown and the kingdom as you conceive it, I would admit that I am a false Christ, I would lie to God, I would disown Myself and the Father and I would be worse than Lucifer, because I would deprive God of the joy of having you, I would be worse than Cain for you, because I would condemn you to perpetual exile from God in a Limbo without hope of Paradise?

Do you not understand all that? Do you not see the snares of men to make Me fall? The trap of Satan to hit the Eternal Father in His Beloved Son and in His creatures: men? Do you not see that this is the sign that I am more than a man, that I am the Man-God? This craving of Mine only for spiritual matters in order to give you the spiritual Kingdom of God?... Do you not understand that the sign that I... »

« Gamaliel's words! » exclaims Simon.

«... that I am not a king, but the King, is all this hatred from hell and of all the world towards Me? I must teach, suffer and save you. That is what I must do. But Satan and his like do not want that. One of you said: "Gamaliel's words". Now. He is not My disciple and will never be while I am in this world. But he is a just man.

Well: is Gamaliel perhaps among those who tempt you and Me with regard to the poor human kingdom? »

« Oh! no! Stephen said that the rabbi, when he heard what happened at Chuza's house, exclaimed: "My spirit startles as I ask myself whether He can really be what He says. But no such question would ever cross my mind, if He had agreed to that proposal. The Child Whom I heard said that slavery and royalty will not be as we believed them, misunderstanding the prophets, that is, material, but spiritual, thanks to the Christ, the Redeemer from Sin and founder of the Kingdom of God in souls. I remember those words. And I judge the Rabbi by them. If in judging Him I should find out that He is inferior to that height, I would reject Him as a sinner and a liar. And I trembled seeing the hope, which the Child had put into them, dissolve into nothing" » says Simon.

« Yes, but in the meantime he does not say that He is the Messiah » remarks Joseph.

« He is waiting for a sign, so he says » replies Simon.

« Give him it, then! And make it a powerful one. »

« I will give him what I promised him. But not now. In the meantime you may go to the feast. I am not coming publicly, as a rabbi, as a prophet, to impose Myself, because it is not yet My hour. »

« But at least You will go to Judaea? You will give the Hebrews proofs that will convince them? So that they may not say... »

« Yes. But do you think that they will be of any avail to My peace? Brother, the more I do that, the more I shall be hated. But I will satisfy you. I will give them such proofs that more incontrovertible ones cannot be produced... and I will speak to them words capable of changing wolves into lambs and hard stones into soft wax. But they will be of no avail... » Jesus is sad.

« Have I grieved You? I was speaking for Your own good. »

« You are not grieving Me... But I would like you to understand Me, My dear brother, and to see Me for what I am... I would like to go away with the happy certainty that you are My friend. A friend understands and protects the interests of his friend... »

« And I tell You that I will do that. I know that they hate You. I am certain by now. That is why I came. But You know. I will watch over You. I am the oldest. I will rebuff slander and I will see to Your Mother » promises Joseph.

« Thank you, Joseph. My burden is heavy and you are relieving it. Sorrow, like a sea, is advancing with its waves to submerge Me and hatred is with it... But it is nothing if I have your love. Because the Son of man has a heart... and this heart needs love... »

« And I will give You it. Yes. In the eyes of God Who sees me I tell You that I will give You it. Go in peace, Jesus, to Your work. I will help You. We were fond of each other. Then... But let us go back to those days. One for the other. You: the Saint, I: the man, but united

for the glory of God. Goodbye, Brother. »

« Goodbye, Joseph. »

They kiss each other and then Simon asks: « Bless us that our hearts may open to all the Light. »

Jesus blesses them and before leaving them He says once again: « I entrust My Mother to you... »

« Go in peace. We shall be like two sons to Her. »

They part.

Jesus goes back to the road and begins to walk fast with John beside Him.

After quite a long time John breaks the silence asking: « But is Joseph of Alphaeus convinced by now or is he not? »

« Not yet. »

« Then, what are You as far as he is concerned? Messiah? Man? King? God? The situation is not clear to me. I think that he... »

« Joseph is like one of those morning dreams when the mind draws near reality relieving itself of the heavy slumber which caused unreal dreams and at times nightmares. Night phantoms recede, but the mind fluctuates in the dream which one would like never to come to an end, because it is beautiful... He is like that. He is approaching the moment when one awakes. But for the time being he is still caressing the dream. He is almost holding it back, because, for him, it is beautiful... But one must learn to take what man can give. And we must praise the Most High for the transformation which has taken place so far. Blessed be children! It is so easy for them to believe! » and Jesus passes an arm round the waist of John, who knows how to be a child and to believe, to make him feel His love.

#### **477. Awaiting Johanan's Peasants near the Jezreel Tower.**

24th August 1946.

« You are very tired, John. And yet we should arrive at Engannim tomorrow before sunset. »

« We shall arrive, Lord » says John and he smiles although he is pale with fatigue, having walked more than everybody else. And he tries to walk faster to convince the Master that he is not very tired. But he soon falls back to the pace of one who is exhausted, with stooped shoulders, his head bent forward as if he were oppressed by a yoke, dragging his feet and stumbling along.

« At least give Me the bags. Mine is heavy. »

« No, Master. You are more tired than I am. »

« You must be more tired because from Nazareth you came to Mattathias' wood and then you went back to Nazareth. »

« And I slept in a bed. You did not. You were awake in the wood and You left early. »

« And you, too. Joseph said so. You left by starlight. »

« Oh! but the stars last until dawn!... » remarks John smiling. He then becomes serious and adds: « And it is not the lack of sleep that grieves one... »

« What else, John? What has grieved you? Perhaps My brothers... »

« Oh! no, Lord! They as well... But what makes me feel heavy... no, not heavy... What makes me old is that I saw Your Mother weep... She did not tell me why She was weeping and I did not ask Her, although I felt inclined to do so. But I looked at Her so much that She said: "I shall speak to you at home. Not now, because I would weep more copiously". And in the house She spoke to me so kindly and so sadly that I wept as well. »

« What did She tell you? »

« She told me to love You very much, that I must never be the cause of the least sorrow to You, because later I would regret it bitterly. She said to me: "Let us do all our duty in the remaining months, even more than our duty". Because duty alone is too little for You Who are God. And She also said to me - and it made me suffer so much and if She had not said it I could not believe it and She said to me: "And it is also too little to do only our duty towards One Who is about to go away, and Whom we shall no longer be able to serve... In order to be resigned later, when He is no longer among us, we must have done more than our duty. We must have given everything, all our love, attention, obedience, everything. Then in the torture of separation one can say: 'Oh! I can say that, while it was God's will that I should have Him, I did not neglect to love and serve Him even for one moment'". And I said: "But is the Master really going away? He has still so much to do! There will be time... And She shook Her head saying, and two large tears streamed down from Her eyes: "The true Manna, the living Bread will go back to the Father when man rejoices savouring again bread made with new wheat... And we shall be alone, then, John". In order to comfort Her I said: "A great sorrow. But we must rejoice if He goes back to the Father, because no one will be able to hurt Him any more". And she said moaning: "Oh! but before!", and I thought I understood. But will it be really like that, Lord? Really? See, it is not a question of not believing Your words. The fact is that we love You and... I shall not say to you as Simon did one day: that cannot happen to You. I believe, we all believe... But we love You and... Oh! my Lord! Are the sins of love really sins? »

« Love never sins, John. »

« Then we, who love You, are ready to fight and kill in order to defend You. Galileans are not loved by other peoples because they say that we are quarrelsome. Well, we shall justify that reputation

by defending You. We are in the places where in the days of Deborah, Barak destroyed Sisera's army with his ten thousand men. And those ten thousand came from Naphtali and Zebulun. And we come from there as well. The name is different but the hearts are the same. »

« They were ten thousand... But even if you were ten times ten thousand now, what would you be able to do? »

« What? Are You afraid of the cohorts? They are not so many, and then... They do not hate You. You do not cause them any trouble. You are not thinking of a kingdom which may tear away a prey from the Roman eagles. They will not interfere with us and Your enemies who will soon be destroyed. »

« Even if you were one thousand, ten thousand, one hundred thousand, of what avail would that be against the will of the Father? I must fulfil it... »

John, depressed, speaks no more. How odd is the stubbornness and mental inability even of the best followers of Jesus to understand His greatest mission! They accept Him as Master and as Messiah. They believe in His power to save and redeem. But when they face His way of redeeming, their intellects become blind. The very prophecies seem to lose their value with regard to them. And no more can be said with regard to Israelites, who, we can say, breathe and walk and are nourished and live by means of the prophecies! Everything written in the holy Books is true except this: that the Messiah must suffer and die and be defeated by men. They cannot accept that. To me they look like blind and deaf people to whom Jesus is anxious to show the pictures of His future Passion, that they may read in them what it will be. But they close their eyes. Thus they neither see nor understand.

It is a rather dull evening and it is getting dark when they arrive in sight of Jezreel.

Jesus comforts John, who has not spoken any more and is proceeding like a sleep-walker so tired he is, saying: « We shall soon be there. You will go in and look for a shelter for yourself. »

« And for You. »

« No, John. I shall remain near the road coming from the plain. I think that they will come during the night and I want to comfort them and send them away before dawn. »

« You are so tired... and it may rain as it did last night. At least come until half the watch of the cock's crow. »

« No, John. »

« In that case I will stay with You. We are near the estates of the Pharisees and... And I promised Your Mother and myself. I do not want to have to repent... »

Some towers are at the four corners of Jezreel, but I do not know which purpose they serve. They were already old when I saw

them. They look like four gruff giants placed as jailors to the town which is built on an elevation overlooking the plain now slowly disappearing in the early shadows of a cloudy evening.

« Let us climb that slope near the tower. We shall be able to see all the road without being seen. There is grass on which to lie down and the step before the door will protect us if it should rain » says Jesus.

They go up. They sit down on a very low wall, which is half ruined and is about ten metres away from the tower. It looks like a protection built in olden time around the tower. It is almost completely crumbled and thick grass covers the ruins with huge cascades of wild convolvuli and other herbs which grow among ruins, with large downy leaves, the name of which I do not know.

They nibble at some bread in the last light of the day. They have nothing else. John, although exhausted, eyes the branches of a figtree, which has come up, twisted and dishevelled, among the stones and among the yellowing leaves he discovers some small figs spared by birds and children. They eat them completing their meal. They have water in their little flasks. The meal is soon over.

« Does anybody live in the tower? » asks John who is sleepy.

« I do not think so. No light or sound leaks out of it. Did you want to ask for shelter? You are dead-beat... »

« Oh! no. I was just wondering... But it is pleasant here... »

« At least lie down, John. The grass is thick and it has not rained here yet. The ground is dry. »

«... No... No... Lord. I am not sleepy... Let us speak. Tell me something... A parable... I will sit here at Your feet. I am quite happy if I rest my head on Your knees... » and he sits down leaning his head, with his face looking at the sky, on Jesus' knees. He makes desperate efforts not to fall asleep... He tries to speak to keep awake... He tries to take an interest in what he sees... stars in the sky, lights on the road. The former are becoming more and more numerous, because the wind has blown the clouds away; whilst the latter are rarer and rarer because pilgrims have stopped travelling at night. Only a few obstinate people persist in proceeding with their carts equipped with a lantern dangling from mats or blankets stretched across the arches of the cart.

But silence itself, now deeper and deeper, makes one sleepy... John, in a voice which sounds more and more remote, says: « How many lights in the sky! And look: some seem to have descended upon the Earth and tremble and quiver as they did up there... But they are smaller and not so beautiful... We cannot make stars... There is smoke in ours and they smell of wick... and anything can put them out... You once said that a butterfly is enough to put out a light in us and You compared butterflies with the allurements of the world... And then You said that... while butterflies can put out

a light, the wings of angels, and You called angels spiritual things, make the light within us brighter... I... the angel... the light... » John falls asleep slowly and he lies down unintentionally, exhausted by fatigue.

Jesus waits until he is comfortably settled and then He puts his bag under his head and covers him with a mantle with paternal gestures. In a final flash of lucidity John whispers: « I am not sleeping, Master, You know?... Only... thus I can see more stars and I see You better... » and he passes on to see Jesus and the starry sky better, dreaming of them in a sound sleep.

Jesus goes back to sit on His green seat. He rests His right elbow on His knee and His cheek on the palm of His hand and thinks, prays, looking at the road now deserted, while His Beloved apostle, with one arm folded under his head, sleeps as placidly as a child.

#### **478. Taking to the Road Again towards Engannim.**

26th August 1946.

« John, it is dawning. Get up and let us go » says Jesus shaking the apostle so that he may awake.

« Master! The sun has already risen! How long have I slept! And what about You? »

« I slept, too, beside you, under our mantles. »

« Ah! You convinced Yourself that these peasants would not come and You lay down! I had foreseen that... »

Jesus smiles and replies: « They came when the stars of the Great Bear pointed out with their position that crowing was about to begin. »

« Oh! I did not hear anything!... » John is mortified. « Why did You not keep me awake? »

« You were so tired. You looked like a baby sleeping in a cradle. Why awake you? »

« To keep You company! »

« You did that by means of your placid sleep. You fell asleep talking of angels, of stars, of souls, of light... and in your sleep you certainly continued to see angels, stars and your Jesus... Why bring you back to the iniquity of the world when you were so far away from it? »

« And if... if instead of the peasants, some criminals had come up here? »

« I would have called you in that case. But who would come? »

« Well... I do not know... Johanan, for instance... He hates You... »

« I know. But only his servants came. No one betrayed... because that is what you are thinking: that somebody may have spoken to injure Me and them. But no one betrayed. And I did the right thing

in waiting for them here. The new steward is as wicked as his master and has very severe instructions. I do not lack in charity by calling them: cruel. Any other word would be a lie... The peasants ran away as soon as it was dark praying the Lord that He would make them meet Me. God always rewards the faith of His unhappy children and comforts them. If they had not met Me they would have remained here until morning and would have then gone back to be in the fields by dawn... And so I saw them and blessed them... »

« And You are sad because You saw them so oppressed. »

« That is true. So many reasons to be sad... For the reason you mentioned, because I had nothing to give their exhausted bodies, because of the thought that I will not see them again... »

« Did You tell them? »

« No. Why add sorrows where everything is sorrow? »

« I would have willingly said goodbye to them myself for the last time. »

« It is not the last time for you. On the contrary, when I have gone away, you will take great care of them together with your fellow disciples. I entrust all My followers to you, and in particular the most unhappy ones and those whose only comfort is their faith and whose only joy is their hope of Heaven. »

« Oh! My master! As Your brother Joseph, I shall say to You as well: go in peace, Master. I will continue, as best I can. Believe me. »

« I am sure of that. Let us go... The road is becoming busy. Clouds are grouping in the sky and light is decreasing instead of increasing. It is going to rain today and everybody is hastening towards the next halting places. But the clouds have been kind to us. The night was not cold and there was no rain for us who were out in the open. The Father always watches over His beloved children. »

« You are beloved, Master. I... »

« You are loved by Him because you love Me. »

« Oh! that is true. Unto death... »

And mingling with the crowd, they depart southwards...

#### **479. Jesus and John Arrive at Engannim.**

27th August 1946.

The weather has really kept its promise and turned into a gloomy persistent drizzle. Those who are in wagons are well protected. But those who are travelling on foot or on donkeys get wet and are annoyed at it, particularly those who are troubled not only by the water wetting their heads and shoulders, but also by the mud which is becoming more and more watery and thus soaks into

their sandals, sticks to their ankles and splashes their garments. The pilgrims have pulled over their heads mantles or blankets, which they have folded double, and they look like hooded monks.

Jesus and John, who are on foot, are drenched. But they take more care in protecting their bags, containing their spare clothes, than themselves. They arrive thus at Engannim and they begin to look for the apostles, separating, in order to find them sooner.

And it is John who finds them, that is, he finds James of Zebedee, who had purchased provisions for the Sabbath.

« We were worried. And if you had not come, we were going to walk back, notwithstanding that it was the Sabbath... Where is the Master? »

« He is looking for you. The first to find you is to go near the blacksmith's. »

« Then... Look. We are staying in that house. She is a good woman with three daughters. Go to the Master at once and come back... » James lowers his voice and whispers looking around: « There are many Pharisees... and... they are certainly evil-minded. They asked us why He was not with us. They wanted to know whether He had gone ahead or was behind. At first we said: "We do not know". They did not believe us. And they were right, because how can we say that we do not where He is? Then the Iscariot - he is not so scrupulous - said: "He is ahead of us" and as they were not convinced and asked with whom, with what, when He had gone, because they knew that last Friday He was near Giscala, he said: "He embarked at Ptolemais and so He preceded us. He will land at Joppa and will enter Jerusalem by the Damascus Gate, and will go at once to see Joseph of Arimathea in his house in Bezetha". »

« But why so many lies? » asks John who is scandalised.

« Who knows?! We told him as well. But he laughed saying: "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, and lie for lie. Provided the Master is safe. They are looking for Him to hurt Him. I know". Peter pointed out that by mentioning Joseph's name he might cause trouble for him. But Judas replied: "They will rush there and seeing Joseph's astonishment they will realise that it is not true". "They will hate you, then, for making fools of them..." we objected. But he laughed and said: "Oh! I do not give a fig for their hatred. I know how to make it harmless... But go, John. Try to find the Master and come with Him. The rain is helping us as the Pharisees are indoors in order not to wet their bulky garments... »

John gives his brother his bag and is about to run away, but James holds him back to say to him: « And do not mention Judas' lies to the Master. Even if they were told for a good purpose, they are still lies. And the Master hates falsehood... »

« I will not tell Him » and John runs away.

What James said is true. Rich people are already at home. Only

poor people are bustling about in the streets, looking for shelter...

Jesus is in a lobby near the forge. John approaches Him and says: « Come quickly. I found them. We shall be able to put on dry clothes. » He does not say anything else to justify his hurry.

They soon arrive at the house. They go in through the door left ajar. Immediately behind it are the eleven apostles who crowd round Jesus, as if they had not seen Him for months. The landlady, a little withered shrunken woman, peeps at them through a door ajar.

« Peace to you » says Jesus smiling and He embraces them all with the same fondness.

They all speak at the same time wishing to tell Him so many things. And Peter shouts: « Be quiet! And let Him go. Don't you see how wet and tired He is? » And he says to the Master: « I had a warm bath prepared for You... and give me Your wet mantle... and warm clothes. I took them from Your bag... » He then turns round towards the inner part of the house and he shouts: « Hey! woman! The Guest has arrived. Bring the water, because I will see to the rest. »

And the woman, as timid as everybody who has suffered - and it is clear from her countenance that she has suffered - passes through the corridor silently, followed by three girls who are like her in thinness and countenance, to go into the kitchen and get the cauldrons full of boiling water.

« Come, Master. And you, too, John. You are as cold as drowned bodies. I had some juniper boiled with vinegar and I put it in the water. It is good for you. » In fact the smell of vinegar and other aromas has spread from the cauldrons as they passed by.

Jesus, upon entering the little room in which are two large tubs (that is two small wooden vats probably used as wash-tubs) looks at the woman going out with her daughters and He greets her: « Peace to you and to your daughters. And may the Lord reward you. »

« Thank You, Lord... » she replies and she slips away.

Peter goes in with Jesus and John. He closes the door and whispers: « Remember that she does not know Who You are... We are pilgrims... all of us, and You are a rabbi, we are Your friends. Which is true, after all... It isn't... H'm! of course! it is but a half-hidden truth... Too many Pharisees... and too interested in You. Act accordingly... we shall speak later » and he leaves them alone and goes back to his companions who are sitting in a little room.

« And now? What shall we tell the Master? If we tell Him that we lied He will be grieved. But... we cannot hide the truth from Him » says Peter.

« Do not sacrifice yourself I lied and I will tell Him. »

« And you will make Him even sadder. Have you not noticed how

depressed He is? »

« Yes, I have. But that is because He is tired... In any case... I can also say to the Pharisees: "I told you a lie". That is a trifle. The important thing is that He may not suffer. »

« I would not say anything to anybody. If you tell Him, you will not keep it a secret. If you tell them, you will not be able to save Him from their snares... » remarks Philip.

« We shall see » says Judas confidently.

A short time later Jesus comes in wearing dry clothes and refreshed by the bath. John follows Him.

They speak of everything that happened to the apostolic group and to the Master and John. But no one mentions the Pharisees until Judas says: « Master, I know for certain that those who hate You are looking for You. And in order to save You I spread the rumour that You are not going to Jerusalem along the usual route, but by sea as far as Joppa... They will rush there, aha! aha! »

« But why lie? »

« And why do they lie? »

« But they are they, and you are not, you ought not be like them... »

« Master, I am only one thing: one who knows them and who is fond of You. Do You want to be ruined? I am ready to prevent that. Listen to me carefully and hear my heart speak to You through my words. You shall not go out of here tomorrow... »

« Tomorrow is the Sabbath... »

« All right. But You shall not go out. You will rest, You... »

« Everything but sin, Judas. No consideration will make Me agree to neglect sanctifying the Sabbath. »

« They... »

« Let them do what they want. I will not sin. If I did, in addition to My sin which would weigh on Me, I would put in their hands a weapon to ruin Me. Do you not remember that they already say that I violate the Sabbath? »

« The Master is right » say the others.

« All right... You can do what You like on the Sabbath. But not with regard to the road. Do not let us take the road that everybody takes, Master. Listen to me. Disorientate them... »

« Now, listen! What do you know exactly, since you speak so much? » shouts Simon shaking his short arms. « Master, tell him to speak! »

« Peace, Simon. If your brother has got knowledge of a danger, which may be a risk for him, too, and he warns us about it, we must not treat him as an enemy, but we must be grateful to him. If he cannot tell us everything, because that might involve third persons who are not bold enough to take the initiative in speaking, but are still honest enough not to allow a crime, why do you want

to force him to speak? So let him speak, and I will accept what is good in his project and reject what might not be good. Speak, Judas. »

« Thanks, Master. You are the only One Who knows me for what I am. I was saying. We could proceed safely within the borders of Samaria. Because Rome rules more in Samaria than in Galilee and Judaea and those who hate You, do not wish to get into trouble with Rome. But I say that in order to puzzle spies we should not follow the direct route, but, departing from here, we should turn our steps towards Dothan and then, without going to Samaria, we should cut across the country and pass through Shechem, then down to Ephraim, along Mount Adummim and Cherith and then proceed to Bethany. »

« A long and difficult road, particularly if it rains. »

« Dangerous! The Adummim... »

« You seem to be seeking danger... »

The apostles are not enthusiastic. But Jesus says: « Judas is right. We shall go that way. Afterwards we shall have time to rest. I have still other things to do before the hour comes and is perfect, and I must not, out of stupidity, put Myself in their hands, until everything is accomplished. We shall thus call on Lazarus. He is certainly very ill and is waiting for Me... You may have your meal. I am withdrawing. I am tired... »

« Not even a little food? You are not ill, are You? »

« No, Simon. But I have not slept in a bed for seven nights. Goodbye, My friends. Peace be with you... » And he withdraws.

Judas is overjoyed: « See? He is humble and just and He does not reject what He feels is right... »

« Yes... but... Do you think that He is happy? Really happy? »

« I don't... But He realises that I am right... »

« I would like to know how you managed to become acquainted with so many things. And yet... you have always been with us!... »

« Yes. And you watch over me as if I were a dangerous beast. I know. But it does not matter. Bear this in mind: also a beggar, and even a thief may be useful to find out things, and a woman as well. I spoke to a beggar and I helped him. And I spoke to a robber and I found out... And to... a woman and... how many things a woman may know! »

The astonished apostles look at one another. They cast inquisitive glances at one another. When? Where did Judas find out and get in touch with?...

He laughs and says: « And I spoke to a soldier! Yes. Because the woman had said so much as to make me go to the soldier. And he confirmed. And I made people know... Everything is permitted when it is necessary: also courtesans and soldiers! »

« You are... you are...! » exclaims Bartholomew repressing what

he was about to say.

« Yes. I am I. Nothing more than myself. A sinner according to you. But I, with all my sins, serve the Master much better than you do. In any case... If a courtesan knows what Jesus' enemies want to do, it means that they go to courtesans or they have them, ballerine or mimes, to amuse themselves... And if they have them close at hand... I can have them as well. See? She... she was useful to me. You must consider that at the borders of Judaea He might have been caught. And since I avoided that you ought to say that I was wise... »

They are all pensive and take their food listlessly. Then Bartholomew stands up.

« Where are you going? »

« To look for Him... I do not believe that He is sleeping. I will take Him some warm milk... and I shall see. »

He goes out and is absent for some time. He comes back.

« He was sitting on the bed... and was weeping... You have grieved Him, Judas. Just as I thought. »

« Did He say that? I will go and explain. »

« No. He did not say that. On the contrary He said that you have your merits, too. But I understood Him. Do not go. Leave Him in peace. »

« You are all fools. He suffers because He is persecuted and hindered in His mission. That is the reason » replies Judas in a rebellious tone.

And John confirms: « That is true. He wept also before joining you. He is suffering bitterly, also because of His Mother, His brothers, the unhappy peasants. Oh! such deep grief!... »

« Tell us... »

« It is grievous to leave His Mother... and to see that He is not understood, that no one understands Him. And it grieves Him that Johanan's peasants... »

« Yes! It is really sad to see them!... I am glad that Marjiam did not see them. He would have suffered and hated the Pharisee... » says Peter.

« But have my brothers made Jesus suffer again? » asks Judas Thaddeus severely.

« No, on the contrary. They met and spoke affectionately and they parted in peace and with good promises. But He would like them to be like us... and more than us all... He would like us all to be convinced of His Kingdom and of its nature. And we... » But John says no more... And silence descends upon the little room lit up by a double-flame lamp which illuminates twelve differently pensive faces.

#### 480. Jesus and the Samaritan Shepherd.

28th August 1946.

I cannot say in which part of Samaria we are. We are certainly right in the middle of the Samaritan mountains, although these ones are not the highest. The highest ones, in fact, are farther south, with their steep tops rising towards the sky, which has now cleared up.

The apostles are keeping as close as possible to Jesus while walking, but the path, a short cut, does not allow them to do so very frequently and the group forms and breaks up continuously.

Many shepherds are in the mountains with their flocks and the apostles apply to them to find out whether the path is the right one to take them to the caravan-track which from the sea goes to Pella. Although they are Samaritans, they answer the questions without any rudeness. On the contrary, one of them, at a junction of paths running in all directions and forking again in more branches, says: « I shall be going down to the valley soon. Have a little rest and then we can set out together. If you should get lost in these mountains... it would not be a good thing... » He lowers his voice and adds: « Highwaymen! » and he looks around as if he were afraid that they might be close to him and threatening him. Then, when he is reassured, he says: « They come down from the slopes of Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal and they spread about in these days of pilgrimages. And they are always active, notwithstanding that the Romans reinforce guards on roads... because there are always people who avoid busy roads to travel quicker or for other reasons. »

« You have many rascals, eh? » remarks Philip with a meaningful smile.

« You, a Galilean... do you think that they are Samaritans? » replies the shepherd resentfully.

The Iscariot intervenes as he feels that it is his duty to avoid every unpleasant incident, as he was the promoter of the change of itinerary, and he says: « No, no! It is because people know that you are hospitable and thus those who have done evil deeds elsewhere, come here seeking shelter. It is as if... the whole place were a city of refuge. Evil-doers know very well that nobody, Galileans or Judaeans, would follow them here and they take advantage of that. And nature assists them as well. All these mountains... »

« Ah! I thought that you were considering... The mountains, of course, serve their purpose. The two highest ones, particularly... Yes... but... how many come from the Adummim mountains and from the gorge of Ephraim! They belong to all races, eh!... and the Roman soldiers are shrewd... They do not go to dislodge them. Only snakes and eagles are aware of their dens and can reach them. And dreadful things are reported. But sit down. I will give you some milk... I am a Samaritan, but I know the Pentateuch as well!

And I do not offend those who do not offend me. You... you do not offend, and yet you are Galileans and Judaeans. But they say that a prophet has risen to teach us how to love one another. If I did not consider that according to the scribes and Pharisees of Israel we are cursed, so they say, I would say that the great prophets who loved us, although we are Samaritans, have come back in Him, as some people say, to love once again. But I do not believe it... Here is the milk... But I would like to meet that prophet. They say that the other prophet, the one who took refuge at our borders and whom we did not betray - those who insult us ought to remember that - said that this prophet is greater than Elijah. He called Him the Lamb of God, the Christ. And some Samaritans from Shechem spoke to Him, and they now tell great things of Him, and many people have gone to the main roads, waiting for Him, because they think that He may pass there. Nay - it is the first time that it happened - also some Judaeans, Pharisees and doctors have questioned us in every town, saying that if we see Him, we should run ahead of Him to tell them that He is arriving, because they want to give Him a great welcome. »

The apostles look at one another stealthily, but they wisely remain silent. Judas, with his bright dark eyes, full of triumphant light, seems to be saying: « Have you heard that? Are you now convinced that I was right? »

The shepherd continues to speak: « You certainly know Him. Where do you come from? »

« From Upper Galilee » replies Judas at once.

« Ah! you are... No. You are not Galilean. »

« We come from all places. We went on pilgrimage to the tombs of the doctors. »

« Ah! Perhaps you are disciples... But is this man not a rabbi? » he says pointing at Jesus.

« We are disciples. You are right. Yes, this man is a rabbi. But you know that one rabbi differs from another... »

« I know. He is certainly young and he has still much to learn from the great doctors of your Temple » and there is a touch of contempt in the possessive adjective.

But Judas, who is always ready to answer back, is wonderfully submissive. The others do not speak, Jesus looks absorbed in thought, so the pungent remark provokes no reply. Judas in fact says smiling: « He is very young indeed. But He is the wisest of us all » and to put an end to the conversation which might become dangerous, he says: « Have you to stay here much longer? Because we would like to be down in the valley by night. »

« No. I am coming. I shall gather the sheep and come. »

« All right. In the meantime we shall move on... » and he stands up with the others and takes to the path at once.

When a thicket is between him and the shepherd he laughs and laughs, saying: « How easy it is to tease people! And are you now convinced that I was not lying and I was not foolish? »

« No. You were not lying... but you lied now. »

« Lied? no. How can you say that, Philip? I knew how to speak the truth preventing it from becoming harmful. Do we not come from Upper Galilee? Do we not come from all places? Did we not go one day to venerate the tombs of doctors and were pelted with stones? And did we not go near them also in our last journey towards Giscala? Have I perhaps denied that Jesus is a rabbi? Have I perhaps said that He is not the wisest of us all?... In saying that, I was thinking, and my heart was rejoicing, that by saying "we" I was offending the rabbis, who are all inferior to the Master, although they do not think so, and I was making a fool of the shepherd... Ha! Ha! One must know how to say things... and one can say everything without sinning and without causing any harm. »

Judas of Alphaeus makes a grimace of disgust and says: « As far as I am concerned it is still a lie. »

« Of course! I did it! But did you hear him, eh? They put aside prejudices, disgust, arrogance in order to tell Samaritans to inform them of the passage of the Master, so that they might welcome Him at the borders! Ah! What a welcome! »

« Welcome! They also thought and spoke of something true, while lying... Judas of Kerioth is right » says Thomas.

Jesus turns round and says: « Yes. Their words were deceitful and hateful. But to say one thing for another, even if for a good purpose, is always blameworthy. Do you think that the Lord needs such behaviour to protect His Messiah? Do not lie any more, not even for a good purpose. The mind becomes accustomed to imagining lies, and lips to utter them. No, Judas. Avoid being insincere. »

« I will, Master. But let us be quiet now. The shepherd is running to join us... »

In fact the shepherd arrives pushing forward his sheep, which feeling the fold close at hand begin to run with their shambling gait, bleating, shoving one another, forcing their way through the apostles, whom they almost sweep away. He is followed by the young shepherd and the dog and he stops only when with the help of the boy and the dog he succeeds in holding back the sheep, gathering them together so that they may not scatter about or go to the valley by themselves.

« They are the most stupid animals on the Earth. But they are so useful! » he says wiping his perspiration and he adds with a sigh: « Eh! if Reuben were still here! But with this boy only!... » He shakes his head going down behind his sheep, which the dog and the boy,

at the head of the flock, are keeping together. And talking to himself he says: « If I knew where to find that prophet, although I am a Samaritan, I would speak to Him... »

« And what would you say to Him? » asks Jesus.

« I would say: "I had a wife as good as mountain water is to a thirsty man, and the Most High took her from me. I had a daughter as good as her mother, a Roman saw her and wanted to marry her and took her away. I had my first-born son and he was everything to me... he slid down the mountain one rainy day and broke his back and is motionless and now he has been taken ill as well with an internal disease and the doctors say that he will die. I am not going to ask You why the Eternal Father punished me, but I beg You to cure my son". »

« And do you believe that He could cure him for you? »

« I certainly believe it! But I shall never see Him... »

« Why are you sure? He is not a Samaritan. »

« He is a just man. He is the Son of God, so they say. »

« You, in your fathers, offended God. »

« That is true. But it is also said that God will forgive the Sin of man by sending the Redeemer. This promise can be read in the Pentateuch next to the condemnation of Adam and Eve. And the Book repeats it several times. If He forgives that sin, will He not have mercy on me, who am not guilty of being born a Samaritan? I think that if the Messiah heard of my grief, He would feel pity for me. »

Jesus smiles but does not say anything. Also the apostles smile meaningly, which, however, is not noticed by the shepherd.

« So is that boy not your son? » asks Jesus.

« No. He is the son of a widow who has seven sons and lives in poverty. I have taken him as an assistant... and a son... so that I shall not be left alone... when Reuben is in his grave... » and he sighs.

« But if your son should recover, what would you do with this one? »

« I would keep him. He is good and I feel sorry for him... » he lowers his voice saying: « He does not know... But his father died on the galleys. »

« What had he done to deserve that? »

« Nothing deliberately. But his cart ran over a drunk soldier and was accused of doing it deliberately... »

« How do you know that he is dead? »

« Oh! one does not survive long at the oar! But definite news was given to us by a merchant of Samaria, who had seen his dead body being removed from the shackles and thrown into the sea beyond the Pillars. »

« And you would really keep him with you? »

« I am quite prepared to swear it. He is unhappy, I am unhappy. And I am not the only one to do so. Other people have taken the sons of the widow, who is now left with her three daughters. They are still too many. But it is better to be four than twelve... But I need not swear!... Reuben will die... »

One can now see the road which is very busy with pilgrims hastening to their halting places. It will soon be dark.

« Have You a place where to sleep? » asks the shepherd.

« Not, really. »

« I would like to say to You: "Come", but my house is too small for everybody. But the pen is large. »

« May God reward you as if you had given Me hospitality. But I will go on until the moon sets. »

« As You wish. Are You not afraid of getting lost? Of meeting wicked people?. »

« The poverty of My companions and Mine will protect Me against highwaymen. With regard to the road, I rely on the angel of pilgrims. »

« I must go to the front of the herd. The boy does not yet know... And the road is full of carts... » and he runs ahead to lead the sheep safely.

« Master, the worst is coming now. We have to cover a stretch of the road among people... » whisper the apostles.

They are now on the road, behind the sheep, which are proceeding in a line, closed between the mountain side, the shepherd's crook and the alert dog. The boy is now beside Jesus Who caresses him.

They arrive at a cross road. The shepherd has stopped the herd saying: « Here we are. This is Your road and that one is mine. But if You come towards the village, You will find a shorter one to go to the next village. Look: can You see that huge sycamore? Go as far as that and then turn to the right. You will see a little square with a fountain and after it, a house, black with smoke. It is the forge. The road is beyond it. You cannot go wrong. Goodbye. »

« Goodbye. It was very kind of you and God will comfort you. »

The shepherd goes his way and Jesus takes His. The former is surrounded by sheep, the latter by the apostles. Two shepherds in the middle of their flocks...

They are now separated, concealed by a group of houses built between the main road, followed by the shepherd, and the lane which passes through a poor part of the village, the poorest, I think, silent, solitary... The poor people are already indoors and the fireplaces in the kitchens can be seen through the half-open doors... Night is falling with the darkness of twilight.

« We shall stop just outside the village » says Judas. « I can see some houses over there in the fields. »

« No. It is better to go on. » There are different opinions.

They reach the fountain. They rush towards it to wash themselves and fill their little flasks. There is the smith. He is closing his black workshop. And there is the road towards the fields... They take it...

But a cry is heard from afar, from the village. « Rabbi! Rabbi! My son! Citizens! Come! Where is the Pilgrim? »

« They are looking for us, Master! What have You done? »

« Run. If we reach that wood no one will be able to see us any more. »

They run across a field covered with recently cut hay, they arrive at a hillock which they climb and disappear, followed by the voices, now numerous, and by people who have spread about, outside the village, calling rather than looking, because not much can be seen in the twilight. They stop at the foot of the hillock.

« It was the Rabbi Who went to Shechem, I am telling you. It could be but Him. And He cured my Reuben. And I did not recognise Him. Rabbi! Rabbi! Rabbi! Allow me to worship You! Tell me where You are hidden! »

Only the echo replies and it seems to say: « Abbi! Abbi! Abbi! » and to change the last word into « heaven ».

« But He cannot be far » says the forger. « He passed in front of me shortly before you arrived... »

« And yet He is not here. See. There is nobody on the road. He was to take this one. »

« Will He be in the wood? »

« No. He was in a hurry... » Then he seeks help from his dog. « Find them! Find them! » and for a moment the dog seems to be able to discover the hiding place, because it makes for the wood after sniffing at the meadow. Then the animal stops perplexed, with one paw lifted up, its muzzle in the air... then, disappointed by I do not know what, it starts off in the opposite direction, barking, and the people run after it...

« Oh! Blessed be the Lord! » exclaim the apostles with sighs of relief and they cannot help saying to the Master: « But what have You done, Lord! » and they almost reproach Him for doing it. « You know that it is dangerous for You to be pointed out, and yet You... »

« And was I not to reward faith? And is it not a good thing that they should think that I am on the road which from Dothan takes one to Pella? Do you perhaps no longer want them to have no clear idea about anything? »

« That is true. You are right! But if the dog found You out? »

« Oh! Simon! And do you think that He Who imposes His will, also from a distance, on diseases and elements and drives out demons, is not able to impose it on an animal? Now let us try to

reach the road beyond the bend, and they will not be able to see us any more. Let us go. »

And they proceed almost gropingly through the thicket on the hill, until they get back to the road: a small road, all white in the light of the rising moon, and far from the village now completely concealed by the hill...

#### **481. The Ten Lepers near Ephraim.**

29th August 1946.

They are still in the rugged mountains, on paths where no cart can pass but only wayfarers or people riding strong mountain donkeys, which are taller and stronger than the usual little donkeys one finds in more level areas. Many people may consider this remark rather trite, but I am making it just the same.

In Samaria there are customs which differ from those of other places, both with regard to garments and many other things. And one is the large number of dogs, unlike other places, and it surprises me as I was surprised at the presence of pigs in the Decapolis. Perhaps there are many dogs because there are many shepherds in Samaria and there are probably many wolves in the mountains which are so wild. There are many dogs also because I see that in Samaria the shepherds are generally alone, at most with a boy, each one pastures his own flock, whereas elsewhere there are mostly many looking after large herds of rich people. It is a fact that here each shepherd has his dog or more dogs according to the number of sheep of his flock.

Another characteristic are the donkeys, almost as tall as horses, they are robust, fit to climb these mountains with a heavy load on the pack-saddle, also big logs, for I see them coming down from these wonderful mountains covered with age-old woods.

Another distinctive feature: the ease of manner of the inhabitants, who without being sinners as the Judaeans and Galileans considered them, are open and frank, without bigotry and without the silly complications of other people. And they are hospitable. This remark makes me think that in the parable of the good Samaritan there is not only the intention of pointing out that there is good and evil everywhere and among all races, and that also among heretics there may be righteous people, but there is also a real description of Samaritan behaviour towards those who are in need. They may have stopped at the Pentateuch, I hear them speak of it and of nothing else, but they practise it, at least towards their neighbours, with more rectitude than the others, with their six hundred and thirteen precepts etc.

The apostles are speaking to the Master, and although they are convinced Israelites, they are compelled to acknowledge and

praise the attitude of the people of Shechem, who invited Jesus to stay with them, as I understand from the conversation I hear.

« You have heard them, haven't you? » says Peter « how they said very clearly that they are aware of the hatred of Judaeans? They said: "They hate You more than they hate us Samaritans, as many as we are and have ever been. There is no limit to their hatred for You". »

« And that old man? How rightly he said: "After all it is only fair that it should be so, because You are not a man, You are the Christ, the Saviour of the world and thus You are the Son of God, because only God can save the corrupt world. Therefore as You have no limits as God, no limits in Your power, in Your holiness and in Your love, as Your victory over Evil will have no limit, so it is natural that Evil and Hatred, all one thing with Evil, have no limit against You". He really spoke the truth! And that reason explains many things! » says the Zealot.

« What does it explain according to you? I... I say that it explains only that they are fools » says Thomas straightforwardly.

« No. Foolishness would be a justification. But they are not fools. »

« Intoxicated then, intoxicated with hatred » replies Thomas.

« Not even that. Intoxication yields after bursting forth. Their hatred does not yield. »

« It cannot be more unrestrained than it is! And it has been so for such a long time... that it should have subsided by now. »

« My friends, it has not reached its goal yet » says Jesus calmly, as if the goal of that hatred were not His death.

« No?! And yet they never leave us in peace?! »

« Master, they cannot bring themselves to believe that I have spoken the truth. But I did. Oh! I did indeed! And I say also that if it had depended on you, you would have all fallen into the trap, like the Baptist. But they will not succeed because I am on the watch... » says the Iscariot.

And Jesus looks at him. And I look at him as well wondering, and I have been wondering for some days, whether the behaviour of the Iscariot has been brought about by a good real return to the path of virtue and love for the Master, a release from the human and extra-human powers which held him back, or it is more refined work preparatory to the final blow, a greater enslavement to the enemies of Christ and to Satan. But Judas is such a special being that he is not decipherable. God only can understand him. And God, Jesus, draws a veil of mercy and prudence over all the actions and the personality of His apostle... a veil which will be torn, throwing full light on so many questions at present mysterious, only when the books of Heaven are opened.

The idea that the hatred of enemies has not yet reached its goal has worried the apostles so much that they have stopped speaking

for some time. Then Thomas addresses the Zealot saying: « Well then, if they are neither intoxicated nor foolish, if their hatred explains many things but not this one, what does it explain? What are they? You have not told us... »

« What are they? They are possessed. They are what they say He is. That explains their fury which knows no bounds, on the contrary the more His power is revealed, the more it increases. The Samaritan spoke the truth. In Him, Son of the Father and of Mary, Man and God, there is the Infinity of God, and the Hatred which opposes that perfect Infinity is infinite, even if in its limitless being, Hatred is not perfect, because God only is perfect in His actions. But if Hatred could touch the abyss of perfection it would descend to touch it, nay it would hurl itself down to touch it, to bounce back up again, through the very vehemence of its fall into the abyss of hell, against the Christ, in order to wound Him with the weapons snatched from the infernal Abyss. The firmament regulated by God, has one sun only. It rises, it shines and sets leaving the place to the smaller sun which is the moon and the latter, after shining in her turn, sets to give the place to the sun. Stars teach men many things because they are submitted to the will of the Creator. Men are not. The opposition to the Master is an instance of that. What would happen if the moon should say: "I am not going to disappear and I will come back along the route I went"? She would certainly clash against the sun horrifying and damaging the whole of Creation. That is what they want to do, as they think they can shatter the Sun... »

« It is the struggle of Darkness against the Light. We see it every day at dawn and in the evening. The two forces oppose each other dominating the Earth alternately. But darkness is always defeated because it is never absolute. A little light is always shed, even in the most starless night. The very air seems to create it in the infinite spaces of the vault of heaven shedding it, even if it is very scanty, to persuade men that the stars are not extinguished. And I say that likewise in this particular darkness of Evil against the Light which is Jesus, the Light will be there to comfort those who believe in It, despite all the efforts of Darkness » says John smiling at his own thought, in which he is engrossed as if he were talking to himself.

His thought is pursued by James of Alphaeus. « In the Books the Christ is called "Morning Star". So He, too, will know a night, and - it terrifies me! - we also shall be aware of it, of a period of time when the Light will not seem strong, whereas Darkness will appear to be winning. But since He is called the Morning Star in a way that excludes limitation of time, I say that after the momentary night He will be the pure, fresh, virginal morning Light, renovating the world, like the light which followed Chaos on the

first day. Oh! yes. The world will be re-created in His Light. »

« And accursed will be the reprobates who will have raised their hands to strike the Light, repeating the errors already made by Lucifer down to the desecrators of the holy people. Jehovah leaves man free in his actions. But for the sake of man He will not allow Hell to prevail. »

« Oh! it's a good thing that after so much drowsiness of our spirits, whereby we all seemed to be dull and sluggish due to premature old age, wisdom flourishes again on our lips! We no longer seemed ourselves! Now I find the Zealot again, and John, and the two brothers of the good old days! » says the Iscariot congratulating them.

« I do not think we had changed so much as to no longer seem to be ourselves » says Peter.

« We had indeed! All of us. And you were the first. And then Simon and the others, including myself. If there was one who was more or less the same as before, it was John. »

« H'm! I don't really know in what... »

« In what? Uncommunicative, as if we were tired, indifferent, worried... We no longer heard conversations like those of the good old days, like the present one, so useful... »

« For disputes » says Thaddeus remembering how they often turned into squabbles.

« No, for our formation. Because we are not all like Nathanael, or Simon, or like you, the sons of Alphaeus, with regard to birth and wisdom. And those who are less so, learn from those who are more like that » replies the Iscariot.

« Actually... I would say that what is most necessary is to grow in justice. And Simon has given us a wonderful lesson on that » says Thomas.

« Me? You are seeing things the wrong way. I am the most stupid of the lot » says Peter.

« No. You are the one who has changed most. In that respect Judas of Kerioth is right. There is very little left in you of the Simon I met when I came and joined you and who, forgive me, remained as he was for a long time. Since I joined you again, after parting for the Feast of the Dedication, you have done nothing but improve yourself. You are now... yes, I will tell you: you are more fatherly and at the same time more austere. You bear more with your poor brothers than you did previously... And one can see, at least I see it, what it costs you. But you control yourself. And you never commanded so much respect as you do now that you do not speak and do not reproach so much... »

« Well, my dear friend! It is very kind of you to judge me so... I have not changed at all, except for the love for the Master, which grows in me more and more. »

« No. Thomas is right. You have changed very much » many of them confirm.

« Who knows! You say so... » says Peter shrugging his shoulders. And he adds: « Only the Master could give a definite opinion. But I will take good care not to ask Him. He is aware of my weakness and He knows that an undeserved praise might harm my spirit. So He would not praise me, and He would be doing the right thing. I have become more and more acquainted with His heart and His method and I see how just they are. »

« Because you have an upright mind and you love more and more. It is your love for the Master that makes you see and understand. Your Master, the true and greatest Master who makes you understand your Master, is Love » says Jesus Who so far has been listening and has been silent.

« I think... it is also the grief that is within me... »

« Grief? Why? » some of them ask.

« Hey! because of many things, which after all, are one thing only: what the Master suffers... and the thought of what He will suffer. It is not possible for us to be as absent-minded as we were in the early days, like children who do not know, now that we know what men are capable of doing and how one must suffer to save them. Oh! we thought everything was easy in the early days! We thought all we had to do to make the others side with us was to present ourselves! We thought that to conquer Israel and the world was like... casting a net in waters abounding in fish. Dear me! I think that if He does not succeed in having a good haul, we will have none at all. But that is nothing! I think they are wicked and they make Him suffer. And I think that is the reason for our change in general... »

« That is true. As far as I am concerned it is true » confirms the Zealot.

« Also with regard to me. Also with regard to me » say the others.

« I have been worried about that for a long time and I tried to have... some good assistance. But they betrayed me... and you did not understand me... And I did not understand you. I thought you were like that through spiritual tiredness, lack of confidence, disappointment... »

« I never hoped for human joys, so I was not disappointed » says the Zealot.

« My brother and I would like Him to be victorious, but for His own joy. We followed Him out of love as His relatives, rather than as disciples. We have always followed Him since our childhood. He is younger than we are, but always so much greater than we are... » says James with his boundless admiration for his Jesus.

« If there is one thing we must regret, it is that not all His relatives love Him in spirit and only with the spirit. But we are

not the only ones in Israel who love Him in a wrong way » says Thaddeus.

Judas Iscariot looks at him and would probably say something, but his attention is distracted by a cry coming from a hillock dominating the little village, around which they are walking, looking for the road to enter it.

« Jesus! Rabbi Jesus! Son of David and our Lord, have mercy on us. »

« They are lepers! Let us go, Master, otherwise the whole village will rush here and will detain us in their houses » say the apostles.

But the lepers have the advantage of being ahead of them, high up on the road, at least five hundred metres from the village, and they come down limping and rush towards Jesus repeating their cries.

« Let us go into the village, Master. They cannot go in » say some of the apostles, but others remark: « Some women have already come out and are looking. If we go in, we will avoid the lepers, but we will not avoid being recognised and retained. »

And while they are uncertain as to what they should do, the lepers come closer to Jesus, Who heedless of His disciples' ifs and buts, has gone on His way. And the apostles resign themselves to following Him while women with children hanging on to their skirts and a few old men left in the village come to see, remaining at a prudent distance from the lepers who, however, stop at a few metres from Jesus and implore once again: « Jesus, have mercy on us! »

Jesus looks at them for a moment; then, without approaching the sorrowful group, He asks: « Are you from this village? »

« No, Master. We come from different places. But the other side of the mountain where we stay, faces the road to Jericho and it is a good spot for us... »

« Go then to the village which is nearest to your mountain and show yourselves to the priests. »

And Jesus resumes walking, moving to the roadside, so that He may not touch the lepers, who look at Him, while He draws closer, with their poor diseased eyes expressing nothing but hope. And when Jesus reaches them, He raises His hand to bless them.

The people of the village are disappointed and go back to their houses... The lepers clamber up the mountain again going to their grottoes or towards the Jericho road.

« You did the right thing in not curing them. The people in the village would not have let us go away... »

« Yes, and we ought to arrive at Ephraim before night. »

Jesus continues to walk and is silent. The village is now hidden by the bends of the winding road which follows the irregular contour of the mountain at the foot of which it is dug.

But a voice reaches them: « Praise to the Most High God and to His true Messiah. All power, wisdom and mercy is in Him! Praise

to the Most High God Who has granted us peace through Him. Praise Him, o men of the towns in Judaea, Samaria, Galilee and beyond the Jordan. Let the praise to the Most High and to His Christ resound as far as the snow on the very high Hermon, as far as the parched stones in Idumea, as far as the beaches lapped by the waves of the Great Sea. The prophecy of Balaam has been fulfilled. The Star of Jacob is shining in the restored sky of the fatherland reunited by the true Shepherd. And the promises made to the patriarchs are also fulfilled! Here, here is the word of Elijah, who loved us. Listen to it, peoples of Palestine and understand it. One must no longer limp on two sides but one must choose by the light of the spirit, and if the spirit is righteous one will choose correctly. This is the Lord, follow Him! Ah! so far we have been punished because we did not strive to understand! The man of God cursed the false altar prophesying: "A son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name, who shall immolate on the altar and bum the bones of Adam. And the altar will burst apart as far as the bowels of the Earth and the ashes of the immolation will be scattered to the north, to the south, to the east and where the sun sets". Do not behave like foolish Ahaziah who sent messengers to consult the god of Ekron when the Most High was in Israel. Do not be inferior to Balaam's donkey which for its respect for the spirit of light would have deserved to live, whereas the prophet who did not see would have been struck down. Here is the Light passing among us. Open your eyes, men whose souls are blind, and see » and one of the lepers follows them drawing closer and closer, also on the main road, where he points Jesus out to pilgrims.

The apostles, annoyed, turn round two or three times ordering the leper, by now completely cured, to be silent. And the last time they almost threaten him.

And he stops shouting for a moment, in order to speak to everybody, and replies: « And do you expect me not to glorify the great things which God has done to me? Do you want me not to bless Him? »

« Bless Him in your heart and be quiet » they reply angrily.

« No, I cannot be quiet. God puts the words on my lips », and he resumes in a louder voice: « People of the two border towns, and you who happen to pass here, stop and worship Him Who will reign in the name of the Lord. I used to laugh at so many words. But now I repeat them because I see that they have been fulfilled. All the peoples are moving and are coming towards the Lord, rejoicing, across the sea and deserts, over mountains and hills. And we also, the people who have been walking in darkness, will go to the great Light which has risen, towards Life, leaving the region of death. We who were like wolves, leopards and lions, we will be born to a new life in the Spirit of the Lord and will love one

another in Him, in the shade of the Shoot of Jesse, which has grown into a cedar, under which will camp the nations gathered by Him at the four cardinal points of the Earth. Here comes the day when the jealousy of Ephraim will end, because there is no longer Israel and Judah, but one Kingdom only: the Kingdom of the Christ of the Lord. Well, I sing the praises of the Lord Who saved me and consoled me. Now, I say: praise Him and come to drink salvation at the fountain of the Saviour. Hosanna! Hosanna to the great things He works! Hosanna to the Most High Who put His Spirit among men and clothed Him with flesh, that He might become the Redeemer! »

He is inexhaustible. The crowds increase in number, they throng and obstruct the road. Those who were behind rush forward, those who were ahead come back. The people of a little village, which is now close at hand, join the passers-by.

« Please make him keep quiet, Lord. He is a Samaritan. That is what the people say. Since You do not allow even us to go ahead of You preaching You, he must not speak of You! » say the angry apostles.

« My dear friends, I will repeat to you the words which Moses spoke to Joshua the son of Nun when he complained because Eldad and Medad were prophesying in the camp: "Are you jealous on my account? Oh! if only the whole people of Yahweh were prophets, and Yahweh gave His Spirit to them all!". However, I will stop and dismiss him to make you happy. »

And He stops turning round and calling the cured leper, who runs towards Him and prostrates himself before Jesus kissing the ground.

« Stand up. And where are the others? Were you not ten in all? The other nine did not feel it was necessary to thank the Lord. What? Out of ten lepers, among whom one only was a Samaritan, not one, except this foreigner, felt it was his duty to come back and give glory to God, before going back to life and to his family? And they say that he is a "Samaritan". So the Samaritans are no longer intoxicated, as they do not see double and they come to the way of Salvation without staggering? Does the Word speak a foreign language if foreigners understand Him and His countrymen do not? »

He turns His wonderful eyes on the crowds from every place in Palestine present there. And those flashing eyes are unsustainable... Many lower their heads and spur their mounts or walk away...

Jesus lowers His eyes on the Samaritan kneeling at His feet and looks at him most kindly. He raises His hand, which was hanging loosely along His side, to bless him and says: « Stand up and go away. Your faith has saved in you something which is more than your flesh. Proceed in the Light of God. Go. »

The man kisses the ground again and before standing up he asks: « Give me a name, Lord. A new name because everything is new in me and for ever. »

« In which part of the country are we now? »

« In Ephraim. »

« And Ephrem is from now onwards your name, because Life has given you life twice (1). Go. »

And the man stands up and goes away.

The local people and some pilgrims would like to hold Jesus back. But He subdues them with a glance, which is not severe, on the contrary it is very gentle, but it must express such a power that no one attempts to detain Him.

And Jesus leaves the road without going into the little village, He walks through a field, He then crosses a little stream and a path and climbs the eastern hillock, all covered with woods, which He enters with His disciples saying: « We will follow the road walking in the wood, so that we shall not get lost. After that bend the road runs along this mountain. We will find a grotto in which we can sleep and at dawn we shall be beyond Ephraim... »

(1) The meaning of « Ephrem » is, in fact: double fruit.

#### **482. At Ephraim. Parable of the Pomegranate.**

31st August 1946.

And Jesus in fact thinks that He will be able to get past Ephraim at the first light of dawn, while the town is silent and its streets deserted, without being seen by anybody. He prudently goes round the town, without entering it, despite the very early hour.

But when, coming from the little lane at the rear of the village, they arrive at the main road, they find the whole village, I would say, waiting for them, together with other people from other towns, through which they passed previously, and the latter crowd point out Jesus to the people of Ephraim as soon as they see Him. Fortunately there are no Pharisees, scribes or the like.

The people of Ephraim send on the notables of the town, and one of them, after a solemn greeting, says on behalf of everybody: « We heard that You were here and that You did not disdain to have mercy on anybody. We already knew that You had been merciful to the people of Shechem and so we wished to have You. Now, He Who knows the thoughts of men has led You among us. Stay and speak to us, because we also are children of Abraham. »

« I am not allowed to stop... »

« Oh! we are aware that they are looking for You. But not here. This town is at the border of the desert and of the Mountains of blood. They do not come here willingly. And in this occasion, after

the first ones, we have not seen any more. »

« I cannot stop... »

« The Temple is waiting for You. We know. But believe us. We are considered by you as outlaws because we do not bend our heads to the Pontiffs of Israel. But is the Pontiff perhaps God? We are far from you. But not so far as not to know that your priests are as worthless as ours. And we think that God can no longer be with them. No. The Most High no longer conceals Himself in the cloud of incense. They could stop burning it, and they could enter the Holy of Holies without any fear of being reduced to ashes by the splendour of God standing in His glory. And we worship God feeling that He is outside the deserted stones of the empty temples. And we do not say that our temple is more empty than yours, if you wish to accuse us of having a temple of idols. You can see that we are impartial. So listen to us. »

And he continues in a solemn tone: « It would be better if You stopped here to worship the Father among those who at least admit that they have a spirit of religion devoid of truth like the others who will not admit it and they offend us. Although alone, avoided like lepers, without prophets and doctors, we have at least been able to be united, feeling that we were brothers. And it is our law not to betray, because it is written: "You must not take the side of the greater number in wrong doing, nor side with the majority and give evidence in a lawsuit in defiance of justice". It is written: "See that the man who is innocent and just is not done to death, for I cannot bear impious people. You must not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds clear-sighted men and is the ruin of a just man's cause. Do not oppress the stranger because you know what it means to be strangers in a foreign country". And in the blessings pronounced on Gerizim, a mountain dear to the Lord if He chose it as a mountain of blessings, all sorts of good things are promised to those who conform to the true Law which is in the Pentateuch. Now if we reject the words of men as if they were idols, but we keep those of God, can people say that we are idolaters? The curse of God is upon him who secretly strikes his neighbour and accepts a reward to sentence an innocent to death. We do not want to be cursed by God because of our actions. Because we shall not be cursed for being Samaritans, as God is Just and He rewards righteousness wherever it is. That is our reliance in the Lord. »

He reflects for a moment, and then he resumes: « That is why we say to You: it would be better for You to stay with us. The Temple hates You and tries to grieve You. And not only the Temple: You will always be too long among those who reject You as a disgrace. No love will come to You from the Jews. »

« I cannot stay here. But I will remember your words. In the meantime I tell you to persevere in the observance of the laws of

justice which you have recalled, and which ensue from the precept of love of our neighbour. The precept, which with that of the love of God, forms the main commandment of the old Religion and of Mine. The path to Heaven is not far from those who live righteously. One step only will take onto the way to the Kingdom of God those who are on the nearby path and who are separated only by obstinacy, by now, rather than by conviction. »

« To Your Kingdom! »

« To Mine. But not the Kingdom as men imagine, the kingdom of fair temporal power, which may be even violent to be mighty. But the Kingdom which begins in the hearts of men, to whom the spiritual King gives a spiritual code and will give a spiritual reward. He will give the Kingdom, in which there will not be exclusively Judaeans or Galileans or Samaritans, but all those who on the Earth had one faith only: Mine, and in Heaven will have one name only: saints. Races, and divisions among races remain on the Earth and are confined to it. In My Kingdom there will not be different races, but only the race of the children of God. The children of One Only Father can but be of one descent. Now let Me go. I still have a long way to go before night. »

« Are You going to Jerusalem? »

« To En-shemesh. »

« We will then show you a road, which only we know, to go to the ford without having to stop and without risks. You can take it as you have no heavy loads or carts. You will be at Your destination at the ninth hour. And it will be a good thing for You to know that path. But rest here with us for an hour and accept our bread and salt and give us Your word in exchange. »

« Let it be done as you wish. But let us stay where we are. It is such a pleasant day and this place is beautiful. »

They are in fact in a little valley overspread with orchards and in the middle of it there is a little stream, which has been nourished by the first rains and flows babbling and shining in the sun towards the Jordan amid large stones, which break its water into pearly foam. The shrubs which have survived the summer heat seem to enjoy the pulverised foam on the two banks and they shine quivering in a mild breeze which brings the smell of ripe apples and fermenting musts.

Jesus goes near the stream, He sits on a huge stone with His head in the light shade of a willow-tree while the stream flows merrily down the valley. The people sit down on the grass which is beginning to grow again on the two banks.

From the village they bring bread, new milk, cheese, fruit and honey, and they offer everything to Jesus for Himself and for His disciples. And they look at Him, while He eats, after offering and blessing the food, so simple as a human being, so supremely handsome

and spiritually imposing as a god. He is wearing a white tunic shading into ivory like the hue of homespun wool and a dark blue mantle which is thrown over His shoulder. The sun, filtering through the willow, lights His hair with golden shafts which shift continuously as the light leaves of the willow move. And a sunbeam caresses His left cheek turning the soft curl at the end of the tuft falling along His cheek into a skein of spun gold and the same hue, somewhat paler, can be seen on His soft not excessively thick beard covering His chin and the lower part of His face. His skin, of an ancient ivory hue, shows in the sunshine the delicate embroidery of the veins on His cheeks and temples and one that runs across His smooth high forehead, from His nose up to His hair...

I think that it was just from that vein that I saw so much blood stream, because a thorn had pierced it during His Passion...

Every time I see Jesus so handsome and tidy in His virile composure, I remember the state to which He was reduced by His suffering and the insults of men...

While eating Jesus smiles at some children who have pressed round Him, resting their heads on His knees, or looking at Him eating, as if they saw I do not know what. And when Jesus arrives at the fruit and honey, He gives them some, putting grapes and soft crumbs dipped into liquid honey into the mouths of the younger ones, as if they were nestlings.

A little boy runs away through the crowds towards an orchard and comes back holding his arms tightly folded against his chest forming thus a live little basket, in which there are three wonderful big beautiful pomegranates - he certainly likes them and hopes to have some - and he offers them insistently to Jesus.

Jesus takes the fruit, He opens two making one part for each of His little friends, to whom He hands them out. Then, He takes the third one in His hand, stands up and begins to speak holding the beautiful pomegranate in the palm of His left hand, so that everybody may see it.

« To what shall I compare the world in general, and Palestine in particular, once united as one Nation, also in accordance with God's thought, and subsequently divided by an error and by the obstinate hatred of brothers? To what shall I compare Israel as she is now reduced through her own will? I will compare her to this pomegranate. And I solemnly tell you that the variances existing between Judaeans and Samaritans, are found, in different form and measure but with the same substantial hatred, among all the nations in the world, and at times among the provinces of the same nation. And they are said to be insuperable, as if they were things created by God. No. The Creator did not make as many Adams and Eves as there are races, adverse to one another, or as many as the tribes and families which are hostile to one another. He made one

only Adam and one only Eve, from whom all men descended, and they spread to fill the Earth with people, as if it were one only house which becomes richer and richer in rooms as the children grow up and get married procreating grandchildren for their parents. So, why so much hatred among men, why so many barriers and incomprehensions? You said: "We know how to be united, feeling like brothers". But it is not enough. You must love also those who are not Samaritans.

Look at this fruit. You know its flavour besides its beauty. Closed as it is, it already promises you the sweet juice inside it. If you open it, it is also a pleasant sight with its serried rows of acini similar to rubies enclosed in a coffer. But woe to the imprudent person who should bite it without removing the very bitter partitions between the families of acini. He would poison his lips and bowels and would throw it away saying: "It is poison". Likewise the separations and the hatred existing between one people and another, between one tribe and another, turn into "poison" what was created to be sweetness. Such separations are of no use, and as in this fruit, they do nothing but create limitations which take away space and cause anxiety and sorrow. They are bitter and they give bitterness which poisons the spirits of those who feed on them, that is those who bite their neighbours whom they do not love but they offend and grieve. Are they indelible? No. Good will cancels them as the hand of a child can remove these partitions of bitterness in the sweet fruit, which the Creator made for the delight of His children.

And the first to have good will is the same Sole Lord, Who is God of Judaeans as well as Galileans, Samaritans and Idumaeans. And He proves that by sending the Unique Saviour Who will save them all without asking them anything but faith in His Nature and Doctrine. The Saviour Who is speaking to you will pass by knocking down the useless barriers, cancelling the past which has divided you, to replace it with a present time which makes you all brothers in His Name. All you and those beyond the border have to do is to follow Him, and hatred will vanish and the dejection which gives rise to rancour will also vanish, as well as the pride which brings about injustice.

This is My commandment: that all men love one another as brothers, which they are. That they love one another as the Father in Heaven loves them and as the Son of man loves them, as He through the human nature which He took upon Himself feels He is the brother of men, and through His Paternity He knows He has the power to defeat Evil with all its consequences. You said: "It is our law not to betray". In that case, as first thing, do not betray your souls depriving them of Heaven. Love one another, love one another in Me, and peace will come to the spirits of men, as was

promised. And the Kingdom of God will come, which is Kingdom of peace and love for all those who want to serve the Lord their God with upright will.

I leave you. May the Light of God enlighten your hearts... Let us go... »

He envelops Himself in His mantle, He throws His bag across His shoulder and is the first to set out, with Peter on one side and the notable, who spoke at the beginning, on the other. The apostles are behind Him and farther back, as it is not possible to proceed in a group on the narrow road along the stream, are some young men from Ephraim...

### **483. At Bethany for the Feast of the Tabernacles.**

2nd September 1946.

The varied green shades of the countryside around Bethany come into sight as soon as one climbs over a spur of the mountain and sets foot on the southern slope, descending along a zigzag path towards Bethany. The silvery green of olive-trees, the bright green of apple-orchards with a few yellow leaves showing early here and there, the ruffled and more yellowish green hue of vines, the dark dense green of oaks and carob-trees mixed with the brown of fields already ploughed and waiting to be sown and with the fresh green of kitchen gardens and of meadows in which new grass is growing, look like a multicoloured carpet to anyone overlooking Bethany and surroundings. And towering over the green below, the fanshaped leaves of date-palms, always elegant and reminiscent of the East.

The little town of En-shemesh, lying in the middle of the greenery and all lit up by the sun which is beginning to set, is soon overcome, and also the large fountain rich in water a little to the north of Bethany is also left behind, then the first houses appear amid the green... They have arrived after a long tiring journey. And although they are very tired, they seem to regain strength simply by being near the friendly house in Bethany.

The little town is quiet, almost empty. Many inhabitants must have already moved to Jerusalem for the feast. So Jesus is unnoticed until He arrives near Lazarus' house. Only when He is near the garden which has now grown wild - where all the stilt-birds were - , He meets two men who recognise and greet Him and then ask: « Are You going to see Lazarus, Master? You are doing a good thing, because he is very ill. We are coming from his house after taking him the milk of our asses, as it is the only food, together with a little fruit juice and honey, which his stomach still accepts. His sisters do nothing but weep. They are worn out with watching at his bedside and with grief... And he does nothing but pine for

You. I think that he would be already dead, if his keen desire to see You had not kept him alive so far. »

« I am going at once. God be with you. »

« And... will You cure him? » they ask inquisitively.

« The will of God will be revealed on him together with the power of the Lord » replies Jesus perplexing them and He hastens towards the gate of the garden.

A servant sees Him and rushes to open it, but without any exclamation of joy. As soon as the gate is opened he kneels down venerating Jesus and says in a sorrowful voice: « You have come at the right moment, Lord! And may Your arrival bring joy to this house full of tears. Lazarus, my master... »

« I know. Be resigned, all of you, to the will of the Lord. He will reward you for sacrificing your wills to His. Go and call Martha and Mary. I will wait for them in the garden. »

The servant hurries away and Jesus follows him slowly after saying to the apostles: « I am going to Lazarus. You can have a rest, as you need it... »

In fact, while the two sisters appear at the door and have difficulty in recognising the Lord, so tired are their eyes with watching and weeping, and the sun shining into their eyes makes it more difficult for them to see, other servants come out of a side door to meet the apostles and they take them away.

« Martha! Mary! It is I. Do you not recognise Me? »

« Oh! the Master! » exclaim the two sisters and they run towards Him prostrating themselves at His feet stifling their sobs with difficulty. Kisses and tears fall upon Jesus' feet as previously in the house of Simon, the Pharisee.

But this time Jesus, while receiving the streaming tears of Martha and Mary, does not remain stiff as He did then. Now He bends down, He touches their heads blessing them and compels them to stand up saying: « Come. Let us go under the jasmine pergola. Can you leave Lazarus? »

More by nodding than by words, while sobbing, they say yes. And they go under the shady bower on whose dark leafy branches a few persistent jasmine little stars are still white and fragrant.

« Now, tell Me... »

« Oh! Master! You have come to a really sad house! We are dazed with grief. When the servant said to us: "There is someone looking for you" we did not think of You. And when we saw You, we did not recognise You. See? Tears have scalded our eyes. Lazarus is dying!... » and fresh tears interrupt the words of the two sisters who have been speaking alternately.

« And I have come... »

« To cure him?! Oh! my Lord! » says Mary, her eyes shining with hope through her tears.

« Ah! I said so! If He comes... » says Martha joining her hands in a joyful gesture.

« Oh! Martha! Martha! What do you know of God's acts and decrees? »

« Alas, Master! Will You not cure him?! » they both exclaim plunging back into grief.

« I say to you: have unlimited faith in the Lord. Persevere in having it despite innuendoes and events, and you will see great things when your hearts no longer have any reason to hope to see them. What does Lazarus say? »

« He echoes Your words. He says to us: "Do not doubt God's kindness and power, no matter what may happen. He will intervene on your and on my behalf, and on behalf of many, of all those who, like me and you, will remain faithful to the Lord". And when he is fit to do so, he explains the Scriptures to us, he does not read anything else nowadays, and he speaks to us of You, and he says that he will die in a happy period of time because the era of peace and forgiveness has begun. But You will hear him... because he says also other things which make us weep even more than we do for our brother... » says Martha.

« Come, Lord. Every minute that passes is stolen from Lazarus' hope. He used to count the hours and would say: "He will certainly be in Jerusalem for the feast and He will come... We know many things which we do not tell Lazarus in order not to grieve him, and we did not have so much hope, because we thought that You would not come to avoid those who are looking for You... Martha was fully convinced of that. I was not so sure... because if I were You, I would face my enemies. I am not a woman who is afraid of men. And now I am not even afraid of God. For I know how good He is to repentant souls... » says Mary and she casts a loving glance at Him.

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

« Of sin... and of myself... I am always afraid of falling again into evil. I think that Satan must have a mortal hatred of me. »

« You are right. You are one of the souls most hated by Satan. But you are also one of the most loved by God. Bear that in mind. »

« Oh! I do. And that remembrance is my strength! I remember what You said in Simon's house. You said: "Many sins are forgiven her because she has loved much", and You said to me: "Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace". You said "your sins". Not many. All of them. And so I think that You loved me, my God, without limit. Now if my poor faith of those days, the faith of a soul laden with faults, achieved so much from You, will my present faith not be able to defend me from Evil? »

« Yes, Mary. Be vigilant and watch over yourself. It is humility and prudence. But have faith in the Lord. He is with you. »

They go into the house. Martha goes to her brother. Mary would

like to serve Jesus. But Jesus wants to go to Lazarus first. And they enter the semi-dark room, where the sacrifice is being consumed.

« Master! »

« My friend! »

Lazarus lifts his emaciated arms, while Jesus lowers His to embrace the body of His languishing friend. A long embrace. Then Jesus lays the invalid down again on the cushions and gazes at him compassionately. But Lazarus smiles. He is happy. In his ravaged face only his hollow eyes shine brightly, lit by the joy of having Jesus there.

« See? I have come. And I shall be staying with you for a long time. »

« Oh! You cannot, my Lord. They do not tell me everything. But I know enough to be able to tell You that You cannot. To the sorrow they give You, they have added mine, my part, by not allowing me to die in Your arms. But since I love You I cannot be so selfish as to detain You here with me, in danger. You... I have already seen to it... You must change places continually. All my houses are open to You. The guardians have been given instructions and also the stewards of my lands. But do not go to Gethsemane to stay there. They keep a strict watch over it. I mean the house. You can go among the olive-trees, particularly the upper ones, and You can go there along many paths, without them finding out. Marjiam, do You know that he is already here? He was questioned by some people when he was in the oil-mill with Marcus. They wanted to know where You were and whether You would be coming. The boy gave them a very clever reply: "He is an Israelite and will come. Which way I do not know, as I left Him at Merom". So he did not give them the opportunity to say that You are a sinner and he did not lie. »

« Thank you, Lazarus. I will listen to you. But we will often meet just the same. » And He gazes at him again.

« Are You looking at me, Master? See how I am reduced? Like a tree which in autumn is stripped of its leaves, I am despoiled of my flesh, my strength and of the hours of my life. But I speak the truth when I say that, if I am sorry that I shall not live long enough to see Your triumph, I rejoice at departing so that I shall not see the hatred which is increasing against You, powerless as I am to check it. »

« You are not powerless; you never are. You see to your Friend, even before He arrives. I have two houses of peace, and I can say that they are equally dear to Me: the one in Nazareth and this one. If My Mother is there: the celestial love almost as great as Heaven for the Son of God, here I have the love of men for the Son of man. The friendly, faithful, venerating love... Thanks, My friends! »

« Will Your Mother never come? »

« At the beginning of springtime. »

« Oh! then I shall never see Her again... »

« Yes, you will. I am telling you and you must believe Me. »

« I believe everything, Lord. Also what facts disprove. »

« Where is Marjiam? »

« In Jerusalem with the disciples. But he comes here in the evening. He will be here shortly. And Your apostles? Are they not with You? »

« They are with Maximinus who is succouring them as they are tired and exhausted. »

« Have you walked much? »

« Yes, very much, without stopping. I will tell you about it... But rest now. I bless you for the time being. » And Jesus blesses him and withdraws.

The apostles are now with Marjiam and with almost all the shepherds and they are speaking of the insistence of the Pharisees to find out about Jesus. They say that such inquisitiveness roused their suspicions, so much so that their disciples decided to guard each road leading into Jerusalem in order to warn the Master.

« In fact » says Isaac « we are scattered along all the roads a few stadia from the Gates and we watch one night each in turns. This is our turn. »

« Master » says Judas laughing « they say that at the Joppa Gate there was half of the Sanhedrin and they were quarrelling because some of them remembered the words I spoke at Enganim, some swore that they heard that You had been to Dothan, some instead said that they had seen You near Ephraim, and thus they were furious because they did not know where You were... » and he laughs thinking of the trick he had played on Jesus' enemies.

« They will see Me tomorrow. »

« No. We will go tomorrow. We have already made our plans: all in a group and making ourselves conspicuous. »

« I do not want that. You would tell lies. »

« I swear to You that I will not lie. If they say nothing to me I will say nothing to them. If they ask me whether You are with us, I will reply: "Can't you see that He is not here?", and if they wish to know where You are I will say: "Look for Him yourselves. How do you expect me to know where the Master is just now?". In fact I will certainly not be in a position to know whether You are in the house, here, or in the orchards, or I do not know where. »

« Judas, Judas, I told you... »

« And I say that You are right. But my behaviour perhaps is not the simplicity of a dove, but it is the prudence of a serpent. You are the dove, I the serpent. And together we will form the perfection which You taught us. » He assumes the attitude of Jesus when He teaches and imitating the Master to perfection he says: « "I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be therefore as wise as serpents and as simple as doves... Do not worry about what to say, as the words will then be put on your lips, because it is not you

that speak, but the Spirit speaks in you... When they persecute you in one town, flee into another until the Kingdom of the Son of man comes... I remember them and it is now time to put them into practice. »

« I did not say them thus, neither did I say only those » objects Jesus.

« Oh! at present it is necessary to remember only those and to speak them thus. I know what You mean. But until faith in You is confirmed, and it is a stone in Your Kingdom, it is better not to surrender to the enemies. Later... we will say and do the rest... » And Judas' expression is so brightly intelligent and impish that he conquers everybody, except Jesus, Who sighs. Judas is really the seducer who lacks nothing to triumph over men.

Jesus is pensive and sighs... But He surrenders as He feels that Judas' precaution is not entirely wicked. And the Iscariot expounds his plan triumphantly.

« So we will go tomorrow and the day after tomorrow until the day after the Sabbath. And we will stay in a hut made with branches, in the valley of the Kidron, like perfect Israelites. They will get tired waiting for You... and then You will come. In the meantime You will stay here, in peace and You will rest. You are exhausted, my Master. And we do not want that. When the gates are closed one of us will come and tell You what they do. Oh! it will be lovely to see them disappointed! »

They all agree and Jesus does not offer any resistance. Perhaps the fact that He is really dead tired, perhaps His desire to give comfort to Lazarus, all possible comfort before the final struggle, contribute to His yielding. Perhaps also the real necessity of being free until He can accomplish all the necessary deeds, so that Israel may have no doubt about His Nature before condemning Him... He says: « Let it be so. But avoid discussions and lies. Be silent, but do not lie. Now let us go, because Martha is calling us. Come, Marjiam. I find you in better form... » and He goes away speaking to the boy, with one arm round his shoulder.

#### **484. At the Temple: « The Kingdom of God Does Not Come with Pomp ».**

3rd September 1946.

Jesus goes into the Temple. He is with His apostles and with a very large number of disciples, whom I know at least by sight. And behind them all, but united to the group, as if they wanted to be considered as followers of the Master, there are new faces, all unknown to me, with the exception of the shrewd one of the Greek from Antioch. He is speaking to other people, perhaps Gentiles like himself, and while Jesus and His disciples go on and enter the Court of Israel, he stops in the Court of the Gentiles with those

with whom he is conversing.

Of course, Jesus' entrance into the overcrowded Temple does not pass unnoticed. A fresh murmur rises, as if it were a disturbed beehive drowning the voices of the doctors teaching under the Porch of the Gentiles. The lessons are interrupted as though by magic, and the pupils of the scribes run in all directions with the news of Jesus' arrival, so that when He goes through the inner enclosure into the Court of Israel, several Pharisees, scribes and priests are scattered about watching Him. But they do not say anything to Him while He prays and they do not even go near Him. They watch Him only.

Jesus goes back to the Court of the Gentiles. They follow Him. And the train of the ill-intentioned people increases in number, like that of the curious and well-meaning ones. And words uttered under one's breath spread among the crowds. Now and again a louder voice can be heard saying: « Are you convinced now that He would come? He is a just man. He could not fail to come to the feast. » Or: « Why has He come? To mislead the people further? » Or: « Are you happy now? Can you see where He is now? You have asked for Him so keenly! »

Isolated remarks at once choked in throats by the meaningful glances of the disciples and followers who threaten the rancorous enemies with their very love. Ironical poisonous voices of enemies who squirt poison and then quiet down because they are afraid of the crowd. And the crowds are silent after an impressive demonstration in favour of the Master, because they are afraid of the reprisals of the mighty ones. The realm of reciprocal fear...

The only one who is not afraid is Jesus. He walks slowly and with stateliness towards the place where He wants to go, somewhat absorbed but ready to come out of His absorption to caress a child offered to Him by a mother, or to smile at an old man who greets and blesses Him.

In the Porch of the Gentiles, standing in the middle of a group of disciples, there is Gamaliel. With his arms folded across his chest, in his magnificent snow-white very wide garment which looks even whiter against the thick deep red carpet laid under his feet, Gamaliel seems to be engrossed in thought, with bowed head, and not to be interested in what is happening. His disciples, on the contrary, are most excited with keen curiosity. One of them, who is very short, climbs on to a high stool, to have a better view.

But when Jesus is opposite Gamaliel, the rabbi looks up and his deep eyes under his forehead of a thinker stare for a moment at Jesus' peaceful face. An inquisitive, tormenting and tormented glance. Jesus perceives it and turns round. He looks at him. The two flashes: that of the very dark eyes and that of the sapphire ones, meet. Jesus' eyes are meek, open to being scrutinised;

Gamaliel's are impenetrable, anxious to know and to get to the heart of the mystery of truth - the Galilean Rabbi is in fact a mystery to him - but he is pharisaically jealous of his thought, so that he is closed to every survey which does not concern God. They look at each other just for a moment. Then Jesus goes on and Gamaliel lowers his head again, without listening to the frank anxious questions of some of the people around him, or to the sly spiteful ones of others: « Is it Him, master? What do you think of Him? », « Well! What is your opinion? Who is He? »

Jesus goes to the spot which He has chosen. Oh! there are no carpets under His feet! He is not even under the porch. He is simply leaning against a column, standing on the top step, at the end of the porch. It is the lowest spot. Around Him there are the apostles, disciples, followers and curious people; farther back there are Pharisees, scribes, priests, rabbis. Gamaliel remains where he was.

Jesus begins to preach for the hundredth time the advent of the Kingdom of God and the preparation for it. And I could say that He repeats the same concepts, enhanced in power, which He expounded almost in the same place, twenty years previously. He speaks of Daniel's prophecy, of the Precursor foretold by the prophets, He recalls the star of the Wise Men, the slaughter of the Innocents. And after these preliminary recollections to demonstrate the signs of Christ's coming on to the Earth, in order to confirm His coming, He mentions the present signs which characterise Christ Teacher, as the others previously characterised the Advent of Christ Incarnate, that is, He recalls the contradiction which coexists with Him, the death of the Precursor, and the miracles which take place continuously, confirming that God is with His Christ. He never attacks His antagonists. He does not even seem to see them. He speaks to confirm His followers in their faith, to enlighten on the truth those who, through no fault of theirs, are still in complete ignorance of the truth...

A hoarse voice is heard from the far end of the crowd: « How can God be in Your miracles if You work them on forbidden days? Even yesterday You cured a leper on the Bethphage road. »

Jesus looks at His interrupter but does not reply. He continues to speak of the liberation from the domination which oppresses men, and of the establishment of the eternal, invincible, glorious, perfect Kingdom of Christ.

« And when will that happen? » asks a scribe sneeringly. And he adds: « We know that You want to make Yourself king. But a king like You would be the ruin of Israel. Where is Your royal power? Where are Your troops, Your treasures, Your alliances? You are mad! » And many like him shake their heads laughing and mocking at Him.

A Pharisee says: « Don't behave like that. In that way we will

never know what He means by kingdom, which laws it will have and how it will reveal itself. What? Was the ancient kingdom of Israel perfect at once as in the days of David and Solomon? Don't you remember the many uncertainties and hard times before the royal splendour of the perfect king? In order to have the first king it was necessary to form the man who would anoint him, and thus remove the barrenness of Anne of Elkanah and inspire her to offer the fruit of her womb. Meditate on Anne's song. It is a lesson to our hardness and blindness: "There is none as holy as the Lord... Do not speak and speak with haughty words, being proud of them... The Lord gives death and life... He raises the poor... He safeguards the steps of His faithful, but the wicked vanish in darkness, because it is not through his strength that man is strong, but through the strength which comes to him from God". Oh! remember! "The Lord will judge the ends of the Earth, He will endow His king with power and will exalt the horn of His Christ". Was the Christ of the prophecies not to be of the stock of David? So what was foretold from Samuel's birth onwards, is it not to be referred to the kingdom of the Christ? You, Master, are You not of David's issue, born in Bethlehem? » he finally asks Jesus directly.

« Yes, what you said is true » replies Jesus briefly.

« Oh! Gratify then our minds. You see that silence is not a good thing because it excites the clouds of doubt in hearts. »

« Not the clouds of doubt, but of pride, which is even more grave. »

« What? To be in doubt about You is not so grave as being proud? »

« Yes. Because pride is the lust of the mind. And it is a greater sin, because it is the same sin as Lucifer's. God forgives many things, and His Light shines lovingly to enlighten ignorance and dispel doubts. But He does not forgive pride which scoffs at Him pretending to be greater than He is. »

« Which of us says that he is greater than God? We do not blaspheme... » several of them shout.

« You do not say so with your lips. But you confirm it with your deeds. You want to say to God: "It is not possible for the Christ to be a Galilean, a man of the people. It is not possible for this man to be Him". What is impossible to God? »

Jesus' voice resounds like thunder. If previously He looked somewhat modest, leaning like a beggar against His column, now He has straightened Himself, He moves away from the pillar, He raises His head solemnly and crushes the crowd with the glare of His refulgent eyes. He is still standing on the step, but He looks as if He were on a high throne, so regal is His appearance. The people withdraw, they are almost frightened and no one replies to His last question.

Then a rabbi, a small wrinkled man, whose soul is certainly as ugly as his looks, preceding his question with a false clucking sly

laugh, asks: « It takes two people to accomplish lust. With whom does the mind accomplish it? The mind is not corporeal. So, how can it commit a sin of lust? As it is incorporeal, with whom does it copulate to sin? » and he laughs drawing his words and sly laugh.

« With whom? With Satan. The mind of the proud man fornicates with Satan against God and against love. »

« And with whom did Lucifer fornicate to become Satan, if Satan did not yet exist? »

« With himself. With his own intelligent and disordered thought. Scribe, what is lust? »

« But... I told You! Who does not know what is lust? We have all experienced it... »

« You are not a wise rabbi, because you do not know the true essence of this universal sin, the trine fruit of Evil. As the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are the Trine Form of Love. O scribe, lust is disorder. Disorder led by a free conscious intelligence, which is aware that its desire is evil, but wants to satisfy it just the same. Lust is disorder and violence against natural laws, against justice and love for God, for ourselves, for our brothers. All lust: the lust of the flesh as that aiming at the riches and power of the Earth, as well as that of those who would like to prevent Christ from accomplishing His mission, because they intrigue with immoderate ambition which is afraid of being struck by Me. »

A great murmur runs through the crowd. Gamaliel, who is all alone on his carpet, raises his head again and casts a sharp glance at Jesus.

« So, when will the Kingdom of God come? You have not replied... » urges again the previous Pharisee.

« When the Christ will be on the throne which Israel is preparing for Him, higher than any other throne, higher than this Temple. »

« But where is it being prepared, as no preparation is evident? Is it possible that Rome will allow Israel to rise again? Have the eagles become so blind that they cannot see what is being prepared? »

« The Kingdom of God does not come with pomp. Only the eye of God can see it being formed, because the eye of God reads inside men. So do not go looking for this Kingdom, where it is being prepared. And do not believe those who say: "They are plotting in Batanaea, they are conspiring in the caves in the desert of Engedi, and on the shores of the sea". The Kingdom of God is in you, within you, in your spirits which receive the Law that came from Heaven, as the law of the true Fatherland, the law, which, when practised, makes one the citizen of the Kingdom. That is why John came before Me to prepare the ways to the hearts of men so that My Doctrine could enter them. The ways have been prepared through penance, through love the Kingdom will rise and the

slavery of sin, which interdicts the Kingdom of Heaven to men, will fall. »

« This man is really great! And you say that He is an artisan? » says in a loud voice a man who was listening attentively. And others, apparently Judaeans judging by their garments, probably instigated by Jesus' enemies, gaze at one another dumbfounded and then approach their instigators asking: « What have you insinuated to us? Who can say that this man is leading the people astray? » And others ask: « We are wondering and would like you to tell us this: if it is true that none of you has taught Him, how can He be so wise? Where did He learn so much wisdom if He never studied with a master? » And they address Jesus asking: « Tell us. Where did You find Your doctrine? »

Jesus looks up full of inspiration and says:

« I solemnly tell you that this doctrine is not mine, but it is of Him Who sent Me among you. I solemnly tell you that no teacher taught Me it, neither did I find it in any living book or parchment or stone monument. I solemnly tell you that I prepared for this hour listening to the Living Being speak to My spirit. The hour has now come for Me to give the people of God the Word which has come from Heaven. And I do so, and will do so to the last, and after I have breathed My last the stones, which heard Me and did not soften, will experience a fear of God greater than that which Moses felt on Sinai, and in such fear, with the voice of truth, blessing or cursing, the words of My rejected doctrine will be engraved on stones. And those words will never be deleted. The sign will remain: light for those who will receive it, at least then, with love; absolute darkness for those who not even then will understand that it is the Will of God that sent Me to establish His Kingdom. At the beginning of Creation it was said: "Let there be light". And there was light in the chaos. At the beginning of My life it was said: "Peace to men of good will". A good will is the one which does the will of God and does not oppose it. Now he who does the will of God and does not oppose it, feels that he cannot fight against Me because he feels that My doctrine comes from God and not from Myself. Do I perhaps seek My own glory? Do I perhaps say that I am the Author of the Law of grace and of the era of forgiveness? No. I do not take the glory which is not Mine, but I give glory to the Glory of God, the Maker of all good things. My glory is to do what the Father wants Me to do, because that gives glory to Him. He who speaks on His behalf in order to be praised, seeks his own glory. But He Who can receive glory from men, even without seeking it, for what He does or says, but rejects it saying: "It is not My glory, created by Me, but it proceeds from the glory of the Father as I proceed from Him", is in the truth and there is no injustice in Him, as He gives each person what belongs to them

without keeping for Himself what is not His own. I am, because He wanted Me. »

Jesus stops for a moment. He scans the crowd prying into consciences. He reads in them and weighs them. He resumes speaking: « You are silent. Half of you admire Me, the other half are wondering how they can make Me be silent. Whose are the ten Commandments? Whence do they come? Who gave them to you? »

« Moses! » shouts the crowd.

« No. The most High. Moses, His servant, brought them to you. But they come from God. You have the formulae, but you do not have the faith, and you say in your hearts: "We did not see God. Neither we nor the Hebrews at the foot of Sinai". Oh! not even the thunderbolts which set the mountain on fire while God shone thundering in the presence of Moses, are sufficient to make you believe that God was present. Not even thunderbolts and earthquakes serve to make you believe that God is among you to write the eternal Pact of salvation and of condemnation. You will see a fresh dreadful epiphany very soon within these walls. And the holy secret places will come out of darkness because the Kingdom of the Light begins and the Holy of Holies will be extolled in the presence of the world and will no longer be concealed under the triple veil. And you will not believe yet. What is therefore needed to make you believe? That the thunderbolts of Justice may strike your bodies? But Justice will be appeased then and flashes of love will descend. And yet, not even they will write the Truth in your hearts, in all your hearts, neither will they give rise to Repentance and then to Love... »

Gamaliel's strained eyes are now gazing at Jesus...

« But you know that Moses was a man among men and the chroniclers of his days left you a description of him. And yet, although you know who he was, from Whom and how he received the Law, do you comply with it? No, none of you observe it. »

The crowds howl protesting.

Jesus imposes silence: « Are you saying that it is not true? That you observe it? Why then do you want to kill Me? Does the fifth commandment not forbid to kill a man? Do you not recognise Me as the Christ? But you cannot deny that I am a man. So why are you trying to kill Me? »

« You are mad! You are possessed! A demon is speaking in You and makes You rave and tell lies! None of us are thinking of killing You! Who wants to kill You? » shout those who actually want just that.

« Who? You. And you are trying to find excuses to do so. And you reproach Me for false faults. You blame Me, and it is not the first time, for curing a man on the Sabbath. Does Moses not say that we must be compassionate to a donkey or an ox which has fallen as it

is of value to your brother? And should I not have mercy on the diseased body of a brother for whom his recovered health is material comfort and a spiritual means to bless the Lord and love Him because of His kindness? And do you not practise also on Sabbaths the circumcision which Moses gave you having received it from the patriarchs. If by circumcising a man on the Sabbath the Mosaic Law is not infringed because it makes a child a son of the Law, why do you remonstrate loudly with Me if on a Sabbath I cured a man completely, both his body and his soul, and I made him a son of God? Do not judge from appearances or to the letter. But judge with sound judgement and according to the spirit, because the letter, formulae and appearances are dead things, painted sceneries but not real life, whereas the spirit of words and of appearances is real life and source of eternity. But you do not understand these things because you do not want to understand them. Let us go. » And He turns round and goes towards the exit, followed and surrounded by His apostles and disciples, who look at Him feeling pity for Him and indignation for His enemies.

Jesus is pale, but He smiles and says to them: « Do not be sad. You are My friends. And you are doing the right thing in being so, because My time is coming to its end. The time will soon come when you will be wishing to see one of these days of the Son of man. But you will no longer be able to see it. It will then be a consolation for you to say: "We loved Him and were faithful to Him while He was among us". And to laugh at you and make you look like fools, they will say to you: "The Christ has come back. He is here! He is there!". Do not listen to those voices. Do not go and do not follow those lying scoffers. The Son of man, once He has gone away, will not come back again until His Day. And His manifestation will be like lightning flashing across the sky, so fast that the eye can hardly follow it. You, and not only you, but no man could follow Me when I will finally appear to gather together all those who were, are or will be. But before that happens the Son of man must suffer much. He must suffer everything. All the grief of Mankind, and further, He is to be rejected by this generation. »

« Then, my Lord, You will suffer all the evil with which this generation will be able to strike You » remarks Matthias, the shepherd.

« No. I said: "All the grief of Mankind". It existed before this generation and will exist, through generations, after this one. And it will always sin. And the Son of man will relish all the bitterness of past, present and future sins, down to the last sin, in His spirit, before being the Redeemer. And after His glory He will still suffer in His spirit of Love seeing that Mankind tramples on His Love. You cannot understand now... Let us go into this house. It is a friendly one. »

He knocks at a door which is opened letting Him go in, while the door-keeper does not seem to be seized with astonishment seeing the number of people going in after Jesus.

**485. At the Temple: « Do You Know Me and Where I Come from? ».**

4th September 1946.

The Temple is even more crowded than on the previous day. And among the excited crowd filling the first court I see many Gentiles, many more than yesterday. They are all waiting anxiously, both the Israelites and the Gentiles. And the Gentiles are speaking to Gentiles, and the Hebrews to Hebrews, in small groups, scattered here and there, without losing sight of the doors.

The doctors under the porches are busy raising their voices to draw the attention of people and show off their eloquence. But the people are not paying attention and they are preaching to few pupils. Gamaliel is there, in his usual place. But he is not speaking. He is walking up and down on his magnificent carpet, with folded arms, lowered head, meditating, and his long tunic and longer mantle which he has unfastened and is hanging held by two silver rosettes, form a train which he pushes aside with his foot every time he retraces his steps. His disciples, the most faithful ones, leaning against the wall, look at him in silence, intimidated as they are, and they respect the meditation of their master.

Some Pharisees and priests seem to be very busy and they come and go... The people, who are aware of their real intentions, point them out and an occasional remark goes off like a rocket on fire to bum their hypocrisy. But they feign they do not hear. They are few in number compared with the many who do not hate Jesus and on the contrary hate them, so they deem it wise not to react.

« There He is! There He is! He is coming from the Golden Gate today! »

« Let us run! »

« I am staying here. He will come and speak here. I am not going to lose my place. »

« Neither am I, nay, those who are going away are making room for us. »

« But will they let Him speak? »

« If they have allowed Him to come in!... »

« Yes, but it is a different matter. As a son of the Law, they cannot prevent Him from entering. But as a rabbi, they can drive Him out if they wish so. »

« How many discriminations! If they let Him speak to God, why should they not let Him speak to men? » says a Gentile.

« That is true » replies another Gentile. « As we are impure, you do

not let us go there, but we can stay here, as you hope that we will become circumcised... »

« Be quiet, Quintus. That is why they let Him speak to us. They hope to prune us as if we were trees. Instead we come here to graft His ideas like scions into our wild minds. »

« You are quite right. He is the only one who does not loathe us! »

« Oh! When we go shopping with purses full of money, the others do not loathe us either. »

« Look! We Gentiles are the only ones left here. We shall hear Him well and see Him better! I like to see the faces of His enemies. By Jove! A battle of faces... »

« Be quiet! Don't let anyone hear you mentioning Jupiter. It is forbidden here. »

« Oh! Between Jove and Jehovah there is only a tiny difference. And between gods there will be no ill-feeling... I have come urged by a good desire to hear Him. Not to laugh at Him. They speak highly of the Nazarene everywhere! So I said: the weather is fine and I will go and listen to Him. Many people go farther to hear the oracles... »

« Where have you come from? »

« From Perga. And you? »

« From Tarsus. »

« I am almost Jewish. My father was a Hellenist from Iconium. But he married a Roman from Antioch in Cilicia and he died before I was born. But the seed is Hebrew. »

« He is late... Will they have caught Him? »

« Be not afraid. The shouts of the crowd would tell us. These Jews shout like restless magpies, always... »

« Oh! there He is, over there. Will He really come here? »

« Don't you see that they have taken all the places on purpose, except this corner? Can't you hear how many frogs are croaking pretending to teach? »

« But that one over there is silent. Is it true that he is the greatest doctor in Israel? »

« Yes, but... how pedantic he is! I listened to him one day, but to digest his science I had to drink many goblets of Falemian wine at Titus' in Bezetha. » They both laugh.

Jesus approaches slowly. He passes before Gamaliel, who does not even raise his head, and then He goes to the same place as yesterday.

The crowd, now a mixture of Israelites, proselytes and Gentiles, understand that He is about to speak and they whisper: « He is now going to speak in public, and no one says anything to Him. »

« Perhaps the Princes and the Chiefs have recognised Him as the Christ. After the Galilean went away yesterday, Gamaliel spoke to the Elders for a long time. »

« Is it possible? How could they recognise Him all of a sudden, if only a short time ago they considered that He deserved to be put to death? »

« Perhaps Gamaliel had some proofs... »

« What proofs? What proofs do you expect him to have in favour of that man? » asks a man angrily.

« Be quiet, jackal. You are only the last of the scribes. Who spoke to you? » and they make fun of him.

He goes away. But others take his place, they do not belong to the Temple, but they are certainly incredulous Jews: « We have the proofs. We know where He is from. But when the Christ comes, no one will know where He comes from. We will not know His origin. But this one!!! He is the son of a carpenter of Nazareth, and the whole village can witness against us if we are telling lies... »

In the meantime the voice of a Gentile is heard saying: « Master, speak a little to us today. We have been told that You say that all men come from one God only, Yours. So much so, that You call them the children of the Father. Some of our Stoic poets had a similar idea. They said: "We are descendants of God". Your fellow-countrymen say that we are more impure than animals. How can You reconcile the two trends? »

The question is put according to the custom of philosophical debates, at least I think so. And Jesus is about to reply, when the incredulous Jews and the believing ones begin to dispute more furiously and a shrill voice repeats: « He is a common man. The Christ will not be like him. Everything will be exceptional in Him: His figure, nature, origin... »

Jesus looks in that direction and says in a loud voice: « So you know Me and you know where I come from? Are you sure? And the little you know, does it not mean anything to you? Does it not confirm the prophecies? But you do not know everything about Me, I solemnly tell you that I did not come by Myself and from where you think that I came. It is the very Truth, Whom you do not know, Who sent Me. »

A cry of indignation rises from the enemies.

« The very Truth, Whose deeds you do not know. Neither do you know His way, along which I came. Hatred cannot be acquainted with the ways and deeds of Love. Darkness cannot stand the sight of Light. But I know Him Who sent Me because I belong to Him, I am part of Him and one Whole with Him. And He sent Me to fulfil what His Thought wants. »

There is an uproar. His enemies rush upon Him to lay hands on Him, to capture and hit Him. The apostles, disciples, people, Gentiles, proselytes react to defend Him. Some rush to help the former and would perhaps succeed in doing so, but Gamaliel, who so far seemed remote from everything around him, departs from his

carpet and comes towards Jesus, and as he is driven back by those defending Him under the porch, he shouts: « Leave Him. I want to hear what He says. »

Gamaliel's voice achieves more than the squad of legionaries who have come from the Antonia to put down the riot. The tumult drops like a whirl that breaks and the outcry abates to a whisper. The legionaries remain as a precaution - quite unnecessary now near the external enclosure.

« Speak » Gamaliel orders Jesus. « Reply to those accusing You. » His tone is peremptory, but not mocking.

Jesus moves forward, towards the Court. He calmly resumes speaking. Gamaliel remains where he is and his disciples are busy taking the carpet and stool to him, so that he may be comfortable. But he remains standing, with his arms folded, his head lowered, his eyes closed, engrossed in listening.

« You have accused Me unfairly, as if I had blasphemed instead of speaking the truth. I am speaking, not to defend Myself, but to give you Light, so that you may know the Truth. And I am not speaking on My own behalf, but recalling the words in which you believe and on which you swear. They bear witness to Me. I know that you see in Me nothing but a man like yourselves, inferior to yourselves. And you think that it is impossible for a man to be the Messiah. Or at least you think that the Messiah ought to be an angel, that his origin should be so mysterious that he should be king only by the authority excited by the mystery of his origin. But when ever in the history of our people, in the books forming that history, and which will last as long as the world, because doctors of all countries and all times will draw from them corroboration for their science and their researches into the past by means of the enlightenment of truth, when ever in those books is it said that God spoke to one of His Angels to say to him: "From now on you will be My Son because I begot you"? »

I see that Gamaliel has a tablet and some parchments given to him and he sits down writing...

« The angels, spiritual creatures, servants of the Most High and His messengers, were created by Him, as man, as animals and everything that was created. But they were not begotten by Him. Because God begets only another Himself, as the Perfect One could but beget another Perfect One, another being like Himself, in order not to lower His perfection by begetting a creature inferior to Himself. Now, if God cannot beget the angels or elevate them to the dignity of sons of His, what will the Son be to Whom He says: "You are My Son. I begot You today"? And of what nature will He be, if begetting Him, He says pointing Him out to His angels: "And let all the angels of God adore Him"? And what will this Son be like to deserve to hear the Father say to Him, the

Father by Whose grace men can mention His name with their hearts humbled in adoration: "Sit at My right hand and I will make Your enemies a footstool for You"? That Son can but be God like His Father, with Whom He shares attributes and power, and with Whom He enjoys the Charity which gladdens them in the ineffable and unknowable love of Perfection itself.

But if God did not find it appropriate to elevate an angel to the rank of Son, could He ever have said of a man what He said of Him Who is now speaking to you here - and many of you who now oppose Me were present when He said so - at the ford of Betharabah two years ago? You heard Him and trembled. Because the voice of God is unmistakable, and without His, special grace it crushes those who hear it and shakes their hearts. What is therefore the Man Who is speaking to you? Is He perhaps one born of human seed and by the will of man like all of you? And could the Most High have placed His Spirit to dwell in a body, devoid of grace, like those of men born of carnal will? And could the Most High be satisfied with the sacrifice of a man to make amends for the great Sin? Consider this: He does not choose an angel to be the Messiah and Redeemer, can He therefore elect a man? And could the Redeemer be only the Son of the Father-without assuming human nature, but with means and power exceeding human limitations? And could the First-Born of the Father have parents if He is the eternal First-Born? Are your proud thoughts not upset by such questions which rise towards the realms of Truth, closer and closer to it, and find a reply only in a humble heart full of faith?

Who is to be the Christ? An angel? More than an angel. A man? More than a man. A God? Yes, a God. But joined to human flesh that it may complete the expiation of the guilty flesh. Everything is to be redeemed through the same matter by which it sinned. So God should have sent an angel to expiate the sins of the fallen angels, to expiate on behalf of Lucifer and his angelic followers. Because, as you are aware, Lucifer also sinned. But God did not send an angelic spirit to redeem the angels of darkness. They did not worship the Son of God, and God does not forgive the sin against His Word begotten of His Love. But God loves man and He sends the Man, the only perfect Man, to redeem man and obtain peace with God. And it is according to justice that only a Man-God may fulfil the redemption of man and appease God.

And the Father and the Son loved and understood each other. And the Father said: "I want". And the Son said: "I want". And then the Son said: "Give Me". And the Father said: "Take", and the Word was made flesh, the formation of which is mysterious and this flesh was named Jesus Christ, the Messiah, He Who is to redeem men, lead them to the Kingdom, defeat the demon, crush slavery.

To defeat the demon! An angel could not, cannot accomplish what the Son of man can do. That is why God does not call angels but the Man to accomplish the great work. Here is the Man Whose origin you doubt, you deny or are worried about. Here is the Man. The Man acceptable to God. The Man representing all His brothers. The Man like you in appearance, superior to and different from you by origin, begotten not of man but of God and consecrated to His ministry, is in front of the high altar to be Priest and Victim for the sins of the world, supreme eternal Pontiff, High Priest of the order of Melchizedek. Be not afraid! I am not stretching out My hand toward the pontifical tiara. Another crown is awaiting Me. Do not worry! I will not take the Rational away from you. Another one is ready for Me. Fear only that the Sacrifice of the Man and the Mercy of the Christ be of no avail to you. I have loved you so much, I love you so much that I obtained from the Father to annihilate Myself. I have loved you and I love you so much that I asked to consume all the Sorrow of the world in order to give you eternal salvation.

Why do you not want to believe Me? Can you not believe yet? Is it not said of the Christ: "You are Priest of the order of Melchizedek for ever"? But when did priesthood begin? Perhaps in the days of Abraham? No. And you know. Does the King of Justice and Peace, who appears to announce Me, with prophetic figure, at the dawn of our people, not warn you that there is a more perfect priesthood coming directly from God, just as Melchizedek, whose origin was never ascertained by anybody and who is called "the priest" and priest he will remain for ever? Do you no longer believe inspired words? And if you believe that, why, doctors, can you not give an acceptable explanation of the words which say, and they refer to Me: "You are Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek"? There is, therefore, another priesthood, before and beside Aaron's. And it is said of it "you are". Not "you were". Not "you will be". You are priest for ever. So this sentence announces that the eternal Priest will not belong to the well known stock of Aaron or to any other sacerdotal stock. But it will be of new origin, as mysterious as Melchizedek's. It is of such origin. And if the power of God sends it, it means that He wants to renew the Priesthood and the rite so that they may become useful to Mankind. -

Do you know My origin? No. Do you know My deeds? No. Do you realise which effects they will produce? No. You know nothing of Me. So you can see that also thus I am the "Christ" Whose Origin, Nature and Mission are not to be known until it pleases God to reveal them to men. Blessed are those who will be able to believe and do believe before the dreadful Revelation of God crushes them on the ground with its weight, and nails them there,

striking them with the dazzling powerful truth thundered from Heaven, howled from the Earth: "He was the Christ of God". You say: "He is from Nazareth. Joseph was His father. Mary was His Mother". I have no father who begot Me as man. I have no mother who gave birth to Me as God. And yet I have a body which I assumed through the mysterious deed of the Spirit, and I came among you passing through a holy tabernacle. And I will save you, after forming Myself according to the will of God, I will save you, by letting My true self come out from the Tabernacle of My Body to consume the great Sacrifice of a God Who immolates Himself to save men.

Father, My Father! I told You at the beginning of time: "Here I am to obey Your Will". And I told You at the hour of grace before departing from You to take on a body to be able to suffer: "Here I am to obey Your Will". And I tell You once again to sanctify those for whom I came: "Here I am to obey Your Will". And I will always tell You until Your Will is accomplished... »

Jesus, Who had raised His arms towards heaven, praying, now lowers them and folds them across His chest, He bends His head, closes His eyes and becomes engrossed in secret prayer.

The people whisper. Not everybody has understood, nay most of them (including myself) have not understood. We are too ignorant. But we realise that He has enunciated great things. And we are silent, full of admiration.

The evil-minded persons, who have not understood or did not want to understand, sneer: « He is raving! » But they dare not say more and they move aside or go to the gates shaking their heads. I think that so much prudence is due to the Roman lances and daggers shining in the sunshine against the outer walls.

Gamaliel elbows his way through those who have stayed. He arrives near Jesus, Who is still absorbed in prayer, far from the crowd and the place, and calls Him: « Rabbi Jesus! »

« What do you want, rabbi Gamaliel? » asks Jesus looking up, His eyes still absorbed in an internal vision.

« An explanation from You. »

« Tell Me. »

« Go away, all of you! » orders Gamaliel, and in such a tone that apostles, disciples, followers, curious people and Gamaliel's very disciples, move aside quickly. Jesus and Gamaliel are alone, facing each other. And they look at each other. Jesus is, as usual, meek and kind, Gamaliel unintentionally authoritative and proud looking. A countenance certainly due to years of exaggerated homage.

« Master... Some words of Yours have been related to me. You spoke them at a banquet... of which I disapproved because it was not a genuine one. I fight or I do not fight, but always openly... I

meditated on those words. I compared them with the ones which are in my memory... And I have been waiting for You, here, to ask You about them... But first I wanted to hear You speak... They have not understood. I hope I will be able to understand. I wrote Your words while You were speaking, so that I may meditate on them, not to injure You. Do You believe me? »

« Yes, I do. And may the Most High make them blaze in your spirit. »

« Let it be so. Listen. The stones which are to vibrate, are they perhaps those of our hearts? »

« No, rabbi. These (and He points at the walls of the Temple with a rotary motion of His hand). Why are you asking Me? »

« Because my heart vibrated when the words You spoke at the banquet and Your replies to the tempters were related to me. I thought that throbbing was the sign... »

« No, rabbi. The throbbing of your heart and of the hearts of a few more people is too little to be the sign which leaves no doubts... Even if you, with rare judgement of humble knowledge of yourself, define your heart: stone. Oh! Rabbi Gamaliel, can you really not make of your petrified heart a bright altar receiving God? Not for My benefit, rabbi. But that your justice may be complete... »

And Jesus looks kindly at the elderly master who ruffles his beard and inserts his fingers under his head-dress pressing his forehead and whispering with his head lowered: « I cannot... Not yet... But I hope... Will You still give that sign? »

« Yes, I will. »

« Goodbye, Rabbi Jesus. »

« May the Lord come to you, rabbi Gamaliel. »

They part. Jesus nods to His disciples and leaves the Temple with them.

Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, disciples, rabbis rush like vultures around Gamaliel who is putting into his large belt the sheets he has written.

« Well? What do you think of Him? Is He mad? You did the right thing in writing His follies. We will need them. Have you made up your mind? Yesterday... today... More than is needed to convince you. » They are speaking uproariously and Gamaliel is silent while he adjusts his belt, he taps the ink-pot hanging from it, he hands back to his disciple the tablet on which he leaned to write on the parchments.

« Are you not answering? You have not spoken since yesterday... » insists one of his colleagues.

« I am listening, not to you, to Him. And I am trying to recognise in His present words the word which He spoke to me one day, here. »

« And are you successful? » many of them say laughing.

« Like a thunder, which sounds differently, according to whether it is closer or farther away. But still the roar of thunder. »

« So, an inconclusive sound » jeers one.

« Do not laugh, Levi. The voice of God may be found also in thunder, and we may be so stupid as to think that it is the noise of clouds being rent... And you, Helkai, and you, Simon, stop laughing, lest the thunder should change into a thunderbolt and reduce you to ashes... »

« So... you... are almost saying that the Galilean is that boy whom you and Hillel thought a prophet, and that the boy and the man are the Messiah... » some of them ask scoffingly, although slyly, because Gamaliel commands respect.

« I am not saying anything. I am saying that the roar of thunder is always the roar of thunder. »

« Closer or farther away? »

« Alas! The words are stronger, as befits His age. But the twenty years which have gone by have made my intellect twenty times more closed on the treasure which it possesses. And the sound penetrates more weakly... » And Gamaliel droops his head on his chest, meditating.

« Ha! Ha! Ha! You are getting old and foolish, Gamaliel! You are mistaking phantoms for realities. Ha! Ha! Ha! » they all say laughing.

Gamaliel shrugs his shoulders scornfully. He gathers his mantle which was hanging from his shoulders, he envelops himself in it several times, so large it is, he turns his back on everybody, without replying one word, full of contempt in his silence.

#### **486. At the Temple: « I Shall Remain with You for Only a Short Time Now ».**

5th September 1946.

Without worrying about other people's malevolence Jesus goes back to the Temple for the third day. But He cannot have slept in Jerusalem because His sandals are very dusty. Perhaps He spent the night on the hills around the city. And His brothers James and Judas with Joseph, the shepherd, and Solomon must have been with Him. He meets the other apostles and disciples near the eastern wall of the Temple.

« They came, You know? Both to us and to the best known disciples. It's a good job You were not there! »

« We must always do that. »

« All right. But we shall talk about it later. Let us go. »

« Many have preceded us extolling Your miracles. How many have become convinced and believe in You! Your brothers were

right, with regard to that » says John, the apostle.

« They went even to Annaleah's looking for You, You know? »

« And to Johanna's mansion. But they only found Chuza... and in a temper! He drove them away like dogs saying that in his house he does not want spies and that he has had enough of them. We were told by Jonathan, who is here with his master » says Daniel, the shepherd.

« You know? The scribes wanted to disperse those who were waiting for You, by convincing them that You are not the Christ. But they replied: "He is not the Christ? And who is He then? Will another man ever be able to work the miracles which He works? Did the others, who said that they were the Christ, work them? No. One hundred, one thousand impostors may rise, perhaps created by you, saying that they are the Christ, but whoever may come will never work miracles like Him and as many as He works". And as the scribes and Pharisees maintained that You work them because You are a Beelzebub, they replied: "Oh! in that case you should work striking ones, because you are certainly Beelzebubs, compared with the Holy One » says Peter and he laughs and they all laugh remembering the witty remark of the crowd and the scandalised scribes and Pharisees, who had gone away full of indignation.

They are now within the Temple and are at once surrounded by a crowd which is even larger than it was the previous days.

« Peace to You, Lord! Peace! Peace! » shout the Israelites.

« Hail, Master! » greet the Gentiles.

« May peace and light come to you » replies Jesus in one greeting.

« We were afraid that they might have caught You, or that You were not coming out of prudence or disgust. And we would have spread out looking for You everywhere » say many.

Jesus smiles lightly and asks: « So you do not want to lose Me? »

« And if we lose You, Master, who will give us the lessons and the graces which You give us? »

« My lessons will remain in you and you will understand them better when I have gone away... And the fact that I am no longer present among men will not prevent graces from descending upon those who pray with faith. »

« Oh! Master! But do You really want to go away? Tell us where You are going and we will follow You. We are in such need of You! »

« The Master is saying so to find out whether we love Him. But where can the Rabbi of Israel go, but here in Israel? »

« I solemnly tell you that I shall remain with you for only a short time and I will go to those to whom the Father has sent Me. Afterwards you will look for Me and you will not find Me. And where I am you will not be able to come. But now let Me go. Today I will not speak in here. I have some poor people who are waiting for Me

elsewhere and they cannot come here because they are seriously ill. After the prayer I shall go to them. » And with the help of His disciples He pushes through the crowd going towards the Court of Israel.

Those who remain look at one another.

« Where will He be going? »

« Certainly to His friend Lazarus. He is very ill. »

« I was saying: where will He go, not today, but when He leaves us for good. Did you not hear that He said that we will not be able to find Him? »

« Perhaps He will go to gather Israel together, evangelizing those of our country who are scattered among the various nations. The Diaspora hopes in the Messiah as we do. »

« Or perhaps He will go and teach the heathens to lead them to His Kingdom. »

« No. That's not possible. We would always be able to find Him, even if He were in remote Asia, or in central Africa, or in Rome, or Gaul, Iberia, Thrace or among the Sarmatians. If He says that we would not find Him even if we looked for Him, it means that He will not be in any of those places. »

« Of course! What do His words mean: "You will look for Me and you will not find Me, and where I am you cannot come"? "I am... Not: "I shall be... So where is He? Is He not here among us? »

« I am telling you, Judas! He looks like a man but He is a spirit! »

« Certainly not! Among the disciples there are some who saw Him when He was a new-born baby. Even more! They saw His Mother pregnant with Him a few hours before He was born. »

« But is He really that child, who has now become a man? Who can assure us that He is not a different person? »

« No! He could be another person and the shepherds could be mistaken. But what about His Mother, his brothers and the whole village?! »

« Did the shepherds recognise the Mother? »

« Of course they did... »

« Well... Then, why does He say: "Where I am you will not be able to come?". For us there is a future: you will be able. For Him it is a present: I am. So has this Man no future? »

« I don't know what to say. It is so. »

« I am telling you. He is mad. »

« Perhaps you are mad, you spy of the Sanhedrin. »

« Me spy? I am a Judaeen who admires Him. And did you say that He is going to Lazarus? »

« We have not said anything, old spy. We know nothing. And even if we knew we would not tell you. Go and tell those who sent you, to look for Him themselves. You are a spy, a corrupted spy!... »

The man sees that things are taking a bad turn and he slinks

away.

« But we are staying in here! If we had gone out, perhaps we would have seen Him. Run this way! Run that way!... Tell us which way He went. Tell Him not to go to Lazarus. »

Those with good legs run away... And they come back... « He is no longer here... He mingled in the crowd, and no one can say... »

The disappointed crowd slowly disperses...

... But Jesus is much closer than they thought. After going out through one of the gates, He went round the Antonia and came out of town through the Sheep Gate, descending into the valley of the Kidron which has very little water in the central part of the riverbed. Jesus crosses it jumping on the stones emerging from the water and begins to climb the Mount of Olives. The olive-trees are very thick in that part and are mingled with the bushes which make this side of Jerusalem gloomy, I would say funereal, closed as it is between the dark walls of the Temple which dominates on that side with all its mountain, and the Mount of Olives on the other. Farther south the valley brightens up and widens out, whereas here it is very narrow: the scratch of a gigantic claw which has dug a deep furrow between Mount Moriah and the Mount of Olives.

Jesus is not going towards Gethsemane, He is going in the opposite direction, northwards, walking all the time on the mountain which widens out into a wild valley, where, close to a low circular range of wild hills covered with stones, flows the torrent forming a bend to the north of the town. The olive-trees are replaced there by sterile, thorny, twisted, ruffled little trees, mingled with bushes, the tentacles of which spread in all directions. It is a very sad and solitary place. It gives the impression of an infernal apocalyptic place. There are a few sepulchres, and nothing else, not even lepers. And this solitude, contrasting with the crowds of the town so close and so full of people and noise, is strange indeed. With the exception of the murmur of the water among the pebbles, and the rustle of the wind among the plants which have grown in the midst of stones, no other noise is heard. There is not even the cheerful chirping of birds, which are so numerous among the olivetrees of Gethsemane and of Mount Olivet. The rather strong wind blowing from northeast, raising little vortices of dust, drives back the noise of the town, and silence, the silence of a place of death, reigns oppressively, almost frighteningly.

« But is this the way? » Peter asks Isaac.

« Yes, it is. One can get there also along other routes, starting from Herod's Gate and better still from the Damascus one. But it is better for you to know the less frequented paths. We have been round all the outskirts to find them and show them to you. You will thus be able to go wherever you wish, in the neighbourhood,

without taking the usual ways. »

« And... can we trust those of Nob? » asks Peter again.

« As you can trust your own family. Thomas last winter, Nicodemus all the time, his disciple John the priest, and others have won the little village over. »

« And you did more than all the rest » says Benjamin the shepherd.

« Oh! me!! If I have done anything, then everybody has been at it. But You can be sure, Master, that You have safe places all around the town... »

« Ramah also... » says Thomas who is proud of his town. « My father and my brother-in-law thought of You with Nicodemus. »

« In that case also Emmaus » says a man who is not new to me, but I cannot say exactly who he is, also because I found more than one Emmaus in Judaea, without taking into account the place near Tarichea.

« It is too far to go and come as I do now. But I will come there sometime, without fail. »

« And to my house » says Solomon.

« I will certainly come there at least once to say hallo to the old man. »

« There is also Bether. »

« And Bethzur. »

« I will not go to the houses of the women disciples, but when necessary I will send for them. »

« I have a loyal friend near En-Rogel. His house is open to You. And none of those who hate You will think that You are so close to them » says Stephen.

« The gardener of the royal gardens can give You hospitality. He is hand in glove with Manaen who got him that job... and then... You cured him one day... »

« Did I? I don't know him... »

« He was among the poor people whom You cured in Chuza's house at Passover. A cut by a scythe soiled with manure was causing his leg to putrefy and his former master had dismissed him because of that. He was begging for his children. And You cured him. Then Manaen got him a job in the Gardens, in a good moment of Antipa. He now does everything Manaen tells him. And for You... » says Matthias, the shepherd.

« I have never seen Manaen with you... » says Jesus staring at Matthias, who changes colour and becomes excited. « Come ahead with Me. »

The disciple follows Him.

« Speak! »

« Lord... Manaen made a mistake... and he is suffering very much and Timoneus and a few more people with him. They cannot

set their minds at rest because You... »

« They surely do not think that I hate them... »

« No! But... They are afraid of Your words and of Your face. »

« Oh! What a mistake! Just because they made a mistake they should come to the Remedy. Do you know where they are now? »

« Yes, Master, I do. »

« Well, go to them and tell them that I will be waiting for them at Nob. »

Matthias goes away without wasting time.

The mountain path rises so that the whole of Jerusalem can be seen from the north... Jesus with His disciples turns round and goes in the opposite direction.

#### **487. At Nob. The Miracle on the Wind.**

6th September 1946.

It is a fairly well kept village, with houses grouped together. The inhabitants are all in their houses, because a strong wind is blowing. But when the disciples go and inform them that Jesus is there, all the women, children and old people whom age had compelled to stay at home, crowd round Jesus, Who had stopped in the main little square. As the village is on an elevation, the air is clear also on a dull day, one's eyes rove towards Jerusalem to the south and towards Ramah to the north (I say Ramah because it is written on a milestone with the indication of the miles).

The people are deeply moved. It is such a new and touching situation for them to have the privilege of giving hospitality to the Lord!... An old man, a real patriarch, says so on behalf of everybody and the women nod assent.

As they are accustomed to being crushed by the pride of priests and Pharisees, they are timid... But Jesus sets them at once at their ease by taking in His arms a little girl, who is taking her first steps, and caressing the old man, saying: « Had you not seen Me before? »

« From far away... passing by... some people at the Temple. But for us who are close to the town, it is even more difficult to have what other people coming from afar have » says the old man.

« It is always so, father. What seems to make things easy, makes them difficult, because everybody relies on the idea that it is easy. But we shall now get to know one another. Go home, father. The autumn winds are blowing, and they are not propitious to patriarchs. »

« Oh! I am all alone! Days no longer count for me... »

« His daughter got married far from here and his wife died at the feast of the Dedication » explains a woman.

« John, you must not say that, since you have the Rabbi with you

today. You were so anxious to have Him! » a little old woman says to him.

« It's true. But... You are the Messiah, are You not? »

« Yes, father, I am. »

« Well, then, what can I desire further, now that I have seen Him and I see fulfilled the promise made to Abraham? An old man, he was then old, sang one day in the Temple, and I was there, because on that day my Leah became purified of her only childbirth, and I was near her, and before us, a Woman, little more than a girl had fulfilled the rite... an old man sang kissing the New-Born of that Girl: "Now, Lord, let your servant go in peace, because my eyes have seen the Saviour". So You were that New-Born. Oh! how blessed I am! I then prayed the Lord saying: "Let me also die after I have met Him". Now I know You. You are here. The hand of the Lord is resting on my head. His voice has spoken to me. The Eternal God has heard me. And what shall I say but the words of the old learned and just, Simeon? I say them: "Let, Lord, your servant go in peace, because my eyes have known Your Christ!" »

« Do you not want to wait and see His Kingdom? » asks a woman.

« No, Mary. Feasts are not for old people. And I do not believe what most people say. I remember the words of Simeon... He promised a sword in the heart of that Girl because the world will not love the Saviour completely... He said that fall and resurrection would come to many through Him... and there is Isaiah... and there is David... No. I prefer to die and await His grace in the world to come... And His Kingdom in the world to come... »

« Father, you see better than young people. My Kingdom is the Kingdom of Heaven. But My coming is not ruin for you because you know how to believe in Me. Let us go to your house. I am staying with you » and led by the old man He goes to a little white house in a lane between kitchen gardens, which the strong wind is divesting of their leaves, and He goes in with Peter and the two sons of Alphaeus and John.

The others spread among other houses... to come back after some time to cram the little house, the kitchen garden, the terrace on the roof, and they even climb on the dry-stone wall separating one side of the kitchen garden from the road, on a huge walnut-tree and on a robust apple-tree, heedless of the wind which is becoming stronger and stronger, raising clouds of dust. They want to hear Jesus. And Jesus hesitates for a moment, then He begins to speak standing on the threshold of the kitchen so that His voice spreads both inside and outside the house.

« A mighty king, whose kingdom was very vast, one day wanted to go to visit his subjects. He lived in a sublime palace from which, through servants and messengers, he sent his orders and favours to his subjects, who were thus aware of his existence, of his love for

them, of his intentions, but they did not know him personally, neither did they know his voice and language. Briefly, they knew that he was there and was their Lord, but nothing else. And, as is often the case, because of such situation, many of his laws and providential initiatives were distorted, either through evil will or failure to understand them, so that the interests of the subjects and the desires of the king, who wanted them to be happy, suffered damage. He at times was compelled to punish them and suffered thereby more than they did. And punishments did not bring about improvements. He then said: "I will go. I will speak to them directly. I will make myself known. They will love me, they will follow me more diligently and will be happy". And he departed from his sublime abode to come among his people.

His coming caused great surprise. The people were touched and became excited, some with joy, some with terror, some with anger, some with distrust, some with hatred. The king without ever tiring, began to patiently approach those who loved him as well as those who feared him or hated him. He explained his law, he listened to his subjects, he assisted them and put up with them. And many ended by loving him, by no longer avoiding him because he was too great; some, only a few, stopped mistrusting and hating. They were the best. But many remained what they were as they had no good will. But as the king was very wise he endured also that, taking shelter in the affection of the better ones as a reward for his fatigue.

But what happened? It happened that not all the better ones understood him. He came from so far! His language was so new! His will was so different from that of his subjects! And he was not understood by everybody... Nay some grieved him, and caused him sorrow and damage, or risked doing so, as they misunderstood him. And when they realised that they had grieved and hurt him, they were distressed and ran away from his presence and they never went back to him, as they were afraid of his word.

But the king read their hearts and every day he called them lovingly, he prayed eternal God to grant him to find them again so that he might say to them: "Why are you afraid of me? It is true. Your incomprehension has grieved me, but I saw that there is no malice in it, it is only the consequence of your inability to understand my language which differs so much from yours. What distresses me is your being afraid of me. Which means that you have not understood me only as your king, but also as your friend. Why do you not come? Do come back. What you did not understand through the joy of loving me, has become clear to you through your sorrow for grieving me. Oh! come, do come, my friends. Do not increase your ignorance by staying away from me, your darkness by hiding yourselves, your bitterness by depriving yourselves of my love. See? Both you and I are suffering by

being separated. And I more than you. So come and give me joy".

That is what the king wanted to say. And that is what he says. God also speaks thus to those who sin. And the Saviour speaks thus to those who may have made a mistake. And the King of Israel speaks thus to His subjects. The true King of Israel, He Who from the little kingdom of the Earth wants to take His subjects to the great Kingdom of Heaven. Those who do not follow the King, those who do not learn to understand His words and His thought cannot enter His Kingdom. But how can you learn if you avoid the Master at the first error?

Let no man lose heart if he has sinned and repented, if he has made a mistake and admits his error. Let him come to the Fountain which obliterates errors and grants light and wisdom, which burns with the desire to quench his thirst and which has come from Heaven to give itself to men. »

Jesus is silent. Only the wind can be heard howling louder and louder. On the top of the little mountain where Nob is, it rages so furiously that trees creak frighteningly.

The people are compelled to go back to their houses. But when they have dispersed and Jesus goes into the house closing the door, Matthias, followed by Manaen and Timoneus, comes out from behind the little wall and goes into the kitchen garden and knocks at the door.

Jesus Himself comes to open it. « Master, here they are!... » says Matthias pointing at the two who feeling ashamed, have remained at the edge of the kitchen garden and dare not raise their faces to look at Jesus.

« Manaen! Timoneus! My friends! » exclaims Jesus going out into the kitchen garden and closing the door to make those inside the house understand that they are not to come forth, out of curiosity. And He goes towards the two men, with arms stretched out ready to embrace them.

The two look up, touched by the love vibrating in the Master's voice, they see His face and eyes full of love, and their fear vanishes, they rush forward with a cry made hoarse by their tears: « Master! » and they fall at His feet embracing His ankles, kissing His bare feet and wetting them with tears.

« My friends! Not there. Here on My heart. I have waited for you so long! And I have understood so much! Come!... » and He tries to lift them up.

« Forgive us! Oh! forgive us!... Do not say no, Master. We have suffered so much! »

« I know. But if you had come earlier, I would have said to you earlier: "I love you". »

« You love us? Master?! As before?! » Timoneus is the first to ask

looking up inquiringly.

« More than previously, because now you are cured of all humanity in your love for Me. »

« It is true! Oh! my Master! » and Manaen springs to his feet as he can resist no longer. He throws himself on Jesus' chest and Timoneus imitates him...

« See how comfortable it is to be here? Is it not better here than in a poor palace? Where could you have Me more, and more powerful, kind, rich in treasure without end, than having Me as your Saviour, Redeemer, spiritual King and loving Friend? »

« That is true! Very true! Oh! They had seduced us! And we thought we were honouring You and that their idea was a just one! »

« Think no more about it. It is passed. It belongs to the past. Let time, which flies by as fast as the whirlwind now assailing us, carry it far away and disperse it for ever... But let us go in. It is not possible to stay here... »

In fact a real hurricane swoops down on the village from the north. Branches crash to the ground, tiles fly, low walls fall from terraces with a crash. The walnut and the apple-trees twist about as if they wanted to be uprooted.

They go into the house and the four apostles are amazed looking at the disciples' faces still wet with tears in contrast with the smiles on their lips. But they do not say anything.

« I'm afraid there is going to be a disaster » says old John.

« Yes. I don't know what those living in huts will do... » says Peter.

The wind is so strong that the three flames of a lamp, lit to give light to the closed room, flicker although the doors are closed.

The noise of the wind, which is growing stronger and stronger and strikes the house with dust and grains of rubble, which sound like small hailstones, mingles with the cries of women, who can be heard closer and closer. They are frightened wives and anguished mothers: « Our husbands! Our children! They are on the way. We are frightened. The wall of a deserted house has collapsed... Lord! Jesus! Mercy! »

Jesus stands up, with some difficulty He opens the door, against which the wind blows with all its violence. Some women, bent to resist the wind - a real tornado under a frightening sky - are moaning with their arms stretched out.

« Come in. Be not afraid! » says Jesus. And He looks at the sky and at the trees on the point of crashing.

« Come back in, Jesus! Do You not see how branches are breaking off and roof-tiles are falling? It is not wise to stay outside » shouts Judas of Alphaeus.

« Poor olive-trees! These are hailstones. Where they fall, it's the

end of the harvest » states Peter.

Jesus does not go back in. On the contrary, He goes right outside where the wind wrings his clothes and ruffles His hair. He stretches out His arms, prays and then orders: « That's enough! I want it! » and He goes back into the house.

The wind howls for the last time then suddenly drops. The silence after so much noise is impressive. It is such that amazed faces look out from houses. The signs of the tornado are there: leaves, broken branches, shreds of curtains. But everything is quiet. The vault of heaven replies to the Earth, which is no longer upset, by dissipating the clouds, which from dark become clear and spread out without causing any harm, pouring a drizzle which purifies the air of so much dust.

« What happened? »

« How did it stop like that? »

« It looked like the end of the world and now it is clearing up? » Voices ask from house to house.

The women who had rushed towards Jesus, come out hurriedly. « The Lord! The Lord is with us! He worked the miracle! He stopped the wind! He dispersed the clouds! Hosanna! Hosanna! Praise to the Son of David. Peace! Blessings! Christ is with us! The Blessed One is with us! The Holy One! The Holy One! The Holy One! The Messiah is with us! Hallelujah! »

The village pours out all its usual inhabitants and the occasional ones, that is, the apostles and disciples, who all rush to the little house where Jesus is staying. Everybody wants to kiss, touch and exalt Him.

« Praise the Most High Lord. He is the Master of winds and waters. If He listened to His Son, He did so to reward the faith and love you had for Him. »

And He would like to dismiss them. But who can calm a village wild with joy and excited because of an obvious miracle? Particularly if the village is full of women? Jesus' efforts are useless. He smiles patiently while the old man who gave Him hospitality washes His left hand with tears and kisses it.

Here are the first men who have come back from Jerusalem: they are panting and frightened. They are afraid of I do not know what misfortune. They see the people rejoicing. « What is the matter? What happened? But did you not have a storm here? From the mountain we could see the town disappear under clouds of dust. We thought it had collapsed. Instead everything is in order here! »

« The Lord! The Lord! He came in time to save us from ruin. Only the cursed house has collapsed, some tiles and a few branches. And what about you? What happened in Jerusalem? »

Questions and answers are exchanged. But the men elbow their way towards the Saviour to venerate Him. Only later they explain

that everybody in town was afraid because of the impending storm and people ran away from the huts into houses and the owners of olive-groves were already grieving for the loss of the harvest... when the wind suddenly dropped, the sky cleared up... with little rain... and the whole town was amazed. And as imagination becomes immediately lively in certain cases, men relate that while people were running away, many who had been in the Temple on the previous days, seeing that the hill of Moriah was hit the most by the gusts, so much so that the benches of the moneychangers had been turned over and the house of the Pontiff had been damaged, said that it was a punishment from God for the insults to His Messiah. And so on... The more people arrive, the more the story is embellished. It almost becomes more apocalyptic than the relation of Good Friday...

#### **488. Jesus at the Camp of the Galileans with His Apostle Cousins.**

10th September 1946.

« Judas and James, come with Me. »

The two sons of Alphaeus do not need to be told twice. They get up at once and go out with Jesus from a little house in a suburb to the south of Jerusalem, where they have been given hospitality today.

« Where are we going, Jesus? » asks James.

« To greet the Galileans on the Mount of Olives. »

They walk for some time towards Jerusalem, then they pass close to some little hills with houses among the greenery, obviously manor-houses, they cross the road to Bethany and Jericho, the southern one ending at Tophet and Siloam, they go round another hill, which is a ramification of the Mount of Olives, they cross the other road which goes directly to Bethany from the Mount of Olives and along a little path among the olive-trees they climb to the camp of the Galileans. Many tents have already been dismantled, and in remembrance of the crowding, there remain withered branches thrown on the ground, the remains of fires which have scorched the grass, ashes, brands, litter, as always happens where there has been a camp. The cold and precociously wet season has speeded up the departure of pilgrims. Caravans of women and children are departing even now. Men, particularly those still strong, have stayed to terminate the feast.

The Galileans who believe in the Lord must have been warned by some disciple perhaps, because I see them all and from every village known to me. Nazareth with the two disciples, Alphaeus, whom Jesus forgave after his mother's death, and a few more. But I do not see Simon or Joseph of Alphaeus. But, as compensation

there are others, among whom the head of the synagogue, who is visibly embarrassed in greeting Jesus with deference after thwarting Him so much. But he helps himself out of the difficult situation by saying that Jesus' relatives are staying with « that friend You know », because of the children who suffered from the wind at night. And Cana is present with Susanna's husband, her father and other people, and also Nain is present with the man brought back to life and others, and Bethlehem of Galilee with many citizens and the western lake-towns with their inhabitants...

« Peace to you! Peace to you! » greets Jesus passing among them, caressing the children still present, His little friends from Galilean places, listening to Jairus who tells Him that he is sorry he was absent the last time.

Jesus asks whether the widow from Aphek has settled at Capernaum and has taken in the orphan from Giscalá. « I do not know, Master. Perhaps I had already left... » says Jairus.

« Yes. A woman has come and she gives lots of honey and caresses to children. And she bakes cakes for us. And the children who used to come to You, always go to her house to eat. And the last time she showed us a tiny little baby. She bought two goats to have milk. And she told us that the baby is the son of Heaven and of the Lord. And she did not come to the feast, as she would have liked to do, because she could not travel with such a little baby. And she asked us to tell You that she will love him with justice and that she blesses You. »

The children of Capernaum twitter like little sparrows around Jesus and they are proud that they know what not even the head of the synagogue knows, and that they have to act as ambassadors to the good Master, Who listens to them with the same attention as He would listen to adults, and Who replies: « And you will tell her that I bless her as well and that she is to love children for My sake. And you must love her and not take advantage of the fact that she is good, do not love her only because she gives you honey and cakes, but because she is good. She is so good and kind that she has understood that those who love children in My name make Me happy. And you are to imitate her, all of you, both you children and you adults, always bearing in mind that he who receives a child in My name, has his place allotted in Heaven. Because mercy is always rewarded, even if it is only a cup of water given in My name, but mercy on behalf of children, saving them not only from hunger, thirst and cold, but from the corruption of the world, receives an infinite reward... I have come to bless you before you depart. You will take My blessing to your women, to your homes... »

« But are You not coming back to us, Master? »

« I shall come back... But not now. After Passover... »

« Oh! If You are going to stay away for such a long time, You will forget about the promise... »

« Be not afraid. The sun may stop shining before Jesus forgets those who hope in Him. »

« It will be a long time!... »

« And sad! »

« If we are taken ill... »

« If we have trouble... »

« If death should descend upon our houses... »

« Who will help us? » say several people from different places.

« God will. He is with you if you remain in Me with your will. »

« And what about us? We have believed in You only for a short time. We admit it. So will we have no comfort? And yet now, after seeing You work miracles and hearing You speak in the Temple, oh! we believe You... »

« And it is a great joy to Me, because it is My greatest desire that My fellow citizens should be on the way of Salvation. »

« Do You love us so much? But for a long time we have offended and ridiculed You!... »

« That is in the past. It is no longer so. Be faithful in future and I solemnly tell you that your past is cancelled both on the Earth and in Heaven. »

« Are You staying with us? We shall share our bread as we did many times at Nazareth, when we were all equal and on Sabbaths we rested in the olive-groves, or when You were just Jesus and You used to come with us and like us to Jerusalem for feasts... » There is regret and desire for past times in the voices of the Nazarenes who now believe in Jesus.

« I wanted to go to Joseph and Simon. But I will go later. You are all My brothers in God, and spirit and faith are of greater value to Me than flesh and blood, because the latter perish whilst the former are immortal. »

And while some get busy preparing fires to roast the meat, using bits of olive branches to cook the food, the more elderly people and those of higher rank, from every place in Galilee, gather round Jesus asking Him why that morning and the previous day He was not at the Temple, and whether He would be going the following day, which was the last one of the feast.

« I was not there... But I will certainly be there tomorrow. »

« And will You speak? »

« Yes, if I can... »

Alphaeus of Sarah, looking about himself, whispers in a low voice to Jesus: « Your brothers have gone to secure assistance for You in town... That fellow is aware of many things because he is a relative of one of the Temple through the relationship of some women... Joseph is worried about You, You know? After all... he is

good. »

« I know. And he will become better and better when he is spiritually good. »

More Galileans arrive from town. The number of those around Jesus increases, to the regret of the children who are pushed back by the adults and cannot make their way towards Jesus until He sees the innocent sulky group and He says smiling: « Let the little children come to Me. »

Then while the circle breaks up, once again as happy as a flight of birds, they run towards Jesus, Who caresses them and goes on speaking to the adults. And His long hand, which is still brown after so much exposure to the sun in summer, passes again and again on the little dark and brown heads, with an occasional golden one among so many dark ones, all pressing against Him as much as they can, hiding their faces among His clothes, under His mantle, embracing His knees and sides, eager for His caresses, utterly happy when they receive them.

They eat sitting in a circle after Jesus has blessed the food and handed it out, in a serene friendly union of hearts. The others, who are not Jesus' followers, look from afar, derisively and incredulously. But no one minds them...

The meal is over. Jesus is the first to get up and He calls Jairus, Alphaeus, Daniel of Nain, Elias of Korozim, Samuel (the excripple, I do not know from where), then a certain Uriah, one of the many Johns, one of the many Simons, a Levi, an Isaac, Abel of Bethlehem etc., in brief, one from each village, and with the help of His cousins He divides into equal parts the money of two very full purses and He gives one part to each man He called for the poor of each village.

Then, when He is penniless, He blesses everybody and takes His leave. He would like to depart from them turning His steps towards Gethsemane, to enter the town by the Sheep Gate. But almost everyone follows Him, children in particular, who hold on to His tunic and the hem of His mantle, and certainly annoy Him, but He does not stop them...

And the little boy of Magdala, Benjamin, who one day very clearly said what he thought of Judas of Kerioth, plucks His tunic until Jesus bends to listen to him in particular.

« Have You still got that bad man with You? »

« Which bad man? There are none with Me... » says Jesus to him smiling.

« Of course there are! That tall dark man who laughed... You know, the one whom I told that he was handsome outside and ugly inside... he is bad. »

« He is talking of Judas » says Thaddeus who is behind Jesus and has heard.

« I know » replies Jesus turning round, and then He says to the child: « Of course that man is still with Me. He is one of My apostles. But now he is very good... Why are you shaking your head? You must not have a bad opinion of your neighbour, particularly of people you do not know. »

The boy lowers his head and becomes silent.

« Are you not replying to Me? »

« You do not want me to tell lies... and I promised You not to tell any and I kept my promise. But now if I say to You that I think that he is good, I would say something which is not true, because I think that he is bad. I can keep my mouth closed to please You, but I cannot close my mind not to think. »

His remark is so impetuous and logical in its simplicity, although childish, that all those who hear him cannot help laughing. Everyone, except Jesus, Who sighs and says: « Well, you must do one thing. If he really seems bad to you, you must pray that he may become good. You must be his angel. Will you do that? I will be happier if he becomes good. So if you pray for that, you will pray that I may be happy. »

« I will. But if he is bad and does not become kind to You, my prayer will be of no avail. »

Jesus puts an end to the argument by stopping and bending to kiss the children. He then orders everybody to go back...

When they are alone, Jesus and His two cousins, Judas of Alphaeus, after a short silence, as if he had been so far thinking about it, says concluding: « He is right! He is quite right! I also am of his opinion. »

« But who are you speaking of? » asks his brother James, who, engrossed in thought, was walking a little ahead of him on a narrow path which allows one person to pass at a time.

« I am speaking of Benjamin. And of what he said. And... but You will not hear of it, and I tell You that Judas is... He is not a true apostle... He is not sincere, he does not love You, he does not... »

« Judas! Judas! Why grieve Me? »

« My dear Brother, because I love You. And I am afraid of the Iscariot, I'm more afraid of him than of a snake... »

« You are unfair. If it had not been for him, perhaps I would have been captured by now. »

« Jesus is right. Judas has done very much. He has profusely drawn hatred and derision upon himself, and has worked and still works for Jesus » says James.

« I cannot believe that you are a fool or a liar... And I wonder why you -support Judas. I am not speaking out of jealousy or out of hatred. I am speaking because I feel that he is bad, that he is not sincere... All I can admit, for Your sake, is that he is mad. A poor madman raving one way today, and a different way tomorrow.

But he is definitely not good. Don't trust him, Jesus! Don't!... None of us is good. But look at us carefully. Our eyes are limpid. Watch us diligently. Our behaviour is constant. Does it not mean anything to You that the Pharisees do not make him pay for mocking them? That those of the Temple do not react to his words? That he always has friends among those whom he apparently offends? That he always has plenty money? I am not speaking about us two, but even Nathanael, who is rich, even Thomas, who does not lack means, have only what is necessary. He... Oh!... »

Jesus is silent.

James says: « My brother is partly right. It is a fact that Judas always finds the way to be alone, to go by himself... to... But I do not want to grumble or judge. You know... »

« Yes. I know. And that is why I say that I do not want you to pass judgement. When you are in the world replacing Me, you will find people who are stranger than Judas. What kind of apostles would you be, if you should eliminate them because they are strange? Nay, just because they are strange, you will have to love them patiently to make them lambs of the Lord. Let us go to Joseph and Simon now. You heard the news, did you not? They are working secretly on My behalf. Family love, you may say. True. But still love. You did not part friends the last time. Make it up now. Both you and they are right and wrong. Let everyone acknowledge his fault, let no one raise his voice to assert his rights. »

« He offended me seriously by offending You very seriously » says James.

« You are very much like My father Joseph. And your brother Joseph is like your father Alphaeus. Well: Joseph was often criticised by his elder brother, but he bore with him and always forgave him. Because My father was a great just man! Be the same yourself. »

« And if he should reproach me as if I were still a little child? You know that when he is upset he will not listen to reason... »

« In that case be silent. It is the only remedy to appease one's anger. Be humbly and patiently silent, and if you feel that you can no longer be silent without being rude, go away. To be able to be quiet! To be able to run away! Not out of cowardice, or lack of words, but out of virtue, out of prudence, charity, humility. It is so difficult to keep justice in debates! And the peace of the spirit. Something always descends into the depth of one's heart distorting, confounding, making an uproar. And the image of God reflected in every good spirit is obscured, it vanishes and its words can no longer be heard. Peace! Peace among brothers. Peace also with enemies. If they are our enemies, they are Satan's friends. But shall we also become Satan's friends by hating those who hate us? How

can we lead them to love if we are out of love ourselves? You may say to Me: "Jesus, You have already said so many a time and that is what You do, but they always hate You". I will always say so. When I am no longer with you, I will inspire it into you from Heaven. And I also tell you not to count defeats, but victories. Let us praise the Lord for them! No month goes by without some conquest being made. That is what the workman of the Lord must take notice of, rejoicing in the Lord, without the anger of worldly people when they lose one of their poor victories. If you do so... »

« Peace to You, Master. Do You not recognise Me? » says a young man who from town was going up towards Gethsemane.

« You?... You are the levite who was with us last year together with the priest. »

« It is I. How did You recognise me, since You see a whole world around You? »

« I do not forget the distinctive features of faces and spirits. »

« Which is the feature of my spirit? »

« A good one. But unsatisfied. You are tired of what surrounds you. Your spirit tends to better things. You feel that they exist. You realise that it is time to make up your mind for an eternal Good. You are aware that beyond darkness there is a Sun, the Light. You want the Light. »

The young man throws himself on his knees: « Master, You have said it! It is true. That is what I have in my heart. And I could not make up my mind. Jonathan, the old priest, believed, then he died. He was old. But I am young. I heard You speak in the Temple... Do not reject me, Lord, because not everybody there hates You and I am one of those who love You. Tell me what I must do, considering that I am levite... »

« Do your duty until the new times. Meditate, because by coming to Me you will not be going towards earthly glory, but towards sorrow. If you persevere, you will receive glory in Heaven. Study My doctrine. Be firm in it... »

« How? »

« Heaven itself will confirm you with its signs. My disciples will help you to be confirmed again and to have a deeper and deeper knowledge of what I taught and to practise it. Do that and you will achieve eternal life. »

« I will, Lord. But... can I still serve in the Temple? »

« I told you: until the new times. »

« Bless me, Master. It will be my new consecration. »

Jesus blesses and kisses him. They part.

« See? Such is the life of the workers of the Lord. A year ago the seed fell into that heart. But it did not appear to be a victory, because he did not come to us at once. But here he comes now, after a year, to corroborate the words I spoke a little while ago. A victory.

And does that not make the day a beautiful one for us? »

« You are always right, Jesus... But beware of Judas! It is silly of me to tell You. I know. You are aware... But I have this torment in my heart... I am not telling the others, but it's there... and I am sure that the others have it as well. »

Jesus does not reply. He says: « I am glad that Joseph and Nicodemus gave Me that money. I can now send some assistance to My poor people in Galilee... »

They have arrived at the Gate and they go in mingling with the crowd.

#### **489. On the Last Day of the Feast of the Tabernacles. The Living Water.**

13th September 1946.

The temple is really crowded with people. But there are not many women and children. The persistence of a windy season with heavy though short showers must have dissuaded women from setting out with children. But men from all over Palestine and proselytes from the Diaspora are literally crowding the Temple for the last prayers and offerings and to listen to the last lessons of the scribes.

The Galilean followers of Jesus are all there, with the most important chiefs in the first row, and Joseph of Alphaeus, highly conscious of his position as a relative, is in the middle of the group with his brother Simon. Another thick group which is waiting is that of the seventy-two disciples, I mean the disciples chosen by Jesus to evangelize, a group which has changed in number and faces, because some of the older ones are no longer in it, after the defection following the sermon on the Bread of Heaven, whilst new ones, such as Nicolaus of Antioch have joined it. A third group which is also compact and numerous is that of the Judaeans, among whom I see the archsynagogues of Emmaus, Hebron and Kerioth; from Juttah there is Sarah's husband and from Bethzur Eliza's relatives.

They are near the Beautiful Gate and they clearly intend to surround the Master as soon as He appears. In fact Jesus cannot take one step inside the walls without being pressed round by these three groups which almost isolate Him from evil-minded persons and even from people who are simply curious.

Jesus turns His steps towards the Court of Israel to pray there, and the others follow Him compactly, as far as the over-crowding allows them, deaf to the discontent of those who have to move aside and make room for the large number of people around Jesus. He is between His brothers. And the glances of Joseph of Alphaeus, who looks meaningfully at some Pharisees, are not so

kind as Jesus', neither is his bearing so humble...

They pray and then go back to the Court of the Gentiles. Jesus sits humbly on the floor with His back to the wall of the porch and with a semicircle, which is becoming thicker and thicker with people, drawing up behind the rows closer to Him, sitting down or thronging together standing up: a multitude of faces and glances converging on one Face only. The curious and evil-minded people and those who have come from afar and are unacquainted with the Master, are beyond the barrier of believers and they strive to see stretching their necks, standing on the tips of their toes.

Jesus in the meantime listens to this one and that one asking Him for advice or relating information. Eliza's relatives speak of her, asking whether she may come to serve the Master. And He replies: « I am not staying here. She will come later. » And the relative of Mary of Simon, the mother of Judas of Kerioth, says that he remained to look after the farm, whereas Mary is almost always with Johanna's mother. Judas opens his eyes wide in amazement, but does not speak. And Sarah's husband says that he will soon have another son and asks what name he should give it. Jesus replies: « John, if it is a boy, Anne if a girl. » And the old archsynagogue of Emmaus whispers a case of conscience and Jesus replies in a low voice. And so on.

In the meantime the crowd grows larger and larger. Jesus raises His head and looks around. As the porch is a few steps higher than the floor of the court, although He is sitting, He commands a large part of the court, on that side and can thus see many faces.

He stands up and in loud voice, at the top of His well tuned strong voice, He says: « Let those who are thirsty come to Me and drink! Rivers of living water will spring from the bosoms of those who believe in Me. »

His voice fills the wide court, the splendid arcades, it is certainly heard beyond those on this side and spreads elsewhere, it overwhelms every other voice, like a harmonious thunder full of promises. He speaks and then is silent for a moment, as if He wanted to enunciate the theme of His speech and then give time to those not interested in listening to Him, to go away without disturbing later. The scribes and doctors become silent, that is, they lower their voices to a murmur, which is certainly malevolent. I do not see Gamaliel.

Jesus moves forward, through the semicircle which opens out as He approaches it, and then closes up behind Him changing from a semicircle to a ring. He walks slowly, majestically. He seems to be gliding on the polychrome marbles of the floor, with His mantle slightly loose forming a kind of train behind Him. He goes to the corner of the porch, on the step overlooking the court, and stops there. He thus commands two sides of the first enclosure. He raises

His right arm in the gesture customary to Him when He begins to speak, while with His left hand on His chest He holds His mantle.

He repeats His initial words:

« Let those who are thirsty come to Me and drink! Rivers of living water will spring from the bosoms of those who believe in Me!

He who saw the theophany of the Lord, the great Ezekiel, a priest and prophet, after he had prophetically seen the impure acts in the desecrated house of the Lord, and after he had seen, once again in a prophetic way, that only those marked with the Tau will be living in the true Jerusalem, whilst the others will know more than one slaughter, more than one condemnation, more than one punishment - and the time is close at hand, o you who are listening to Me, it is close at hand, closer than you may think, so that I, as Master and Saviour, exhort you not to delay further to mark yourselves with the Sign that saves, not to delay further to put the Light and Wisdom into yourselves, not to delay further to repent and weep, on your own and other people's behalf, so that you may save yourselves - Ezekiel, after seeing all that and even more, speaks of a terrible vision. That of the dry bones.

The day will come when on a dead world, under a dark vault of heaven, bones and bones of dead people will appear at the angelical blare. Like a womb that opens to give birth, the Earth will eject from its bowels every bone of man who died on it and is buried in its mud, from Adam down to the last man. And then it will be the resurrection of the dead for the great supreme judgement after which, like an apple of Sodom, the world will become empty, turning into nullity and the vault of heaven with its stars will come to an end. Everything will come to an end, with the exception of two things which are eternal, remote, at the extremes of two abysses of immeasurable depth, in complete antithesis with regard to form, aspect and way in which the power of God will continue for ever in them: Paradise: light, joy, peace, love; Hell: darkness, sorrow, horror, hatred.

But do you think that the immense field of the Earth is not covered with lifeless, very dry, inert, separated, dead bones, simply because the world is not yet dead and the angelical trumpets are not sounding to gather the dead? I solemnly tell you that it is so. Among the living, because they still breathe, there are numberless people who are like corpses: like the dry bones seen by Ezekiel. Who are they? Those who do not possess the life of the spirit.

Such people are in Israel, and all over the world. And it is natural that among Gentiles and idolaters there are but dead people awaiting to be vitalised by the Life, and it grieves only those who possess true Wisdom, because It makes them understand that the Eternal Father created human creatures for Himself and not for idolatry and He grieves at seeing so many dead. But if the Most

High has such sorrow, and it is great indeed, what will His sorrow be like for those of His People who are white, lifeless, spiritless bones?

Why should those chosen, beloved, protected, nourished, taught by Him directly or by His servants and prophets be culpably dry bones, as He always trickled a fine stream of vital water from Heaven for them and nourished them with the water of Life and Truth? Why did they dry up, considering that they were planted in the Land of the Lord? Why did their spirits die when the Eternal Spirit put a full sapiential treasure at their disposal, that they might draw from it and live? Who, and by which prodigy, will be able to come back to Life, if they left the springs, the pastures, the lights granted by God and are groping in darkness, are drinking at impure sources and are feeding on unholy food?

So will they never become alive again? Yes, they will. I swear to it in the name of the Most High. Many will rise again. God has the miracle ready, nay, it is already active, it has already been worked on some, and arid bones have been re clothed with life because the Most High, Who is forbidden nothing, has kept and keeps His promise and completes it more and more. From the height of Heaven He shouts to these bones awaiting Life: "Now, I shall infuse the spirit into you and you shall live". And He took His Spirit, He took Himself, and He formed flesh to clothe His Word, and He sent Him to these dead people, so that by speaking to them, Life should be infused into them once again.

How many times Israel has shouted throughout ages: "Our bones are dried up, our hope is dead, we are separated!". But every promise is sacred, every prophecy is true. Now, the time has come when the Messenger of God opens tombs to draw the dead out and vivify them and lead them to the true Israel, to the Kingdom of the Lord, to the Kingdom of your Father and Mine.

I am Resurrection and Life! I am the Light which came to enlighten those lying in darkness! I am the Fountain which spurts eternal Life.

Those who come to Me will not know Death. Let those who thirst after Life come to Me and drink. Let those who want to possess Life, that is, God, believe in Me and rivers of living water, not drops, will flow from their bosoms. Because those who believe in Me will form with Me the new Temple from which the wholesome water, of which Ezekiel speaks, flows.

Come to Me, peoples! Come to Me, creatures! Come and form one only Temple, because I do not reject anybody, but out of love, I want you with Me, in My work, in My merits, in My glory.

"And I saw the waters flow from under the door of the house eastwards... And the waters flowed from under the right side, south of the altar".

The believers in the Messiah of the Lord, in the Christ, in the New Law, in the Doctrine of the time of Salvation and Peace, are that Temple. As the walls of this Temple are built with stones, so the mystical walls are formed with living spirits and it will live for ever and will rise from the Earth to Heaven, like its Founder, after the struggle and the test.

That altar from which the water spouts, that altar facing east is I. And My waters spring from the right hand side, because that side is the place for those elected to the Kingdom of God. They spring from Me to flow into those I have elected, to enrich them with the vital waters, that they may bear them and spread them to the north, south, east and west, to give Life to the Earth in its people who are waiting for the hour of Light, the hour that will come, will definitely come for every place before the Earth ceases being.

My waters spring and spread out mingled with those which I personally gave and will give to My followers, and although they are spread out to better the Earth, they will be united in only one river of Grace, which will become deeper and deeper, wider and wider, growing day by day, step by step, with the waters of the new followers, until it becomes like a sea that will wash every place to sanctify the whole Earth.

God wants that and does that. A deluge washed the world killing sinners. A new deluge, of a different liquid from rain, will wash the world giving Life. And through a mysterious act of grace, men will be able to take part in that sanctifying deluge, by joining their wills to Mine, their fatigue to Mine, their sufferings to Mine. And the world will become acquainted with the Truth and Life. And those who want to participate in it, will be able to do so. And only those who do not want to be nourished with the waters of Life will become a marshy pestiferous place, or will remain such, and will not know the rich harvest of the fruits of grace, wisdom, health, with which those living in Me will be acquainted.

I solemnly tell you once again that those who are thirsty and come to Me, will drink and will never be thirsty again, because My Grace will open springs and rivers of living water in them. And those who do not believe in Me will perish like a saline where life cannot exist.

I solemnly tell you that the Fountain will not cease after Me, because I shall not die, but I will live, and after that I have gone, gone but not dead, to open the Gates of Heaven, Another will come, Who is like Me, and will complete My work making you understand what I told you and setting you on fire to make you "lights", because you received the Light. »

Jesus is silent. The crowd, so far silent, held spellbound by the speech, now whispers making different comments.

Some say: « What words! He is a real prophet! »

Some say: « He is the Christ. I am telling you. Not even John spoke like that. And no prophet is so strong. »

« And He makes us understand the prophets, even Ezekiel, whose symbols are so obscure. »

« Did you hear that? The waters! The altar! It is evident! »

« And the dry bones?! Did you see how the scribes, Pharisees and priests became upset? They understood the psalm! »

« Of course! And they sent the guards, who... forgot to capture Him and remained like children to whom angels appear. Look at them over there! They seem to be dumbfounded. »

« Look! Look! An official is calling them and reproaching them. Let us go and hear him! »

Meanwhile Jesus is curing some sick people who have been brought to Him and does not pay attention to anything else until He is reached by a group of priests and Pharisees, elbowing their way through the crowd, led by a man about thirty or thirty-five years old, whom everybody shuns so fearfully that they seem to be terrified.

« Are You still here? Go away! In the name of the High Priest! »

Jesus straightens up - He was bent over a paralytic - and looks at them calmly and mildly. He then bends again to impose His hands on the invalid.

« Go away! Have You understood? You seducer, of crowds. Or we will have You arrested. »

« Go and praise the Lord living holily » says Jesus to the invalid who stands up cured, and that is His only reply, while those threatening Him spit venom and the crowds warn them with their hosannas not to harm Jesus.

But if Jesus is meek, Joseph of Alphaeus is not and straightening up and throwing his head back to look taller, he shouts: « Eleazar, since you and the like of you would like to overthrow the sceptre of the chosen Son of God and David, you had better know that you are cutting down every tree, beginning with your own, of which you are so proud. Because your wickedness agitates the sword of the Lord over your head! » and he would go on speaking, but Jesus lays His hand on his shoulder saying: « Peace, peace, My brother! » and Joseph, purple with anger, becomes silent.

They go towards the exit. And when they are outside the enclosure Jesus is informed that the chiefs of the priests and the Pharisees had reproached the guards for not arresting Him and that they had justified themselves saying that no one had ever spoken like Jesus and that the chiefs of the priests and the Pharisees, among whom there were many members of the Sanhedrin, had been driven wild by their reply. So much so that, to prove to the guards that only stupid people could be allured by a madman, they wanted to come and arrest Him under the charge of

blasphemy, also to teach the crowds to understand the truth. But Nicodemus, who was present, opposed their decision saying: « You cannot proceed against Him. Our Law prohibits us from condemning a man before hearing him and seeing what he does. And in His case we have only heard and seen things which are not condemnable. » And that caused Jesus' enemies to disburden their wrath upon Nicodemus by means of threats, insults and mockery, as if he were a fool and a sinner. And Eleazar ben Annas had gone personally with the most furious ones to drive Jesus out, as he did not dare to do anything else, owing to the feelings of the crowds.

Joseph of Alphaeus is furious. Jesus looks at him and says: « See, brother? » He does not say anything else... but those words mean so much! They are a warning that He is right whether He speaks or is silent, they are a reminder of His words, they are an indication of what the most important castes in Judaea are, of what the Temple is and so forth.

Joseph lowers his head and says: « You are right... » He becomes silent and thoughtful, then, all of a sudden, he throws his arms round Jesus' shoulders and weeps on His chest saying: « My poor Brother! Poor Mary! Poor Mother! » I think that Joseph realised just then, and very clearly, what was Jesus' destiny...

« Don't weep! Do, as I do, the will of our Father! » says Jesus comforting him and kissing him at the same time to console him.

When Joseph has calmed down a little, they set out towards the house where Jesus is given hospitality and they kiss each other goodbye. Joseph is deeply moved and his last words are: « Go in peace, Jesus! Don't worry about anything. I repeat to You what I told You near Nazareth, and I repeat it even more firmly. Go in peace. Take care of Your work only. I will see to the rest. Go and may God comfort You. » And he kisses Him again with paternal attitude, caressing His head, as if he were giving the blessing of the head of the family.

Then Joseph says goodbye to his brothers. He greets Simon as well. But I notice that James, I do not know why, is rather stiff with Joseph, and viceversa. Instead with Simon there is more tenderness. Joseph's last question to James is: « So, have I to say that I lost you? »

« No, brother. You must say that you know where I am and therefore it is up to you to find me. Without ill-feeling. On the contrary, with many prayers for you. But in spiritual matters one must not take two paths at the same time. You know what I mean... »

« You can see that I defend Him... »

« You defend the man and the relative. That is not enough to give you the rivers of Grace of which He was speaking. Defend the Son of God, without any fear of the world, without considering advantages,

and you will be perfect. Goodbye. Look after our mother and Mary of Joseph... »

Jesus - I do not know whether He has heard them, as He was intent on greeting the other Nazarenes and Galileans - when the greetings are over says: « Let us go to the Mount of Olives. Then from there we shall go to some other place... »

#### **490. At Bethany. « One Can Kill in Many Ways ».**

14th September 1946.

A sadder and sadder but always pleasant house in Bethany... The presence of friends and disciples does not remove the sadness of the house. There is Joseph with Nicodemus, Manaen, Eliza and Anastasica; as far as I can understand, the two women could not put up with being far from Jesus and they apologise as if they had disobeyed, although they are quite decided not to go away. And Eliza explains her good reasons which are: the impossibility for Lazarus' sisters to follow the Master and take womanly care of Him and of the apostles, as is necessary with a group of men alone and, furthermore, persecuted.

« We are the only ones who can do that. Because Martha and Mary cannot leave their brother. Johanna is not here. Annaleah is too young to come with us. It is better for Nike to stay where she is, so that she may receive You there. My white hair will prevent disparagement. I shall precede You wherever You go, or I shall stay where You tell me, and You will always have a mother near You, and I shall feel as if I still had a son. I will do what You want, but allow me to serve You. »

Jesus agrees when He hears that they all think that it is the right thing to do. Perhaps, in the deep bitterness of His heart, He wishes to have a motherly heart close at hand, to find in it reflections of His Mother's kindness...

Eliza is triumphant in her joy.

Jesus says: « I shall often be at Nob. You will stay in the house of old John. He told Me that I can stay there when I stop at Nob. I shall find you there every time we come back... »

« Are You thinking of going away in spite of the wet weather? » asks Joseph of Arimathea.

« Yes, I am. I want to go towards Perea, stopping in Solomon's house. Then I will go towards Jericho and Samaria. Oh! I would like to go to many more places... »

« Master, don't go too far away from roads and towns garrisoned by a centurion. They are undecided. And the others are undecided as well. Two fears. Two surveillances. Concerning You. And in turn. But You may be sure that, as far as You are concerned, the Romans are less dangerous... »

« They have abandoned us!... » remarks Judas of Kerioth bluntly.

« Do you think so? No. Among those Gentiles who listen to the Master can you perhaps see those sent by Claudia or by Pontius? Among the freedmen of the former and of her lady friends there are many who could speak in the Bel Nidrasc, if they were Israelites. Don't forget that there are learned people everywhere, that Rome enslaves the world, that her patricians love to take the best booty to adorn their houses. If gymnasiarchs and circus managers choose what can give them profit and glory, patricians select those whose learning or beauty may adorn and gratify their houses and themselves... Master, this subject reminds me of something... May I ask You a question? »

« Speak up. »

« That woman, that Greek woman, who was here last year... and was a charge against You, where is she? Many have tried to find out... not for a good purpose. But I have no evil wish... Only... I don't think it is possible that she has gone back to the wrong doctrine. She was gifted with a great intelligence and sincere justice. But she is no longer about... »

« In a part of the Earth, she, a heathen woman, has been able to practise for a persecuted Israelite the charity which Israelites did not have. »

« Are You referring to John of Endor? Is he with her? »

« He is dead. »

« Dead? »

« Yes, and they could have let him die near Me... There was not a long time to wait... Those, and they are many, who worked to have him sent away, committed murder, as if they had raised their hands armed with knives against him. They broke his heart. And although they know that that is why he died, they do not consider themselves homicides. They do not feel remorse for being so. Brothers can be killed in many ways. With weapons and with words or with some wicked deed, such as informing a persecutor of the place where the persecuted person is, or depriving a poor wretch of his refuge of comfort... Oh! in how many ways one can kill... But man does not feel remorse for that. Man, and that is the sign of his spiritual decline, has killed remorse. »

Jesus is so severe in speaking those words, that no one has the courage to speak. They look at one another stealthily, with lowered heads, and even the best and most innocent ones are embarrassed.

After a moment's silence Jesus says: « No one need inform the enemies of the dead man and Mine of what I said, to give them a satanic joy. But should anyone question you, you may reply that John is at peace, with his body in a far away sepulchre and his soul in expectation of Me. »

« Did that grieve You much, Lord? » asks Nicodemus.

« What? His death? »

« Yes. »

« No, it did not. His death gave Me peace because it was his peace. I was grieved, deeply grieved by those who through low feelings informed the Sanhedrin of his presence among the disciples and brought about his departure. But every man has his systems and only a great good will can change instincts and systems. But I say: "He who denounced, will denounce again. He who brought about death, will bring about death again". But woe to him. He thinks he is winning whereas he is losing. And the judgement of God is awaiting him. »

« Why are You looking at me thus, Master? » asks John of Zebedee, becoming uneasy and blushing, as if he were guilty.

« Because if I look at you, nobody, not even the most wicked person, will think that you may have hated a brother of yours. »

« It must have been a Pharisee or a Roman... He supplied them with eggs... » says Judas of Kerioth.

« It was a demon. But he did him good whilst wishing to harm him. He hastened his complete purification and peace. »

« How do You know? Who brought You the news? » asks Joseph.

« Does the Master need to have news brought to Him? Does He not see the actions of men? Did He not go and call Johanna that she might come to Him and be cured? What is impossible to God? » says Mary of Magdala passionately.

« That is true, woman. But few people have your faith... And that is why I asked a silly question. »

« All right. But come, now, Master. Lazarus has awaked and is waiting for You... » And she takes Him away abruptly and resolutely, cutting short any further conversation or question.

#### **491. Near the Fountain of En-Rogel.**

16th September 1946.

Jesus comes back from Bethany along the lower road (I mean the longer one, which does not go through the Mount of Olives, but enters the town through the suburb of Tophet).

He stops first to assist the lepers who ask Him for nothing but bread, then He goes straight to a large quadrangular basin, covered and closed on all sides but one. A well, a large covered well, the largest I have seen. It is larger than the well of the Samaritan woman, and it must also be rich in water because the ground around it is nourished by it and looks very fertile, in contrast with the arid sepulchral Hinnom valley, a glimpse of which can be caught to the north-west. Only a solid stone building like that of the well and its roof covering could resist the dampness of

the ground. And the dark huge stones, which even without being an expert one realises are ancient, resist protecting the precious water.

Although it is a dull day and the sepulchres of the lepers are close at hand, and they always diffuse much sadness in the neighbourhood, the place is pleasing both because of its rich fertility and because behind it, to the north, there are large gardens with all kinds of trees raising their thick tops towards the grey sky which hangs low over the town, and in front of it, to the south the Kidron, widens its bed and becomes richer in water, as the valley becomes brighter and richer in light, following for a good stretch the road which goes to Bethany and Jericho.

There are many people: women with amphorae, ass-drivers with buckets, caravans arriving or departing, are stopping near the well and drawing water. A large strip of ground is damp because of the water dripping from buckets while filling containers. Calm sweet voices of women, trilling voices of children, deep hoarse strong voices of men, braying of donkeys and wild cries of camels, which lying down under their loads are awaiting the return of the camel-driver with water.

It is a typical scene at a hazy sunset when the sky is stained with an unnatural sudden yellow which spreads a strange light on everything, while higher up heavy leaden clouds pile up one on top of the other. The upper parts of the town look ghastly in the strange light against the leaden sky marked with streaks the colour of sulphur.

« It looks like water and wind... » says Peter sententiously, and he asks: « Where are we going this evening? »

« To the gardener's. I am going up to the Temple tomorrow and... »

« Again? Watch what You are doing! You had better accept the invitation of the freedmen near the synagogue » suggests Simon Zealot.

« Then, as one synagogue is as good as another, there are many more, which have manifested that they want Him! But why they? » says Judas of Kerioth.

« Because they are the safest. And there is no need to explain why » replies the Zealot.

« Safe!!! What makes you so sure? »

« The fact that they remained faithful notwithstanding all they suffered. »

« Do not quarrel. Tomorrow I am going up to the Temple. That is decided. Let us stay here for a little while. It is always a good place where one may evangelize. »

« Not better than any other. I don't know why You prefer it. »

« Why, Judas? For many reasons which I will explain to those who gather here, and for one which I will tell you all in particular.

The three Wise Men from the East stopped uncertain and disappointed at this well of the fountain of Rogel, as the Star that had guided them from so far had disappeared. Any other man would have mistrusted God and himself. They prayed until dawn near their tired camels, the only ones to be awake among the sleeping servants, and then at dawn they got up and set out towards the gates, daring the danger of being considered mad and instigators and daring also the danger of their lives. Herod, the blood-thirsty king, then reigned, remember that. And much less than what they, the Wise Men, wanted to tell him was enough for him to condemn them to death. But they were looking for Me. They were not seeking glory, riches, honours. They were looking for Me, for Me only. A Baby: their Messiah, their God. The research for God, being good, always gives assistance and courage. Fears, low things are the inheritance of those who dream of base things. They yearned to worship God. They were strong in their love, which, after a few hours, was rewarded, as the Star appeared once again to their eyes, here, in the moonlit night. Those who seek God with justice and love are never without the star of God. The three Wise Men! They could have rested among the false honours which Herod wanted to give them after the response of the chief priests, scribes and doctors. They were so tired!... But they did not stop even for one night and before the gates were closed they came out and stopped here until dawn. Then... not the dawn of the sun but the dawn of God appeared again to make the way as bright as silver; the Star called them with its light and they came to the Light. Blessed! Blessed they and those who know how to imitate them! »

The apostles and Marjiam with Isaac are intent on listening with the blissful look their faces always have when Jesus recalls His birth, and Isaac, enraptured, sighs, smiles, remembering... with an ecstatic face, remote from time and place, having gone back over thirty years, to that night, that Star that he saw when he was with his herd...

More people have come near, because the road is busy, and they listen, and some recollect the wonderful caravan, and the news brought by them... and its consequences.

« This is always a place of meditation. History always repeats itself. This is always a place of trial. For good and for bad people. But the whole life is a trial for the faith and justice of man.

I remind you of Hushai, Zadok and Abiathar, of Jonathan and Ahimaaz, who left from this place to save their king and were protected by God because they were acting according to justice.

I will remind you of an event connected to this same place but did not have a happy outcome because it was an outrage and thus it was not blessed by God. Near the Zoheleth stone, close to the fountain of En-Rogel, Adonijah conspired against the will of his

father and got the men of his party to proclaim him king. But the abuse was of no avail to him, because before the banquet was over the hosannas sung in Gihon informed him, even before Jonathan of Abiathar spoke, that Solomon was the king and that he, who wanted to usurp the throne, had to rely only on Solomon's mercy. Too many people repeat the deed of Adonijah and fight against the true King or plot against Him following the party which seems the strongest one. And too many, by doing so, will be able to cling to the altar horns begging forgiveness and trusting in God's mercy.

Now that we have considered three events that took place near this well, can we say that this place is subject to good or bad influences? No. Not the place. Not the time. Not the events, but it is the will of man that upsets the actions of man. En-Rogel saw the loyalty of David's servants and Adonijah's sin, as it saw the faith of the three Wise Men. It is the same well. Jonathan and Ahimaaz, like Adonijah and his followers, like the three Wise Men leaned on its stones and quenched their thirst with its water. But the water and the stones saw three different things: loyalty to king David, betrayal of king David, and loyalty to God and the King of kings. It is always the will of man that brings about good or evil. And the Will of God throws its light on the will of man and the will of Satan its poisonous vapours. It is up to man to accept the light or the poison and become just or sinner.

A guardian is placed at that well so that no one may infect the water. And in addition to the guardian it was given walls and a roof, so that the wind might not blow into it leaves and dirt, which might defile the precious water. Also to man God gave a guardian: the intelligent and conscious will of man; and He gave him protections: the commandments and angelical advice, so that the spirit of man might not be corrupted consciously or unconsciously. But when man corrupts his conscience, his intellect, he does not listen to the inspirations from Heaven, he tramples on the Law, he is like a guardian who leaves the well unguarded, or like a madman who dismantles its defences. He leaves the field open to devilish enemies, to the concupiscence of the world and of the flesh, and to temptations, which, even if they are not yielded to, are to be prudently watched and rejected.

Children of Jerusalem, Hebrews, proselytes, wayfarers who have come here by chance to listen to the voice of God, be wise with true wisdom, which consists in defending one's ego from deeds disgracing man.

I see many Gentiles here. I point out to them that not only riches and merchandise are to be purchased, but there is another thing to be acquired, and that is the life of one's soul; because man has a soul in himself, that is something impalpable, but it makes him live, a thing that does not die when his flesh dies, a thing that is

entitled to live its true life, an eternal life, but cannot live it if man kills his true self by means of his evil deeds.

Idolatry and Gentilism can be overcome. A wise man meditates and says: "Why must I follow idols and live without the hope of a better life, whereas by going to the true God I can achieve eternal joy?". Man is frugal of his days and death horrifies him. The more he is enveloped in the darkness of false religions or in unbelief, the more he fears death. But he who comes to the true Faith is no longer terrified of death because he knows that beyond death there is an eternal life where spirits will meet again and where there will be no more pains or separations. It is not difficult to follow the way of Life. It is sufficient to believe in the Only true God, to love our neighbour and love honesty in every action.

You people of Israel are aware of what is commanded and what is forbidden. But I will repeat such things for these people who are listening to My words and will take them far away... (and He says the Decalogue). True religion consists in that, not in vain pompous sacrifices. It is necessary to obey the precepts of perfect morals, of faultless virtue, to be merciful, to avoid what dishonours man, to give up vanities, deceptive divinations, false augurs, the dreams of the wicked, as the sapiential book says, to make use of the gifts of God with justice, that is health, wealth, riches, intellect, power, not to be proud, as pride is a sign of stupidity because man is alive, healthy, rich, wise, powerful as long as God grants him it, not to cherish immoderate desires that often lead one even to commit crime. Summing up, one must live as a man and not as a brute, also out of respect for oneself.

It is easy to descend, it is difficult to rise. But who would like to live in a putrid abyss only because he has fallen into it, and would not try to come out of it climbing back to the flowery summits bright with sunlight? I solemnly tell you that the life of a sinner is placed in an abyss and likewise a life in error. But those who receive the Word of truth and come to the Truth climb to the tops of the Light.

You may now go to your destinations. And remember that near the fountain of En-Rogel, the Source of Wisdom gave you its water to drink so that you may thirst for it again and you may come back to it. »

Jesus makes His way and sets out towards the town, leaving the people to make comments, to ask questions and reply to them.

## **492. The Pharisees and the Adulterous Woman.**

20th March 1944.

I see the inside of the enclosure of the Temple, that is, one of the many courts surrounded by porches. And I see also Jesus, Who, well enveloped in His mantle that covers His tunic - the latter is dark red and not white, and seems to be made of a heavy woollen cloth - is speaking to a crowd of people standing around Him.

I would say that it is a winter day because I notice that everybody is muffled up, and that it must be rather cold because people, instead of standing, are walking fast as if they wished to warm themselves. The wind is blowing shaking mantles and raising dust in the courts.

The group pressing round Jesus, the only one to be still, whilst all the others standing around this or that master are walking up and down, opens out to let a small group of gesticulating venomous scribes and Pharisees pass. They are spurring venom from their eyes, their livid faces and mouths. What vipers they are! Rather than lead they are dragging a woman, about thirty years old; her hair is ruffled and her dress untidy and she is weeping, as if she had been ill-treated. They throw her at Jesus' feet as if she were a bundle of rags or a dead body. And she remains there, crouched, with her face resting on her arms, which hide it and are like a cushion between it and the ground.

« Master, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Her husband loved her and ensured that she lacked nothing. She was the queen in her house. And she has been unfaithful to him because she is a vicious ungrateful sinner and profaner. She is an adulteress and as such she is to be stoned. Moses ordered so. In his law he orders us to stone such women like unclean animals. And they are unclean. Because they betray faith and the man who loves them and takes care of them, and because like earth never sated, they always crave for lust. They are worse than prostitutes because without the sting of need they give themselves to satisfy their lewdness. They are corrupted and corrupters. They are to be sentenced to death. Moses said so. What have You to say, Master? »

Jesus, Who had stopped speaking at the tumultuous arrival of the Pharisees and had looked at the pack of angry men with piercing eyes and then had lowered them on the depressed woman thrown at His feet, is silent. Still sitting, He has bent, and with His finger He begins to write on the stones of the porch covered with the dust raised by the wind. While they speak He writes.

« Master? We are speaking to You. Listen to us. Reply to us. Have You not understood? This woman has been caught in the very act of committing adultery. In her house. In the bed of her husband. She has polluted it with her lechery. »

Jesus is writing.

« But this man is a fool! Don't you see that He does not understand anything and that He is drawing signs on the dust like a poor fool? »

« Master, for the sake of Your name, speak. Let Your wisdom reply to our question. We repeat it: this woman lacked nothing. She had clothes, food, love. And she has been unfaithful. »

Jesus is writing.

« She lied to the man who trusted her. With mendacious lips she greeted him and went to the door with him, smiling, she then opened the secret door and let her lover in. And while her husband was away working for her, like an unclean animal, she wallowed in her lewdness. »

« Master, she is a desecrator of the Law as well as of her nuptial bed. She is a rebel, an impious person, a blasphemer. »

Jesus is writing. He writes and cancels with His sandal-shod foot what He has written and writes further on, turning round slowly to find more room. He looks like a little boy playing. But what He writes are not playful words. He has written successively: « Usurer », « False », « Irreverent son », « Fornicator », « Murderer », « Desecrator of the Law », « Thief », « Libidinous », « Usurper », « Unworthy husband and father », « Blasphemer », « Rebellious to God », « Adulterer ». The words are written over and over again while fresh accusers speak.

« Well, Master! Your opinion. The woman is to be judged. She must not contaminate the Earth with her weight. Her breath is poison that upsets hearts. »

Jesus stands up. Good gracious! What a face! His eyes flash like lightning striking the accusers. He holds His head so upright that He looks even taller. And He is so severe and solemn that He seems a king on his throne. His mantle has fallen off one shoulder forming a short train behind Him. But He does not mind that. With stern countenance and not even the least trace of a smile on His lips or in His eyes, He glares with such eyes at the crowds which withdraw as they would before two sharp blades. He stares at them one by one. With such searching intensity that frightens. Those who are stared at try to withdraw into the crowd and hide there. The circle thus widens and breaks up as if it were mined by an occult power.

He finally speaks: « If there is one of you who has not sinned, let him be the first to throw a stone at her. » And His voice sounds like thunder while His eyes flash even more brightly. Jesus has folded His arms across His chest and remains thus: as straight as a judge, awaiting. His eyes give no peace: they search, penetrate and accuse.

First one, then two, then five, then in groups, all the people present

go away with lowered heads. Not only the scribes and the Pharisees, but also those who were previously around Jesus, and others who had approached Him to hear His opinion and the sentence, and both the former and the latter had joined together to abuse the guilty woman and demand her lapidation.

Jesus is left alone with Peter and John. I do not see the other apostles.

Jesus has resumed writing, while the flight of the accusers is taking place, and He now writes: « Pharisees », « Vipers », « Sepulchres of rottenness », « Liars », « Traitors », « Enemies of God », « Revilers of His Word »...

When the court is completely empty and there is a solemn silence in it - only the rustling of the wind and the murmur of a little fountain in a corner can be heard - Jesus raises His head and looks. His countenance is now placid. He is sad, but no longer angry. He casts a look at Peter, who has moved away a little, leaning against a column, and one at John, who almost behind Jesus, looks at Him with his loving eyes. Jesus smiles slightly looking at Peter and more brightly when He looks at John. Two different smiles.

He then looks at the woman, still prostrated and weeping at His feet. He gets up, He adjusts His mantle as if He were about to set off. He beckons to the two apostles to go to the exit.

When He is alone He calls the woman. « Woman, listen to Me. Look at Me. » He repeats His order because she dare not look up. « Woman, we are alone. Look at Me. »

The poor wretch raises her face that tears and dust have turned into a mask of dejection.

« Woman, where are now those who were accusing you? » Jesus is speaking in a low voice, with gravity full of pity. His head and body are lightly bent forward, toward so much misery, and His eyes are full of an indulgent restoring expression. « Did no one condemn you? »

The woman replies sobbing: « No one, Master. »

« Neither do I condemn you. Go. And do not sin any more. Go home. And behave in such a way that you may be forgiven by God and by the man you offended. And do not trespass on the benignity of the Lord. Go. »

And He helps her to get up taking her by the hand. But He does not bless, neither does He greet her with the salutation of peace. He looks at her going away, her head lowered and slightly staggering in her shame, and when she disappears, He sets off Himself with the two disciples.

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Jesus says:

« What hurt Me was the lack of charity and sincerity in the accusers.

Not because they lied in accusing. The woman was really guilty. But they were insincere being scandalised at something they had committed thousands of times and that only greater cunning and better luck had allowed to remain concealed. The woman, at her first sin, had not been so cunning and lucky. But none of the accusers, both male and female - because also women accused her in their hearts even if they did not raise their voices - were free from sin.

He is an adulterer who commits the act and he who desires the act and craves for it with all his might. Both he who sins and he who wishes to sin are lustful. It is not sufficient not to do evil. It is also necessary not to desire to do it. Remember, Mary, the first word of your Master, when I called you from the edge of the precipice where you were: "It is not sufficient not to do evil. It is also necessary not to desire to do it" He who cherishes sensual thoughts and excites sensual feelings by means of literature and performances sought for such purpose and through pernicious habits, is equally impure as he who commits the sin materially. I dare say: he is more guilty. Because with his thoughts he goes against nature, not only against morals. I am not referring to those who commit real acts against nature. The only extenuating circumstance for such person is an organic disease or mental illness. He who does not have such an extenuating circumstance is inferior to the filthiest beast by ten degrees.

One ought to be free from sin in order to condemn with justice. I refer you to past dictations, when I speak of the essential conditions to be a judge.

I was not unaware of the hearts of those Pharisees and scribes, or of the hearts of those people who had joined them in insulting the guilty woman. Sinners against God and their neighbour, they had sinned against faith, against their parents, against their neighbour and above all they had committed many sins against their wives. If by means of a miracle I had ordered their blood to write their sins on their foreheads, among the many charges that of "adulterers" by deed or by desire would have reigned supreme. I said: "It is what comes from the heart that contaminates man". And with the exception of My heart there was no one among the judges whose heart was pure. They lacked sincerity and charity. Not even their being like her in their hunger for lust induced them to be charitable.

It was I Who was charitable to the dejected woman. I, the Only One, Who should have been disgusted with her. But remember this: "The kinder one is, the more compassionate one is to culprits". One is not lenient to the fault itself. No. But one is indulgent to weak people who have not resisted temptation.

Man! Oh! More than a fragile reed and a thin bearbine, he is easily

inclined to yield to temptation and to cling to whatever may make him hope to find solace. Because many times sin is committed, particularly by the weaker sex, owing to such search for comfort. I therefore say that he who has no love for his wife, or for his own daughter, is ninety per cent responsible for the sin of his wife or of his daughter and will have to answer for them. Both the stupid love, which is nothing but foolish slavery imposed by a man on his wife or by a father on his daughter, and the neglect of love or even worse, a sin of lechery which leads a man to other love affairs and parents to other cares than their children, are incentives to adultery and prostitution and are condemned by Me as such.

You are beings gifted with reason and guided by a divine law and by a moral law. To degrade yourselves to the behaviour of savages or of brutes should horrify your great pride. But pride, which in this case would be also useful, is used by you for completely different matters.

I looked at Peter and John in different ways, because I wanted to say to the former: "Peter, make sure you are not lacking in charity and sincerity as well", and I also wanted to say to him as My future Pontiff: "Remember this hour and in future judge as your Master did"; whilst to the latter, a young man with the soul of a child, I wanted to say: "You can judge, but you do not, because your heart is like Mine. Thank you, My beloved, for being so much Mine, as to be a second I". I sent the two disciples away before calling the woman as I did not wish to increase her mortification with the presence of two witnesses. Learn, o pitiless men. No matter how guilty a man is, he is to be treated with respect and charity. You must not rejoice at his annihilation, you must not be pitiless, not even with curious glances. Have mercy on those who fall!

I pointed out to the guilty woman the way she should follow to redeem herself: to go back to her house, to ask humbly to be forgiven and to obtain forgiveness through an upright life; not to yield any more to the flesh; not to trespass on divine Goodness and human kindness in order not to expiate more severely than at present for two or many sins. God forgives and He forgives because He is Goodness. But man, although I said: "Forgive your brother seventy times seven", is not capable of forgiving twice.

I did not wish her peace and I did not give her My blessing because she was not fully detached from her sin, as is required to be forgiven. In her flesh and unfortunately not even in her heart there was no nausea for sin. When Mary of Magdala savoured My Word, she became disgusted with sin and came to Me, full of good will to change completely. But this woman still hesitated between the voices of the flesh and those of the spirit. And in the excitement of the moment, she had not yet been able to use the axe against the stump of the flesh and cut it off in order to go, once she

was mutilated of her greedy weight, to the Kingdom of God. Mutilated of what is ruin, but increased with what is salvation.

Do you want to know whether she was saved? I was not the Saviour for everybody. I wanted to be so, but I was not because not everyone wanted to be saved. And that was one of the most piercing arrows in My agony at Gethsemane.

Go in peace, Mary of Mary, and do not sin any more, not even in trifles. Under Mary's mantle there is nothing but pure things. Bear that in mind.

One day Mary, My Mother, said to you: "I ask My Son with tears to give you to Me". And another time: "I leave it to My Jesus to have Me loved... When you love Me I come. And My coming is joy and salvation".

Mother wanted you. And I gave you to Her. Nay, I took you there, because I know that where I can bend with authority, She takes you with the caress of love and She takes you there even better than I do. Her touch is a seal before which Satan runs away. Now you have Her dress and if you are faithful to the prayers of the two Orders, you will meditate on all the life of our Mother every day: on Her joys and sorrows. That is, My joys and My sorrows. Because since I, the Word, became Jesus, I have rejoiced and wept with Her and for the same reasons.

So you can see that to love Mary is to love Jesus. It is to love Him more easily. Because I make you carry the cross and I put you on the cross. Mother instead carries you or stands at the foot of the cross to receive you on Her heart that can only love. Also at the moment of death Mary's bosom is more pleasant than a cradle. Whoever breathes his last in Her, hears nothing but the voices of the angelical choruses whirling round Mary. He does not see darkness, but sees the sweet ray of the Morning Star. He hears no weeping, but sees Her smile. He knows no terror. Of Us who love Her, who would dare tear from Mary's arms a creature of Her's?

Do not say "Thanks" to Me. Thank Her, Who did not want to remember anything of you, except the little good you have done and the love you have for Me, and that is why She wanted you, to subdue under Her foot what your good will did not succeed in subjugating. Shout: "Long live Mary!" And remain at Her feet at the foot of the Cross. You will adorn your garment with the rubies of My Blood and with the pearls of Her tears. You will have a queen's robe for your entrance into My Kingdom.

Go in peace. I bless you. »

### 493. Instructions on the Road to Bethany.

Jesus says: « you will put here the vision of the Adulterous Woman of 20th March 1944. »

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17th September 1946.

Jesus has joined the ten apostles and the main disciples at the foot of the Mount of Olives, near the fountain of Siloam. When they see Jesus coming, walking with vigorous strides between Peter and John, they go towards Him and they meet just near the fountain.

« Let us go up to the Bethany road. I am leaving the town for some time. While walking I will tell you what you have to do » orders Jesus.

Among the disciples there are also Manaen and Timoneus, who, now cheerful again, have come back to their place. And there are Stephen and Hermas, Nicolaus, John of Ephesus, John the priest, in short, all the ones who are more notable because of their wisdom, besides others, simple men, but so active by the grace of God and their own good will.

« Are You leaving the town? Has anything happened? » ask many.

« No. But there are places waiting for... »

« What have You done this morning? »

« I spoke... The prophets... Once again. But they do not understand... »

« No miracle, Master? » asks Matthew.

« No. I forgave and defended a person. »

« Who was it? Who was offending? »

« Those who think that they are without sin were accusing a woman who had sinned. I saved her. »

« But if she was a sinner, they were right. »

« Her body was that of a sinner. Her soul... There are many things I should say about souls. And I would not call sinners only those whose guilt is obvious. Also those are guilty, who instigate others to sin. And to a more cunning sin. They play the part of the Serpent and of the Sinner at the same time. »

« But what had the woman done? »

« Adultery. »

« Adultery?! And You saved her? You shouldn't!! » exclaims Judas Iscariot.

Jesus stares at him then He asks: « Why not? »

« Because... It may be detrimental to You. You know how they hate You and try to find charges against You! Certainly... To save an adulteress is to go against the Law. »

« I did not say that I wanted to save her. I only said that those who were without sin should throw the stones. And no one struck her, because no one was without sin. So I confirmed the Law that inflicts lapidation on adulterers, but I also saved the woman

because not one lapidator could be found. »

« But You... »

« Did you want Me to stone her to death? It would have been justice, because I could have stoned her. But it would not have been mercy. »

« Ah! she had repented! She implored You and You... »

« No... She was not even repentant. She was only dejected and frightened. »

« Then!... Why?... I no longer understand You! Previously I was still able to understand why You forgave Mary of Magdala, John of Endor, also... in short many sin... »

« You may as well say Matthew. I don't take it amiss. On the contrary I will be grateful to you for reminding me of my debt of gratitude to my Master » says Matthew calm and dignified.

« Yes, also Matthew... But they repented their sins, their dissolute lives. But this woman!... I do not understand You any more! And I am not the only one who doesn't... »

« I know. You do not understand Me... You have never understood Me well. And you are not the only one. But that does not change My behaviour. »

« Forgiveness is to be granted to those who ask for it. »

« Oh! If God should forgive only those who ask to be forgiven! And strike at once those who do not repent after sinning! Have you never felt that you had been forgiven before repenting? Can you really say that you repented and that is why you have been forgiven? »

« Master, I... »

« Listen to Me, all of you, because many among you think that I made a mistake and that Judas is right. Peter and John are here. They heard what I said to the woman and they can repeat it to you. I was not foolish in forgiving. I did not say what I said to other souls whom I had forgiven because they were fully repentant. But I gave that soul time and possibility to arrive at repentance and holiness, if she wishes to reach them. Bear that in mind when you are the masters of souls.

It is essential to possess two things to be true masters and worthy of being masters. The first thing: an austere life for oneself, so that one may judge without the hypocrisy of condemning in other people what one forgives oneself. The second thing: patient mercy to give souls the time to recover and fortify themselves.

Not every soul recovers instantaneously from its wounds. Some do so by successive stages, which are often slow and subject to relapses. It does not befit a spiritual doctor to reject, condemn, frighten them. If you drive them away, they will bound back and throw themselves again into the arms of false friends and masters. Always open your arms and hearts to poor souls, so that they may

find in you true and holy confidants, on whose knees they do not feel ashamed to weep. If you condemn them depriving them of spiritual assistance, you will make them more and more unhealthy and weak. If you cause them to be frightened of you and of God, how will they be able to raise their eyes to you and to God?

Man meets man as his first judge. Only he who lives a spiritual life knows how to meet God first. But the creature who has arrived at living spiritually, does not fall into grave sins. His human side may be still weak, but his strong spirit is vigilant and his weaknesses do not become grave faults. Whereas the man who is still subject to flesh and blood commits sin and meets man. Now, if the man who should point out God to him and instruct his spirit, frightens him, how can the guilty person yield completely to him? And how can he say: "I humble myself because I believe that God is good and forgives", if he sees that one of his fellow-creatures is not good?

You are to be the term of comparison, the measure of what God is, just as a farthing is the part that makes one understand the value of a talent. But if you are cruel to souls, you tiny parts who are part of the Infinite and you represent Him, what will they think that God is? What intolerant harshness will they ascribe to Him?

Judas, since you are a severe judge, if just now I said to you: "I will denounce you to the Sanhedrin for magic practices...". »

« Lord! You will not do that! It would be... it would be... You know that it is... »

« I know and I do not know. But you can see how you cry at once for mercy for yourself... and you know that you would not be condemned by them because... »

« What do You mean, Master? Why do You say that? » asks Judas excitedly, interrupting Jesus.

And Jesus, very calmly but with a glance that pierces Judas' heart, and at the same time curbs the upset apostle, who is being gazed at by the other eleven apostles and by many disciples, says: « Because they love you. You have good friends in there. You have said so many a time. »

Judas heaves a sigh of relief, wipes his perspiration, which is strange in a cold windy day, and says: « That is true. Old friends. But I don't think that if I sinned... »

« And is that why you ask for mercy? »

« Yes. I am still imperfect and I want to become perfect. »

« You have spoken the truth. Also that woman is very imperfect. I gave her time to become good, if she wishes. »

Judas does not reply any more.

They are now on the Bethany road, at a good distance from Jerusalem. Jesus stops and says: « Have you given the poor what I gave you? Have you done everything I told you? »

« Everything, Master » reply the apostles and disciples.

« Well, listen. I will now bless you and dismiss you. You will spread out, as usual, through Palestine. You will gather here again for Passover. Do not fail to come... and during these next months fortify your hearts and the hearts of those who believe in Me. Be more and more just, unselfish, patient. Be what I taught you to be. Go round towns, villages, secluded houses. Shun no one. Put up with everything. You are not serving your own egos, as I do not serve the ego of Jesus of Nazareth, but I serve My Father. Serve your Father as well. Thus, His interests, not yours, are to be sacred to you, even if they bring sorrow or detriment to your human interests. Be guided by the spirit of self-denial and obedience. I may send for you or I may tell you to remain where you are. Do not judge My instructions. Obey them, whatever they may be, with the firm belief that they are good and given for your good. And do not be jealous if I send for some and not for others. You know... Some have departed from Me... and I suffered because of that. They were the ones who still wanted to act according to their own wills. Pride is the lever that overturns spirits and the magnet that tears them away from Me. Do not curse those who left Me. Pray that they may come back... My shepherds will be staying by twos in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. Isaac is coming with Me for the time being together with Marjiam. Love one another. And help one another. My dear friends, may your spirits tell you all the rest, reminding you of what I taught you, and may your angels repeat it to you. I bless you. »

They all prostrate themselves while Jesus recites the Mosaic blessing. They then crowd round Jesus greeting Him. They then depart while He with the twelve apostles, Isaac and Marjiam proceeds along the Bethany road.

« We shall now stop just long enough to greet Lazarus and then we shall go on towards the Jordan. »

« Are we going to Jericho? » asks Judas with interest.

« No. To Betharabah. »

« But... night... »

« There is no shortage of houses and villages from here to the river... »

No one speaks any more and apart from the rustling of olivetrees and the shuffling of feet, no other noise can be heard.

#### **494. At the Village of Solomon and in His House.**

18th September 1946.

In order not to be seen by people they go into the village where Solomon's house is, walking along the bank of the river. But I would say that the precaution was quite unnecessary, because it

gets dark early in the November or end of October evenings and people are already at home. There is no one, absolutely no one in the street and if some bleatings were not heard, one would say that the place is deserted.

They shake the little gate. It is closed. Well closed at the entrance of the little kitchen garden, which looks very tidy in the half-light.

« Call him! He is in the kitchen. A thread of light is stealing through the shutters » says Jesus.

Thomas takes upon himself to call with his powerful voice the old man who opens the door at once and looks towards the street. He is uncertain because of the dim light outside, particularly because he comes from the kitchen where there is a fire on and a lamp is lit.

But when Jesus says: « It is us », the old man recognises the voice at once and shouts: « The Master! » and descending the rustic step he runs to open.

« My Lord! Come in, come into Your house, and may this day be blessed because it ends with Your coming! » he says bustling with the lock of the gate and he explains: « I am alone and I close the gate well. The robbers are capable of anything. There are some who cause damage now in one place now in another, and they come down from the Gilead mountains. It is not that I am afraid for my life. But I had prepared for You and... Here, Master. Come. It is a damp evening. Your hair is wet with dew... »

« And you are more diligent than the bride of the Song of Songs, father. The trouble you take to welcome the Pilgrim is no burden to you » says Jesus smiling.

« Trouble? How long this time has been! One day after the other, one after the other. I had sown your seed and I saw the vegetables grow beautifully. I used to say: "If He came, He would certainly like this". But they ripened and You did not come... And I saw the fruit colour up on the trees and I ate of them sadly, because You did not have any. That ewe gave me a lamb, a completely white one. I kept it for such a long time to eat it with You. I was hoping to see You before the Tabernacles. Then... a lamb all for me... Too much! I changed it for a little sheep, and they were good to me, because they did not want anything to balance the deal. But I have kept as much fruit and cheese as I could for You, as well as some dried fish and legumes and I still have a few melons. And a little wine... I don't drink any, but I made some for You, for winter time. »

He is speaking while cleaning the table, he lays the kitchenware on it and pokes the fire, he adds water to the pot and he busies himself happily. He no longer looks like the poor old man of a few months previously.

He goes out and comes back with some milk and he says

apologising: « It is only a little because only one ewe gives some milk. But they will be two shortly. It is enough for You, however. »

He is fatherly; devoted and fatherly at the same time. He has taken the damp mantles and the dirty sandals and has taken them elsewhere. He has come back with some apples and pomegranates and grapes and also some figs half dried and he says: « I dried them like that, just to make You taste them. I thought... I thought of my Ananias who was so fond of them when they were prepared like that!... » His voice, previously serene, lowers to a sad tone while saying these words and he concludes: « and... I thought that You would like them and while I was preparing them I felt as if I were preparing them for the son of my son. » He shakes his head, he strives to smile, with his eyes shining with tears.

Jesus, Who had sat down at the table, stands up, and laying one arm round his shoulders, He draws him to Himself saying: « I like them very much. They remind Me of My childhood... and of My father. But you should not deprive yourself of so many things because of Me. They are good for old people. You must remain healthy and strong to be able to welcome Me thus every time I come. It is so pleasant to find a home like this, with a father waiting for us. Is that right, My dear friends? »

« It is certainly right. It is so beautiful that we grow lazy instead of helping Ananias » says Peter and he stands up exclaiming: « Come on, let us go and make our beds while Jesus speaks to him. »

« Oh! It is not necessary! They are always ready. And everything is clean... The only thing is... that they are not enough. You are more than twelve. But I will go and lie on the hay and... »

« You will certainly not, father. In that case I will go » says John.

« No, I will » say Andrew and others.

« There is no need for that. I will sleep here on this table. It is certainly not harder than the bottom boards of my boat, and Marjiam... » says Peter.

«... will sleep with Me » says Jesus interrupting him.

« Or with me, if you wish so... as little Ananias used to do » says the old man with imploring eyes.

« Yes, Master. You always have me. He... I will go with him » says Marjiam.

Jesus caresses him appreciating his gesture.

« They have come several times looking for You after Pentecost. Then they stopped coming » says the old man.

« Who was looking for Him? »

« Pharisees, hey! And others like them. They wanted to question You. But I said: "He has gone to His village. He is not here, and I don't know when He will be coming here... That was the truth. And they got tired of coming. And they were looking for another man, a certain John, and they said that he was with You and they

perhaps thought that he was hiding here. I said to them: "But that's His apostle and he is with Him". They replied: "Was His apostle blind in one eye? Was he old, sick, dying?". I realised that it was not you and I replied: "I know only John, the apostle, a young man who is kinder than a child and has a wholesome heart and body". They threatened me. But what else could I say? That is the truth... »

« Yes. That is the truth. And be always truthful; even if you should harm Me, father, never tell a lie. »

« Lord, my hair has grown grey and I have always striven to obey the Lord. And among the commandments to be obeyed, there is also not to tell lies. But... why are they looking for You, Lord? I was blind. So I did not go to Jerusalem any more. I went back now... Only for the rite. Because I wanted to be here waiting for You... And I perceived hatred and love around You... and I thought there was more hatred than love among the chiefs of the people. I was in the Temple that morning when they wanted to offend You... and I ran away as I was distressed and I came here to wait for You and weep. Why is man so wicked? »

« Because he has killed his spirit. And with his spirit his capability to feel remorse for being unjust. »

« That is true!... And are they looking for You to hurt You? »

« Yes, they are. »

« Yes!! Israel wants to injure her King? How horrible! Israel is condemning herself to the prophesied punishments!... Oh! I am glad, now, that my son is dead... and I would like to die myself not to see the sin of Israel... »

There is dead silence. Only the crackle of the wood burning in the fireplace can be heard.

« Let us speak of something else! We speak of nothing but death, hatred, betrayal! Enough of that! I cannot stand that! » says the Iscariot, who is upset, surly, agitated and is moving about the kitchen gesticulating excitedly with his legs, his arms, his whole body.

« Judas is right » many say.

« The fact that one does not want to hear, is of no avail. What helps is not to consent » says Jesus, opening His hands on the rustic table, with His palms upwards, in a gesture of resignation.

« What do You mean? To consent! Who consents to that? » Judas, bending over the table, almost lying across it to approach the Master, shakes his fists almost in His face.

« Who? All those who already dream of seeing Me perish in My blood. Blood! The blood of your Messiah! Blood on you, o Earth, who do not want your Lord! A blood brighter than those flames! Blood, a fire in the ice and darkness of a criminal world! They hope to kill the Light by depriving it of its blood. But Light is spirit;

blood is still matter. Matter weighs down the spirit. The blood spread on a sheet of mica dims the light, does it not? Well, I solemnly tell you that as that wood did not shine until it became fire and its resins catching fire turned into brightness, and it is now an incandescent glare, so when everything is completed and the blood and flesh are consumed by the sacrifice, then, like that fire over there, which has changed everything into light, My spirit will shine more brightly than ever on the world and I shall be more than ever the Light. Such a Light that it will dazzle for ever those who hate the Light and kill it. Such a Light that the golden gates of Heaven will melt after being closed to Mankind for ages and Heaven will be open to the just. Such a Light that it will pierce the stones forming the vault of the Abyss and the fierce fire of Hell will become extremely fierce under the thunderbolts of My rays. And woe to those who will have laid snares to the Light! Blood and Light! Those two things will be in front of them until they are driven mad and to despair. Demons! »

Jesus, Who had stood up when saying « I solemnly tell you » and was frightening, so imposing He looked in the low dark-walled kitchen, as the brightness of the flames of the fireplace formed a halo round His head, sits down and becomes silent.

They all look at one another, with the exception of Judas, who seems to be hypnotised looking at the firewood ablaze... Hypnotised and frightened. A fright that depicts a dreadful mask on his face, of a ghastly greenish paleness, which the burning wood tinges with red. It reminds me of his terrible face on Good Friday. He then turns suddenly round and shouts: « Be quiet! Be quiet! Why are You tormenting us?! » and he goes out slamming the door...

« His way, that is true. But he loves You very much... and he suffers hearing certain words » says Thomas. And he concludes: « They hurt us so much as well! But we are not so strange, let us say... strange... »

No one speaks. Jesus also is silent...

« The vegetables are cooked, the milk is warm... » says the old man in a low voice, as he is intimidated and he almost does not dare say such common words after the incident...

« Call Judas and let us have supper » orders Jesus.

John goes out and calls his companion. They come back in... Judas looks tortured. But a torture without peace... But he sits at the table and he stands up with the others when Jesus offers and blesses and he looks stealthily at Him when He hands out the portions keeping the last one for Himself.

Everyone would like to dispel the sadness reigning in the room, but no one succeeds until Jesus addresses the old man asking him whether the little village and nearby places have received the word of the Lord.

« Yes, Master. And they received it very well. I would say better here than on the other side of the river. You know the Baptist still lives in everybody's memory here, and his disciples, who are now Yours, keep it green and through his words they make You known. And then here there are not many Pharisees in Perea and in the Decapolis, so »

#### **495. Jesus and Simon of Jonas.**

20th September 1946.

I do not know where I am. Certainly no longer in the Jordan valley, but in mountains bordering on it, because I can see the green valley and the lovely blue river below, whilst peaks of quite high mountains emerge from the vast plateau stretching east of the Jordan.

I see Peter, all alone on a little rising of ground, staring northeast and sighing sadly. There is some firewood at his feet and it has certainly been picked up in the woods covering this hill. A little village nestles among the greenery. Peter is really down-hearted. He ends up by sitting on his bundle of sticks holding his head in his hands, all curled up. He remains thus, forgetful of time and of everything, so absorbed that not even some children who pass by with some whimsical little goats arouse him. The boys look at him and then run away, after their goats, towards the village. The sun is setting slowly and Peter does not stir.

Jesus is proceeding along the path which climbs from the village to the hillock. He is walking slowly and avoids making any noise. He thus reaches the spot where Peter is sitting. And He calls him standing upright in front of him: « Simon! »

« Master! » Peter starts, he raises his head and looks upset while uttering that word.

« What were you doing, Simon? All your companions have come back. You were the only one missing and we were worried. So much so that your brother and the sons of Zebedee with Thomas and Judas have scattered through the mountains, while My brothers with Isaac and Marjiam have gone down towards the plain. »

« I'm sorry... I'm sorry for causing pain and trouble... »

« Your companions are fond of you... Judas was the first one to become anxious and he reproached Marjiam for letting you go by yourself. »

« H'm!... »

« Simon, what is the matter with you? »

« Nothing, Master. »

« What were you doing here, all alone on this hillock, while it is getting dark? »

« I was looking... »

« You may have been looking, Simon. But you were not looking just now... Some boys passed near you and they almost feared that you were dead because you were so bent on yourself. They ran to the fold that gave us hospitality and they told Me. I came... What were you looking at, Simon? »

« I was looking... I was looking towards Ramoth Gilead, towards Gerasa, Bozrah, Arbela... our trip of last year, so beautiful, so The Mother was with us! The women disciples... John of Endor The merchant... Even he was kind and helped to make the journey pleasant How many things have changed! How much difference and how much grief!... That is what I was looking at: the past. »

« And the future, My dear Simon. » Jesus sits on the bundle of sticks beside Peter and lays an arm on his shoulders speaking to him: « You were looking at the horizon... and sadness dimmed it. The present, like a whirl, raised frightening clouds and concealed the serene memory full of promises and hope from you, and it frightened you. Simon, you are subjected to one of those hours of sadness and boredom, which our human nature meets on its way. No one is free from them, because those hours are brought about by him who hates man. And the more a man serves God, the more Satan tries to frighten and tire him to detach him from his ministry. You also are subjected to an hour of tiredness. You are fatigued by the persistent persecutions against your Master. And finally - and you do not know that it is not you, but it is the Tempter - you listen to a voice that whispers to you: "And tomorrow? What will happen tomorrow? »

« Lord, it is true. You are reading my heart. But You also see that if I ask that question, it is not because I am afraid for myself. It's because... No. I could never bear to see You tormented... You often speak of crime, of betrayal. I... Oh! not only I! How many, particularly old people, have asked You to let them die before seeing their King offended? And I!... I, You know, You are everything for me. I am not interested in anything but You. It is not as Judas says, nostalgia for my boat and for my wife... Look: You can see whether I am telling the truth. I insisted so much to have Marjiam. My human nature wanted at least an adoptive son in place of the children that my wife did not give me mortifying my virility that wanted to be perpetuated. But now, but at present I... I do love him. But if You should take him away from me, I would not react. I would only say to You... No! I would not say anything! »

« You would only say to Me? Go on. »

« It is no use, Master. »

« Tell Me! »

« I would say: "Give him to someone who would bring him up as

a just man, better than I could". Nothing else! Or rather... and I am saying this to You, weeping, for him, for myself, for my brother, and also for John and James... and also for the others, but we... we are Your first ones... » Peter falls on his knees, leaning against Jesus' knees, with raised hands, palms upwards, imploring, while tears stream down his cheeks and disappear in his beard... «... I am saying this for ourselves: let us die, take us away before we... Oh! I was thinking, I have always been thinking, for months - and You can see whether it is a thought that tortures me and makes me old, it is an uninterrupted fear that does not even leave me when I sleep - I think that, if it is going to be as You say, I could be the traitor, or Andrew, or John, or James, or Marjiam... And if we don't go to that extent, it might be one of those You mentioned also three evenings ago at Ananias', one of those who go to the extent of wanting to take Your Blood, one, also one of those who, out of cowardice, cannot oppose that and they consent to evil for fear of evil... I... if I should consent only by not reacting, out of fear... Master, oh! my dear Master, I would kill myself to punish myself, or... I would kill Your murderers, if I should meet them. I... if You do not want that, let me die before, at once, here... Life is nothing, but to fail to love You... To be one of those... to be... to see and not... » He is so excited that he lacks even words. He bends with his face on Jesus' knees weeping bitter tears, the tears of a coarse elderly man, not accustomed to weeping, upset by too many feelings.

Jesus lays His hands on Peter's head as if He wished to calm his grief and dispel every perturbing thought and He says: « My dear friend, and do you think that even if you were... not to be perfect at that hour, the Lord, Who is just, would not weigh your mistake with the weight of your love and your present good will? And are you afraid that this golden love and will may weigh less than your temporary imperfection, and may be insufficient to obtain for you indulgence from God, and with that indulgence all the assistance to become yourself again, My beloved Peter? »

« Let me die! Save me! I'm afraid! »

« You are My Stone, Simon. Can I crumble the Stone on which I will found Her who is to perpetuate Me on the Earth? »

« I am not worthy of that. I feel it. I am a poor ignorant man, a sinner. All evil tendencies are in me. I am not worthy, I am not worthy! I shall become perverse. A murderer. All the worst... Let me die. Do You realise that if I should find out who hates You... »

« All the world hates Me, Simon. We must forgive... »

« I am speaking of the main culprit. There must be a main one and... »

« There will be many one, and each will have his main task... »

« Which task? That of... Oh! Don't let me say it! But I... »

« But you must forgive, like Me and with Me. Why are you so

upset, Simon, thinking of what you might do to punish? Leave that task to the Lord. You must love and forgive, be indulgent and forgive. They, all those who will offend against your Jesus, need so much to be helped to be forgiven! »

« There is no forgiveness for them. »

« Oh! how severe you are with your brothers, Simon! Of course there is forgiveness also for them, if they mend their ways. It would be dreadful if all My offenders were not to be forgiven! Come on, stand up, Simon. Your companions will be more worried now, seeing that I am not at the fold either. But even at the cost of letting them suffer a little further, let us pray before going to them. Let us pray together. There is nothing else to be done to regain peace, spiritual strength, love, pity... also for ourselves. Prayer dispels Satan's phantoms, and makes us feel closer to God. And with God near us, we can face and put up with everything justly and meritoriously. Let us pray thus, you and I together, here, from this mountain, from which so much of our Fatherland can be seen, as the Promised Land was seen by Moses from mount Nebo. We are luckier than he was, because we are taking the Word and Salvation to the Land which will belong to the Christ. I first, then you. Look! The Judaeon mountains can still be seen in the last light. But beyond them there is the plain, the sea, then other lands, the world... They are waiting for you, Peter. They are waiting for you to learn that there is a true God. A God Who will give the true light to the souls groping in the darkness of Gentilism and idolatry. Look: the earthly light is growing dim. How could wayfarers not lose their way in a lightless night? But there is the Pole-star. It is rising already to guide wayfarers. My Religion will be the star that guides spiritual wayfarers on the way to Heaven. And you will be so united to it as to be one light only with Me and My Doctrine, My dear Peter, My blessed Stone. Let us pray for that hour when men will be saved through My Name. "Our Father Who art in Heaven"... »

He says the « Our Father » slowly, holding Peter by the hand, and He seems to be presenting him to the Father, as He raises His arms and hands, with the apostle's left hand in His right one.

« And now let us go down. And let us leave here any useless sadness and worries about tomorrow. Together with our daily bread the Father will give us His help for tomorrow and for every morrow. Are you convinced, Simon? »

« Yes, Master, I believe that » says Peter resolutely; he no longer looks upset, but austere, as he has been for some months, so that he seems to be quite different from the coarse facetious fisherman of the first two years.

They go down, Jesus ahead, followed by Peter with his bundle of sticks and almost at the first house of the village they meet the

worried apostles.

« But where had you gone? » they ask Peter shouting.

« We would have been here some time ago, but I stopped with him, speaking and looking towards Gerasa... » replies Jesus on his behalf.

They go to the right, to the ruins of a half-demolished sheep-fold. Inside a wooden fence, half of which has collapsed and the rest is mouldy and tottering, there is a dry-wall shed, badly covered and badly closed on three sides by walls and on the fourth by boards. There is nothing inside it, except some straw on the floor and a primitive fireplace in a corner. I think that the village did not give them hospitality and they took shelter there...

#### **496. Jesus to Thaddeus and to James of Zebedee.**

21st September 1946.

« Do You really want to go along this road? For a number of reasons I don't think it is wise... » objects the Iscariot.

« Which? Did men from these villages not come to Me, as far as Capernaum, seeking health and wisdom? Are they not creatures of God, too? »

« Yes... But... It is not wise for You to go too close to Machaerus... It's an inauspicious place for Herod's enemies. »

« Machaerus is far away. And I have no time to go so far. I would like to go to Petra and beyond... But I shall be able to go half that distance, perhaps less. In any case, let us go... »

« Joseph advised You... »

« To remain on guarded roads. This is the road that takes one beyond the Jordan and is strictly watched over by the Romans. I am not cowardly, Judas, or imprudent. »

« I would not trust it. I would not go away from Jerusalem. I... »

« Leave the Master alone. He is the Master and we are His disciples. When have you heard of a disciple giving advice to his master? » says James of Zebedee.

« When? It is not years ago that your brother told the Master not to go to Achor and He listened to him. Let Him listen to me now. »

« You are jealous and overbearing. If my brother spoke and was listened to, it means that what he said was right and was to be heeded. It was enough to look at John that day, to understand that it was justice to agree with him! »

« Oh! with all his wisdom he was never able to defend Him, and he never will. Instead what I did coming to Jerusalem is a recent event. »

« You did your duty. My brother also would have done it, if he had had the opportunity, and in a different way, because he is not capable of telling lies, not even for a good purpose, and I am glad

of that... »

« You are offending me. You are calling me a liar... »

« Hey! Do you want me to say that you are sincere, if you lied so skilfully, without changing colour? »

« I was doing it... »

« I know. I know! To save the Master. But I don't like it, and none of us does. We prefer the simple reply of the old man. We prefer to be silent and to be considered stupid, and even maltreated, rather than lie. One begins for a good purpose and ends up with a bad one. »

« When one is wicked. But I am not. When one is a fool. But I am not. »

« That is enough! Even if you are right, you end up by being wrong, not with regard to what you were throwing at each other's face, but because of your lack of charity. You all know what My opinion is on sincerity. I insist on that also in respect of charity. Let us go. Your disputes grieve Me more than the insults of My enemies. »

Jesus is obviously upset and He begins to walk with a rapid step, all alone, along a road which, without being an archaeologist, one understands was built by the Romans. It runs southwards, almost straight as far as the eye can see, between two ranges of high mountains. A monotonous road, dark because of the woody slopes enclosing it and preventing one's eyes from roving over the horizon, but well kept. Now and again there is a Roman bridge across torrents or little rivers, which flow towards the Jordan or the Dead Sea. I am not sure which, because the mountains obstruct the view on the western side where the river and the sea must be. There are some caravans on the road, coming up perhaps from the Red Sea and going goodness knows where, with many camels, camel-drivers and merchants of a race clearly different from the Jewish one.

Jesus is always ahead, lonely. Behind, in two groups, the apostles are talking to one another in low voices. The Galileans are in front, the Judaeans behind, -with Andrew and John and the two disciples who have joined them. One group is trying to comfort James, who is dejected after the Master's reproach, the other is endeavouring to persuade Judas not to be always so obstinate and aggressive. And both groups agree in advising the two reproached apostles to go to the Master and make peace with Him.

« Me? I will go at once. I know I am right. I know what my actions are. It was not I who insinuated evil. And I am going » says the Iscariot. He is bold, I would say: shameless. He quickens his step to catch up with Jesus. I wonder once again whether in those days he was already prepared to betray the Christ and was conspiring with His enemies...

James, instead, who after all is less guilty, is so depressed for grieving the Master that he has not got the courage to approach Him. He looks at his Master, Who is now speaking to Judas... He looks at Him and his desire for His forgiving word is clearly visible on his face. But his very love, so sincere, firm and deep, makes him feel that his misdeed is unpardonable.

The two groups are now together and also Simon Zealot, Andrew, Thomas and James say: « Cheer up! I know Him so well! He has already forgiven you! » and with keen perspicacity, the elderly and wise Bartholomew, laying his hand on James' shoulder says: « I am telling you: to avoid further storms He impartially reproached both of you. But in His heart He meant Judas only. »

« It is so, Bartholomew! My Brother is worrying Himself putting up with that man, whom He insists in wanting to reform and He tires trying to make him appear... as we are. He is the Master, and I... am I... But if I were Him, oh! the man of Kerioth would not be with us! » says Thaddeus while his beautiful eyes, which recall those of Jesus, flash with anger.

« Do you think so? Are you suspicious? Of what? » ask many.

« Nothing. Nothing definite. But I don't like that man. »

« You never liked him, brother. An absurd repugnance that arose at your first meeting. You admitted it to me. It is against charity. You ought to overcome it, even if it were only to give joy to Jesus » says James of Alphaeus calmly and persuasively.

« You are right, but... I am not able. Come, James, let us go to my Brother together » and Judas of Alphaeus takes the arm of James of Zebedee resolutely and drags him away.

Judas hears them coming, turns round, then says something to Jesus, Who stops waiting for them. Judas looks at the mortified apostle with mischievous eyes.

« Excuse me, move over a little. I must speak to my Brother » says Thaddeus. The words are polite, but the tone is very cold.

The Iscariot giggles, then shrugging his shoulders he retraces his steps joining the others.

« Jesus, we are sinners... » says Judas Thaddeus.

« I am a sinner, not you » whispers James with lowered head.

« We are sinners, James, because I thought of what you did, I approved of it, I have it in my heart. So I am a sinner as well. Because my judgement against Judas comes from my heart and contaminates my charity... Jesus, are You not saying anything to Your disciples who acknowledge their sins? »

« What shall I say that you do not already know? Will you change your attitude towards your companion because of My words? »

« No. Not more than he changes because of the words You speak to him » His cousin replies with sincerity for himself and for the others.

« Never mind, Judas, never mind! I made the mistake. I am involved and I have to look after myself, not after the others. Master, don't be annoyed with me... »

« James, I would like one thing from you, from all of you. I am so grieved, because of the many incomprehensions I meet... because of so much stubborn resistance. You are aware of it... For every place that gives Me joy, there are three that refuse Me and they drive Me away like an evil-doer. But I would like to receive at least from you that comprehension and adherence which other people deny Me. That the world should not love Me, that I should feel suffocated by all this hatred, this aversion, enmity, suspicion around Me, by all kinds of base actions, by selfishness, by everything that only My infinite love for man makes Me put up with, is painful. But I endure it with patience. I have come to suffer that from those who hate Salvation. But you! No, I cannot stand that! That you are not able to love one another and thus understand Me. That you do not adhere to My spirit, striving to do what I do.

Do you all think I do not see Judas' errors, and I am unacquainted with his deeds? Oh! be convinced that it is not so. If I had wanted beings that were perfect in their spirits, I would have got angels to become incarnate and I would have surrounded Myself with them. I could have done that. Would it really have been a good thing? No. On My side it would have been selfishness and contempt. I would have avoided the grief caused by your imperfections and I would have despised men created by My Father and so much loved by Him as to send Me to save them. And on man's side it would have been detrimental to his future. When My mission is completed and I ascend once again to Heaven with My angels, what and who would actually be left to continue My mission? Which man would have been able to try and do what I say, if only a God and angels had set the example for a new life guided by the spirit? It was necessary for Me to take a human body to persuade man that if he wishes so, he can be chaste and holy in every way. And it was also necessary for Me to take men, as they are, whose spirits replied to My spirit, without taking into account whether they were rich or poor, learned or ignorant, citizens or countrymen. It was necessary for Me to take them as I found them, and for My will and theirs to transform them slowly into masters of other men.

Man can believe man, the man he sees. But it is difficult for man, who has fallen so low, to believe in God, Whom he does not see. Sinai was still blazing with fire and idolatry had already begun at the foot of the mountain... Moses was not yet dead, and they were already committing sins against the Law, although they could not look at his face. But when you are transformed into masters and

you are like an example, a witness, like yeast among men, they will no longer be able to say: "They are gods who have descended among men and we cannot imitate them". They will have to say: "They are men like us. They have the same instincts, incentives and reactions as we have, and yet they are able to resist their incentives and instincts, and their reactions are completely different from our brutal ones". And they will be convinced that man can be divinised, if he only wishes to follow the ways of God. Look at the Gentiles and idolaters. Are they made any better by all their Olympus and all their gods? No. Because if they are incredulous, they say that their gods are a fable; if they are believers they say: "They are gods and I am a man" and they do not strive to imitate them. You therefore must strive to be like Me. And do not be in a hurry. Man evolves slowly from a reasonable animal into a spiritual being. And bear with one another! No one, except God, is perfect.

And it is all over now, is it not? Improve yourselves with firm will, imitating Simon of Jonas, who in less than one year has made rapid progress. And yet... Who among you was more materially human than Simon with all the defects of a very material humanity? »

« That is true, Jesus. I never stop studying him. And he surprises me » confesses Thaddeus.

« Yes. I have been with him since my childhood. I know him as if he had been my brother. But now I have a different Simon in front of me. I must admit that when You said that he was our chief, I, and I was not the only one, was perplexed. He seemed to be the least suitable of all of us. Simon as compared to the other Simon and Nathanael! Simon in comparison with my brother and with Your brothers! Above all with regard to those five! I really thought it was a mistake... I now say that You were right. »

« And you only see the surface of Simon! But I see his depth. He has still much to do and to suffer to be perfect. But I would like to see his good will, his simplicity, humility and love in everyone... »

Jesus is looking in front of Himself and seems to be seeing I do not know what. He is absorbed in thought and smiles at what He sees. He then lowers His eyes and looks at James smiling.

« So... am I forgiven?! »

« I would like to forgive everybody as I forgive you... There, that town must be Heshbon. The man said so: the town is after the bridge with three arches. Let us wait for the others and go into town all together. »

#### **497. The Man from Petra, near Heshbon.**

22nd September 1946.

I cannot see the town of Heshbon. Jesus and His apostles are coming out of it and from their looks I realise that they are disappointed. They are followed, or rather chased, a few metres away, by a bawling threatening crowd...

« These places around the Dead Sea are cursed like the sea itself » says Peter.

« This place! It is still the same as in Moses' days and You are too kind to punish it as it was punished then. But that is what is needed: to subdue the people with the power of Heaven or with that of the Earth, all of them, to the last man and the last place » says Nathanael angrily, his sunk en eyes flashing with wrath. The Jewish race shows up remarkably in the lean elderly apostle in his outburst of indignation and makes him look very much like the many rabbis and Pharisees who always oppose Jesus.

And the Master turns round and lifting His arm He says: « Peace! Peace! They will be drawn to the Truth as well. But peace is necessary. And compassion. We have never been here. They do not know us. Other places were like that the first time, they then changed. »

« The trouble is that these places are like Masada. Corrupted! Let us go back to the Jordan » says Peter insisting.

But Jesus proceeds southwards along the main road, which they have taken again. Those who are most enraged with Him continue to follow Him, drawing the attention of wayfarers all the time.

One, who must be a rich merchant or employed by a merchant, and is driving a long caravan going northwards, watches with astonishment and stops his camel. All the others stop at the same time. He looks at Jesus, he looks at the apostles, whose appearance is so defenceless and benign, he looks at the bawling crowds which arrive threateningly and he asks them what it is all about. I cannot hear his words, but I hear those shouted in reply: « He is the cursed Nazarene, the mad possessed Nazarene. We don't want Him within our walls! »

The man does not ask any further question. He turns the camel round, he shouts something to one of his men who was following him closely and he goads his animal which, with few curvets, reaches the apostles. « In the name of your God, which of you is Jesus the Nazarene? » he asks the apostles Matthew, Philip, Simon Zealot and Isaac, who are in the last group.

« Why do you want to know? Do you want to molest Him as well? Are His fellow-countrymen not enough? Do you want to start, too? » says Philip quite worriedly.

« I am not as bad as they are. And I am seeking grace. Do not reject me. I beg you in the name of your God. »

Something in the man's voice convinces the four apostles and Simon says: « The one ahead of everybody, with the two youngest ones. »

The man goads his camel again -because Jesus, Who was ahead, has gone even farther away during the short conversation of which He is unaware.

« Lord!... Listen to an unhappy man... » he says, as soon as he catches up with Him.

Jesus, John and Marjiam turn round quite astonished.

« What do you want? »

« I come from Petra, Lord. I carry goods coming from the Red Sea as far as Damascus, on behalf of other people. I am not poor. But I am just as unhappy. I have two children, Lord, and a disease has affected their eyes and they are blind; one, who was taken ill first, is completely blind, the other is almost blind and will soon lose his sight completely. Doctors do not work miracles, but You do. »

« How do you know? »

« I know a rich merchant who knows You. He often stops in my enclosure and at times I serve him. When he saw my sons he said to me: "Only Jesus of Nazareth could cure them. Look for Him". I would have looked for You. But I do not have much time and I have to follow the most suitable roads. »

« When did you see Alexander? »

« Between your two springtime festivals. Since then I have made two trips but I never met You. Lord, have mercy! »

« Man, I cannot go down as far as Petra, and you cannot leave the caravan... »

« Of course I can. Arisa is a reliable man. I will tell him to go on slowly. I will fly to Petra. My camel is faster than the wind in the desert and more agile than a gazelle. I will take my children and another faithful servant. I will catch up with You. You will cure them... Oh! light in their dark eyes as beautiful as stars, now dimmed by a thick cloud! Then I will carry on, while they go back to their mother. I see that You are going on, Lord. Where are You going? »

« I was going to Dibon... »

« Don't go there. It is full of those... of Machaerus. Cursed places, Lord. Don't abandon unhappy people, Lord, to give Yourself to those who are cursed. »

« Just what I was thinking » mutters Bartholomew into his beard, and many say that he is right.

By now all the people are around Jesus and the man from Petra. On the contrary, the citizens of Heshbon, seeing that the caravan is well disposed to the persecuted Master, retrace their steps. The caravan, standing still, is awaiting the outcome and the decision.

« Man, if I do not go to the towns in the south, I will go back to the

north. But that does not mean that I will listen to you. »

« I know that I am contemptible for you Israelites. I am uncircumcised and I do not deserve being listened to. But You are the King of the world, and we are in the world, too... »

« That is not the point. The matter is... How can you believe that I can do what doctors were not able to do? »

« Because You are the Messiah of God and they are men. You are the Son of God. Misace told me and I believe it. You can do everything, also for a poor man like me. » His reply is a resolute one and the man completes it by sliding down to the ground, without even getting his camel to kneel down, and he prostrates himself in the dust.

« Your faith is greater than that of many. Go. Do you know where mount Nebo is? »

« Yes, Lord. That is mount Nebo. We also have heard of Moses. A great man! Too great to be ignored. But You are greater. The comparison between You and Moses is like that between a mountain and a stone. »

« Go to Petra. I will be waiting for you on mount Nebo... »

« There is a village at the foot of the mountain for visitors. And there are hotels... I shall be there in ten days' time at most. I will force my camel and if He Who sends You protects me, I shall not meet any storm. »

« Go and come back as soon as possible. I must go to other places... »

« Lord! I... am not circumcised. My blessing is a dishonour for You. But the blessing of a father is never so. I bless You and I am off. »

He takes a silver whistle and blows it three times. The man at the head of the caravan comes back at a gallop. They speak to each other and then say goodbye. The man goes back to the caravan which sets off. The other man mounts his camel again and departs southwards at a gallop.

Jesus and His apostles set forth again.

« Are we really going to mount Nebo? »

« Yes, and we shall leave the towns and climb the slopes of the Abarim mountains. There will be many shepherds. And we shall learn from them the road to mount Nebo and we shall teach them the Way to the mountain of God. And we shall stop there for a few days, as we did on the mountains of Arbela and near mount Cherit. »

« Oh! how lovely it will be! And we shall become better. We were always stronger and better when we came down from those places » says John.

« And You will speak to us of everything that Nebo reminds us of. Brother, do You remember, when we were children, that one

day you played Moses who blessed Israel before dying? » says Judas of Alphaeus.

« Yes. And Your Mother uttered a cry seeing You lie down as if You were dead? Now we are really going to mount Nebo » says

James of Alphaeus.

« And You will bless Israel. You are the true Leader of the people of God! » exclaims Nathanael.

« But You will not die there. You will never die, will You, Master? » asks Judas of Kerioth with a strange giggle.

« I shall die and rise as it has been stated. Many men will die without being dead on that day. And while the just will rise again, even if they have been dead for years, those living in their bodies but whose spirits are definitely dead, shall not rise again. Make sure you are not one of them. »

« And You make sure that no one hears You repeat that You will rise again. They say it is blasphemy » replies Judas of Kerioth.

« It is the truth. And I say it. »

« What faith that man has! And that Misace! » says the Zealot trying to make a digression.

« But who is Misace? » ask those who last year did not take part in the journey beyond the Jordan. And they go away speaking of those events, while Jesus resumes with Marjiam and John the thread of their interrupted discourse.

#### **498. Descending from Mount Nebo.**

23rd September 1946.

« I shall always regret this mountain and this rest in the Lord » says Peter while they are getting ready to descend from a very wild hillside to the valley.

They are in a range of very high mountains. To the east, beyond the valley, there are more mountains, and there are mountains to the south and even higher ones to the north. To north-west there is the green valley of the Jordan which flows into the Dead Sea. To the west there is first the gloomy sea and then, beyond it, the arid stony desert, interrupted only by the wonderful Engedi oasis, and then the Judaeian mountains. An imposing wide view. One's eyes can reach as far as they wish, forgetting in the vision of so much vegetable life, which one supposes or knows it is inhabited, the gloomy sight of the Dead Sea, devoid of sails and life, still gloomy even in sunshine, sad also in the low peninsula which almost halfway along the eastern side, projects into it. How dreadful are the paths descending to the valley! Only wild animals can feel at their ease on them. If they were not able to hold on to trunks and bushes it would be impossible for them to descend, and that makes the Iscariot grumble.

« And yet, I would like to go back again » replies Peter.

« You have queer tastes. This place is worse than the first and the second one. »

« But not worse than the place where our Master prepared for his mission of a preacher » remarks John objecting.

« Eh! everything seems beautiful to you... »

« Yes. Everything around my Master is beautiful and good and I love it. »

« Be careful, I also am in that everything... and also Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes and Herodians are often in it... Do you love them as well? »

« He loves them. »

« And what about you? ha! ha! are you doing what He does? But He is He, and you are you. I don't know whether you will always be able to love, as you grow pale whenever you hear someone speak of betrayal and death, or you see someone who wishes such things. »

« Which means that I am very imperfect, if I become upset out of fear for Him or out of anger towards culprits. »

« Ah! so anger also upsets you? I didn't think so... So, if one day you should by chance see someone really hurting the Master, what would you do? »

« Me?! Why ask me? The Law says: "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth". My hands would become tongs round his throat. »

« Oh! But He says that one must forgive! Has meditation improved you so much? »

« Leave me alone, you disturber! Why are you tempting and disturbing me? What have you got in your heart? I would like to see it... »

« The mystery of the bottom of the Dead Sea is not revealed to those prying into its waters. Those waters are like a sepulchral stone covering the rottenness they have received » says behind them Bartholomew, who is at the rear. The others are all ahead and have not heard, but Bartholomew did. And he intervenes in their conversation and his glance is an admonition.

« Oh! the wise Bartholomew! But you are not going to say that I am like the Dead Sea! »

« I was speaking to John, not to you. Come with me, son of Zebedee, I shall not upset you » and he takes John by the arm, as if he, an elderly man, were seeking the support of his young agile companion.

Judas is left last and makes an ugly gesture of wrath behind their backs. He seems to be swearing something to himself, or to be threatening...

« What did Judas mean? And what did you mean? » John asks elderly Nathanael.

« Forget about it, my dear friend. Instead let us think of what the Master explained to us during the past days. How well we understood Israel! »

« True. I don't understand why the world does not realise it! »

« We do not understand it fully either, John. We don't want to understand. See how difficult it is for us to accept His Messianic idea? »

« Yes, we believe Him blindly in everything, except that. As you are a learned man, can you tell me why? Since we find the rabbis to be dull-minded as compared with the Christ, why do we also fail to attain the perfect idea of a spiritual regality of the Messiah? »

« I have wondered many a time myself. Because I would like to arrive at what you call a perfect idea. And I think I can set my mind at rest by saying to myself that what opposes such acceptance in us, who are willing to follow Him not only materially and doctrinally, but also spiritually, are all the ages before us... and within us. Within us. See? Look eastwards, southwards, westwards. Every stone has a recollection and a name. Every stone, every fountain, every path, every village or castle, every town, every river, every mountain... what do they remind us of, and what do they shout to us? The promise of a Saviour. The mercy of God on His people. Like a drop of oil from a leaking goatskin, the little initial group, the nucleus of the future people of Israel spread with Abraham over the world, as far as remote Egypt, and then, more and more numerous, came back with Moses to the land of father Abraham, rich in greater and more certain promises and in the signs of God's paternity, established as a true People because it was provided with a Law, which is the holiest in existence. But what happened later? What happened to that summit which a little while ago was shining in the sun. Look at it now. It is enveloped in clouds that change its appearance. If we did not know that it is there and we were to identify it to direct our steps towards a safe road, would we be able to do so, disfigured as it is by thick clouds that look like rounded hills and mountain ridges? That is what happened to us. The Messiah is what God told our fathers, the patriarchs and the prophets. Immutable. But what we have added of our own, to... explain Him, according to our poor human wisdom, has created such a Messiah, such a false moral figure of the Messiah, that we can no longer recognise the true Messiah. And with the ages and generations behind us, we believe in the Messiah we have conceived, in the Avenger, in the very human King, and we are not able to conceive the Messiah and King as He really is, as thought of and wanted by God, although we say that we do believe in Him. That's the situation, my dear friend! »

« But shall we, at least we, never succeed in seeing, believing,

wanting the real Messiah? »

« Yes, we shall succeed. If we were not to succeed, He would not have chosen us. And if Mankind were not to benefit by the Messiah, the Most High would not have sent Him. »

« But He will redeem the Sin also without the help of Mankind! Through His own merit only. »

« My dear friend, the redemption from the original Sin would be a great one, but would not be complete. We have other sins in addition to the original one. And to be cleansed, they need the Redeemer and the faith of those who apply to Him as their Salvation. I think that Redemption will be active until the end of the world. The Christ will not be inactive for a moment, when He becomes the Redeemer and gives Mankind the Life that is in Him, just as a fountain unceasingly gives its water to those who are thirsty, one day after the other, one month after the other, one year after the other, one century after the other. Mankind will always be in need of Life. He cannot cease giving it to those who hope and believe in Him with wisdom and justice. »

« You are a learned man, Nathanael. I am a poor ignorant fellow. »

« You do by spiritual instinct what I do with difficulty by means of mental reflection: our transformation from Israelites into Christians. But you will reach your goal sooner because you can love more than you can reflect. Love carries you off and transforms you. »

« You are kind, Nathanael. If we were all like you! » says John with a deep sigh.

« Forget about it, John! Let us pray for Judas » says the elderly apostle, who has understood John's sighing...

« Oh! you are here as well! We were looking at you coming. What were you talking about so earnestly? » asks Thomas smiling.

« We were speaking of ancient Israel. Where is the Master? »

« He has gone ahead with His brothers and Isaac to see a sick shepherd. He told us to proceed along this road until we come to the one climbing up to the mountain. »

« Let us go, then. »

They are going down now on a path which is not so steep until they arrive at a real mule-track which goes up mount Nebo. There is a small group of houses in the wood. Farther down, almost in the valley, there are the white houses of a true and proper town on the slopes which are now almost flat. From the road where they are they can see people entering the town.

« Shall we wait for the man from Petra over there? » asks Peter.

« Yes, that is the town. Let us hope he has come. If so, tomorrow we will go back towards the Jordan. I don't know. I don't feel at all happy here » says Matthew.

« The Master had told us to go much farther on » says the Iscariot.

« Yes, but I hope He will convince Himself of the opposite. »

« But what are you afraid of? Of Herod? Of his bravoos? »

« Bravoos are not only at Herod's service. Oh! Here is the Master! The shepherds are numerous and happy. These have been conquered. They are nomads. They will go and spread the good news that the Messiah is on the Earth » says Matthew again.

Jesus joins them with a train of shepherds and herds.

« Let us go. We shall be just in time to arrive at the village. These men will give us hospitality, they are known. » Jesus is happy to be among simple people who are capable of believing in the Lord.

#### **499. Parable of the Father Who Praises His Far-away Children. Cure of the Little Blind Children Fara and Tamar.**

24th September 1946.

It is a beautiful autumn morning. Apart from the yellow-red leaves covering the ground and reminding one of the season, the grass is so green with some little flowers springing from the tufts revived by the autumn rains, the air moving among the branches partly already bare is so serene, that one is inclined to think it is the beginning of springtime, all the more so as perennials mixed with annuals bring a cheerful note with their little fresh emerald green leaves sprouting at the ends of little branches, near the bare branches of other plants, which thus seem to be putting forth fresh leaves. Sheep come out of folds and they go with the lambs born in autumn towards the grazing grounds bleating. The water of a fountain at the beginning of the village is shining like liquid diamonds in the sun kissing it, and when falling into the dark basin seems to emit multicoloured gleams against the walls blackened by age of a little house.

Jesus sits on a little wall bounding the road on one side, and waits. His apostles and the villagers are around him, while the shepherds, who do not wish to spread out too far, confined as they are by their flock, instead of climbing higher up, remain on both sides of the road towards the plain.

No one is coming at present on the road which from the valley climbs to mount Nebo.

« Will he be coming? » ask the apostles.

« Yes, he will. And we shall wait for him. I do not want to disappoint a dawning hope and destroy a future faith » replies Jesus.

« Are you not happy here? We have given you the best we had » says an old man who is warming himself in the sun.

« Happier than elsewhere, father. And your kindness will be rewarded by God » replies Jesus.

« Then speak to us a little more. Zealous Pharisees and proud

scribes come here at times. But they do not speak to us. It is fair. They are high up, separated from... everything, and sage. We... So are we to know nothing because our fate made us come into the world here? »

« In the House of My Father there are no separations or differences for those who believe in Him and practise His Law, which is the code of His will, that man may live righteously to obtain the eternal reward in His Kingdom.

Listen. A father had many children. Some had always lived close to Him, some, for various reasons, had been comparatively farther away from their father. However, as they were aware of their father's wishes, although they were far away, they were able to act as if he were present. Some more strove to serve their father with regard to the little which, more out of instinct than out of knowledge they knew pleased him, because they were farther away and from the first day of their birth had been brought up by servants who spoke different languages and had different customs. One day the father, who was aware that despite his instructions the servants had refrained from making his thoughts known to these remote children, because in their pride they considered them inferior and no longer loved, only because they did not live with their father, decided to gather all his offspring together. And he summoned them. Well, do you think that he judged them on the lines of human rights, granting the possession of his property only to those who had always been in his house, or who had not been so far as to be prevented from becoming acquainted with his orders and wishes? On the contrary, following a completely different line and taking into consideration the deeds of those who had been just for the sake of their father, whom they knew only by name, and had honoured him with all their actions, he called them near himself saying: "Your being just is doubly meritorious, because you were so only through your own will, without any help. Come and stand around me. You are quite entitled to it! The others have had me all the time and all their actions were guided by my advice and rewarded with my smiles. You had to act out of faith and love. Come, because your places are ready in my house and I do not make any difference between having always been in the house and having been away from it; but the difference is in the deeds accomplished by my children, near me or far from me".

That is the parable. And this is its explanation: the scribes or the Pharisees, living around the Temple, may not be in the House of the Lord on the eternal Day, and many, who are so far as to have only a scanty knowledge of the things of God, may be then in His Bosom. Because what gives the Kingdom is the will of man inclined to obey God, and not a mass of practices and science.

Do, therefore, what I explained to you yesterday. Do it without

excessive fear that paralyses, do it without calculating to avoid punishment. Do it therefore only for love of God Who created you to love you and to be loved by you. And you will have a place in the Father's House. »

« Oh! continue speaking to us! »

« What shall I say to you? »

« Yesterday You said that there are sacrifices more pleasing to God than those of lambs and rams, and also that there are leprosy more disgraceful than those of the body. What You said is not very clear to me » says a shepherd, who concludes: « Before a lamb is a year old and it is the most beautiful in the flock, without any stain or fault, do You realise how many sacrifices one must make and how many times one has to overcome the temptation of using it as the ram of the herd or selling it as such? Now if for a year one resists every temptation, one takes care of it and becomes fond of it, the gem of the herd, do You know how great is the sacrifice of immolating it without any profit and with deep sorrow? Is there a greater sacrifice to be offered to the Lord? »

« Man, I solemnly tell you that the sacrifice does not consist in the animal immolated, but in the effort made by you in keeping it to immolate it. I solemnly tell you that the day is about to come when, as the inspired word says, God will say: "I do not need the sacrifice of lambs and rams" and He will exact one only sacrifice and a perfect one. And from that moment every sacrifice will be spiritual. But ages ago it was said which sacrifice is preferred by the Lord. David exclaims weeping: "If You had wanted a sacrifice, I would have given it to You, but holocausts give You no pleasure. The sacrifice for God is a contrite spirit (and I add: obedient and loving, because one can offer a sacrifice of praises and joy and love, not only of expiation). The sacrifice for God is a contrite spirit; You, o God, will not scorn a contrite and humiliated heart". No, neither does your Father scorn a heart that has sinned and repented. So, how will He receive the sacrifice of a pure just heart that loves Him? That is the most agreeable sacrifice. The daily sacrifice of human will to the divine will as shown to you in the Law, in inspirations and in daily events. And likewise, the leprosy of the flesh is not the most disgraceful disease that excludes people from the presence of men and from places of prayer. But it is the leprosy of sin. It is true that it often passes unnoticed by men. But do you live for men or for the Lord? Does everything come to an end here or does it continue in the next life. You know. So be holy, that you may not be lepers in the eyes of God, Who sees the hearts of men and remain pure in spirit that you may live for ever. »

« And if one is a hardened sinner? »

« Let him not imitate Cain. Let him not imitate Adam and Eve. But let him run to the feet of God and ask for mercy with true repentance.

A sick or wounded man goes to a doctor to be cured. Let a sinner go to God to have forgiveness. I... »

« Are You here, Master? » shouts one who is coming up the road, all enveloped in a mantle among many other people.

Jesus turns round and looks at him.

« Don't You recognise me? I am rabbi Sadoc. We meet now and again. »

« The world is always small when God wants people to meet. We shall meet again, rabbi. In the meantime, peace be with you. »

The other does not reciprocate the salutation of peace, but he asks: « What are You doing here? »

« I have done what you are about to do. Is this mountain not a holy one for you? »

« You have said it. And I come with my disciples. But I am a scribe! »

« And I am a son of the Law. So I venerate Moses as you do. »

« That is a lie. You make void his word with Yours and You exact obedience to Yours, no longer to ours. »

« To yours, no. It is yours. But it is not necessary... »

« It is not necessary? How dreadful! »

« No, not any more than the many flowing zizith adorning your garment are necessary to protect you from the autumn air. It is the garment that protects you. So, of the many words that are taught I accept the holy and necessary ones, the Mosaic ones, and I neglect the others. »

« Samaritan You do not believe the prophets! »

« You do not respect the prophets either. If you did, you would not call Me Samaritan. »

« Leave Him alone, Sadoc. Do you want to speak to a demon? » says another pilgrim who has just arrived with other people. And looking round with hard eyes at the group surrounding Jesus, he sees Judas of Kerioth and greets him scoffingly.

An incident might take place, because the local people want to defend Jesus, but the man from Petra, followed by a servant, elbows his way through the crowd. Both he and the servant are holding a child each in their arms. « Let me pass. Lord, have I kept You waiting too long? »

« No, man. Come to Me. »

The people open out to let him pass. He comes to Jesus and kneels down laying on the ground a little girl whose head is enveloped in linen bandages. The servant imitates him laying down a boy with unseeing eyes.

« My children, Master Lord! » he says, and all the hope and grief of a father quiver in the short sentence.

« You have had much faith, man. Supposing I had disappointed you? Or you had not found Me? Or I said to you that I cannot cure

them? »

« I would not believe You. Neither would I believe the evidence of not seeing You. I would say that You had hidden Yourself to test my faith and I would look for You until I found You. »

« And what about the caravan and your profit? »

« Such things? What are they with respect to You Who can cure my children and give me firm faith in You? »

« Uncover the girl's face » orders Jesus.

« I keep it covered because the light hurts her very much. »

« It will only be a moment of pain » says Jesus.

But the little girl begins to weep desperately and does not want to be unbandaged.

« She is behaving like that because she thinks that You will torture her with fire as the doctors did » explains the father while struggling to remove the child's hands from the bandages.

« Oh! don't be afraid, little girl. What is your name? »

The girl is weeping and does not reply. Her father replies in her stead: « Tamar, from the place where she was born. And the boy Fara. »

« Don't weep, Tamar. I will not hurt you. Feel My hands. I am not holding anything. Come to My lap. In the meantime I will cure your brother and he will tell you what he felt. Come here, child. »

The servant pushes towards Jesus' knees the poor little blind fellow whose eyes have been ruined by trachoma. Jesus caresses his head and asks him: « Do you know who I am? »

« Jesus the Nazarene, the Rabbi of Israel, the Son of God. »

« Will you believe in Me? »

« Yes, I will. »

Jesus lays His hand on the boy's eyes covering more than half of his face. He says: « I want it! And may the light of his eyes open the way to the light of Faith. » And He removes His hand.

The boy utters a cry taking his hands to his eyes, and then says: « Father! I can see! » But he does not run to his father. In his boyish spontaneity he clings to Jesus' neck and kisses His cheeks and remains thus, embracing His neck, with his little head sheltered on Jesus' shoulder, to get his eyes accustomed again to sunshine.

The crowds shout at the miracle while the father would like to remove the boy from Jesus' neck.

« Leave him. He is not disturbing Me. Only, Fara, tell your sister what I have done to you. »

« A caress, Tamar. It felt like mummy's hand. Oh! be cured as well and we shall play again! »

The girl, still somewhat reluctant, has herself placed on the knees of Jesus, Who would like to cure her without even touching her bandages. But the scribes and their companions shout: « It's a trick. The girl can see. It's a plot to take advantage of your confidence

in Him, o inhabitants of this place. »

« My daughter is sick. I... »

« Never mind! Now, Tamar, be good and let Me remove your bandages. »

The girl, who is now convinced, agrees. What a sight when the last linen bandage is removed! Two red, scabby, swollen sores are in the place of her eyes, and tears and pus run down from them. The crowds yell with terror and pity while the little girl takes her hands to her face to protect herself from the light which must make her suffer terribly; two red recent bumps appear on her temples.

Jesus removes her little hands and with a light touch He lays His hand on such ruin saying: « Father, Who created light for the joy of the living, and gave eyes even to midges, grant light to this creature of Yours that she may see You and believe in You and from the light of the Earth, she may enter, through Faith, the light of Your Kingdom. » He removes His hand...

« Oh! » they all shout.

There are no more sores. But the girl still keeps her eyes closed.

« Open them, Tamar. Be not afraid. The light will not hurt you. »

The girl obeys rather timorously and opens her eyelids showing two lively dark eyes.

« Father! I can see you! » and she also relaxes on Jesus' shoulder to become slowly accustomed to the light.

The crowds are rejoicing while the man from Petra throws himself at Jesus' feet weeping for joy.

« Your faith has received its reward. From now on may your gratitude lead your faith in the Man to the highest sphere: to the faith in the true God. Stand up and let us go. »

And Jesus puts down the girl who smiles happily and He becomes detached from the boy when He stands up. He caresses them once again and He would like to squeeze through the crowd thronging to see the cured eyes.

« You also ought to ask to have your veiled eyes cured » says a disciple to an old man led by the hand as his eyes are so dimmed.

« Me?! Me?! I don't want light from a demon. On the contrary! I shout to You, eternal God! Listen to me. To me! Complete darkness to me! That I may not see the face of the demon, of that demon, of that impious usurper, blasphemer, deicide! May shadows fall upon my eyes for ever. Darkness, darkness, that I may never see Him! » It is he who seems to be a demon! In his paroxysm he strikes his eye-sockets as if he wanted his eyes to burst.

« Be not afraid. You will not see Me. Darkness does not want the Light and the Light does not impose itself on those who reject it. I am going, old man. You will not see Me again on the Earth. But you will see Me just the same, elsewhere. »

And Jesus is so depressed that the gait typical of very tall people - slightly inclined forward - is more outstanding as He sets out downhill. He is so dejected that He already seems the Condemned man descending the Moriah under the load of the Cross... And the shouts of His enemies, incited by the old madman, are very much like the shouts of the crowds in Jerusalem on Good Friday.

The man from Petra, mortified, with the little girl weeping out of fear in his arms, whispers: « Because of me, Lord! Because of me! You have done so much good to me! But I... to You! I have something for You in the tent on the camel. But what is it compared to the insults which I have brought about? I am ashamed that I came near You... »

« No, man. That is My bitter daily bread. And you the honey sweetening it. The bread is always more than the honey. But a drop of honey is sufficient to make much bread sweet. »

« You are good... But at least tell me: what shall I do to dress those wounds? »

« Keep faith in Me, for the time being as best you can. Before long... Yes, My disciples will come as far as Petra and farther. Then follow their doctrine because I shall speak through them. And for the time being speak to those of Petra of what I did for you, so that when those surrounding Me and others will come in My Name, this Name of Mine is not unknown to them. »

At the end of the descent, on the Roman road, there are three camels. One with just the saddle, the others with baldachins. A servant is watching them.

The man goes to the tent and takes some parcels from it: « Here » he says offering them to Jesus. « They will be useful to You. Do not thank me. It is I who have to bless You for what You have given to me. If You can do it for uncircumcised people, bless me and my children, Lord! » and he kneels down with the children. The servants imitate him.

Jesus stretches out His hands praying in a low voice looking fixedly at the sky.

« Go. Be just and you will find God on your way and you will follow Him without ever losing Him. Goodbye, Tamar! Goodbye, Fara! » He caresses them before each of them climbs on a camel with the servants.

The animals stand up at the cries of the camel-drivers and they turn trotting southwards. Two little brown hands stretch out from the tents and two shrill voices say: « Goodbye, Lord Jesus! Goodbye, father! »

The man is about to mount, too. He bends to the ground and kisses Jesus' garment, he then mounts and departs northwards.

« And now let us go » says Jesus setting out northwards as well.

« What? Are You no longer going where You wanted to go? » they

ask Him.

« No. We cannot go any longer! The voices of the world were right! Because the world is shrewd and is aware of the works of the demon We shall go to Jericho »

How sad is Jesus! They all follow Him, laden with the parcels given by the man, dejected and speechless

### **500. Divine and Diabolical Possessions.**

25th September 1946.

The Bethabara ford has just been crossed. Across the blue river which is quite rich in water as it is nourished by the affluents replenished by the autumn rains, one can see the other bank, the eastern one, with many people gesticulating. On the western bank, instead, where Jesus is with His apostles, there is only one shepherd and a herd grazing the green grass on the bank.

Peter throws himself on the remains of a little wall which is there, without even drying his legs, still wet after wading. Because it is true that in this season they use boats, but to avoid running them aground where the water is shallow, they make use of them only where the water is deeper and stop to disembark the passengers where the keel rubs against submerged herbs. Thus passengers are compelled to walk for a few steps in the water.

« What is the matter with you? Are you not feeling well? »

« No. But I cannot stand this any more. On mount Nebo violence, and before that at Heshbon, and previously at Jerusalem and at Capernaum, after mount Nebo at Callirhoe, and now at Bethabara... Oh! ... » he bends his head holding it with his hands and weeps...

« Don't lose heart, Simon. Don't deprive Me of your companion's courage and of yours! » Jesus says to him approaching him and laying His hand on the apostle's heavy grey mantle.

« I cannot stand that! I cannot see You ill-treated thus! If I reacted... perhaps I could. But... having to restrain myself... and hear their insults, and see You suffering, as if I were a powerless baby... oh! it breaks my heart and I feel worn out... How can one bear to see Him thus!? He seems to be ill, to be dying of marshfever... He looks like a chased culprit who cannot find a place where to stop and have a morsel of food or a drop of water, or find a stone on which to rest his head! That hyena on mount Nebo! Those snakes at Callirhoe! That madman who is still over there! (and he points at the other bank). Less of a demon the one from Callirhoe, although You say that only the second one was possessed by Beelzebub! I am afraid of possessed people, I think that if Satan seized them thus, they must have been very bad. But... man may fall without being completely willing to do so. Those instead

who without being possessed behave as they do, with their reason completely free!... Oh! will You never subdue them, considering that You do not want to punish them? And they... will defeat You... » And the faithful apostle, whose tears had stopped during his outburst of anger, resumes weeping bitterly...

« My dear Peter, and do you think that they are not possessed? Do you think that to be possessed one must be like the man from Callirhoe or like other people we have come across? Do you think that obsession is displayed only by unbecoming shouts, by bounds, by fury, by mania for living in dens, by stubborn silence, by impediments in limbs, by benumbed minds, so that the person possessed speaks and acts unconsciously? No. There are also more subtle and powerful obsessions, nay possessions, and they are the most dangerous ones because they do not hinder or weaken reason, so that it may not accomplish good deeds, but they develop it, nay: they expand it so that it may be powerful in serving him who possesses it. When God takes possession of an intellect and makes use of it for His service, He instils into it, in the hours in which it is at God's service, a supernatural intelligence which greatly increases the natural intelligence of the subject. Do you think, for instance, that Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the other prophets, if they had had to read and explain those prophecies, as written by others, would not have found the indecipherable obscurities that present-day people find? And yet, I tell you, they understood them perfectly while receiving them. Look, Simon. Let us take this flower which has grown here at your feet. What can you see in the shade enveloping its calyx? Nothing. You can see a deep calyx and a little mouth and nothing else. Now look at it while I pick it and I put it here in the rays of sunlight. What do you see? »

« I see some pistils, some pollen, and a little crown of down which looks like cilia around the pistils and a tiny strip, all beetle-browed, adorning the large petal and the two small ones and I see a tiny drop of dew at the bottom of the calyx... and oh! A midge has gone down into it, to drink, and has become entangled in the beetle-browed down and cannot free itself So! Let me have a better look. Oh! The down is sticky like honey I see! God made it thus, so that the plant may feed on it, or birds may be nourished eating the flies, or the air may be purified... How wonderful! »

« But without the strong sunshine you would not have seen anything. »

« Eh! no! »

« The same happens in the case of a divine possession. Man, who of his own puts only the good will to love his God wholly, to give himself up to His will, to practise virtues and control passions, T's absorbed in God, and in the Light that is God, in the Wisdom that is God he sees and understands everything. Later, when the absolute

action comes to an end, a state takes over in the creature, whereby what has been received is transformed into a rule of life and sanctification, but becomes obscure, or rather, what previously seemed clear becomes crepuscular. The demon, a perpetual mimic of God, causes a similar effect, although limited because God only is infinite, in the mental obsession of those who are possessed because they gave themselves spontaneously to him in order to be triumphant, and he grants them a superior intelligence, devoted exclusively to evil, to harming, to offending God and man. But as the satanic action finds the soul consenting, it is continuous and thus leads it by degrees to a complete knowledge of Evil. They are the worst possessions. Nothing appears outwardly and consequently such possessed people are not avoided. But they exist. As I have often told you, the Son of man will be struck by people possessed that way. »

« But could God not strike Hell? » asks Philip.

« He could. He is the stronger. »

« And why does He not do so to defend You? »

« The reasons of God are known in Heaven. Let us go. And do not lose heart. »

The shepherd, who has been listening without pretending to do so, asks: « Have You a place where to go? Are You expected? »

« No, man. I should go beyond Jericho. But no one is expecting Me. »

« Are You very tired, Rabbi? »

« Yes, I am tired. They would not give us hospitality or allow us to stop as from mount Nebo. »

« Well... I wanted to tell You... I come from near Beth-hoglah, the ancient... My father is blind and I cannot go too far as I do not want to leave him by himself for months. But my heart suffers because of that and so does the herd. If You want... I would give You hospitality. It is not far. The old man believes so much in You. Joseph, Joseph's son, Your disciple, knows. »

« Let us go. »

The man does not wait to be told twice. He gathers the herd and sets it going towards the village, which must be north-west of the place where they are now. Jesus follows the herd with His disciples.

« Master » says the Iscariot after some time « Beth-hoglah will not have anyone who can afford to buy the gifts of that man... »

« We shall sell them when we go to Jericho to see Nike. »

« The fact is... that this man is poor and we will have to requite him, but I have not a penny left. »

« We have food, and plenty of it. Also for some beggars. We need nothing else for the time being. »

« As You wish. But it would have been better if You had sent me

ahead. I could have... »

« It is not necessary. »

« Master, that is lack of trust! Why don't You send us as You did previously, by twos? »

« Because I love you and I take care of your welfare. »

« It is not right to keep us unknown like this. People will think that... we are not worthy, not able... Once You used to let us go, we preached, we worked miracles, we were known... »

« Do you regret that you no longer do so? Did it do you any good to go without Me? You are the only one to complain that you do not go by yourself... Judas!... »

« Master, You know whether I love You! » says Judas resolutely.

« I know. And I keep you with Me that your spirit may not become corrupted. You are the only one who gathers and hands out, sells or barter on behalf of the poor. That is enough. Even too much. Look at your companions, not one of them asks for what you ask. »

« But You allowed the disciples... Such difference is unfair. »

« Judas, you are the only one to say that I am unjust... But I forgive you. Go on and send Andrew to Me. »

And Jesus slackens His pace to wait for Andrew and speak to him privately. I do not know what He says to him. I see Andrew smile gently and bend to kiss the hands of the Master and then go on.

Jesus remains alone, behind them all... and He proceeds with bowed head, wiping His face with the hem of His mantle as if He were perspiring. But the drops streaming down His emaciated pale cheeks are tears, not beads of perspiration.

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Jesus says: « You will put here the vision of 3rd October 1944: "The Wife of the Sadducean Necromancer". »

### **501. The Wife of the Sadducean Necromancer.**

3rd October 1944.

Jesus is still travelling tirelessly around Palestine. The river is still on His right hand side and He is proceeding in the same direction as the beautiful blue water, which shines where it is kissed by the sun, and is green-blue near the banks, where the shade of the trees is reflected with its deep green hues.

Jesus is in the middle of His disciples. I hear Bartholomew ask Him: « Are we really going to Jericho? Are You not afraid of an ambush? »

« No, I am not. I arrived in Jerusalem for Passover along a different road and they are disappointed, as they do not know where to get hold of Me without attracting the attention of the crowds too

much. Believe Me, Bartholomew, there is less danger for Me in a thickly populated town than along remote paths. The crowds are good and sincere. But they are also impulsive. And they would rebel if I were captured when I am among them to evangelize and cure people. Snakes work in solitude and darkness. And then... I still have many days to work... The... the hour of the Demon will come and you will lose Me. But you will find Me later. Believe that. And remember to believe it, when events will really seem to be giving Me the lie. »

The apostles sigh worriedly and look at Him lovingly and pitifully and John utters a groan: « No! » while Peter embraces Him with his short strong arms as if to defend Him, saying: « O my Lord and Master! » He does not say anything else, but those few words are so meaningful.

« It is so, My dear friends. That is why I came. Be strong. You can see how I proceed unhesitatingly towards My goal, like one who goes towards the sun smiling at it and being kissed by it. My Sacrifice will be a sun for the world. The light of Grace will descend into hearts, the peace with God will make them productive, the merits of My martyrdom will make men capable of earning Heaven. And what do I want but that? To put your hands into the hands of the Eternal, your Father and Mine and say: "Here: I have brought these children back to You. Look, Father, they are pure. They can come back to You". And see you clasped in His bosom and say: "Love one another at last, because the One and the others are anxious for that and you suffered bitterly for not having been able to love one another". That is My joy. And every day that brings Me closer to the fulfilment of that return, of that forgiveness, of that union, increases My anxiety to consummate the holocaust to give you God and His Kingdom. »

Jesus is solemn, almost ecstatic while saying so. He is walking upright in His blue tunic and darker mantle, bareheaded in this cool hour of the morning, and He seems to be smiling at I wonder which vision, which His eyes can see against the clear blue sky. The sun that kisses His left cheek makes His eyes shine even more brightly and causes His golden hair to sparkle as it is moved by a light breeze and by His step. It stresses the red of His lips open to a smile and seem to inflame all His face with a joy, which actually comes from the inside of His adorable Heart, burning with love for us.

« Master, may I say a word to You? » asks Thomas.

« Which? »

« The other day You said that the Redeemer, You, will have a traitor. How can a man betray You, the Son of God? »

« A man, in fact, would not be able to betray the Son of God, God like His Father. But it will not be a man. It will be a demon in the

body of a man. The most possessed, the most obsessed man. Mary of Magdala had seven demons and the demoniac of a few days ago was dominated by Beelzebub. But in My traitor there will be Beelzebub and all his demoniac court... Oh! Hell will really be in that heart to give him the boldness to sell the Son of God to His enemies, just as a lamb is sold to the butcher! »

« Master, is that man already possessed by Satan now? »

« No, Judas. But he is leaning towards Satan and to lean towards Satan means putting oneself in the condition of falling into him » (Jesus is speaking to the Iscariot).

« And why does he not come to You to be cured of his inclination? Does he know he has such inclination or does he not know? »

« If he did not know he would not be guilty, whereas he is, because he knows that he tends to evil and that he does not persist in his decision to emerge from it. If he persisted, he would come to Me... but he does not come... Poison penetrates and My closeness does not cleanse him because he does not want it, he avoids it... Your error, o men. You fly from Me when you need Me most » (Jesus has replied to Andrew).

« But has he ever come to You? Do You know him? And do we know him? »

« Matthew, I know men even before they know Me. And you know that and your companions know. I called you because I knew you. »

« But do we know him? » asks Matthew insisting.

« And is it possible for you not to know those who come to your Master? You are My friends and share food, rest and fatigue with Me. I have even opened My house to you, the house of My holy Mother. I take you there so that the air one breathes in it may make you capable of understanding Heaven with its voices and orders. I take you to it as a doctor takes his patients, as soon as they recover from a series of diseases, to healthy springs which may fortify them overcoming the remains of the diseases which may become harmful again. So you know everyone coming to Me. »

« In which town did You meet him? »

« Peter, Peter! »

« It's true, Master, I am worse than a gossipy woman. Forgive me. But it is love, You know... »

« Yes, I know, and that is why I tell you that your fault does not disgust Me. But get rid of it. »

« Yes, my Lord. »

The path narrows, limited by a row of trees and a small ditch, and the group stretches out lengthwise. Jesus is speaking to the Iscariot, to whom He gives instructions for expenses and alms. All the others are behind, in twos. In the rear, there is Peter, all alone. He is thoughtful. He is walking with his head bowed, so engrossed

in thought that he does not realise that he has been outdistanced by the others.

« Eh, you! man » a man on horseback shouts to him. « Are you with the Nazarene? »

« Yes, why? »

« Are you going to Jericho? »

« Are you anxious to know? I don't know. I follow the Master and I don't ask questions. Wherever He goes, all is well done. The road is the Jericho one, but we might go back to the Decapolis. Who knows? If you want more information, the Master is over there. »

The man spurs his horse and Peter makes a strange grimace behind his back and mumbles: « I don't trust you, my handsome man. You are a lot of dogs, all of you. I don't want to be the traitor. I swear to myself: "This mouth of mine shall be sealed". There you are » and he makes a sign on his lips as if he were locking them.

The man on horseback has joined Jesus. He is speaking to Him and that gives Peter the opportunity to join the others.

When the man departs, he waves his hand to the Iscariot. Nobody notices it, except Peter, who is at the rear of the group. And he does not appear to be approving of the greeting. He takes Judas by the sleeve and asks him: « Who is he? Do you know him? How come? »

« By sight. He is a rich man of Jerusalem. »

« You have friends in the upper classes! Well... providing it is all right. Tell me: is he the fox-faced man who tells you so many things?... »

« Which things? »

« Well! the ones you say you know about the Master! »

« Me? »

« Yes, You. Don't you remember that stormy evening? At the time of the spate? »

« Ah! No!... But are you still thinking of words spoken in a moment of ill humour? »

« I think of everything that may hurt Jesus: things, people, friends, enemies... And I am always ready to keep the promises I make to whoever wants to harm Jesus. Goodbye. »

Judas looks at him in a strange way, while he goes away. There is amazement, sorrow, anger and I would say something else: hatred.

Peter joins Jesus and calls Him.

« Oh! Peter! Come! » Jesus lays His arm on Peter's shoulder.

« Who was that hispid Judaeen? »

« Hispid, Peter? He was smooth and scented! »

« He had a hispid conscience. Don't trust him, Jesus. »

« I told you that My time has not yet come. And when it comes no mistrust will save Me... if I wanted to be saved. Stones also would

shout and would form a chain, if I wanted to save Myself. »

« It may be... But don't trust... Master? »

« Peter? What is the matter? »

« Master... I have something to tell You and a burden in my heart. »

« A thing? A burden? »

« Yes. The burden is a sin. The thing an advice. »

« Start from the sin. »

« Master... I... I hate... I am disgusted, yes, if I do not hate because You do not want us to hate, I am disgusted at one of us. I seem to be near a den from which the stench of snakes in heat comes out... and I would not like any of them to come out to injure You. That man is a mass of snakes and he himself is in heat with the demon. »

« How do you infer that? »

« Well!... I don't know. I am coarse and ignorant, but I am not stupid. I am accustomed to reading winds and clouds... and now I have eyes to read also hearts. Jesus... I am afraid. »

« Do not judge, Peter. And do not suspect. Suspicion creates chimeras. And one sees what is not there. »

« May eternal God grant that there is nothing. But I am not sure. »

« Who is it, Peter? »

« Judas of Kerioth. He boasts of having important friends and even a short time ago that ugly face greeted him as one greets a well known person. He did not have such friends previously. »

« Judas is the one who receives and hands out money. He has the opportunity to approach rich people. He is clever. »

« Yes, he is clever... Master, tell me the truth, do You not suspect? »

« Peter, you are so dear to Me because of your heart. But I want you to be perfect. Who does not obey is not perfect. I said to you: do not judge and do not suspect. »

« But You are not telling me... »

« We shall soon be near Jericho and we shall stop to wait for a woman who cannot receive us in her house... »

« Why? Is she a sinner? »

« No. She is a poor wretch. The man on horseback who worried you so much came to tell Me to wait for her. And I will wait for her although I know I can do nothing for her. And do you know who put her and the horseman on My tracks? Judas. You can see that his acquaintance with that Judaeon is an honest one. »

Peter lowers his head and becomes silent and embarrassed. Perhaps he is not yet convinced and is still curious, but he is silent.

Jesus stops outside the town walls and tired as He is, He sits down in the shadow of a group of trees, which give shade to a fountain, near which there are quadrupeds watering. The disciples also sit down waiting. It cannot be an important district of the town because

apart from these horses and donkeys, obviously of travelling merchants, there are no people.

A woman comes forward, all enveloped in a large dark mantle and with her face well covered. Her thick dark veil conceals half of her face. The horseman seen previously, but now on foot, and three men, sumptuously dressed, are with her.

« We greet You, Master. »

« Peace be with you. »

« This is the woman. Listen to her and satisfy her request. »

« If I can. »

« You can do everything. »

« Do you, a Sadducee, think so? » The Sadducee is the horseman.

« I believe in what I see. »

« And have you seen that I can? »

« Yes, I have. »

« And do you know why I can? » There is silence. « May I know why you think that I can? » There is silence.

Jesus no longer minds him or the others. He speaks to the woman: « What do you want? »

« Master... Master... »

« Speak, without fear. »

The woman looks askance at her companions who interpret her glance their way.

« The woman's husband is ill and she asks you to cure him. He is an influential person, at Herod's court. You had better satisfy her. »

« I will satisfy her if I can, not because he is influential, but because she is unhappy. I have already said so. What is the matter with your husband? Why did he not come? And why do you not want Me to go to him? »

Further silence and further look askance.

« Do you wish to speak to me without witnesses? Come. » They move a few steps aside. « Speak. »

« Master... I believe in You. I believe so much that I am sure that You know everything about him, me and our wretched lives... But he does not believe... But he hates You... But he... »

« But he cannot be cured because he has no faith. Not only he has no faith in Me, but not even in the true God. »

« Ah! You are aware! » The woman is weeping desperately. « My house is a hell! A hell! You free possessed people. So You know what the demon is. But do You know this subtle, intelligent, false and learned demon? Do you know to what perversion he leads one? To what sins? Do You know the ruin he causes around himself? My house? Is it a house? No. It is the threshold of hell. My husband? Is he my husband? He is now ill and does not bother about me. But also when he was strong and eager for love, was it a man that embraced

me, held me and had me? No! I was in the coils of a demon, I smelt the breath and felt the viscid body of a demon. I loved him so much and I love him. I am his wife and he took my virginity when I was little more than a girl: I was only fourteen years old. But also when I remembered that first hour and with it I recollected the unsullied sensations of the first embrace that made me a woman, I, at first with the nobler part of myself then with my flesh and blood, I reacted with horror remembering that he is a filthy necromancer. I had the impression that not my man but the dead people he evoked were on me to satisfy themselves... And even now, when I look at him, dying and still immersed in that magic, I am horrified. I do not see him... I see Satan. Oh! How grievous it is! Not even in death I shall be with him, because the Law forbids it. Save him, Master. I ask You to cure him to give him time to recover. » The woman is weeping distressingly.

« Poor woman! I cannot cure him. »

« Why, Lord? »

« Because he does not want it. »

« Yes. He is afraid of death. Of course he wants. »

« He does not want. He is not insane, he is not a man possessed unaware of his state, who does not ask to be freed because he cannot think freely. He is not a man with inhibited will. He is one who wants to be what he is. He knows that what he does is forbidden. He is aware that he is cursed by the God of Israel. But he persists. Even if I cured him, and I would begin from his soul, he would revert to his satanic enjoyment. His will is corrupted. He is a rebel. I cannot. »

The woman weeps more loudly. The men who brought her, come near. « Are You not satisfying her, Master? »

« I cannot. »

« Didn't I tell you? Why? »

« You, a Sadducee, are asking Me why? I refer you to the book of Kings. Read what Samuel said to Saul and what Elijah said to Ahaziah. The spirit of the prophet reproaches the king for disturbing him by evoking him from the reign of the dead. It is forbidden to do it. Read Leviticus, if you no longer remember the word of God, Creator and Lord of everything that exists, the Guardian of life and of the dead. The dead and the living are in the hands of God and you are not allowed to snatch them from them, through vain curiosity, or sacrilegious violence, or cursed incredulity. What do you want to know? Whether there is an eternal future? And you say that you believe in God. If God exists, He will certainly have a court. And what court will it be, but an eternal one like Himself, consisting of eternal spirits? If you say that you believe in God, why do you not believe in His word? Does His word not say: "You shall not practise divination, you shall not observe

dreams"? Does it not say: "If a man has recourse to magicians and diviners and will fornicate with them, I shall set My face against that man and outlaw him from his people"? Does it not say: "Do not cast gods of metal"? And what are you? Samaritans and lost people or are you children of Israel? And what are you: fools or men capable of reasoning? And if by reasoning you deny the immortality of souls, why do you evoke the dead? If the incorporeal parts that animate man are not immortal, what remains of man after death? Rottenness and bones, dry bones emerging from a wriggling mass of worms. And if you do not believe in God, and you have recourse to idols and signs to be cured and obtain money, responses, as this man did, whose health you are asking to be restored, why do you cast gods and believe that they can tell you words, which are more truthful, holier and more divine than the words God speaks to you? I will now give you the same reply that Elijah gave Ahaziah: "Since you sent messengers to consult Beelzebub, the god of Ekron, as if there were no God in Israel to be consulted, the bed you have got into you will not get out of, and you are certainly going to die in your sin". »

« You are always the one who insults and attacks us. I am pointing it out to You. We come to You to... »

« To lure Me into a trap. But I read your hearts. Masks off, you Herodians sold to the enemy of Israel! Masks off, you false cruel Pharisees! Masks off, you Sadducees, true Samaritans! Masks off, you scribes whose words contrast with facts! Masks off, all of you, transgressors of the Law of God, enemies of the Truth, concubines of Evil! Down with you, desecrators of the House of God! Down with you, instigators of weak consciences! Down with you, jackals who scent the victim in the wind that has blown past it and who follow that track and lie in wait, awaiting the right moment to kill, and you lick your lips foretasting the savour of blood and dreaming of that moment!... O swindlers and fornicators who sell for less than a handful of lentils your primogeniture among peoples and are no longer blessed, because other peoples will wear the fleece of the Lamb of God, and true Christs will appear to the eyes of the Most High, Who smelling the fragrance of His Christ emanate from them, will say: "Here is the scent of My Son! Like the scent of a flowery field blessed by God. Upon you the dew of Heaven: Grace. In you the opulence of the Earth: the fruit of My Blood. In you abundance of wheat and wine: My Body and My Blood that I will give for the lives of men and in remembrance of Me. Let peoples serve you, let nations bow to you, because where is the sign of My Lamb, there is Heaven. And the Earth is subject to Heaven. Be the masters of your brothers, because the followers of My Christ will be the kings of the spirit, as they will possess the Light, to which Light the others will turn their eyes hoping in its

help. Let the children of your mother: the Earth, bow to you. Yes, all the children of the Earth will stoop one day to My Sign. Cursed be he who curses you and blessed who blesses you, because blessings and maledictions given to you, come to Me, your Father and God". That is what He will say, o fornicators who fornicate with Satan and his false doctrines, whilst you could have the true faith as the beloved spouse of your souls. That is what He will say, o murderers. Murderers of consciences and murderers of bodies. Here are some of your victims. But if two hearts have been murdered, there is a Body that will be in your possession only for the time of Jonah. Then, joined to Its immortal Essence, It will judge you. »

Jesus is terrible in this severe reproof. Terrible! I think that He will be more or less like that on Doomsday.

« And where are those murdered people? You are talking nonsense! You are a concubine of Beelzebub. You fornicate with him and work miracles in his name. You cannot work one in our case because we are friends of God. »

« Satan does not drive himself out, I expel demons. So in whose name do I do it? » Silence. « Answer My question! »

« It is not worth while bothering with this demoniac. I warned you. You did not believe me. Let Him tell you. Answer, You mad Nazarene. Do You know the sciemanflorasc? »

« I do not need it! »

« Did you hear that? Another question. Have You been to Egypt? »

« Yes, I have. »

« See? Who is the necromancer, the demon? How horrible! Come, woman. Your husband is a saint as compared to Him. Come!... You will have to be purified. You have touched Satan!... » And they go away dragging the woman who is weeping with clear gestures of aversion.

Jesus, with His folded arms, watches them with flashing eyes.

« Master... Master... » The apostles are terrorised both by Jesus' vehemence and by the Judaeans' words.

Peter asks, and he even bends down while speaking: « What did they mean with those last questions? What is that thing? »

« What? The sciemanflorasc? » (1)

« Yes. What is it? »

« Forget about it. They are mixing the Truth with Falsehood, God with Satan, and in their satanic pride they think that God, to yield to the wishes of men, has to be implored by means of His

(1) This word, which is probably spelt incorrectly, is unknown even to experts, who have been consulted on the matter. From its context it would appear to be an expression used for incantations by people practising magic.

Tetragrammaton. The Son speaks the true language with His Father and by means of it, through the reciprocal love of Father and Son, miracles are performed. »

« But why did he ask You whether You have been to Egypt? »

« Because Evil makes use of the most harmless things to make charges against those it wants to strike. My stay when a child in Egypt will be among the counts of indictment in their hour of revenge. You, and those who come after you, must know that with shrewd Satan and his faithful servants double astuteness is required. That is why I said: "Be as cunning as snakes besides being as simple as doves", so as to put only the minimum of weapons in the hands of the demons. And even so, it is of no avail. Let us go. »

« Where, Master? To Jericho? »

« No. We shall take a boat and go back to the Decapolis again. We shall go up the Jordan as far as Enon and then we shall land. On the shores of Gennesaret we shall take another boat and sail to Tiberias, and thence to Cana and Nazareth. I am in need of My Mother, and you need Her, too. What the Christ does not do with His word, Mary does with Her silence. What My power does not do, Her purity does. Oh! My Mother! »

« Are You weeping, Master? Are You weeping? Oh! no! We will defend You! We love You! »

« I am not weeping and I am not afraid because of those who hate Me. I am weeping because hearts are harder than jasper and I can do nothing for many of them. Come, My friends. »

They go down to the bank and they go up the river in a boat. It all ends thus.

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"Jesus says:

« You and he who guides you ought to meditate for a long time on My reply to Peter.

People of this world - not exclusively laymen - deny the supernatural, then, in the presence of manifestations of God, they are ready to call into question not the supernatural, but the occult. They mix up one thing with the other. Now listen: supernatural is what comes from God. Occult is what comes from an extraterrestrial source, but has no root in God.

I solemnly tell you that spirits can come to you. How? In two ways. By God's command or by man's violence. Angels and blessed souls and spirits that are already in the light of God, come by God's command. By man's violence those spirits can come over whom also a man has control, as they are immersed in regions lower than the human ones, in which there is still a remembrance of Grace, although it is not active Grace. The former come spontaneously, obeying one order only: Mine. And they bring the truth that I want you to know. The latter come through a complex of

joined powers. The power of an idolatrous man joined to the powers of Satan-idol. Can they give you the truth? No. Never. Absolutely never. Can a formula, even if taught by Satan, bend God to man's will? No. God always comes spontaneously. A prayer can join you to Him, not a magic formula.

And if someone should object saying: "Samuel appeared to Saul", I say: "Not by deed of the sorceress. But by My will in order to rouse the king, rebellious to My Law". Some people may say: "And what about the prophets?". The prophets speak through knowledge of the Truth which is infused into them directly or through angelic ministry. Others may object: "And what about the writing hand at Belshazzar's banquet?". Let those read Daniel's reply: "... you also have defied the Lord of Heaven... praising gods of silver, bronze, iron, gold, wood, stone, Which cannot either see, hear or understand, but you have not given glory to the God Who holds your breath and every movement of yours in His hands. That is why He has sent the finger (which was sent spontaneously, while you, a foolish king and a foolish man, were not thinking about it and were intent on filling your stomach and swelling with pride) the finger of that hand that wrote what is over there".

Yes. At times God admonishes you by means of manifestations that you call "mediumistic", which in fact are the compassion of a Love that wants to save you. But you must not wish to create them yourselves. Those created by you are never sincere. They are never useful. They never bring any good. Do not become enslaved to what ruins you. Do not say and believe that you are more intelligent than the humble people, who submit to the Truth which has been deposited for ages in My Church, only because you are proud people seeking, through disobedience, permission for your illicit instincts. Go back and remain in the Discipline, which is centuries old. From Moses to Christ, from Christ to you, from you to the last day it is that one, and no other one.

Is your science really science? No. Science is in Me and in My doctrine and man's wisdom is in obeying Me. Curiosity without danger? No. Contagion of which later you suffer the consequences. Do away with Satan, if you want to have Christ. I am the Good One. But I will not cohabit with the Spirit of Evil. Either I or he. Make your choice.

O My "mouthpiece": say this to whom it is to be said. It is the last voice that will go to them. And you and he who guides you must be prudent. Proofs become counter-proofs in the hands of the Enemy and of the enemies of My friends. Be careful! Go with My peace. »

## 502. Death of Ananias.

26th September 1946.

« Get up and let us go. Let us go back to the river and look for a boat. Peter, go with James and get a boat that will take us near Bethabara. We shall stay for a day at Solomon's and then... »

« But were we not to go to Nazareth? »

« No. I made up My mind during the night. I am sorry for you. But I must go back. »

« I am happy! » exclaims Marjiam. « I shall be staying longer with You! »

« Yes, although, My poor child, you see very sad days with Me! »

« So it is a good thing that I love to be with You. To love You. That is all I want. I do not ask for anything else. »

Jesus kisses his forehead.

« And are we passing through Bethabara again? » asks Matthew.

« No. We shall cross the river in the boat of some fisherman. »

Peter comes back with James. « No boats, Master, until this evening... And... must I tell You? »

« Tell Me. »

« Some people must have passed through here... And they must have paid well or uttered strong threats... I don't think that even this evening You will find a boat... They are merciless... » says Peter with a sigh.

« It does not matter. Let us set forth... and the Lord will help us. »

The weather is bad, it is raining. The road is muddy, along the embankment the dew of the night, plentiful near the river, increases the dampness of the rain. But they proceed just the same on the rise in the ground skirting the road, as it is not so muddy and is less exposed to the droplets of the very fine but persisting rain, being somewhat protected by a row of poplars, except when a breath of wind causes all the drops of water retained by the branches to fall suddenly.

« Eh! The rainy season has come! » says Thomas philosophically lifting the hem of his garment.

« It has indeed! » confirms Bartholomew with a sigh.

« We shall dry ourselves somewhere. They will not be all... excited against us » says Peter.

« We may still find a boat... You never know! » adds James of Alphaeus.

« If we had much money we could find anything. But He did not want me to go to Jericho to sell... » says Judas of Kerioth.

« Keep quiet, please! The Master is so depressed! Be silent! » implores John.

« I will keep quiet. Nay, I can but rejoice at His order. So no one can say that those Sadducees from near Jericho were sent by me » and he looks at Peter. But Peter is engrossed in thought and he neither

sees nor replies.

They go on, walking in the drizzle, which is as thin as fog, in the dull day. Now and again they speak to one another. But they seem to be speaking to themselves, so much their words sound like conclusions of dialogues with invisible interlocutors.

« We shall have to end up by stopping somewhere. »

« All places are alike, because they come to all of them. »

« If we are to be persecuted, we may as well stay in town. At least we shall not get wet. »

« But what are they aiming at? »

« Poor Mary! If She knew! »

« Most High God, protect Your servants! » and so forth... They then join together and talk in low voices.

Jesus is in the front, alone... all alone until Marjiam joins Him with the Zealot.

« The others have gone down to the exposed river-bed, to see if there is a boat... It would be quicker. Can we stay with You? »

« Come. What were you speaking of previously? »

« Of Your suffering. »

« And of the hatred of men. What can we do to comfort You and repress their hatred? » asks the Zealot.

« For My grief there is your love... For hatred... one can only put up with it... It is a thing that will come to an end with the life of the Earth... and this thought gives one patience and strength to bear it. Marjiam! My child! Why are you upset? »

« Because this reminds me of Doras... »

« You are right. It is time for Me to send you home... »

« No! Jesus! No! Why do You want to punish me if I have not done anything wrong? »

« I am not punishing you, I am preserving you... I do not want you to remember Doras. To which feelings does that remembrance give rise in your heart? Tell Me... »

Marjiam weeps with lowered head, he then looks up and says: « You are right. My spirit is not capable of seeing and forgiving, it is not yet capable. But why are You sending me away? If You are suffering, it is all the more reasonable that I should be near You. You have always comforted me! I am no longer the foolish boy who last year used to say to You: "Don't let me see Your sorrow". I am a man, now. Let me stay! Lord! Oh! will you tell Him, Simon! »

« The Master knows what is good for us. And perhaps... He wants to entrust you with a task... I don't know... It's only a thought of mine... »

« You are right. I would have let him stay and with so much joy until after the feast of the Dedication. But... But My Mother is lonely up there. The noise of hatred is so loud. She might be afraid more than is necessary. My Mother is all alone. And She certainly

weeps. You will go to Her and tell Her that I send Her My love and I am waiting for Her now. After the Dedication. And you shall not say anything else, Marjiam. »

« And if She asks me? »

« Oh! You can avoid telling a lie saying... that the life of Her Jesus is like this sky in Ethanim: clouds and rain, at times a storm. But there are also sunny days. As yesterday, as tomorrow, perhaps. To be silent is not to lie. You will tell Her of the miracles that you have seen. That Eliza is with Me. That Ananias welcomes Me in his house as if he were My father. That at Nob I am in the house of a good Israelite. The rest... Be silent about the rest. And then you will go to Porphirea. And you will stay there until I send for you. »

Marjiam is weeping louder.

« Why are you weeping thus? Are you not happy to go to Mary's? Yesterday you were... » says Simon.

« Yes, yesterday I was, because we were all going. And I am weeping because I am afraid I shall not see You any more... Oh! Lord! Lord! Never again shall I be as happy as I have been these past days! »

« We shall meet again, Marjiam. I promise you. »

« When? Not before Passover. It's a long time! » Jesus is silent. « Do You really not want me before Passover? »

Jesus throws an arm round his still slender shoulders and draws him to Himself. « Why do you wish to know the future? We are today. Tomorrow we no longer are. Man, even the richest and mightiest one, cannot add one day to his life. It is, as well as all the future, in the hands of God... »

« But for Passover I have to come to the Temple. I am an Israelite. You cannot make me commit sin! »

« You will not sin. And the first sin which you must promise Me not to commit is that of disobedience. You shall obey. Always. Me now, and who will speak to you in My Name later. Do you promise that? Remember that I, your Master and God, obeyed My Father and I will obey Him until the... end of My day. » Jesus is solemn in speaking these last words.

Marjiam, almost fascinated, says: « I will obey. I swear it. Before You and before eternal God. »

There is silence. Then the Zealot asks: « Will he go by himself? »

« Certainly not. With some of the disciples. We shall find more besides Isaac. »

« Are You sending Isaac also to Galilee? »

« Yes, and he will come back with My Mother. »

They are being called from the river. The three move, cross the road and go towards the river.

« Look, Master. We have found one and they do not want

anything. They are the relatives of a man healed miraculously. But they are carrying sand to that village. We have to go over there on foot, and then they will take us. »

« May God reward them. We shall be at Ananias' this evening. »

Peter is happy and he goes back up to the road and sees that Marjiam is upset. « What is the matter with you? What have you done? »

« Nothing wrong, Simon. I told him that when we arrive at the first place where there are disciples, I will send him home. And he has become sad. »

« Home... Of course!... That's right... The weather... » Peter is pensive. Then he looks at Jesus, he plucks His sleeve making Him lower His head towards his mouth. He says in His ear: « Master, why are You sending him without waiting... »

« Because of the season, as you said. »

« Then? »

« Simon, I will tell you the truth. It is better for Marjiam not to poison his heart... »

« You are right, Master. To embitter one's heart... That is just what happens in the end. » He raises his voice: « The Master is quite right. You will go and... we will meet again at Passover. After all... it will not be long... Once Chislev is over... Oh! beautiful Nisan will soon be here. Of course! He is right... » Peter's voice is no longer so steady. He repeats slowly and sadly: « He is right... » and speaking to himself: « What will happen from now until Nisan? » He strikes his forehead with his hand disconsolately.

And they proceed in the damp day. It does not rain until, in mud up to their knees, they get in five small damp boats, overspread with sand, going downstream again. It begins to rain again, and the raindrops, hitting the calm water of the river, which reflects the sky grey with clouds, draw many circles that appear and dissolve continuously with a play of pearly facets.

It looks like a deserted landscape. On the embankments, in the river villages, there is not a soul to be seen. Because of the rain houses are closed and roads desert. So that when at twilight they land where Solomon's village is, they find the road silent and empty, and they arrive at the house without being seen by anybody. They knock. They call. No reply. Only the cooing of doves, the bleating of sheep and the noise of rain.

« There is nobody inside. What shall we do? »

« Go to the houses in the village. To little Michael's first » orders Jesus.

And while the younger apostles go away quickly, Jesus with the elder ones remains near the house watching and making comments.

« Everything is closed... Also the gate is well tied and secured. Look! There is even a big nail. And the windows are closed as at

night time. How sad! And that lamentation of sheep and doves? Will he be ill? What do You think, Master? »

Jesus shakes His head. He is tired and sad...

The apostles come back running. Andrew is the first to arrive and while he is still a few metres away he shouts: « He is dead... Ananias is dead... We cannot go into the house because it has not yet been purified... He was buried a few hours ago. If we could have come yesterday... The woman, Michael's mother, is coming now. »

« What is persecuting us?! » exclaims Bartholomew.

« Poor old man! He was so happy! And so well! What happened? When was he taken ill? » They are all speaking at the same time.

The woman arrives and remaining at a distance from everybody she says: « Lord, peace be with You. My house is open to You... I do not know whether... I prepared the dead man. That is why I am staying away from you. But I can show You the houses that will welcome You. »

« Yes, woman. May God reward you, and those who take pity on wayfarers. But how did he die? »

« Oh! I don't know. He was not ill. The day before yesterday he was all right. Yes, he was certainly well. Michael came in the morning to take his two sheep and join them to ours. That was the arrangement. And at the sixth hour I took back to him some clothes that I had washed for him. He was sitting at the table eating, perfectly sound. In the evening Michael took the sheep back to him and fetched two pitchers of water for him, and Ananias gave him two buns he had baked. Yesterday morning my son came for the sheep. Everything was closed as it is now and no one replied to the cries of the boy. He pushed the gate but he could not open it. It was locked. Michael then became frightened and he ran back to me. My husband and I with other people ran here. We opened the gate and knocked at the kitchen door... we forced the door... He was sitting near the fireplace with his head reclined on the table, the lamp was still near him, but it was out, there was a little knife at his feet with a wooden bowl half carved... That's how he died... A smile hovered on his lips... He was in peace... Oh! how his countenance had become that of a just man! He even looked more handsome... I... I had taken care of him only for a short time. But I had become fond of him... and I weep... »

« He is in peace. You said that yourself. Do not weep! Where have you put him? »

« We knew that You loved him so much, so we put him in the sepulchre that Levi built for himself recently. The only one, because Levi is a wealthy man. We are not. Down there, beyond the road. Now, if You wish so, we will purify everything and... »

« Yes. You will take the sheep and the doves, and keep the rest

for My disciples and Me. So that I may stay here occasionally. May God bless you, woman. Let us go to the sepulchre. »

« Do You want to raise him from the dead? » asks Thomas quite astonished.

« No. It would not be a joy for him. He is happier where he is. In any case that is what he wished... »

Jesus is very depressed. Everything seems to combine to increase His sadness. At the doors of their houses, some women look and greet Him making comments.

The sepulchre is soon reached: a small cube built recently. Jesus prays near it. He then turns round, with tears welling in His eyes and says: « Let us go... to the houses in the village. In our little house there is no longer anyone waiting for us to bless us... O My Father! Solitude envelops Your Son, void is becoming deeper and deeper and gloomier and gloomier. Those who love Me, die, and those who hate Me, remain... O My Father! May Your will always be done and blessed!... »

They go to the village and two here, three there, they enter the houses of those who have not touched the corpse, to have shelter and refreshment.

### **503. The Parable of the Unscrupulous Judge.**

27th September 1946.

Jesus is once again in Jerusalem. A windy dull Jerusalem in winter. Marjiam is still with Jesus and Isaac also is there. They are speaking while going to the Temple.

Joseph and Nicodemus are with the Twelve speaking to the Zealot and Thomas more than to the others. They then part and when passing before Jesus they greet Him without stopping.

« They do not want to enhance their friendship with the Master. It is dangerous! » hisses the Iscariot in Andrew's ear.

« I think they do that with an honest thought, not out of cowardice » replies Andrew defending them.

« After all they are not disciples. So they can do that. They have never been disciples » says the Zealot.

« No?! I thought... »

« Not even Lazarus is a disciple, neither is... »

« But if you go on excluding, who will be left? »

« Who? Those who have the mission of disciples. »

« And the others, then, what are they? »

« Friends. Nothing but friends. Do they perhaps leave their homes, their interests, to follow Jesus? »

« No. But they listen to Him with pleasure and they give Him assistance and... »

« Well, if that's the case, also the Gentiles do it. You know that

near Nike's house we met people who had provided for Him. And those women are certainly not disciples. »

« Don't get excited! I was saying so just for the sake of speaking. Are you so anxious that your friends should not appear to be disciples? I think that you should want the opposite. »

« I am not getting excited and I do not want anything. Neither do I want you to harm them saying that they are His disciples. »

« How can I say that to anybody? I am always with you... »

Simon Zealot casts such a severe glance at him that Judas' giggle dies on his lips, and he deems it wise to change subject by asking: « What were they wanting, today, to speak to you thus? »

« They found a house for Nike. Near the market-gardens. Near the Gate. Joseph knew the owner and he was aware that he would sell if he got a good price. We will let Nike know. »

« How anxious she is to throw away money! »

« It is her money and she can do what she likes with it. She wants to be near the Master. She thus complies with the will of her husband and with her own heart. »

« Only my mother is far away... » exclaims James of Alphaeus with a sigh.

« And mine » says the other James.

« But not for long. Did you hear what Jesus said to Isaac, John and Matthias? "When you come back at the new moon of Shebat, come with the women disciples, in addition to My Mother". »

« I do not know why He does not want Marjiam to come back with them. He said to him: "You will come when I send for you". »

« Perhaps because He does not want Porphirea to be left without help... If no one goes out fishing, they have no food up there. Since we do not go, Marjiam has to go. A fig-tree, a beehive, a few olivetrees and two sheep are not enough to keep a woman, to dress her and feed her... » remarks Andrew.

Jesus, leaning against the enclosure wall of the Temple, watches them coming. Peter, Marjiam and Judas of Alphaeus are with Him. Some poor people get up from the slabs placed on the road going towards the Temple - the one coming from Zion towards Moriah, not that coming from Ophel to the Temple - and they go moaning towards Jesus begging for alms. None of them ask to be cured. Jesus tells Judas to give them some coins. He then goes into the Temple.

There are not many people. After the large multitudes at festivals, there are no more pilgrims. Only those who are compelled to come to Jerusalem on matters of grave interest, or those who live in the town, go up to the Temple. Thus the courts and porches, although not deserted, are much less crowded, and they look larger and more sacred, as they are not so noisy. Also money-changers and vendors of doves and other animals are less numerous, and are

leaning against the walls on the sunny side, although the sun is so faint that it pierces its way through the grey clouds with difficulty.

After praying in the Court of Israel, Jesus retraces His steps and leans against a column watching... and being watched.

He sees a man and a woman, who must be coming back from the Court of Israel, and although they are not weeping, their countenances are more dejected than if they were shedding tears. The man is trying to console the woman, but one can see that he is deeply grieved, too.

Jesus moves away from the column and goes towards them. « What is ailing you? » He asks them compassionately.

The man looks at Him, quite amazed at His concern. Perhaps he also thinks that He is indelicate. But Jesus looks at him so kindly, that he is disarmed. But before expressing the reason for his grief, he asks: « How come a rabbi takes an interest in the sorrow of a simple believer? »

« Because the rabbi is your brother, man. Your brother in the Lord, and he loves you as is prescribed by the commandment. »

« Your brother! I am a poor tiller of the Sharon plain, near Dora. You are a rabbi. »

« Rabbis have sorrows like everybody else. I know what sorrow is like and I would like to comfort you. »

The woman lifts her veil a little to look at Jesus and she whispers to her husband: « Tell Him. He may be able to help us... »

« Rabbi, we had a daughter, we have a daughter. We still have her... We married her with decorum to a young man, recommended to us as a good husband by a common friend. They have been married six years and have had two children. Two only... because later their love passed off... so much so, that her husband now wants to divorce her. Our daughter weeps and is wasting away with grief, that is why we said that we still have her: she will die brokenhearted before long. We have tried everything to persuade her husband. And we have prayed the Most High so much... But neither of them has listened to us... We came here on pilgrimage just for that and we have been here for a full month. We have come to the Temple every day: I to my place, my wife to hers... This morning a servant of my daughter brought us the news that her husband has gone to Caesarea to send her a writ of divorce from there. And that is the answer that our prayers have received... »

« Don't say that, James » implores the wife in a whisper. And she adds with a sigh: « The Rabbi will curse us as if we were blasphemers... and God will punish us. It is our sorrow. It comes from God... and if He has struck us, it means that we deserved it. »

« No, woman. I will not curse you. And God will not punish you. I tell you. As I tell you that it is not God Who gives you this sorrow,

but man. And God allows it to test you and your daughter's husband. Do not lose your faith and the Lord will hear you. »

« It is late. Our daughter has been repudiated and dishonoured by now and she will die... » says the man.

« It is never too late for the Most High. In a moment and because of a persistent prayer, He can change the course of events. Between the cup and the lips there is still time for death to thrust its dagger in and thus prevent him, who was taking the cup to his lips, from drinking of it. And that through the intervention of God. I am telling you. Go back to your places of prayer and persist today, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, and if you can have faith you will see the miracle. »

« Rabbi, You want to comfort us... but just now... It is not possible, as You know, to make void the writ, once it has been handed to the repudiated woman » says the man insisting.

« I tell you to have faith. It is true it cannot be made void. But do you know whether your daughter has received it? »

« There is not a great distance from Dora to Caesarea. While the servant was coming here, Jacob has certainly gone back home and driven out Mary. »

« There is not a great distance. But are you sure that he has covered it? Can a will superior to man's not have stopped a man, if Joshua, with the help of God, stopped the sun? Is your insistent confident prayer made for a good purpose not a holy will opposed to the evil will of man? And will God not help you in stopping the foolish man on his way, since you are asking for a good thing of Him, Who is your Father? Has He not perhaps already helped you? And even if the man should still persist in going on, would he succeed, if you persist in asking the Father for something that is just? I tell you: go and pray today, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow and you will see the miracle. »

« Oh! let us go, James! The Rabbi knows. If He tells us to go and pray it means that He knows that it is the right thing. Have faith, my spouse. I feel a great peace, a strong hope rise in me where I had so much sorrow before. May God reward You, Rabbi, since You are good and may He listen to You. Pray for us, too. Come, James, come » and she succeeds in convincing her husband, who follows her after greeting Jesus with the usual Hebrew salutation: « Peace be with You », to which Jesus replies with the same formula.

« Why did You not tell them who You are? They would have prayed with more peace » say the apostles, and Philip adds: « I will go and tell them. »

But Jesus holds him back saying: « I do not want that. He would in fact have prayed with peace, but with less value and less merit. As it is, their faith is perfect and will be rewarded. »

« Really? »

« Do you expect Me to lie deceiving two unhappy people? »

He looks at the people who have gathered near Him, about one hundred of them, and He says:

« Listen to this parable that will explain to you the value of a constant prayer.

You know what Deuteronomy says speaking of judges and magistrates. They should be just and merciful listening with impartiality to those who have recourse to them, always judging as if the case that they have to judge were a personal case of their own, without taking into account gifts or threats, without being partial to guilty friends and severe with those who are at variance with the judge's friends. But if the words of the Law are just, men are not as just neither do they obey the Law. Thus we see that human justice is often imperfect, because rare are the judges who know how to keep free from corruption, and are merciful and patient both with the rich and the poor, with widows and orphans, as with those who are not so.

In a town there was a judge who was very unworthy of his office, that he had obtained through powerful relatives. He was most unfair in judging, as he was always inclined to say that the rich and mighty ones, or those recommended by rich and powerful people, or those who bribed him with rich gifts were right. He did not fear God and he derided the complaints of poor and weak people, because they were lonely and without strong supporters. When he did not want to listen to a man who had such evident reasons to prevail over some rich person that he could in no way decide against him, he had him driven away from his presence threatening to put him in prison. And most people suffered his violence withdrawing as if they had been defeated, and resigned to defeat even before the case was debated.

But in that town there was also a widow with many children, and she was entitled to receive a large sum of money from a mighty man for works done by her dead husband for the rich man. Urged by need and motherly love she had tried to obtain from the rich man the sum of money which would enable her to feed her children and clothe them in the oncoming winter. But when all her requests and entreaties to the rich man became vain, she applied to the judge.

The judge was a friend of the rich man who had said to him: "If you admit that I am right, one third of the amount will be yours". So he turned a deaf ear to the words of the widow who begged him saying: "Do me justice against my opponent. You know that I am in need. Everybody can tell you that I am entitled to that amount". He did not listen to her and had her expelled by his assistants. But the woman went back once, twice, ten times, in the morning, at the sixth, at the ninth hour, in the evening, without

ever tiring. And she would follow him in the streets shouting: "Do me justice. My children are hungry and cold. And I have no money to buy bread and clothes for them". She waited for him at the door of his house when he went home to sit at the table with his children. And the cries of the widow: "Do me justice against my opponent, because my children and I are cold and hungry" could be heard even inside the house, in the dining-room, in the bedroom, during the night, as insistent as the cry of a hoopoe: "Do me justice, if you do not want God to strike you! Do me justice. Remember that widows and orphans are sacred to God and woe to those who oppress them! Do me justice if you do not want to suffer one day what we are suffering now. The cold, the hunger we are suffering, you will find them in the next life if you do not do me justice. You mean man!".

The judge feared neither God nor his neighbour. But he was tired of being continuously molested, of seeing that he had become the laughing stock of the whole town, because of the widow's persecution, and that many people blamed him. So one day he said to himself: "Although I do not fear God, or the threats of the widow, or the opinion of the people, yet, to put an end to so much trouble, I will listen to the widow and do her justice by compelling the rich man to pay, providing she stops persecuting me and gets out of my way". And he sent for the rich friend and said to him: "My friend, it is impossible for me to satisfy you. Do your duty and pay, because I cannot put up any more with being molested because of you. That is my decision". And the rich man had to pay the sum according to justice.

That is the parable. It is now for you to apply it.

You have heard the words of a wicked man: "I will listen to the woman to put an end to so much trouble". And he was a wicked person. But will God, the very good Father, be inferior to the bad judge? Will He not do justice to those sons of His who invoke Him day and night? And will He keep them waiting so long for the grace that their depressed souls stop praying? I assure you: He will do them justice at once so that their souls may not lose faith. But it is also necessary to know how to pray, without tiring after the first prayers and asking for good things. And you must rely also on God saying: "But let that be done what Your Wisdom sees is more useful to us".

Have faith. Pray having faith in prayer and faith in God, your Father. And He will do you justice against those who oppress you, whether they are men or demons, diseases or other calamities. A persevering prayer opens Heaven, and faith saves the soul in whatever way the prayer is heard and answered. Let us go! »

And He sets out towards the exit. He is almost outside the enclosure when raising His head to look at the few people following

Him and at the many indifferent or hostile ones watching Him from afar, He exclaims sadly: « But when the Son of man comes back, will He still find faith on the Earth? » and with a sigh He envelops Himself more tightly in His mantle and strides away towards the Ophel suburb.

#### **504. Jesus, Light of the World.**

28th September 1946.

Jesus is still in Jerusalem, but not in the courts of the Temple. He is in a beautifully decorated vast room, one of the many to be found within the enclosure, which is as large as a village.

He has just gone in and is still walking beside the person who invited Him to go in probably to protect Him from the cold wind blowing on the Moriah, and He is followed by the apostles and some disciples. I say « some », because besides Isaac and Marjiam there is Jonathan, and among the crowds, who also go in behind the Master, there is the levite Zacharias, who a few days previously told Him that he wanted to be His disciple, and there are two more men, whom I have already seen with the disciples, but whose names I do not know. But among those well-disposed people there are also the usual unavoidable unchangeable Pharisees. They stop almost at the door, just as if they happened to be there by chance to discuss business, but they are there to listen. The people present are eager to hear the word of the Lord.

He looks at the assembly of people of clearly different nationalities, as they are not all Palestinians, although of Jewish religion. He looks at all the people gathered, many of whom will perhaps return tomorrow to the regions from which they came and will relate His word there saying: « We have heard the Man Who is said to be our Messiah. » And He does not speak to them of the Law, as they are already acquainted with it, as He often does when He realises that His listeners are not familiar with it or their faith is shaken; but He speaks of Himself, that they may know Him.

He says: « I am the Light of the world and he who follows Me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life. » And He becomes silent, after enunciating the theme of His speech, as He usually does when He is going to deliver a momentous speech. He keeps silent to give the people time to decide whether they are interested in the subject or not, and also to give them time to go away if the subject is of no interest to them. None of the people present go away; on the contrary the Pharisees, who were near the door, intent on a forced affected conversation, and who have become silent and have turned towards the interior of the synagogue at Jesus' first word, go in elbowing their way with their unflinching arrogance.

When all the whispering is over, Jesus repeats the aforesaid sentence in an even louder voice and He goes on to say:

« I am the Light of the world because I am the Son of the Father, Who is the Father of the Light. A son is always like the father who begot him and is of the same nature. Likewise I am like and I have the same nature as He Who begot Me. God, the Most High, the perfect and Infinite Spirit, is Light of Love, Light of Wisdom, Light of Power, Light of Goodness, Light of Beauty. He is the Father of the Lights, and he who lives of Him and in Him can see, because he is in the Light, as it is God's desire that men should see. And He gave man intelligence and feelings, that he might see the Light, that is, God Himself, and understand and love it. And He gave man eyes, that he might see the most beautiful of all things created, the perfection of elements, through which Creation is visible and which is one of the first actions of God Creator and bears the most visible sign of Him Who created it: light, the incorporeal, bright, beatific, consoling, necessary light, as is necessary the Father of all: God Eternal and Most High.

By an order of His Thought He created the firmament and the earth, that is, the mass of the atmosphere and the mass of dust, the incorporeal and the corporeal, what is very light and what is heavy, but both still barren, void and shapeless, because they were enveloped in darkness, devoid of stars and lifeless. But to give the earth and the firmament their true features, to make of them two beautiful things, useful and suitable for the continuation of His creative work, the Spirit of God - that hovered over the waters and was one thing with the Creator Who was creating and with the Inspirer Who urged to create, in order to be able to love not only Himself in the Father and in the Son, but also an infinite number of creatures named stars, planets, waters, seas, forests, plants, flowers, animals that fly, wriggle, creep, run, jump, climb, and finally man, the most perfect creature, more perfect than the sun, because he is endowed with soul as well as with matter, with intelligence as well as with instinct, with freedom as well as with rules, man similar to God because of his spirit, similar to animals because of his body, the demigod who becomes god by the grace of God and his own will, the human being who can transform himself into an angel, if he wishes so, the beloved being of sensible Creation, for whom, although He knew that he would be a sinner, even before time existed, He prepared the Saviour, the Victim in the Being loved beyond measure, in the Son, in the Word, for Whom everything was made - but to give the earth and the firmament their true features, as I was saying, the Spirit of God, hovering over the cosmos, shouts, and it is the first time that the Word shows Himself: "Let there be light" and there was light, good, beneficial, strong during the day, dim at night, everlasting until

the end of time. From the ocean of wonders, which is the throne of God, the bosom of God, God draws the most beautiful gem, and it is the light preceding the most perfect gem, that is, the creation of man, in whom there is not a jewel of God, but God Himself, breathing over the dust to make it living flesh and His heir to the heavenly Paradise where He awaits the just, His children, that He may rejoice in them and they in Him.

If at the beginning of creation God wanted light on His works, if to make light He used His Word, if God grants those, whom He loves, His most perfect likeness: light, material joyful incorporeal light, wise sanctifying spiritual light, is it possible that He has not given the Son of His love what He is Himself? Really the Most High has given everything to Him in Whom He is well pleased from eternity, and He wanted the Light to be the first and the most powerful of everything, so that without waiting to ascend to Heaven men might know the wonder of the Trinity, that makes the blissful heavenly choruses sing because of the harmonious joy they admire, and that angels enjoy contemplating the Light, that is, God, the Light that fills Paradise making all its inhabitants blissful.

I am the Light of the world. He who follows Me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of Life! As light on the shapeless earth made life possible for plants and animals, so My Light makes eternal Life possible for spirits. I, being the Light that I am, create Life in you and I preserve it, I increase it, I re-create you in it, I transform you, I take you to the Abode of God along the ways of wisdom, of love, of sanctification. He who has the Light, possesses God, because the Light is one thing with Charity and he who has Charity has God. He who has the Light possesses the Life, because God is there where His beloved Son is welcomed. »

« You are talking nonsense. Who has seen what is God? Not even Moses saw God, because in Horeb, as soon as he realised who was speaking from the blazing bush, he covered his face; neither could he see Him on the other occasions because of the dazzling lightning. And You say that You saw God? The face of Moses, who had only heard Him speak, remained brightly radiant. But what radiance is there on Your face? You are a poor Galilean with a pale face like most of Your countrymen. You are ill, tired and thin. If You had really seen God and He did love You, You would not look like a dying man. You want to give Your life, when You have not got enough for Yourself? » and they shake their heads pitying Him ironically.

« God is Light and I know which is His Light, because children know their father and each knows himself. I know My Father and I know who I am. I am the Light of the world. I am the Light because My Father is the Light and He begot Me and gave Me His

Nature. The Word does not differ from the Thought because the word expresses what the intellect thinks. In any case, do you no longer know the prophets? Do you not remember Ezekiel and above all Daniel? When the former describes God, seen in the vision, on the chariot of the four animals, he says: "On the throne there was one who looked like a man and within him and around him I saw a kind of yellow amber which resembled fire, and from his loins upwards and downwards I saw a kind of fire and a light all around; like a rainbow in the clouds on rainy days, that is how the surrounding light appeared". And Daniel says: "I was watching until the thrones were set in place and the Ancient of days took his seat. His robe was as white as snow, his hair as pure as wool; his throne was a blaze of flames and the wheels of his throne were a burning fire. A stream of fire poured out issuing from his presence". God is like that and I shall be like that when I come to judge you. »

« Your testimony is not valid. You bear witness to Yourself. So what is the value of Your testimony? As far as we are concerned it is false. »

« Although I bear witness to Myself, My witness is true, because I know from where I came and where I am going. But you know neither from where I come nor where I am going. Your wisdom is what you see. I instead know everything that is unknown to man, and I have come that you may become acquainted with it as well. That is why I said that I am the Light. Because light reveals what was concealed by darkness. In Heaven there is Light, on the Earth there is, above all, the reign of Darkness, which conceals the truth from spirits, because Darkness hates the spirits of men and does not want them to become acquainted with the Truth and the truths, so that they may not be sanctified. And that is why I came. That you may have Light and consequently Life. But you do not want to receive Me. You want to judge what you do not know and you cannot judge it because it is so much higher up than you are and cannot be understood by anyone who does not contemplate it with the eyes of the spirit, of a humble spirit nourished with faith. Instead you judge according to the flesh. So your judgement cannot be true. I instead do not judge anybody, if I can abstain from judging. I look at you mercifully and I pray for you. That you may open out to Light. But when I have to judge, then My judgement is true, because I am not alone, but I am with the Father Who sent Me, and from His glory He can see the interior of hearts. And as He sees yours, He can see Mine. And if He saw an unjust judgement in My heart, for My sake and for the honour of His Justice, He would inform Me. But the Father and I judge in one way only and so we are in two and I am not alone in judging and bearing witness. In your Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses giving

the same evidence is to be accepted as true and valid. So I bear witness to My Nature and the Father Who sent Me testifies the same thing. So what I say is true. »

« We cannot hear the voice of the Most High. You say that He is Your Father... »

« He spoke of Me at the Jordan... »

« All right. But You were not the only one at the Jordan. There was also John. He might have spoken of him. He was a great prophet. »

« You are condemning yourselves with your own lips. Tell Me: who speaks through the lips of the prophets? »

« The Spirit of God. »

« And was John a prophet according to you? »

« One of the greatest, if not the greatest. »

« Well then, why did you not believe his words and why do you not believe them? He pointed Me out as the Lamb of God, Who had come to cancel the sins of the world. When he was asked whether he was the Christ, he replied: "I am not the Christ, I am one who precedes Him. And behind me there is He Who actually precedes me, because He existed before me, and I did not know Him, but He Who took me from the womb of my mother and invested me with my mission in the desert and sent me to baptise, said to me: 'He upon Whom you will see the Spirit descend, He is the One Who will baptise with the Holy Spirit and fire'". Do you not remember? And yet many among you were present... So why do you not believe the prophet who pointed Me out after hearing the words of Heaven? Have I to tell My Father this: that His people no longer believes in the prophets? »

« And where is Your father? Joseph the carpenter has been sleeping for years in his sepulchre. You no longer have a father. »

« You know neither My Father nor Me. But if you wanted to know Me, you would know also My true Father. »

« You are possessed and a liar. You are a blasphemer as You insist in maintaining that the Most High is Your Father. You deserve to be stoned according to the Law. »

The Pharisees and the others of the Temple shout threateningly while the people look at them grimly, anxious as they are to defend the Christ.

Jesus looks at them without saying anything further, and He then leaves the room by a little side door opening onto a porch.

## 505. Jesus Speaks in the Temple to the Incredulous Judaeans.

30th September 1946.

Jesus goes back into the Temple with His apostles and disciples. And some of the apostles, and not only the apostles, point out to Him that it is not wise to go in. But He replies: « By what right could they refuse to let Me go in? Have I perhaps been condemned? No, not yet. So I am going up to the altar of God like every Israelite who fears the Lord. »

« But You intend to speak... »

« And is this not the place where rabbis usually gather to speak? To speak and teach outside is an exceptional case, such as the rest taken by a rabbi or a personal necessity. But this is the place where everyone loves to teach disciples. Do you not see people of every nationality around rabbis to hear the famous ones at least once? So that when they go back to their native countries they may say: "We heard a master, a philosopher speak according to the fashion of Israel". A master for those who already are or intend to be Jews; a philosopher for the true and proper Gentiles. Neither do the rabbis disdain being listened to by the latter, as they hope to make proselytes. Without such hope, which would be holy if it were humble, they would not remain in the Court of the Gentiles, but they would demand to speak in that of Israel, and if it were possible, in the very Sanctuary, because, according to the opinion they hold of themselves, they are so holy, that God only is holier... And I, the Master, will speak where teachers speak. But be not afraid! It is not their hour as yet. When their hour comes, I will tell you, that you may fortify your hearts. »

« You will not tell us » says the Iscariot.

« Why not? »

« Because You will not know. No sign will tell You. There is no sign. I have been with You for almost three years and I have always seen You threatened and persecuted. Nay, You were alone then. Now You have the support of the crowds who love You and of whom the Pharisees are afraid. So You are in a stronger position. How do You expect to know when the hour has come? »

« By what I see in the hearts of men. »

Judas remains dumbfounded for a moment, then he says: « And You will not mention it also because... You spare us because You doubt our courage. »

« He keeps silent not to distress us » says James of Zebedee.

« True. But You will certainly not tell us. »

« I will tell you. And until I tell you, whatever violence and hatred you see against Me, be not afraid of it. They will have no consequences. Go on. I am staying here to wait for Manaen and Marjiam. »

The Twelve and those who are with them go on halfheartedly. Jesus retraces His steps towards the gate waiting for the two, He then goes out into the street and walks towards the Antonia.

Some legionaries standing near the fortress point Him out chatting to one another. There seems to be some disagreement in opinion, then one of them says in a loud voice: « I'll ask Him » and he departs from the group coming towards Jesus. « Hail, Master. Are You speaking in there also today? »

« May the Light enlighten you. Yes. I am going to speak. »

« In that case... be careful. One who knows has warned us. And a lady who admires You has ordered us to watch. We shall be near the eastern underground. Do You know where the entrance is? »

« I do. But both ends are closed. »

« Do You think so? » The legionary has a little laugh and in the shadow of his helmet his eyes and teeth shine making him look younger. He then salutes coming to attention and says: « Hail, Master. Remember Quintus Felix. »

« I will. May the Light enlighten you. »

Jesus resumes walking and the legionary goes back to his place and talks to his fellow-soldiers.

« Master, are we late? The lepers were so many! » exclaim together Manaen, who is wearing a plain dark brown garment, and Marjiam.

« No. You have been quick. But let us go. The others are waiting for us. Manaen, was it you who warned the Romans? »

« Of what, Lord? I have not spoken to anybody. And I would not know... The Roman ladies are not in Jerusalem. »

They are once again near the gate of the enclosure. The Levite Zacharias is there, as if he happened to be there just by chance.

« Peace to You, Master. I want to tell You... I will try to be always where You are, in here. And please do not lose sight of me. And if there is a tumult and You see me go away, try to follow me all the time. They hate You so much! I cannot do any more... Please understand me... »

« May God reward and bless you for the pity you take on His Word. I will do what you say. And you may rest assured that no one will be aware of your love for Me. »

They part.

« Perhaps he told the Romans. While in there he may have heard... » whispers Manaen.

They go to pray passing through the crowds who look at them with different feelings and who later gather behind Jesus, when He comes away from the Court of Israel after praying.

Outside the second enclosure Jesus is about to stop, but He is surrounded by a mixed group of scribes, Pharisees and priests. One of the officials of the Temple speaks on behalf of them all.

« Are You here again? Do You not realise that we do not want You? Are You not even afraid of the danger impending over You? Go away. It is already a lot if we allow You to come in to pray. But we do not allow You to teach Your doctrine any more. »

« Yes, go away. Go away, You blasphemer! »

« Yes. I am going away, as you wish. And not only out of these walls. I will go, I am already going farther, where you will not be able to reach Me. And the time will come when you also will be looking for Me, and not just to persecute Me, but through a superstitious terror of being struck for driving Me away, urged by a superstitious anxiety to have your sin forgiven and receive mercy. But I am telling you. This is the time of mercy. This is the time to make friends with the Most High. After the present time, no remedy will be of any avail. You will not have Me any more and you will die in your sin. Even if you travelled all over the Earth and you succeeded in arriving at stars and planets, you would no longer find Me, because you cannot come where I am going. I have already told you. God comes and passes by. Those who are wise receive Him with His gifts while He passes by. Those who are foolish let Him go and no longer can find Him. You come from down here. I come from up there. You belong to this world. I am not of this world. So, once I have gone back to the Abode of My Father, out of this world of yours, you will not be able to find Me any longer and you will die in your sins, because you will not even be able to reach Me spiritually through faith. »

« Do You want to kill Yourself, You devil? We will certainly not be able to join You in Hell, where violent souls descend, because Hell is the place of damned cursed souls, whereas we are the blessed children of the Most High » some of them say.

And others say approvingly: « He certainly wants to kill Himself, because He says that we cannot go where He goes. He realises that He has been found out and has failed the test, and He is going to kill Himself, without waiting to be killed like the other Galilean who was a false Christ. »

And others say benevolently: « And if He really were the Christ and should go back to Him Who sent Him? »

« Where? In Heaven? Abraham is not there, so how can you expect Him to go there? The Messiah is to come first. »

« But Elijah was taken up to Heaven in a chariot of fire. »

« On a chariot, yes. But to Heaven!... Who can assure that? »

And the dispute continues while Pharisees, scribes, officials, priests, Judaeans obsequious to priests, scribes and Pharisees pursue the Christ through the vast porches as a pack of hounds chases roused game.

But some people, that is the good ones among the hostile group, those urged by real honest intentions, elbow their way through the

crowd until they reach Jesus and ask Him the anxious question, which has been heard being asked so often with love or with hatred: « Who are You? Tell us so that we may know how to behave. Tell us the truth in the name of the Most High! »

« I am the Truth itself and I never tell lies. I am what I have always declared to be since the first day I spoke to the crowds, in every place in Palestine, what I said I am, here, several times, near the Holy of Holies, of Whose thunderbolts I am not afraid, because I speak the truth. I have still many things to say and to judge during My day and with regard to this people, and although My evening seems to be close at hand, I know that I shall tell them and I shall judge everybody, because that is what I have been promised by Him Who sent Me and is truthful. He spoke to Me in an eternal embrace of love, telling Me all His Thought, so that I could repeat it by means of My Word to the world, and I shall not be able to be silent, neither will anybody be able to silence Me until I announce to the world what I heard from My Father. »

« Are You still blaspheming? And are You continuing to call Yourself the Son of God? But who do You expect to believe You? Who will ever be able to see the Son of God in You? » shout His enemies shaking their fists at His face, deranged as they are by hatred.

The apostles, disciples and well-meaning people drive them back forming a protective barrier round the Master. Zacharias, the levite, steals slowly close to Jesus, Manaen and Alphaeus' two sons with stealthy movements in order not to attract the attention of the evil ones.

They are now at the end of the Court of the Gentiles as progress is slow owing to the hindering opposition and Jesus stops at His usual place, at the last column of the eastern side. He stops. They cannot eject a true Israelite from the place where even pagans are allowed to stay, unless they wish to rouse the masses. Which they craftily avoid doing. And He resumes speaking replying to His offenders and everybody else: « When you have lifted up the Son of man... »

The Pharisees and scribes shout: « And who do You expect is going to lift You up? Miserable is that Country whose king is a silly charlatan and a blasphemer disliked by God. None of us will lift You up, You may be sure of that. And the little intelligence You are still left with has made You realise that in time, when You were put to the test. You know that we shall never be able to make You our king! »

« I know. You will not raise Me to a throne, and yet you will lift Me up. And while lifting Me up you will think that you are lowering Me. And just when you think that you have lowered Me, I shall be raised. Not only over Palestine, not only over the people of Israel

spread all over the world, but over the whole world, even over pagan countries, even over those countries of which the learned people of the world are still unaware. And I shall be raised not only for the lifetime of a man, but for the whole life of the Earth and the shadow of My throne will spread more and more over the Earth until it covers it completely. Then only, I will come back and you will see Me. Oh! You shall see Me! »

« Listen to His speech of a madman! We shall raise Him by lowering Him, and we shall lower Him by raising Him! He's mad! And the shadow of His throne all over the Earth. Greater than Cyrus! Greater than Alexander! Greater than Caesar! And what about Caesar? Do You think he will allow You to take the Roman empire? And He is going to last on His throne until the end of the world! Ha! Ha! » Their words are more grievous than slaps; their irony is more painful than scourging.

But Jesus lets them speak. He raises His voice to be heard in the outcry of those who deride and of those who defend, filling the place with the roar of a rough sea.

« When you have raised the Son of man, then you will understand who I am and you will realise that I do nothing by Myself, but I say what My Father taught Me and I do what He wants. And He Who sent Me does not leave Me all alone, but He is with Me. As a shadow follows a body, so is the Father behind Me, watchful and present, although invisible. He is behind Me and comforts and helps Me and He does not go away because I always do what He likes. God instead goes away when His children do not obey His laws and His inspirations. He then goes away and leaves them all alone. That is why many people in Israel commit sin. Because when man is left to himself, it is difficult for him to remain just and he easily falls into the coils of the Snake. I solemnly tell you that because of your sin in resisting the Light and Mercy of God, He leaves you and will no longer dwell in this place or in your hearts and what Jeremiah grieved over in his prophecies and lamentations will be fulfilled. Meditate on those prophetic words, tremble and return to your senses with good minds. Do not listen to the threats but to the kindness of the Father Who warns His children while they are still granted the possibility to make amends and save themselves. Listen to God in His words and deeds, and if you do not want to believe My words, because old Israel is suffocating you, believe at least in old Israel. Her prophets proclaim the dangers and misfortunes of the Holy City and of all our Fatherland if she does not convert to the Lord her God and does not follow the Saviour. The hand of God weighed heavily on this people in the past. But the past and present are nothing as compared to the dreadful future, which is awaiting it for not accepting the Messenger sent by God. What is awaiting Israel who repudiates

the Christ cannot be compared with the past in severity and duration. I am telling you, straining My eyes into future ages: like a tree uprooted and thrown into a stormy river, the Hebraic race will be struck by divine anathema. It will stubbornly try to stop on the banks, here or there, and vigorous as it is, it will sprout and take root. But when it thinks it has settled, the violence of the flood will get hold of it again, tearing it away and breaking its roots and shoots, and it will be carried farther away, to suffer, to strike roots again, and then be torn off and scattered once more. And nothing will be able to give it rest, because the flood pursuing it will be the wrath of God and the contempt of peoples. Only by throwing itself into a sea of living sanctifying Blood it could find peace. But it will shun that Blood, because although its voice will be an inviting one, it will sound like the voice of Abel's blood calling it: the Cain of the heavenly Abel. »

A further widespread whispering runs through the large enclosure like the noise of the sea. But the harsh voices of Pharisees, scribes and of the Jews subjected to them, are not part of the whispering. Jesus avails Himself of the opportunity to try to go away.

But some people who were far from Him, approach Him and say: « Master, listen to us. We are not all like them (and they point at His enemies), but we find it difficult to follow You also because Your voice is all by itself against hundreds of voices which state the opposite of what You say. And what they say is just what we have heard from our fathers since our childhood. But Your words induce us to believe in You. But how can we believe fully and have life? We feel as if we were tied by the thoughts of the past... »

«If you settle in My Word, as if you were being born again now, your faith will be complete and you will become My disciples. But you must divest yourselves of the past and accept My Doctrine. It does not delete the past completely. On the contrary it keeps and instils new life into what is holy and supernatural in the past, and it removes the superfluous human additions as it puts the perfection of My Doctrine where now are human doctrines, which are always imperfect. If you come to Me you will know the Truth, and the Truth will make you free. »

« Master, it is true what we said to You, that we feel as if we were tied by the past. But that tie is neither imprisonment nor slavery. We are Abraham's posterity in spiritual matters, because, if we are not mistaken, Abraham's posterity means spiritual posterity as opposed to Hagar's, which is a posterity of slaves. So how can You say that we shall become free? »

« I wish to point out to you that also Ishmael and his children were Abraham's posterity, because Abraham was the father of Isaac and of Ishmael. »

« But it was impure because he was the son of a woman, who was a slave and an Egyptian. »

« I solemnly tell you: there is but one slavery, that of sin. Only he who commits sin is a slave. And of a slavery which no money can ransom; and he is the slave of an implacable cruel master and loses all rights to the free sovereignty in the Kingdom of Heaven. A slave, a man who has become slave through war or misfortunes, may also become the property of a good master. But his welfare is always precarious because his master can sell him to another cruel master. He is merchandise, nothing else. Sometimes he is used as money to settle a debt. And he is not even entitled to complain. A servant instead lives in the house of his master until he is dismissed. But a son remains in the house of his father for good, and the father does not think of expelling him. He can go out only of his own free will. And that is the difference between slavery and servitude, and between servitude and filiation. Slavery puts man in chains. Servitude puts him at the service of a master. Filiation puts him for ever, and with equal rights of life, in the house of the father. Slavery destroys man. Servitude subjects him. Filiation makes him free and happy. Sin makes man the slave and for ever, of the most cruel master: Satan. Servitude, in this case the Ancient Law, makes man fear God as an intransigent Being. Filiation, that is, to come to God with His First-Born, with Me, makes man free and happy, as he knows and trusts in the charity of his Father. To accept My Doctrine is to come to God with Me, the First-Born of many beloved children. I will break your chains, if you only come to Me to have them broken and you will really be happy and coheirs with Me to the Kingdom of Heaven. I know that you are Abraham's posterity. But those among you who seek My death no longer honour Abraham, but Satan, and serve him as faithful servants. Why? Because they reject My word which cannot get to the hearts of many of you. God does not compel man to believe or to accept Me. But He sent Me that I may show you His will. And I tell you what I saw and heard near My Father. And I do what He wants. But those among you who persecute Me, do what they learnt from their father and what he suggests. »

Like a paroxysm which revives after a remission of a disease, the wrath of Judaeans, Pharisees and scribes is roused violently again, although it seemed to have abated. They penetrate like a wedge into the compact circle of people pressing Jesus and they try to approach Him. The crowd sways like opposed billows, as opposed are the feelings of their hearts. The Judaeans, livid with rage and hatred shout: « Abraham is our father. We have no other father. »

« God is the Father of men. Abraham himself is a son of the universal Father. But many repudiate the true Father for one who is not a

father and has been chosen as such by them because he seems more powerful and willing to satisfy their immoderate desires. Children do the works that they see their father do. If you are sons of Abraham, why do you not do the works that Abraham did? Do you not know them? Shall I enumerate them with regard to their nature and symbol? Abraham obeyed by going to the country pointed out to him by God, and is thus the symbol -of man who must be prepared to leave everything to go where God sends him. Abraham was obliging with his brother's son, whom he allowed to choose the region he preferred, thus symbolising respect for freedom of action and the charitable mind we must have for our neighbour. Abraham was humble after the predilection of God, Whom he honoured in Mamre, always feeling that he was a mere nothing in comparison with the Most High, Who had spoken to him, a symbol of the place of reverential love man must always keep towards his God. Abraham believed and obeyed God also in the most difficult matters to believe and painful to accomplish, and he did not become selfish in order to be safe, but he prayed for the people of Sodom. Abraham did not come to terms with the Lord, by requesting a reward for his manifold obedience, on the contrary, in order to honour Him till the very end, to the extreme limit, he sacrificed his beloved son to Him... »

« He did not sacrifice him. »

« He did sacrifice his beloved son because it is true that his heart had already sacrificed him, during the journey, with his will to obey, which was arrested by the angel when his heart of a father was already breaking, as he was on the point of rending the heart of his son. He was going to kill his son in order to honour God. You are killing the Son of God to honour Satan. So, do you do the works of Him Whom you call your father? No, you do not. You are trying to kill Me because I tell you the truth as I heard it from God. Abraham did not behave thus. He did not try to kill the voice coming from Heaven, but he obeyed it. No, you do not do the works of Abraham, but those pointed out to you by your father. »

« We were not born of a prostitute. We are not illegitimate children. You said Yourself that God is the Father of men, and we are the chosen People and we belong to the chosen castes of this People. So we have God as our only Father. »

« If you recognised God as your Father in spirit and truth you would love Me because I proceed and come from God; I have not come of My own accord, but it is He Who sent Me. So, if you really knew the Father, you would know also Me, His Son and your brother and Saviour. Is it possible for brothers not to know one another? Can the children of One only father not recognise the language spoken in the House of the Only Father? Why, then, do you not understand My language and you cannot bear My words? »

Because I come from God and you do not. You left the paternal house and you have forgotten the face and the language of Him Who lives in it. You have spontaneously gone to other regions, to other abodes, where one who is not God reigns, and where another language is spoken. And he who reigns there compels those who want to go in to become his children and obey him. And you have done that and still do it. You abjure and disown God the Father to choose another father for yourselves. And that father is Satan. You have the demon as father and you want to accomplish what he suggests to you. And the wishes of the demon are for sin and violence and you accept them. From the beginning he was a homicide and he did not persevere in the truth, because having rebelled against the Truth, he cannot have in himself any love for the truth. When he speaks, he speaks as he is, that is, as a liar and a gloomy being, because he really is a liar and has procreated and given birth to falsehood after being fecundated with pride and nourished with rebellion. All concupiscence is in his bosom, and he spits it and inoculates it to poison creatures. He is the gloomy, sneering, creeping cursed reptile, the Disgrace and Horror. His deeds have tormented man for ages and their signs and fruits are clear to the intellects of men. And yet you listen to him, although he lies and destroys, whereas if I speak and say what is true and good, you do not believe Me and you say that I am a sinner. But among the many people who have approached Me, with hatred or with love, who can say that he saw Me commit sin? Who can say so truthfully? Where are the proofs to convince Me and those who believe in Me that I am a sinner? Which of the ten commandments have I infringed? Who can swear before the altar of God that he saw Me violate the Law and customs, the precepts, traditions and prayers? Who amongst all men can make Me blush, having convinced Me of sin with definite proofs? No one can do that. No one amongst men, no one amongst angels. God shouts in the hearts of men: "He is the Innocent One". You are all convinced of that, and you who are accusing Me are more firmly persuaded than these people who are undecided as to who is right, you or I. But only who belongs to God listens to the words of God. You do not listen to them, although they resound in your souls day and night, and you do not listen to them because you do not belong to God. »

« We, who live for the Law and in the most detailed observation of the precepts, to honour the Most High, we do not belong to God? And You dare say that? Ah!!! » They seem to be suffocating with horror, as if a halter were fastened round their necks. « And we are not to say that You are possessed and a Samaritan? »

« I am neither, but I honour My Father, even if you deny Him to revile Me. But your insults do not grieve Me. I do not seek My glory. There is One who takes care of it and judges. That is what I

say to you who want to humiliate Me. But to those of good will I say that he who accepts My word, or has already accepted it, and knows how to keep it, will never die. »

« Ah! Now we can see very clearly that the demon possessing You is speaking through Your lips! You said that Yourself: "He speaks like a liar". What You said is a lie, therefore it is a word of the demon. Abraham died and the prophets died. And You say that those who keep Your word will never die. So You will not die? »

« I shall die only as Man, to rise again in the time of Grace, but I shall not die as the Word. The Word is Life and never dies. And he who receives the Word has Life in himself and never dies, but rises in God because I will resuscitate him. »

« Blasphemer Madman! Demon! Are You greater than Abraham and the prophets, who died? Who do You think You are? »

« The Beginning Who am speaking to you. »

There is absolute pandemonium. And while it goes on, the Levite Zacharias pushes Jesus imperceptibly towards a corner in the court, helped by the sons of Alphaeus and by other people, who perhaps assist Him without even knowing what they are doing.

When Jesus is against the wall and is protected by His most faithful ones standing in front of Him and the tumult calms down a little, He says in His voice which is so incisive, beautiful and calm also in the most troubled moments: « If I glorify Myself, My glory is of no value. Anyone can say of oneself what one wishes. But He Who glorifies Me is My Father, Who you say is your God, although He is so little yours that you do not know Him, and you have never known Him, neither do you want to know Him through Me, as I speak to you of Him because I know Him; and if I should say that I do not know Him, to appease your hatred against Me, I would be a liar like you who say that you know Him. I know that I must not lie for any reason whatsoever. The Son of man must not lie even if by telling the truth He will bring about His death. Because if the Son of man should lie, He would no longer be the Son of Truth and the Truth would reject Him from Itself. I know God, both as God and as Man. And as God and as Man I keep His words and comply with them. Israel, think it over! It is here that the Promise is fulfilled. It is accomplished in Me. Recognise Me for what I am! Abraham, your father, longed to see My day. He saw it, prophetically, through a grace of God, and he rejoiced. And you who really live it... »

« Be quiet! You are not yet fifty years old and You are telling us that Abraham has seen You and You have seen him? » and their scornful laugh spreads like a wave of poison or corrosive acid.

« I solemnly tell you: before Abraham was born I am. »

« "I am"? God only can say that, as He is eternal. You cannot! Blasphemer! "I am"! Anathema! Are You perhaps God, that You

may say that? » shouts one, who must be an important personage, because, although he has just arrived, he is already near Jesus, as everybody has moved aside, almost in terror, at his arrival.

« It is you who say it » replies Jesus in a thundering voice.

Everything becomes a weapon in the hands of those who hate. While the last man who has questioned Jesus gives free course to a mimic display of scandalised horror and tears his headgear off his head, ruffles his hair and beard and unfastens the buckles holding his mantle round his neck, as if he were about to faint with horror, handfuls of earth and stones - used by the vendors of doves and other animals to hold tight the ropes of the enclosures, and by money-changers as a prudential protection for their coffers, of which they are more jealous than of their own lives - are thrown at the Master and obviously fall upon the crowd, as Jesus is too far inside the arcade to be struck, and the crowds curse and complain...

Zacharias, the levite, gives Jesus a mighty push, the only means to make Him reach a little low door, hidden in the wall of the court and already set to be opened, and pushes Him inside with the two sons of Alphaeus, John, Manaen and Thomas. The others are left outside in the tumult... its noise arrives weakened in the underground passage, among the mighty stone walls, the correct architectural name of which I do not know. The stones are embedded, I would say, that is, there are large stones and smaller ones, and on top of the smaller ones there are large ones and viceversa. I do not know whether I have made myself clear. They are dark and mighty, coarsely chiselled, hardly visible in the dim light coming from narrow loopholes placed high up at regular intervals to admit air and light so that the place may not be completely murky. It is a narrow tunnel, the purpose of which I do not know, but I am under the impression that it runs right round the court. Perhaps it was built as a protection, as a shelter place, or to double and thus reinforce the walls of the courts, which form enclosures round the true and proper Temple, the Holy of Holies. In brief, I do not know. I am saying what I see. There is a smell of dampness, that kind of dampness that one cannot say whether it is cold or not, as in certain wine-cellars.

« And what are we going to do here? » asks Thomas.

« Be quiet! Zacharias told me that he will come and we must remain silent and still » replies Thaddeus.

« But... can we trust him? »

« I hope so. »

« Be not afraid. He is a good man » says Jesus comforting them.

Outside the noise of the tumult fades away. Some time goes by. Then the dull sound of steps and a tiny flickering light coming from the dark depth.

« Are You there, Master? » asks a voice that wants to be heard but is afraid of being heard.

« Yes, Zacharias, I am here. »

« Praise be Jehovah! Have I kept You waiting? I had to wait for the others to rush to the other exits. Come, Master... Your apostles... I have been able to tell Simon to go all together towards Bezetha and wait there. We go down here... There is not much light, but it's a safe way. It takes us down to the cisterns... and we come out near the Kidron. An old way. Not always used for a good purpose. But this time it is... And that sanctifies it... »

They continue to go down in the deep shade broken only by the flickering light of the lamp, until a different gleam is seen down at the bottom... and beyond it some green appears in the distance... A railing, so heavy and thick that it looks like a door, is at the end of the tunnel.

« Master, I have saved You. You can go. But listen to me. Do not come back for some time. I could not serve You every time without being noticed. And... forget, all of you must forget this passage and me who brought you here » says Zacharias, working some devices of the heavy railing, which he opens just enough to let them go out. And he repeats: « Forget all about this, for my sake. »

« Be not afraid. None of us will speak. And may God be with you for your charity. » Jesus raises His hand and lays it on the bowed head of the young man.

He goes out followed by His cousins and the others. He finds Himself in a small wild open space, covered with bramble, so small that it can hardly contain them all, facing the Mount of Olives. A very steep path runs down among the bramble towards the torrent.

« Let us go. We will climb up again to the height of the Gate of the Sheep and I will go to Joseph's with My brothers, whilst you will go to Bezetha to get the others and will then join Me. We will go to Nob tomorrow evening after sunset. »

#### **506. In Joseph's House at Sephoris. Little Martial Named Manasseh.**

7th October 1946.

The house of Joseph is not the house of Joseph of Arimathea, but that of an old Galilean of Sephoris, a friend of Alphaeus' sons, particularly of the older ones, as he was a friend, and perhaps a distant relative of old Alphaeus, now dead. And, if I am not mistaken, he has business dealings with the sons of Zebedee for the dried fish trade, as the fish is imported from the lake of Gennesaret to the capital with other products of Galilee, dear to the Galileans who have emigrated to Jerusalem. That is what I gather

from the conversation of Alphaeus' two sons and John with Thomas.

Jesus instead is a little behind with Manaen, to whom He entrusts the task of going to Joseph of Arimathea and to Nicodemus asking them to call on Him. This Manaen does at once. Jesus joins the three apostles again for a moment, exhorting them once again to be prudent when speaking « for the sake of the levite who has saved them », then He parts from them and strides away towards a little path...

But John soon joins Him.

« Why have you come? »

« We could not leave You all alone... so I came. »

« And do you think that you could defend Me by yourself against so many? »

« I am not sure. But at least I would die before You. And I would be satisfied. »

« You will die a long time after Me, John. But do not regret it. If the Most High leaves you in the world, He does so that you may serve Him and His Word. »

« And after... »

« After you will continue to serve. As long as you should live to serve Me as both our hearts would wish. But you will serve Me also after your death. »

« How shall I do that, my Master? If I am in Heaven with You, I will worship You. I shall not be able to serve You on the Earth after I have departed from it... »

« Do you really think so? Well, I tell you that you will serve Me until My new advent, the final one. Many things will dry up before the last times, just as rivers dry up, and from blue wholesome flowing water-courses they become dusty mould and arid stones. But you will still be a river resounding My word and reflecting My light. You will be the supreme light left to remind people of Christ. Because you will be a completely spiritual light and in the last times there will be a struggle of darkness against light, of the flesh against the spirit. Those who persevere in faith, will find strength, hope and comfort in what you have left after you, and which will still be you... and above all will still be Me, because you and I love each other, and where you are I am, and where I am you are. I promised Peter that My Church, which will have My Stone as its head and foundation, will not be demolished by the repeated and fiercer and fiercer assaults of Hell, but now I tell you that what will still be I, and that you will leave as light for those seeking the Light, will not be destroyed, notwithstanding that Hell will try to annihilate it in every way. Nay: even more! Also those who believe in Me in an imperfect manner, because although they accept Me they will not accept My Peter, will always turn to your

lighthouse like boats without pilots and without compass, which steer in their storms towards a light, because light means also salvation. »

« But what shall I leave, my Lord? I am... poor... ignorant... I have but love... »

« There you are: you will leave love. And the love for your Jesus will be word. And many, also among those who will not belong to My Church, who will not belong to any church, but will seek light and comfort as incentives to their unsatisfied spirits, for need of compassion in their grief, will come to you and will find Me. »

« I wish the first to find You were these cruel Judaeans, these Pharisees and scribes... But I am not of so much use... »

« Nothing can be added to a full vessel. But do not be discouraged... But here we are at Joseph's. Knock and let us go in. »

It is a narrow tall house, with a low storehouse on one side, ranksmelling with stacked goods; and beside the latter there is a yard which is dark because of the wall dominating it and looks almost like an inn, as inns were in those days: porticoes for goods, stables for donkeys, small rooms or dormitories for guests. Here there is a badly paved yard, a basin, two low dark stables, a rustic roofing as portico attached to the house and with a rough door opening into the storehouse. And beyond it, the house I have mentioned, old and dark, with a narrow tall door which opens onto three stone steps worn by use.

John knocks at the door and waits until a peep-hole is opened and the wrinkled face of an old woman looks through it in the dim light: « Oh! John! I'll open at once. God be with you » utters the mouth in the wrinkled face, and the door is opened with the loud noise of bolts.

« I am not alone, Mary. The Master is with me. »

« Peace also to Him, the honour of Galilee, and happy is the day bringing the feet of the Holy One to the house of a true Israelite. Come in, Lord. I am going to inform Joseph at once. He is making the last deliveries because the sun sets early in the sad month of Ethanim. »

« Leave him to his work, woman. We are stopping here until tomorrow. »

« A great joy for us. We have been waiting for You for a long time. And also a few days ago Your brother Joseph sent for news of You. But my husband will give You better information. Now, You can stay here... And I will leave You, Lord, because I am finishing baking the bread. It must be baked before sunset. If there is anything You need, John knows where to find me. »

« Go in peace. We do not need anything except hospitality. »

They remain alone for some time. Then a little swarthy face appears from behind the curtain separating the room from a corridor

and casts sidelong glances, fearful and curious at the same time.

« Who is that boy? » Jesus asks John.

« I don't know, Lord. He was not here on previous occasions. It is true that since I have been with You, I have never come here on my father's business. Come here, child. »

The boy comes forward with short steps.

« Who are you? »

« I am not telling you. »

« Why? »

« I don't want to hear bad words said to me. If you say them, I will answer back, and Joseph does not want that. »

« That's something new! Master, what do You think of that? » and John laughs, amused as he is with the reasons of the little fellow.

Jesus also smiles and lifts His hand to draw the child to Himself and watches him. He then says: « And do you know who I am? »

« Yes, I know! You are the Messiah, Who will conquer all the world, then no bad words will be spoken to children like me. »

« You are not from Israel, are you? »

« I am circumcised... and it was very painful. But... but hunger also was painful and... and not to have mummy any more... and nobody... But it hurts also to hear that one... that we... » he weeps having lost his primitive self-confidence.

« He must be a foreign orphan, John. Joseph must have accepted him out of pity and had him circumcised... » explains Jesus to John, who is amazed at the child's reasoning and tears. And Jesus lifts the boy bodily and puts him on His knees. « Tell Me your name, child. I love you. Jesus loves all children and little orphans in particular. I have one as well, and his name is Marjiam and he... »

« And I, too, because I (his thin voice becomes a hardly audible whisper) because I am a Roman... »

« I told you. And you are an orphan, are you not? »

« Yes... I do not remember my father. My mother... yes, I remember her. She died when I had already grown up... and I was left all alone, and nobody wanted me. From Caesarea on foot, following wayfarers, after the master had gone far away. And so hungry. And if I said my name, blows... Because they understood by my name, eh?! Then I came here, for a feast, and I was hungry. I went into the stables with a caravan and I hid in the straw to eat the forage and carobs of the donkeys. And a donkey bit me and I screamed and they rushed in and wanted to hit me. But Joseph said: "No, He has done it and He says that we must do what He does. And I am taking the boy and will make him an Israelite". And he took me and looked after me with Mary and he gave me another name because mine... But my mother called me Martial... » and tears begin to stream down his cheeks once again.

« And I will call you Martial as your mother did. It was very kind

of Joseph to do what he did. You must love him. »

« Yes, but I must love You more. He says so. He always says: "if one day you should meet Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, love Him with your whole being, because it is through Him that you have been saved from error". Mary, in the other room, was saying to the servant that the Messiah was in the house, and I came to see who had saved me. »

« I did not know that Joseph had done this. He was so... stingy... I would never have thought that he could... Poor Joseph! Stingy and disgusted with his sons. They had no respect for his grey hair. »

« I know. But see? Perhaps this child instils new life into him and... he forgets. God rewards him thus for what he did for the boy. What is your name, now? »

« An ugly name. I like only the beginning of it, because it is like mine: Manasseh is my name!... But Mary, who understands, calls me "Man". » And the boy repeats it with such a desolate expression that Jesus and John cannot help smiling.

And Jesus to comfort him explains: « Manasseh is a name with a kind meaning for us. It means: the Lord has made me forget all my suffering. Joseph gave it to you meaning that you will make him forget all his grief. And you will do so, My child, to be grateful to him. You yourself with your new name say that the Lord has loved you so much that he has given you a new father, a new mother and a home. Is it not so? »

« Yes, when it is explained thus, yes... But Joseph says that I must forget also my house. I do not want to forget my mother! »

Jesus looks at John, and John looks at the Master and above the dark head of the boy they exchange meaningful glances...

« Your mother is not to be forgotten. Joseph did not make himself clear, or, more likely, you have misunderstood him. He certainly meant that you must forget all the grief of the past, the sorrow for your house, because now you have this one and you must be happy. »

« Ah! that's all right. And Mary is good to me and makes me happy. Even now she is baking cakes. I will go and see whether they are ready and I will bring some to You as well » and he slides down from Jesus' knees and runs out of the room. The noise of his bare feet fades away in the long corridor.

« There is always this hard tendency even in the best among us, They pretend what is impossible! The children of God's people are more severe than God Himself! Poor child! Can one expect a child to forget his mother because he is now circumcised? I will tell Joseph. »

« I did not really know that he had done this. My father, like many Galileans, comes here at festivals. And he has not spoken to me about this as if he knew nothing about it... But I hear Joseph's

voice... »

Jesus stands up and so does John, ready to greet with due respect the landlord who is coming in and who, in turn, bows repeatedly and ends by kneeling at Jesus' feet.

« Stand up, Joseph. I have come, as you see. »

« Forgive me if I kept You waiting. Friday is always a busy day! Hail, John. Have you news of Zebedee? »

« Not since the Tabernacles, when I saw him. »

« Well, I can tell you that he is well and so is Salome. Fresh news. This morning's. With the last delivery of fish. And I can also tell You, Master, that Your relatives are all well at Nazareth. The man who came will depart the day after the Sabbath. If you wish to send word... Are you alone? »

« No. The others will be here shortly... »

« Very well! There is room for everybody. This is a faithful house. I am sorry that Mary has been busy baking the bread and I with sales. We left you all alone... We failed to honour and keep You company as befits a guest. And a great guest! »

« A son of God like you, Joseph. Those who follow the Law of God are all equal. »

« Eh! no. You are You. I am not a fool like these Judaeans. You are the Messiah! »

« That is by the will of God. But by My will and duty I am a son of the Law like you. »

« Eh! Those who slander You cannot say and do what You are saying now and You always do! »

« But you do much of what I teach. I have seen the boy, Joseph... »

« Ah! Have You seen him? He came! He knows that I do not want that! In Your case... I am glad. But it might have been someone else... »

« So? What would have happened? »

« That... I do not like that, that's it! »

« Why, Joseph? Not to be praised? Your thought is praiseworthy. But the child might think that you are ashamed to show him... »

« And it's true! »

« True? Why? Tell Me. »

« Well. The boy is not a Hebrew born of Hebrews, not even of proselytes, or of a Hebrew mother and heathen father. He is the son of two Romans, a freed couple who lived in the house of a Roman at Caesarea on Sea. He kept the child while he remained there. But when he went away, he left the boy who remained alone. The Hebrews obviously would not accept him. The Romans... You know what the Romans are like... And those Romans of Caesarea above all! The boy, begging... »

« Yes, I know. He arrived here and You accepted him. God has marked your deed in Heaven. »

« And I had him circumcised! And I changed his name. His name! Pagan! Idolatrous! But I do not want him to mix with people and to remember his past. »

« Why, Joseph! » Jesus asks kindly and He continues: « The boy suffers for that. He remembers his mother. It is understandable! »

« But it is also understandable that I should not wish to be criticised for accepting a... »

« An innocent. Nothing else, Joseph. Why are you afraid of the opinion of men, when a higher judgement, the divine one, confirms that your action is a holy one? Why are you ashamed, out of respect for public opinion, or for fear of retaliation, of a good deed? Why do you want to set for the boy an example of duplicity, such as arises from changing his name and cancelling his past, out of fear of being prejudiced? Why do you want to instil into the child contempt for his father and mother? See, Joseph, you have accomplished a praiseworthy deed, but you are covering it with dust, with such... imperfect ideas. You imitated one of My actions. You received My words. Which is good. But why do you not make My imitation perfect by completing it candidly and saying: "Yes. The boy was a Roman. And I did not feel disgust at him, because he is a son of the Creator like you. I only wanted him to be in our Law and I had him circumcised"? Really... The true circumcision is about to come and the new incision will be made in men's hearts, from which the suffocating ring of treble concupiscence will be removed, thus even if the child had remained innocent until that time... But I do not wish to reproach you for that. You, a Hebrew, did the right thing in making him a Hebrew. But leave him his name. Oh! In future how many people named Martial, and Caius, and Felix, and Cornelius, and Claudius and so forth, will belong to the Christ and to Heaven! That is possible also for the boy, who knows nothing about Hebrews and Gentiles, and who will become of age when the new and true Law will be established with the new Temple and new priests, and not as you think, and he will be examined by God and found worthy of His new Temple. Leave him with the name given to him by his mother. It is still a motherly caress to him. I understand what you meant by calling him Manasseh. But let him be Martial. And to those who ask you about him, you may say: "Yes, he is Martial. Almost like the disciple of the Christ, the boy to whom Mary gave that name". Be brave in goodness, Joseph. And you will be great, so great. »

« Master... as You wish. I do not want to upset You. And do You think that... I did the right thing also as a man? »

« Yes, you did. Your sorrow has made you good. So everything you have done is well done. And this deed is a good one. »

Some knocks at the main door interrupt the conversation.

## 507. The Old Priest Matan (or Natan).

8th October 1946.

When Peter enters the house, he has the same depressed gesture as he had at the Jordan after wading at Bethabara: as if he were exhausted he throws himself onto the first seat he finds, and holds his head in his hands. The others are not so dejected, but they are all more or less upset, pale looking, I would say bewildered. The sons of Alphaeus, James of Zebedee and Andrew hardly reply to the greetings of Joseph of Sephoris and of his wife, who arrives with an old maidservant and some new bread still warm and various foodstuffs. There are traces of tears on Marjiam's cheeks. Isaac rushes towards Jesus, takes His hand and caressing it he whispers: « It is always like the night of the slaughter... And You are safe once again. Oh! my Lord, for how long? For how long will You be able to save Yourself? » His words make the others talkative and they all begin to speak, although confusedly, telling of the ill-treatments, threats and fear they suffered...

There is another knock at the door.

« Alas, have they followed us?! I said that it was wise to come few at a time!... » says the Iscariot.

« Yes, it would have been better. They are shadowing us all the time. But now... » says Bartholomew.

Joseph himself, although somewhat reluctantly, goes to look at the peep-hole, while his wife says: « From the terrace you can descend to the stables and thence into the rear kitchen garden. I will show you... » But while she sets out, her husband exclaims: « Joseph the Elder! What an honour! » and he opens the door letting in Joseph of Arimathea.

« Peace to You, Master. I was there and I saw... Manaen met me while I was coming out of the Temple disgusted to death, as I was not able to intervene, to do anything, in order to be more useful to You, and... Oh! you are here as well, Judas of Keriioth? You could do it, since you are the friend of so many! Do you not feel it is your duty, as you are His apostle? »

« You are a disciple... »

« No. If I were, I would follow Him like many others. I am a friend of His. »

« It's the same thing. »

« No. Lazarus also is His friend, but you are not going to tell me that he is a disciple... »

« He is, in his soul. »

« All those who are not demons are disciples of His word, because they realise that it is the word of Wisdom. »

The petty quarrel between Joseph and Judas of Keriioth comes to an end as Joseph of Sephoris, who only now realises that something unpleasant has taken place, questions this one and that

one with interest and some sorrow. « Joseph of Alphaeus must be told! He must be told. And I will entrust... What do you want of me, Joseph? » he asks addressing the Elder who has touched his shoulder as if he wanted to ask him something.

« Nothing. I only wanted to congratulate you on your healthy look. This is a good Israelite: faithful and just in everything. Eh! I know. We can say of him that God has tested and known him... »

Another knock at the door. The two Josephs go together towards the door to open it and I see Joseph of Arimathea bend to say something in the ear of the other one, who reacts with great surprise and turns round for a moment to look at the apostles. He then opens the door.

Nicodemus and Manaen come in followed by all the shepherd disciples present in Jerusalem, that is, Jonathan and the exdisciples of the Baptist. Then, with them, there is John, the priest, with another very old man and Nicolaus. And, in the rear, Nike with the young girl entrusted to her by Jesus, and Annaleah with her mother. They remove the veils covering their faces, which look upset.

« Master! What is happening? I heard... From people first and then from Manaen... The town is full of this rumour, like a buzzing beehive and those who love You are rushing about looking for You wherever they think You may be. They have certainly come to your house as well, Joseph... I was going to Lazarus' house, too... It's too much! How did You manage to get out of trouble? »

« Providence watched over Me. The women disciples should not weep but they ought to bless the Eternal Father and fortify their hearts. And thanks and blessings to all of you. Love and justice are not completely dead in Israel. And that consoles Me. »

« Yes, Master, but do not go to the Temple any more. Stay away for a long time, and don't go there! » They all agree in repeating the words and the anxious « don't go » re-echoes among the robust walls of the old house in voices of imploring warning.

Little Martial, hidden goodness knows where, hears the noise and rushes towards the room out of curiosity, and peeps through the aperture of the curtains. He sees Mary and goes towards her taking shelter in her arms for fear of being reproached by Joseph of Sephoris. But Joseph is too excited and busy listening to this one and that one, giving advice and approving, and so forth, to pay attention to him, and he notices him only when the boy, to whom old Mary has said something, goes to Jesus and kisses Him throwing his arms round His neck. Jesus embraces him with one arm, drawing him towards Himself, while He replies to the many people who are telling Him what they think is best to do.

« No. I am not moving from here. You may go to Lazarus, who was waiting for Me, and tell him that I cannot go. I, a Galilean and

a friend of the family for years, am staying here until tomorrow evening. Then I will decide where to go... »

« You always say so, then You go back there, but we will not let You go back again. At least I will not. I really thought You were doomed... » says Peter while two tears well in his bulging eyes.

« I have never seen the like. And it's enough. I have made up my mind. If You do not reject me... I am too old for the altar, by now, but I am still strong enough to die for You. And I will die, if necessary, between the sanctuary and the altar, like wise Zechariah, or Onias the defensor of the Temple and of the Treasury, I will die outside the sacred enclosure to which I have devoted all my life. But You will open a holier place to me! Oh! I can no longer bear the abomination! Why did my eyes have to see so much? The abomination seen by the Prophet is already within the walls and it is rising and rising like the impetuous water of a flood on the point of submerging a town! It is rising and rising, invading courts and porches, overflowing steps, advancing further and further! It is rising and is already about to strike against the Holy of Holies! The muddy water is already lapping on the stones paving the holy place! Their precious hues are darkened! The feet of the Priest are soiled with it! His tunic is soaked with it! And the Ephod is made dirty! The stones of the Rational are dimmed by it and its words can no longer be read! Oh! The waves of the abomination are rising to the face of the High Priest and soiling it, and the Holiness of the Lord is under a crust of mud and his tiara is like a piece of cloth which has fallen into a muddy pond. Mud! Mud! But is it rising from outside, or from the top of Moria is it flowing over the town and all over Israel? Father Abraham! Father Abraham! Did you not want to light the fire of the sacrifice there, so that the holocaust of your faithful heart might shine brightly? Slush now gurgles where the fire was to be! Isaac is among us, and the people are immolating him. But if the Victim is pure... if the Victim is pure... the sacrificers are filthy. Anathema on us! On the mountain the Lord will see the abomination of His people!... Ah! » and the old man who is with John, the priest, drops on the ground covering his face and weeping desolately.

« I brought him to You... He has been wishing for that for such a long time... But today, after what he saw, no one could hold him any longer... Old Matan (or Natan) is often inspired with prophetic spirit, and if his eyesight is becoming dimmer and dimmer, his spiritual vision is becoming brighter and brighter. Accept my friend, Lord » says John, the priest.

« I do not reject anybody. Stand up, priest, and raise your spirit. High above there is no mud, and he who knows how to stay high above is not touched by mud. »

The old man before getting up, full of veneration, takes the lowest

hem of Jesus' tunic and kisses it.

The women, and Annaleah in particular, are weeping under their veils, still deeply moved and the words of the old man increase their weeping. Jesus calls them, and with lowered heads they come near Him from the corner where they were staying. If Nike and Annaleah's mother are successful in controlling their tears, concealing them almost completely, the young woman disciple is sobbing loudly, heedless of those who are watching her with different feelings.

« Forgive her, Master. She owes her life to You and she loves You. It is impossible for her to believe that they can harm You. And then she has been left so... lonely and so... sad after... » says her mother.

« Oh! it is not that! No, it is not that! Lord! Master! My Saviour! I... I... » Annaleah is unable to speak, partly because of her sobbing, partly out of shame or something else.

« She was afraid of reprisals because she is a disciple. That is certainly the reason. Many are going away because of that... » says the Iscariot.

« Oh! no! Even less so! Man, you do not understand anything, or you lend your thoughts to other people. But You know, Lord, why I am weeping. I was afraid that You were dead and that You had forgotten the promise... » she says, ending with a sigh, after uttering the first words vigorously, rebelling against Judas' insinuation.

Jesus replies to her: « I never forget. Be not afraid. Go home, in peace, awaiting the hour of My triumph and of your peace. Go. The sun is about to set. Withdraw, women. And may peace be with you. »

« Lord, I am not happy to leave You... » says Nike.

« Obedience is love. »

« True, Master. But why can I not follow You like Eliza? »

« Because you are as useful to Me here as she is at Nob. Go, Nike. Let some men escort the women so that no one may importune them. »

Manaen and Jonathan are ready to obey, but Jesus stops Jonathan asking him: « So, are you going back to Galilee? »

« Yes, Master, the day after the Sabbath. My master is sending me. »

« Have you room in the wagon? »

« I am by myself, Master. »

« Then you will take Marjiam and Isaac with you. You, Isaac, know what you have to do. And you, too, Marjiam... »

« Yes, Master » reply the two, Isaac with his mild smile, Marjiam with a tremor of tears in his voice and on his lips.

Jesus caresses him, and Marjiam, forgetting all reservedness,

throws himself on His chest saying: « Leave You... now that everybody is persecuting You!... Oh! my Master! I shall never see You again!... You have been all my Good. I found everything in You!... Why are You sending me away? Let me die with You! Of what importance is life to me, if I do not have You? »

« I say to you what I said to Nike. Obedience is love. »

« I will go! Bless me, Jesus! »

Jonathan goes away with Manaen, Nike and the other three women. Also the other disciples go away in small groups.

Only when the room, previously overcrowded, is almost empty, the absence of Judas of Kerioth is noticed. And many are surprised, because he was there shortly before, and he has not been given any order.

« He must have gone to do some shopping for us » says Jesus to prevent comments, and He continues to speak to Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, the only ones left besides the eleven apostles and Marjiam, who is close to Jesus, anxious to enjoy His company during these last hours. Jesus is thus between Marjiam, an adolescent, and Martial, a boy, both swarthy, lean, equally unhappy in their youth, and equally accepted by two good Israelites in Jesus' name.

Joseph of Sephoris and his wife have prudently withdrawn to leave the Master free.

Nicodemus asks: « But who is this boy? »

« He is Martial. A boy that Joseph has taken as son. »

« I did not know. »

« No one, or almost no one, knows. »

« He is a very humble man. Anybody else would have made his gesture known » remarks Joseph.

« Do you think so?... Go, Martial. Take Marjiam to see the house... » says Jesus. And when the two have gone, He resumes speaking: « You are mistaken, Joseph. How difficult it is to judge according to justice! »

« But, Lord! To take in an orphan, because he is certainly an orphan, and not boast about it, is surely humility. »

« The boy, his name tells you, is not from Israel... »

« Ah! now I see. He does the right thing then in keeping him hidden. »

« But he has been circumcised... »

« It does not matter. You know... Also John of Endor was... But he was the cause of reproach for You. Joseph, a Galilean in addition, might have trouble, despite the circumcision. There are so many orphans in Israel as well... Certainly with that name... and his features... »

« How "Israel"-minded you all are, even the best! Even in doing good deeds you do not understand and you are not able to be perfect!

Do you not yet understand that One Only is the Father of Heaven, and that each creature is His child? Do you not yet understand that man can have only one reward and only one punishment and that it is really a reward or a punishment? Why become slaves to the fear of men? But that is the fruit of the corruption of the divine Law, which has been altered and oppressed to such an extent by petty human laws, as to dull and obscure even the thought of the just people who practise it. In the Mosaic Law, therefore divine, in the pre-Mosaic law, merely moral or risen through celestial inspiration, is it perhaps stated that those who did not belong to Israel, could not become part of it? Do we not read in Genesis: "When they are eight days old all your male children must be circumcised, no matter whether they be born within the household or bought from a foreigner not one of your descendants"? That was stated. Any further addition is your own. I told Joseph and I am telling you. The ancient circumcision will soon no longer have much importance. A new and truer one will replace it and on a nobler part. But while the first one lasts and you, out of loyalty to the Lord, apply it to males born of you or adopted by you, do not be ashamed of having done it also on the flesh of other races. The flesh belongs to the sepulchre, the soul to God. The flesh is circumcised because it is not possible to circumcise what is spiritual. But the holy sign shines on the spirit. And the spirit comes from the Father of all men. Meditate on that. »

There is silence, then Joseph of Arimathea stands up and says: « I am going, Master. Come to my house tomorrow. »

« No, it is better if I do not come. »

« Then come to me, to the house on the Mount of Olives, on the road to Bethany. There is peace and... »

« No, not even there. I will go to the Mount of Olives, to pray... But My spirit is seeking solitude. Please excuse Me. »

« As You wish, Master. But... do not go to the Temple. Peace to You. »

« Peace to you. »

The two go away...

« I would like to know where Judas has gone! » exclaims James of Zebedee. « I would say to the poor people. But his purse is here. »

« Do not worry... He will come... »

Mary of Joseph comes in with some lamps, as the light no longer shines through a thick sheet of mica placed as skylight in the large room, and also the two boys come back in.

« I am glad to leave You with one whose name is almost like mine. So, when You call him, You will remember me » says Marjiam.

Jesus draws him to Himself.

Judas also come in. The maidservant opened the door to him. He

is bold, smiling, frank! « Master, I wanted to see... The storm has calmed down. And I escorted the women... That virgin is so fearful! I did not say anything to You because You would have stopped me, and I wanted to see whether there was any danger for You. But no one thinks any more about it. The streets are empty on Sabbaths. »

« Very well. Let us stay in peace here now and tomorrow... »

« You are not going back to the Temple already! » shout the apostles.

« No. To our synagogue, as good Galilean believers. »

### **508. The Cure of the Man Born Blind.**

10th October 1946.

Jesus goes out with His apostles and Joseph of Sefhoris, turning His steps towards the synagogue. The clear limpid day makes people glad, like a promise of springtime after windy cloudy winter days. Thus many people of Jerusalem are in the streets, some going to synagogues, some coming back from them or from other places, some with their families, wishing to leave the town and enjoy the sunshine in the country. From Herod's Gate, which is visible from the house of Joseph of Sefhoris, one can see people go out to enjoy themselves beyond the walls, in the open: a plunge into the green vegetation, into the free open space, away from the narrow streets between high buildings. I think that the rural strip which ran around Jerusalem was purposely wanted by the citizens, who wanted to conciliate the walking limitations of the Sabbath with their wish for air and sunshine, to be enjoyed in the open, and not only on roof-terraces of houses. But Jesus is not going towards Herod's Gate. On the contrary He turns His back to it, bending His steps towards the town centre.

But He has only taken a few steps in the wider street, into which opens the little street where Joseph of Sefhoris' house is, when Judas of Kerioth draws His attention to a young man who is proceeding towards them feeling his way by touching the wall with a stick, raising up his face deprived of eyes, in the gait typical of blind people. His garments are poor, although clean, and he must be well known to many people in Jerusalem, because more than one point him out, and some go towards him saying: « Man, you have lost your way today. You have already passed the Moria streets and you are in Bezetha. »

« I am not begging for alms today » replies the blind man with a smile, and still smiling he proceeds towards the northern part of the town.

« Master, look at him. His eyelids are sealed. Nay, I would say that he has no eyelids at all. His forehead is joined to his cheeks

without any cavity and no eyeballs appear to be underneath. The poor fellow was born like that. And he will die like that without seeing even once the light of the sun or the face of a man. Now tell me, Master. He has certainly sinned to be punished so severely. But if he was born blind, as he definitely was, can he have sinned before being born? Perhaps his parents committed sin and God punished them by allowing him to be born thus? »

Also the other apostles and Isaac and Marjiam press round the Master to hear His reply. And two well-to-do men of Jerusalem, who were a little behind the blind man, quicken their paces hastening towards Jesus, as if they were attracted by the height of the Master, Who towers above the crowd. There is also Joseph of Arimathea, who remains at a distance, and leaning against a main door raised on two steps, he looks around watching all the faces.

Jesus replies and His words are clearly heard in the silence which has been created: « Neither he nor his parents have sinned more than any man sins, and perhaps they have sinned less. Because poverty often refrains from sin. But he was born thus, so that once again the power and works of God may be revealed through him. I am the Light which has come to the world so that those of the world who have forgotten God, or have lost His spiritual image, may see and remember Him, and those who seek God, or already belong to Him, may be confirmed in their faith and love. The Father sent Me that I may complete the knowledge of God in Israel and in the world, in the time still granted to Israel. I, therefore, must accomplish the work of Him Who sent Me, testifying that I can do what He can, because I am one with Him, and the world may know and see that the Son is not different to the Father, and may believe in Me for what I am. Later the night will come when it will no longer be possible to work, and it will be dark, and those who have not engraved in themselves My sign and their faith in Me, will no longer be able to do so in the darkness, confusion, sorrow, desolation and ruin, which will overwhelm these places and astonish spirits with the orgasm of anguish. But as long as I am in the world, I am Light and Witness, Word, Way and Life, Wisdom, Power and Mercy. So go, meet the man born blind and bring him here to Me. »

« Will you go, Andrew. I want to stay here and see what the Master does » replies Judas pointing at the Master, Who has bent down on the dusty road, has spat on the ground and with His finger is mixing the dust with the spittle forming a pellet of mud. While Andrew, who is always obliging, goes to get the blind man, who is about to turn into the narrow street where the house of Joseph of Sefhoris is, Jesus spreads the mud on both forefingers and remains thus, with His hands raised, as priests hold them at Holy Mass, at the Gospel or at the Epistle. Judas withdraws from

his place saying to Matthew and Peter: « Since you are not very tall, come here and you will see better. » And he stands at the back, almost concealed by the sons of Alphaeus and by Bartholomew, who are tall.

Andrew comes back holding by the hand the blind man who is anxiously repeating: « I don't want money. Let me go. I know where the man named Jesus is. And I am going to ask... »

« This is Jesus, He is here in front of you » says Andrew stopping in front of the Master.

Jesus, contrary to His usual habit, does not ask the man anything. He at once spreads the little mud, which He has on His forefingers, on the closed eyelids and says: « And now go, as quickly as you can, to the Pool of Siloam, and do not stop to speak to anybody. »

The blind man, his face soiled with mud, remains perplexed for a moment and moves his lips to speak. He then closes them and obeys. His first steps are slow, as if he were pensive or disappointed. Then he quickens his pace, grazing the wall with his stick, walking faster and faster, as far as it is possible for a blind man, as if he felt being guided...

The two men of Jerusalem laugh sarcastically shaking their heads and go away. Joseph of Arimathea, and this amazes me, follows them without even a word of greeting to the Master, retracing his steps, that is, going towards the Temple, whilst he was coming from that direction. Thus, the blind man, the two men and Joseph of Arimathea go towards the southern part of the town, while Jesus goes westwards and I lose sight of Him, because the Lord wants me to follow the blind man and his followers.

After passing through Bezetha they all enter the valley which lies between Moria and Zion - I think that in the past I heard it being called Tyropoeon - they go along it as far as Ophel, they walk round it, they come out on the street leading to the Siloam Pool, always in the following order: first the blind man who must be well known in that quarter of common people, then the two men, last, at some distance, Joseph of Arimathea.

Joseph stops near a poor house, and he is half-hidden by a box hedge that sticks out surrounding the little kitchen garden of the poor house. The two men instead go near the pool and watch the blind man who cautiously approaches the large pool and feeling the damp wall puts one hand into the cistern and withdraws it dripping water and washes his eyes once, twice, three times. At the third time he drops his stick and presses his face with the other hand, uttering a cry which sounds like a painful one.

He then removes his hands slowly and his previous painful cry changes into a shout of joy: « Oh! Most High! I can see! » and he throws himself on the ground overwhelmed with emotion, his

hands shielding his eyes and pressing his temples, anxious to see but troubled by the light, and he repeats: « I can see! I can see! So this is the earth! And this is the light! This is the grass which I knew only through its coolness... » He stands up and stoops, like one carrying a weight, his weight of joy, he goes to the stream of the overflowing water and looks at it flowing brightly and joyfully and he whispers: « And this is the water... There you are! That's how I felt it with my fingers (he dips his hand into it) it is cold and cannot be held, but I did not know you... Ah! Beautiful! Beautiful! How beautiful everything is! » He looks up and sees a tree... he approaches it, touches it, stretches out a hand, draws a little branch to himself, looks at it and laughs, laughs, he screens his eyes with his hand and looks at the sky, at the sun, and two tears stream down from his virgin eyelids open to contemplate the world... And he lowers his eyes on the grass where a flower undulates on its stem and sees himself reflected in the water, and he looks at himself and says: « That's how I am! » and he is amazed when he sees a dove come to drink a little farther away, and a little goat tearing off the last leaves of a wild rose bush, and a woman coming to the pool with a baby on her breast. And that woman reminds him of his mother, whose face is unknown to him and raising his arms towards the sky he shouts: « May You be blessed, Most High, because of light, because of my mother, because of Jesus! » and he runs away, leaving his now useless stick on the ground...

The two men have not waited to see all that. As soon as they realised that the man could see, they ran towards the town. Joseph instead remains until the end, and when the blind man - who is no longer blind - darts past him towards the labyrinth of lanes of the working-class neighbourhood of Ophel, he leaves his place and retraces his steps towards the town, looking very pensive...

The Ophel suburb, which is always very noisy, is now in a real turmoil: people are running in all directions, asking questions or replying to them.

« You may have mistaken him for somebody else... »

« No, I am sure. I spoke to him saying: "But is it really you, Sidonia, nicknamed Bartholmai?", and he replied: "It's me". I wanted to ask him how it happened, but he ran away. »

« Where is he now? »

« He is certainly with his mother. »

« Who has seen him? » ask some people who have just arrived.

« I did. I did » reply many.

« But how did it happen? »

«... I saw him running without his stick, with two eyes in his face and I said: "Look! Bartholmai would be like that if... " »

« I tell you that I am still trembling. He came in shouting: "Mother, I see you!". »

« A great joy for his parents. He will now be able to help his father and earn his food... »

« That poor woman! She was so overwhelmed with joy that she was not feeling well. Oh! There is one thing! I had gone to ask for some salt and... »

« Let us go and hear the man himself... »

Joseph of Arimathea is caught in the uproar and, I do not know whether out of curiosity or spirit of imitation, he follows the crowd and ends up in a blind alley, which would lead to the Kidron, if it continued. The people crowd there overcoming with their voices the rustling noise of the water of the torrent, swollen with the autumn rains. And Joseph arrives there when, from another lane joining with this one, the two men previously mentioned come with three more: a scribe, a priest and another one whom I cannot identify by his garments. They elbow their way through the crowds arrogantly and they try to enter the house crammed with people.

The house consists of a large kitchen as black as tar, with a corner cut off by a rustic wooden partition, beyond which there is a couch and a door opening into another room with a bigger bed. Through a door on the opposite wall one can see a small kitchen garden only a few square metres large. That is all.

The cured blind man is speaking leaning on a table, replying to those asking him questions, all poor people like himself, the common people of Jerusalem, of this suburb, which is perhaps the poorest in town. His mother is looking at him, standing beside him, and is weeping drying her tears with her veil. His father, a man worn out by work, is rubbing his beard with a shaky hand.

It is impossible also for the overbearing Judaeans and doctors to go into the house and the five are compelled to listen to the words of the cured man outside.

« How were they opened? That man whose name is Jesus dirtied my eyes with some damp earth and He said to me: "Go and wash yourself in the pool of Siloam". I went there, I washed myself, my eyes opened and I could see. »

« But how did you manage to find the Rabbi? You always said that you were unlucky, because you never met Him, not even when He used to pass here going to Jonah at Gethsemane. And today, now that one never knows where He is... »

« Eh! yesterday evening one of His disciples came and he gave me two coins saying: "Why don't you try to see?". I said to him: "I have tried. But I never find Jesus Who works miracles. I have been looking for Him since He cured Annaleah, a girl of my suburb, but if I come here, He is there... and he said to me: "I am one of His apostles and He does what I want. Come to Bezetha tomorrow and look for the house of Joseph the Galilean, the one who sells dried

fish, Joseph of Sephoris, near Herod's Gate and the arch in the square, on the eastern side, and you will notice that sooner or later He will be passing there or going into the house and I will mention you to the Master". I said: "But tomorrow is the Sabbath". I wanted to say that He would not do anything on a Sabbath. He replied to me: "If you want to be cured, that is the day, because afterwards we are leaving the town and you do not know whether you will ever meet Him again". I said also: "I know that they are persecuting Him. I heard about it at the gates of the Temple enclosure, where I go to beg. So I say that now that they persecute Him, He will be less willing to be persecuted and He will not cure me on a Sabbath". And he replied: "Do as I tell you and on a Sabbath you will see the sun". And I went. Who would not have gone, when one of His apostles says so? He also said to me: "I am the one to whom He listens most and I came specially because I feel sorry for you and because I want His power to be displayed brightly after they despised Him. You, who were born blind, will make it shine. I know what I am saying. Come and you will see". And I went and I had not yet arrived at Joseph's house, when a man took me by the hand, but by his voice I knew that he was not the man who spoke to me yesterday, and he said to me: "Come with me, brother" but I did not want to go, I thought he wanted to give me some bread and money, perhaps some clothes, and I repeatedly asked him to let me go, because I had heard where I could find the man named Jesus, and he said to me: "This is Jesus, here, in front of you". But I could not see anything, because I was blind. I felt two fingers, covered with wet earth, touch me here and here, and I heard a voice say: "Go to the Siloam pool quickly and wash yourself and do not speak to anybody" and I did so. But I was down-hearted, because I was hoping to see at once, and I almost concluded that it was the joke of some heartless youngsters and I almost decided not to go. But I heard a kind of a voice within me say: "Hope and obey", so I went to the pool and I washed myself and I could see. » And the young man stops ecstatically remembering the joy of his first vision...

« Let that man come out. We want to question him » shout the five men.

The young fellow elbows his way through the crowd and goes to the door.

« Where is He Who cured you? »

« I don't know » replies the youth to whom a friend whispered: « They are scribes and priests. »

« What do you mean you do not know? You were saying just now that you knew. Do not lie to the doctors of the Law and to the priest! Woe to those who try to deceive the magistrates of the people! »

« I am not deceiving anybody. That disciple said to me: "He is in that house" and it was true because I was near it when I was taken by the hand and led to Him. But I don't know where He is now. The disciple told me that they were going away. He may be already outside the gates. »

« But where was He going? »

« And what do I know about that?! Perhaps He is going to Galilee... considering how He is treated here!... »

« You disrespectful fool, be careful how you speak, you scum of the mob! I asked you which way did He go? »

« But how can you expect me to know, if I was blind? Can a blind man say which way another man is going? »

« All right. Come with us. »

« Where are you taking me? »

« To the chiefs of the Pharisees. »

« Why? What have they got to do with me? Did they perhaps cure me, and I have to thank them? When I was blind and I used to beg, my hands never felt one of their coins, my ears never heard a merciful word of theirs, and my heart never felt their love. What shall I say to them? I have only one person to thank, in addition to my father and mother who have loved me, a poor wretch, for so many years. And that is Jesus Who cured me, loving me with His heart, as my parents loved me with theirs. I am not coming to the Pharisees. I am staying with my mother and father, enjoying the sight of their faces, while they delight in looking at my newly born eyes, so many springtimes after the one in which I was born but I did not see the light. »

« Stop chattering. Come and follow us. »

« No! I am not coming! Have you ever wiped a tear of my mother, depressed by my misfortune, or a bead of perspiration of my father, exhausted with work? I can do that now with my present appearance, and according to you I should leave them and follow you? »

« We order you to come. Orders are not given by you, but by the Temple and the chiefs of the people. If the pride of being cured blunts your mind so that you do not remember that we give orders, we will remind you. Come on! Go on! »

« But why must I come with you? What do you want of me? »

« We want you to give evidence of the fact. This is the Sabbath. The deed was accomplished on the Sabbath. It is to be recorded as a sin. A sin of yours and of that satan. »

« You are satans! You are sinners! And I should come and testify against Him Who helped me? You must be drunk! I will come to the Temple. To bless the Lord. But not more than that. I have been in the darkness of blindness for many years. But my closed eyelids obscured only my eyes. My intellect has seen the light just the same,

by the grace of God, and it tells me that I must not harm the Only Holy One in Israel. »

« Man, that's enough! Don't you know that there are punishments for those who oppose the magistrates? »

« I know nothing. I am here and I am staying here. And you had better not injure me. You can see that the whole of Ophel is on my side! »

« Yes. Leave him alone! Jackals! He is protected by God. Don't touch him! God is with the poor! God is with us, you profiteers and hypocrites! » The crowd shouts and threatens in one of those spontaneous popular demonstrations which are the outbreak of indignation of humble people against their oppressors, or the explosion of love for their protectors. And they cry out: « Woe betide you if you injure our Saviour! The Friend of the poor! The three times Holy Messiah. Woe to you! We were not afraid of the wrath of Herod or of the Chiefs, when we wanted. We are not afraid of yours, you old toothless hyenas! You jackals with blunt claws! You useless overbearing fellows! Rome does not want tumults and does not oppress the Rabbi, because He is peaceful. But Rome knows you. Go away! Away from the quarters of those whom you oppress with tithes exceeding their means, in order to have money and satisfy your hunger for pleasure and accomplish disgraceful negotiations. You are the descendants of Jason! The descendants of Simon! The torturers of the true Eleazars, of the holy Oniases. You despisers of the prophets, go away! » The tumult becomes fiercer and fiercer.

Joseph of Arimathea, who is crushed against a little wall and so far has been a diligent but passive spectator of the events, climbs on the little wall with agility unforeseeable in an old man and what is more muffled in garments and a wide mantle, and standing on the wall he shouts: « Silence, citizens. And listen to Joseph the Elder! »

One, two, ten heads turn round in the direction of the cry. They see Joseph. They shout his name. The Arimathean must be well known and must stand high in the people's favour because the cries of indignation turn into shouts of joy: « Joseph the Elder is here! Long live Joseph! Peace and long life to the just man! Peace and blessings to the benefactor of the poor! Silence! Joseph is going to speak! Silence! »

The crowd becomes silent with some difficulty and for some moments the rustling of the Kidron can be heard beyond the lane. Everybody is now looking at Joseph, as they have all forgotten what made them look in the opposite direction: the five wretched improvident men who gave rise to the uproar.

« Citizens of Jerusalem, men of Ophel, why are you allowing yourselves to be blinded with suspicion and anger? Why lack

respect and infringe the customs, since you have always been so faithful to the laws of our ancestors? What are you afraid of? Do you perhaps fear the Temple is a Molech who does not give back what he receives? Are you afraid that your judges are all blind, blinder than your friend, blind in their hearts and deaf to justice? Is it not our custom that prodigious events are testified, written and kept by those who are responsible for the Chronicles of Israel? So, also to honour the Rabbi Whom you love, let the miraculously cured man go up to the Temple to give evidence of the work He accomplished. Are you still hesitant? Well I stand surety that no harm will befall Bartholmai. And you know that I do not lie. I will escort him up there like a son dear to me, and then I will bring him back here. Believe me. And do not turn the Sabbath into a day of sin by rebelling against your chiefs. »

« What he says is right! We must not do that. We can believe him. He is a just man. His voice is always predominant in the good resolutions of the Sanhedrin. » The people consult with one another and they end up shouting: « Yes, we will trust our friend to you! » They then address the young man: « Come! Be not afraid. With Joseph of Arimathea you are as safe as you would be with your father and even safer » and they open out so that the young man may go to Joseph, who has come down from his improvised pulpit, and while he passes by they say to him: « We are coming as well. Don't be afraid! »

Joseph, in his beautiful sumptuous woollen clothes, lays one hand on the young man's shoulder and sets out. The grey worn tunic of the young fellow, and his short mantle rub against the dark red wide tunic and the even darker sumptuous mantle of the old member of the Sanhedrin. Behind them there are the five men, then a large crowd from Ophel...

They are now at the Temple, after crossing the central streets, attracting the attention of many people who point out to one another the previously blind man saying: « It's the blind fellow who used to beg! And now he has eyes! Perhaps it's one like him! No. It's certainly the same man and they are taking him to the Temple. Let's go and see » and the train becomes longer and longer until they all disappear within the walls of the Temple.

Joseph leads the young man into a hall, which is not the Sanhedrin, where there are many Pharisees and scribes. Joseph goes in with Bartholmai and the five men follow them. The common people of Ophel are pushed back into the court.

« This is the man. I brought him here myself, because I was present, without being seen, at his meeting with the Rabbi and at his recovery. And I can tell you that it was completely accidental as far as the Rabbi is concerned. The man, you will hear this yourselves, was led or rather invited to go where the Rabbi was,

by Judas of Kerioth, who is known to you. And I heard, and these two who were with me also heard because they were present, how Judas induced Jesus of Nazareth to work the miracle. I now testify here that if there is one who ought to be punished, it is neither the blind man nor the Rabbi, but the man from Kerioth who - God sees whether I am lying in saying what I think - is the only one responsible for what happened, as he provoked it with deliberate manoeuvre. That is my statement. »

« What you state does not cancel the fault of the Rabbi. If one of His disciples sins, the Master must not commit sin. And He sinned by curing this man on a Sabbath. He accomplished a servile work. »

« To spit on the ground is not a servile work. And to touch the eyes of another person is not a servile work either. I am touching the man as well, but I do not think that I am committing a sin. »

« He worked a miracle on the Sabbath. That's why He sinned. »

« To honour the Sabbath by means of a miracle is a grace of God and a sign of His bounty. It is His day. Can the Almighty not celebrate it with a miracle that makes His power shine brightly? »

« We are not here to listen to you. You are not accused. We want to question that man. It's for you to reply. How did you get your eyesight? »

« I have explained that and these people heard me. The disciple of that Jesus said to me yesterday: "Come and I will have you cured". And I came. And I felt some mud being put here and I heard a voice say to me to go to the Siloam pool and wash myself. And I did it and now I see. »

« But do you know who cured you? »

« Of course I do! Jesus. I told you. »

« But do you know exactly who Jesus is? »

« I know nothing. I am poor and ignorant. And up to a short time ago I was blind. I know that. And I know that He cured me. And if He was able to do that, God is certainly with Him. »

« Don't blaspheme! God cannot be with those who do not keep the Sabbath » shout some.

But Joseph and the Pharisees Eleazar, John and Joachim remark: « Neither can a sinner work such prodigies. »

« Have you been seduced as well by that possessed man? »

« No. We are just. And we say that if God cannot be with those who work on the Sabbath, neither can man make a fellow born blind see without the help of God » says Eleazar calmly, and the others nod in assent.

« Are you forgetting about the demon? » shout the evil-minded enemies irritably.

« I cannot believe, neither you believe, that the demon may work a deed capable of making one praise the Lord » says John the Pharisee.

« And who is praising Him? »

« This young man, his relatives, the whole of Ophel, and I with them, and with me all those who are just and God fearing in a holy way » replies Joseph.

The evil-minded ones, now held up to ridicule, not knowing what to object, assail Sidonia nicknamed Bartholmai: « What do you say of Him Who opened your eyes? »

« As far as I am concerned He is a prophet. And He is greater than Elijah with the son of the widow of Zarephath. Because Elijah brought the soul back into the boy. But this Jesus has given me what I had never lost, because I never had it: my eyesight. And if He made my eyes in a flash with nothing, except a little mud, whilst my mother had not been able to make them in nine months with flesh and blood, He must be as great as God Who made man with mud. »

« Go away! Go away! You blasphemers. Liar! Corrupted! » and they eject him as if he were possessed.

« The man is lying. It cannot be true. Everybody knows that a person born blind cannot be cured. It must be one like Bartholmai, and the Nazarene has prepared him... or... Bartholmai has never been blind. »

Upon hearing such an astonishing statement Joseph of Arimathea bursts out: « It is known since the days of Cain that hatred blinds people. But that it makes them fools was not yet known. Do you think it credible that a man may reach maturity pretending that he is blind, just to wait for... a probable and very remote clamorous event? Or that Bartholmai's parents do not recognise their son or that they lend themselves to this deception? »

« Money can do everything. And they are poor. »

« The Nazarene is poorer than they are. »

« You are lying! Sums worthy a Satrap pass through His hands! »

« But don't stay there for a moment. That money is for the poor. It is used for a good purpose, not for falsehood. »

« How you defend Him! And you are one of the Elders! »

« Joseph is right. The truth is to be told whatever the office a man may hold » says Eleazar.

« Go and call the blind man back. Make haste and bring him here again. And let others go to his parents and bring them here » shouts Helkai opening the door and giving orders to some people waiting outside. And his mouth is almost covered with foam, so much is he choking with anger.

Some people run here, some there. The first to come back is Sidonia nicknamed Bartholmai, who is surprised and annoyed. They push him into a corner watching him as a pack of hounds gaze at game... Later, after some time, his parents arrive surrounded by a crowd.

« You two come in. All the others out! »

The two go in looking frightened. They see their son in the corner, unharmed, but under arrest. His mother moans: « Son! And this was to be a happy day for us! »

« Listen to us. Is that man your son? » asks one of the Pharisees rudely.

« Of course he is our son! And who would it be if it were not him? »

« Are you really certain? »

The father and mother are so amazed at the question, that they look at each other before replying.

« Answer my question! »

« Noble Pharisee, do you think that a father and a mother may be deceived with regard to their child? » says the father humbly.

« But... can you swear that... Yes, that for no amount of money you have been asked to say that this is your son, whereas he is one like him? »

« Asked to say? And by whom? Swear? Yes, a thousand times, in the name of the altar and in the Name of God, if you wish so! » His assertion is so resolute that it would discourage the most pigheaded person.

But the Pharisees are not disheartened! They ask: « But was your son not born blind? »

« Yes, he was. His eyelids were closed and there was nothing under them... »

« How come he can now see, he has eyes and his eyelids are open? You are not going to tell me that eyes grow just like that, like flowers at springtime, and that an eyelid opens just like the calyx of a flower!... » says another Pharisee laughing sarcastically.

« We know that this man has really been our son for almost thirty years and that he was born blind, but we do not know how he can now see or who opened his eyes. In any case, ask him. He is not an idiot or a little boy. He is well on in age. Ask him and he will tell you. »

« You are lying. In your house he said how he was cured and by whom. Why do you say that you do not know? » shouts one of the two men who had always followed the blind man.

« We were so dumbfounded with amazement that we did not listen to him » the two reply apologetically.

The Pharisees turn to Sidonia nicknamed Bartholmai saying: « Come here. And give glory to God, if you can! Don't you know that He Who touched your eyes is a sinner? Don't you know? Well, you had better know. We are telling you because we know. »

« Who knows! It may well be as you say. I don't know whether He is a sinner or not. I only know that previously I was blind, and now I can see, and quite clearly. »

« But what did He do to you? How did He open your eyes? »

« I have already told you and you did not listen to me. Now you want to hear it all over again? Why? Do you want to become His disciples? »

« Fool! You can be the disciple of that man. We are the disciples of Moses. And we know everything about Moses and that God spoke to him. But of this man we know nothing, where He comes from and who He is, and no prodigy of Heaven points Him out as a prophet. »

« And that is just what is wonderful! That you do not know where He comes from and you say that no prodigy points Him out as a just man. But He opened my eyes and none of us in Israel had ever been able to do that, not even the love of a mother and the sacrifices of my father. But there is one thing that we all know, both you and I, that is, that God does not hear sinners, but only those who fear God and do His will. In no part of the world it has ever been heard that anyone was able to open the eyes of a man born blind, but this Jesus has done that. If He did not come from God, He would not have been able to do it. »

« You were born a sinner through and through and you are as disfigured in your spirit as you were in your body and even more so, and you pretend to teach us? Go away, cursed abortion and become a demon with your seducer. Go away, all of you, foolish sinful populace! » and they eject the son, father and mother, as if they were three lepers.

The three go away quickly, followed by their friends. But when he is outside the enclosure, Sidonia turns round and says: « And you can stay where you are, and say what you like. The truth is that I see and I praise God for it. You may be demons, not the Good One Who cured me. »

« Be quiet, son! Be quiet! Lest it should be detrimental to us!... » moans his mother.

« Oh! mother! Has the air in that hall poisoned your soul, as you used to teach me to praise God in my misfortune, and now you cannot thank Him in our joy and you are afraid of men? If God has loved me and you so much as to grant us the miracle, will He not be able to defend us from a handful of men? »

« Our son is right, woman. Let us go to our synagogue to praise the Lord, since they have driven us out of the Temple. And let us go at once before the Sabbath is over... »

And hastening their paces they disappear in the lanes in the valley.

### **509. At Nob. Judas of Keriath Lies.**

11th October 1946.

Jesus is at Nob and He must have been there only for a short time as He is organizing Himself, dividing the twelve apostles into

three groups of four persons each, to distribute them in houses. He keeps Peter, John, Judas Iscariot and Simon Zealot with Himself, while James of Zebedee is the head of the group consisting of Matthew, Judas of Alphaeus and Philip, and Bartholomew is put at the head of the third group with James of Alphaeus, Andrew and Thomas subjected to him.

« After supper you will go where you have been offered hospitality, and you will come back here in the morning, and I will tell you what you have to do. We shall be all together at meal times. Remember what I have told you many times: that you must preach My Doctrine also through your way of living, your way of living together with one another and with those who receive you in their houses. So be sober, patient, honest in speaking, acting, in looking, so that justice may issue from you like a perfume. You know how the eyes of the world are always watching us, to slander us or to study us, and also out of veneration. But those respecting us are the least of the many eyes watching us. And yet we must take the greatest care of those few, because the study of the world is pointed at their faith to pound it, and everything serves as a weapon to destroy the love of good people for Me and consequently for you. So do not lend a hand to the world with an unholy way of living and do not increase the burden of those who have to defend their faith from the snares of My opponents by scandalising them. Scandal perplexes souls, turns them away, weakens them. Woe to the apostle who scandalises souls. He sins against his Master and against his neighbour, against God and the flock of God. I trust you. Ensure that My grief, which is so deep, is not increased by more grief originating from you. »

« Be not afraid, Master. No sorrow will be caused to You by us, unless Satan leads us all astray » says Bartholomew.

Anastasia, who is in the kitchen with Eliza, comes in and says: « Supper is ready, Master. Come down while the food is still warm. You will refresh Yourself. »

« Let us go. » And Jesus stands up following the woman down the little staircase which from the upper room, where some beds have already been prepared, descends to the little kitchen garden. He then enters the kitchen, which is made pleasant by a lively fire.

Old John is near the fireside with Eliza who is busy with the food and turns round to look with a maternal smile at Jesus coming in. She then hastens to pour into a large tureen the wheat or barley cooked in milk, which I already saw Mary of Alphaeus serve at Nazareth before the departure of John and Syntyche.

« Well. I have always remembered that Mary Clopas told me that You like it. And I had kept the best honey to make it also for Marjiam... I am sorry that the boy has not come... »

« Nike kept him with Isaac, as they are leaving tomorrow at

dawn, and she is taking advantage of the wagon as far as Jericho to fulfil the mission of which you are aware... »

« Which mission, Master? » asks the Iscariot with interest.

« A very womanly mission. To bring up an infant. But the infant does not need milk, but faith, because he is an infant in spirit. But a woman is always a mother, and she knows how to do such things. And once she has understood!... She is as good as a man, with the power of her maternal kindness over and above. »

« How kind You are to us, Master! » says Eliza looking at Jesus so lovingly as if she were caressing Him.

« I am truthful, Eliza. We people of Israel, and we are not the only ones, are accustomed to look at and consider woman an inferior being. No. If she is subjected to man, which is just, if she has been struck more severely by punishment for Eve's sin, if her mission is destined to be carried out among veils and in dim light, without showy deeds or words, if everything takes place in her as if it were choked by a curtain, she is not less strong or less capable than men. Even without remembering the great women of Israel, I tell you that there is great strength in the heart of a woman. In her heart. As in the intelligence of us men. And I tell you that the situation of women is about to change with regard to customs as well as with regard to many other things. And it will be just because a Woman will obtain grace and redemption particularly for women as I will do for all men. »

« A woman? And how can You expect a woman to redeem? » remarks Judas of Kerioth with a mocking laugh.

« I solemnly tell you that She is already redeeming. Do you know what to redeem means? »

« Of course I do. It is to remove from Sin. »

« Yes, but to remove from Sin would not help much, because the Opponent is eternal and he would begin to lay snares all over again. But a voice came from the Earthly Paradise, the Voice of God, saying: "I will create enmity between you and the Woman... She will crush your head and you will lay snares for Her heel". Nothing but snares, because the Woman will have, She has in Herself, what defeats the Enemy. So She has been redeeming since She existed. An active, although concealed redemption. But She will soon come out in the presence of the world, and women will be fortified in Her. »

« That You redeem... all right. But a woman who can... I cannot accept it, Master. »

« Do you not remember Tobit? His hymn? »

« Yes. But it deals with Jerusalem. »

« Has Jerusalem any longer a Tabernacle in which is God? Can God from His glory be present at the sins consumed within the walls of the Temple? Another Tabernacle was necessary, a holy

one, to be a star leading errant people back to the Most High. And that is accomplished in the Co-Redeemer Who throughout ages will rejoice at being the Mother of the redeemed. "You shall shine with a bright light. All the peoples of the Earth will prostrate themselves before You. The nations will come to You from afar bringing gifts and will worship the Lord in You... They will invoke Your great name... Those who will not listen to You will be among those cursed, and blessed will be those who gather round You... You will be happy in Your children because they will be the blessed ones gathered near the Lord". The true hymn of the Co-Redeemer. And the angels who see are already singing in Heaven... The new heavenly Jerusalem begins in Her. Oh! Yes, that is the truth. And the world is unaware of Her. And the dull-minded rabbis of Israel do not know Her... » Jesus is engrossed in His thoughts...

« But who is He speaking of? » the Iscariot asks Philip who is beside him.

Before the latter replies, Eliza, who is putting some cheese and black olives on the table, says rather harshly: « He is speaking of His Mother. Don't you understand that? »

« I never knew that She is mentioned by the prophets as a martyr... Only the Redeemer is mentioned, and... »

« And do you think that there is only the torture of the flesh? And don't you know that that is nothing, for a mother, in comparison with the torture of seeing her son die? Your mind - I am not speaking of your heart, for I don't know what it throbs with does your mind, of which you are so proud, not tell you that a mother would suffer torture and death ten times, rather than hear her son moan? Man, you are a man and you are learned. I am only a woman and a mother. But I tell you that you are more ignorant than I am, because you do not even know the heart of your mother... »

« Oh! You are offending me! »

« No. I am old and I am giving you advice. Let your heart be wise and you will avoid tears and punishment. Do that, if you can. »

The apostles, in particular Judas of Alphaeus, James of Zebedee, Bartholomew and the Zealot, cast sidelong glances at one another stealthily, and lower their heads to conceal the derisive smiles appearing on their lips, because of the frank words of Eliza to the apostle who thinks he is perfect. Jesus, still engrossed, does not hear anything.

Eliza addresses Anastasica saying: « Come, while they finish their meal let us go and prepare two more beds, because three are not enough » and she is on the point of going out.

« Eliza, you are certainly not giving us your beds! » exclaims Peter. « That's not right. John and I can sleep on boards. We're used

to that. »

« No, Simon. There are hurdles and mats. They have been laid aside. We will now place them on trestles. » And she goes out with the other woman.

The apostles, tired as they are, are almost dozing in the warmth of the kitchen. Jesus is pensive, His elbow resting on the table, His head on His hand.

There is a knock at the door. Thomas, being nearest to it, gets up to open and he exclaims: « You, Joseph?! And with Nicodemus?! Come in! Come in! »

« Peace to You, Master, and to everybody in this house. We are going to Ramah, Master; Nicodemus invited me there. As we were passing here, we said: "Let us stop to greet the Master". We were anxious to hear whether... You had been bothered again, as they went looking for You at Joseph's. Actually, they have been looking for You everywhere, after You cured that blind man. They did not walk out of the walls, that is true. They did not move a chair, to avoid infringing the Sabbath, and thus they think they are pure. But to look for You, to follow Bartholmai, oh! they went well beyond the limit! »

« How did they know if the Master did not do anything in the street? » asks Matthew.

« True, we did not know either whether he had been cured. We went to the synagogue and then to say goodbye to Nike, Isaac and Marjiam, who were staying with her. Then, after sunset, we came straight here » says Peter.

« You did not know. But the messengers of the Pharisees did. You did not see. But I did. Two of them were present when the Master touched the eyes of the blind fellow. They had been waiting for hours. »

« Why? » asks Judas of Kerioth with an innocent look.

« Are you asking me? »

« It's strange, that's why I am asking. »

« It's even more strange that for some time there are always spies wherever the Master is. »

« Vultures go where there is a prey and wolves approach herds. »

« And thieves where their accomplices say there is a caravan. You are right. »

« What are you insinuating? »

« Nothing. I was completing your proverb applying it to men. Because Jesus is a man; and men are those who lay snares for Him. »

« Tell us, Joseph, tell us... » many of them say.

« If the Master wishes, I came to tell you. »

« Speak up » says Jesus.

And Joseph tells in detail what he had noticed, omitting, however,

one particular, that it was Judas who informed the blind man where Jesus was staying.

Comments are manifold, resentful, sorrowful, according to hearts, and Judas of Kerioth is the most (apparently) afflicted and upset, he is against everybody and in particular against the imprudent blind man, who had come and placed himself in Jesus' way on a Sabbath, confiding in the well known kindness of the Master...

« Or was it you who pointed out the man to him was near you and I heard » says Philip full of amazement.

« To point out does not mean to give an order to do something. »

« Oh! I am sure, as I am also sure that you would not have taken the liberty of ordering the Master to work... » says Thaddeus.

« Me? Far from it. I pointed him out only to ask for a clarification. »

« Yes. But the action of pointing out is at times an invitation to act. And that is what you did » replies Thaddeus.

« You say so, but it is not true » asserts Judas impudently.

« Is it not true? Are you really sure? As sure as you are alive, that you never spoke to the blind man about Jesus, that you did not influence him to apply to Jesus, and, what is more, that you did not encourage him to do so at once, before Jesus left the town? » asks Joseph of Arimathea.

« Of course I am sure. Who ever spoke to that man? I certainly did not. I am always with the Master, day and night, and when I am not with Him, I am with my companions... »

« I thought you had done that yesterday, when you went away with the women » says Bartholomew.

« Yesterday! I went and came back faster than a swallow. How could I look for the blind fellow, find him and speak to him in such a short time? »

« You might have met him... »

« I never saw him! »

« Then that man is a liar because he stated that you told him to come, and where and what to do; and you had assured him that Jesus would listen to you and... » says Joseph of Arimathea.

Judas interrupts him violently: « That's enough! He deserves to be blinded again for all the lies he tells! I, I can swear it on the Sanctuary, I only know him by sight, and I have never spoken to him. »

« Yes, it's really enough. Your soul is in order, Judas of Kerioth, who do not fear God because you know that your actions are holy. You... happy fellow who are afraid of nothing » Joseph says to him, looking at him severely, with piercing eyes.

« No, I am not afraid, because I am without sin. »

« We all sin, Judas. And it is not so bad if we do repent after our first sins, and we do not increase them in number and wickedness! »

says Nicodemus who had never spoken so far. He then addresses the Master saying: « It is sad that Joseph of Sephoris has been threatened with being banished from the synagogue, if he gives You hospitality again and Bartholmai has already been ejected from it. He had gone there with his father and mother; but the Pharisees were waiting for him at his synagogue, they refused to let him go in and they cried anathema on him. »

« That is too much! For how long, o Lord... » shout many.

« Peace! Peace! It is nothing. Bartholmai is already on the way to the Kingdom. So what has he lost? He is in the Light. So is he not a child of God more than he was previously? Oh! Do not confuse values! Peace! Peace! We will no longer go to Joseph's either... I am sorry that Isaac knows that he has to take My Mother and Mary of Alphaeus there... But it would have been for a few hours only, because there is one who has already done what is necessary. » He turns to John of Nob and says: « Father, are you afraid of the Sanhedrin? You can see how much it costs to give hospitality to the Son of man... You are old. You are a faithful Israelite. You may be driven out of the synagogue on your last Sabbaths. Could you put up with that? Speak frankly, and if you are afraid, I will go away. There must be still a den in the mountains in Israel for the Son of God... »

« I, Lord? But of whom shall I be afraid but of God? I do not fear the mouth of the sepulchre, on the contrary I look at it as a friendly thing. And shall I be afraid of the mouths of men? I would be afraid only of the judgement of God, if for fear of men, I should drive away from me Jesus, the Christ of God! »

« All right. You are a just man... I will stay here... when I am not in the nearby villages, as I intend to do once again. »

« Come to Ramah, to my house, Lord » says Nicodemus.

« And if that should harm you? »

« Do the Pharisees not invite you with evil intentions? Could I not do it to study Your heart? »

« Yes, Master. Let us go to Ramah. My father will be so happy, if he is at home. And if he is not there, as often is the case, he will find Your blessing when he comes back » says Thomas imploringly.

« We will go to Ramah, as the first place. Tomorrow... »

« Master, we are going. Our mounts are outside and we shall be at Ramah before the end of the second vigil. The roads are white in the moonlight as if a pale sun were shining on them. Goodbye, Master. Peace be with You » says Nicodemus.

« Peace to You, Master... and, listen to a good piece of advice from Joseph the Elder. Be somewhat shrewd. Look around Yourself. Open Your eyes and keep Your lips closed. Act, but never say beforehand what You are going to do... And do not come to Jerusalem for some time, and if You come, do not stop at the Temple except for the time necessary to pray. Do You understand

me? Goodbye, Master. Peace to You. » Joseph has put much stress on the words that I have underlined, and while saying them he was gazing intensely at Jesus. His very eyes were a warning.

They go out into the little kitchen garden, white in the moonlight. They untie two strong donkeys, which were tied to the trunk of a walnut tree, they mount and depart along the solitary white road...

Jesus goes back into the kitchen with His apostles.

« But what did he mean, after all? »

« And how did the Pharisees find out? »

« What will they do to Joseph of Sephoris? »

« Nothing. Just words. Nothing but words. Forget about it. It is all over and without any consequence. Let us go. Let us say our prayer and part for the night. "Our Father... »

He blesses them, He looks at them go away, then with the four whom He has kept, He goes up to the room where the beds are.

### **510. Among the Ruins of a Destroyed Village.**

12th October 1946.

I do not know in which place is Jesus. He is certainly in the mountains, in a place deserted after it was destroyed either by a cataclysm or by active war. And I would say that the latter is the more likely cause, because the ruins of the houses show signs of fire in the ceilings protected from rain and still visible through the tangle of bramble, ivy and other creepers and parasitic plants, which have grown everywhere. The broad hairy leaves of a plant, whose name I do not know, although I have seen it also in Italy, cover a large ruin which looks like a steep hill. Farther back a wall, standing upright and lonely to contemplate the rest of the collapsed house, is invaded by caper bushes and pellitory, and a clematis, whose branches undulate in the wind like loose hair, hangs from a fretted parapet of what once was a terrace. Another house, the central part of which has collapsed, whilst the outer walls are still erect, looks like a huge flower vase, which in place of stems contains trees which have grown spontaneously in the hollow where rooms previously were. Another house, part of which is still erect, with the remains of the walls rising in steps, looks like an altar prepared for some rite and completely adorned in green. On the very top of the ruins, a poplar, as slender and straight as a blade, seems to be asking the sky the reason for such a disaster. And between house and house, rubble and rubble, obstinate fruit-trees, now degenerate and wild, overwhelmed by other vegetation or overwhelming it, grown from fallen fruit, twisted, straight, creeping, coming out from holds in walls, from a dried well, give the impression of a bewitched forest. And birds

and pigeons coming out of crevices among the ruins, fly avidly towards neighbouring fields once cultivated, where now there are tangles of hard vetch, dried up by the sun, and from their open pods seeds drop to the ground to spring up again at springtime, and tangles of darnel and tares. With fierce blows of their wings the pigeons drive away the smaller birds searching for millet-seed or grains of hemp, which have come up from who knows what remote seed, lasting for years and years in waste land through spontaneous sowing. And the birds, particularly the quarrelsome sparrows, avenge themselves, by tearing off the thin ears of the scrubby millet and taking them away, to their nests, flying with difficulty, all twisted because of the weight and the encumbrance of the millet-cob.

Jesus is not only with His apostles, there is also a large group of disciples, amongst whom Cleopas and Hermas of Emmaus, the sons of the old chief of the synagogue Cleopas, and Stephen. There are also some men and women, as if they had come from some village to invite Jesus to go to their town, or if they were following Him after He had been with them. And Jesus, crossing the ruined site, often makes a pause to look around, and He stops at the highest spot that commands a view over entanglements of rubble and vegetation, where life is represented only by the pigeons which once were certainly mild and tame, whereas now they are wild and fierce. He contemplates the place with His arms folded across His breast, His head lowered, and the more He looks around the paler and sadder He becomes.

« Why are You stopping here, Master? One can clearly see that this place distresses You. Do not stop to contemplate it. I am sorry I made You come this way, but it is such a good short cut » says Cleopas of Emmaus.

« Oh! I am not looking at what you see! »

« At what, then, Lord? Perhaps You see the past event once again? It was certainly a dreadful one. That is the system of Rome... » says the other man from Emmaus.

« And that should make one think. See. There was a town here, it was not a large one, but it was beautiful. It consisted more of luxury houses than of humble ones. And these places, which are now wild forests, belonged to rich people. And these fields, now sterile and covered with bramble, darnel and nettles were also the property of rich people... They were then rich orchards and fields full of crops. And the houses were beautiful, with gardens full of flowers, and wells, and fountains where pigeons bathed and children played. All the inhabitants of this place were happy, but happiness did not make them just. They forgot the Lord and His words... And this is the result! No more houses, no flowers, no fountains, no crops, no fruits. Only the pigeons are left, and they

are no longer as happy as they used to be, and in place of the golden corn and the cumon of which they were so greedy, they now fight to have a little coarse vetch or bitter darnel. And they feast when they find an ear of barley which has come up among the thorns!...

And, as I look, I do not even see the pigeons any more... But faces and faces... Many of which are not yet born... and I see ruins and ruins, bramble and wild grapes and vetch cover the land of our Fatherland... And all that happens because we did not want to accept the Lord. I can hear exhausted children weep, as they are more unhappy than these birds, for which God still provides the minimum assistance to survive, whereas these babies will be destitute of all help, struck by the general punishment, languishing on the dry breasts of their mothers, who will be dying of starvation and sorrow and indefinable fear. And I can hear mothers wailing over their children who died of starvation on their breasts, and the cries of wives deprived of their husbands, and the laments of virgins captured for the pleasure of winners, and the lamentations of men destined to imprisonment after experiencing all dishonour in war and of old men who lived so long as to see the prophecy of Daniel accomplished.

And I hear the untiring voice of Isaiah in the breath of this wind among the ruins, in the wailing of the pigeons among the rubble: "With uncouth words, in a foreign language the Lord will speak to this people to whom He said: 'Here is my rest. Let the weary rest; this is my relief'". But they would not listen. No, they would not listen, and the Lord cannot find rest among His people. The tired One, Who became tired travelling all over its countryside to teach, cure, convert and comfort, does not find rest but persecution, He does not find relief, but snares and treason. The Son is one with the Father. And if the Truth taught you that also a cup of water given to a man will be rewarded, because each act of mercy done to a brother is done to God Himself, what will the punishment be for those who refuse the Son of man even a stone of the road upon which He may rest His head, and the mountain spring which gushes through the bounty of the Creator, and the fruit forgotten on a branch because it was diseased or unripe, and the ear contended with pigeons, and have already prepared the noose to throttle the air in His throat and thus take His life?

Oh! miserable Israel, who have lost justice and the mercy of God!

Here, here is once again the voice of Isaiah in the evening breeze, more dreadful than the cry of the bird of death, almost as dreadful as the voice that resounded in the Earthly Garden to condemn the two culprits, and - oh! what a terrible thing! - the voice of the Prophet is not joined to the promise of forgiveness as it was then!

No, there is no forgiveness for the mockers of God, for those who say: "We have formed an alliance with Death, we have made an agreement with Hell. When the destructive whip goes by, it will not catch us, for we have set our hopes on Falsehood, and we are protected by it, for it is powerful". And here is Isaiah, who repeats what he heard from the Lord: "I will lay a precious select cornerstone as the foundation of Zion... And I will make justice the measure and integrity the plumb-line, and hail will sweep away the hope in Falsehood, and floods will overwhelm the shelter, your covenant with Death will be broken and your pact with Hell will be annulled. When the destructive whip goes by it will crush you, each time it goes by it will seize you, and punishments only will make you understand the lesson".

Miserable Israel! Israel will be like these fields, where only arid vetch and bitter darnel persist and where there is no more corn, and the Land that did not want the Lord will have no bread for her children, and the children who refused to receive the tired One, will wander about, beaten, wild, like galley slaves, the slaves of those whom they considered inferior beings. God will really thrash the proud people under the weight of His justice, and will strangle it with the scutch of His judgement...

That is what I see in these ruins. Ruins! Ruins! To the north, to the south, to the east, to the west, and above all in the centre, in the heart, where the guilty town will be changed into a putrid pit... »

And tears run slowly down the pale face of Jesus, Who raises His mantle to veil it, leaving uncovered only His eyes, dilated by the painful vision.

And He sets out again, while those who are with Him hardly whisper, terrified as they are...

### **511. At Emmaus in the Mountains. Parable of the Rich Wise Man and of the Poor Ignorant Boy.**

14th October 1946.

The square in Emmaus is crowded with people. It is really packed. And in the middle of the square there is Jesus, Who is moving with difficulty so much is He surrounded and pressed by those who are besieging Him. Jesus is between the son of the chief of the synagogue and the other disciple and around Him there are, with the hypothetical intention of protecting Him, the apostles and disciples and among them many children, as they can easily creep everywhere, like little lizards in the tangle of a thick hedge.

The attraction that Jesus exerted on the little ones is wonderful. Wherever He went, whether He was known or unknown, He was at once surrounded by children, happy to cling to His garments, even happier when His hand touched them lightly with a loving

caress, even if at the same time He said grave things to adults; most happy if He sat down on a seat, on a little wall, or stone, or fallen trunk of a tree, on the grass. In that case, as they had Him at their own height, they were able to embrace Him, rest their little heads on His shoulder or knees, creep under His mantle and thus find themselves in His arms, like chicks that had found the most loving and protective defence. And Jesus always defends them from the arrogance of adults, from their imperfect respect for Him, as although imperfect for so many graver reasons, it pretended to be zealous by driving away the little ones from the Master...

Even now the usual sentence of Jesus can be heard in defence of His little friends: « Leave them alone! Oh! they do not disturb Me! It is not children who cause trouble and grief! »

Jesus bends over them, with a bright smile that makes Him young, so that He almost looks like their older brother, a kind accomplice in some of their innocent amusements, and He whispers: « Be good and quiet, so they will not send you away, and we shall be able to be together a little longer. »

« And will You tell us a nice parable? » asks the... boldest one.

« Yes. One all for you. Then I will speak to your relatives. Listen, everybody. What is useful to the little ones is useful also to men.

A man one day was summoned by a great king who said to him: "I heard that you deserve a prize because you are wise and you honour your town with your work and your science. Now, I will not give you this or that thing, but I will take you into the hall of my treasures and you will choose what you like, and I will give it to you. In this way I will also judge whether you are up to your fame".

At the same time the king, approaching the terrace which surrounded his hall, cast a glance at the square in front of the royal palace and saw a poorly dressed boy pass by: a child of a very poor family, perhaps an orphan and a beggar. He turned to his servants saying: "Go to that boy and bring him here".

The servants went and came back with the child to appear in the presence of the king. Although the dignitaries of the court said to him: "Make a bow, salute, say: 'Honour and glory to you, my king. I bend my knee before you, powerful king whom the Earth exalts as the greatest being existing'", the boy refused to bow and repeat those words, and the scandalised dignitaries shook him rudely and said: "O king, this dirty boorish boy is a dishonour in your abode. Let us drive him out of here into the street. If you wish to have a boy near you we will go and look for one among the rich people in town, if you are tired of our children, and we will bring him to you. But not this boorish fellow who does not even know how to greet a person!...

The rich wise man, who had previously humiliated himself with

many deep servile bows, as if he were before an altar, said: "Your dignitaries are right. For the sake of the majesty of your crown you must ensure that your sacred person is given the homage due to it" and while saying these words he prostrated himself to kiss the king's foot.

But the king said: "No. I want this boy. Not only that, but I want to take him as well into the hall of my treasures, so that he may choose what he wants and I will give it to him. I am perhaps not allowed, just because I am a king, to make a poor boy happy? Is he not my subject like each of you? Is it his fault if he is unhappy? No, God be praised! I want to make him happy at least for once! Come, child, and be not afraid of me" and he stretched out his hand which the boy took with simplicity kissing it spontaneously. The king smiled. And between two rows of stooping dignitaries, on purple carpets with golden flowers, he turned his steps towards the treasure room, with the rich wise man on his right hand side, and the poor ignorant boy on his left. And the royal mantle contrasted strikingly with the frayed garment and the bare feet of the poor boy.

They went into the treasure room, the door of which was opened by two great men of the Court. It was a high, round, windowless room. But light flooded in through the ceiling made of a huge plate of mica. A mild light which, however, made the gold knobs of safes shine brightly and the purple ribbons of many parchment rolls glow on high ornate reading-desks. Stately rolls, with precious rods, and clasps and labels adorned with shining stones. Rare works which only a king could possess. And, ignored on a grim dark low desk, a small parchment rolled on a white piece of wood, tied with a rustic thread, as dusty as a neglected thing.

The king said pointing at the walls: "Here are all the treasures of the Earth, and others which are even greater than earthly treasures. Because here are all the works of human genius, and there are also works coming from superhuman sources. Go and take whatever you wish". And he stood in the middle of the room, with folded arms, watching.

The rich wise man went first towards the safes and lifted their covers with more and more feverish anxiety. Gold bars and jewels, silver, pearls, sapphires, rubies, emeralds, opals... were shining in all the coffers... cries of admiration were heard as each one was opened... He then went to the reading-desks, and when reading the titles, his lips uttered new cries of admiration, and at last the man, highly enthusiastic, turned to the king and said: "You have an incomparable treasure: the stones equal the value of the rolls, and the rolls of the stones! Can I really make my choice freely?".

"I told you. As if everything belonged to you".

The man threw himself with his face on the ground saying: "I

worship you, o great king!". And he got up and ran first to the coffers, then to the desks, taking from both the best things he saw.

The king, who had smiled a first time under his beard seeing the excitement with which the man ran from one coffer to another, and a second time seeing him throw himself on the ground worshipping, and a third time seeing the cupidity, the method and preferences by which he chose gems and books, addressed the boy who was standing beside him saying: "And are you not going to choose the beautiful stones and the valuable rolls?"

The boy shook his head in denial.

"Why riot?"

"Because with regard to the rolls, I cannot read them and as far as the stones are concerned... I do not know their value. They are nothing but little stones to me".

"But they would make you rich

"I have no father, no mother, no brother. Of what avail would it be to me to go to my shelter with a treasure in my bosom?"

"But you would be able to buy a house with it

"I would still be alone in it".

"You could buy clothes".

"I would still be cold without the love of relatives". "Food".

"I could not become satiated with my mother's kisses or buy them at any price".

"You could get teachers and learn to read

"I would like that better. But what could I read then?"

"The works of poets, philosophers, wise men... ancient words and the history of peoples".

"Useless things, either vain or past... Not worth it

"What a silly child!" exclaimed the man whose arms by now were full of rolls, and his belt and tunic round his chest were swollen with gems.

The king smiled once again under his beard. And taking the boy in his arms he carried him to the coffers, where he dipped his hand into the pearls, the rubies, the topazes, the amethysts, letting them drop like sparkling rain, tempting the boy to take some.

"No, king, I do not want any. I would like something else

The king took him to the desks and read stanzas of poets, episodes of heroes, descriptions of countries.

"Oh! it is beautiful to read. But that is not what I would like

"What, then? Tell me, and I will give it to you, my boy".

"Oh! I don't think you can, o king, notwithstanding your power. It is not a thing of this world

"Ah! you do not want works of the Earth. Here, then: here are the works which God dictated to His servants. Listen" and he read some of the inspired pages.

"That is much more beautiful. But to understand it properly, one must first know God's language well. Is there no book which teaches that, that can make us understand what is God?"

The king was quite astonished and did not laugh any more, but he pressed the boy to his heart.

The man instead laughed derisively saying: "Not even the wisest men know what God is, and you, an ignorant boy, want to know? If you want to become rich by that!..."

The king looked at him sternly while the little fellow replied: "I do not seek riches, I am seeking love and one day I was told that God is Love".

The king took him to the grim desk, where the little dusty roll tied with a string was. He picked it up, unrolled it and read the first lines: "Let little ones come to Me, and I, God, will teach them the science of love. It is in this book, and I..."

"Oh! that is what I want! I will know God and by having Him, I shall have everything. Give me this roll, o king, and I shall be happy".

"But it has no value moneywise. That boy is really foolish! He cannot read and he takes a book! He is not wise and he does not want to learn. He is poor and he does not take treasures".

"I will strive to possess love, and this book will teach me. May you be blessed, o king, because you are giving me something which will no longer make me feel a poor orphan!".

"At least worship him as I did, if you think that you have become so happy through him!".

"I do not worship the man, but God Who made him so kind".

"This boy is the true wise person in my kingdom, o man, whereas you have usurped the reputation of being wise. Pride and avidity have intoxicated you to such an extent that you maintain that a creature should be worshipped instead of the Creator, simply because a creature was giving you stones and human works. And you have not considered that you have gems, and I have had them, because God created them, and that you have rare rolls containing the thought of man, because God gave man an intellect. This child who is cold and hungry, who is all alone, who has been struck by all kinds of sorrow, who would be excused and justifiable if he became intoxicated with the sight of riches, this child knows how to express just thanks to God for making my heart kind and he seeks but the one only necessary thing: to love God, to know love in order to have true riches here and in future life. Man, I promised I would give you what you would choose. The word of a king is sacred. So, go with your stones and your rolls: multicoloured pebbles and... straw of human thought. And live trembling with fear of thieves and moths: the former the enemies of gems, the latter of parchments. And be dazzled by the vain flashes-of

those chips, and be disgusted with the sickly sweet flavour of human science, which is only flavour and not nourishment. Go. This child will remain with me and we will strive together to read the book that is love, that is, God. And we shall have no vain flashes of cold gems, nor the sickly sweet flavour of straw of the works of human knowledge. But the fire of the Eternal Spirit will grant us, even in this life, the ecstasy of Paradise and we shall possess Wisdom, which is more fortifying than wine, more nourishing than honey. Come, child, to whom Wisdom has shown her face, that you may desire her as a genuine bride".

And after driving away the man, he kept the child and instructed him in divine Wisdom that he might be a just man and a king worthy of the sacred anointment on the Earth, and a citizen of the Kingdom of God in the other life.

That is the parable promised to the little ones and proposed to adults.

Do you remember Baruch? He says: "Why, Israel, why are you in the country of your enemies, growing older and older in an alien land, sharing defilement with the dead, reckoned with those who go to Sheol?". And he replies: "Because you have forsaken the fountain of Wisdom. Had you walked in the way of God, you would have lived in peace for ever".

Listen, you who too often complain of being in exile, although you are in our fatherland, since our fatherland is no longer ours, but of our rulers; you complain of that and you do not know that in comparison with what is awaiting you in future, it is like a drop of vinegar mixed with water, compared with the inebriating drink given to condemned men and which, as you know, is more bitter than any other drink. The people of God is suffering because it forsook Wisdom. How can you possess prudence, strength, intelligence, how can you even know where they are, and consequently know minor things, if you no longer drink at the fountains of Wisdom?

His Kingdom is not of this Earth, but God's mercy grants its source. It is in God. It is God Himself. And God opens His bosom that it may descend upon you. Well, does Israel, who has or had and still thinks she has, with the foolish pride of prodigal people who squandered their money and think they are still rich and in such belief exact homage, whereas they receive nothing but pity or derision - does Israel, who has or had riches, conquests, honours, possess the only treasure? No, she does not. And she loses also the others because he who loses Wisdom loses also the capability of being great. And he who does not know Wisdom falls from one error into another. And Israel knows many things, even too many, but she no longer knows Wisdom.

Baruch correctly says: "The young men of this people have seen

the day, they peopled the Earth but they have not known the way of Wisdom or her paths and their children have not received her and she has gone far from them". Far from them! They have not received her! Prophetic words!

I am Wisdom speaking to you. And three quarters of the people in Israel do not receive Me. And Wisdom goes away and will go farther away leaving them alone... And then what will those do, who now consider themselves giants and therefore capable of forcing the Lord to assist them and serve them? Are they giants useful to God in establishing His Kingdom? No, they are not. I with Baruch say so: "To establish the true Kingdom of God, God will not choose those proud giants, and He will let them perish in their own folly" outside the paths of Wisdom. Because to ascend to Heaven with one's spirit and understand the lessons of Wisdom, one must have a humble, obedient and above all an entirely loving spirit, because Wisdom speaks her own language, that is, she speaks the language of love, because she is Love. To become acquainted with her paths it is necessary to have limpid humble eyes, free from the treble concupiscence. To possess Wisdom one must buy her with living money: virtues.

Israel did not possess that and I have come to explain Wisdom, to lead you to her Way, and sow virtues in your hearts. Because I know everything and I am aware of everything and I have come to teach My servant Jacob and My beloved Israel all that. I have come to the Earth to converse with men, I, the Word of the Father, to take the children of men by the hand, I, the Son of God and of man, I, the Way of Life. I have come to show you into the room of eternal treasures, I, to Whom everything was given by My Father. I, eternal Lover, have come to take My Bride, Mankind, that I want to elevate to My throne and to My nuptial room, so that men may be in Heaven with Me, and I may introduce them into the wine-cellar that they may be exhilarated with the true Vine from which the vine-shoots draw Life. But Israel is a sluggish bride and does not get up from her bed to open the door to Him Who has come. And the Bridegroom goes away. He will pass. He is about to pass. And later Israel will look for Him in vain, and will not find the merciful Charity of her Saviour but the war wagons of the rulers, and she will be crushed and pride and life will be squeezed out of her, after she wanted to crush also the merciful Will of God.

Oh! Israel, Israel, who are losing true Life for the sake of keeping a false dream of power! Oh! Israel, who think that you are saving yourself and want to save yourself with different means than those of Wisdom, and you are getting lost by selling yourself to Falsehood and Crime, shipwrecked Israel who will not clutch at the solid rope thrown to rescue you, whereas you cling to the wreckage of your shattered past, and the storm carries you away,

to the open sea, a frightful lightless sea, o Israel, what is the good of saving your life or presuming to save it for one hour, one year, for ten, twenty, thirty years, at the cost of a crime, and then perish for ever? What is life, glory, power? A bubble of dirty water on the surface of a pond used by laundrymen, an iridescent bubble, not because it is made of gems, but because it consists of greasy dirt that with potash swells into empty bubbles destined to burst leaving no trace, except a circle on the water foul with human sweat. One thing only is necessary, o Israel. To possess Wisdom. Even at the cost of one's life. Because life is not the most precious thing. It is better to lose one hundred lives than lose one's soul. » Jesus has finished in an admiring silence. And He tries to push through the crowd and go... But the children claim His kisses, and adults His blessing. Only then, after taking leave of Cleopas and Hermas of Emmaus, He can depart.

## **512. The Undecided Young Man. Miracles and Admonitions at Beth-Horon.**

17th October 1946.

And Jesus is still in the mountains, followed by a crowd of people in addition to the apostles and disciples. Some of the disciples are ex-shepherds, who have perhaps been found when passing through some of the little villages. Jesus is climbing from a valley to a mountain, along a road, the turns of which follow the side of the mountain, and is certainly a Roman road, with its unmistakable paving and well-kept maintenance, to be found only in roads built and maintained by the Romans. People are travelling along it, either going down to the valley, or up to the chain of mountains, the tops of which are crowned with towns or villages. And some of the wayfarers, seeing Jesus and those following Him, ask who He is and join the group, some watch only, some shake their heads and sneer.

A squad of Roman soldiers catches up with them with heavy steps and jingling of arms and armour. They turn round to look at Jesus, Who leaving the Roman road, is about to take a... Jewish one which climbs to the top where there is a village. It is a pebbly muddy road, because it has rained, and one's feet either slip on the stones or sink into the puddles. The soldiers, who are obviously making for the same town, after stopping for a moment, set out again and people are compelled to move to the sides of the narrow road to make way for the squad that passes by in strict formation. Some insults are hissed in the air. But discipline prevents the soldiers in route column from giving sharp answers.

They are once again near Jesus Who has moved aside to let them pass and looks at them with His mild eyes which seem to be blessing

and caressing with their bright sapphire irises. And the stern faces of the soldiers brighten in a remembering smile which is not a sneering one, on the contrary it is as respectful as a greeting.

They pass by. The people resume walking behind the Rabbi Who is in front of them all.

A young man departs from the crowd and catches up with the Master greeting him respectfully. Jesus reciprocates the greeting.

« I would like to ask You something, Master. »

« Tell Me. »

« I listened to You by chance one morning after Passover near a mountain not far from the gorges of the Cherit. And since then I have been thinking that... I also could be among those whom You call. But before coming I wanted to have a very clear idea of what it is necessary to do and what must not be done. And I asked Your disciples every time I met them. And some told me one thing, some a different one. And I was uncertain, almost frightened, because they all agreed on one thing, some more some less strictly, and that was the obligation to be perfect. I... I am a poor man, Lord, and God only is perfect... I listened to You a second time... and You also said: "Be perfect". And I lost heart. The third time, a few days ago, I heard You in the Temple. And although You were very severe, I felt that it was not impossible to become so, because... I do not know myself why, how to explain it to myself and to You. But I felt that if it was something impossible, or it was so dangerous to wish to become so, as if one wanted to become a god, since You want to save us, You would not suggest it to us. Because presumption is a sin. To want to be a god is the sin of Lucifer. But perhaps there is a way to be perfect, to become so without committing sin, and it is by following Your Doctrine, which is certainly a Doctrine of salvation. Am I right? »

« Yes, you are. So? »

« So I continued to ask this one and that one. And when I heard that You were at Ramah I came here. And since then, with my father's permission, I have been following You. And now I am more anxious to come... »

« Come, then! What are you afraid of? »

« I don't know... I don't know myself... I ask and ask... And every time, while it seems easy to me and I make up my mind to come when I hear You, afterwards, thinking it over, and what is even worse, when I ask this one and that one, it seems too difficult to me. »

« I will tell you how that happens: it is a snare of the demon to prevent you from coming. He frightens you with phantasms, he confounds you, he makes you ask those who are in need of Light as you are... Why did you not come to Me direct? »

« Because... I was... not afraid, but... Our priests and rabbis! So

difficult and proud! And You... I did not dare to approach You. But yesterday at Emmaus!... I think that I understood that I must not be afraid. And now I am here, to ask You what I would like to know. One of Your apostles, a short time ago, said to me: "Go and do not be afraid. He is kind also to sinners". And another one said: "Make Him happy by confiding in Him. Those who confide in Him find Him kinder than a mother". And another one said: "I do not know whether I am mistaken, but I tell you that He will say to you that perfection is to love". That is what your apostles said, at least some of them, who are kinder than the disciples. But not all of them, because among Your disciples there are some who sound like the echo of Your voice, but they are too few. And among the apostles there are some who... frighten a poor man like me. One said to me with a smile, which was not a kind one: "You want to become perfect? We, His apostles are not, and you want to be so? It's impossible". If the others had not spoken to me, I would have run away, completely discouraged. But I am trying for the last time... and if You also tell me that it is impossible... »

« Son, and is it possible that I came to propose impossible things to men? Who do you think it was that put in your heart the desire to become perfect? Your own heart? »

« No, Lord. I think it was You with Your words. »

« You are not far from the truth. But tell Me, according to you, My words, what are they? »

« They are just. »

« All right. But I mean: words of a man or of one who is more than a man? »

« Oh! You speak like Wisdom and even more kindly and clearly. So I say that Your words are of one who is more than a man. And I do not think that I am wrong if I correctly understood what You said in the Temple. Because I got the impression that You said that You are the very Word of God, so You speak as God. »

« You understood correctly and what you say is right. So who put the desire of perfection into your heart? »

« God did, through You, His Word. »

« So it was God. Now just think: if God, Who is aware of the capabilities of men, says to them: "Come to Me. Be perfect", it means that He knows that man, if he wishes, can become perfect. It is an old word. It resounded the first time for Abraham as a revelation, a command, an invitation: "I am the Almighty God. Walk in My presence. Be perfect". God revealed Himself so that the Patriarch might not be in doubt about the holiness of the command and the truthfulness of the invitation. He ordered him to walk in His presence, because he who walks in his lifetime, convinced of doing so in the eyes of God, will not accomplish evil deeds. Consequently he puts himself in condition of being able to

become perfect according to God's invitation. »

« That is true! It's really true! If God said so, it means that it can be done. Oh! Master! How clear everything is when You speak! Why, then, do Your disciples, and also that apostle, give such a... frightful idea of holiness? Do they not believe that those words and Yours are true? Or can they not walk in the presence of God? »

« Do not worry about what it is. Do not judge. See, son. At times their very anxiety to be perfect and their humility make them be afraid that they can never become so. »

« So are the desire for perfection and humility obstacles to becoming perfect? »

« No, son. The desire and humility are not obstacles. On the contrary one must strive to have them in a very deep but orderly way. They are orderly when they do not imply heedless haste, unfounded dejection, doubts and lack of confidence such as believing that, because of his imperfection, man cannot become perfect. All virtues are necessary, as well as the desire to achieve justice. »

« Yes. Also those whom I questioned told me that. They told me that it was necessary to be virtuous. But some said that one virtue was necessary, some another, and they all maintained the absolute necessity of having that one, which they said was indispensable to be saints. And that frightened me, because how can one have all the virtues in a perfect form, how can one grow them all together like a bunch of different flowers? It takes time... and life is so short! Master, tell me which is the essential virtue. »

« It is love. If you love you will be holy, because all virtues and all good deeds come from the love for the Most High and for our neighbour. »

« Do they? It is easier thus. So holiness is love. If I have love I have everything... Holiness is made of that. »

« Of that and of the other virtues. Because to be holy is not only to be humble, or only prudent, or only chaste and so forth, but to be virtuous. See, son, when a rich man wishes to offer a dinner, does he order only one dish? Also: when one wants to present somebody with a bunch of flowers, does one take only one flower? One does not. Because even if he put piles of the same dish on the table, his guests would criticise him as an incapable host concerned only with showing his means but not his refinement as a gentleman who is anxious to satisfy the different tastes of his guests and wants each of them not only to satisfy his appetite with this or that dish, but to enjoy them. The same applies to him who offers a bunch of flowers. One flower only, no matter how big it is, does not make a bunch. But many flowers do, and thus the different colours and scents gratify one's eyes and smell and make one praise the Lord. Holiness, which we must consider as a bunch of flowers offered to the Lord, is to comprise all virtues.  
Humility

will prevail in one spirit, strength in another, continence in another, patience in another, the spirit of sacrifice or penance in another, all virtues born in the shade of the regal most scented tree of love, whose flowers will always prevail in the bunch, but all the virtues make up holiness. »

« And which is to be cultivated more carefully? »

« Love. I told you. »

« Then? »

« There is no method, son. If you love the Lord, He will grant you His gifts, that is, He will communicate with you and then the virtues which you strive to grow in strength, will grow in the sun of Grace. »

« In other words, in a loving soul it is God Who acts mostly? »

« Yes, son. It is God Who acts mostly, letting man put, as his own contribution, his free will to tend to perfection, his efforts to reject temptations in order to remain faithful to his purpose, his struggles against the flesh, the world, the demon, when they assail him. And the reason for that is that He wants His son to have merit in his holiness. »

« Ah! I see! Then it is quite right to say that man is made to be as perfect as God wants. Thank You, Master. It is now clear to me and I will act accordingly. And You, Lord, please pray for me. »

« I will keep you in My heart. Go and be assured that God will not leave you without help. »

The young man parts from Jesus looking satisfied...

They are by now near the village. Bartholomew with Stephen joins Jesus to tell Him that while He was speaking to the young man, a citizen of Beth-horon, a relative of Helkai the Pharisee, came begging them to take Him at once to his dying wife.

« Let us go. I will speak afterwards. Do you know where she is? »

« He left a servant with us. He is in the rear, with the others. »

« Make him come here and let us quicken our paces. »

The servant arrives. A strong old man looking dismayed. He greets and looks stealthily at Jesus Who smiles at him asking: « What is your mistress dying of? »

« Of... She was expecting. But the child died in her womb and her blood became infected. She is raving as if she were mad and is going to die. They opened her veins to make her temperature drop. But her blood is completely poisoned and she will die. They put her in the cistern to abate her fierce heat. It drops while she is in the ice-cold water. Then it becomes stronger than previously, and she coughs and coughs... and she will die. »

« No wonder! With such treatment! » grumbles Matthew between his teeth.

« How long has she been ill? »

The servant is about to reply when the leader of the Roman

squad runs down the hill towards them and stops in front of Jesus.

« Hail! Are You the Nazarene? »

« I am. What do you want of Me? »

Jesus' followers rush there wondering who knows what...

« One day one of our horses struck a Jewish boy and You cured him to prevent the Jews from making a din against us. Now the stones of the Jews have knocked down a soldier, who is now lying with a broken leg. I cannot stop because I am on duty. No one in the village wants to take him in and he cannot walk. I cannot drag him along with a broken leg. I know that You do not despise us as all the Jews do... »

« Do you want Me to cure the soldier? »

« Yes, I do. You cured also the servant of the Centurion and Valeria's little girl. You saved Alexander from the wrath of Your fellow-citizens. These things are known both in high and in low quarters. »

« Let us go to the soldier. »

« And what about my mistress? » asks the discontented servant.

« Later. »

And Jesus follows the non-commissioned officer, who devours the way with his brawny legs free from hampering clothes. But even striding thus ahead of everybody, he manages to speak some words to Him Who is the first to follow him, that is to Jesus, and he says: « Some time ago I was with Alexander. He... used to speak of You. Chance has put You close to me just now. »

« Chance? Why not say God? The true God? »

The soldier is silent for a moment, then in a low voice so that Jesus only can hear he says: « The true God would be the Hebrew one... But He does not make Himself loved, if He is like the Hebrews. They do not take pity even on a wounded man... »

« The true God is the God of the Hebrews, as well as of the Romans, the Greeks, the Arabs, the Parthians, the Scythians, the Iberians, the Gauls, the Celts, the Lybians, the Hyperboreans. There is but one God! But many do not know Him, others have a wrong knowledge of Him. If they knew Him well, they would all be like brothers to one another, and there would be no abuse of power, no hatred, no slander, no revenge, no lust, no thefts, no homicides, no adulteries and no falsehood. I know the true God and I have come to make Him known. »

« They say... We must be all ears in order to report to the centurions who in turn have to report to the Proconsul. They say that You are God. Is that true? » The soldier is very... worried in saying so. He looks at Jesus from under the shade of his helmet, and he almost looks frightened.

« I am. »

« By Jove! So it is true that the gods descend to converse with

men? After travelling all over the world following the banners, I have come here, an old man, to find a god! »

« The God. The Only One. Not a god » says Jesus correcting him.

But the soldier is stupified at the idea of preceding a god... He does not speak any more... He is pensive, until, just at the entrance to the village the find the squad standing round the wounded soldier, who is moaning on the ground.

« Here he is! » says the non-commissioned officer briefly.

Jesus makes His way through the crowd approaching him. His leg, which is badly broken, is lying with the foot turned inside, and it is already swollen and livid. The man must be suffering very much and when he sees Jesus stretch His hand out he implores: « Don't hurt me too much! »

Jesus smiles. With the tips of his fingers He lightly touches where the livid circle of the trauma shows the fracture. He then says: « Stand up! »

« But he has another fracture farther up, at his hip » explains the non-commissioned officer, certainly meaning: « Are You not going to touch that one? »

Just then a citizen from Beth-horon arrives and says: « Master, Master! You are wasting Your time with heathens, and my wife is dying! »

« Go and bring her here. »

« I cannot. She is mad! »

« Go and bring her here to Me, if you have faith in Me. »

« Master, no one can hold her. She is nude and we cannot dress her. She is mad and tears her clothes. She is dying and she cannot stand. »

« Go and bring her here if your faith is not inferior to the faith of these heathens. »

The man goes away discontentedly.

Jesus looks at the Roman lying at His feet: « And can you have faith? »

« Yes, I can. What must I do? »

« Stand up. »

« Be careful, Camillus, because... » the non-commissioned officer is saying. But the soldier is already on his feet, agile, cured.

The Israelites do not shout hosanna. The man who has been cured is not a Hebrew. On the contrary they appear to be dissatisfied or at least their faces seem to be criticising Jesus' action. But the soldiers are not discontented, and they draw their short wide daggers and raise them into the grey air after beating their shields with them to make a joyful noise. Jesus is in the middle of a circle of blades.

The non-commissioned officer looks at Him. He does not know what to say or what to do, he, a man near a god, a heathen near

God... He is pensive and he realises that he must at least do for God what he would for Caesar. And he orders his men to salute the emperor (at least I think it is so because I hear a mighty « Hail! » resound while the blades shine as they are held almost horizontally by the outstretched arms). And not yet satisfied, he says in a low voice: « Go without worrying also at night. The roads... are all watched. Watched against highwaymen. You will be safe, I... » He stops. He does not know what to say.

Jesus smiles at him saying: « Thank you. Go and be good. Be human also to highwaymen. Be faithful to your service without being cruel. They are poor wretches. And they will have to give account of their deeds to God. »

« I will. Hail! I would like to meet You again... »

Jesus stares at him, then says: « We shall meet. On a different mountain. » And He repeats once again: « Be good. Goodbye. »

The soldiers start off again. Jesus enters the village. He walks a few metres and then He sees a large group come towards Him and His followers shouting comments. A man and a woman depart from the group - the man mentioned previously - and they bow before Jesus: the woman on her knees, the man stooping.

« Stand up and praise the Lord. But I must tell you, o man, that your conscience is not clear. You applied to Me out of selfishness, not out of love for Me or out of faith in Me. And you doubted My word. And you know who I am! Then you had an unkind thought because I stopped to cure a Gentile, as all the village acted unkindly by refusing to accept the wounded soldier. By an excess of mercy and in order to try and make your heart kinder I cured your wife without coming to your house. You did not deserve it. I did it to show you that I need not go to do something. It is enough for Me to want it. But I solemnly tell you all that those whom you despise are better than you are and they believe in My power more than you do. Stand up, woman. You are not guilty, because you were without the faculty of reason. Go and from now on believe out of gratitude to the Lord. »

The attitude of the inhabitants becomes cold and proud owing to Jesus' reproach. They follow Him sulkily as far as the square where He stops to speak, as the synagogue leader does not invite Him into the synagogue and no house opens to the Master.

« When God is with men, men can do everything against misfortune, whatever its name may be. When, on the contrary, God is not with men, they can do nothing against misfortune. The chronicles of this town mention such an occurrence more than once. God was with Joshua and he defeated the Canaanites and along this road God helped him to destroy the enemies of Israel "hurling huge hailstones from heaven and more died under the hailstones than at the edge of the sword" we read in Joshua's book. God was with

Judas Maccabee who came upon this hill with his small army to look at the powerful army of Seron, the leader of the Syrian army, and God confirmed the words of the commander of Israel with a striking victory.

But the necessary condition to have God with us is to act for reasons of justice. "For victory in war does not depend on the size of the fighting force, but on the help that comes from Heaven" says the Book of Maccabees. All good things in life do not depend on wealth, or power, or any other cause, but on the help that comes from Heaven. And it comes because we ask for help for good things. For our lives and our laws, says the Book of Maccabees again. But when one has recourse to God for a wicked or impure purpose, it is useless to invoke His help. God will not reply or He will reply with punishments instead of blessings.

This truth is too much forgotten now in Israel. And they want God's help and they implore Him for purposes which are not good. And they do not practise virtues and the commandments are not kept with true spirit of observance, that is, only their part that can be seen and praised by men is done. But what is hidden by appearance is quite different. I have come to say: be sincere in your actions because God sees everything and sacrifices are useless and prayers vain, if they are offered out of mere ostentation of cult, while one's heart is full of sin, hatred and wicked desires.

Beth-horon, do not do of your inhabitants what Obadiah says of Edom. Edom, thinking she was safe, took the liberty of oppressing Jacob and rejoicing at his defeats. Do not behave so, o sacerdotal town. Take and meditate on the roll of Obadiah. Meditate on it and change your ways. Follow justice if you do not wish to see days of horror. You will not be saved then by being on this summit, or by being apparently out of the war routes. I see in you many who do not have God with them and who do not want God. Are you grumbling? I am telling you the truth. I came up here to tell you. That you may still be saved.

Was your name not one only? Was it not all Israel? Why then has it been divided and it has taken two names? Oh! that really reminds Me of the marriage of Hoshea with a prostitute and of the children born of her who had fornicated. But what does the prophet say? "The number of the children of Israel will be like the sand of the seashore... Then, instead of saying to them: 'You are not My people' it will be said to them: 'You are the children of the living God'. And the children of Judah and Israel will come together again and will elect only one chief and will rise from the Earth because great is the day of Jezreel". Oh! why then do you criticise Him Who is to re-unite them all and make one people only, a great people, one, as God is one, why do you criticise Him for loving all the children of man because they are all children of God,

and Who is to make children of the living God also those who at present seem dead? And can you judge My actions and their hearts and yours? From where does light come to you? Light comes from God. But if God sends Me with the task of re-uniting all men under one sceptre, how can you have a light, a truly divine light, that shows you things contrary to how God sees them? And yet you see contrary to how God sees.

Do not grumble. It is the truth. You are outside justice. And those who seduce you into injustice are even more so. And they will receive double punishment. You accuse Me of fornicating with the enemy, with the ruler. I read your hearts. But do you not fornicate with Satan by becoming followers of those who fight the Son of man, the Messenger of God? And now you hate Me. But I know the face of him who instils hatred into you. As it is said in Hosea, I came with My hands laden with gifts and My heart full of love, I tried to attract you with all the kindest manners to make you love Me. I spoke to My people as a bridegroom to his bride offering them eternal love, peace, justice and mercy. There is still one hour left to prevent the people, who reject Me, and the leaders, who stir up the people - I know them - from being left without king, prince, sacrifice and altar. But near the den, where hatred is stronger and punishment will be more severe, they are working to purchase consciences in order to lead them to crime. Oh! It is true that those who lead consciences astray will be judged seven times seven more severely than those who have been misled.

Let us go. I have come and I worked a miracle and I have told you the truth to convince you Who I am. I am now going away. And if among you there is only one man who is just, let him follow Me, because sad is the future of this place, where snakes nestle to seduce and betray. »

And Jesus turns back to take the road by which He came.

« Why, Rabbi, did You speak to them thus? They will hate You » the apostles ask Him.

« I am not trying to conquer love through negotiations or falsehood. »

« But was it not better not to come here? »

« No. It is necessary not to leave the least doubt. »

« And whom did You convince? »

« Nobody, for the time being. But soon someone will say: "We cannot curse anybody because we were warned and we did not take any action". And if they reproach God for striking them, their reproach will be like blasphemy. »

« But to whom were You referring saying... »

« Ask Judas of Kerioth. He knows many people here and he is aware of their cunning. »

All the apostles look at Judas.

« Yes, this place is practically under Helkai's control. But... I don't think that Helkai... » the words die on the lips of Judas who, raising his eyes from his belt which he was putting in order to strike an attitude, meets Jesus' eyes. The Master's glance is so bright and piercing as to appear even magnetic. Judas lowers his head and concludes: « It is certainly a proud hateful village, worthy of him who dominates it. Everyone has what one deserves. They have Helkai. We have Jesus. And the Master did the right thing in letting them know that He knows. Very good. »

« They are certainly bad. Did you notice that? Not even a greeting after the miracle! Not even a mite! Nothing » remarks Philip.

« But I tremble when the Master unmask them like that » says Andrew with a sigh.

« To do it or not to do it is the same thing. They hate Him just the same. I would like to go back to Galilee! » says John.

« To Galilee! Of course! » says Peter sighing and he lowers his head looking very pensive.

In the rear, those who have followed Jesus and will not leave Him, continue to make their comments with the disciples.

### **513. Towards Gibeon. The Reasons for Jesus' Sorrow.**

18th October 1946.

But Jesus is not allowed to be engrossed in His thoughts for a long time. John and His cousin James, then Peter and Simon Zealot approach Him drawing His attention to the view that they can see from the hilltop. And perhaps in their intent to distract Him, because He is clearly very sad, they recall episodes that took place in the district which their eyes are surveying. The trip towards Ashkelon... the house of the peasants in the Sharon plain where Jesus made the old father of Gamala and Jacob see again... the retreat of Jesus and James on Mount Carmel... Caesarea on Sea and the little girl Aurea Galla... the meeting with Syntyche... the Gentiles at Joppa... the highwaymen near Modin... the miracle of the crops in the house of Joseph of Arimathea... the poor old woman gleaner... Recollections which should cheer one up... but in which, for everybody or for Him alone, there is the remembrance of tears and sorrow. Also the apostles become aware of that and they whisper: « Truly there is sorrow in everything on the Earth. It is a place of expiation... »

But Andrew, who has joined the group with James of Zebedee, remarks quite rightly: « A just law for us sinners. But why so much grief for Him? »

A polite discussion arises and remains such also when all the others, attracted by the voices of the first ones, join the group. The only exception is Judas Iscariot who takes pains in the middle of

the humble people whom he instructs imitating the Master's voice, gestures and expressions; but it is a bombastic theatrical imitation, lacking the warmth of persuasion and his listeners tell him quite openly, which makes Judas irritable and he throws back in their faces that they are dull-minded and thus they understand nothing. And he states that he is going to leave them because « it is not worth the trouble to throw the pearls of wisdom to pigs. » But he remains because the humble people are mortified and they beg him to bear with them admitting that « they are as inferior to him as an animal is to man. »...

Jesus, in order to listen to what Judas is saying, does not pay attention to what the Eleven are saying around Him, and what He hears does not certainly cheer Him up... But He sighs and is silent, until Bartholomew interests Him directly by submitting to Him the different points of view concerning the reason why He, who is innocent and free from sin, must suffer.

Bartholomew says: « I maintain that it happens because man hates him who is good. I am referring to a guilty man, that is, to the majority of men. That majority realise that their guilt and vices show up even more when they are compared with those who are innocent, and out of spite they revenge themselves by making good people suffer. »

« I instead maintain that You suffer because of the contrast between Your perfection and our misery. Even if no one despised You in any way, You would suffer just the same because Your perfection must be sorrowfully disgusted at the sins of men » says Judas Thaddeus.

« On the contrary, I maintain that You, as You are not exempt from humanity, suffer through the effort of having to control, by means of Your supernatural part, the rebellion of Your humanity against Your enemies » says Matthew.

« And I, I am sure I must be wrong because I am silly, I say that You suffer because Your love is rejected. You do not suffer because You cannot punish as Your human side might wish, but You suffer because You cannot do good to people as You would like » says Andrew.

« Finally, I maintain that You suffer because You must suffer all sorrows, in order to redeem all sorrows, as neither of Your Natures prevails in You, but they are both blended in perfect harmony, to form the perfect Victim. So supernatural as to be able to appease the offence given to God, so human as to be able to represent Mankind and lead it back to the immaculacy of the first Adam to cancel the past and generate a new humanity. To re-create a new humanity, according to the thought of God, that is, a humanity in which there is really the image and likeness of God and the destiny of Man: the possession, the ability to aspire to the possession of

God, in His Kingdom. You must suffer supernaturally, and You do suffer, for what You see being done and for what surrounds You, I could say, with perpetual offence to God. You must suffer humanly, and You do suffer, to cut off the lewdness of our flesh poisoned by Satan. With the complete suffering of the two perfect Natures You will completely cancel the Offence to God, the sin of man » says the Zealot.

The others are silent. Jesus asks: « Are you not saying anything? Which according to you is the just definition? »

Some say this, some that. Only James of Alphaeus and John are silent.

« And what about you two? Do you not approve of any of them? » says Jesus teasingly.

« No. We feel there is something true, something very true in each of them. But we also feel that the utter truth is missing. »

« And can you not find it? »

« Perhaps John and I have found it. But it seems almost blasphemy to us to tell You, because... We are good Israelites and we fear God so much that we can hardly mention His Name. And it seems a blasphemous thought to us that while for a man of the chosen people, for a man son of God it is almost impossible to pronounce the blessed Name and he has to create substitutes to mention the name of his God, Satan may dare to harm God. And we feel that sorrow is always active against You, because You are God and Satan hates You. He hates You more than anybody else. You find hatred, Brother, because You are God » says James.

« Yes. You find hatred because You are Love. It is not the Pharisees, or the rabbis, or this man or that one, or for this or that reason, that rise to grieve You. It is Hatred that pervades men and directs them, livid with hatred, against You, because with Your love You snatch too many preys from Hatred » says John.

« There is still one thing missing in the many definitions. Look for the reason which is the really true one. The one by which I am... » says Jesus encouraging them.

But no one finds it. They think and think. They give up saying: « We cannot find it... »

« It is so simple. It is always in front of you. It resounds in our books, in the great figures of our history... Come on, look for it! In all your definitions there is some truth, but the first reason is missing. Do not look for it in the present times, but in the most remote past, beyond the prophets, beyond the patriarchs, beyond the creation of the Universe... »

The apostles are pensive... but they do not find it.

Jesus smiles and then says: « And yet, if you remembered My words, you would find the reason. But you cannot remember everything as yet. But one day you will remember. Listen. Let us

go back up the course of ages together, farther back than the limits of time. You know who spoiled the spirit of man. It was Satan, the Snake, the Antagonist, the Enemy, the Hatred. Call him what you like. But why did he spoil man? Because he was eaten up with envy: he saw man destined to Heaven, from which he had been driven out. He wanted for man the exile that he had received. Why had he been driven out? Because he rebelled against God. You know that. But in what? In obedience. Disobedience is at the origin of sorrow. Then, is it not also necessarily logical that to restore Order, which is always a Joy, there should be a perfect obedience? It is difficult to obey, particularly in grave matters. What is difficult causes sorrow to those who accomplish it. Consider therefore whether I, Who was asked by the Love whether I would take back Joy to the children of God, should not suffer infinitely, to obey the Thought of God. I must, therefore, suffer to win, to cancel not one or a thousand sins, but the very preeminent Sin that, in the angelical spirit of Lucifer or in that animating Adam, was and will always be, until the last man, a sin of disobedience to God. Your obedience, men, is to be limited to the little - it seems so much to you but it is so little - that God asks of you. In His justice He only asks of you what you can give. Of the will of God, you know only what you can understand. But I know all His Thought, concerning great and small events. No limit has been imposed to Me concerning knowledge and execution. The loving Sacrificer, the divine Abraham, does not spare the Victim and His Son. It is the unsatisfied and offended Love that demands reparation and offerings. And if I should live for thousands of years, it would be of no avail, if I did not consume Man to his last fibre, as nothing would have happened if ab aeterno I had not said: "Yes" to My Father, preparing to obey as God Son and as Man, Whom the Father had then found just. Obedience is sorrow and glory. Obedience, like the spirit, never dies. I solemnly tell you that those who are truly obedient will become like gods, after a continuous struggle against themselves, the world, Satan. Obedience is light. The more one is obedient, the more one is luminous and sees. Obedience is patient, and the more one is obedient, the more one bears things and people. Obedience is humble and the more one is obedient, the more one is humble with his neighbour. Obedience is charitable because it is an act of love and the more one is obedient the more numerous and Perfect are the acts. Obedience is heroic. And the hero of the spirit is the saint, the citizen of Heaven, the deified man. If charity is the virtue in which one finds God One and Trine, obedience is the virtue in which one finds Me, your Master. Ensure that the world knows you as My disciples, through absolute obedience to everything that is holy. Call Judas. I have something to tell him as well... »

Judas arrives. Jesus points at the view which becomes narrower as they descend and He says: « A short parable for you, future masters of the spirit. The more you climb the way to perfection, which is hard and painful, the more you will see. Before we could see two plains, the Philistine and the Sharon plains, with many villages, fields and orchards, and even a remote blue expanse, that is, the great sea, and the green Carmel over there at the end. Now we can see only little. The panorama has narrowed and will narrow even more until it will disappear at the bottom of the valley. The same happens to those who descend spiritually instead of ascending. One's virtue and wisdom become more and more limited and one's judgement narrower and narrower until it vanishes completely. A master of the spirit is then dead to his mission. He can no longer discern or guide. He is a corpse and can corrupt as he is corrupt. At times it is alluring to descend, it is almost always tempting, because at the bottom there are sensual satisfactions. We also are going down to the valley to find rest and food. But if that is necessary to our bodies, it is not necessary to satisfy sensual lust and spiritual laziness by descending into the valleys of moral and spiritual sensualism. You are allowed to reach one valley only: the valley of humility. Because God Himself descends into it to abduct humble spirits and raise them to Himself. He who humbles himself will be exalted. Any other valley is lethal, because it removes one from Heaven. »

« Is that why You sent for me, Master? »

« Yes, for that. You had a long conversation with those who were questioning you. »

« Yes, but it is not worth it. They are more dull-minded than mules. »

« And I wanted to leave a thought where everything has vanished. That you may nourish your spirit. »

Judas looks at Him with a perplexed countenance. He does not know whether he is being rewarded or reproached. The others, who are unaware of Judas' conversation with the followers, do not realise that Jesus is reproaching Judas for his pride.

And Judas wisely prefers to change the subject and he asks: « Master, what do You think? Those Romans, and the man from Petra, will they ever be able to accept Your Doctrine, since they have had such a limited contact with You? And that Alexander? He has gone away... We shall never see him again. And these people, too. One might say that they instinctively search for the truth, but they are up to their necks in heathenism. Will they ever succeed in doing anything good? »

« You mean in finding the Truth? »

« Yes, Master. »

« Why should they not succeed? »

« Because they are sinners. »

« Are they the only sinners? Are there none among us? »

« There are many, I agree. That is exactly why I say that if we, who have been nourished for ages with wisdom and truth, are sinners and we are not successful in becoming just and followers of the Truth that You represent, how will they be able to do it, sated with filth as they are? »

« Every man can succeed in reaching and possessing the Truth, that is, God, wherever he may start from to reach it. When there is no mental pride and fleshly perversion, but sincere research for the Truth and Light, purity of intent and yearning for God, a creature is surely on the way to God. »

« Mental pride... fleshly perversion... Master... then... »

« Continue with your thought, which is a good one. »

Judas hesitates, then he says: « Then they cannot reach God because they are perverted. »

« That is not what you wanted to say, Judas. Why have you gagged your thought and your conscience? Oh! how difficult it is for man to rise to God! And the main obstacle is in man himself, as he will not admit and meditate on himself and his faults. Really even Satan is very often slandered, by ascribing every cause of spiritual ruin to him. And God is even more calumniated, as all events are ascribed to Him. God does not infringe man's freedom. Satan cannot prevail over a will firm in Good. I solemnly tell you that seventy times out of one hundred man sins of his own will. And - one does not consider it but it is so - and he does not rise from sin because he avoids examining his own conscience, and even if his conscience, with unexpected motion reacts in him and shouts the truth on which he did not want to meditate, man stifles that cry, he destroys the figure which appears severe and sorrowful to his intellect, he twists with an effort his thought influenced by the accusing voice, and he refuses to say, for instance: "Then we, I, cannot reach the Truth because our minds are proud and our flesh corrupt". Yes, truly, we do not proceed towards the ways of God because among us there is pride of minds and corruption of the flesh. A pride which really vies with the satanic one, so much so that God's actions are judged and hampered, when they are contrary to the interests of men and parties. And because of that sin many Israelites will be damned for ever. »

« But we are not all like that. »

« No. There are still good spirits, in every class of people. They are more numerous among the humble people than among the learned and rich. But they exist. But how many are they? How many with regard to this Palestinian people, whom I have been evangelizing and assisting for almost three years, and for whom I am wasting away? There are more stars shining in a cloudy night

than spirits in Israel willing to come to My Kingdom. »

« And the Gentiles, those Gentiles, will they come? »

« Not all of them, but many. Not even all My disciples will persevere until the end. But do not let us worry about the fruit that fall from the tree because they are rotten! Let us try, as much as possible, through kindness and firmness, through reproaches and forgiveness, through patience and love, to prevent them from becoming rotten. Then, when they say "no" to God and to their brothers who want to save them, and they throw themselves into the arms of Death, of Satan, dying unrepentant, let us lower our heads and offer God our sorrow for not making Him happy with that soul by saving it. Every master meets with such defeats. And they are useful, too. They humble the pride of the master of souls and test his constancy in his ministry. A defeat must not weary the will of the teacher of spirits. On the contrary it must spur him to do more and better in future. »

« Why did You tell the decurion that You will see him on a mountain? How do You know? »

Jesus looks at Judas: a long strange look in which sadness mingles with a smile, and He says: « Because he is one of the people who will be present at My assumption and he will tell the great doctor of Israel a severe word of truth. And from that moment he will begin his safe journey towards the Light. But here we are at Gibeon. Let Peter go with other seven to announce Me. I will speak at once in order to dismiss those who have followed Me from the nearby villages. The others will stay with Me until after the Sabbath. You, Judas, stay with Matthew, Simon and Bartholomew. »

(I did not recognise in the decurion any of the soldiers who were present at the Crucifixion. But I must say that, engaged as I was in watching my Jesus, I did not pay much attention to them. As far as I was concerned, it was a group of soldiers on duty. Nothing else. Further, when I could have watched them more carefully, because everything was accomplished, there was such a faint light that only well-known faces could be recognised. But taking into account Jesus' words, I think that it was the soldier who said some words to Gamaliel, words that I do not remember and that I cannot check, because I am all alone in the house and I cannot get anybody to give me the notebook of the Passion.)

#### **514. At Gibeon. The Wisdom of Love.**

22nd October 1946.

In spring, summer and autumn, Gibeon, built on the top of a pleasant low hill isolated in a very fertile plain, must be a kind airy town with a beautiful view. Its white houses are almost hidden among the green foliage of perennial trees of all kinds, mingled

with trees now laid bare by the season, and in the good season they must change the hill into a cloud of light petals, and later into a glorious display of fruit. Now, in the winter greyness, it shows its slopes lined by bare vines and grey olive-trees, or spotted with the dark trees of bare orchards. And yet the town is beautiful and airy and one's eyes rest on the slope of the hill and on the ploughed plain.

Jesus goes towards a large cistern or well, which reminds me somehow of that of the Samaritan woman, or also of En-Rogel and even more of the reservoirs near Hebron. There are many people there, who are hastening to draw much water for the Sabbath now at hand, or are doing their last business of the day, or, having finished their work, have already begun the Sabbath rest. In the middle of the crowd are the eight apostles who are announcing the Master and have already been successful, as I can see sick people being brought and beggars gathering together and many people coming from their houses.

When Jesus sets foot where the basin is, there is a murmur which changes into a unanimous cry: « Hosanna, Hosanna! The Son of David is among us! Blessed be Wisdom that is coming where she was invoked! »

« Blessed be you who know how to welcome her. Peace! Peace and blessings. » And He goes at once towards the sick people, towards those who are crippled either through misfortune or illness, towards the inevitable blind or almost blind people, and He cures them.

Beautiful is the miracle of a little dumb boy, who is handed to Jesus by his weeping mother and is cured by Him with a kiss on his lips. And the child makes use of words given to him by the Word to shout the two most beautiful names: « Jesus! Mummy! », and from the arms of his mother, who was holding him high above the crowd, he throws himself into Jesus' arms, flinging his arms round His neck, until Jesus hands him back to his happy mother, who explains to Jesus that this first-born son of hers, whom the hearts of his parents destined to be a Levite even before he was born, will be able to become one, as he is now without defects: « I had asked the Lord, with my husband Joachim, not for my own sake, but that he might serve the Lord. And I asked You to make him speak not to hear him call me mother or tell me that he loves me, his eyes and his kisses already told me. But I asked for it so that, like a little faultless lamb, he might be completely offered to the Lord to praise His Name. »

To which Jesus replies: « The Lord heard the word of his soul because He, like a mother, changes one's feeling into words and deeds. But your wish was a good one and the Most High has satisfied it. Now have your son educated for perfect praise so that

he may be perfect in serving the Lord. »

« Yes, Rabbi, but tell me what I must do. »

« Let him love the Lord with his whole being and perfect praise will spontaneously flourish in his heart, and he will be perfect in the service of the Lord. »

« What You said is right, Rabbi. Wisdom is on Your lips. Please speak to all of us » says a dignified citizen of Gibeon who had made his way through the crowd as far as Jesus and invites Him to the synagogue. He is certainly the synagogue leader.

Jesus bends His steps towards it followed by everybody, and as it is impossible to let in all the people of the town and those who were already with Him, Jesus takes the advice of the synagogue leader that He should speak from the terrace of the latter's house which is adjacent to the synagogue. A low long house, two sides of which are covered with the tenacious green vegetation of a jasmine espalier. And Jesus' powerful harmonious voice spreads in the calm air of the approaching evening and all over the square and the three streets leading into it, while a multitude of heads look up listening.

« The woman of your town who wanted the faculty of speech for her little boy, not because she wished to hear loving words from his lips, but that he might be fit for the service of God, reminds Me of another remote word that flowed from the lips of a great man in this town. God consented to his word, as He did to that of your woman, because in both He saw a request of justice, a justice that should be in all prayers so that God may hear them and grant His grace. What is necessary to do in your lifetime in order to obtain the eternal reward, the true endless Life in an endless beatitude? It is necessary to love the Lord with your whole being and your neighbour as yourselves. And that is the most necessary condition to have God as a friend and receive graces and blessings from Him. When Solomon who had become king after David's death, was invested with full powers, He came up to this town and he offered a large number of holocausts. And the Most High appeared to him that night saying: "Ask what you would like Me to give you". A great kindness of God. And a great test for man. Because to each gift corresponds a great responsibility for him who receives it, and the greater the gift, the greater the responsibility. And it is a proof of the degree of improvement reached by the spirit. If a spirit blessed by God, instead of becoming more perfect descends towards materialism, it fails the test thus showing its lack of improvement, or its partial improvement. There are two signs of man's spiritual value: the way he behaves in joy and the way he behaves in sorrow. Only he who has progressed in justice knows how to be humble in glory, faithful in joy, grateful and persevering also after he has been satisfied and does not wish for anything

else. And only he who is really a saint knows how to be patient and to continue loving his God, while afflictions persist. »

« Master, can I ask You something? » says a man from Gibeon.

« Yes, do. »

« Everything You say is true. And if I have understood correctly, You mean that Solomon passed the test successfully. But later he sinned. Now tell me: why did God benefit him so much if later he was to sin? The Lord certainly knew the future sin of the king. So why did He say to him: "Ask what you want Me to give you"? Was it a good or a bad thing? »

« Always a good thing, because God does not do wicked things. »

« But You said that a responsibility corresponds to each gift. Now, since Solomon asked for and received wisdom... »

« He had the responsibility of being wise and he was not, that is what you want to say. It is true. And I tell you that his failure in wisdom was punished and with justice. But the action of God granting him the requested wisdom was a good one. And Solomon's request for wisdom and not for material things was a good one. And as God is a Father and He is Justice, He forgave a large part of the error at the time it was made, considering that the sinner had once loved Wisdom more than any other thing and creature. One action must have diminished the other. The good action performed prior to the sin remains, and counts for forgiveness, when the sinner repents after his sin.

That is why I tell you not to miss any opportunity to do good actions, that they may be like money discounting your sins when, through the grace of God, you repent of them. Good actions, even if they seem to have gone by and consequently one may erroneously think that they no longer affect us by creating in us new incentives and strength for good things, are always active, at least with the remembrance which rises again from the depth of a downcast soul and provokes regret for the time when one was good. Regret is often the first step on the way back to Justice. I have said that even a chalice of water given with love to a thirsty person will not remain without reward. A drop of water is nothing, with regard to its material value, but charity makes it great. And it will not remain without reward. At times the reward may be a return to Goodness which is roused by the remembrance of that act, of the words of the thirsty brother, of the feelings of one's heart at that time, of the heart that offered a drink in the name of God and out of love. And so God, through a sequence of recollections, comes back, like the sun that rises after a dark night, and shines on the horizon of a poor heart that had lost Him and that, fascinated by His ineffable presence, humbles itself and cries: "Father, I have sinned! Forgive me. I love You once again".

Love for God is wisdom. It is the Wisdom of wisdoms because he

who loves knows everything and possesses everything. Here, while night is falling and the evening breeze makes your bodies shiver with cold and causes the lamps you have lit to flicker, I am not going to tell you what you already know: the passages of the Wisdom Book describing how Solomon obtained Wisdom and the prayer he said to obtain it. But I exhort you to read those pages with your synagogue leader, so that you may remember Me and proceed on a safe path and have a light to guide you. The Wisdom Book ought to be a code of spiritual life. Like a motherly hand it should guide you and lead you to a perfect knowledge of virtue and of My doctrine. Because Wisdom prepares My ways and makes of men "with little time to live, with little understanding of justice and the laws, servants and sons of God's serving maids" the gods of God's Paradise.

Seek Wisdom in the first place to honour the Lord and hear Him say to you, on the eternal day: "Since you have this at heart above all and you asked not for riches, goods, glory, a long life or victory over your enemies, Wisdom is granted you, that is, God Himself, because the Spirit of Wisdom is the Spirit of God. Seek holy Wisdom first of all and, I tell you, everything else will be given to you and in such a way that none of the mighty ones of the world can achieve so much. Love God. Be only anxious to love Him. Love your neighbour to honour God. Devote yourselves to the service of God, to His triumph in men's hearts. Convert to the Lord those who are not God's friends. Be holy. Store up holy works as a defence against possible failings of the creature. Be faithful to the Lord. Do not criticise either the living or the dead. But strive to imitate good people, and not for your own earthly joy, but to give joy to God ask graces of the Lord and they will be given to you.

Let us go. Tomorrow we shall pray together and God will be with us. »

And Jesus blesses them and dismisses them.

### **515. Returning to Jerusalem.**

24th October 1946.

The damp cold wind is brushing the trees on the hill and blowing cumuli of greyish clouds in the sky. All wrapped up in their heavy mantles, Jesus, the Twelve and Stephen are descending from Gibeon to the road which takes them towards the plain. They are speaking to one another while Jesus, immersed in silence, is absent from what surrounds Him. And He remains thus until they arrive at a cross-road, half-way down the hill, nay almost at the foot of the hill, where He says: « Let us take this road and go to Nob. »

« What? Are You not going back to Jerusalem? » asks the Iscariot.

« Nob and Jerusalem are practically the same thing for one who is accustomed to long walks. But I prefer to be at Nob. Do you mind? »

« Oh! Master! As far as I am concerned, here or there... I am rather sorry that You did not show up very much in a place so favourable to You. You spoke more at Beth-horon, which was certainly not friendly to You. I think You ought to do the opposite. You should try to attract more and more the towns which You feel are propitious to You, and use them as... defences against the towns dominated by Your enemies. Do You know how important it is to have on Your side the towns near Jerusalem? After all Jerusalem is not everything. Other places may be important as well and exert some influence with their importance on the decisions of Jerusalem. Kings are generally proclaimed such in the most loyal towns, and once the proclamation is made, also the others resign themselves... »

« When they do not rebel, in which case there is fratricidal warfare. I do not think that the Messiah wants to begin His Kingdom with a civil war » says Philip.

« I would like one thing only: that it should begin in you with a correct vision of the situation. But your vision is not right yet... So, when will you be able to understand? »

When the Iscariot realises that a reproach may be coming, he asks once again: « So why did You speak so little here at Gibeon? »

« I preferred to listen and rest. Do you not understand that I, too, need rest? »

« We could have stayed and made them happy. If You are so tired, why did You set off again? » asks Bartholomew sadly.

« My limbs are not tired. I need not stop to rest them. It is My heart that is tired and needs rest. And I rest where I find love. Do you perhaps think that I am insensible to so much bitter hatred? That refusals do not grieve Me? Do you think that the conspiracies against Me leave Me indifferent? That the betrayals of him who feigns to be My friend, whereas he is a spy of My enemies, placed beside Me to... »

« Let that never be, Lord! And You must not even suspect that. You offend us by saying that! » says the Iscariot protesting with sad indignation, which is superior to that of all the others, although they all protest saying: « You grieve us with such words, Master, You distrust us! » And James of Zebedee exclaims impulsively: « I say goodbye to You, Master, and I am going back to Capernaum. With a broken heart, but I am going away. And if Capernaum is not far enough, I will join the fishermen of Tyre and Sidon, I will go to Cintium, I will go I don't know where. But so far that it will be impossible for You to think that I betray You. Bless me for viaticum! »

Jesus embraces him saying: « Peace, My apostle. So many say that they are My friends, you are not the only ones. My words grieve you, they grieve you all. But into which hearts shall I pour My worries and where shall I seek comfort if not in the hearts of My beloved apostles and trustworthy disciples? I am seeking in you part of the union that I left to unite men: the union with My Father in Heaven; and a drop of the love that I left out of love for men: the love of My Mother. I seek them as a support. Oh! the bitter wave, the cruel weight overwhelm and press on My heart, on the Son of man!... My Passion, My hour, is becoming fuller and fuller... Help Me to endure it and fulfil it... because it is so grievous! »

The apostles look at one another moved by the deep grief vibrating in the Master's words, and all they can do is to press round Him, caressing and kissing Him... and Judas on the right hand side and John on the left kiss simultaneously the face of Jesus Who closes His eyes while Judas Iscariot and John kiss Him...

They take to the road again, and Jesus can terminate His interrupted thought: « In so much anguish My heart seeks places where it may find love and rest, where, instead of speaking to arid stones, or sly snakes or dreamy butterflies, it can listen to the words of other hearts and find comfort, as it perceives them to be sincere, loving, just. Gibeon is one of these places. I had never come here. But I found a field ploughed and sown by very good workers of God. That synagogue leader! He came towards the Light, but he already was a luminous spirit. How much a good servant of God can do! Gibeon is certainly not free from the intrigues of those who hate Me. Insinuations and corruption will be tried there as well. But it has a synagogue leader who is just, and the poisons of Evil lose venom in it. Do you think it is pleasant to Me having always to correct, criticise and even reproach? It is much more agreeable to be able to say: "You have understood Wisdom. Proceed along your way and be holy", as I said to the synagogue leader of Gibeon. »

« So shall we go back there? »

« When the Father makes Me find a peaceful place I enjoy it and bless My Father for it. But I have not come for that. I have come to convert to the Lord places which are guilty and remote from Him. You know that I could stay at Bethany, but I am not staying there. »

« Also to avoid harming Lazarus. »

« No, Judas of Simon. The very stones know that Lazarus is My friend. So, in that respect, it would be useless for Me to check My desire for consolation. But it is because... »

« Because of Lazarus' sisters, Mary in particular. »

« Not even that, Judas of Simon. Even stones know that the lust of the flesh does not upset Me. Consider that of the many charges made against Me, the first to be dropped was that one, because even My most bitter enemies realised that by sustaining it they would unmask their false practices. No honest person would have believed that I am sensual. Sensuality can allure only those who do not feed on the supernatural and who abhor sacrifices. But what allurement can the pleasure of an hour have for those who have vowed themselves to sacrifice and are victims? The joy of victim souls is entirely in the spirit and, if they are clothed with flesh, it is nothing but a garment. Do you think that the clothes we wear have feelings? The flesh is the same for those who live of the spirit: a garment, nothing else. The spiritual man is the true superman, because he is not a slave of senses, whereas the material man is valueless, with respect to the true dignity of man, because he has too many appetites in common with brutes, and he is also inferior to them as he surpasses them by turning animal instinct into a degraded vice. »

Judas bites his lip perplexedly, then he says: « Yes, in any case, You would not be able to harm Lazarus any longer. Death will soon rescue him from all dangers of revenge... So why do You not go to Bethany more often? »

« Because I have not come to enjoy Myself, but to convert. I have already told you. »

« But... Do You rejoice at having Your brothers with You? »

« Yes. But it is also true that I have no favouritism for them. When we have to part to find room in houses, they generally do not stay with Me, but you do. And that is to show you that in the eyes and minds of those who have vowed themselves to redemption, flesh and blood have no value, but only the improvement of hearts and their redemption are of value. We shall now go to Nob and we shall part once again for the night. And I will keep you with Me again and I will keep also Matthew, Philip and Bartholomew. »

« Are we perhaps the least improved? I in particular, since You always make me stay with You? »

« You are right, Judas of Simon. »

« Thank You, Master. I realised that » says the Iscariot with illrepressed anger.

« If you have understood, why do you not strive to improve yourself? Do you think that I might lie in order not to mortify you? On the other hand, we are among brothers, and the faults of one must not be an object of derision, and if one is admonished in the presence of the others, who are aware of each brother's imperfections, one must not feel dejected. No one is perfect, I tell you. But also reciprocal imperfections, so painful to see and put up with,

must be a reason to improve yourselves so that reciprocal inconvenience may not be increased. And believe Me, Judas, although I see you for what you are, no one, not even your mother, loves you as I do or strives to make you good as your Jesus does. »

« However, You reproach and mortify me, even in the presence of a disciple. »

« Is it the first time that I have recalled you to justice? » Judas is silent. « Answer My question. I tell you! » Jesus says authoritatively.

« No. »

« And how many times did I do that in public? Can you say that I shamed you? Or must you say that I covered you up and defended you? Speak up! »

« You defended me, it's true. But now... »

« But now it is for your own good. A man who caresses his guilty son will have to bandage his wounds later, says the proverb. And another proverb says that a horse badly broken-in turns out stubborn, and an uncontrolled son turns out headstrong. »

« Am I perhaps Your son? » asks Judas changing countenance, as he no longer frowns but looks contrite.

« If I had begotten you, you could not be more so. And I would have My viscera torn out to give you My heart and make you as I would like you to be... »

Judas has one of his fits of repentance... and looking really sincere he throws himself into Jesus' arms shouting: « Ah! I do not deserve You! I am a demon and I do not deserve You! You are too good! Save me, Jesus! » and he weeps, he really weeps with the pain of a heart upset by evil things and by the remorse of grieving the Master Who loves him.

#### **516. Jesus, the Good Shepherd.**

25th October 1946.

Jesus, Who has entered the town by Herod's Gate, is now crossing it, going towards the Tyropoeon and the Ophel district.

« Are we going to the Temple? » asks the Iscariot.

« Yes, we are. »

« Watch what You do! » many say warning Him.

« I will only stop for the time of the prayer. »

« They will detain You. »

« No. We will go in through the northern gates and will come out through the southern ones and they will have no time to organise themselves and harm Me. Unless there is always one behind Me who watches and reports. »

No one replies and Jesus goes on His way towards the Temple which appears on the top of its hill, looking almost ghastly in the

green yellowish light of a dull winter morning, as the sun is only a reminiscence, which insists on being present striving to make its way through the thick clouds. A useless effort! The joyful brightness of dawn has turned into a pale reflection of an unreal yellow hue, which is not diffused, but shows spots mixed with leaden hues veined with green. In such light the marbles and gold decorations of the Temple look pale, gloomy, I would say dismal, like ruins emerging from a dead area.

Jesus looks at it intensely while ascending towards the enclosure. And He looks at the faces of the morning wayfarers. Mostly humble people: market-gardeners, shepherds with small animals for slaughter, servants or housewives going to the markets. They all pass by silently, enveloped in their mantles, bending a little to protect themselves from the chilly morning air. Also their faces look paler than is usual with this race. It is the strange light that makes them look so greenish, almost pearly in the contour of the coloured cloths of their mantles, which are green, bright violet, deep yellow and thus not suitable to cast rosy reflections on their faces. Some greet the Master, but do not stop. It is not the right time. There are no beggars as yet, uttering their plaintive cries at crossroads or under the arches built across streets at short intervals. The hour and the season assist Jesus in going freely without any obstacle.

They are now at the enclosure. They go in. They go to the Court of Israel. They pray while the blares of trumpets, I would say silver ones by their timbre, announce something important spreading over the hill, and while the smell of incense spreads pleasantly overwhelming every other less pleasant odour which one can smell at the top of the Moriah, that is, I would say, the perpetual smells of meat slaughtered and consumed by fire, of burnt flour, of burning oil, which are always perceptible up there, more or less strongly, because of the continuous holocausts.

They come away following a different direction and they begin to be noticed by the first people going to the Temple, by those belonging to it, by money-changers and vendors who are assembling their benches and enclosures. But they are too few and their surprise is such that they do not react. They exchange words of astonishment:

« He has come back! »

« He did not go to Galilee, as they said. »

« But where is He hiding if He could not be found anywhere? »

« He really wants to defy them. »

« What a fool! »

« What a holy man! » and so forth according to individual feelings.

Jesus is already outside the Temple and He is going down towards the street that takes one to Ophel, when, at the crossing

with the streets leading up to Zion, He meets with the man born blind, cured recently, who laden with baskets full of sweet-smelling apples is going along cheerfully, joking with other young men, equally laden, going in the opposite direction.

Perhaps the young man would not notice the encounter, as he does not know the face of Jesus or those of the apostles. But Jesus recognises the face of the man He cured miraculously. And He calls him. Sidonia, named Bartholmai, turns round and looks inquisitively at the tall stately man, although modestly dressed, who is calling him by the name, going towards a narrow street.

« Come here » Jesus orders him.

The young man approaches Him, without putting down his load, looks stealthily at Jesus, and thinking that He wants to buy some apples, he says: « My master has already sold them. But he has more if You want them. They are beautiful and good. They arrived yesterday from the Sharon orchards. And if You buy many of them he will give you a good discount, because... »

Jesus smiles raising His right hand to check the talkative young man. And He says: « I did not call you because I want to buy apples, but to congratulate you and bless the Most High Who has been kind to you. »

« Oh! yes! I do that continuously, because of the light that I can see and because of the work that I can do, helping my father and mother, at last. I found a good master. He is not a Hebrew but he is good. The Hebrews did not want me because I have been ejected from the synagogue » says the young man laying his baskets on the ground.

« They have ejected you? Why? What have you done? »

« I, nothing. I can assure You. The Lord did it. On a Sabbath He made me find that man who is said to be the Messiah, and He cured me, as You can see. And that is why they drove me out. »

« Then, He Who cured you, did not do you a completely good turn » says Jesus tempting him.

« Don't say that, man! You are blaspheming! First of all He showed me that God loves me, and then He made me see... You do not know what it is "to see" because You have always had Your eyesight. But one who had never seen! Oh!... It is... It is all the things together that one has with his sight. I tell You that when I saw, over there near the Siloam pool, I laughed and wept, for joy, eh? I wept as I had never wept in my misfortune. Because I then understood how great it was and how good was the Most High. And now I can earn my living and by means of a decent work. And then... - this is above all what I hope the miracle I received will grant me - I hope to meet the man who is said to be the Messiah and His disciple who had... »

« What would you do then? »

« I would like to bless Him. Him and His disciple. And I would like to ask the Master, Who must really come from God, to take me as His servant. »

« What? Because of Him you are anathema, you have difficulty in finding a job, you may be punished more severely, and you want to serve Him? Do you not know that all those who follow Him Who cured you are persecuted? »

« Yes, I know! But he is the Son of God, that is what is said among us. Although those up there (and he points at the Temple) do not want us to say that. And is it not worth leaving everything to serve Him? »

« So do you believe in the Son of God and in His presence in Palestine? »

« I do believe it. But I would like to meet Him to believe in Him not only with my intellect, but with my whole self. If You know Who He is and where He is, tell me, that I may go to Him and see Him, and I may believe in Him completely, and serve Him. »

« You have already seen Him, and there is no need for you to go to Him. He, Whom you see just now and Who is speaking to you, is the Son of God. »

I could not assert this with full certainty, but I got the impression that in saying these words Jesus almost underwent a very short transfiguration, becoming most handsome and I would say bright. I think that to reward the humble believer in Him and confirm him in his faith, for the duration of a flash, He revealed His future beauty, I mean the beauty that He will assume after Resurrection and will retain in Heaven, His beauty of a glorified human creature, of a body glorified and blended with the inexpressible beauty of Perfection, which is exclusively His. I say, an instant. A flash. But the semi-dark corner, where they have withdrawn to speak, under the archivolt of the lane, lightens with a strange brightness emanating from Jesus Who, I would repeat, becomes very handsome.

Then everything returns to normal, with the exception of the young man, who is now prostrated on the ground, his face in the dust, and who adores saying: « I believe, Lord, my God! »

« Stand up. I came into the world to bring light and the knowledge of God and to test men and judge them. This time of Mine is the time of choice, election and selection. I have come for the pure in heart and intention, for the humble, the meek, the lovers of justice, of mercy, of peace, for those who weep and for those who know how to give the real value to the various riches and prefer spiritual riches to material ones, that they may find what their spirits long for and those who were blind may see because men have built thick walls to obstruct light, that is the knowledge of God - and those who consider themselves seers,

may become blind... »

« Then You hate a large part of men and You are not as good as You say. If You were, You would like everybody to be able to see, and those who can see not to become blind » interrupt some Pharisees who have arrived from the main road and have cautiously approached the group at the back of the apostles.

Jesus turns round and looks at them. He is certainly no longer transfigured into divine beauty, now! It is a very severe Jesus Who stares at His persecutors with His sapphire eyes, and His voice no longer has the golden note of joy, but it is a bronze voice and it is sharp and severe like the sound of bronze while He replies: « I am not the one who wants those, who at present are fighting the truth, not to be able to see it. They themselves are raising plates in front of their eyes in order not to see. And they become blind of their own free will. And the Father sent Me that the division may take place, and the children of Light and those of Darkness may be really known, those who want to see and those who want to be blind. »

« Are we among these blind people as well? »

« If you were and you tried to see, you would not be guilty. But it is because you say: "We see", and then you do not want to see, that you commit sin. Your sin persists because you do not try to see, although you are blind. »

« And what have we to see? »

« The Way, the Truth, the Life. A man born blind, as this young man was, with the help of his stick can always find the door of his house and move about it, because he knows his house. But if he were taken to a different place he would not be able to go in by the door of the new house, because he would not know where it is and he would bump against the walls.

The time of the new Law has come. Everything is renewed and a new world, a new people, a new kingdom are rising. Now the people of the past do not know all this. They know their times. They are like blind people taken to a new town where the regal house of the Father is, but they do not know its location. I have come to lead them there and take them into it and that they may see. But I am the Door through which one enters the paternal house, in the Kingdom of God, in the Light, in the Way, in the Truth, in the Life. And I am also the One Who has come to gather the flock left without a guide and lead it to one only sheep-fold: the Father's. I know the door of the Fold because I am Door and Shepherd. And I go in and come out as and when I like. And I go in freely, and by the door, because I am the true Shepherd.

When a man comes to give the sheep of God other instructions or tries to mislead them taking them to other abodes and other ways, he is not the good Shepherd, but an idol shepherd. Likewise, he who does not go in by the door of the fold, but tries to enter in a

different way, jumping over the enclosure, is not the shepherd, but a thief and an assassin, who goes in to kill and steal, so that the stolen lambs with their wailing voices may not draw the attention of the watchmen and of the shepherd. False shepherds are trying to insinuate themselves also among the sheep of the flock of Israel to lead them astray from the pastures, far from the true Shepherd. And they go in ready to tear them from the flock even by means of violence, and if necessary, they are also willing to kill them and strike them in many ways, so that they may not speak informing the Shepherd of the tricks of the false shepherds or they may cry to God to protect them from their enemies and the enemies of the Shepherd.

I am the good Shepherd and My sheep know Me, and those who have been for ever the watchmen of the true Fold know Me. They have known Me and My Name and they mentioned it to make it known to Israel, and they described Me and prepared My ways, and when My voice was heard, the last of them opened the door to Me saying to the flock awaiting the true Shepherd, the flock gathered round his crook: "Now! Here is the One Who I said would follow me. One Who precedes me because He was before me and I did not know Him. But for Him, that you may be ready to receive Him, I have come to baptise with water, that He may be revealed to Israel". And the good sheep heard My voice and when I called them by their names they came to Me and I took them with Me, as a good shepherd does when he is known to the sheep that recognise his voice and follow him wherever he goes. And when he has let them all out, he walks in front of them and they follow him because they love the voice of the shepherd. But they do not follow a stranger, on the contrary they run away from him, because they do not know him and they are afraid of him. I also walk ahead of My sheep to point out the road to them and be the first to face dangers and show them to the flock, that I want to lead to safety in My Kingdom. »

« Is Israel no longer the kingdom of God? »

« Israel is the place from which the people of God must rise to the true Jerusalem and to the Kingdom of God. »

« And what about the promised Messiah? That Messiah that You say You are, is He not to make Israel triumphant, glorious, the master of the world, subjecting to His sceptre all the peoples and revenging Himself, oh! revenging Himself cruelly on all those who subjugated it since it was a people? So, nothing of all that is true? Are you denying the prophets? Are You saying that our rabbis are stupid? You... »

« The Kingdom of the Messiah is not of this world. It is the Kingdom of God, based on Love. It is nothing else. And the Messiah is not the king of peoples and armies, but the king of spirits.

The Messiah will come from the chosen people, from the royal stock, and above all from God, Who generated Him and sent Him. The foundation of the Kingdom of God, the promulgation of the Law of love, the announcement of the Good News mentioned by the prophet began from the people of Israel. But the Messiah will be the King of the world, the King of kings, and His Kingdom will have no limit or boundary, neither in time nor in space. Open your eyes and accept the truth. »

« We have understood nothing of Your nonsense. You speak words without any logical connection. Speak and reply to us without parables. Are You or are You not the Messiah? »

« And have you not yet understood? I told you that I am Door and Shepherd for that. So far no one has been able to enter the Kingdom of God, because it was walled up and without exits. But now I have come and the door to enter has been made. »

« Oh! Others have said that they were the Messiah and later they were found out to be highwaymen and rebels and human justice punished their wickedness. Who can assure us that You are not like them? We are tired of suffering and of making the people suffer the severity of Rome, thanks to liars who say that they are kings and they induce the people to rebel! »

« No. What you say is not correct. You do not want to suffer, that is true. But you are not sorry if the people suffer. So much so that you add your rigour to the severity of our rulers, by oppressing the common people with heavy tithes and in other ways. Who can assure you that I am not a rascal? My deeds. I am not one who will make the hand of Rome heavy. On the contrary, if anything, I make it lighter by advising the rulers to be human and the people ruled to be patient. At least that. »

Many people have assembled and they are growing more and more in numbers so much so that the traffic is obstructed on the main road and so they all move into the little lane, under the arches of which voices resound, as they express their approval saying: « He is quite right with regard to tithes! It's true. He advises us to submit and the Romans to be compassionate. »

The Pharisees, as usual, become embittered because of the approval of the crowd and the tone in which they speak to the Christ becomes more biting. « Reply to us without so many words, and prove that You are the Messiah. »

« I solemnly tell you that I am. I alone am the Door of the Fold of Heaven. He who does not pass by Me cannot enter. It is true. There have been other false Messiahs, and there will be still more. But I am the only and true Messiah. Those who have come so far proclaiming themselves such, were not the Messiah, they were only thieves and bandits. And not only those who made the few people of their kind call them Messiah, but also others who without taking

that name demand a worship which is not even given to the true Messiah. Listen, anyone who has ears to hear. But take notice of this. The sheep did not listen to the false Messiahs or to the false shepherds and masters, because their spirits understood the falseness of their voices which wanted to sound kind and were instead cruel. Only some billy-goats followed them to be their companions in wickedness. Wild unyielding billy-goats that do not want to enter the Fold of God, under the sceptre of the true King and Shepherd. Because this is now what happens in Israel. That He Who is the King of kings becomes the Shepherd of the Flock, whereas, once, he who was the shepherd of flocks became king and both the Former and the latter come from the same root, that of Jesse, as it is stated in the promises and prophecies.

The false shepherds did not speak sincere words or perform comforting deeds. They dispersed and tortured the flock or they abandoned it to wolves, or they killed it to make a profit selling it to secure their lives or they deprived it of its pastures to turn them into places of pleasure or thickets for idols. Do you know which are the wolves? They are the evil passions, the vices that the same false shepherds taught the flock, as they were the first to practise them. And do you know which are the thickets for idols? They are one's selfishness before which too much incense is burnt. The other two things need not be explained because the sermon is even too clear. But it is logical that false shepherds should behave thus. They are nothing but thieves who have come to steal, kill and destroy, to take the sheep to treacherous pastures or to false folds which are nothing but slaughter-houses. But those which come to Me are safe and they will be able to go out to My pastures or come back to rest with Me and become strong and fat with holy healthy food. Because I have come for that. That My people, My sheep, so far thin and depressed, may have life and have it abundantly, in peace and joy. And I want that so much that I have come to give My life so that My sheep may have the full abundant Life of the children of God.

I am the good Shepherd. And when a shepherd is good he gives his life to defend his flock from wolves and thieves, whereas a mercenary, who does not love the sheep but the money he gets for leading them to pasture, is only worried about saving himself and the savings that he keeps in his bosom, and when he sees wolves or thieves come, he runs away, save going back later to take some sheep left half dead by the wolves or dispersed by the thieves, killing the former to eat them or selling the latter to make more money and then with false tears he tells his master that not even one sheep was spared. What does the mercenary care if a wolf fangs and disperses the sheep, and a thief plunders them to take them to the butcher? Did he watch over them while they were

growing and did he work to make them strong? But the owner who knows how much sheep cost, how many hours of work, of watch, how many sacrifices, loves them and takes care of them as they are dear to him. But I am more than the owner. I am the Saviour of My flock and I know how much the salvation of even one soul costs Me, and I am therefore willing to do anything to save a soul. It was entrusted to Me by My Father. All the souls have been entrusted to Me with instructions that I should save a very large number of them. The more I will be able to snatch from the death of the spirit, the more will My Father be glorified. I therefore struggle to free them from all their enemies, that is from their egos, from the world, from the flesh, from the demon, and from My enemies who contend for them with Me to grieve Me. I do that because I know the Thought of My Father. And My Father sent Me to do that, because He is aware of My love for Him and for souls. And also the sheep of My flock know Me and My love and they feel that I am ready to give My life to give them happiness.

And I have other sheep. But they do not belong to this Fold. Therefore they do not know Me for what I am, and many do not know what I am and who I am. Sheep that to many of us appear to be worse than wild billy-goats and are considered unworthy of knowing the Truth and of having Life and the Kingdom. And yet it is not so. The Father wants them as well, so I must approach them, too, to make Myself known and to make the Good News known, to lead them to My pastures and gather them. And they also will listen to My voice because they will end up by loving it. And there will be only one Fold under only one Shepherd, and the Kingdom of God will be formed on the Earth ready to be transported to and received in Heaven, under My sceptre and My sign and My true Name.

My true Name! It is known to Me only! But when the number of the chosen ones is complete, and among hymns of jubilation they sit at the great wedding feast of the Bridegroom and the Bride, then My Name will be made known to My chosen ones, who through their loyalty to it have become holy, without however knowing the full extent and the depth of what it means to be marked with My Name and rewarded because of their love for it, or what the reward will be... This is what I want to give to My faithful sheep. And that is My own joy... »

With His eyes bright with ecstatic tears Jesus looks at the faces turned towards Him, and a smile trembles on His lips, such a spiritualised smile in His spiritualised face, that it thrills the crowds who realise that the Christ has been in a beatific rapture and that out of love He wishes to see it accomplished. He collects Himself and for a moment He closes His eyes concealing the mystery that His mind sees and that the eyes might reveal, and He

resumes:

« That is why the Father loves Me, o My people, o My flock! Because for your sake, for your eternal good, I give My life. Later I will retake it. But first I will give it that you may have life and your Saviour as your life. And I will give it in such a way that you may feed on it, as I will change from Shepherd into pasture and fountain, which give food and drink, not for forty years as for the Hebrews in the desert, but for all the time of exile in the deserts of the Earth. No one, actually, takes My life. Neither those who loving Me with their whole beings deserve that I should sacrifice it for them, nor those who take it through immense hatred and foolish fear. No one could take it if I did not agree to give it and if the Father did not allow it, as we are both enraptured by an ecstasy of love for guilty Mankind. I will give it Myself. And I have the power to retake it whenever I wish, as it is not befitting that Death should prevail over Life. That is why the Father gave Me that power, nay the Father ordered Me to do that. And through My life, offered and consumed, the people will become one only People: Mine, the heavenly People of the children of God, and in the people the sheep will be separated from the billy-goats and the sheep will follow their Shepherd to the Kingdom of eternal Life. »

And Jesus, Who so far has spoken in a loud voice, turns towards Sidonia named Bartholmai, who has been all the time in front of Him with his baskets of sweet-smelling apples at his feet, and He says to him in a whisper: « You have forgotten everything because of Me. Now you will certainly be punished and you will lose your job. See that? I am always the cause of sorrow to you. Because of Me you lost the synagogue, and now you will lose your master... »

« And what am I going to do with all that, if I have You? You only are of value to me. And I will leave everything to follow You, if You will allow me. Just let me take this fruit to him who bought it and then I will come with You. »

« Let us go together. Then we will go to see your father. Because you have a father and you must honour him by asking him to bless you. »

« Yes, Lord. Everything You wish. But teach me many things, because I know nothing, just nothing, I cannot even read and write because I was blind. »

« Do not worry about that. Your good will will teach you. »

And He sets out to go to the main street, while the crowds comment, discuss, and even quarrel, divided between the two usual opinions: is Jesus of Nazareth a person possessed or is He a saint? The crowds, with discordant opinions, dispute, while Jesus goes away.

## 517. Towards Bethany and in Lazarus' House.

28th October 1946.

Jesus dismisses the disciples Levi, Joseph, Matthias and John, whom He met I do not know where and to whom He entrusts the new disciple Sidonia named Bartholmai. This happens at the first houses in Bethany. And the shepherd disciples go away with the newcomer and with seven other men who were with them. Jesus looks at them go away, He then turns round to look at His apostles and He says: « And now let us wait here for Judas of Simon... »

« Ah! You noticed that he has gone? » say the others who are surprised. « We thought that You were not aware of it. There was such a large crowd. And You were speaking all the time, first with the young man and then with the shepherds... »

« I noticed that he had gone from the very first moment. Nothing escapes My notice. That is why I went to some friendly houses, telling them to send Judas to Bethany, if he should look for Me... »

« God forbid! » grumbles the other Judas between his teeth.

Jesus looks at him, but pretends that He has not heard, and He goes on, speaking to everybody, as He sees that they are all of the same opinion as Thaddeus (faces, at times, speak better than words): « This will be a good rest while waiting for his return. It will be of comfort to everybody. Then we will go towards Tekoah. The weather is cold but it is clearing up. I will evangelize that town, then we will come back up passing through Jericho and we will go to the other bank. The shepherds told Me that many sick people are looking for Me and I sent word that they need not set out on the journey, and that they should wait for Me there.- »

« Well, let us go » says Peter with a sigh.

« Are you not glad to go to Lazarus' house? » Thomas asks him.

« I am glad. »

« You don't seem to be, the way you say it. »

« It is not because of Lazarus. It's because of Judas... »

« You are a sinner, Peter » says Jesus admonishing him.

« I am. But... he, Judas of Kerioth, is he not a sinner since he goes away, is insolent and a torture? » bursts out Peter angrily, as he cannot stand the situation any longer.

« He is. But if he is, you must not be. None of us must be. Remember that God will ask us, - I say: will ask us, because God Father entrusted that man to Me before entrusting him to you - to account for what we did to redeem him. »

« And do You hope to succeed, Brother? I cannot believe it. You, I believe this, You know the past, the present and the future. So You cannot be mistaken about that man. And... But it is better if I don't tell You the rest. »

« It is in fact a great virtue to be able to be silent. But you had better know that to foresee more or less exactly the future of a heart

does not exempt anyone from persevering until the end to save a heart from being ruined. Do not fall into the fatalism of Pharisees who maintain that what is destined must take place and nothing can prevent what is destined from being accomplished, and with such reasoning they justify their sins and will justify their final act of hatred against Me. Many a time God awaits the sacrifice of a heart, that overcomes its nausea and indignation, its antipathy, even if justified, to rescue a spirit from the quagmire into which it is sinking. Yes, I tell you. Many times God, the Almighty, the Everything, waits for a creature, a mere nothing, to make or not to make a sacrifice, to say a prayer, in order to condemn or not condemn a spirit. It is never late, never too late, to try and hope to save a soul. And I will give you proof of that. Even on the threshold of death, when both the sinner and the just man who is anxious about him, are about to leave the Earth to appear at the first judgement of God, one can always save or be saved. Between the cup and the lips, says the proverb, there is always room for death. I instead say: between the extremity of agony and death there is always time to obtain forgiveness, for oneself or for those whom we want to be forgiven. »

Not one word is uttered by anybody.

Jesus, who by now has arrived at the heavy gate, calls a servant to have it opened. And He goes in and asks after Lazarus.

« Oh! Lord! See? I have just come back from gathering bay-leaves and the leaves of the camphor tree, and cypress-berries and other leaves and scented fruit to boil them with wine and resins, and prepare baths for our master with them. His flesh is coming off in bits and it is impossible to withstand the stench. You have come, but I do not know whether they will let You pass... » Lest the very air should hear, he lowers his voice to a whisper saying: « Now that it is no longer possible to conceal the sores, the mistresses do not receive anybody... lest... You know... Lazarus is not really loved by many people... But many, and for many reasons, would be glad if... Oh! don't let me think of this as it is the terror of the whole household. »

« And they are right. But do not be afraid. That misfortune will not take place. »

« But... will he be able to recover? A miracle of Yours... »

« He will not recover. But that will serve to glorify the Lord. »

The servant is disappointed... Jesus cures everybody but does nothing here!... But only a sigh expresses his thought. He then says: « I am going to the mistresses to announce You. »

Jesus is surrounded by the apostles who are interested in Lazarus' conditions and are filled with dismay when Jesus informs them. But the two sisters are about to arrive. Their flourishing although different beauty seems dulled with grief and

with the fatigue of protracted watching at Lazarus' bedside. Pale, humble, emaciated, their eyes, once so bright, tired, without rings or bracelets, wearing two dark grey dresses, they look more like maidservants than mistresses. They kneel down at a distance from Jesus, offering Him nothing but tears. Resigned, silent tears flowing from an internal source and unable to stop.

Jesus approaches them. Martha stretches out her hands whispering: « Move away, Lord. We are really afraid by now that we have infringed the law on leprosy. But we cannot, o God, we cannot have such an ordinance against our Lazarus! But please do not come near us, as we are unclean as we touch nothing but sores. We alone. Because we have kept everybody else away, and everything is placed on the threshold for us, and we take it and wash and burn things in the room next to our brother's. See our hands? They are corroded by the caustic lime which we use for the vases we have to hand back to the servants. We think that by doing so we are less guilty » and she weeps.

Mary of Magdala, who has been silent so far, moans in her turn: « We should call the priest. But... I, I am the more guilty one because I oppose that and I say that it is not the dreadful cursed disease in Israel. It is not, it is not! But so many hate us and so much, that they would say it is. Your apostle Simon was declared a leper for much less! »

« You are neither priest nor doctor, Mary » says Martha sobbing.

« I am not. But you know what I have done to be certain of what I am saying. Lord, I went and covered the whole valley of Hinnom, all Siloam, all the sepulchres near En Rogel. I went dressed as a maidservant, veiled, in the first light of dawn, loaded with foodstuffs, medicated waters, bandages and clothes. And I gave, I gave everything. I said that it was a vow I had made for him whom I loved. And it was true. I only asked to see the sores of the lepers. They must have thought that I was mad... Who ever wishes to see those horrors?! But after laying my offering at the edges of the crags, I asked to see. And they were above me, I was farther down; they were amazed, I was disgusted; they wept, and I wept; and I looked and looked! I looked at bodies covered with scales, with crusts, with sores, I looked at corroded faces, at white hair stiffer than bristles, at eyes exuding pus, at cheeks through which I could see teeth, at skulls on living bodies, at hands which had become claws of monsters, at feet resembling knobby branches... stench, horror, rottenness. Oh! if I sinned worshipping flesh, if I took delight in my senses of sight, smell, hearing, touch, in what was beautiful, scented, harmonious, soft and smooth, oh! I can assure you that my senses have been purified in the mortification of such sights! My eyes forgot the enticing handsomeness of man on contemplating those monsters, my ears expiated the past enjoyment

of manly voices on hearing those harsh ones, no longer sounding like human voices, my body shuddered, my smell revolted... and all remainders of the cult of myself died, because I saw what we shall be after death... But I brought back with me this certitude: that Lazarus is not a leper. His voice is not injured, his hair and the hairy parts of his body are intact, and his sores are different. No, he is not a leper! And Martha distresses me because she will not believe, because she does not comfort Lazarus by dissuading him from believing that he is unclean. See? He does not want to see You, now that he knows that You are here, lest he should infect You. The foolish fears of my sister are depriving him also of Your comfort!... »

Her passionate nature makes her angry. But when she sees that her sister bursts into tears weeping desolately, her impetuosity abates at once and she embraces and kisses Martha, saying: « Oh! Martha! Forgive me! Grief is making me unfair! It's my love for you and Lazarus that wants to convince you! My poor sister! What poor women we are! »

« Now, now, do not weep so! You are in need of peace and reciprocal compassion, for your own sake and for his. Lazarus, in any case, is not leprous, I tell you. »

« Oh! come to him, Lord. Who can judge better than You whether he is leprous? » says Martha imploringly.

« Have I not already told you that he is not? »

« Yes. But how can You say so if You do not see him? »

« Oh! Martha! Martha! God forgives you because you are in pain and you are like one whose mind is raving! I feel sorry for you and I will go to Lazarus and uncover his sores and... »

« and You will cure them!!! » shouts Martha standing up.

« I have already told that I cannot do it... But I will put your minds at rest, as you will know that you have not infringed the law concerning lepers. Let us go... » And He is the first to set out towards the house beckoning to His apostles not to follow Him.

Mary runs ahead, she opens a door, runs along a corridor, opens another door which leads into a small internal yard, and after a few steps she enters a semidark room encumbered with basins, small vases, amphorae, bandages... A mixed odour of spices and putrefaction is perceived. There is a door opposite the first one and Mary opens it shouting in a voice that endeavours to be bright and joyful: « Here is the Master. He has come to tell you that I am right, my dear brother. Cheer up and smile because our love and peace is coming in! » and she bends over her brother, lifts him on the pillows, kisses him, heedless of the smell that in spite of palliatives exhales from the ulcerated body, and she is still bent tidying him, when Jesus' kind greeting resounds in the room, which, enveloped in a faint light, seems to brighten up because of

the divine presence.

« Master, You are not afraid... I am... »

« You are ill! Nothing else. Lazarus, the rules have been laid down, so comprehensive and severe, out of an understandable sense of prudence. It is better to be exceedingly prudent than imprudent in certain cases, such as catching diseases. But you are not infectious, My poor dear friend, you are not unclean. And in fact I do not think that I lack prudence towards My brothers if I embrace you and kiss you thus » and He kisses him taking his emaciated body in His arms.

« You really are Peace! But You have not yet seen me. Mary will now uncover the horror. I am already a dead body, Lord. I do not know how my sisters can stand... »

I would not know either, so frightening and disgusting are the sores near the varicose veins of his legs. Mary's beautiful hands massage them lightly while in her wonderful voice she replies: « Your ills are roses for your sisters. Only because you suffer they are thorny roses. Here it is, Master. See? Leprosy is not like that! »

« No, it is not. It is a bad disease and it consumes you, but it is not dangerous. Believe your Master! You may cover him, Mary. I have seen. »

« Are You really not going to touch him? » asks Martha with a sigh, persevering in hope.

« It is not necessary. Not because of disgust, but to avoid irritating the sores. »

Martha, without insisting any more, bends over a basin containing spicy wine or vinegar and dips some linens into it and then hands them to her sister. Silent tears drop into the reddish liquid...

Mary bandages the poor legs and lays the blankets once again on Lazarus' feet, which are as motionless and yellowish as those of a dead man.

« Are You alone? »

« No. They are all with Me, except Judas of Kerioth who stayed in Jerusalem, and will come... Nay, if I have already left, send him to Bethabara. I shall be there. And tell him to wait for Me there. »

« You are going away soon... »

« And I shall be back soon. It will soon be the Feast of the Dedication. I shall be with you those days. »

« I shall not be able to honour You at the Feast of the Lights... »

« I shall be in Bethlehem on that day. I must see My cradle once again... »

« You are sad... I know... Oh! and I can do nothing! »

« I am not sad. I am the Redeemer... But you are tired. Do not strive to keep awake, My dear friend. »

« It was to honour You... »

« Sleep. We shall meet later... » and Jesus withdraws noiselessly.

« Have You seen, Master? » asks Martha, outside, in the yard.

« Yes, I have. My poor disciples... I weep with you... But I truly confide to you that My heart is much more ulcerated than your brother. Grief gnaws at My heart... » and He looks at them with such deep sadness that they forget their sorrow because of His, and as their being women prevents them from embracing Him, they confine themselves to kissing His hands and tunic and to serving Him as loving sisters. And they serve Him in a little room, and overwhelm Him with their love.

The loud voices of the apostles can be heard from beyond the yard... All of them, except the voice of the bad disciple. And Jesus listens and sighs... He sighs awaiting the fugitive patiently.

### **518. Going to Tekoah. Old Elianna.**

29th October 1946.

They are still only eleven when they set out again. Eleven pensive shocked faces around the sad face of Jesus, Who takes leave of the sisters, and Who, after a moment's consideration, says to Simon Zealot and Bartholomew: « You will stay here. You will join Me at Tekoah, at Simon's house, or in the house of Nike near Jericho, or at Bethabara, if he should come. And... serve Charity. Have you understood? »

« Do not worry, Master. We will not be lacking in love for our neighbour in any way » says Bartholomew assuring Him.

« At whatever hour he may arrive, leave at once. »

« We will, Master. And... thanks for trusting us » says the Zealot.

They kiss one another and while a servant closes the gate and Jesus goes away, the two apostles go back to the house with the sisters.

Jesus is ahead, alone; Peter is behind Him between Matthew and James of Alphaeus; behind them there is Philip with Andrew, James and John of Zebedee. Last, as silent as the others, come Thomas and Judas Thaddeus. But I am wrong. Peter also is silent. His two companions exchange a few words, but he, who is between them, does not speak. He proceeds silently, with his head lowered. He seems to be holding a mute conversation with the stones and grass on which he is treading.

Also the last two seem to have the same attitude. The only difference is that, while Thomas seems to be engrossed in the contemplation of a tiny branch of willow, which he strips leaf by leaf, and looks at each leaf after detaching it, as if he were studying its light green shade on one side and the silvery one on the other, or the veins of its design, Judas Thaddeus is staring straight ahead. I do not know whether he is looking at the view which, after they have crossed over the ridge of a mountain, stretches across the rather

indistinct splendour of a plain at dawn, or whether he is only looking at the fair hair of Jesus, Who has thrown His mantle back to enjoy the mild December sunshine on His head.

And Thomas' occupation and Judas Thaddeus' contemplation of the view, or of the Master, end at the same time. The latter lowers his eyes and turns round looking at his companion, while Thomas, who has reduced his little branch to a riding-whip, raises his eyes to look at Thaddeus. A sharp and at the same time kind sad look which meets a similar one.

« It is so, my friend! Just so! » says Thomas as if he were ending a speech.

« Yes, it is so. And deep is my grief... Also my love for a relative is involved... »

« I understand. But... You have a torture of love in your heart. But, what about me? I have a sense of remorse torturing me. And it is even worse. »

« Remorse? You have no reason for remorse. You are good and loyal. Jesus is pleased with you and we have never had from you any reason for scandal. So how can you have this feeling of remorse? »

« From a recollection. The remembrance of the day when I decided to follow the new Rabbi, Who had appeared in the Temple... Judas and I were close to each other and we admired the action and the words of the Master. And we decided to look for Him... And I was more decided than Judas and I almost dragged him. He says the opposite, but it is so. That is my remorse. That I insisted to make him come... I brought an everlasting sorrow to Jesus. But I knew that Judas was loved by... many and I thought that he would be useful. As foolish as all those who can but think of a king of Israel greater than David and Solomon, but still a king... a king as He says that He will never be, I was yearning to have him among the disciples as he might be useful!... I was hoping so. And only now I understand, and I understand so more and more, how right Jesus was in not accepting him at once, on the contrary He told me not to look for him... A cause for remorse, I tell you! Remorse! That man is not good. »

« He is not. But do not create occasions of remorse for yourself. You did not act out of malice, so you are not guilty. I tell you. »

« Are you really sure? Or are you saying so to console me? »

« I am telling you because it is the truth. Do not think of the past any more, Thomas. It does not help to eradicate it... »

« That's easily said! But just think! If because of me some misfortune should befall the Master... I am sick at heart and full of suspicion. I am a sinner because I am judging a companion, and my judgement is not merciful. And I am a sinner because I should believe the words of the Master... He excuses Judas... Do you...

believe your brother? »

« In everything except that. But don't be distressed. We have all the same thought. Also Peter, who is so worried, strives to think well of that man, and Andrew, who is meeker than a little lamb, and Matthew, the only one among us who does not feel disgust for any sinner. And also the so loving and pure John, who is so lucky that he need not fear evil or vice, because he is so full of charity and purity that he has no room for anything else. And my brother has it, too. I mean Jesus. He certainly has other thoughts as well, and thus sees the necessity of keeping Judas... until every attempt to make him good becomes vain. »

« Yes. But... what will happen in the end? He has many... He has no... Briefly, you understand without me telling you. How far will he go? »

« I don't know... Perhaps he will leave us... Perhaps he will stay, waiting to see who is stronger in this struggle: Jesus or the Hebrew world... »

« Nothing else? Do you not think that he is already serving two masters? »

« That is certain. »

« And are you not afraid that he may serve the more numerous group, in order to cause complete damage to the Master? »

« No, I am not. I do not love him. But I cannot believe that he... At least not for the time being... I would certainly be afraid of that if one day the crowds stopped supporting the Master. If, instead, a public acclamation should consecrate Him king and our leader, I am sure that Judas would abandon everybody for Him. He is an exploiter... May God check him, and protect Jesus and us all!... »

The two realise that they have slackened their paces and that they have been left far behind their companions and without speaking any more they begin to walk fast to join them.

« What have you been doing? » asks Matthew. « The Master wanted you... »

Thomas and Thaddeus proceed quickly to go to Jesus.

« Of what were you speaking between yourselves? » asks Jesus staring at them.

The two look at each other. Should they tell Him? Should they not? Sincerity wins. « Of Judas » they say together.

« I knew. But I wanted to put your sincerity to the test. You would have distressed Me if you had lied... But do not speak any more about him, and particularly in that manner. There are so many good things about which you can speak. Why always debase oneself to consider what is very, nay, too material? Isaiah says: "Trust no more in man, he has but a breath in his nostrils". I say to you: stop analysing that man and take care of his spirit. The animal that is in him, his monster, must not attract your attention

and your judgement; but love his spirit with sorrowful active love. Free him from the monster that is detaining him. You do not know. »...

He turns round to call the other seven: « Come here, all of you, because what I am about to say is useful to everybody, as you all have the same thoughts in your hearts... Do you not know that you learn more through Judas of Kerioth than through any other person? You will find many Judases and very few Jesus in your apostolic ministry. The Jesus will be kind, good, pure, faithful, obedient, prudent, free from greed. They will be very few... But how many Judases of Kerioth you, your followers and your successors will find along the ways of the world! And in order to be masters and to know, you must attend this school... With his faults he shows you what man is; I show you what man should be. Two examples equally necessary. By knowing both well, you must try to change the former into the latter... And let My patience be your rule. »

« Lord, I was a big sinner, and I am certainly an example as well. But I would like Judas, who is not such a sinner as I was, to become the convert that I am. Is it pride to say this? »

« No, Matthew, it is not pride. You honour two truths by saying so. The first is that the sentence saying: "The good will of man works divine miracles" is truthful. The second is that God loved you infinitely, since the time you thought nothing about it, and He did so because He was aware of your capability for heroism. You are the fruit of two powers: your will and God's love. And I am putting your will first, because without it God's love would have been vain. Vain, inert... »

« But could God not convert us without our will? » asks James of Alphaeus.

« Certainly. But man's will would still be required to persevere in the conversion obtained miraculously. »

« So such will has not been and is not in Judas, either before knowing You, or now... » says Philip impulsively. Some laugh, some sigh.

Jesus is the only one who defends the absent apostle: « Do not say that! He had it and has it. But the evil law of the flesh overwhelms it at intervals. He is ill. A poor sick brother. In every family there is a weak or a sick person, someone who is the pain, the worry, the burden of the family. And yet is a frail child not the one most loved by his mother? Is the unhappy brother not the one best served by his brothers? Is he not the one to whom his father gives the dainty, taking it from his plate, to make him happy, to make him feel that he is not a burden and thus make his illness less boring? »

« That is true. It is just like that. My twin sister was delicate in her childhood. I had taken all the sturdiness. But the love of the

whole family helped so much that now she is a buxom wife and mother » says Thomas.

« Exactly. Do with your spiritual brother what you would do with a weak brother german. I will not utter one word of reproach. Do not be more severe than I am. Your patient love is the sharpest rebuke against which it is not possible to react. I will leave Matthew and Philip at Tekoah to wait for Judas... Let the former remember that he was a sinner and the latter that he is a father... »

« Yes, Master. We will bear that in mind. »

« At Jericho, if Judas has not yet joined us, I will leave Andrew and John, and let them remember that the gratuitous gifts of God have not been granted in the same measure to everybody... But go to that old man who is staggering on the road over there. The town is in sight. With your alms he will be able to buy some bread. »

« Master, we cannot. Judas has gone with the purse... » says Peter. « And the sisters did not give us anything. »

« You are right, Simon. They are stunned with grief and we are as dazed as they are. It does not matter. We have some bread. We are young and strong. Let us give it to the old man, that he may not drop on the road. »

They search in their bags and put together a few morsels of bread, they give them to the old man who looks at them with an amazed countenance.

« Eat, eat! » says Jesus encouraging him. And He lets him drink out of His flask, while asking him where he is going.

« To Tekoah. There is a big market tomorrow. But I have had nothing to eat since yesterday. »

« Are you alone? »

« More than alone... My son drove me out of the house... » The senile voice is heart-rending.

« God will open the gate of His Kingdom to you if you can believe in His mercy. »

« And in that of His Messiah. But my son will have no Messiah, because he who hates Him so much as to hate his father who loves Him, cannot have the Messiah. »

« Is that why he drove you out? »

« Yes, it is. And that he might not lose the friendship of some people who persecute the Messiah. He wanted to show them that his hatred is greater than theirs, as it exceeds the call of kinship. »

« How horrible! » they all exclaim.

« It would be more horrible if I had the same thoughts as my son » says the old man impulsively.

« But who is he? If I have understood correctly, he must be one who has power and authority... » says Thomas.

« Man, it will not be a father to mention the name of his guilty son to have him despised. I must say that I am cold and hungry,

although by working hard I had increased the wealth of the family to make my son happy. But not more than that. Consider that I am from Judaea, and he is from Judaea, and that we are thus of the same race but of different opinions. The rest is of no importance. »

« And since you are a just man, are you not asking anything of God? » Jesus asks kindly.

« That He may touch the heart of my son and induce him to believe what I believe. »

« But for yourself, just for yourself, are you not going to ask anything? »

« To meet Him Who, according to me, is the Son of God. To venerate Him and then die. »

« But if you die, you will not see Him any more. You will be in Limbo... »

« Only for a short time. You are a rabbi, are You not? I cannot see very well... My age... and the many tears, and also hunger... But I can see the tassels of Your belt... If You are a good rabbi, and I think You are, You must realise, too, that the time has come, I mean the time mentioned by Isaiah. And the hour is about to come when the Lamb will take upon Himself all the sins of the world and will bear all our evils and sorrows and will therefore be pierced and sacrificed that we may be restored to health and we may be at peace with the Eternal Father. Then there will be peace also for spirits... I hope so confiding in the mercy of God. »

« Have you ever seen the Master? »

« No. I only heard Him in the Temple at festivals. But I am small and age makes me even more so, and I cannot see very well, as I said. So, if I go to the middle of the crowd I cannot see because there is someone in front of me, if I stay out of the crowd I cannot see because I am too far away. Oh! I would love to see Him! At least once! »

« You will see Him, father. God will satisfy you. And have you where to go at Tekoah? »

« No. I will stay under a porch or some door. I am used to it by now. »

« Come with Me. I know a good Israelite. He will receive you in the name of Jesus, the Galilean Master. »

« But You are a Galilean, too. One can tell by Your accent. »

« Yes... Are you tired? But we are already at the first houses. You will soon be able to rest and you will have some refreshment. »

Jesus bends to say something to Peter and Peter moves aside to tell the others what Jesus said but I do not understand what he says. Then Peter quickens his steps and he enters the town with Alphaeus' sons and John. Jesus follows him with the others, adapting His step to that of the poor old man, who does not speak any more, tired as he is, and so he remains behind with Andrew and

Matthew.

The town seems to be empty. It is midday and many people are at home for their meals. After a few metres they meet Peter who says: « It's done, Lord. Simon will accept him because You are taking him, and he thanks You for thinking of him. »

« Let us bless the Lord! There are still just people in Israel. This old man is one, and Simon is another. There are still some good merciful people, faithful to the Lord. And that compensates so much bitterness. And it allows one to hope that divine justice will be appeased because of these just people. »

« However... That a son should expel his father from his house in order not to lose the friendship of some powerful Pharisee...! »

« Their hatred for You can go to that extent! I am shocked! » says Philip.

« Oh! you will see much more than that! » replies Jesus.

« More? And what can there be more than a father being driven out because he does not hate You? The sin of that man is a tremendous one!... »

« More tremendous will be the sin of a people against their God... But let us wait for the old man... »

« Who will his son be? »

« A Pharisee! »

« A member of the Sanhedrin! »

« A rabbi. » There are different opinions.

« A wretch. Do not investigate. Today he struck his father. Tomorrow he will strike Me. You can see that the sin of Judas, his going away like an undisciplined son, is nothing in comparison. And yet I will pray for this ungrateful son, for this Hebrew who offends his God. That he may mend his ways. Do the same... Come, father. What is your name? »

« Elianna. I have never been happy! My father died before I was born, and my mother in giving birth to me. My mother's mother, who brought me up, named me with the two names of my father and mother joined together. »

« You really are an Eli, man, and your son is like Phinehas » says Philip who cannot set his mind at rest because of such sin.

« God forbid, man. Phinehas died a sinner, and he died when the ark was captured. That would be a misfortune for his soul and for the whole of Israel » replies the old man.

« Listen, this house is a friendly one and whatever I ask I get. It belongs to a certain Simon, a just man in the eyes of God and of men. He will receive you for My sake, if you are willing to stay here » says Jesus before knocking at the door.

« Am. I to make a choice? I will invoke the blessing of Heaven on those who give me bread and the shelter of charity. But I want to work. It is not a shame to be a servant. It is shameful to commit

sin... »

« We shall tell Simon » says Jesus with a smile of compassion, looking at the little old man, destroyed by privations and grief.

The door is opened: « Come in, Master, peace be with You and with those who are with You. Where is this brother whom You have brought me? That I may give him the kiss of peace and welcome » says a man about fifty years old.

« Here he is. And may the Lord reward you. »

« I am rewarded. I have You as my guest. He who has You has God. I was not expecting You, and I cannot honour You as I would like. But I hear that You will be coming back in a few days time and I will be ready to receive You as becomes You. »

They are by now in a room in which steaming basins are ready for ablutions. The old man is standing shily against the door, but the landlord takes him by the hand, and makes him sit down, he wants to take his sandals off and serve him as if he were a king, and then put new sandals on his feet, while the old man says: « Why? Why all this? I have come to serve, and you are serving me! It is not right. »

« It is right, man. I cannot follow the Rabbi because I must help here in the house. But as the least disciple of the holy Master I strive to put His words into practice. »

« You know Him well. Really, you know Him because you are good. There are many who know Him in Israel, but how? With their eyes and their hatred. So they do not know Him. A man knows a woman when he knows everything about her and he possesses her completely. It is the same with Jesus of Nazareth, Whom I do not know with my eyes, but Whom I know better than many people because I believe that Wisdom is in Him. But you really know Him, by sight and by His doctrine. »

The man looks at Jesus but does not say anything.

The old man resumes speaking: « I told this rabbi that I want to work... »

« Yes. We will find a job for you. For the time being come to the table. Master, Your disciples will be coming shortly. Can we sit at the table just the same, or do You prefer to wait for them? »

« I prefer to wait for them. But if you have work to do... »

« Oh! Master. You know that it is a joy for me to obey Your least order. »

From this moment the old man begins to suspect of the identity of the Man Who assisted him on the way and looks at Him over and over again, he then looks at His companions... diligently... walking round them... The sons of Alphaeus come in with John. Jesus calls them by their names.

« Oh! Most High God! So... it was You! » exclaims the old man and he prostrates himself venerating Him.

His amazement is not inferior to that of the others. His way of recognising the Master is so strange! Peter in fact asks him: « What is there so special in these names so common in Israel, to make you think that you are in the presence of the Messiah? »

« Because I know Judas. He always comes to my son, and... » the old man stops, as he feels embarrassed having mentioned his son...

« But I have never seen you, man » says Thaddeus, standing in front of him and bending to be face to face with him.

« Neither do I know you. But one Judas, a disciple of the Christ, often comes to my son, and I heard him speak of a John, of a James, and of a Simon, a friend of Lazarus of Bethany and of so many other things... When I heard three names, known as those of the most intimate disciples of the Master! And He, so good!... I understood, I did! But where is the other Judas? »

« He is not here. But it is true. It is I. The Lord is good, father. You wished to see Me, and you have seen Me. Let us bless the mercy of God... Do not move away, Elianna. You were close to Me when I was a Wayfarer to you and nothing else. But now that I am the Destination? You do not know how much your heart has comforted Me! It is not possible for you to know. I, not you, I am the one who has received most... When three quarters of Israel, and even more, hate Me to the point of being criminals, when the weak ones move away from My way, when the thorns of ingratitude, of hatred, of slander pierce Me on every side, when I can find no relief in the thought that My Sacrifice will be salvation to Israel, to find one like you, father, is to receive compensation for My grief... You do not know... None of you are aware of the deeper and deeper sadness of the Son of man. I thirst for love... and too many hearts are dried springs which I approach in vain... But let us go... »

And holding the old man close to Himself, He goes into the room where the tables are already laid...

### **519. At Tekoah.**

31st October 1946.

The rear of Simon of Tekoah's house is actually a square delimited on two sides by the wings of the U-shaped edifice. I call it a square because on market days, as the one I am observing, they open three sections of the strong gate which separates it from a larger public square, and many vendors invade with their stalls the porches which are situated on three sides of the house. I now understand the financial... use, because Simon, being a clever Jew, passes collecting the hires of the places occupied. And he drags after himself the old man, who is now wearing a decent garment, and he introduces him to everybody saying: « As from today you will pay the amount agreed upon to him. » Then, after completing

the tour of the porches, he says to Elianna: « That is your work. Here, and inside, with the hotel and the stables. It is not difficult or hard but it shows you how highly I esteem you. I dismissed, one after the other, three men who were helping me, because they were not honest. But I like you. And then, He brought you to me. And the Master knows hearts. Let us go to Him and tell Him that if He wishes, this is the right time to speak. » And he goes away followed by the old man...

The square is becoming more and more crowded and the noise is increasing more and more. There are women doing their shopping, cattle dealers, buyers of oxen to be yoked to the plough and of other animals, peasants bent under the weight of baskets of fruit and praising their goods, cutlers with all their sharp utensils well displayed on mats, making a great din by striking axes on stumps to show the hardness of the metal, or hammering scythes placed across trestles to show the perfect hardening of the blade, or lifting ploughshares with both hands and driving them into the ground, which bursts open as if it were wounded, to give proof of the robustness of the share which no ground can resist, and copper smiths with amphorae and buckets, pans and lamps, striking the sonorous metal to the point of deafening people, to show them that it is solid, or shouting at the top of their voices offering oil-lamps with one or more flames for the oncoming festival in Chislev; and above all this uproar, as tedious and piercing as the lament of the nocturnal owl, there are the cries of beggars spread out in the strategic points of the market.

Jesus comes from the house with Peter and James of Zebedee. I do not see the others. But I think they must be going round the town announcing the Master, because I see that the crowds recognise Him at once and many people arrive, while the shouting and noise die down. Jesus has alms given to some beggars and He stops to greet two men who, followed by their servants, were about to leave the market after doing their shopping. But they stop, too, to hear the Master. And Jesus begins to speak, taking what He sees as a starting point:

« Everything at the right time, everything in the right place. You do not hold markets on the Sabbath, neither do you trade in synagogues, nor do you work at night, but only during the day. Sinners only trade on the day of the Lord, or desecrate the places destined for prayer by means of human commerce, or steal at night committing robberies and crimes. Likewise: those who trade honestly, busy themselves to demonstrate the good quality of their victuals or of their implements to their customers and those who buy them are happy with the good purchase made. But if, for instance, a vendor should succeed in deceiving a buyer with shrewd artifice, and the tool or the victuals should turn out to be

bad, inferior in value to the price paid, would the buyer not have recourse to defensive measures, going from a minimum of stopping buying from that vendor to a maximum of applying to a judge to have his money back? That is what would happen and it would be just. And yet do we not see the people disappointed in Israel by those who sell rotten goods as good ones and denigrate Him Who gives good merchandise, being the Just One of the Lord? Yes, we can all see that.

Yesterday evening many of you came to tell of the evil artifices of bad vendors and I said: "Let them carry on. Be firm in your hearts and God will provide". Those who sell things which are not good, whom do they offend? You? Me? No. God Himself. He who is deceived is not as guilty as he who deceives. The sin is not so much against man, as it is against God, by trying to sell things which are not good, so that those who want to make a purchase may not come to good things. I do not say: react, revenge yourselves. Such words cannot come from Me. I only say: listen to the true sound of words, watch the actions of those who speak to you, diligently, in the great light, taste the first draught or morsel offered to you, and if they taste sour, and if the behaviour of other people is sinister, if the savour left in your hearts is upsetting, refuse what you are offered as a thing which is not good. Wisdom, justice, charity are never sour, upsetting or fond of acting in the shadow.

I know that I have been preceded by some of My disciples and I will leave two of My apostles with you; further, yesterday evening with deeds more than words, I testified where I come from and with what mission. No long speech is required to draw you to My way. Meditate and be anxious to remain on it. Imitate the founders of this town at the borders of the arid desert. Consider that outside My doctrine there is the aridity of the desert, whilst in My doctrine there are the sources of Life. And whatever may happen, do not be upset or scandalised. Remember the words of the Lord in Isaiah. My hand will never become too short or too small to do good to those who follow My ways, neither will anything ever-prevent the hand of the Most High from striking those who offend and grieve Me, yet I came and I found very few willing to receive Me, I called and few replied to Me. Because, as he who honours Me honours the Father Who sent Me, so he who despises Me despises Him Who sent Me. And according to the law of retaliation, he who disowns Me will be disowned.

But you, who have received My word, must not fear the abuse of men or tremble because of the outrage committed first against Me, and then against you, because you love Me. Although I appear to be persecuted and will seem to be struck, I will comfort and protect you. Be not afraid, do not fear man, who is mortal, he is today and tomorrow he is but a remembrance and dust. But fear the

Lord, fear Him with holy love, without being frightened, but be afraid of not knowing how to love Him proportionately to His infinite love. I will not say to you: do this or that. You are aware of what is to be done. I say to you: love. Love God and His Christ. Love your neighbour as I taught you. And you will do everything, if you know how to love.

I bless you, citizens of Tekoah, the town at the border of the desert, but an oasis of peace for the persecuted Son of man, and may My blessing be in your hearts and in your homes, now and for ever. »

« Stay, Master! Stay with us. The desert has always been kind to the saints of Israel! »

« I cannot. There are other people awaiting Me. You are in Me, I in you, because we love one another. »

Jesus makes His way with difficulty through the crowd, who follow Him forgetting their trades and everything else. Sick people cured bless Him again, hearts comforted thank Him, beggars greet Him: « Living Manna of God »...

The old man is beside Him and remains with Him as far as the outskirts of the town. And only when Jesus blesses Matthew and Philip who are remaining at Tekoah, he makes up his mind to leave his Saviour and he does so kissing Jesus bare' feet, weeping and uttering words of gratitude.

« Stand up, Elianna, and come here that I may kiss you. The kiss of a son to his father and may that reward you for everything. I apply to you the words of the prophet: "You who are weeping, shall weep no more, because the Merciful One has had mercy on you". The Lord will give you a little bread and a little water. I could not do more. If you have been driven away by one only, I have all the mighty ones of the people driving Me away, and I am fortunate if I find food and shelter for My apostles and Myself. But your eyes have seen Him Whom you desired to see, and your ears have heard My words, just as your heart must feel My love. Go and be at peace because you are a martyr of justice, one of the precursors of all those who will be persecuted because of Me. Do not weep, father! » And He kisses his white-haired head.

The old man kisses His cheek and whispers in His ear: « Do not trust the other Judas, my Lord. I do not want to soil my tongue... but do not trust him. He does not come with good intentions to my son... »

« Yes. But think no more of the past. It will soon be all over and no one will be able to harm Me any more. Goodbye, Elianna. The Lord is with you. »

They part...

« Master, what did the old man say to You in such a low voice? » asks Peter who is walking beside Jesus, and with some difficulty,

because Jesus is striding with His long legs, and Peter cannot, because he is rather short.

« Poor old man! What do you think he could tell Me, that I did not already know? » replies Jesus, evading a precise answer.

« He spoke of his son, did he not? Did he tell You who he is? »

« No, Peter. I can assure you. He kept that name in his heart. »

« But do You know him? »

« I do. But I will not tell you. »

They remain silent for a long time. Then the anxious question of Peter and his confession. « Master, but why, for what purpose does the Iscariot go to the house of a very wicked man, such as the son of Elianna? I am afraid, Master! He has no good friends. He does not go openly. He has no strength to resist evil. I am afraid, Master. Why? Why does Judas go to such people, and secretly? » Peter's face is an expressive mask of a sorrowful query.

Jesus looks at him but does not reply. In fact, what can He reply, in order not to tell a lie and not to hurl faithful Peter against unfaithful Judas? He prefers to let Peter speak.

« Are You not replying? I have had no peace since yesterday, when the old man thought he had recognised Judas among us. It is like the day when You spoke to the wife of the Sadducee. Do You remember? Do You remember my suspicion? »

« Yes, I do. And do you remember what I said to you then? »

« Yes, Master, I remember. »

« There is nothing else to be said, Simon. The actions of men have appearances that are different from reality. But I am glad that I provided for that old man. It is as if Ananias had come back. Actually, if Simon of Tekoah had not accepted him, I would have taken him to Solomon's little house, to have a father there always waiting for us. But for Eli it is better as it is. Simon is good and he has many grandchildren. Eli loves children... And children make one forget many sad things... »

With His usual skill in distracting His interlocutor, and leading him on to a different subject, when He finds that it is not convenient to answer dangerous questions, Jesus has distracted Peter from his thoughts. And He continues to speak to him of children, whom they have met here and there, until they remember Marjiam, who is perhaps hauling the nets just then, after fishing in the beautiful lake of Gennesaret.

And Peter, whose thoughts are now far from Eli and Judas, smiles and asks: « But after Passover, we are going there, are we not? It is so beautiful. Oh! much more than it is here. We Galileans are sinners, according to those of Judaea... But to live here! Oh! Eternal Mercy! If we are going to be punished, there will certainly be no reward here. »

Jesus calls the others who have been left behind and He goes

away with them along the road warmed by the December sunshine.

## **520. Arrival at Jericho. Zacchaeus' Apostolate.**

1st November 1946.

Jesus is anxiously awaited. A large crowd is in the fields near the town waiting for Him, and as soon as a look-out man, who has climbed a tall walnut-tree, shouts: « Here is the Lamb of God! » the people stand up and run towards Jesus, Who is coming forward in the early misty twilight.

« Master! Master! We have been waiting for You for such a long time! Our sick people! Our children! Your blessing! The old people are waiting for You to die in peace! If You bless us, Lord, no misfortune will befall us! » they all speak at the same time, while Jesus raises His hand repeatedly to bless and continues to say: « Peace, peace to all of you! » The apostles who are still with Him are caught in the crowd and carried away from Jesus, Who is almost prevented from walking by the very ones who gently complain of the long wait.

Poor Zacchaeus struggles convulsively to reach Jesus, to make himself heard by Him, or at least to be seen. But so short as he is, and not very agile or strong, he is always pushed back by fresh waves of people, his voice is lost in the clamour, and in the confusion of restless heads, arms and garments, his person disappears. In vain he implores and at times he reproaches to have some compassion. People are always selfish with regard to what gives them pleasure, and are cruel to their weaker neighbour. Poor Zacchaeus, feeling exhausted after all his efforts and convinced of their uselessness, is no longer willing to struggle and utterly disheartened, resigns himself. In fact how can he possibly succeed if more people come rushing from every street, which look like streams flowing into the same river: the street along which Jesus is walking? And each new affluent, with a fresh wave that makes the crowd thicker and thicker, to the extent of making it frightening to be caught in it, pushes back poor Zacchaeus.

Thaddeus sees him and tries to elbow his way through the crowd to tear him away from the corner into which the crowd has pushed and confined him. But Judas Thaddeus in turn is pushed by those pressing in upon him from behind and his attempt fails. Thomas, relying on his strength, elbows his way and shouts in his powerful voice: « Make way! » for the same purpose... Not a hope! The crowd is a wall more solid than rock, and at the same time as pliable as caoutchouc. It bends but will not break. It is no longer an embrace: it is an unbreakable chain. Thomas also resigns himself.

And Zacchaeus loses all hope, because Didimus is the last of the

apostles caught in the stream of people. And at last it passes... It has passed... Strips of cloth, tassels, fringes, hairpins, clothesclasps are lying on the ground witnessing the violence. There is also a little child's sandal, completely crushed, and seems to be sadly awaiting the little foot that lost it... Zacchaeus queues up behind them all looking sad as well, just like the little sandal snatched from its little owner by the crowd.

Jesus cannot be seen any longer. A bend in the street has concealed him from poor Zacchaeus' eyes... When, last in the crowd, he arrives at the square where once he had his bench, he sees the crowds have stopped shouting, praying, imploring. And he sees Jesus, Who has mounted the little step of a house, shake His head and arms. And He says something that cannot be understood because of the roar of the crowd. And finally he sees Jesus, Who has come off His pedestal with difficulty, take to the road again and turn towards that part of the town where his house is. Zacchaeus then grows daring again. The crowd is a large one, but the square is wide, the people therefore are not so compact and... one can go through it, as if it were not too thick a hedge, if one is willing to do so and is not afraid of being injured. And Zacchaeus, who has now become a wedge, a catapult, a battering-ram, butts and bumps against people, insinuates himself, delivering and receiving punches on the nose, thrusts with elbows in the stomach and kicks in the shin, but he pushes his way through and moves forward... He is now at the opposite side... But the square narrows here, and he meets the impenetrable wall again. He is only a few steps from Jesus, Who is already standing near his house. But if deserts and rivers separated him from it, he could have better hopes to succeed in reaching Him. He gets angry, and he shouts in a commanding voice: « I have to go home! Let me pass! Can't you see that He wants to go into my house? »

He should never have said so! That rekindles the wishes of the people to have the Master in other houses. Some people laugh making fun of poor Zacchaeus, some give him rude answers. There is not one person who feels sorry for him. On the contrary they begin to shout and get excited so that the Master may not hear or see Zacchaeus. And some shout: « You have already had even too much from Him, you old sinner! » I think that the memory of old tax collections and vexations influences so much ill-will... Even the man who is more inclined to the supernatural almost always has a little corner in which the love for his hoard is lively and even more lively is the memory of whoever has been detrimental to that hoard...

But the time for Zacchaeus' trial has passed and Jesus rewards his perseverance. Jesus shouts at the top of His voice: « Zacchaeus! Come to Me. Let him pass, because I want to go into his house. »

It is absolutely necessary to obey. The people press against one

another in order to open out and Zacchaeus comes forward, flushed with fatigue and blushing for joy, and he tries to tidy his ruffled hair, his unbuttoned garment, and his belt the tassels of which are around his back instead of being in front of him. He looks for his mantle... Who knows where it is!... It does not matter. He is by now in front of Jesus, stooping to pay his respects to Him. It is impossible for him to do more than that as he has hardly enough room to bend a little.

« Peace to you, Zacchaeus. Come here, that I may give you the kiss of peace. You deserve it » says Jesus smiling a really cheerful juvenile smile that makes Him look rejuvenated.

« Oh! yes, Lord. I did deserve it. How difficult it is to reach You, Lord » says Zacchaeus, raising himself up as much as possible on the tips of his toes to be at the level of Jesus Who bends to kiss him. As he does so, his face appears to be bleeding because of a scratch on his right cheek, and one of his eyes is bruised, probably because of a thrust of an elbow on his eye-socket.

Jesus kisses him and then says:

« But I am not rewarding you for this effort. But for the others you have made, unknown to many people, but known to Me. Yes, it is true. It is difficult to reach Me, and the crowd is not the only obstacle, and it is not even the most difficult obstacle one finds to meet Me.

But, o people who have almost carried Me shoulder-high, the most difficult, the most composed obstacle, and which is always recomposed after one tries to destroy it or overcome it, is one's ego. I did not seem to be seeing, but I saw everything. And I evaluated everything. And what did I see? I saw a converted sinner, one who was hard-hearted, who loved comfort, was proud, vain, lascivious and avaricious. And I saw him divest himself of his old ego also in minor matters, and change in his behaviour and affections, in order to come to his Saviour, as he did by struggling to reach Him, by imploring with humbleness, by accepting gibes and reproaches patiently, suffering in his body to be knocked about by the crowd and in his heart to be pushed to the very end of it, without even one glance from Me. And I saw other things in him. Things which you know as well, but you do not want to take them into account, although they have given you relief.

You may say: "How do You know them, since You do not live among us?". I reply: as I read the hearts of men so I am aware of the actions of men and I know how to be just and reward in proportion to the distance covered to reach Me, to the efforts made to uproot the wild forest which covered the spirit, to improve it eliminating what was not the vital tree, and making it the king of one's ego, surrounding it with plants of virtues so that it may be honoured, and watching that no animal that is unclean because it

creeps, or is eager for corruption, or lascivious, or idle - the various wicked passions - should nestle in the thicket, but this spirit of yours should be inhabited only by what is good and capable of praising the Lord, that is supernatural affections, singing birds and meek lambs willing to be sacrificed, inclined to perfect praise out of love for God.

And as I noticed Zacchaeus' action, thoughts and labour, so I noticed that in this town the love of many people who have acclaimed Me, is more sensitive than spiritual. If you loved Me according to justice, you would have taken pity on your fellow citizen and you would not have mortified him by reminding him of his past. That past that he has cancelled and God does not remember, because He does not go back on forgiveness granted, unless man sins again. And he is judged again only for the new sin, not for the one already forgiven. Now I say to you, and I give this as a subject for meditation at night, that true love for Me does not consist in acclamations, but in doing what I do and teach, in practicing reciprocal love, in being humble and merciful, bearing in mind that your material part was made with one only dust, and that dust always has an attraction for mire, and that consequently, if so far what in you is the strength that has held you up above the mire, the spirit, has never known defeats - and that is impossible because man is a sinner and God only is without sin - in future your spirit might have to admit defeats, and in greater number and gravity than those of the old sinner now reborn to Grace. In fact through Grace he has become juvenile and new, just like a new-born baby, with in his favour the humility deriving from his recollection of having been a sinner and the firm will to do, during the rest of his lifetime, as much good as is necessary to fill a long life entirely consecrated to doing good, and thus make amends, and with full and overflowing measure, for all the wrongs he may have done.

I will speak to you tomorrow. I have said enough for this evening. Go and bear in mind My warning and bless God Who has sent you the Doctor Who amputates your sensuality hidden under a veil of spiritual health, like hidden diseases that corrode life under a veil of seeming health... Come Zacchaeus. »

« Yes, my Lord. I have only one old servant and I will open the door myself, and with it my deeply moved heart, oh! how moved it is, because of Your infinite goodness. »

And after opening the gate he lets Jesus and the apostles go in, and leads Him towards the house, through the garden, now turned into a kitchen garden. The house also has been stripped of all superfluous items. Zacchaeus lights a lamp and calls the servant.

« Here we are. The Master is here. He will be sleeping here with His apostles and will have dinner here. Have you prepared

everything as I told you? »

« Yes, I have. With the exception of the vegetables, which I will boil now, everything is ready. »

« Change your clothes, then, and go and inform those I told you, that He is here and ask them to come. »

« I am going, master. May You be blessed, Master, as You are letting me die a happy death! » He goes away.

« He is the servant of my father and has remained with me. I dismissed all the others. But he is dear to me. He is the voice that was never silent when I sinned. And because of that I used to illtreat him. After You, he is the one I love more than anybody else... Come, my friends. There is a fireplace there and what can give comfort to tired cold limbs. You, Master, to my room... » and he takes Him towards a room at the end of a corridor.

He goes in, closes the door, pours hot water into a pitcher, takes off Jesus' sandals and serves Him. Before putting the sandals on again, he kisses the bare foot and places it on his neck saying: « Thus! That it may crush the residue of the old Zacchaeus! » He stands up. He looks at Jesus, with a smile that trembles on his lips, a humble smile, which looks as if it were moistened with tears. He makes a gesture indicating the whole room and says: « I sinned so much in here! But I have changed everything, so that that savour should no longer be present... Memories... I am weak... I wanted only the memory of my conversion to be alive on these bare walls, in this hard bed... The rest... I made money of it, because I was left without any and I wanted to accomplish good deeds. Sit down, Master... »

Jesus sits on a wooden seat and Zacchaeus places himself on the floor, at Jesus' feet, half sitting, half kneeling. He resumes speaking.

« I do not know whether I have done the right thing, and whether You can approve of my behaviour. Perhaps I began where I should have finished. But they exist, too. And only an old publican can show no repugnance against them in Israel. No, I am wrong. Not only an old publican, but You as well nay it is You Who taught me to love them truly. Previously they were my accomplices in vice, but I did not love them. Now I reproach them but I love them. You and I. The all Holy One, the converted sinner. You because You have never sinned and You want to give us the joy that is Yours, of the Man without sin. And I because I sinned so much and I know how sweet is the peace that comes from being forgiven, redeemed, renewed... I wanted it for them. I looked for them. Oh! it was hard at the beginning! I wanted to make them good and I had myself to improve... What a difficult task! I had to watch over myself because I felt that they were watching over me. A mere nothing would have sufficed to drive them away... And then... Many sinned out of need, urged by their occupation. I sold everything to have

money to keep them until they found other jobs, less profitable, more laborious, but honest. And some of them still come, and they are half curious, half willing to be men, not only animals. And I have to give them hospitality until they become submissive to the new yoke. Many have been circumcised. The first step towards the true God. But I do not compel them. I have wide arms to embrace their miseries, and I cannot be disgusted with them. I also would like to give them what You would like to give everybody: the joy of being without remorse, since we cannot be, like You, without sin. Now, tell me, my Lord, whether I have been too daring. »

« You have acted well, Zacchaeus. You are giving them more than what you hope and think I want to give men. Not only the joy of being forgiven, without remorse, but the joy of being soon citizens of My heavenly Kingdom. I was aware of these deeds of yours. I followed you while you proceeded along the hard but glorious path of charity; because that is charity, and of the purest quality. You have understood the word of the Kingdom. Few people have understood it because the ancient idea survives in them with the firm belief that they are already holy and learned. After removing the past from your heart, you remained empty and you were able to, nay you wanted to put the new words, the future, the eternal into your heart. Continue so, Zacchaeus, and you will be the collector of your Lord Jesus » concludes Jesus smiling and laying His hand on Zacchaeus' head.

« Do You approve of what I did, Lord? Of everything? »

« Of everything, Zacchaeus. I also told Nike, who was speaking to Me about you. Nike understands you. She is open to universal mercy. »

« Nike used to help me a lot. But now I see her only once a month, at the new moon... I would have liked to follow her. But Jericho is favourable to my new work... »

« She will not stay long in Jerusalem... You would move for no time. Afterwards Nike will come back here... »

« After how long, Lord? »

« After My Kingdom has been proclaimed. »

« Your Kingdom... I am afraid of that moment. Will those who now say that they are faithful to you, be able to be so, then? Because there will certainly be risings and struggles between those who love You and those who hate You... Do You know, Lord, that they engage even highwaymen, the scum of the people, to have followers ready to form a large mass and thus impose themselves on others? I was told by one of my poor brothers... Oh! is there much difference between him who steals lawfully, between him who steals somebody's honour and him who robs a wayfarer? I also used to steal lawfully until You saved me, but even then I would not have countenanced those who hate You... It

was a young man. A thief. Yes, a thief. One evening, when I had gone towards mount Adummim awaiting three peers of mine, who were coming from Ephraim with some cattle purchased at a low price, I found him lying in wait in a gorge. I spoke to him... I have never had a family, and yet I think that if I had had children, I would have spoken to them thus to convince them to change life. He explained to me how and why he had become a thief... Eh! how often the true culprits are those who do not seem to be doing anything wrong!... I said to him: "Don't steal any more. If you are hungry, there is some bread for you, too. I will find you an honest job. As you have not yet become a killer stop, save yourself". And I convinced him. He told me that he was by himself, as all the others had been bought over with much money by those who hate You, and now they are ready to foment risings and to say that they are Your followers, in order to scandalise the people, and they hide in the caves of the Kidron, in the sepulchres, towards the Phasaël, in the caves to the north of the town, among the tombs of the Kings and Judges, everywhere... What do they want to do, Lord? »

« Joshua was able to stop the sun, but by no means whatsoever will they be able to stop the will of God. »

« They have money, Lord! The Temple is rich, and the gold offered to the Temple is not Corban for them, if it serves them to triumph. »

« They have nothing. The power is Mine. Their building will collapse as if it were built with leaves dried by the autumn winds and shaped into a castle by a little boy. Do not be afraid, Zacchaeus. Your Jesus will be Jesus. » (1)

« God grant it!... They are calling us. Let us go. »...

(1) That is: Saviour. Jesus, in fact, in Hebrew means « Yahweh saves » (Yehoshua). See Mt. 1, 20-21; Ac. 4, 12.

### **521. At Jericho. Two Parables: That of the Sick and the Healthy, and That of the Pharisee and the Publican.**

2nd November 1946.

Jesus comes out of Zacchaeus' house. It is late in the morning. He is with Zacchaeus, Peter and James of Alphaeus. The other apostles are perhaps already out in the country announcing that the Master is in town.

Behind the group of Jesus, Zacchaeus and the apostles, there is another one of people considerably... varying in features, age and garments. One can state without hesitation that the men in the group belong to different races, which are probably even opposed to one another. But the events of life have brought them to this Palestinian town and have gathered them so that from their depth they may rise towards light. They are mostly withered faces of

people who have used and abused life in several ways, most of them with tired eyes; the eyes of others seem to have become greedy or hard owing to the long habit of attending to... fiscal robberies or to giving brutal orders, and now and again their old looks appear again under a humble pensive veil drawn by their new life. And that happens particularly when people from Jericho look at them scornfully or mumble insolent words to them. Their eyes later become tired, humble and they lower their heads disconsolately.

Jesus turns round twice to look at them and seeing them far behind, slackening their paces as they, come closer to the place selected for His speech, and already crowded with people, He slackens His pace as well, to wait for them and He then says to them: « Go on ahead of Me and be not afraid. You defied the world when you were doing evil; you must not be afraid of it now that you have divested yourselves of it. Use also now what you made use of to subdue it in the past: indifference towards the opinion of the world, the only weapon to make it tired of judging, and it will tire of having anything to do with you, and it will absorb you, although slowly, annihilating you in the great anonymous mass, that is, in this miserable world, to which, in actual fact, too much importance is attached. »

The men, fifteen in all, obey and move forward.

« Master, the sick people of the country are over there » says James of Zebedee going towards Jesus and pointing to a corner warmed by the sun.

« I am coming. Where are the others? »

« With the crowd. But they have already seen You and they are coming. Also Solomon, Joseph of Emmaus, John of Ephesus, Philip of Arbela are with them. They are going to the house of Philip and they have come from Joppa, Lydda and Modin. They brought with them men and women from the seaside. In actual fact they were looking for You because they are at a variance on judging a woman. But they will tell You... »

In fact Jesus is soon surrounded and greeted reverently by the other disciples. Behind them are those who have been recently attracted by Jesus' doctrine. But John of Ephesus is absent and Jesus asks why.

« He stopped with a woman and her relatives in a house far from the crowd. They do not know whether the woman is possessed or she is a prophetess. She says wonderful things, according to the people from her village. But some scribes have listened to her and they have judged her to be possessed. Her relatives have called exorcizers several times, but they have not been able to expel the demon that makes her speak and possesses her. But one of them said to the father of the woman (she is a virgin widow who remained

in the family): "The Messiah Jesus is needed for your daughter. He will understand her words and will know where they come from. I tried to order the spirit, that speaks in her, to go away in the name of Jesus called the Christ. The spirits of darkness have always fled when I used that Name. But they didn't this time. From that I infer that: it is either Beelzebub himself who speaks and can resist also that Name mentioned by me, or it is the Spirit of God Himself, and consequently is not afraid being one with the Christ. I am more convinced of the latter case than of the former. But to be certain, only the Christ can judge. He will know the words and their origin". He was maltreated by the scribes who were present and who said that he was possessed as well, like the woman and like You. Forgive us if we have to say this... And some scribes have never left us, and they guard the woman because they want to ascertain whether she may be informed of Your arrival. Because she says that she knows Your face and Your voice, and would be able to recognise You among thousands of people, whereas it is proved that she has never left her village, nay, she has never moved from her house since her bridegroom died fifteen years ago, on the eve of her wedding day; and it is also proved that You have never been to Bethlechi, which is her village. And the scribes are waiting for this last test to say that she is possessed. Will You see her at once? »

« No. I must speak to the people. And it would be too noisy to meet here, among the crowds. Go and tell John of Ephesus, the woman's relatives and also the scribes, that I will wait for them, when the sun begins to set, in the woods along the river, on the path to the ford. Go. »

After dismissing Solomon, who has spoken on behalf of everybody, Jesus goes towards the sick people imploring to be cured and He heals them. Among them there is an elderly woman ankylosed by arthritis, a paralytic, a dull-witted young man, a girl who I think was tubercular, and two people with sore eyes.

The crowds utter thrilling cries of joy.

But the series of sick people has not yet come to an end. A woman disfigured by grief comes forward, supported by two friends or relatives, and she kneels saying: « My son is dying. He cannot be brought here... Have mercy on me! »

« Can you believe without limits? »

« Everything, my Lord! »

« Then, go home. »

« Home?... Without You?... » The woman looks at Him for a moment, full of anxiety, then she understands. Her poor face brightens up. She shouts: « I am going, Lord. And blessed be You and the Most High Who sent You! » And she runs away faster than her companions...

Jesus asks a dignified citizen of Jericho: « Is that woman a Jewess? »

« No, she isn't. At least not by birth. She is from Miletus. But she married one of us and since then she believes in our faith. »

« She believed better than many Hebrews » remarks Jesus.

Then, climbing on the high step of a house, He makes the usual gesture of opening out His arms, before speaking, to impose silence. When silence is created, He gathers the folds of His mantle, opened on His chest by His gesture, and holds it with His left hand while He stretches out His right one in the attitude of one who takes an oath, saying:

« Listen, o citizens of Jericho, to the parables of the Lord, and then meditate on them in your hearts, and draw the conclusions to nourish your spirits. You can do so, because it is not since yesterday, or last month, or last winter that you know the Word of God. Before I became the Master, John, My Precursor, had prepared you for My coming, and when I became the Master, My disciples ploughed this ground seven and seven times to sow the seed that I had given them. So you are able to understand the word and the parable.

With whom shall I compare those, who were converted after being sinners? I will compare them with sick people who have recovered. With whom shall I compare the others who have not sinned in public or those, who are rarer than black pearls, who not even secretly have committed grave sins? I will compare them with healthy people. The world is composed of those two categories, both in the spirit and in the flesh and blood. But if the comparisons are the same, the way the world treats sick people who have recovered from diseases of the body is different from the way it treats converted sinners, that is people whose spirits were diseased and who have become healthy.

We see that even when a leper, who is the most dangerous sick person and the most isolated because of the danger, receives the grace of recovery, he is admitted again into society, after he has been examined by a priest and purified, and the people of his town give him a hearty welcome because he is cured and has come back to life, to his family and his business. There is a big feast in the family and in the town when a leper receives that grace and becomes healthy! His relatives and fellow-citizens vie in taking various things to him, and if he is all alone, without home or furniture, they offer him bed and pieces of furniture, and they all say: "He is held 'dearest by God. His hand has cured him. Let us therefore honour him and we will thus honour Him Who created and re-created him". It is right to do so. And when unfortunately a man shows the first signs of leprosy, with how much love full of anguish his relatives and friends overwhelm him with endearments,

as long as it is possible to do so, as if they wished to give him, all at once, the treasure of love they would have given him in many years, that he may take it with him to the sepulchre of a living being.

But why do they not do so with the other sick people? A man begins to commit sins, his relatives and above all his fellowcitizens notice that. Why then do they not try to tear him away from sin with loving efforts? A mother, a father, a wife, a sister still do that, but brothers are unlikely to do so, never mind the children of the father's or mother's brother. And, finally, the fellow-citizens the more just ones, do nothing but criticise, scoff at, abuse, be scandalised, exaggerate the sins of the sinner, pointing him out, keeping him away as if he were a leper, whereas those who are not just become his accomplices, to enjoy themselves at his expense. But only very rarely there is a mouth, and above all a heart, that goes to the poor wretch with compassion and firmness, with patience and supernatural love, and anxiously strives to stop the descent into sin. What? Is the disease of the spirit not more serious, really grave and mortal? Does it not deprive one, and for ever, of the Kingdom of God? Should the first form of love towards God and our neighbour, not be the anxiety to cure a sinner for the good of his soul and the glory of God?

And when a sinner is converted, why do people persist in judging him, and almost regret that he has come back to spiritual salvation? Is it because you realise that your prediction of the certain damnation of a fellow-citizen of yours is given the lie? But you ought to be happy, because He Who gives you the lie is merciful God, Who gives you a measure of His goodness to comfort you in your more or less grave sins. And why persist in considering soiled, despicable, worthy of remaining isolated, what God and the good will of a heart have made clean, admirable, worthy of the esteem, nay of the admiration of one's brothers? But you do rejoice if an ox of yours or a donkey or camel, or a sheep of your flock or your pet dove recovers from a disease! You do exult if a stranger, whom you can hardly remember by name having heard about him when he was isolated because he suffered from leprosy, is healed! Why then do you not exult at these spiritual recoveries, at these victories of God? Heaven rejoices when a sinner is converted. Heaven: God, the most pure angels, who do not know what it is to commit sin. And do you, you men, want to be more intolerant than God?

Be honest-hearted and recognise the presence of the Lord not only in the clouds of incense and in the songs of the Temple, in the place where only the holiness of the Lord, in the High Priest, must enter and ought to be as holy as indicated by its name, but also in the wonder of these spirits which have risen again, and of these reconsecrated

altars on which the Love of God descends with its fire to consume the sacrifice. »

Jesus is interrupted by the mother seen previously, as with cries and blessings she wants to worship Him. Jesus listens to her, blesses her and sends her back home, resuming His interrupted speech.

« And if the behaviour of a sinner was once the cause of scandal to you, whereas now it is an edifying example, do not mock at it, but imitate it. Because no one is ever so perfect as to make it impossible for another person to edify him. And Good is always a lesson to be accepted, even if it is given by one who was once blameworthy. Imitate and help him, because by doing so you will glorify the Lord and prove that you have understood the Word. Do not be like those whom you criticise in the secret of your hearts because their actions do not correspond to their words. But let each good action of yours be the crowning-piece of each good word of yours. And then you will really be looked at and listened to benevolently by the Eternal Father.

Listen to this other parable to understand which things are of value in the eyes of God. It will teach you to rectify a bad thought often found in many hearts. Most men are their own judges, and considering that one man only in a thousand is humble, it so happens that each man considers himself the only perfect one, whereas he finds hundreds of faults in his neighbour.

One day two men, who had gone to Jerusalem on business, went up to the Temple, as becomes every good Israelite every time he sets foot in the Holy City. One was a Pharisee, the other a publican. The former had come to collect the rents of some shops and to make up accounts with his stewards who lived near the town. The latter had come to pay in the taxes he had collected and to invoke compassion for a widow who could not pay the taxation on a boat and nets, because the amount of fish caught by her oldest son was barely sufficient to feed her many children.

Before going up to the Temple, the Pharisee had called on the tenants of the shops, and after looking round in the shops and seeing that they were full of goods and buyers, he was pleased with himself and he then called the tenant and said to him. "I see that your business is thriving".

"Yes, by the grace of God. I am pleased with my work. I have been able to increase the stock of goods and I hope to increase it further. I made improvements to the place and next year I shall have no expenses for benches and shelves and I will thus have more profit".

"Well! Very well! I am glad! What is your rent for this place?".

"One hundred didrachmae a month. It is dear but the position is a good one..."

"You are right. It is good. I therefore double the rent".

"But, sir" exclaimed the shopkeeper. "If you do that, you leave me no profit!".

"What I said is right. Have I to make you rich with my property? Be quick. You either give me two thousand four hundred didrachmae at once, or I will expel you and keep the goods. The place belongs to me and I can do what I like with it".

He did that with the first, the second and the third tenant, doubling the price to each of them, turning a deaf ear to their entreaties. And as the third tenant, who had a large family, wanted to offer resistance, he sent for the police and had the official seals of distraint affixed to the door, and the poor tenant driven out.

Then in his mansion, he examined the registers of his stewards, finding faults whereby he punished them as sluggards and sequestered the goods they had kept for themselves by full right. One of them had a dying son, and because of the heavy expenses he had sold part of his master's oil to buy medicines. So he had nothing to give the greedy master.

"Have mercy on me, sir. My poor son is on the point of death, and later on I will do extra work to pay you what you think is fair. But now, as you can understand, I am not in a position to do so".

"Are you not? I will show you whether you can pay me or not". And he went to the oil-mill with the poor steward and took away also the little oil the man had kept for his family and to feed the lamp that enabled him to watch at night at the bedside of his son.

The publican, instead, went to his superior who, on receiving the taxes he had collected said to him: "Three hundred and seventy ases are missing here. How come?".

"Well, I will explain it to you. In the village there is a widow with seven children. Only the oldest is fit to work. But he cannot go far from the shore in his boat, because his arms are too weak to handle the oars and the sail, and he cannot afford to engage an assistant. As he fishes near the shore he catches very little which is hardly sufficient to feed the eight poor wretches. I had not the heart to collect the tax".

"I see. But the law is law. It would be dreadful if people knew that it is compassionate. Everybody would find some reason not to pay. Let the young man change trade and sell his boat if they cannot pay".

"It is their daily bread, also for the future... and it is a souvenir of their father".

"I understand. But it is not possible to compromise".

"All right. But I cannot think of eight unfortunate people being deprived of their only resource. I will pay the three hundred and seventy ases".

Then the two went up to the Temple and on passing near the

treasury hall the Pharisee took a bulky purse from his bosom ostentatiously and emptied it to the last coin into the treasury. The purse contained the money taken from the shopkeepers and the proceeds of the steward's oil that the Pharisee had immediately sold to a merchant. The publican instead threw in a handful of small coins after taking from it what he needed to go back home. So they both gave what they had. Apparently the Pharisee was the more generous because he gave to the last coin he had. But one must also consider that he had more money in his mansion and he had credits with rich money-changers.

They then went before the Lord. The Pharisee at the very front, near the limit of the Court of the Hebrews, toward the Holy; the publican at the back, almost under the vault opening into the Women's Court, where he remained stooped, crushed by the thought of his misery as compared with divine Perfection. And they both prayed.

The Pharisee, standing up straight, almost insolent, as if he were the landlord of the place and he were the one who condescended to do homage to a visitor, said: "Here I am, I have come to venerate You in the House that is our glory. I have come, although I feel that You are in me, because I am a just man. I know how to behave to be so. However, although I am aware that it is only through my own merit that I am such, I thank You, as prescribed by the law, for what I am. I am not greedy, unjust, adulterous, or a sinner like that publican who threw a handful of small coins into the Treasury at the same time as I did. As for me, as You saw, I gave You all I had with me. That greedy fellow, instead, divided his money into two parts and gave You the smaller one. He will certainly keep the other part for revelries and women. But I am pure. I will not be polluted. I am pure and just, I fast twice a week, I pay the tithes of what I possess. Yes, I am pure, just and blessed, because I am holy. Bear that in mind, o Lord".

The publican, from his remote corner, without daring to raise his eyes towards the precious doors of the Temple, and striking his chest, prayed saying: "Lord, I am not worthy to be here. But You are just and holy, and You still allow me to stay here because You know that man is a sinner and if he does not come to You he becomes a demon. Oh! my Lord! I would like to honour You day and night, but for many hours I am the slave of my work. An unpleasant work that disheartens me because it is the cause of grief to the poorest of my neighbours. But I must obey my superiors, because it is my daily bread. Grant me, o my God, to be able to mitigate my duty towards my superiors with charity towards my poor brothers, so that I may not be condemned because of my work. Every work is holy if performed with charity. Let Your charity be always present to my heart so that I, miserable

as I am, may bear with my subjects as You bear with me, a big sinner. I would have liked to honour You more, Lord. You know. But I thought that to take some of the money destined to the Temple was better than putting it in the Treasure and causing eight poor innocent people to weep desolately. But if I made a mistake, let me understand that, o Lord, and I will give You up to the last farthing and I will go back to my village on foot begging for a piece of bread. Let me understand Your justice. Have mercy on me, o Lord, because I am a big sinner".

That is the parable. I solemnly tell you that while the Pharisee left the Temple with a fresh sin added to those he had committed before going up to the Moriah, the publican came away justified and the blessing of God followed him to his house and remained in it. Because he was humble and merciful and his actions were even holier than his words. The Pharisee, instead, was good only in words and exteriorly, whilst internally he was and acted as a demon because of the pride and hardness of his heart, and God therefore detested him.

He who exalts himself will, sooner or later, be humbled. If not in this, in future life. And he who humbles himself will be exalted, particularly in Heaven where the actions of men are seen in their true reality.

Come, Zacchaeus. Come, you who are with him and you, My apostles and disciples. I will go on speaking to you privately. »

And enveloping Himself in His mantle, He goes back to Zacchaeus' house.

## **522. In Zacchaeus' House with the Converts. The Soul and the Error of Reincarnation.**

3rd November 1946.

They are all gathered in a large bare room. It was certainly beautiful once. Now it is nothing but a large room. From the dining-room and the bedrooms they have brought chairs and small beds into it and they are all sitting round the Master, Whom they have seated on a kind of armchair, of engraved wood, covered with a long-pile carpet. It is the most luxurious piece of furniture in the house.

Zacchaeus is speaking of a croft bought with the money gathered among them: « After all we had to do something. Idleness is not a good medicine to avoid sin. The ground is not fertile as yet, because it was neglected, just like us, and like us it was full of bramble, stones, barrenness and weeds. Nike sent us her peasants to show us how to clear neglected wells, to clean the fields, to prune the few trees left, and plant new ones. We were aware of so many things... but not of the holy work of man. But in this work so

new to us, we really find a new life. Nothing around us reminds us of our past. Only our consciences remember it. But that is a good thing... We are sinners... Will You come to see it? »

« We shall depart together from here going towards the Jordan, and we shall stop at your croft. You told Me that it is just on the road to the river... »

« Yes, Master. But it is not a pleasant sight. The house is dilapidated. There is no furniture in it. We did not have enough money for everything... after making amends, as far as we could, for the wrongs done to our neighbour. With the exception of Demetis, Valens and Levi, who are too old for certain sacrifices and sleep here, the others must make shift with some hay, Lord. »

« Very often I do not even have that. I will sleep on hay, too, Zacchaeus. I slept My first sleeps on it and they were peaceful because they were watched over by love. I can sleep on it also tonight and it will not be a restless sleep, because I shall be among men whose good will has revived. » And He looks at those first redeemed men from every country so kindly that He seems to be caressing them.

And they look at Him... They are not men ready to weep. On the contrary who knows how many tears they have caused people to shed. Their faces are like books in which their wicked past is written, and if now their new life veils the brutality of those words, they can still be deciphered so clearly as to enable one to realise from which abyss they are rising towards Light. And yet their faces clear up and brighten, their eyes look reassured, a light of supernatural hope, of moral satisfaction shines in them upon hearing the Master say that they are men of good will once again.

Zacchaeus then says: « So You approve of what I have done? See, Master. On that day I said: "I will follow You", and I really wanted to follow You physically. But that very evening Demetis came to me for one of those... for one of his ill-famed affairs... and he was in need of money. He came from Jerusalem... they say that she is holy, but she is covered with shame, and the first to bring such shame on her are the very ones who then want to stone us as if we were lepers... But I must tell my sins, not theirs. I had no money left. I had given it all to You. Also what was left in the house was as good as given, because I had divided it up to give it back to those from whom I had extorted it by practising usury. So I said to him: "I have no money, but I have more than a treasure". And I told him about my conversion, Your words and the peace I had in me... I spoke so much that the light of the new day came in making our faces look pale, and the lamps useless, while I was still speaking. I do not know what I exactly said. I know that with his fist he violently struck the table at which we were sitting and exclaimed: "Mercury has lost a follower and his satyrs a companion.

Take this money as well, it is not enough for the criminal deed, but it will buy some bread for a beggar, and take me with you. I want to become acquainted with a perfume after so many foul smells". And he remained with me. We went to Jerusalem together, I to sell some items, he to free himself from all engagements. And on our way back I said - I had prayed in the Temple, after such a long time, with the pure pacified heart of a boy - I said to myself: "Is this not to follow the Master, and perhaps follow Him in a better way, by remaining in Jericho, where my wretched publican friends like me, gamblers, procurers, usurers, after being superintendents of galley slaves and convicts, of slaves, torturers of all miserable people, lawless and pitiless soldiers, used to carousing to forget remorse in drunkenness, come to see me to invest their cursed money, or to propose affairs, or to invite me to banquets or to other infamous filthiness? The town despises me. The Hebrews will always consider me a sinner. But they will not consider themselves such. But they are like me. They are filthy, but they may have something in them urging them to be good and they do not find who can give them a helping hand. I helped them in evil. Perhaps they sinned also because of my advice, for what at times I asked of them. It is my duty to help them to come towards goodness. As I paid those whom I had injured, as I made amends with regard to my fellow-citizens, so I must try and redress any wrongs done to them". And I remained here. Now one, now another one would come from this or that town, and I spoke to them. They did not all behave like Demetis. Some ran away after mocking at me. Some were hesitant. Some stayed here but after some time they went back to their miserable life. These ones have remained. And now I feel that this is the way I must follow You, that we must follow You thus, struggling against ourselves, putting up with the scorn of the world that cannot forgive us. Our hearts bleed when we see that the world does not forget, when recollections come back... and are so many and so painful... In some they are... »

« The dreadful Nemesis that always throws our crimes in our faces and promises vengeance in the hereafter » says one.

« They are the cries of those whom I struck to make them work, although they were exhausted. »

« They are the curses of those I enslaved after taking all their properties through usurious practices. »

« They are the entreaties of widows and orphans who could not afford to pay and whose last belongings I had sequestered in the name of the law. »

« They are the cruelties accomplished in conquered countries against defenceless people terrorised by their defeat. »

« They are the tears of my mother, of my wife, of my daughter, who died of privations while I was squandering everything in banquets. »

« They are... oh! there is no name for my crime! Lord, my hands are not stained with blood, I did not steal money, I did not impose exorbitant taxes, I did not fleece anybody, I did not strike the defeated enemy, but I exploited all miseries, and I made money at the expense of innocent girls of the beaten enemy, of orphan girls, of women sold like merchandise for a piece of bread. I travelled round the world seizing such opportunities, following armies, where there was famine, where an overflowing river had deprived people of food, where pestilence had left young lives without protection, and I treated them as goods, infamous yet innocent goods. Infamous with regard to me, as I made money out of it, innocent because they were not yet aware of so much horror. Lord, I have in my hands the virginity of young girls seduced, and the honour of young wives taken in conquered towns. My trade centres... and my brothels were famous, Lord... Do not curse me, now that You know!... »

The apostles have unintentionally moved away from the last man who has spoken. Jesus stands up and approaches him. He lays a hand on his shoulder and says: « It is true! Your crime is grave. You have much to redress. But I, the Mercy, tell you that even if you were the demon himself and you were responsible for all the crimes of the Earth, if you want, you can make amends for everything and be forgiven by God, the true, great, paternal God. If you want. Join your will to Mine. I also want you to be forgiven. Join Me. Give Me your poor spirit, so ill-famed, ruined, full of scars and disheartened after you abandoned sin. I will put it on My Heart, where I place the biggest sinners and I will take it with Me to the redeeming Sacrifice. The holiest Blood, that of My Heart, the last Blood of Him Consumed on behalf of men, will be shed on the greatest ruins and will regenerate them. Have hope for the time being. Let your hope be greater than your immense crime, in the mercy of God, because it has no limit, o man, for those who can trust in it. »

The man would like to take and kiss the hand resting on his shoulder, so pale and thin against his brown garment and his strong shoulder. But he dare not. Jesus understands and stretches out His hand saying: « Kiss the palm of it, man. I will find that kiss again and it will cure My torture. A kissed hand, a wounded hand. Kissed out of love. Wounded for love. Oh! I wish all men could kiss the great Victim, and the great Victim could die in its clothes made of sores, knowing that in each are the kisses, the love, of all men redeemed! » and He holds his hand pressed against the clean-shaven lips of the man, who, judging from his overall appearance, I would say is a Roman. He holds it there until the man moves away as if he were sated with it after quenching the parching

thirst of his remorse by drinking the Mercy of the Lord in the hollow of the divine hand.

Jesus goes back to His place and when passing He lays His hand on the curly hair of a very young man. I would say that he is hardly twenty years old, if that. One who has never spoken, and is certainly of Hebrew race. Jesus asks him: « And you, My son, are you not saying anything to your Saviour? »

The young man raises his head and looks at Him... A full speech is in his look. A story of grief, of hatred, of repentance, of love.

Jesus, bending lightly over him, staring at his eyes, reads a mute story and then says: « That is why I call you "son". You are no longer alone. Forgive all those of your own blood and those who are strangers, as God forgives you. And love the Love Who saved you. Come with Me for a moment. I want to say a word to you privately. »

The young man stands up and follows Him. When they are alone, Jesus says: « I want to tell you this, son. The Lord has loved you very much, although it may not appear to be so to a superficial judge. You have been sorely tried by life. Men have harmed you seriously. Both could have ruined you irreparably. Behind them there was Satan, jealous of your soul. But above you there was the eye of God. And that blessed eye stopped your enemies. His love sent Zacchaeus along your path. And, with Zacchaeus, He sent Me, Who am now speaking to you. And now I tell you that in this love you must find what you have not had, you must forget what embittered you, and forgive, forgive your mother, your ill-famed master, and yourself. Do not hate yourself in an evil way, son. Hate your time of sin, but not your spirit that has been successful in leaving that sin. Let your thought be a good friend of your spirit, so that together they may reach perfection. »

« Me, perfect! »

« Did you hear what I said to that man? And yet he was in the depth of the abyss!... And thank you, son! »

« For what, my Lord? I have to thank You... »

« For not going to those who buy men to betray Me. »

« Oh! Lord! How could I do it, if I knew that You do not despise even us highwaymen? I also was among those who brought You the lamb at the Chert. And one of us, who has now been captured by the Romans - at least so they say, he has certainly not been seen in the refuge of the highwaymen since before the Tabernacles - told me the words You spoke in a valley near Modin... Because at that time I had not yet joined the highwaymen. I went to them at the end of last Adar and I left them at the beginning of Ethanim. But I did not do anything that deserves Your thanks. You were good. I wanted to be good, and to warn a friend of Yours... can I say so of Zacchaeus? »

« Yes, you can. All those who love Me are My friends. You are one, too. »

« Oh!... I wanted to warn him so that You should be on the lookout. But a warning does not deserve thanks... »

« I will repeat it to you again: I thank you for not selling yourself to those who are against Me. That is important. »

« And is the warning not? »

« Son, nothing will be able to prevent Hatred from assailing Me. Have you ever seen a torrent overflow? »

« Yes, I have. I was near Jabesh-Gilead and I saw the damage caused by the river that had overflowed before flowing into the Jordan. »

« And could anything stop the water? »

« No, it flooded and ruined everything. Even some houses were swept away. »

« Hatred is like that. But it will not carry Me away. I shall be submerged but not destroyed. And in the very bitter hour the love of those who would not hate the Innocent One will be My consolation, my light in the dark of that hour of Darkness, My sweetness in the chalice of wine mixed with gall and myrrh. »

« You?... You are speaking of Yourself as if... That chalice is for highwaymen, for those who go to die on the cross. But You are not a thief! You are not guilty! You are... »

« The Redeemer. Give Me a kiss, son. »

He takes the man's head in His hands and kisses his forehead, then He bends to receive his kiss. A timid kiss that hardly touches the emaciated cheek... Then the young man collapses on Jesus' chest weeping.

« Do not weep, son! I am sacrificed by love. And it is always a sweet sacrifice even if it is grievous to human nature. »

He holds him in His arms until he stops weeping and then He goes back, holding him by the hand close to Himself, to the place where Peter was previously.

He resumes speaking: « While we were taking our food, one of you, not from Israel, said that he wanted to ask Me to explain something. Let him do so now, because we shall soon have to go back to the crowd and then part. »

« It is I who said that. But many wish to know. Zacchaeus cannot explain it clearly, neither can any of us who follow Your religion. We asked Your disciples, when they passed through here. But they did not give us a clear explanation. »

« So what do you wish to know? »

« We did not even know that we had a soul. That is... we, at least, should have known, because our ancestors... But we did not read the old books. We were like animals... And we no longer knew what this soul is. We do not know even now. What is the soul? Is it

perhaps our reason? We do not think so, because in that case we would have been without it, and we have been told that without soul one cannot live. So what is the soul, which we have been told is incorporeal and immortal, if it is not our reason? Thought is incorporeal, but it is not immortal because it ends with our life. Even the wisest man thinks no more after his death. »

« A soul is not a thought, man. The soul is the spirit, the immaterial prime cause of life, the impalpable but true principle that animates the whole man and lasts after man. That is why it is said to be immortal. It is so sublime that even the most powerful thought is nothing in comparison with it. A thought comes to an end. The soul, instead, has a beginning, but has no end. Whether blissful or damned it continues to exist. Blessed are those who know how to keep it pure, or to restore it to its purity after making it impure, in order to give it back to the Creator as He gave it to man to enliven his humanity. »

« But is it within us, or above us, like the eye of God? »

« In us. »

« Imprisoned in us until death, then? A slave? »

« No. A queen. In the eternal thought, the soul, the spirit is what reigns in man, in the animal created and named man. The soul was created queen, with the authority and destiny of a queen, as it came from the King and Father of all kings and fathers, His breath and image, His gift and right, and its mission is to make of the creature named man a king of the great eternal kingdom and a god in the hereafter, a "living being" in the Abode of the most sublime only God. Its maidservants are all the virtues and faculties of man, its minister is the good will of man, the thought of man is its servant and disciple. It is from the spirit that thought acquires power and truthfulness, justice and wisdom, and can rise to regal perfection. A thought deprived of the light of the spirit will always be lacunose and obscure, it will never be able to understand the reason for truths that are more incomprehensible than mysteries to those who are separated from God, having lost the royalty of their souls. The thought of man will be obscure and dull, if it lacks the basic point, the lever indispensable to understand, to rise leaving the Earth and dashing upwards, towards the Intelligence, the Power, the Divinity, in one word. I am speaking thus to you Demetis, because you have not always been a money-changer, so you can understand and explain this to the others. »

« You are really a seer, Master. No, I have not been only a moneychanger... Nay, that was the last step of my descent... Tell me, Master. If the soul is a queen, why then does it not reign and subdue the evil thought and evil flesh of man? »

« Subjection would be neither freedom nor merit; it would be oppression. »

« But thought and the flesh overwhelm also the soul, I am speaking of myself, of us, and they enslave it too often. That is why I asked whether it was in us in the form of a slave. How can God allow such a sublime thing - You called it "breath of God and His image" - to be degraded by inferior beings? »

« According to the divine Thought the soul was not to be aware of slavery. But are you forgetting about the enemy of God and of man? The infernal spirits are known to you as well. »

« Yes, and all of them with cruel desires. And remembering my childhood, I can say that I must ascribe only to those infernal spirits the man I became and was, up to the threshold of old age. I have now found the lost child of those days. But shall I be able to become such a child as to go back to the purity of my childhood? Is it possible to go backwards in time? »

« It is not necessary to go backwards. You would not be able to do it. Bygone days will not come back, one cannot make them come back or go back to them. And it is not necessary. Some of you come from places where the theory of Pythagoras' school is known. A wrong theory. Souls, when they end their stay on the Earth, do not come back to it again in any body. Not in the body of an animal, as it would not befit such a supernatural being to dwell in a brute. Not in the body of a man, because how could the body be rewarded when it is reunited to the soul in the Last Judgement, if that soul had been clothed with many bodies? Those who believe in that theory say that it is the last body that rejoices, because the soul through successive purifications, in successive lives, reaches the perfection deserving a reward only in the last reincarnation. An error and an offence! Error and offence against God, as it admits that God was able to create only a limited number of souls. Error and offence against man, as it considers him so corrupt that he deserves a reward only with great difficulty. The reward may not be granted at once, ninety-nine times in a hundred a purification will be required in life to come. But purification is preparation to joy. So he who is being purified is already saved. And once he is saved he will rejoice, after Doomsday, with his body. He will have only one body for his soul, as he had one life here, and with the body that his parents made for him, and with the soul that the Creator created for him to give life to his body, he will take delight in the reward. It is not possible to be reincarnated, as it is not possible to go back in time. But it is possible to be re-created through one's free will, and God blesses and assists such will. Each of you has had that will. And then man, who was sinful, vicious, filthy, delinquent, thieving, corrupt, corrupting, murderous, impious, adulterous, revives spiritually through the purification of repentance, he destroys the corrupt kernel of the old man, he dispels the mental ego which is even more corrupt, as if the will to

be redeemed were an acid that attacks and destroys the unwholesome case concealing a treasure, and after laying bare his spirit, purifying it and restoring it to health, he clothes it with a new mentality, with a new, pure, good juvenile garment. Oh! a garment that can go close to God, that can worthily cover the recreated soul, protect and assist it until its supercreation, that is its complete holiness, that in future - perhaps a remote future if measured with human mind and means; very close if contemplated with the thought of eternity - will be glorious in the Kingdom of God. And every man can, if he so wishes, recreate in himself the boy of his childhood, the loving, humble, sincere, kind boy, whom the mother used to press to her breast and the father looked at glorying, whom the angel of God loved and God admired with love. Your mothers! Perhaps they were women of great virtue... God will not leave their virtue unrewarded. Strive therefore to be equally virtuous, to be united to them when there will be only one thing for all the virtuous people: the Kingdom of God for good people. Perhaps they were not good and they contributed to your ruin. But if they did not love you, if you do not know what love is, if the lack of love made you bad, now that a divine Love has embraced you, be holy so that with heavenly joy you may take delight in the Love that exceeds all love. Have you anything else to ask? »

« No, Lord. We have everything to learn. But for the moment we have nothing else... »

« I will leave John and Andrew with you for a few days. Later I will send you some good wise disciples. I want wild colts to know the ways of the Lord and His pastures, like the people of Israel, because I have come for everybody and I love everybody in the same way. Stand up and let us go. »

And He is the first to go out into the changed garden, closely followed by His apostles who complain gently saying: « Master, You have spoken to them as You have seldom done to Your chosen ones... »

« And do you complain of that? Do you not know that they do so also in the world, when they want to conquer someone they love? But with those who we know love us with their whole beings, there is no need for the art of conquering. It is sufficient to see one another in order to be in one another with joy and peace » says Jesus with a divine smile, really divine, so much being the joy it communicates.

And the apostles no longer complain, on the contrary they look at Him blissfully, lost as they are in the exultation of loving one another.

### 523. Sabea of Bethlechi.

5th November 1946.

The croft that feeds the heterogeneous group of Zacchaeus' friends is a very poor one indeed, particularly now that the winter season does not certainly cheer up hearts. Yet they are fond of it and they are proud of showing it to Jesus. Three corn fields, ploughed and brown, the orchard with few fruitful trees and others too young for any hope of fruit, a few stunted rows of vines, a vegetable garden... a small stable with a little cow and a donkey for the water-wheel, an enclosure with a few hens and five pairs of doves, six sheep, a hovel with a kitchen and three rooms, a shed used as wood-store, lumber-room and hay-loft, a well with a chipped rim and a cistern with muddy water. Nothing else...

« If the season is favourable... »

« If the animals will litter... »

« If the trees take root... »

Everything is conditional... Very poor hopes...

But one of them remembers what he heard years before - of the wonderful crop Doras had because of a blessing given by the Master, so that Doras might be humane to his peasants - and he says: « And if You blessed this place... Doras also was a sinner... »

« You are right. What I did, although I knew that it would not change his heart, I will do also for you, whose hearts have changed. » And He stretches out His arms to bless saying: « I will do that at once to convince you that I love you. »

Then they proceed on the road towards the river, along ploughed fields with dark fertile land, and orchards stripped by the season.

At a bend some scribes come forward. « Peace to You, Master. We have been waiting for You here to venerate You... »

« No. To be sure that I work no fraud. You have done the right thing. You must be convinced that I have had no opportunity to see the woman or any of the people who are with her. You were on watch at Zacchaeus' house and you saw that none of us came out. You preceded Me on the way and you saw that none of us went ahead of you. You are thinking of imposing terms on Me with regard to the meeting with that woman, and I tell you that I will accept them even before you mention them. »

« But... if You do not know them... »

« Is it not true that you do want to impose them? »

« It is true. »

« As I am aware of your intention, which is known only to you, I am also aware of what you will say to Me. And I tell you that I will accept what you intend to propose, because it will serve to give glory to the Truth. Speak up. »

« Do You know what the situation is? »

« I know that you consider her to be possessed, and that no exorciser

has been able to expel the demon. And I know that she does not speak words worthy of a demon. That is what those who have heard her speak say. »

« Can You swear that You have never seen her? »

« A just man never swears, because he is entitled to have his word accepted. I tell you that I have never seen her and that I have never been to her village, and the whole village can confirm that. »

« And yet she maintains that she knows Your face and Your voice. »

« Her soul in fact knows Me by the will of God. »

« You say by the will of God. But how can You state that? »

« I have been told that she speaks inspired words. »

« The demon also speaks of God. »

« But mixing errors on purpose, to lead men astray with wrong thoughts. »

« Well... we would like You to allow us to put the woman to a test. »

« In what way? »

« Do You really not know her? »

« I have told you that I do not. »

« Well then. We will send somebody ahead shouting: "Here is the Lord" and we shall see whether she greets him as if it were You. »

« A poor test! But I agree. Pick those to be sent ahead, from My followers. I will follow you with the others. But if the woman speaks, you must let her speak, that I may judge her words. »

« That is fair. The agreement is made and we will keep it loyally. »

« Let it be so and may your hearts be touched. »

« Master, we are not all enemies. Some of us are in a position of expectation... sincerely anxious to see the truth and follow You » says a scribe.

« That is true. And they will still be loved by God. »

The scribes examine the apostles and are surprised at the absence of many, of the Iscariot in particular. They then choose Judas Thaddeus and John. They also take the young converted thief who is pale and thin and with hair verging to a reddish hue. In short, they take those who, because of their age and features, look like the Master.

« We will go on with them. You will remain here with Our companions and Yours, and will follow us after some time. »

They do that.

The woods along the river are already in sight. The winter sunshine at sunset gilds the tree-tops and spreads a bright yellow light on the people gathered near the trees.

« Here He is! Here is the Master! Get up! Come and meet Him! » shout the scribes who had gone ahead, deviating towards a path that ends against a huge oak, with mighty roots half uncovered,

forming seats for those who take shelter near its trunk.

The people gathered there, turn round, stand up, open out and part to come and meet those who are arriving. Only three scribes remain near the trunk, with John of Ephesus, and an elderly man and woman, and another woman who is sitting on one of the protruding roots, her back to the trunk, her head bent on her knees which are embraced by her arms with clasped hands, all covered with such a deep violet veil, that it seems to be black. She seems indifferent to everything. She does not stir despite all the shouting.

A scribe touches her shoulder: « The Master is here, Sabea. Stand up and greet Him. »

The woman does not reply and does not move.

The three scribes look at one another and smile ironically, nodding meaningfully to the others who are coming forward. And as those who were waiting had become quiet, because they did not see Jesus, they begin to shout louder than ever with their accomplices, so that the woman may not become aware of the deceit.

« Woman » says a scribe to the old mother who is with her daughter « you, at least, ought to greet the Master, and tell your daughter to greet Him. »

The woman prostrates herself with her husband before Thaddeus and John and the repentant thief, then standing up, she says to her daughter: « Sabea, your Lord is here. Worship Him. »

The young woman does not stir.

The scribes smile more ironically, and one of them, a thin bignosed man, says in a nasal drawling voice: « You were not expecting this test, were you? And your heart is trembling. You realise that your fame of a prophetess is in danger and you are not prepared to tempt fate... I think that that is enough to say that you are a liar... »

The woman raises her head all of a sudden. She throws her veil behind her head and looking with wide-open eyes she says: « I do not lie, scribe. And I am not afraid because I am in the truth. Where is the Lord? »

« What? You say that you know Him and you do not see Him? He is in front of you. »

« None of these is the Lord. That's why I did not move. None of them. »

« None of them? What? Is that fair-haired Galilean not the Lord? I do not know Him, but I know that He is fair-haired and His eyes are sky-blue. »

« He is not the Lord. »

« Well, it is that other one, who is tall and severe looking. Look at His royal features. It's certainly Him. »

« He is not the Lord. The Lord is not amongst them » and she lowers her head on her knees as before.

Some time passes. Then there is Jesus coming forward. The scribes have ordered the few people present to be silent. So His arrival is not given away by any hosanna. Jesus is coming forward between Peter and His cousin James. He is walking slowly... Silently... The thick grass deadens all shuffling of feet. While the old woman wipes her tears with her veil and a scribe offends her saying: « Your daughter is mad and a liar », and her father sighs and reproaches his daughter, Jesus arrives at the end of the path and He stops.

The young woman, who could not hear or see anything, jumps to her feet, throws away her veil, uncovering thus her head, stretches out her arms with a mighty cry: « Here is my Lord coming to me! This is the Messiah, o men, who want to deceive and humiliate me. I can see upon Him the light of God Who points Him out to me and I honour Him! » and she throws herself on the ground, remaining where she was, at about two metres from Jesus. With her face on the ground, on the grass, she shouts: « I greet You, o King of peoples, o Wonder, o Prince of Peace, Father of the century that has no end, Leader of the new people of God! » and she remains prostrated under her wide dark mantle, of a violet almost black shade like her veil.

But the moment she stood up against the black trunk - and after throwing away her veil, she remained with her arms stretched forward like a statue - I noticed that under her mantle she wore a heavy woollen dress of a white-ivory shade, fastened at her neck and waist only by a cord. And above all I was able to admire her beauty of a middle-aged woman. She must be about thirty years old. And generally speaking, thirty years in Palestine are equivalent to at least forty of our years; if Our Lady is an exception to this rule, other women reach maturity early, particularly those of dark complexion and hair and buxom like this one. She is the classical type of a Jewish woman. I think that Rachel, Ruth and Judith, who were famous for their beauty, must have been like her. Tall, buxom yet slender, with smooth skin of a pale brown hue, a small mouth and lips lightly tumid and deeply red, a straight long thin nose, deep dark velvet-like eyes under an arch of long thick eyebrows, a high smooth regal forehead, a rather long oval-shaped face and ebony hair as wonderful as an onyx wreath. Not a jewel, but a statuesque body and the majesty of a queen.

She is now getting up pushing her hands, which are long, brown, beautiful, joined to her arms by thin wrists. She is now on her feet, standing against the dark trunk. She now looks at the Master in silence, and shakes her head because the scribes say to her: « You are wrong, Sabea. He is not the Messiah, but it is the one you saw previously without recognising him. » She shakes her head decidedly and severely, without taking her eyes off the Lord. Then

her face becomes transfigured into an expression that I cannot say whether it is of intense joy or ecstatic drowsiness. It looks like both, because she grows pale like one about to faint, while all her life seems to concentrate on her eyes which become bright with a light of joy, of triumph, of love... I do not know. Are those eyes smiling? No, they are not, as her severe lips are not smiling. And yet a light of joy shines in them and they acquire a greater and greater power of intensity, that is striking.

Jesus looks at her with His meek somewhat sad eyes. « Don't You see that she is mad? » a scribe whispers to Him. Jesus does not reply. With His left hand hanging down His side, His right one holding His mantle on His chest, He looks and is silent.

And the woman opens her mouth and stretches her arms as she did previously. She looks like a huge butterfly with violet wings and a body of ancient ivory. And a new cry is uttered by her lips: « O Adonai, You are great! You alone are great, o Adonai! You are great in Heaven and on the Earth, in time and in ages, and beyond Time, from time immemorial and for ever, o Lord, Son of the Lord. Your enemies are under Your feet and Your throne is supported by the love of those who love You. »

Her voice becomes steadier and steadier and louder and louder while her eyes are taken off Jesus' face and they look at a point in the distance, a little above the heads of those who are paying attention around her and whom she dominates without difficulty, standing straight against the trunk of the oak, which is on a rising of the ground like a low bank.

After a pause she resumes speaking: « The throne of my Lord is adorned with the twelve stones of the twelve tribes of the just. In the great pearl that is the throne, the white precious bright throne of the Most Holy Lamb, there are mounted topazes with amethysts, emeralds with sapphires, rubies with sardonyxes, and agates and chrysolites and beryls, onyxes, jaspers, opals. Those who believe, those who hope, those who love, those who repent, those who live and die in justice, those who suffer, those who leave error for the Truth, those who were hard-hearted and have become meek in His Name, the innocent, the repentant, those who divest themselves of everything to be agile in following the Lord, the virgins whose spirits shine with a light like the dawn of the Heaven of God... Glory to the Lord! Glory to Adonai! Glory to the King sitting on His throne! »

Her voice is a sharp sound. The people quiver with emotion. The woman seems to be really seeing what she says, as if the golden cloud sailing in the clear sky and which she seems to be following with her enraptured eyes, were a lens with which she saw the heavenly glories.

She rests as if she were tired but without changing attitude. Only

her face becomes more transfigured as it grows paler and her eyes shine more brightly. She resumes speaking lowering her eyes on Jesus Who is listening to her attentively among a group of scribes who shake their heads sceptically and scornfully, and among His apostles and followers who are pale with holy emotion. She resumes speaking in a clear but lower voice: « I see! I see in the Man what is concealed in the Man. Holy is the Man, but my knee bends before the Holy of Holies enclosed in the Man. »

Her voice becomes loud again and imperious like a command: « Look at your King, o people of God! Become acquainted with His' Face! The Beauty of God is before you! The Wisdom of God has taken a mouth to teach you. It is no longer the prophets, o people of Israel, who speak to you of the Unnamable One. It is He Himself. He, Who knows the mystery that is God, speaks to you of God. He Who knows the thought of God Who presses you to His bosom, o people who are still a baby after so many centuries, and nourishes you with the milk of God's Wisdom to make you an adult in God. To do that He has become incarnate in a womb. In the womb of an Israelite woman, greater in the eyes of God and of men than any other woman. She stole the heart of God with one only of Her throbs of a dove. The beauty of Her spirit fascinated the Most High and of Her He made His throne. Miriam of Aaron sinned because sin was in her. Deborah decided what was to be done, but she did not act with her own hands. Jael was strong, but she soiled her hands with blood. Judith was just and she feared the Lord, and God was in her words and allowed her the deed that Israel might be saved, but for the love of her country she made use of murderous cunning. But the Woman Who generated Him exceeds those women because She is the perfect Maid of God and serves Him without sinning. Entirely pure, innocent and beautiful, She is the beautiful Star of God, from its rising to its setting. Entirely beautiful, shining and pure to be Star and Moon, Light to men to find God. She does not precede and does not follow the holy Ark as Miriam of Aaron did, because She is the Ark Herself. On the muddy water of the Earth covered with the flood of sins, She sails and saves, because those who enter in Her find the Lord. Spotless dove She goes out and brings the olive-branch, the branch of peace to men, because She is the beautiful Olive-tree. She is silent and in Her silence She speaks and acts more than Deborah, Jael and Judith and She does not advise to fight, She does not urge to slaughter, She sheds no blood but Her own most chosen blood, with which She made Her Son. Unhappy Mother! Sublime Mother!... Judith feared the Lord, but her flower had belonged to a man. This Woman gave Her inviolate flower to the Most High, and the Fire of God descended into the calyx of the sweet lily and the womb of woman contained and carried the Power, the Wisdom and the Love

of God. Glory to the Woman! Sing, o women of Israel, Her praises! »

The woman becomes silent as if her voice were exhausted. In fact I do not know how she can hold such a strong timbre.

The scribes say: « She is mad! She is mad! Make her keep quiet. She is either mad or possessed. Order the spirit possessing her to go away. »

« I cannot. There no spirit in her but God's, and God does not eject Himself. »

« You are not doing it because she praises You and Your Mother and that tickles Your pride. »

« Scribe, meditate on what you know about Me and you will see that I know no pride. »

« And yet only a demon can speak in her to sing the praises of a woman thus!... A woman! And what is woman in Israel and for Israel? What, but sin in the eyes of God? The seduced and seducer! If it were not part of our faith, one could hardly believe that woman has a soul. She is forbidden to go close to the Holy because of her uncleanness. And this woman says that God descended into Her!... » says another scandalised scribe and his accomplices aid and abet him.

Jesus says, without looking at anybody in the face, He seems to be speaking to Himself: « "The Woman will crush the head of the Serpent... The Virgin will conceive and give birth to a Son Who will be called Immanuel- A shoot will spring from the stock of Jesse, a flower will come up from this root and the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him". That Woman. My Mother. Scribe, out of respect for your knowledge, remember and understand the words of the Book. »

The scribes do not know what to reply. They have read those words thousands of times and said that they were true. Can they now deny it? They keep quiet.

One gives instructions to light some fires as it is getting cold near the banks of the river where the evening wind is blowing. The order is obeyed and bonfires of sticks blaze in circle around the people who have grouped together.

The dancing light of the fire seems to rouse the woman who had become silent with her eyes closed deeply absorbed in herself. She opens her eyes and stirs herself. She looks at Jesus again and shouts once more: « Adonai! Adonai! You are great! Let us sing a new hymn to the Divine One! Shalom! Shalom! Malchich!!... (I am spelling it thus, but the "h" is aspirated almost like a "c" as pronounced by people in Tuscany). Peace! Peace! O King Whom nothing can resist!... »

The she becomes silent all of a sudden. She looks round, for the first time since she began to speak, at those surrounding Jesus, and she stares at the scribes as if it were the first time she saw them,

and without any apparent reason tears well up in her large eyes and her face becomes sad and dull. She speaks slowly now and in a deep voice like one relating sorrowful things: « No. There is who resists You! O people, listen! After my grief, o people of Bethlechi, you have heard me speak. After years of silence and grief I heard and I said what I had heard. Now I am no longer in the green woods of Bethlechi, a virgin widow who finds her only peace in the Lord. I have not around me only my fellow-citizens to say to them: "Let us fear the Lord because the hour has come when we must be ready for His call. Let us clothe our hearts with beautiful garments in order not to be unworthy of being in His presence. Let us gird ourselves with strength because the hour of the Christ is an hour of trial. Let us purify ourselves like victims for the altar, so that we may be received by Him who sends the Christ. Let those who are good become better. Let those who are proud become humble. Let thus who suffer from lust divest themselves of their flesh to be able to follow the Lamb. Let the miser become a benefactor because God assists us through His Messiah, and let everybody practise justice in order to belong to the people of the Blessed One Who is coming". Now I am speaking before Him and before those who believe in Him, and also before those who do not believe and scoff at the Holy One and at those who speak and believe in His Name and in Him. But I am not afraid. You say that I am mad, you say that a demon speaks in me. I am aware that you could have me stoned as a blasphemer. I know that what I am going to tell you will sound like an insult and blasphemy, and that you will hate me. But I am not afraid. Being perhaps the last of the voices that speak of Him before His Manifestation, I may follow the lot of many more voices, and I am not afraid. The exile in the cold and solitude of the Earth is too long for those who think of the bosom of Abraham, of the Kingdom of God that the Christ opens to us and is holier than the holy bosom of Abraham. Sabea of Carmel of the stock of Aaron is not afraid of death. But she fears the Lord. And she speaks when He makes her speak in order not to disobey His will. And she speaks the truth because she speaks of God with the words given to her by God. I do not fear death, even if you call me a demon and you have me stoned as a blasphemer, even if my father, mother and brothers should die because of such disgrace, I shall not tremble with fear or pain. I know that the demon is not in me, because all wicked incentives are inert in me, and the whole of Bethlechi knows that. I know that the interruption that stones may cause to my song will be shorter than a sigh, and afterwards more breath will be given to my song in the freedom beyond the Earth. I know that the grief of my kinsfolk will be comforted by God, and it will be short, whereas their joy of martyr relatives of a martyr will be eternal. I am not afraid of your death, but of that

which would come to me from God, if I did not obey. And I speak. And I say what I have been told. O people, listen, and you too, o scribes of Israel, listen. »

She raises her sorrowful voice again and says: « A voice, a voice comes from high above and shouts in my heart. It says: "The ancient People of God cannot sing the new hymn, because it does not love its Saviour. The new hymn will be sung by those saved in every country, those of the new People of the Christ Lord, not those who hate My Word"... Horror! (she really utters a cry that makes one shudder). The voice gives light, the light gives sight! Horror! I see! » Her shout is almost a howl. She writhes as if she were held firm before a dreadful sight torturing her heart, and she were trying to put an end to it by running away. Her mantle slips off her shoulders, and she is left in her white dress against the huge dark trunk. In the light fading slowly in the reflected green of the wood and in the reddish dancing reflection of the flames, her face becomes tremendously tragic. Shadows appear under her eyes, around her nostrils, under her lip. It seems a face disfigured by grief. She wrings her hands repeating in a lower voice: « I see! I see! » and she drinks her tears while she continues: « I see the crimes of this people of mine. And I am powerless to stop them. I see the hearts of my fellow-citizens and I am unable to change them. Horror! Horror! Satan has left his place and has come to dwell in these hearts. »

« Make her keep quiet » the scribes order Jesus.

« You promised to let her speak... » replies Jesus.

The woman continues: « Your face on the ground, in the mud, o Israel, who still know how to love the Lord. Cover yourself with ashes, wrap yourself in sackcloth. For yourself! For them! Jerusalem! Jerusalem! Save yourself! I can see a town rioting and requesting a crime. I hear, I can hear the shouts of those who with hatred invoke blood upon themselves. I can see the Victim being raised in the Passover of Blood and I can see that Blood flowing, and I can hear that Blood cry louder than the blood of Abel, while heaven opens and the earth quakes and the sun grows dark. And that Blood does not cry out for vengeance, but it implores mercy on its murderous People and on us! Jerusalem!!! Be converted! That Blood! That Blood! A stream! A stream that washes the world curing all evils, cancelling all sins... But for us, for us of Israel, that Blood is fire, for us it is a chisel that engraves the name of deicides and the curse of God on the sons of Jacob. Jerusalem! Have mercy on yourself and on us!... »

« Tell her to be quiet, it's an order! » shout the scribes while the woman sobs covering her face.

« I cannot order the Truth to be quiet. »

« Truth! Truth! She is mad and she is raving! What kind of a

Master are You, if You accept as true the words of a raving woman? »

« And what Messiah are You if You cannot make a woman be quiet? »

« And what Prophet are You if You cannot drive out a demon? And yet You have done it on other occasions! »

« Yes, He did. But it does not suit Him now. It is nothing but a well planned trick to frighten the crowd! »

« And I would have chosen this moment, this place and this handful of men to do it, when I could have done it in Jericho when I had over five thousand people who followed and surrounded Me several times, when the enclosure of the Temple was too small to contain all those who wanted to hear Me? And can the demon speak words of wisdom? Which of you can honestly say that one error has come out of her lips? Are the dreadful words of the prophets not resounding on her lips, in her womanly voice? Do you not hear the howl of Jeremiah and the weeping of Isaiah and of the other prophets? Do you not hear the voice of God spoken through a creature, the voice that strives to be accepted by you for your own good? You do not listen to Me. You may think that I speak in My own interest. But what profit does this woman, who is unknown to Me, hope to have from these words? What will she gain, except your contempt, your threats and perhaps your revenge? No, I will not order her to be silent! On the contrary, that these few people may hear her, and you also may hear her and mend your ways I say to her: "Speak! Speak up, I tell you, in the name of the Lord!" »

Jesus is now majestic, He is the powerful Christ of the moments of miracles, with His large magnetic eyes shining like blue stars, made even brighter by the flames of a bonfire which is burning between Him and the woman. The woman instead, overwhelmed by grief, is less regal looking, with her head lowered, her face covered with her hands, and with her dark hair, which has become loose, falling over her shoulders and in front of her, like a mourning veil over her white dress.

« Speak up, I tell you. Your sorrowful words are not fruitless. Sabea, of the stock of Aaron, speak up! »

The woman obeys. But she speaks in a low voice, in fact they all press closer to hear her better. She seems to be speaking to herself, looking towards the river that flows babbling on her right hand side, with the last gleams of the water in the fading light of the day. And she seems to be addressing the river: « O Jordan, sacred river of our fathers, your water is sky-blue and wavy like precious byssus, and you reflect the pure stars and the pale moon in it, and you caress the willows on your banks, and you are the river of peace and yet you know so much sorrow; o Jordan, in stormy times with your swollen agitated waves you carry the sand of a thousand torrents and at times you tear away a tender shrub on

which there is a nest and you carry it away vertically towards the deadly abyss of the Salt Sea, and you have no mercy on the pair of birds, which screeching with pain fly following their nest, destroyed by your robbery; thus, o sacred Jordan, you will see the people, that did not want the Messiah, go towards its ruin, struck by divine wrath, torn away from their homes and from the altar, and perish on the greatest death. My people, save yourselves! Believe in your Lord! Follow your Messiah! Recognise Him for what He is. Not the king of peoples and armies. He is the King of souls, of your souls, of all souls. He descended to gather the just souls, He will ascend again to lead them to the eternal Kingdom. O you, who are still able to love, press round the Holy One! O you, who have the destiny of our Fatherland at heart, join the Saviour! Let not all the offspring of Abraham die! Shun the false prophets who with lying mouths and rapacious hearts want to tear you away from Salvation. Come out of the darkness rising around you. Listen to the voice of God! In the decree of God, the mighty ones of whom you are now afraid, are already dust. One only is the Living Being. The places in which they reign and from which they oppress people, are already in ruin. One only is lasting. Jerusalem! Where are the proud sons of Zion of whom you boast? Where the rabbis and the priests with whom you adorn yourself and whom you regard with respect? Look at them! Oppressed, in chains, they are going towards their places of exile, among the ruins of your buildings, among and the dead bodies of those who were slaughtered or died of starvation. The fury of God is upon you, Jerusalem, who reject your Messiah and strike His face and heart. All your beauty has been destroyed. Every hope of yours is dead. The Temple and the altar are desecrated... »

« Make her be silent! She is blaspheming! Make her be quiet, we say. »

«... the ephod is torn. It is no longer of any use... »

« You are guilty if You do not command her to be silent! »

«... because he no longer reigns. There is another, an eternal Pontiff, and He is holy, and has been sent by God: King and Priest for ever, sent by Him Who considers as given to Himself the offences given to the Christ and avenges them. Another Pontiff. The True Holy Pontiff, Anointed by God and by His Sacrifice, in the place of those on whose heads the tiara is a dishonour as it covers horrible thoughts! ... »

« Be quiet, you cursed one! Be quiet or we will strike you! » and the scribes maltreat her rudely. But she does not appear to hear them.

The people set up a protest shouting: « Let her speak, since you speak so much. She is telling the truth. It is so. There is no more holiness among you. One only is Holy and you are vexing Him. »

The scribes deem it wise to be quiet, and the woman continues in her tired sorrowful voice: « He had come to bring you light. And you waged war against Him... Health. And you sneered at Him... Love. And you hated Him... Miracles. And you said He was a demon... His hands cured your sick people. And you pierced them. He brought you the Light. And you spat on His face and covered it with filth. He brought you Life. And you killed Him. Israel, grieve over your fault and do not curse the Lord, while you are going into the exile, that will not come to an end as the exiles of the past. You will roam all over the Earth, Israel, as a defeated cursed people, pursued by the voice of God with the same words spoken to Cain. And you will not be able to come back here and build a solid home, unless you acknowledge with the other peoples that this is Jesus, the Christ, the Lord Son of the Lord... » The woman's voice is thin with pain and fatigue, as tired as the voice of one who is dying.

But she does not refrain from speaking, on the contrary, she takes courage again for a list command: « Lie down, people who do not yet know how to love. Roll in ashes, wrap yourself in sackcloth. The fury of God is hanging over us like a cloud laden with hailstones and lightning over a cursed field. »

The woman collapses on her knees, her arms stretched out towards Jesus, and she shouts: « Peace, peace, o King of justice and of peace! Peace, o great and mighty Adonai, Whom not even the Father resists! Implore peace for us, in Your Name, o Jesus, Saviour and Messiah, Redeemer and King, and God, three times holy! » and shaken by sobs, she falls to the ground with her face on the grass.

The scribes surround Jesus taking Him aside and turning away everybody else with threatening looks and words, and one of them says: « The least You can do is to cure her. Because if You insist on saying that she is free from a demon, You must admit that she is ill. Women!... And women sacrificed by fate... Their vitality must find relief somehow... and they digress... and they see unreal things... and above all they see You, Who are young and handsome... and »

« Be quiet, you mouth of a snake! You do not believe yourself what you are saying » bursts out Jesus so authoritatively that He cuts short the words on the lips of the lean big-nosed scribe, who at the beginning of the incident had scoffed at the woman as a false prophetess.

« Let us not offend the Master. We appointed Him judge of a case on which we are unable to pass judgement... » says another scribe, the one who went with the others to meet Jesus on the road and told Him that not all the scribes are against Him, as some watch Him to form an opinion and to follow Him with a sincere will, if they consider Him to be God.

« Be quiet, Joel named Alamo, son of Abijah! Only an ill-bred man like you can say such words » say the others angrily.

The scribe blushes at the insult. But he controls himself and he replies in a dignified manner: « If nature has been hostile to my person, that has not impaired my intellect. Nay, by precluding many pleasures from me, it made a man of wisdom of me. And if you were holy people you would not humiliate the man, but you would respect the sage. »

« Well! Let us talk of what matters to us. You must cure her, Master, because in her frenzy she frightens people and offends the priesthood, the Pharisees and us. »

« If she had praised you, would you ask Me to cure her? » Jesus asks kindly.

« No. Because it would serve to make people respectful to us, these capricious people who hate us in their hearts and sneer at us whenever they get a chance » replies one of the scribes without realising that he is falling into a trap.

« But would she still not be a sick person? Would I not have to cure her? » Jesus asks kindly again. He sounds like a schoolboy who is asking his teacher what he has to do. And the scribes, blinded by pride, do not realise that they are giving themselves away...

« In that case, no. On the contrary! She ought to be left in her frenzy! And we should do everything in our power to make people believe that she is a prophetess. Honour her! Point her out... »

« But if it were not true?!... »

« Oh! Master! Once we do away with what she says against us, the rest would be of great assistance to raise the pride of Israel against the Romans again, and to humble the pride of the people against us! »

« But we could not say to her: "Speak thus, but do not say that" » says Jesus resolutely.

« Why? »

« Because those who rave do not know what they say. »

« Oh! with money and some threats... we would achieve anything. Even the prophets were under control... »

« Truly, I do not know about that... »

« Eh! because You do not know how to read between the lines and because not everything has been written. »

« But the prophetic spirit is not subject to orders, o scribe. It comes from God, and God cannot be bought over or frightened » says Jesus changing tone. It is the beginning of His counter-attack.

« But this woman is not a prophetess. It is no longer the time for prophets. »

« It is no longer the time for prophets? Why not? »

« Because we do not deserve them. We are too corrupt. »

« Really? And you say so? A short while ago you judged her to be

worthy of punishment because she said the same thing? »

The scribe is disconcerted. Another scribe comes to his rescue saying: « The time of prophets ended with John. They are of no use any more. »

« Why? »

« Because You are here to tell us the Law and to speak to us of God. »

« Also in the days of the prophets there was the Law and Wisdom spoke of God. And yet they were there, too. »

« But what did they prophesy? Your coming. Since You have come, they do not serve any more. »

« Hundreds of times I have heard you, the priests and the Pharisees ask Me whether I was the Christ or not, and because I affirmed it, I was said to be a blasphemer and a madman, and you picked up stones to throw them at Me. Are you not Sadoc, the so called golden scribe? » says Jesus pointing at the big-nosed scribe who had maltreated the woman after trying to deceive her.

« I am. So? »

« Well, you, exactly you, have always been the first, at Giscala and in the Temple, to stir up violence against Me. But I forgive you. I remind you only that you did so saying that I could not be the Christ, whereas now you maintain it. And I remind you also of the challenge I issued to you at Kedesh. You will shortly see part of it being fulfilled. When the moon will come back to the phase in which she is now shining in the sky, I will give you the proof. The first one. You will have the second when the corn, which is now sleeping in the earth, will shake its still green ears in the breeze of Nisan. But to those who say that the prophets are useless, I reply: "And who will put limits to the Most High Lord?". I solemnly tell you that there will always be prophets as long as there are men. They are torches in the darkness of the world. They are the fireplaces among the ice of the world. They are the blares of trumpets that will awake drowsy people. They are the voices that remind men of God and of His truth, forgotten and neglected through time, and they bring the voice of God directly to man, arousing thrills of emotion in the forgetful listless children of man. They will have other names, but the same mission and the same destiny of human sorrow and superhuman enjoyment! Woe to men if there were no such spirits whom the world will hate and God will love dearly! Woe to men if they did not exist to suffer and forgive, to love and work obeying the Lord! The world would perish in darkness, frozen in deadly drowsiness, in idiocy, in wild brutal ignorance. God will therefore give rise to them, and there will always be some of them. And who can order God not to do so? You, Sadoc? or you? or you? I solemnly tell you that not even the spirits of Abraham, Jacob and Moses, of Elijah and Elisha could

impose such a limitation on God, and God only knows how holy they were and what eternal lights they are. »

« So You will neither cure the woman nor condemn her? »

« No, I will not. »

« And do You judge her to be a prophetess? »

« Yes, an inspired prophetess. »

« You are a demon like her. Let us go. It is not right to lose more time with demons » says Sadoc, pushing Jesus rudely to move Him aside.

Many follow him. Some stay. Among the latter, the one whom they called Joel Alamoth.

« And are you not following them? » asks Jesus pointing at those going away.

« No, Master. We shall go away because night has fallen. But we want to tell You that we believe in Your judgement. God can do everything, that is true. And as we fall into many sins, He can give rise to spirits who will call us back to justice » says a very elderly one.

« You are right. And your humility is greater than your knowledge in the eyes of God. »

« Then, remember me when You are in Your Kingdom. »

« Yes, Jacob, I will. »

« How do You know my name? »

Jesus smiles without replying.

« Master, remember us as well » say the other three. And Joel Alamoth, the last one to speak, says: « And let us bless the Lord Who has given us this hour. »

« Let us bless the Lord! » replies Jesus.

They greet one another and part.

Jesus joins His apostles and goes with them towards the woman, who has resumed the position she had at the beginning sitting all curled up on the protruding root.

Her mother and father ask the Master anxiously: « So is our daughter a demon? They said so before going away. »

« She is not. Set your minds at rest. And love her because her destiny is a very sorrowful one. Exactly as all destinies like hers. »

« But they said that that is Your judgement... »

« They have lied. I do not lie. Be at peace. »

John of Ephesus comes forward with Solomon and the other disciples and says: « Master, Sadoc has threatened them. I tell You. »

« Them or her? »

« Them and her. Isn't that right? »

« Yes. They said to us, to my wife and me, that if we cannot convince our daughter to be silent, there will be trouble for us. And they said to Sabea: "If you speak we will denounce you to the

Sanhedrin". We foresee sad days for us!... But our hearts are at peace because of what You told us... and we will put up with the rest. But with regard to her... What shall we do? Tell us, Lord. » Jesus is pensive, then He replies: « Have you no relatives far from Bethlechi? »

« No, Master. »

Jesus is pensive and then He raises His head and looks at Joseph, John of Ephesus and Philip of Arbela. He says to them: « You will set out with these people and then from Bethlechi you will go with her and her trousseau to Aera. You will tell Timoneus' mother to keep her in My name. She knows what it means to have a persecuted son. »

« We will do that, Lord. It's a wise decision. Aera is far and out of the way » say the three men.

Sabea's father and mother kiss the Master's hands and they thank Him and bless Him.

Jesus bends over the woman, He touches her veiled head and calls her gently: « Sabea, listen to Me! »

The woman raises her head, she looks at Him and then falls on her knees.

Holding His hand to her head Jesus says: « Listen, Sabea. You will go where I send you: to a mother. I would have liked to send you to My Mother. But it is not possible. And continue to serve the Lord with justice and obedience. I bless you, woman. Go in peace. »

« Yes, my Lord and my God. But shall I be able to speak when I have to?... »

« The Spirit Who loves you will guide you according to the moment. Be sure of His love. Be humble, chaste, simple and sincere, and He will not abandon you. Go in peace! »

He joins again the apostles and Zacehaeus with his friends, who had stopped a few paces away holding back other curious people.

« Let us go. Night has fallen. I do not know how you who have to go to Jericho will get there. »

« Particularly for the woman and her relatives, I would say. But if You think that it is a good idea, we will stay outside and You and they will be able to sleep in the house until morning » suggests one of Zacchaeus' friends.

« A good idea. Go and tell Sabea to come here with her relatives and the disciples. They will sleep in the house. I will stay with you. It is not a windy night. We will light some fires and we will wait for dawn thus, while I teach you and you listen to Me. »

And He slowly sets off in the early moonlight...

## **524. At Bethabara, Remembering the Baptist.**

7th November 1946.

« Peace to You, Master! » greet the shepherd disciples who had gone ahead some days previously and were waiting beyond the ford with the sick people they had gathered together, and other people anxious to hear the Master.

« Peace to you. Have you been waiting for Me long? »

« For three days. »

« I was held up on the way. Let us go to the sick people. »

« We put up some tents to give shelter to them without going backwards and forwards to and from the nearby villages. We were given milk for them by some of our shepherd friends, who are now over there with their herds waiting for You » say the disciples while leading Jesus into a thicket, which by itself would be a protection for anyone taking shelter in it.

There are about twenty small tents supported by poles, or stretched between two trunks of trees, and under them there is the large sad crowd of sick people who are waiting, and as soon as they realise Who is coming they utter the usual cry: « Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us. »

Jesus does not want to keep them waiting long and appearing, or rather bending from tent to tent, as His height does not allow Him to go in standing straight, He looks into each smiling, and His smile is already a grace. The sun shining behind Him casts His shadow on the little beds and emaciated faces or on the inert limbs. He only says a few words: « Peace to you who believe » and He then passes to the next tent. And the cry follows Him. A cry repeated each time His sentence is repeated, a cry that is heard in the tent just left, as if it were the echo of the one uttered in the previous tent: « I am cured. Hosanna to the Son of David! »

And the large group of sick people, previously lying under the dark tents, comes out and gathers together behind the Master. They are all full of joy and they throw away their sticks or crutches, they wrap themselves in the blankets of the now useless stretchers, they take off the no longer needed bandages, and above all they exult in the joy of their recovery.

They have all been cured by now. And Jesus turns round and with a most loving smile He says: « The Lord has rewarded your faith. Let us bless His goodness together » and He intones the psalm: « Acclaim the Lord, all the Earth, serve the Lord gladly. Come into His presence with songs of joy. Know that He, the Lord, is God, He made us, etc. »

The people follow Him as best they can. Some, who are probably not Israelites, follow the song with a murmur of their lips. But their hearts do sing, as one can tell from their faces. God will certainly accept that poor murmur better than the perfect but arid

song of some Pharisees.

Matthias says to Jesus: « O Lord, when You speak to those who are awaiting Your word, mention our John. »

« I was thinking of doing that because this place brings back to My heart an even livelier recollection of the figure of the Baptist » and surrounded by the crowd He climbs a rising of the ground, covered with thin grass, and He begins to speak.

« What have you come to seek in this place? The health of your bodies, o sick people, and it was given to you. The word that evangelizes, and you have found it. But the health of your bodies must prepare you to seek the health of your spirits, as the word that evangelizes must prepare your wills to seek justice. How dreadful it would be if the health of the body were confined to the joy of the flesh and blood, being instead inactive with regard to the spirit! I made you praise the Lord Who granted you the gift of health. But your gratitude to the Lord must not come to an end after the moment of exultation. And gratitude reveals itself in the good will to love Him. Every gift of God is nothing, no matter how full of active strength it is, if in man there is no will to recompense it with the gift of his own spirit to God.

This place heard the preaching of John. Many among you certainly heard it. Many people in Israel heard it, but it did not have the same results in everybody, although John spoke the same words to everybody. Why so much difference then? What is the cause of it? The different wills of men who heard those words. Some were really prepared by them to receive Me, and consequently they were prepared for their own holiness. Others instead were prepared against Me, and consequently for their own injustice. They resounded like the cry of a sentinel, and the army of spirits divided, although one only was the cry. Some of them prepared to follow their Leader. Some armed themselves and studied plans to fight Me and My followers. And because of that Israel will be defeated, because a kingdom, which is divided in itself, cannot be strong, and foreign countries take advantage of it to subdue it.

The same applies to individual spirits. In every man there are good and bad powers. Wisdom speaks to the whole man, but only few men want one part only to reign: the good one. In deciding to choose one part only as queen, the children of the world are more skilful. They know how to be completely wicked, when they so wish, and they throw away the good parts, as if they were useless garments, whereas they could oppose resistance in them. The men, instead, who are not of the world and who are stimulated towards the Light, only with difficulty can imitate the children of the world and throw away, like rejected garments, the wicked parts which try to resist in them.

I said that if one eye causes you to sin, it should be torn out, if a

hand causes you to sin, it should be cut off, because it is better to enter the eternal Light crippled, than enter eternal Darkness with both eyes or hands. The Baptist was a man of our days. Many of you have known him. Imitate his heroic example. Out of love for the Lord and for his soul, he gave away much more than an eye and a hand, he gave his very life, to be faithful to Justice. Many among you were perhaps his disciples and still say that they love him. But bear in mind that you prove your love for God and for the teachers who take you to God by doing what they taught you, imitating their works of justice and loving God with your whole selves, to the extent of heroism. Then, by doing so, the gifts of health and wisdom granted by God do not remain idle and do not become condemnation, on the contrary they are a ladder to ascend to the abode of My and your Father, Who awaits everybody in His Kingdom.

For your own good, ensure that the sacrifice of the Baptist - a whole life of sacrifice ended in martyrdom - and My sacrifice - a whole life of sacrifice and ending in a martyrdom hundreds of times greater than My Precursor's - may not be fruitless for you. Be just, have faith, obey the word of Heaven, renew yourselves in the New Law. Let the Gospel be really good news for you, making you good and deserving to enjoy the Bounty, that is the Most High Lord in an eternal Day. Learn to tell true shepherds from false ones, and follow those who will give you the words of Life they learned from Me.

The feast of Lights, the celebration of the Dedication of the Temple is close at hand. Remember that many lights to honour the festivity and the Lord are of no avail, if your hearts are without light. Love is light and its lamp-holder is the will to love the Lord with good deeds. Remember that the Dedication of the Temple is a good thing, but it is much greater, better and more pleasant to the Lord to dedicate one's spirit to God and reconsecrate it through love. Just spirits in just bodies, because the body is like the walls surrounding the altar, and the spirit is the altar upon which the glory of the Lord descends. God cannot descend upon altars desecrated by one's sins, or by contact with flesh bitten by lust and by wicked thoughts.

Be good. The fatigue of being so through the continuous tests in life is rewarded a hundredfold by the future prize, and at present, by the peace comforting the hearts of just people at the end of each day, when they lie down to rest and find their pillows free from remorse, which is instead the nightmare of those who want to enjoy themselves illicitly and they only succeed in being seized with a restless frenzy. Do not envy the rich, do not hate anybody, do not wish to have what you see other people have. Be satisfied with your condition considering that to do the Will of God in everything is

the key that opens the gates of the eternal Jerusalem.

I am leaving you. Many among you will not see Me again, because I am about to go to prepare the places for My disciples... My special blessing to your children, to your women whom I shall not see again. And to you, men... Yes, I want to bless you... My blessing will help those who are stronger not to fall, and the weaker to rise up again. Only for those who will betray Me because they hate Me, My blessing will be of no value. »

He blesses them all together, He then blesses the women, He kisses the children and then He goes back to the ford with the five apostles who are still with Him and with the shepherd disciples.

### **525. Going Back to Nob. Jesus' Omniscience.**

8th November 1946.

They are already on the slopes of the Mount of Olives and the three pairs of apostles left at Jericho, Tekoah and Bethany are once again with the Master. But Judas of Kerioth is still absent and the apostles are speaking in low voices about him...

Jesus is infinitely sad... The apostles have noticed that and they are saying to one another: « It is certainly because of Lazarus. He is a broken man... And his sisters arouse so much pity... The Master cannot even stop in their house, persecuted as He is by so much hatred. It would have been a great consolation to the sick man, his sisters and also for the Master. »

« I cannot understand why He does not cure him! » exclaims Thomas.

« It would be also fair. A friend... He helps so much... A just man... » murmurs Bartholomew.

« Ah! with regard to justice, he is just indeed. I think you have persuaded yourself of that these last days... » says the Zealot to Bartholomew.

« Yes, that's true. And also what you imply is true. I was not quite convinced of his justice... Because of their familiarity with Gentiles, because of the education they received from their father who was very, very... I would say inclined to yield to new forms of life different from ours... »

« Their mother was an angel » says Simon Zealot decidedly.

« Perhaps that is the reason why they are just... Let us overlook Mary's past. She is now redeemed... » says Philip.

« Yes, but all that made me suspicious. Now I am really convinced, and I am surprised that the Master... »

« My Brother knows how to appraise the merits of men. We suffered as well for a long time from a natural human jealousy, because we saw that strangers were more gratified than the members of our family. But now we have understood that the error was in our way of thinking and that He was right. We considered

His behaviour as being indifferent, and as a depreciation and incomprehension of our value. Now we have understood. He prefers to draw to Himself those who are deformed and unformed. He... with His infinite means, entices the souls that are most wretched and remote and thus more exposed to danger. Do you remember the parable of the lost sheep? The truth, the key to His way of behaving is in that parable. When He sees his faithful sheep follow Him or stay where or how He wishes, His spirit is at peace. And He makes use of that peace to pursue the lost sheep. He knows that we love Him, that Lazarus and his sisters love Him, that the women disciples and the shepherds love Him, and so He does not lose His time with us with any special trial of love. He always loves us. He has us in His heart all the time. We ourselves enter it and we do not want to come out of it. But the others... sinners, those who are misled!... He must run after them, He has to draw them to Himself with love, miracles and His power. And He does that. Lazarus, Mary and Martha will continue to love Him even without a miracle... » says James of Alphaeus.

« That is true. But... What did He mean with His last greeting? You heard Him say: "The love of the Lord for you will be revealed in proportion to your love. And remember that love has two wings to be perfect, and the more unbounded they are, the more perfect love is: faith and hope" » says Andrew.

« Of course! What did He mean? » several of them ask.

There is silence. Then Thomas with a deep sigh concludes an interior speech of his own: «... But His good patience does not always win redemptions. I also have suffered at time because of the predilections He shows for Judas of Kerioth... »

« Predilection? I don't think so. He reproaches him as He does with any of us... » says Andrew.

« According to justice, yes. But consider how much more severity that man would deserve... »

« That is true. »

« Well, I suffered many times because of that. But now I realise that He certainly does so because... he is the most imperfect amongst us. »

« The most wretched, you must say, Thomas! The most wretched. You think that His sadness (and he points at Jesus Who is walking ahead of them, all alone, absorbed in His grief) is brought about by Lazarus' disease and by the tears of his sisters. I say that it is brought about by Judas' absence. He was hoping to be met by him on the way when He was going to Bethabara. He was hoping to find him at least at Jericho, Tekoah or when He came back to Bethany. Now He no longer hopes. He is now sure of Judas' evildoing. I have watched Him all the time... and I noticed that His face looked utterly desolate when you, Bartholomew, said: "Judas

has not come" » says Thaddeus.

« But He is aware of events before they take place, I am certain of that! » exclaims John.

« Of many, not of all of them. I think that His Father conceals some of them from Him, out of pity » says the Zealot.

The eleven are divided into two parties, some agree to one version, some to the other, and each states his reasons supporting his own.

John exclaims: « Oh! I do not want to listen to either, not even to myself! We are all poor men, and we cannot see things right. I am going to Jesus and I will ask Him. »

« No. He might be thinking of something else and this question may remind Him of Judas and make Him more grieved » says Andrew.

« No. I will certainly not tell Him that we were speaking of Judas. I will ask Him so... without any reference. »

« Go then. It may help Him to take His mind off sad thoughts. Don't you see how sad He is? » says Peter pushing John.

« I am going. Who is coming with me? »

« Go by yourself. He speaks to you without reserve. And then you will tell us... »

John goes away. « Master! »

« John! What do you want? » and Jesus with a smile that brightens His face embraces His dearest apostle with one arm, holding him close to Himself while walking.

« We were talking among ourselves and we were uncertain about one thing. This: whether You know all the future or is part of it hidden from You. Some of us said one thing, some another. »

« And what did you say? »

« I said that the best thing was to ask You. »

« And so You came. You did the right thing. This gives you and Me the opportunity to enjoy a moment of love... Only so rarely now we can have some peace!... »

« It's true! How beautiful the early days were!... »

« Yes. For the man, which we are, they were more beautiful. But for the spirit which is in us, these days are better. Because the word of God is better known and because we suffer more. The more one suffers, the more one redeems, John... So, although we remember the happy days, we must be more fond of these ones that grieve us, and through grief they give us souls. But I will answer your question. Listen. I know as God. And I know as man. I know future events because I am with the Father since before time and I see beyond time. As a man free from imperfections and limitations connected with the Sin and with sins, I have the gift of introspection of hearts. Such gift is not limited only to the Christ. But in different degrees it is in all those who, having achieved

holiness, are so united to God that one can say that they do not act by themselves, but through the Perfection existing in them. So I can reply to you that as God I am aware of the future of centuries, and as a just man I know the state of hearts. »

John is pensive and silent. Jesus leaves him alone for a moment, then says: « For instance now I see this thought in you: "Then my Master knows the state of Judas of Kerioth exactly!" »

« Oh! Master! »

« Yes. I know. I know and I will continue to be his Master, and I would like you to continue to be his brothers. »

« Holy Master!... But do You really always know everything? See, at times we say that it is not so, because You go to places where You find enemies. Before going, do You know that You will find them, and You go there to fight them with Your love, to gain them to love, or... do you not know and do You see Your enemies only when they are in front of You and You read their hearts? Once You said to me - You were very depressed even then, and always for the same reason - You said that You were like one who cannot see... »

« I experienced also that torture of man: to have to proceed without seeing, relying entirely on Providence. I must be acquainted with everything pertaining to man, with the exception of consumed sin. Not because of a protective barrier placed by My Father against the flesh, the world and the demon, but because of My will of man. I am like you. But I have a stronger will-power than you. So I am subject to temptation but I do not yield to them. And My merit lies in that, as it does for you. »

« You tempted!... It seems almost impossible to me... »

« Because temptations do not affect you very much. You are pure, and you think that I, being purer than you, should not experience temptation. In fact the carnal one is so weak as compared with My chastity, that it is never perceived by My ego. It is as if a petal struck a solid piece of granite. It skims it... The very demon is tired of shooting that arrow at Me. But, John, do you not consider how many other temptations there are around Me? »

« Around You? You do not crave for riches or honours... So which are they?... »

« And do you not take into consideration that I have a life, affections, and duties towards My Mother, and that such things tempt Me to avoid the danger? The Snake calls it "danger". But its true name is "Sacrifice". And do you not think that I have feelings, too? My moral ego is present in Me and suffers offences, derision, double-dealing. Oh! My John! Do you realise how loathsome falsehood and liars are to Me? Do you know how many times the demon tempts Me to react against these things that grieve Me, by relinquishing My meekness and becoming hard-hearted and

intolerant? And lastly, do you not consider how many times he blows his breath burning with pride, and says: "Be proud of this or that. You are great. The world admires You. The elements are at your service!". The temptation to delight in being holy! The most subtle one! How many lose the holiness already acquired, because of such pride! How did Satan corrupt Adam? By tempting his sensuality, his thought, his spirit. Am I not the Man Who must recreate man? The new mankind is to come from Me. And there is Satan trying the same means to destroy, and for good, the race of the children of God. Now go to your companions and repeat My words to them. And do not wonder whether I know or do not know what Judas is doing. Consider that I love you. Is that thought not sufficient to fill a heart? » He kisses him and dismisses him.

And when He is once again all alone, He raises His eyes to the sky that can be seen through the branches of the olive-trees and He says in a plaintive voice: « Father! Grant Me at least this, that I may be able to conceal the Crime until the last hour, to prevent My beloved disciples from staining their hands with blood. Have mercy on them, Father! They are too weak to refrain from reacting against offence! Let there be no hatred in their hearts in the hour of perfect Love! » and He wipes the tears that God only sees...

### **526. At Nob. Judas of Keriath's Return.**

9th November 1946.

« Yes, Master! Judas of Keriath has been here for many days. He came one Sabbath evening. He looked tired and exhausted. He said that he had lost You in the streets in Jerusalem and that he had run to the various houses where You usually go, looking for You. He comes here every evening. He will be here shortly. He goes away in the morning, and he says that he goes to the nearby villages to preach You. »

« All right, Eliza... And did you believe him? »

« Master, You know that I am not fond of that man. If my children had to be like him, I would have asked the Most High to take them from this world. No, I did not believe his words. But for Your sake I kept my opinion to myself... And I have been motherly to him. At least I succeeded in getting him to come back here every evening. »

« You did well. » Jesus looks at her intensely and then suddenly asks: « Where is Anastasica? »

Eliza blushes and her elderly face becomes purple red, but she replies frankly: « At Bethzur. »

« You did the right thing there again. And please pity the man. »

« It is because I feel sorry for him that I wanted to put out the fire before it spread causing scandal, or, at the least, frightening the

woman. »

« May God bless you, o just woman... »

« Are You suffering acutely, Master? »

« Yes, I am. It is true. I can tell a mother. »

« You can tell a mother... If You were not Jesus, the Lord, I would like You to rest Your tired head on my shoulder and I would press Your distressed heart on mine. But You are so holy that no woman, but Your Mother, can touch You... »

« Eliza, good friend of My Mother and a good mother, your Lord will soon be touched by much less holy hands than yours, and kissed... oh!... And afterwards, other hands... Eliza, if you were allowed to touch the Holy of Holies, with what spirit would you do so? Would you perhaps abstain, if the voice of God, in a cloud of incense, should ask you for love, to have a loving caress at long last, after being approached by so many people who do not love Him? »

« My Lord! If God should ask me, I would go on my knees to cover the holy place with kisses and would to God He would be satisfied and comforted by my love! »

« Then, Eliza, the good friend of My Mother, the good faithful disciple of your sorrowful Saviour, let Me rest My head on your heart because My heart is tormented to the extent of suffering mortal pains. »

And Jesus, sitting where He is, close to Eliza, who is standing, really rests His forehead on the breast of the old disciple, and silent tears stream down the dark dress of the woman, who cannot refrain from laying a hand on the head reclined on her heart, and then, feeling the tears fall on her bare sandal-shod feet, she bends to kiss Jesus' head, lightly and weeps silently, raising her eyes towards the sky in silent prayer. She looks like an elderly Mother of Sorrows. She does not speak or move. But she is so motherly in her attitude that she could not possibly be more so.

Jesus raises His head and looks at her. He smiles lightly and says: « May God bless you for your pity. Oh! a mother is really necessary when grief overwhelms the strength of man! »

He stands up. He looks once again at His disciple and says: « Every moment of this hour is to be kept to ourselves. I came ahead by Myself just for that. »

« Yes, Master. But You cannot remain all alone. Let Your Mother come. »

« She will be with Me in two months' time... » and He is about to say something else, when the strong voice, always somewhat insolent and ironical, of Judas of Kerioth, resounds downstairs in the kitchen: « Still busy carving, old man? It's cold! And there is no fire in here. I am hungry. And there is no food ready. Is Eliza sleeping perhaps? She wanted to do everything by herself. But old people are slow and their memory is weak. I say! Are you not speaking? »

Are you completely deaf this evening? »

« No, but I am letting you speak, because you are an apostle and it ill-becomes me to reproach you »  
replies the old man.

« Reproach me? Why? »

« Examine yourself and you will find why. »

« My conscience has no voice... »

« Which means that it is deformed or that you have maimed it. »

« Ha! Ha! Ha! » and Judas must have gone out of the kitchen because first a door bangs and then footsteps are heard on the staircase.

« I am going downstairs to prepare, Master. »

« Go, Eliza. »

Eliza leaves the room upstairs and she immediately meets Judas who is about to set foot on the terrace.

« I am cold and hungry. »

« Nothing else? Well, man, you still have very little. »

« What else should I have? »

« Eh! so many things!... » Eliza's voice fades away.

« They are all old fools. Ugh! »

He pushes the door and finds himself facing Jesus. He is so surprised that he takes a step backwards. He collects himself and says: « Master!! Peace to You! »

« Peace to you, Judas. » Jesus receives the kiss of the apostle, but He does not return it.

« Master. You have... Are You not kissing me? »

Jesus looks at him and remains silent.

« It's true. I made a mistake. And to refuse to kiss me is the least You can do. But do not judge me too severely. On that day I was caught in the middle of some people who... do not love You and I argued with them until I talked myself hoarse. Later... I said: "I wonder where He has gone?!" and I came back here waiting for You. Isn't this house Yours by now? »

« While they allow Me. »

« You will not bear me a grudge for that! »

« No. I only want you to consider the example you have set for the others. »

« Eh! I can already hear their words. But I have reasons that will justify me with them. I am not even doing it with You because I know that You have already forgiven me. »

« I have already forgiven you. That is true. »

One would expect Judas to make a gesture of humility, of love for so much kindness. He instead makes one which is the very opposite: a gesture of anger, while he exclaims: « But is there no way to see You lose Your temper?! What kind of man are You? »

Jesus is silent. And Judas, standing, looks at Jesus, Who is sitting with His head lowered, and he shakes his head with an evil

smile on his lips. And the incident is over, as far as he is concerned. He begins to speak about this and that matter, as if he were the best-behaved apostle.

Night is falling. The noise of the road dies out. « Let us go downstairs » says Jesus.

They go into the kitchen where a bright fire is burning and a three-flame lamp is lit. Jesus, tired, sits near the fireside and seems to be dozing in the warmth...

There is a knock at the door. The old man opens it. It is the apostles. Peter, the first to enter, sees Judas and assails him vigorously asking: « Can you tell us where you have been? »

« Here. Just here. It would have been foolish to run here and there after people who had disappeared. I came here as I was sure that you would be coming back here. »

« A fine way to behave! »

« The Master has not reproached me for it. In any case you had better know that I have not wasted my time. I evangelized every day and I also worked miracles, and that is a good thing. »

« And who authorised you to do that? » asks Bartholomew severely.

« Nobody. Neither you nor anybody else. It is enough to be of the... In brief: people are surprised, and grumble and laugh at us, the apostles who do nothing. And since I know, I acted on behalf of everybody. And I did more than that. I went to see Helkai and I proved to him that one does not misbehave when one is holy. There were many there and I convinced them. You will see that they will no longer disturb us. And now I am happy. »

The apostles look at one another. They look at Jesus. His face is impenetrable. It seems to be veiled with so much fatigue, which is the only visible thing.

« But you might have done that with the Master's permission » remarks James of Alphaeus. « We have been worried about you all the time. »

« Oh! well! Now you need not be anxious any longer. He would never have given me permission. He... protects us too much. So much so that people murmur that He is jealous of us, that He is afraid we might do more than He does, and also that we are punished by Him. People have caustic tongues. The truth, instead, is that He loves us more than the apple of His eye. Isn't that right, Master? He is afraid we may be exposed to danger or we may cut... a bad figure. And we, too, in our minds, thought that we were punished and that He was jealous... »

« Definitely not! I never thought that! » says Thomas interrupting him. And the others echo him, with the exception of Thaddeus, who fixes his sincere beautiful eyes on the beautiful but elusive eyes of Judas and says: « And how were you able to work miracles? »

In whose name? »

« What? In whose name? But do you not remember that He gave us that power? Has He deprived us of it? Not that I know. So... »

« So I would never take the liberty of doing anything without His consent and order. »

« Well, I wanted to do it. I was afraid I might no longer be able. But I was and I am happy! » and he breaks off the discussion going out into the dark kitchen garden.

Once again the apostles look at one another in dismay. They are shocked by so much audacity. But no one has the heart to say anything that may grieve their Master even more, as He seems to be suffering so much.

They get rid of their bags which John, Andrew and Thomas take upstairs. And Bartholomew, bending to pick up a dry branch fallen out of a faggot, whispers to Peter: « God forbid he was helped by a demon! »

Peter makes a gesture with his hands as if wished to say: « Goodness gracious! » but he does not say one word. He goes to Jesus and laying a hand on His shoulders, he asks Him: « Are You so tired? »

« Yes, Simon, I am. »

« It's ready, Master. Come to the table. Or... No. Remain there, near the fireside. I will bring You some milk and bread » says Eliza. In fact she puts a big bowl of steaming milk and some bread spread with honey on a tray and takes it to Jesus, and she waits while He, standing, offers the food. Then she crouches on the floor, like a good old mother, anxiously wishing to console Him, and she smiles at Him urging Him to eat. And when Jesus lovingly reproaches her for spreading the bread with honey, she replies: « I would give You my blood to invigorate You, my Master! This is the poor honey of my kitchen garden at Bethzur and it can but strengthen Your body. But my heart... »

The others are eating round the table, with the good appetite of people who have walked- a long way. And Judas, peaceful, almost arrogant, eats with them and is the only one to speak...

He is still speaking when Jesus orders: « Let each of you go to the house giving you hospitality. Go. Peace be with you. »

Judas, Bartholomew, Peter and Andrew remain with Him. And Jesus orders them to go and rest at once. He is deadly tired, so tired that He can no longer endure to speak or hear people speak, and I think He is unable to bear the effort of controlling Himself with regard to Judas of Kerioth.

## **527. At Nob during the Following Days. Hidden Possessions.**

12th November 1946.

These winter days are cold but clear. On the top of the little mountain on which Nob is built, the wind blows almost all the time, but it is mitigated by the sun that from dawn until sunset caresses with its rays the kitchen garden verdant with winter vegetables. They are small kitchen gardens close to the houses, with small beds green with vegetables and other beds with the colour of well nourished earth, bare beds ready to be sown with legumes. When looking round, one can see the grey-green foliage of olive-trees, or the serpentine skeleton-like rows of bare vines, or small ploughed fields, already sown with cereals, ready to germinate in the first warmth of the early Palestinian springtime, blessed with warm sunshine. I would almost say that in the clear days, like the one I am admiring, there is already the warmth of spring, a germinating warmth, in fact the buds of the almond-trees close to the houses are swelling on the branches, which only a few days previously were dry. Dark gems hardly noticeable on the little dark branches, but proving that life is rising and the robust trunk is about to awake again.

In John's little orchard, at the rear of the house, there is a thin strip of cultivated land, whereas the strip along the house is shaded by a walnut-tree. In the thin strip there is a huge almond-tree, perhaps older than its master, so close to the house that for a good length of its trunk it has been compelled to branch only on three sides, because the wall of the house prevented it from putting forth branches on the fourth side. But further up its branches are ruffled in such an entanglement, that when they blossom they are bound to form a light cloud above the poor terrace, a precious tent more beautiful than a royal canopy.

In order not to be idle, Jesus and the apostles are working in the cheerful warm sunshine. With their garments tucked up, those who are familiar with joinery and locks are repairing or making new utensils or, casings. Some are hoeing the land, covering up vegetables that have been transplanted, reinforcing a hedge of dry canes and green hawthorn enclosing two sides of the little kitchen garden, or they are pruning the almond and the walnut-tree, and tying the vine branches that the winter wind has unfastened. I have noticed that where Jesus is, one is never idle. He is the first to teach the beauty of manual work, when other evangelical work is interrupted. Also today Jesus, with His cousins, is repairing a door, the lower part of which had rotted and its latch was falling off. Philip and Bartholomew instead are working with pruning shears and sickle on old fruit-trees, while the fishermen are busying themselves with ropes and old blankets, some mending them

with very... masculine stitches, some fixing rings and pulleys, probably with the intent of creating over the terrace a velarium which will be useful in summer.

« You will be very comfortable here, Eliza » says Peter with a promising intention, hanging out of the low terrace wall, to speak to the old disciple who is spinning wool, sitting against the sunny wall.

« Yes. When the vine is stretched out and the almond-tree sorted, it will really be a lovely spot in summer » says Philip between his teeth, as he is holding in his mouth some reeds with which he ties the vine-shoots to their supports.

Jesus raises His head and looks, while Eliza raises hers to look at Jesus and she says: « I wonder whether we shall be here in summer... »

« Why should we not be, woman? » asks Andrew.

« Well... I don't know... I no longer rely on the future since... Since I saw that all my forecasts ended up in a sepulchre. »

« Eh! the Master would have to die to prevent us from being here! The Master has now chosen this place as His residence. Have You not, Master? » asks Thomas.

« That is true. But also what Eliza says is true... » replies Jesus working with a plane on the stile of a door He is repairing.

« But You are young. And above all healthy! »

« People do not die only of diseases » says Jesus again.

« Who is speaking of death? You, Master? For Yourself?... The illwill has really calmed down for some time. See, no one is disturbing us now. They know that we are here. They met us also yesterday when we were coming back from town with the shopping, and they did not bother us » says Bartholomew.

« Yes. It was the same with us, when we went to the nearby villages to inform people that You are here. No one ever troubled us. And yet we met Helkai and Simon, then Sadoc and Samuel, and also Nahum with Doras. They even greeted us. Didn't they, James? » says John addressing his brother.

« Yes! We must admit that Judas has done good work whilst in our hearts we were criticising him. Since we came back here we have had no trouble! His words have been confirmed by facts. We seem to have gone back to the good old days at the Clear Water. To the beginning of those days... Oh! I wish it were true! » says James of Zebedee.

« If it were really true! » says Peter with a sigh.

« It is not always a clear day when there is no rumble of thunder » says Eliza sententiously whirling her spindle.

« What do you mean? » asks Peter.

« I mean that much peace at times, in a stormy place, foreshadows a most dangerous tempest. You ought to know, as you are

a fisherman. »

« Eh! woman, I know. A lake is like a huge tun full of blue oil, at times. But almost every time sails are loose and the water is smooth, a storm of the worst kind is ready. The wind of a dead calm sea is the wind of death for seamen. »

« H'm! Of course. So, if I were you, I would not trust so much peace. It's too peaceful! »

« Well! If when it is wartime one suffers because there is a war, and when it is peace-time one suffers because an even more dreadful war may break out, when can one rejoice? » asks Thomas.

« In the next life. Sorrow is always ready here. »

« Ugh! How dismal you are, woman! My time to rejoice is very remote, then! I am one of the youngest! Cheer up, Bartholomew, you are the nearest to enjoy it. You and the Zealot » says James of Zebedee jokingly.

« Dismal and shrewd, woman! Eh! elderly women! But sometimes they guess right. Also my mother when she says: "Be careful! You are about to do something silly because of this and that" always guesses right » says Thomas who is bent hoeing the ground.

« Women are malignant or more artful than foxes. We are worth nothing, as compared to them, when it is a question of understanding certain things that we would like them not to understand » says Peter sententiously.

« You ought to be quiet. You happened to marry a wife who would believe you even if you said that Lebanon had turned into butter. What you say is the law for her. She listens, believes and is silent » says Andrew to his brother.

« Yes... but her mother makes up for her and for another hundred women. What a serpent! »

They all laugh, including Eliza and the old man who is helping the younger ones to hoe.

The Zealot, Matthew and Judas of Kerioth come back.

« We have done everything, Master. We are tired! What a long tour! But I will take a rest tomorrow. It's your turn tomorrow » says the Iscariot to those who are hoeing the land. And he goes towards them taking a hoe to work with it.

« If you are tired why do you want to work? » Thomas asks him.

« Because I have to plant out some little plants. This place is as bald as the head of an old man, and it's a pity » he says sententiously thrusting the hoe into the ground with strong strokes of his foot.

« It wasn't like this in the good old days! Then... Too many things have died, and it wasn't worth my while to work to remake them. I am old and more than old I was desolate » replies the old man.

« But what size of holes are you digging? They are fit for trees, not for little plants, as you said » remarks Philip who has descended after tying the vine-shoot.

« When a tree is young it is always a little plant. That is what mine are like. This is the right time. I was assured by the man who gave me them. Do You know who, Master? That relative of Helkai who is a farmer. And he is a good farmer. What an orchard! And his olive-trees! He is replanting part of the olive-grove. I said to him: "Give me some of those plants". "For whom?" he asked. "For an old man in Nob who has given us hospitality. They will serve to make him forgive me all the scandals I bore him". »

« No, son. Not with plants, but only through your good behaviour that can happen. And with God. I... I watch, pray and forgive. But my forgiveness... But I am grateful to you for the plants... Although... Do you think that I will live long enough to eat their fruit? »

« Why not? One must always hope. Nay one must want to triumph... And one then triumphs. »

« There is no triumph over old age! And I do not wish for it either. »

« There is no triumph either over many other things. If wishing were enough to have things! I would have my sons » says Eliza sighing.

« Master, Eliza's words remind me of a question some people asked me today along the road. As something had happened in a village, they were asking whether it is true that a miracle is always a proof of holiness. I said it is. But they said that it is not, because in that village, at the border of Samaria, he who had worked wonderful things was certainly not a just man. I silenced them saying that man always judges wrongly and that the man who they said was not just, was perhaps holier than they were. What do You think? » asks Matthew.

« I say that you were both right. Each for his own part. You by saying that a miracle is always the proof of holiness. It is generally so. And also by saying that one must not judge in order not to make mistakes. But they were also right in suspecting other sources for the wonderful things of that man. »

« Which sources? » asks the Iscariot.

« Those of darkness. There are people who are already worshippers of Satan and practise the cult of pride, and in order to impose themselves on other people, they sell themselves to the Dark One to have him as a friend » Jesus replies to him.

« How is it possible? Is it not a legend of heathen countries that man can stipulate contracts with the demon or with infernal spirits? » asks John who is utterly amazed.

« It is possible. Not as the heathen legends say. Not by means of money or material contracts. But by adhering to Evil, by choosing to give oneself up to Evil, so that one might enjoy one hour of triumph, no matter how. I solemnly tell you that those who sell

themselves to the Cursed One in order to gain their end, are more numerous than one may think. »

« Are they successful? Do they achieve what they ask for? » asks Andrew.

« Not always and not everything. But they get something. »

« How can that be? Is the demon so powerful as to simulate God? »

« He is... but he would be a nonentity if man were holy. The fact is that man is often a demon himself. We fight against obvious, noisy, striking possessions. Everybody is aware of them... They are far from being pleasant for relatives and citizens, and above all they take place in material forms. Man is always impressed by what is heavy and strikes his senses. He does not notice what is immaterial and is perceptible only by what is immaterial: his reason and spirit, and even if he does notice it, he takes no care of it, particularly if it is not detrimental to him. So such hidden possessions elude our power of exorcisers! And they are the most harmful because they work in the choicest part, with the choicest part and toward other choice parts: from reason to reason, from spirit to spirit. They are like corrupting, impalpable, unnoticeable miasmata, until the person suffering from it is not warned by the fever of the disease that he is affected with it. »

« And does Satan help him? Really? Why? And why does God allow him? And will He always allow him? Even after You will be reigning? » they all ask.

« Satan helps to complete the enslavement. God allows him to act thus, because the value of the creature emerges from the struggle between High and Low, Good and Evil. Both his value and his will emerge. He will always allow him to act. Also after I have been raised. But Satan then will have to fight against a very great enemy and man will have a very powerful friend. »

« Who? »

« Grace. »

« Oh! well! So for those of our times, who are without grace, it will be easier to be enslaved, but their fall will be less grave » says the Iscariot hoeing all the time.

« No, Judas. The judgement will be the same. »

« That is unfair because, if we are less helped, we should be less condemned. »

« You are not completely wrong » says Thomas.

« He is wrong, Thomas. Because we people of Israel have been gifted with so much faith, hope, charity, and so much light of Wisdom, that we have no excuse for being ignorant. And you, in any case, who already have had Grace as your Master for almost three years, will be judged like those of the new time » says Jesus stressing His words and looking at Judas who has raised his head and is pensive looking into space.

Then Judas of Kerieth shakes his head, as if he were concluding an internal reasoning, and thrusting the hoe into the soil he asks: « And what does he become, who gives himself thus to the demon? »

« A demon. »

« A demon! So if I, for instance, in order to assert that Your contact gives one a supernatural power, should do something... that You censure, would I be a demon?... »

« Yes, you would. »

« However, I do hope that you will not do such things... » says Andrew who is almost frightened.

« Me? Ah! Ah! I am planting the little trees for our old man » and he runs to the other side of the kitchen garden, and comes back with five young plants which are certainly heavy because of the clod of earth wrapping the roots.

« Have you come from Beth-Horon with that load on your shoulders? » asks Peter.

« You should say from Gibeon! That is where some of Daniel's orchards are. Wonderful soil. Look! ... » and he crumbles with his fingers the earth around the roots. He then unfastens the lace holding the five little stems which are already the size of an arm. Only two have a few leaves on their tops. And they are olive leaves. « Here we are. This one is for Jesus and this one for Mary. They are the peace of the world. I am transplanting them first, because I am a man of peace. One here... and one there » and he places them at the ends of the strip of land. « And an apple-tree here, as young and good as that one in Eden, to remind you, John, that you also descend from Adam and that you must not be surprised... if I may be a sinner. Beware of the Serpent... And here... No, this is not the right place. This young fig-tree, over there, in the front, near the wall. How can one do without a fig-tree in the garden, when they grow here like weeds? And we will put this young almond-tree in the hole in the centre. It will learn from that age-old one the virtue of yielding fruit. There we are! Your little kitchen garden will be beautiful in future... and looking at it you will remember me. »

« I would remember you just the same, because you have been here with the Master. Everything will speak to me of this time. And looking at things I shall say: "He wanted to set my house in order again, just like a son!". But... But if I could wish for something different from what is probably already written in Heaven, I would like not to have to remember this period of time so beautiful for me, more beautiful than when these trees, now old, were young, and my wife and I were young, and my little daughter used to play here... and it was a pleasure to take care of the apple, the pomegranate and the fig trees, and of the vines, because the little hands of my daughter were eager to have the

fruit, and it was lovely to see my wife, sitting in the shade of the green trees, weave and spin... Later... my daughter went away... so forgetful!... My wife was ill and died... Why and for whom should I take care of what once was beautiful? And everything is dead, except the two old trees that remember my childhood... I would like to die before having to remember, and while there is a woman here as just as Leah. I thank You for the trees, for the work, for everything. I thank everybody. But I beg my Lord to uproot my old tree from this land before this hour of peace for old John sets... »

Jesus approaches him and laying a hand on his shoulder, He says kindly and severely at the same time: « You have been able to do so many things in your long lifetime. You still lack one: to accept the hour of your death from God without asking to have it brought forward or delayed by one minute. You are resigned to so many things. And thus God loves you. Resign yourself to the most difficult one: to live when you would only wish to die. And now let us go inside. The sun is setting behind the mountains and it turns cold at once. The Sabbath is beginning. We will finish our work after it... » and He picks up saw, plane and hammer and goes back into the house, while the others finish making up into bundles the branches they have cut, watering the plants they have transplanted and putting back on its hinges the door they have repaired.

### **528. Judas of Kerioth Is Lustful.**

14th November 1946.

All Nob is asleep. It is daybreak. Dawn, in the smooth winter light is delicately coloured with unreal hues. It is not the silvery green light of summer dawns, the light which appears so rapidly and changes into pale gold and into pink that becomes brighter and brighter. But a jade green dissolving into a very faint greyblue, shows it in the east in a small low semicircle above the horizon: a spot of a veiled almost tired brightness like a pale flame of sulphur burning behind a screen of whitish smoke. And it stretches with difficulty along the still grey sky, although it is clear with its stars still ogling at the world. It has difficulty in driving back the greyness to make room for its precious shade of pale jade and for the pure cobalt-blue of the Palestinian sky. It seems to be halting shyly, as if it were suffering from the cold, at the eastern border. And it delays there further, with its semicircle of sulphur brightness slightly expanded and just fading from pale green to white, veiled with a touch of yellow, when it is outshone by a sudden pink hue that frees the sky from the last night veil and makes it as clear and precious as a canopy of sapphire-coloured satin and a fire is lit in the remote horizon, as if a wall had collapsed and a

blazing furnace were revealed. But is it fire or a ruby lit up by a hidden fire? No. It is the rising sun. There it is. As soon as it rises from behind the curves of the horizon, it is ready to tinge a white woolly cloud with coral pink, and to change the dewdrops on the tops of perennials into diamonds. A tall oak, at the end of the village, has a veil of diamonds on its bronze leaves facing east. They look like stars glittering among the branches of the giant tree, whose top rises towards the blue sky.

Perhaps during the night, some stars have come too low over the village to whisper celestial secrets to the citizens of Nob, or perhaps to comfort with their pure light the sleepless Man Who is walking silently up there, on John's terrace. Because Jesus only, in the whole town of Nob asleep, is awake and is walking slowly up and down the terrace of the little house, with folded arms, tightly enveloped in His large mantle that covers also His head like a hood, to protect Himself from the cold. Every time He arrives at the end of the terrace, He leans out to look at the street that runs through the centre of the town. A street that is still semi-dark, empty and silent. He then resumes going up and down, slowly, silently, most of the time with His head lowered, pensive, sometimes looking at the sky that with the vague hues of dawn is beginning to grow clear. Or with His eyes He follows the whirring flight of the earliest sparrow, roused by daylight, as it leaves the hospitable tile of a nearby roof, descending to peck at the foot of John's old apple-tree, then it flies away again, seeing Jesus, chirping with fear and thus awaking other little birds in their nests here and there.

The bleating of a sheep is heard from a fold and it fades away trembling in the air. And the hurried shuffling of feet is heard coming from the street. Jesus leans out to look. He then runs down the staircase, He enters the dark kitchen closing the door.

The steps are approaching, they can be heard on the strip of the kitchen garden near the house, their noise stops before the kitchen door; a hand gropes for the lock, it feels that there is no key, it lifts the latch that can be moved both from outside and inside, and at the same time a voice says: « Is there someone up already? » A hand opens the door cautiously without letting it squeak. The head of Judas of Kerioth appears through the aperture... He looks... Pitch dark. Cold. Silence.

« They forgot to close the door... And yet... I thought it was closed... In any case, it does not matter! ... Thieves do not rob poor people. And there is nobody poorer than we are... Eh!... But let us hope that... it will not be always like this. Where is that cursed tinder-box?... I cannot find it... If I manage to light the fire... because I am late, yes, too late... But where will it be? Too many people use it. On the mantelshelf? No... On the table? No... On the

benches? No. On the shelf? No... That worm-eaten door-squeaks when you open it... Worm-eaten wood... rusty hinges... Everything is old, mouldy, horrible here. Ah! poor Judas! And it isn't here... I shall have to go into the old man's room... »

While speaking, he has been groping all the time in the invisible darkness, as cautious as a thief or a night bird in avoiding obstacles which might make noise... He knocks against a body and utters a faint cry of fear.

« Be not afraid. It is I. And the tinder-box is in My hand. Here it is. Light it » says Jesus calmly.

« You, Master? What were You doing here, all alone, in the dark, in this cold... There will certainly be many sick people today, after a Sabbath and two wet days, but they will not be here so early. They will be hardly moving from the nearby villages now, because only now they can see that it will not rain today. The wind has already dried the roads during the night. »

« I know. But light a lamp. It is not for honest people to speak in darkness, but it is typical of thieves, liars, lewd people and killers. Parties to evil deeds love darkness. I am no party to anybody. »

« Neither am I, Master. I wanted to light a good fire. So I was the first to get up... What did You say, Master? You mumbled between Your lips and I did not understand. »

« So light it. »

« Ah!... I saw that it's a clear day. But it's cold. They will all be pleased to find a good fire... Did You get up because You heard me bustle about or because of the old man who... Is he still in pain?... Here it is! At long last! The tinder and steel seemed to be damp, and they would not give a spark... They have got soaked... »

A little flame rises from the wick of a lamp. One only small trembling little flame... but sufficient to see the two faces: the pale face of Jesus, the swarthy fearless face of Judas.

« I will now light the fire... You are as white as death. You have had no sleep! And because of that old man! You are too good. »

« That is true. I am too good. To everybody. Also to those who do not deserve it. But the old man deserves it. He is an honest man, with a loyal heart. However, I did not keep watch for him, but for somebody else. It is true that the steel and tinder box were damp, but not because of a cup overturned, or of other liquid spread by accident, but because My tears dripped on them. It is true. It is a clear day but it is cold and the wind has dried the roads and at dawn dew fell. Feel My mantle. It is wet with it... Then dawn came to show the clear sky, light came to show an empty place, the sun rose to make dewdrops shine on leaves and tears on eyelashes. It is true. There will be many sick people today, but I was not waiting for them. I was waiting for you. I was awake all night for you. And as I could not stay in here waiting for you, I went up to the terrace,

shouting My call to the wind, showing My grief to the stars, My tears to dawn. Not the old sick man, but the dissolute young one, the disciple who shuns the Master, the apostle of God who prefers a cloaca to Heaven and falsehood to the Truth, made Me stay up all night waiting for you. And when I heard your steps I came down here... waiting for you again. Not for your person, which was now close to Me wandering like a thief around the dark kitchen, but for your feelings... I was expecting a word... And you did not speak it when you felt that I was standing in front of you. Did he, to whom you are selling your spirit, not inform you that I was aware? Of course not! He could not warn you or suggest to you the only word that you could, that you should have said, if you were a just man. But he suggested the lies not requested, the useless lies, that are even more offensive than your night escapade. He suggested them grinning, rejoicing that he had made you descend a further step and that he had caused Me another sorrow. It is true. Many sick people will come. But the one who is most seriously ill will not come to his Doctor. And the Doctor Himself is sick with grief because of that patient who does not want to recover. It is true. Everything is true. Also that I whispered a word that you did not understand. After what I have told you, can you guess it? »

Jesus has spoken in a low voice, but so sharp and sorrowful and at the same time so severe, that Judas, who at the first words was smiling, standing straight, impudently, very close to Jesus, has slowly withdrawn and shrunk into himself, as if each word were a blow, whereas Jesus has stood more and more upright, truly a Judge and truly tragical in His sorrowful image.

Judas, by now confined between a kneading trough and a corner, whispers: « Well... I would not know... »

« No? Well, I will tell you because I am not afraid to say what is true. Liar! That is what I said. And if we can put up with an untruthful child because he does not yet know the import of a lie and we teach him not to tell any more, we cannot bear that in a man; in an apostle, because in a disciple of the very Truth it is disgusting. Absolutely disgusting. That is why I waited for you all night and I wept and My tears damped the table where the tinder box was, and then I wept while keeping watch and calling you with all My soul in the starlight night, that is why I am covered with dew like the bridegroom of the Song of Songs. But My head is covered in vain with dew and My locks with the drops of night, in vain I knock at the door of your soul saying: "Open the door to me for I love you although you are not spotless". Nay, it is just because it is stained that I want to go in and clean it. It is because it is ill that I want to go in and cure it. Be careful, Judas! Watch that the Bridegroom does not go away, and for ever, and that you may not be able to find Him any more... Judas, are you not speaking?... »

« It's late by now to speak! You have said it: I disgust You. Send me away... »

« No. Lepers also disgust Me. But I feel sorry for them. And if they call Me, I make haste to go to them and cleanse them. Do you not want to be cleansed? »

« It is late... and of no avail. I am not able to be holy. I tell You: send me away. »

« I am not one of your Pharisaic friends who state that numberless things are unclean and they shun them or drive them away harshly, whereas they could cleanse them with charity. I am the Saviour and I do not drive anybody away... »

A long silence. Judas is in his corner, Jesus is leaning with His back against the table and seems to be resting on it, so tired and suffering as He looks... Judas raises his head. He looks at Him hesitantly and whispers: « And if I left You, what would You do? »

« Nothing. I would respect your will. Praying for you. But in my turn I say to you that even if you leave Me, it is by now too late. »

« For what, Master? »

« For what? You know as well as I do... Light the fire, now. I can hear footsteps upstairs. Let us stifle the scandal here, between us. With regard to the others we have not slept long... and the wish for warmth brought us together here... Father of Mine!... »

And while Judas sets the flame near the faggots already placed in the fireplace and he blows so that some light shavings may catch fire, Jesus lifts His hands above His head and then presses them against His eyes...

### **529. Jesus Speaks to Valeria of Matrimony and Divorce. The Miracle of Little Levi.**

15th November 1946.

Jesus is in the middle of sick people and pilgrims who have come to Him from many places in Palestine. There is even a seaman from Tyre who has become paralysed through an accident at sea and he is telling his story: the rolling of the ship caused the load to fall and he was caught under some heavy goods and his back was injured. He did not die, but he is as good as dead, because completely paralysed as he is, his relatives are compelled to leave their work and look after him. He says that he went with them to Capernaum and then to Nazareth and that he heard from Mary that He was in Judaea and precisely in Jerusalem. « She gave me the names of friends who might have given You hospitality. And a Galilean from Sephoris told me that You were here. And I came. I know that You do not despise anybody, not even Samaritans. And I hope that You will hear my prayer. I have so much faith. » His wife does not speak. But crouched near the little stretcher on

which the sick man is lying, she looks at Jesus with eyes imploring more than any word.

« Where were you hit? »

« Under my neck. That is where I had the worst blow and I heard a noise in my head, sounding like bronze when it is struck, and it changed into a continuous roar of a stormy sea, and lights, lights of all colours, began to dance in front of me... Then I did not feel anything for many days. We were sailing in the sea near Cintium and I found myself at home without knowing how I got there. And the roar of the sea in my head and the lights in my eyes started all over again and lasted for many days. Then it all stopped... but my arms and my legs are without life. A broken man at the age of forty. And I have seven children, Lord. »

« Woman, lift up your husband and uncover the spot where he was struck. »

The woman obeys without speaking. With skilful motherly movements, with the help of the man who came with her, I do not know whether her brother or brother-in-law, she inserts one hand under the shoulders of her husband and with the other hand she holds his head, and with the tenderness with which she would turn over a new-born baby, she lifts the heavy body from the litter. A scar, still red, marks the spot of the worst wound.

Jesus bends over him. They all stretch their necks to see. Jesus lays the tips of His fingers on the scar saying: « I want it! »

The man gets a shock as if he had been touched by electric power and he shouts: « What a fire! »

Jesus removes His finger from the injured vertebrae and says: « Stand up! »

The man does not wait to be told twice. He pushes his arms, inert for months, against the litter, he shakes off the arms of those holding him, he throws his legs out of the low stretcher and jumps to his feet in much less time than has taken me to write the various phases of the miracle.

His wife and relative utter cries, the cured man raises his arms to the sky, dumb with joy. A moment of dumbfounded joy, he then turns round, as steadily as the most agile man and finds himself face to face with Jesus. He finds his voice again and shouts: « May You and He Who sent You be blessed! I believe in the God of Israel and in You, His Messiah » and he throws himself on the ground to kiss Jesus' feet while the crowds are shouting.

After other miracles mostly on little children, women, old people, Jesus speaks.

« You have seen the miracle of fractured bones being rejoined and of dead limbs becoming alive again. The Lord has granted you to see that to confirm the faith of those who believe and to excite it in those who do not possess it. And miracles have been granted to

people from every place, as they came here seeking health, urged by their faith in My healing power. There are here Judaeans and Galileans, Lebaneses and Syro-Phoenicians, people from remote Batanaea and from the seacoast. And they have all come here heedless of the season and of the long journey and their relatives have come with them, without grumbling, without regretting the work interrupted or the business neglected. Because their sacrifices were nothing as compared with what they were seeking. And as the selfishness and perplexities of man have vanished, so their political or religious ideas have disappeared, whereas they previously formed a kind of wall built to prevent them from considering themselves all brothers, all alike in life and in sorrow, in wishing and hoping for health and comfort. And to those who have joined together in hope, which is already faith, I have granted health and comfort. Because it is fair that it should be so.

I am the universal Shepherd and I must gather together all the sheep that want to join My flock. I make no distinction between healthy and sick, weak and strong sheep, between sheep that know Me, because they already belong to the herd of God, and sheep that up to the present moment did not know Me and did not even know the true God. Because I am the Shepherd of Mankind, and I accept My sheep from wherever they are and come to Me. Are they poor, dirty, downhearted, ignorant sheep, beaten by shepherds who did not love them and rejected them saying that they were unclean? There is no uncleanliness that cannot be cleansed. And there is no uncleanliness that, wanting to be cleansed and asking for help to be so, can be rejected with the excuse that it is such. It is God Who rouses good wishes. If He rouses them, it means that He wants them to become real. It is the very Spirit of God that with ineffable prayers asks all men to be absorbed by the Love, because the Spirit of God wishes to spread about and become rich. To spread about by loving an infinite number of beings, hardly sufficient to give solace to His Infinity of Love, and to become rich with an unlimited number of beings attracted to Him by the sweetness of His perfumes.

No one is allowed to scorn and reject those who want to join the holy flock. I say this for those among you in whose hearts the ideas of many Israelites may be cultivated, ideas of distinction and of judgements not pleasing to God, because they are the opposite of His design to make of all the peoples one People only, bearing the Name of the Messiah sent by Him.

But I will now speak also to those who have come from abroad, to the sheep so far wild and who now wish to enter the only herd of the Only Shepherd. And I say: let nothing discourage them, let nothing humiliate them. There is no heathenism, no idolatry, no life different from what I teach, that cannot be repudiated and rejected,

allowing the spirit to put new vigour and faith into its life, free from all evil plants, in order to be fit to receive the new seeds and to clothe itself with new uniforms. And that should urge people to come to Me, more than their desire to have health for their bodies.

As - and let this apply to the Hebrews of Palestine, to the Hebrews and proselytes of the Diaspora, and to the Gentiles - as you come to Me to have the yoke of diseases removed from your sick bodies, so you should come to have the yoke of sin and heathenism removed from your spirits. You ought all to ask of Me as first thing, and want it with all-your strength, to be freed from what makes your spirits slaves to wicked forces that dominate them. You ought to want that liberation as first thing, and want the Kingdom in you as first miracle. Because, once you have this Kingdom in you, everything else will be given, and in such a way that the gift may not be heavy like a punishment in the future life. You did not mind the inclement weather, fatigue, loss of money, providing you obtained the health of your bodies which, even if they have been cured today, will perish through physical death in the near future. With the same hearts you ought to face everything in order to obtain health for your spirits, and eternal Life, and the possession of the Kingdom of God.

What are mockery or threats of relatives or fellow-citizens, or of mighty people, as compared with what you will all have, from whichever place you may come, if you are able to come to the Truth and Life? Who would prefer to stay for one day at a feast that ends at sunset, instead of going to a place where he knew that a happy life was awaiting him? And yet many do that. And to become satiated, for a short time, with the insipid vain joys of the world, they give up going where they would find true food, true health, true joy for ever, and without any fear of being deprived of it by hostile hatred. In the Kingdom of God, there is no hatred, no war, no abuse of power. Those who succeed in entering it, will no longer experience sorrow, anxiety, abuse, but will possess the joyful peace emanating from My Father.

I will now dismiss you. Go. Go back to your villages. My disciples are now numerous and are spread all over every region in Palestine. Listen to them, if you want to become acquainted with My Doctrine and be ready for the day of decision, on which the eternal life of many will depend. I give you My peace that it may come with you. »

And Jesus, after blessing the crowd, goes back to the house...

The apostles remain outside for some time, they then go in for their meal, because the sun, now high in the sky, tells them that it is midday. Sitting at the rustic table, after the blessing of the food, consisting of cheese and boiled chicory dressed with oil, they speak of the events of the morning, and they congratulate themselves

on the number of evangelizing disciples being now such as to relieve the Master from the fatigue of speaking continuously in His present tired condition. Jesus, in fact, has grown thin recently and His complexion, which is naturally deep ivory-white, with just a shade of pink under His swarthy skin, at the top of His cheeks, is now completely white, like a withered magnolia petal.

As I lived for a long time in Milan, I am familiar with the delicate hue of the Candoglia marble, with which the wonderful Duomo is built, and the face of the Lord during these last sorrowful months of His earthly life, looks just like the colour of that marble, which is neither white, nor pink, nor yellow, but reminds one, with its most delicate tones, of those three shades. His eyes are more deeply set and thus look darker, probably also because a shadow of weariness dims his eyelids and eye-sockets. They are the eyes of one who sleeps little and weeps and suffers much. His hands look longer because they have grown thin and pale, the kind hands of my Lord, and they already show tendons and veins standing out, and hollows brought about by their leanness, and thus their bone-structures appear; the holy, martyr hands, already prepared for the nails that will pierce them, and the executioners will have no difficulty in finding where to place the nails because there is not even a veil of fat on the ascetic hands of my Lord. One hand is now resting, looking tired, on the dark wood of the table, while He shakes His head smiling faintly at His apostles, who notice the infinite tiredness of His body and voice, and above all of His heart, which is too distressed, too fatigued with the effort of keeping so many different hearts united, and of having to put up with and conceal the dishonour of the incorrigible disciple...

Peter says sententiously: « You must definitely rest until the Feast of the Dedication. We will see to the people that come. You will go... Of course! To Thomas' house. You will be near us and You will be at peace. »

Thomas supports Peter's proposal. But Jesus shakes His head. No. He does not want to go.

« Well, in that case, You will not speak during the next days. We can do that. Our words will not be sublime, but we will confine ourselves to what we know. And You will only cure the sick people. »

« We can do that as well » says the Iscariot.

« H'm! As far as I am concerned, I am backing out » says Peter.

« And yet, you have already done that! »

« Certainly. When the Master was not with us and we had to represent Him and make people love Him. But He is here now and He will work the miracles. He is the only worthy one. We... miracles! But it is we who are in need to receive the miracle of our revival, because I can see very well that by ourselves we shall

never do any good!... We are poor wretches, ignorant and sinners. »

« Please speak for yourself. I do not consider myself a poor wretch at all! » remarks Judas of Kerioth.

« The Master is tired. His weariness is more moral than physical. If it is true that we love Him, let us avoid discussions. They wear Him out more than anything else » says the Zealot in a severe voice.

Jesus raises His head to look at the elder apostle, who is always so wise, and He stretches out a hand towards him, across the table, to caress him. The Zealot takes that white hand in his swarthy ones and kisses it.

« You are right. But I am right as well, when I say that He definitely must have a rest. He looks ill!... » says Peter insisting.

They all nod assent, including old John and Eliza, who says: « I have been saying that for such a long time. That is why I would like... »

There is a knock at the door. Andrew, who is closest to the door, goes to open and he goes out closing the door behind himself.

He comes back in: « Master, there is a woman. She insists in seeing You. She has a little girl with her. She must be a woman of rank, although she is modestly dressed. But I would say that neither she nor the girl is ill. But I do not know why she is all covered with a veil. The girl has a bunch of wonderful flowers in her arms. »

« Send her away. We have just said that He must rest and you are not even letting Him finish His meal! » grumbles Peter.

« I told her. She replied that she will not tire the Master, and that He will certainly be pleased to see her. »

« Tell her to come back tomorrow, at the same time as other people come. The Master is now going to have a rest. »

« Andrew, take her to the room upstairs. I will come at once » says Jesus.

« There you are! Just what I thought! That's how He takes care of Himself! Just what we were saying He should do! » Peter is upset.

Jesus gets up and before going out He passes near Peter, He lays a hand on his shoulders, He bends a little to kiss his head saying: « Be good, Simon! Who loves Me relieves Me of My weariness more than a rest in bed. »

« How do You know that she loves You? »

« Oh! Simon! Anxiety makes you speak words that you already regret because you realise that they are silly! Be good! Be good! A woman who comes with an innocent child, and she brings Me her innocent little girl whose arms are full of flowers, can but be one who loves Me and realises My need to find some love and purity after so much hatred and foulness. » And He goes away and climbs the staircase of the terrace, while Andrew, having finished his task, comes back into the kitchen.

The woman is at the door of the upper room. She is tall, slender, wearing a heavy grey mantle, with her face covered with an ivory hued byssus veil hanging from her hood closed round her face. The little girl, a baby because she must be at most three years old, is wearing a white woollen dress and a mantle with hood, which is also white. But her little hood has slipped a good deal back on to her little curls of a delicate light chestnut colour, because the little girl is looking up at her mother raising her head that emerges from the flowers she is holding in her arms. Wonderful flowers, as can be found only in these countries in the cold month of December: flesh-coloured roses mixed with delicate white flowers, which I do not know what they are; I am not skilled in floriculture.

As soon as Jesus sets foot on the terrace, He is greeted by the little voice of the girl, who runs to meet Him, urged by her mother saying: « Ave, Domine Jesu! »

Jesus bends over His tiny devotee and laying a hand on her head He says to her: « Peace be with you », He then straightens Himself and follows the child who with trilling laughter goes back to her mother, who has made a low bow, moving to one side of the door to let the Master pass.

Jesus greets her with a nod and goes into the room, sitting on the first seat He finds, awaiting in silence. He is very kingly looking. Sitting on a poor wooden seat with no back, He seems to be sitting on a throne, such is His austere dignity. With no mantle, wearing a very dark blue tunic, without ornaments or decorations, somewhat faded on the shoulders where rain, sunshine, dust and perspiration have changed its shade, a clean but poor tunic, yet it looks like a purple garment such is the majesty of His bearing. Very stiff, almost hieratic because of the stiffness of His head on His neck, of His hands resting on His knees with open palms, with His bare feet on the bare floor of old bricks, with the bare whitewashed wall in the background, with no drape or canopy hanging behind His head, but only a sieve for flour and a rope from which bunches of garlic and onions are hanging, He is more majestic than if there were a precious floor under His feet, a golden wall behind Him, and purple veil adorned with gems on His head.

He is waiting. And His majesty paralyses the woman with venerable amazement. Also the little girl is silent and motionless near her mother and is perhaps a little frightened. But Jesus smiling says: « I am here for you. Be not afraid. »

And all fear drops. The woman whispers something to the little girl, who moves, followed by her mother, and goes toward Jesus' knees and lays all her flowers in His lap saying: « Faustina's roses to her Saviour ». She says so slowly, like one who is not very familiar with a language that is not one's own. In the meantime

the woman has knelt down behind the little girl throwing her veil behind her back. She is Valeria, the little girl's mother and she greets Jesus with the Roman salutation: « Hail, o Master. »

« May God come to you, woman. How come you are here? And so lonely? » asks Jesus as He caresses the little girl who is no longer afraid and who, not satisfied with placing the flowers in Jesus' lap, searches the scented bundle with her little hands and picks those which according to her are the most beautiful, saying: « Take them! Take them! They are Yours, You know? » and she lifts now a rose, now one of the large white umbrellas with little scented stars, up to the face of Jesus, Who accepts it and then puts it back into the scented bundle.

Valeria begins to speak: « I was at Tiberias, because my daughter was not well and our doctor advised us to go there... » Valeria makes a long pause, she changes colour and then says hurriedly: « and I was so sad at heart and I was anxious to see You. Because only one doctor could find a cure for my pain: You, Master, Who have words of justice for everything... So I would have come just the same. Through the selfishness of being comforted and to find out what I must do to... Yes, to show my gratitude to You and to Your God, Who have granted me to have this child... But we are informed of many things, Master. The reports of the least events of the Colony are laid every day on the office table of Pontius Pilate, who looks into them but before taking the relevant decisions he consults a great deal with Claudia... Many reports deal with You and the Hebrews who stir up the country, making You the symbol of national insurrection and at the same time the cause of civil hatred. Claudia is right when she says to her husband that he must not fear one only man in the whole of Palestine as the possible cause of disgrace for him: You. And Pilate listens to her day after day... So far Claudia is the most powerful one. But if in future another power should control Pilate... So I heard and I felt that my innocent child would be of comfort to You... »

« You have a pitiful and enlightened heart, woman. May God enlighten you fully, and watch over this child of yours, now and for ever. »

« Thank You, Lord. I am in need of God... » Tears drop from Valeria's eyes.

« Yes, you need Him. You will find all comfort in God and you will also find a guide to be just in judging, in forgiving, in loving again, and above all in bringing up this child so that she may have the happy life of those who are children of the true God.

See. The God Whom you did not know, Whom you perhaps derided, both Him and His Law, so different from your gods and your laws and religions; Whom you had certainly offended by a

way of living in which virtue was not respected in many things, not yet grave, if you wish so, but leading to more serious offences against virtue and against the Divinity, Who created you as well; that God has loved you so much that through a sorrow which your humanity of a mother suffered, of a mother unaware of future life and consequently of the temporary separation from the flesh of her flesh, He brought you to Me. He loved you so much as to lead Me to Caesarea, when you were almost in the throes of death over your child's little body that was already becoming cold in its last agony. He has loved you so much that He gave her back to you, that you may always bear in mind the goodness and power of the true God, and have a restraint against all heathen licentiousness, as well as comfort in all the sorrows of your married life. He has loved you so much that through another sorrow He has strengthened your will to come to the Way, the Truth, the Life and to settle there with your daughter, so that she at least, from the very beginning of her childhood, may possess comfort and peace, health and light in the sad days of the Earth, and they may preserve her from what makes you suffer in your better part and in your emotional one. The former, instinctively good and intolerant of the sombre foul ambience in which it is compelled to live. The latter, disorderly in its goodness.

Because in your affections you are pagan, woman. It is not your fault. It is the fault of the times in which you live. And of the Gentilism in which you have been brought up. Only he who is in the true Religion can give the right value, measure and manifestation to affections. You, a mother unaware of eternal life, loved your daughter in a disorderly manner, and when you saw that she was about to die, you rebelled in despair against that loss, driven mad by her impending death. Like a relative who sees the person dearest to him snatched by a madman and sees him held over an abyss, from the bottom of which he would not be able to come out, if he were dropped into it, nay, it would not even be possible to carry him out as a cold corpse, for a last kiss of love, just like that you saw your Faustina hanging over the abyss of the void... A poor mother who no longer would have had her daughter! Neither in her body nor in her spirit. Nothing. The end, the inexorable end which is death for those who do not believe in the spiritual Life.

You, a loving faithful heathen wife, loved in your husband your earthly god with sensual love, your handsome god who made you worship him, degrading your dignity as his equal to the servility of a slave. Let the wife be subject to her husband, and be humble, faithful and chaste. Agreed. He, the man, is the head of the family. But head does not mean despot. Head does not mean capricious master to whom any whim is lawful not only on the body but also on the better part of his wife. You say: "Where you are Caius, there

I am Caia". Poor women from a place where there is licentiousness even in the tales of your gods, those among you who are not unchaste or unrestrained, how can they be where their husbands are? It is inevitable for her who is not licentious and corrupt to part from her husband with disgust and feel a dreadful pain, as of lacerating fibres, and experience dismay and the total collapse of her cult for her husband so far contemplated as a god, when she finds out that he, whom she adored as a god, is a miserable being ruled by brutal animalism, licentious, adulterous, thoughtless, indifferent, a derider of the feelings and dignity of his wife.

Do not weep. I also know everything, even without the reports of centurions. "Do not weep, woman. Learn instead to love your husband in an orderly way. »

« I cannot love him any more. He no longer deserves it. I despise him. I will not lower myself by imitating him, but I cannot love him any more. Everything is finished between us. I let him go away... without trying to keep him... Actually I am grateful to him for the last time, for his going away... I will not look for him. In any case, when was he my companion? Since I have become undeceived about my worship for him, I remember and judge his behaviour. Did he pity my heart when I wept having to follow him, leaving my sick mother and my fatherland, and I was just married and I was about to be delivered of my child? He laughed foolishly with his friends at my tears and when I felt sick he only warned me not to dirty his clothes. Was he beside me when I was homesick in a foreign country? No, he went out with his friends, feasting where I was not allowed to go because of my state... Did he watch with me over the cradle of our new-born baby? He laughed when they took our daughter to him and he said: "I would almost have her laid on the ground. I did not accept the marriage yoke to have daughters". Neither was he present at the purification saying that it was a pantomime. And as the baby was crying, he said going out: "Name her Libitina and may she be sacred to the goddess". And when Fausta was dying, did he share my anguish? Where was he the night before Your arrival? At a banquet in Valerian's house. But I loved him; he was, as You rightly said, my god. I thought that everything was good and fair in him. He allowed me to love him... and I was the most enslaved slave to his wishes. Do You know what repelled me from him? »

« Yes, I know. Because your soul woke up again in your body and you were no longer a female but a woman. »

« Exactly. I wanted to make my house respectable... and he asked to be transferred to Antioch, at the Consul's service, and ordered me not to follow him, and he took his favourite slave girls with him. Oh! I will not follow him! I have my 'daughter. I have everything. »

« No. You have not everything. You have a part, a small part of the Everything, as much as serves you to be virtuous. The Everything is God. Your daughter must not be for you a cause of injustice but of justice towards the Everything. It is your duty to be virtuous for her and with her. »

« I came to comfort You and You are consoling me. But I have also come to ask You how I must bring up this little girl to make her worthy of her Saviour. I was thinking of becoming a proselyte and of making her a proselyte as well... »

« And what about your husband? »

« Oh! It's all over with him. »

« No. Everything is beginning now. You are still his wife. The duty of a good wife is to make her husband good. »

« He says that he wants to divorce me. And he will certainly do that. So... »

« He will do it. But he has not done it yet. And until he does so, you are his wife also according to your law. And as such it is your duty to remain as wife in your place. And your place is second to your husband in the house, with regard to your daughter, the servants and the world. You are thinking: he has set the bad example. That is true. But that does not exempt you from setting virtuous examples. He went away. True. You must take his place with your daughter and the servants.

Not everything is blameworthy in your customs. When Rome was less corrupt, women were chaste, industrious, and they served the divinity with their lives of virtue and faith. Even if their poor condition of pagans made them serve false gods, the idea was good. They offered their virtue to the Idea of religion, to the need of respect for religion, for a Divinity Whose true name was unknown to them, but Whom they felt existed and was greater than licentious Olympus and the degraded deities that people it according to mythological legends. Your Olympus does not exist, neither do your gods. But your ancient virtues were the fruit of the firm belief that people had to be virtuous if they wanted to be watched over with love by the gods; they were the fruit of the duties you felt you had towards the gods you worshipped. To the eyes of the world, particularly of our Hebrew world, you seemed to be foolish for honouring what did not exist. But to the eternal true Justice, to the Most High God, the Only and Almighty Creator of all creatures and things, those virtues, that respect, those duties were not vain. Good is always good, faith has always the value of faith, and religion has always the value of religion if he who follows, practises and possesses them is convinced of being in the truth.

I exhort you to imitate your ancient chaste, industrious and faithful women, remaining in your place, the column and light in your house and of your house. Do not think that you will be bereft

of the respect of your servants because you are alone. So far they have served you with fear and at times with a hidden feeling of hatred and rebellion. From now on they will serve you with love. The unhappy love the unhappy. Your slaves know what sorrow is. Your joy was a bitter goad for them. Your grief, by divesting you of the cold light of mistress, in the most hateful sense of the word, will reclothe you with a warm light of pity. You will be loved, Valeria, by God, by your daughter and by your servants. And even if you were no longer a wife, but a divorced woman, remember (and Jesus stands up) that a legal separation does not destroy the duty of a woman to be faithful to her marriage oath.

You would like to embrace our religion. One of the divine precepts of it is that woman is flesh of the flesh of her husband and that no person or thing can separate what God has joined into one flesh only. We also have divorce. It came as the wicked fruit of human lust, of the sin of origin, of the corruption of men. But it did not come spontaneously from God. God does not change His word. And God had said, inspiring Adam, who was still innocent and spoke therefore with intelligence not dimmed by sin, the words: that husband and wife, once united, were to be one flesh only. And the flesh is separated from the flesh only through the calamity of death or disease. The Mosaic divorce, granted to avoid dreadful sins, gives woman only a very poor freedom. A divorcee is always inferior in the opinion of men, whether she remains such or marries for the second time. In God's judgement she is an unhappy woman if she was divorced through the ill-will of her husband and remains a divorcee; but she is a sinner, an adulteress, if she is divorced through disgraceful sins of her own and she marries again. But you want to embrace our religion to follow Me. So I, the Word of God, as the time of the perfect religion has come, say to you what I say to many people. It is against the law to separate what God has united, and he or she is always adulterous by getting married again while the consort is still alive.

Divorce is legal prostitution, as it puts man and woman in a position to commit lustful sins. Only seldom a divorcee remains the widow of a living man, and a faithful widow. A divorced man is never faithful to his first marriage. Both he and she, by passing to other unions, descend from the level of men to that of brutes, which are granted to change female at each appeal of sensuality. Legal fornication, dangerous to families and to the Fatherland, is criminal towards innocent children. The children of a divorced couple must judge their parents. The judgement of children is a severe one! At least one of the parents is condemned by the children. And the children, through the selfishness of the parents, are doomed to a mutilated affective life. Then, if to the family consequences of divorce, that deprives innocent children of their

father or mother, a new marriage is added of the consort to whom the children have been entrusted, to the doom of an affective life mutilated of a member, a further mutilation is added: that of the more or less total loss of the affection of the other member, who is divided or completely absorbed by the new love and by the children of the second marriage.

To speak of marriage, of matrimony in the case of a new union of a divorcee or divorcee, is to profane the meaning and the essence of marriage. Only the death of one of the consorts and the consequent widowhood of the other can justify a second marriage. However, I think that it would be better to yield to the always just verdict of Him Who controls the destinies of men, and to remain chaste when death has put an end to the matrimonial state, devoting oneself to the children and loving the dead consort in the children. A holy, true love, deprived of all materialism. Poor children! To experience, after the death or the ruin of a home, the hardness of a second father or of a second mother and the anguish of seeing caresses shared with other children who are not their brothers!

No. There will be no divorce in My religion. And he who divorces by civil law to contract a new marriage will be an adulterer and sinner. Human law shall not change My decree. Matrimony in My religion will no longer be a civil contract, a moral promise, made and ratified in the presence of witnesses appointed for that purpose. But it shall be an indissoluble bond stipulated, confirmed and sanctified by the sanctifying power I will give it, as being a Sacrament. To make you understand: a sacred rite. A power that will help to practise all matrimonial duties in a holy way, but that will also be the sentence of indissolubility of the bond.

So far marriage has been a mutual natural and moral contract between two people of different sexes. When My law comes into force, it will extend to the souls of the consorts. It will therefore become a spiritual contract sanctioned by God through His ministers. Now you know that nothing is superior to God. Therefore what He has united, no authority, law or human whim will be able to separate. Your ritual "where you are Caius, there I am Caia" lasts in life to come in our, in My rite, because death is not the end, but a temporary separation of the husband from his wife, and the obligation to love lasts also after death. That is why I say that I would like widows to be chaste. But man does not know how to be chaste. And also because of that I say that consorts have the reciprocal duty to improve the other consort.

Do not shake your head. That is the duty and it is to be accomplished if one really wants to follow Me. »

« You are severe today, Master. »

« No. I am the Master. And I have in front of Me a creature who

can grow in the life of Grace. If you were not what you are, I would exact less of you. But you have a good temperament and suffering purifies and hardens your character more and more. One day you will remember and bless Me for being what I am. »

« My husband will not draw back... »

« And you will go forward. Holding your innocent child by the hand, you will walk on the way of Justice: without hatred, without revenge; but also without vain expectations and regret for what has been lost. »

« So You know that I have lost him! »

« I do. But not you: he has lost you. He did not deserve you. Now listen... It is hard, I know. You brought Me roses and innocent smiles to console Me... I... I can but prepare you to bear the wreath of thorns of forlorn wives... But consider. If we could go back in time to that morning when Fausta was dying and your heart were put in the condition of choosing between your daughter and your husband, having definitely to lose either one or the other, which would you choose?... »

The woman becomes pensive, pale but strong in her grief after the few tears shed at the beginning of the conversation... Shethen bends over the little girl who is sitting on the floor enjoying herself putting some white little flowers round Jesus' feet, she picks her up, embraces her and shouts: « I would choose her because I can give her my very heart, and I can bring her up as I have learned one should live. My creature! And be united to her in the next life. I... always her mother; she... always my daughter! » and she smothers her with kisses while the little one clings to her neck with loving smiles. « Tell me, oh! tell me, Master, who teach people to live heroically, what must I do to rear this child so that we may be both in Your Kingdom? Which words, what acts shall I teach her?... »

« No special acts or words are required. Be perfect so that she may reflect your perfection. Love God and your neighbour that she may learn to love. Live on the Earth with your affections in God. She will imitate you. That for the time being. Later My Father, Who has loved you in a special way, will see to your spiritual needs, and you will become wise in the faith that bears My Name. That is what is to be done. In the love of God you will find all necessary restraint against Evil. In the love for your neighbour you will have assistance against the depression of solitude. And teach both yourself and your daughter to forgive. Do you understand what I mean? »

« Yes, I do... It is just... Master, I leave You. Bless a poor woman... who is poorer than a beggar who has a faithful companion... »

« Where are you staying now? In Jerusalem? »

« No, at Bethel. Johanna, who is so good, sent me to her castle there... I was suffering too much up there... I shall remain there until Johanna comes, which is soon. She is coming down to Judaea with Your Mother and the other women disciples at the first warm days in springtime. I shall be staying with her for some time. Then the others will come and I will go with them. But time will have already healed my wound. »

« Time, and above all God and the smiles of your little girl. Goodbye, Valeria. May the true God, Whom you are seeking with good spirit, comfort and protect you. » Jesus lays His hand on the head of the little one and blesses her. He then approaches the closed door asking: « Have you come by yourself? »

« No, with a freed woman. The wagon is waiting for me in the wood at the entrance to the village. Shall we meet again, Master? »

« I shall be in the Temple in Jerusalem for the Dedication. »

« I will be there, Master. I need Your words for my new life... »

« Go and do not worry. God does not leave without help those who seek it. »

« I believe... Oh! our pagan world is sad indeed! »

« There is sadness wherever there is no true life in God. People weep also in Israel... Because they no longer live according to the Law of God. Goodbye. Peace be with you. »

The woman makes a low bow and suggests something to the little girl. And the child raises her head, stretches out her arms and says with her little voice as sweet as a finch's: « Ave, Domine Jesu! »

Jesus bends to receive from her tiny lips the kiss that is already taking shape there, and He blesses her again... He then goes back into the room and sits down thoughtfully near the flowers spread on the floor.

Some time goes by thus. Then someone knocks at the door.

« Come in. »

The door opens and Peter's honest face appears in the opening.

« It is you? Come in... »

« No, You ought to come to us. It's cold here. What lovely flowers! Worth a lot! » Peter watches his Master while speaking.

« Yes, they are worth a lot. But the gesture and the way it was accomplished are worth more than the flowers. They were brought to Me by the daughter of Valeria, the Roman friend of Claudia. »

« Eh! I know. But why? »

« To comfort Me. They know that I am grieved, and Valeria had that kind thought. She thought that the flowers of an innocent child would be able to console Me... »

« A Roman lady!... And we people of Israel cause nothing but grief to You... Judas' suspicion was right. He said that he had seen a wagon that was stationary and that the woman was certainly Roman... and he was upset, Master... » says Peter who is very inquisitive.

But Jesus only asks: « Where is Judas? »

« Outside. I mean on the road, near the wood. He wants to see who came to You... »

« Let us go downstairs. »

Judas is already in the kitchen, He turns round seeing Jesus come in and says: « Even if You wanted to deny it, You could not deny that that woman came to... complain of something! Have they still something to say? Have they nothing else to do but spy and report and... »

« I am not obliged to reply to you. But I say this to everybody. And Simon already knows who she is and I will now tell everybody why she came. Also people who are apparently very happy may need comfort and advice... Andrew, go upstairs, pick up all the flowers brought by the little girl and take them to little Levi. »

« Why? »

« Because he is dying. »

« He is dying? But I saw him at the third hour and he was all right! » says Bartholomew who is amazed.

« He was all right. He will be dead before it gets dark. »

« If he is so ill he will not enjoy the flowers... »

« No. But in the dismayed house the flowers sent by the Saviour will speak a bright word. »

Jesus sits down while they all speak of the transience of life and Eliza puts on her mantle saying: « I am going with Andrew... That poor mother!... » I can see Andrew and Eliza go away with the flowers in their hands...

Jesus is silent. Judas also is silent. He is hesitant. Jesus is silent but not severe looking... Judas walks round Him, urged by the desire to know, by the tormenting anxiety of a person whose conscience is not at peace. But he ends up by pulling Peter to one side and questioning him. He recovers confidence after speaking with Peter and he goes to tease Matthew who is writing peacefully on a corner of the table.

Andrew comes back running. He says panting: « Master... the boy is really dying... All of a sudden... They seemed to have gone mad... But when Eliza said: "The Lord has sent them" and I... thought they would understand: "for his death bed", the mother and the father shouted... together: "Oh! it's true! Run back and call Him. He will cure him". »

« The word of faith. Let us go » and Jesus almost runs out. Of course they all follow Him, including old John, plodding along in the rear.

The house is at the end of the village. But Jesus arrives there quickly and He elbows His way through the crowd obstructing the

open door. He goes straight to a room at the end of a corridor, because it is a large house with many inhabitants, perhaps brothers.

In the room, bent over the improvised bed, there are the father, the mother and Eliza... They see Jesus only when He says: « Peace to this house. » The unhappy parents then leave the bed and throw themselves at Jesus' feet. Only Eliza remains where she is, intent on rubbing with aromatic essences the limbs that are becoming cold.

The boy is really on the point of death, his body already shows the heaviness and languor of death, his face is waxen with dark nostrils and violet lips. He breathes with difficulty, with spasms of his little chest, and each breath seems the last one, so long it is from the previous one.

His mother is weeping with her face on Jesus' feet. The father, who is also prostrated on the floor, says: « Have mercy! Have mercy! » He cannot say anything else.

Jesus says: « Levi, come to Me » and He stretches out His arms.

The little one, a boy about five years old, has something like a shock, as if someone called him in a loud voice while he was asleep. He sits up without difficulty, rubs his eyes with his little fists, he looks around, obviously surprised, and when he sees Jesus smiling, he throws himself out of the bed and goes resolutely towards the Master in his little tunic.

His parents, bent as they are, do not see anything. But the exclamations of Eliza who shouts: « Eternal goodness! » and of the apostles and of the curious people in the corridor, as they shout an: « Oh! » of wonder, warn them of what is happening. They look up and see their child standing there, as healthy as if he had never been on the point of death...

Joy makes people laugh, weep, shout, be silent, according to the reaction of each individual. Here it is the cause of mute, almost frightened amazement... There is too much difference between the previous condition and the present one, and the two poor parents, already stunned with grief, have difficulty in accepting joy.

They eventually succeed while Jesus takes the boy in His arms, and then silence is followed by a deluge of words mixed with exclamations of joy and blessings, and it is difficult to follow this torrent of words, all uttered confusedly at the same time. I gather from them that at about the sixth hour the boy, who was playing in the kitchen garden, had gone into the house complaining of abdominal pains. When his grandmother took him in her arms near the fireplace, he seemed to get better. Later, about the ninth hour, he began to vomit intestinal matter and he was at once in his last agony. The typical fulminant peritonitis. His father had rushed to Jerusalem at the first symptoms of the disease and had come back

with a doctor, who after seeing the boy, who in the meantime had begun to vomit, had said: « He cannot live » and had gone away... In fact the child was getting worse every moment and his body was getting cold, and in the anguish of the sudden misfortune they were not able to think of the salvation at hand. Only when Andrew and Eliza had gone in with the flowers saying: « Jesus sends them to Levi », they were enlightened as if by an internal light and said: « Jesus will save him. »

« And You have saved him, may You be blessed for ever! Your flowers! Hope! Faith! Oh, yes! faith in Your love for us! But how did You know? Blessed One! Ask whatever You want of us! Give us Your orders as if we were Your slaves! We owe You everything!... »

Jesus listens to them still holding the child in His arms. He lets them speak until they are tired, until their nerves subjected to so much strain, become relaxed by giving vent to their feelings. He then says kindly: « I love children and faithful hearts. You all of Nob have been very good to Me. If I am good to those who hate Me, what shall I give to those who love Me? I knew... and I was also aware that grief was making you forget the Source of Life. I wanted to show you the way... »

« But why did You not come by Yourself, Lord? Were You perhaps afraid that we might not welcome You? »

« No. I knew that you would receive Me with love. But among these people who are around us there were some who needed to be convinced that I know everything of men and of the state of their hearts. And I also wanted other people to understand that God answers those who invoke Him with faith. Now be at peace. And let your faith in the mercy of God grow deeper and deeper. Peace be with you all. Goodbye, Levi. Go to your mother, now. Goodbye, woman. Consecrate to the Lord also the child you are carrying in your womb, in remembrance of the Lord's kindness to you. Goodbye, man. Preserve your spirit in justice. »

He turns round to go away, passing with difficulty through the relatives crowding the corridor: grandparents, uncles, cousins of the boy cured miraculously, as they all want to speak to Jesus, bless Him, be blessed, kiss His garments, His hands... Then after the large number of relatives, the people of the village want to do the same, but they pour into the street behind Jesus, leaving those of the house blessed by the miracle to their joy. And in the streets by now dark, with the usual noise of the hours of rejoicing, all Nob takes Jesus back to John's little house, and it takes all the authority of the apostles to convince the citizens to go back to their houses, leaving the Master in peace, and to their authority they have to add more energetic means, such as threatening that, unless they allow Him to rest, they will all go away the following morning,

in order to reach their aim.

And at long last the Tired one can rest...

### **530. Jesus and the Prostitute Sent to Tempt Him.**

21st November 1946.

People taken as a mass, men taken individually are always somewhat childish and wild, or at least primitive, and thus very sensitive to anything having the savour of novelty, of extraordinariness, and creating a joyful atmosphere. The approaching of solemnities always has the power of elating men, as if the festivity cancelled what makes them sad and tired. At the first approach of a feast, everybody is affected by a sort of animation, of a light exaltation, as if the approach were like the beat of tom-tom of savages at their idolatrous festivals or in their warlike enterprises:

Also the apostles, in the imminence of the Feast of Lights, are in that state of lightheartedness. Talkative and cheerful as they are, they begin to make plans, to remember past festivities, a touch of melancholy is noticeable in their conversation, then the festal atmosphere cheers them again urging them to be active, so that everything may be beautiful for the festival. Are the lights in John's house only few? Oh! Thomas' house at Ramah is full of them! And Thomas leaves for Ramah to get them. Is the oil not plentiful? Oh! Eliza has plenty oil at Bethzur and she offers it. And Andrew and John go to Bethzur to get it. Is the mild fire of brushwood necessary to bake the cakes? The two Jameses go to the mountains to collect some. Is there not enough flour, barley and honey for the ritual dishes? And Nike, who is almost offended because they never ask her for anything, is she not in Jerusalem just to give them some of her very blond honey, barley and flour from her beautiful estate? So Peter and Simon Zealot go to Nike, while Judas of Alphaeus helps Eliza to adorn the house, and even old Bartholomew partakes of the general mirth and with Philip whitewashes the smoky kitchen to make it look more pleasant. Judas Iscariot reserves for himself the decoration side and he comes back several times laden with branches of sweet-smelling evergreens adorned with berries and he arranges them nicely on shelves and around the fireplace. And on the eve of the Feast the little house seems to be prepared to receive a bride, such is the change in the copper kitchenware now so shiny, in the lamps as bright as the sun, with the green branches decorating the white walls, while the smell of bread and cakes spreads in the air already scented with the fresh branches.

Jesus lets them do as they wish. He seems so remote from everybody, He is very pensive, and sad. He replies to those who ask Him questions with the intent of being praised for what they

have done. And their questions make it possible for me to reconstruct the work done by the disciples. In fact by asking: « Was my idea to go home and get the lamps not a good one? »; or: « Did Philip and I not do a good job by whitewashing everything? It is clean and pleasant and looks larger »; or: « See, Master? Eliza is happy. She seems to be at home and to have gone back to the time when she had her sons. She was singing today when filling the lamps with her oil and when kneading the flour with her honey and mixing it with milk for the barley »; or also: « Helkai can say what he likes. But a little green looks nice. After all!... If the Creator made branches, it means that we have to use them, isn't that right? » they allow me to reconstruct the work done by each of them. But even if Jesus replies to such questions that imply a wish for praise, His mind is absent, as one can easily see.

Night falls. After the last greetings of the citizens who before going home drop in at the kitchen to say good night to the Master, silence reigns in Nob. It is supper time. It is bedtime for children and old people, for those who are weakly through illness or age.

It must be a custom to give presents at the Feast of the Lights, because as soon as old John withdraws to his little room near the kitchen, I see Eliza and the apostles busy themselves, the former finishing a garment, the latter completing useful items carved in wood, and a tent in network, made with little ropes dyed red, green, yellow and indigo, a special work of fishermen. Thomas, Matthew, Bartholomew and the Zealot are looking at them.

« Here it is. I have finished » says Eliza standing up and shaking loose threads off the garment.

« It will keep him warm, poor old man! Eh! we men are really poor wretches without women. I do not know what we would be like without you, after being away from home for months. I can do this, but if I have to sew on a clasp!... » says Peter feeling the cloth.

« You have done it quickly, too. You are like my wife » says Bartholomew.

« I have finished, too. This was good wood. Soft to carve but strong at the same time » says Judas Thaddeus laying a small wooden box to be used for salt or spices on the dark table.

« Mine instead is not yet finished. There is a hard vein here that is difficult to carve. Perhaps I will not be able to finish the job. And I am sorry. The beauty of it was in the dark veins in the light wood. Look, Jesus. Don't they look like mountain crests painted on wood? » says James of Alphaeus showing a kind of vase, I do not know for what use it may be destined, of a really beautiful shape, with a dome-shaped lid and gracefully veined in the belly and lid. It is just the wood of the lid near the knob that is resisting stubbornly.

« Insist, and you will see that it can be done. Make your tool red-hot.

It will bite into its fibre and then you will manage. When the first layer is broken... » replies Jesus Who has been watching.

« But will the fire not spoil it? » asks Matthew.

« Not if it is used skilfully. In any case, either that or it will have to be thrown away. »

James makes a sharp bradawl red-hot and presses its red point against the obstinate part. There is a smell of burning wood...

« That's enough. Carve it now and you will succeed » says Jesus. And He helps His cousin holding the lid tight like a vice.

The blade slips twice and skims Jesus' fingers. « Take Your hand away, Brother. I wouldn't like to hurt You... » says James of Alphaeus. But Jesus goes on holding the vase. The third time the sharp knife makes Jesus' thumb bleed.

« There You are! See? You have hurt Yourself! Let me see! »

« It is nothing. Two drops of blood... » replies Jesus shaking His finger to let the blood drop. « You should rather dry the lid. It is stained » He then adds.

« No. Leave it! It is precious thus. Wipe Your finger here, Master. Here, in my veil. Your blood is blessed blood » says Eliza enveloping the hand in her linen veil.

The lid, the cause of so much trouble, is conquered. The carving is accomplished.

« It wanted to do some harm first » remarks the Zealot.

« Yes! Then it was persuaded. Obstinate wood! » says Thomas.

« With iron, fire and pain. It sounds like one of those sentences so dear to the Romans » states the Zealot.

« It reminds me, I do not know why, of the prophets in certain parts. We are obstinate wood as well... and will it take iron, fire and pain to make us good? » asks Bartholomew.

« It will really take that. And it will not be enough either. I am working with iron and My grief, but not every heart can imitate that piece of wood... Be quiet! There is someone outside... There is the shuffling of feet... »

They listen. No noise is heard.

« It was the wind, perhaps, Master. There are dry leaves in the kitchen garden... »

« No. It was footsteps... »

« A night animal. I cannot hear anything. »

« Neither can I, neither can I... »

Jesus is listening. He seems to hear. He then looks up and gazes at Judas of Kerioth, who is also listening very carefully. More than anybody else. He gazes at him so intently that Judas asks: « Why are You looking at me thus, Master? » But there is no reply because a hand knocks at the door. Of the fourteen faces lit up by the lamp, only Jesus' remains as it was. The others change colour.

« Open, open the door, Judas of Kerioth! »

« No, I am not opening! It may be wicked people who have deliberately come at night. Do not let it be me who may hurt You! »

« Simon of Jonas, open it, please. »

« Less than never! On the contrary, I am going to push the table against the door! » says Peter and he is about to do so.

« Open, John, and be not afraid. »

« Oh! if You really want to let people in, I am going into the old man's room. I don't want to see anything » says the Iscariot covering with four strides the distance between him and the door of the old man's room, into which he disappears.

John, standing near the door, with his hand already on the key, casts a frightened glance at Jesus and murmurs: « Lord!... »

« Open and be not afraid. »

« Of course. After all we are thirteen strong men. It cannot be an army! With four blows and a few screams - Eliza, make sure you scream if necessary - we will put them to flight. We are not in a desert! » says James of Zebedee and he takes off his mantle and rolls up the sleeves of his tunic or vest, ready for action. Peter imitates him.

John, still hesitant, opens the door, he looks out. He does not see anything. He shouts: « Who is disturbing? »

A woman replies in a subdued, suffering voice: « A woman. I want the Master. »

« This is no time to come to people's houses. If you are sick, why are you about at this time? If you are a leper, why do you venture to come into a village? If you are grieved, come back tomorrow. Go away and mind your own business » says Peter who is standing behind John.

« Oh! for pity's sake! I am all alone in the road. I am cold and hungry. I am a poor wretch. Call the Master for me. He is merciful... »

The apostles look at Jesus perplexedly. Jesus is very severe and silent. They close the door.

« What shall we do, Master? Shall we give her at least a little bread. There is no room for her. To go to people's houses with an unknown woman... » asks Philip.

« Wait. I will go and see » says Bartholomew and he gets hold of the lamp to see.

« You need not go. The woman is neither cold nor hungry, and she knows very well where to go. She is not afraid of the night. But she is a poor wretch, although she is neither sick nor a leper. She is a prostitute and has come to tempt Me. I am telling you that, so that you may be aware that I know, that you may be convinced that I know. And I also tell you that she has not come owing to a whim of her own; but she has come because she is paid to come. » Jesus has spoken in a loud voice, so that He could be heard in the adjoining

room, where is Judas.

« And who would do that? And why? » says the Iscariot appearing once again in the kitchen. « Certainly not the Pharisees, or the scribes, or the priests, if she is a prostitute. Neither do I think that the Herodians are so... resentful as to take all the trouble to... I do not know myself why. »

« I will tell you why. To be able to say that I am a sinner, one who has relations with public sinners. And you know as well as I do that it is so. And I also tell you that I do not curse her or those who sent her. I am still and always Mercy. And I am going to her. If you wish to come with Me, come. I am going to her because she really is a poor wretch. When she says that she is, she thinks that she is telling a lie, because she is young, beautiful and well paid, she is healthy and pleased with her ill-famed life. But she is wretched. It is the only truth among all her lies. Go ahead of Me and be present at our conversation. »

« No, I don't want to be present. Why should I? »

« To bear witness to those who will ask you. »

« And who do You think is going to ask me? There is no question to be asked among us, and the others... I cannot see anybody. »

« Be obedient. Go ahead. »

« No. I don't want to obey You, and You cannot compel me to approach a prostitute. »

« Hey! What are you? The High Priest? I will come, Master, and without any fear of getting infected » says Peter.

« No. I will go by Myself. Open the door. »

Jesus goes out into the kitchen garden. In the dark moonless night it is not possible to see anything.

The kitchen door is opened again, and Peter comes out with a lamp. « Take this at least, Master, if You really do not want me » he says in a loud voice. And then in a subdued voice: « Bear in mind that we are behind the door. In case of need, call... »

« Yes. Go. And do not quarrel with one another. »

Jesus takes the lamp and lifts it up to see. Behind the big trunk of the walnut-tree there is a human figure. Jesus takes two steps towards it, saying: « Follow Me. » And He goes and sits down on the stone bench placed against the house, on the eastern side.

The woman comes forward, she is covered with a veil and is stooped. Jesus lays the lamp on the stone, close to Himself. « Speak. » His order is so austere and so severe, and He is so Divine, that the woman instead of coming forward and speaking, steps back and stoops even more, remaining silent.

« Speak up, I tell you. You wanted Me. I have come. Speak » He says with a shade of kindness in His voice.

Silence.

« Then I will speak. I ask you: why do you hate Me so much as to

serve those who want My ruin and wish it in every way, and seek all possible causes for it? Tell Me. What wrong have I done you, o wretched woman? What harm have you received from the Man Who has not even derided you in His heart for the ill-famed life you are leading? What? Have you been corrupted by the Man Who not even in His heart has wished to have you, that you hate Him more than you hate those who prostituted you and despise you every time they come to you? Answer Me! What has Jesus of Nazareth done to you, Jesus the Son of man, Whom you hardly know by sight, having met Him in the street in town, Jesus who does not know your face and takes no heed of your favours and seeks only the foul defaced image of your soul, to become acquainted with it and cure it? So speak up!

Do you not know who I am? Yes, you know Me partly. Nay, you know as much as two parts. You know that I am young and that you like My person. Your unrestrained animalism told you that. And your tongue of a drunken woman told those who received the confession of your sensuality and have turned it into a weapon to injure Me. You know that I am Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. You have been told who I am by those who exploiting your sensuality paid you to come here to tempt Me. They said to you: "He says that He is the Christ. The crowds say that He is the Holy One, the Messiah. He is nothing but an impostor. We need the proof that He is a miserable man. Give us that proof, and we will cover you with gold". And as you, with a remainder of justice, the last particle of the treasure of justice that God had put into your body with your soul, and that you shattered and scattered, did not want to hurt Me, as you loved Me, your way, they said to you: "We shall do Him no harm. On the contrary! We shall surrender the man to you, giving you the means to let Him live as a king beside you. It is sufficient for us to be able to say to ourselves, to be at peace with our own consciences, that He is simply a man. A proof that we are right not believing Him to be the Messiah". That is what they said to you. And you came. But if I should yield to your allurements, hell would be upon Me. They are ready to cover Me with filth and to capture Me. And you are their instrument to do that.

You can see that I am not asking you questions. I am speaking because I know, without having to ask. But if you know those two things, you do not know the third one. You do not know who I am, in addition to being a man and Jesus. You see the man. Other people say to you: "He is the Nazarene". But I tell you who I am. I am the Redeemer. In order to redeem one must be without sin. Look how I trampled on My possible sensuality as a man. As I am doing with this disgusting caterpillar that in the darkness was moving from one heap of dirt to another for its lascivious sensuality. That is how I always trampled on it. That is how I trample on it even

now. And likewise I am willing to tear your disease away from you and tread on it, freeing you from it to make you holy and healthy. Because I am the Redeemer. Only that. I took the body of man to save you, to destroy sin, not to sin. I took it to remove your sins, not to sin with you. I took it to love you, but with a love that gives its life, its blood, its word, everything, to take you to Heaven, to Justice, not to love you as a brute. And not even as a man, because I am more than a man.

Do you know exactly who I am? You do not know. You did not even know the significance of what you were going to accomplish. And I forgive you for that, without you asking for it. You did not know. But your prostitution? How could you live in that state? You were not like that. You were good. Oh! poor wretch! Do you not remember your childhood? Do you not remember the kisses of your mother? Her words? And the hours of prayer? The words of Wisdom you heard your father explain in the evening and the leader of the synagogue on Sabbaths? Who made you dull-witted and who intoxicated you? Do you not remember? Do you not regret it? Tell Me! Are you really happy? Are you not replying? I will speak in your stead and I say: no, you are not happy. When you wake up you find your shame on your pillow giving you the first daily twist of torture. And the voice of your conscience howls its reproach while you adorn and perfume yourself to look pleasant. And you smell an infamous scent in the finest essences. And a nauseating taste in rare dishes. And your jewels are as heavy as a chain. And they are. And while you laugh and allure, something moans within you. And you get drunk to overcome the boredom and nausea of your life. And you hate those whom you say you love for the sake of gain. And you curse yourself. And your sleep is heavy with nightmares. And the thought of your mother is a sword in your heart. And the curse of your father gives you no peace. And then there are the insults of those who meet you, the cruelty of those who use you, always mercilessly. You are a merchandise. You sold yourself. One makes use of purchased goods as one likes. One tears them, consumes them, treads and spits on them. It is the right of the buyer. You cannot rebel... And does that situation make you happy? No. You are in despair. You are in chains. You are tortured. On the Earth you are a dirty rag on which anybody can tread. If, in some moments of grief, you seek comfort raising your spirit to God, you feel the wrath of God upon you, a prostitute, and that Heaven is more closed to you than it was to Adam. If you are not well, you dread death because you know what your destiny is. The Abyss is for you.

Oh! miserable woman! And was that not enough? To the chain of your sin would you like to add also that of being the ruin of the Son of man? Of Him Who loves you? The Only One Who loves you?

Because He clothed Himself with flesh also for your soul. I could save you, if you wanted. The Abyss of Merciful Holiness is bending over the abyss of your abjection and is waiting for your wish to be saved to draw you up from the abyss of your filth. In your heart you think that it is impossible for God to forgive you. You base this thought of yours on the comparison with the world that does not forgive you for being a prostitute. But God is not the world. God is Goodness. God is forgiveness. God is Love.

You came to Me, being paid to harm Me. I solemnly tell you that the Creator, in order to save one of His creatures, can turn into good even what is evil. And if you want, your coming to Me will be changed into good. Be not ashamed of your Saviour. Be not ashamed of showing Him your bare heart. Even if you wish to conceal it, He sees it and weeps over it. He weeps. He loves. Be not ashamed of repenting. Be as bold in repentance as you were in sin. You are not the first prostitute to weep at My feet and to be led back to justice by Me... I have never rejected any person, no matter how guilty the person was. I have always tried to attract sinners to me and save them. It is My mission. I am not horrified at the state of a heart. I know Satan and his deeds. I know men and their weaknesses. I know the condition of woman who pays, and justly, for the consequences of Eve's sin more severely than man. So I know how to judge and how to pity. And I tell you that I am more severe with those who make women fall than with the women who have fallen. In your case, o unhappy woman, I am more severe with those who sent you than with you who came, not knowing exactly what you were lending yourself to. I would have preferred you to come urged by the desire for redemption, like other sisters of yours. But if you countenance the wish of God, and you turn an evil deed into the headstone of your new life, I will speak to you the word of peace... »

Jesus, Who was severe at the beginning and has become kinder and kinder, still remaining so... divine as to exclude all weakness of senses and also every possible error of evaluation of His goodness, is now silent, looking at the woman, who has been standing all the time, stooping more and more, at about two metres from Him, and who, in the middle of His speech has taken her hands to her face pressing her veil against it, two beautiful hands outstanding against the dark mantle and all adorned with rings. Bracelets are at the wrists of arms bare up to the elbows.

I could not say whether she is weeping or not. If she is, she is doing it so silently because I cannot hear any sobs or see any movement. She is so still in her dark clothes that she looks like a statue. Then all of a sudden she falls on her knees and curls herself up on the ground and then she really weeps without any reluctance to show it. Then, lying on the ground dejectedly, she begins to speak:

« It is true! You really are a prophet... Everything is true... They paid me for this... But they told me that it was a wager... They would have found You in my house... But also close to You... »

« Woman, I will only listen to the story of your sins... » says Jesus interrupting her.

« That is true. I am not entitled to accuse anybody because I am a dung-heap. Everything is true. I am not happy... I do not enjoy riches, banquets, love affairs... I blush when I think of my mother... I am afraid of God and of death... I hate the men who pay me. Everything You said is true. But do not drive me away, Lord. No one, after my mother, has ever spoken to me as You did. Nay, You have spoken to me even more kindly than my mother, who in the last days was hard to me because of my behaviour... I ran away to Jerusalem not to hear her any more... But You... And yet Your kindness is like snow on the fire devouring me. My fire is dying down, it is a different fire. It was scorching, but gave no light or heat. I was as cold as ice and I was in darkness. Oh! how much I suffered through my own will! How much useless cursed grief I have caused myself! Lord, through the half-open door I told you that I was an unhappy woman and to have mercy on me. They were the lies they taught me to tell You to lure You into the trap. They said to me that, afterwards, my beauty would do the rest... My beauty! My clothes! ... »

The woman stands up. Now that she is standing I can see that she is tall. She tears off her veil and mantle and appears in her true beauty of a brown-haired woman with a very white complexion. Her eyes, enlarged with bistre, are large and beautiful and they have the look of amazed innocence, which is odd to be found in this type of woman. Perhaps they have already been washed by her tears. The woman tears and treads on the cloth of her mantle, she rends her veil, she pulls off the precious buckles from both and throws them on the ground, takes off her rings and bracelets, she flings away the ornaments on her head, she gets hold of her curly locks full of shiny clasps and tears and ruffles them to destroy their artificial beauty in a fury of sacrifice that is even frightening. Her necklace, stretched violently, becomes unstrung and falls to the ground and her foot shod in ornate sandals treads on the gems crushing them; her precious belt and a clasp fastening her dress on her breast with artistic style, have the same fate. And all that takes place while in a low panting voice she repeats: « Away! Cursed things. Away! You and who gave them to me. Away, my beauty! Away, my hair. Away, my complexion as white as jasmine! »

With a swift movement she gets hold of a sharp stone that she sees on the ground and she strikes her face and mouth till they bleed and she scratches herself with her painted nails. Blood falls

in drops from her wounds, her features are swollen with blows... until her fury dies down and panting, exhausted, disfigured, unkempt, with clothes torn and stained with blood and earth, she throws herself on the ground at Jesus' feet, moaning: « And now You can forgive me, if You see my heart, because there is nothing of my past, nothing of... You have won, Lord, against Your enemies and against my flesh... Forgive my sins... »

« I had already forgiven you when I came to meet you. Stand up and sin no more. »

« Tell me what I must do, so that I may do it. »

« Go away from the places of your sins, from those who know who you are. Your mother... »

« Oh! my Lord! She will not receive me any more. She hates me as my father died because of me, cursing me. »

« If God Who is God receives you, and He receives you because He is a Father, can your mother not receive you, as she gave birth to you and is a woman like you? Go to her with all humility. Weep at her feet as you are weeping at Mine. Make a full confession to her as you did to Me. Tell her your sufferings. Implore her mercy. Your mother has been waiting for this moment for years. She is waiting for it that she may die in peace. Bear her words of loving reproach as you bore Mine. I was a stranger to you, and yet you listened to Me. She is your mother. It is therefore twice as much your duty to listen to her respectfully. »

« You are the Messiah. You are more than my mother. »

« Now you say that. But when you came to tempt Me you did not know that I was the Messiah, and yet you have listened to My words. »

« You were so different from men... so... You are holy, o Jesus of Nazareth! »

« Your mother is holy as a mother and as a creature. Through her prayers you have found mercy with God. A mother is always holy! And God wants her to be honoured. »

« I have dishonoured her. The whole village knows that. »

« That is another reason why you should go to her and say: "Mother, forgive me". And it is another reason for consecrating your life to her to repay her for the pains she suffered because of you. »

« I will do that... But... Lord, do not send me back to Jerusalem. They are waiting for me... and I do not know whether I will be able to resist their threats... Let me stay here until dawn, and then... »

« Wait a moment. »

Jesus stands up, He goes to the kitchen door, He knocks, and has the door opened. He says: « Eliza, come out. »

Eliza obeys. Jesus takes her towards the woman who seeing another woman, who is also elderly, come towards her, makes a

gesture as if she were ashamed, and she tries to cover her face and immodest dress with what remains of her torn mantle and veil.

« Listen, Eliza. I am leaving this house at once. You will tell My disciples to join Me at Herod's Gate at dawn. All of them, except Judas who must come with Me. You will take this woman to sleep with you. You can take My bed because I will not come back to Nob for a long time. Tomorrow, when John gets up, you and he will take this woman where she tells you. You will give her an ordinary dress and one of your mantles. And you will help her in everything. »

« All right, Lord. I will do what You wish. I am sorry for John... »

« I am sorry, too. I wanted to make him happy, but the hatred of men prevents the Son of man from granting an hour of joy to a just man... »

« And afterwards, Lord? »

« Afterwards? You can go back to Bethzur and wait... Goodbye, Eliza. May My blessing and My peace be with you. Goodbye, woman. I am entrusting you to a mother and to a just man. But if you think that you have to come back to get what belongs to you... »

« No. I do not want to have anything of the past. »

« My dear woman, you cannot leave everything abandoned. Have you no servant or relatives? » asks Eliza.

« I have only a maidservant... and... »

« You will have to dismiss her, you will have to... »

« I beg you to do it, when you come back. Help me to recover completely, woman. » There is true anguish in her voice.

« Yes, my daughter, I will. Do not be distressed. We will see to everything tomorrow. Now come upstairs with me » and Eliza takes her by the hand and leads her upstairs, into one of the two little rooms.

"She then comes down quickly, and says: « I think that it would be a good thing if they all saw You without her, Lord. Neither should they know where she is. These jewels... » She stoops to pick up rings and bracelets, buckles and hairpins and belt and as many beads of the broken necklace as she can. « What shall we do with these? » she asks.

« Come with Me. You are right. It is better if they see Me. »

They go into the kitchen. They all look at Jesus inquisitively. Also the old man has got up, awakened perhaps by a dispute.

« Eliza, give those precious items to Thomas. And tomorrow, Thomas, you will sell them to some goldsmith. They will be of use for the poor. Yes, they are jewels of a woman, of that woman. And that is the answer to those who think that human flesh can tempt the Son of man and deviate Him from His mission. And it is also an advice to those who hate Me, that every subterfuge to find faults

with which to charge Me is useless. John, Eliza will tell you what you are to do. I bless you... »

« Are You leaving me, Lord? » The old man is grieved.

« I must. Goodbye. Peace be with you. » He addresses the apostles: « Go and rest. Everybody except Judas, who will come with Me. »

« Where? It's night-time » objects Judas.

« To pray. It will do you no harm. Or are you afraid of the air of the night, if you breathe it with Me? »

Judas lowers his head taking his mantle with a bad grace, while Jesus takes His.

« Tomorrow at dawn at Herod's Gate. We shall go to the Temple and... »

« No! » The "no" is unanimous. Judas' is the loudest.

« We shall go to the Temple. Did you not say that you have convinced them to leave Me in peace? »

« That is true. »

« Then we shall go to the Temple. Come » and He sets off to go out.

« And that is the end of the feast that we had prepared... » says Peter with a sigh.

« You should say that it ended before beginning » replies James of Zebedee.

Jesus is already on the threshold of the open door. He turns round and blesses them, then He disappears into the night.

In the kitchen they have all been struck dumb. Finally Matthew asks Eliza: « But what happened, after all? »

« I do not know. There was a woman who was weeping. And He said to me what He said also to you. Who she was, from where and why she came, I do not know... »

« Well. Let us go... » And they all go away, with the exception of Matthew and Bartholomew who sleep in the house.

### **531. Jesus and Judas of Kerioth Going towards Jerusalem.**

25th November 1946.

The horizon clears at dawn. The olive-grove covering the mountain brightens very slowly emerging from the shadow, and the trunks, still in the shade, seem to be absent whilst their silvery foliage is visible. Fog seems to be spread over the mountain, but it is only the greyness of the leafy branches in the uncertain morning light.

Jesus is alone under the olive-trees. But it is not Gethsemane. Because Gethsemane is parallel, so to say, to the Moriah, whereas the Moriah here is in front of the olive-grove. So we are north of Jerusalem, beyond the graves of the kings. Jesus is still praying

and He does not stop even when the first chirping of birds tells Him that it is daytime. Only when the first rays of the risen sun light up a golden spot on the so far dimmed gold of the domes of the Temple, He stands up, He takes off and shakes His mantle with traces of earth and a few dry leaves sticking to the heavy cloth, with one hand He smoothes His beard and hair, He tidies his tunic and belt, He checks the straps of His sandals, He puts on His mantle and He sets off down the mountain along a tiny path hardly traced out among the trunks. He is perhaps directing His steps towards that little house, half way down the slope, from the chimney of which smoke is rising. No. He makes a detour towards another wider path that descends towards the main road that takes one to town.

Judas of Kerioth rushes down the mountain behind Him. I say he rushes because he is running like a madman to join the Master. And when he is within hearing distance, he calls Him. Jesus stops. Judas reaches Him panting: « Master... fortunately I thought I should come looking for You! Were You going away like that, without me? Yesterday evening You told me to wait for You in the house, because You would certainly come. Instead... »

« Did I not tell everybody that I would wait for you at Herod's Gate at dawn? It is dawn. And I am going to Herod's Gate. »

« Yes, but... that was for the others. You and I were together. »

« Together? » Jesus is very serious.

« Of course, Master. We came away together. You wanted that. Then You preferred to go and pray by Yourself. But I was willing to come with You. »

« At Nob you made it clear that it was not agreeable to you to spend the night praying with your Master. And I spared you a forced act of virtue. It would have been of no avail. Good deeds are to be performed spontaneously so that they may be scented and fertile. Otherwise they are only a pantomime... and at times worse than a pantomime. »

« But I... Why have You been so severe with me recently? Do You no longer love me? »

« Even more so I could ask you: do you not love Me? But I will not ask you. Because also that question would be a useless one and I never do useless things. »

« Of course! Because You know very well that I love You! »

« I wish I knew, Judas of Kerioth. And I wish I could say to you: I know that you love Me. But as I never do useless things, so I never speak false words. So I will not say to you that I know that you love Me. »

« But why, Master! Do I not love You? Do I not work for You? Can You doubt it? That grieves me. Because as soon as I realise that something grieves You, I avoid doing it and I watch that it is not

done! Look: I understood that You did not like... my going out at night. And I did not go out any more. I realised that the disputes of Your enemies fatigued You excessively. So I went - and I was not spared insults - and told them to stop it, and You know that You have not been troubled any more. And I hope that You will not be troubled in the Temple either. You are not fair, Master, with poor Judas! »

« You are the first among all My followers to reproach Me of unfairness... »

« Oh! forgive me! But Your words, Your severity grieves me so much that I can no longer ponder on things. They drive me crazy, believe me. Well, my peace, let us make it up between us. I want to be with You as if I were one thing with You. Always together... »

« Once we were so. But now tell Me, Judas: when are we so now? »

« Still because of that night? Or because I did not come with You to Bethabara? But You know why I did not come. For Your own good... And with regard to that night... I am a young man, Lord! But apart from those moments, when, I admit it, I may have made a mistake, nay I certainly did do wrong, I am always close to You. »

« I am not talking of physical closeness, but of the spiritual one, of the closeness of thoughts and hearts. You are far, Judas, from your Saviour, and you are going farther and farther away. »

« There You are! All reproaches are for me! And yet You can see how humbly I accept them. I said to You: "Send me away". But You kept me... so what do You want of me? »

« What do I want!! I would like not to have become Incarnate in vain for you. That is what I would like! But by now you belong to another father, to another country, you speak a different language... Oh! What shall I do, Father, to cleanse the profaned temple of this son of Yours and My brother? » Jesus, Who is very pale, weeps speaking to His Father.

Judas becomes wan, too, and he moves aside a little, in silence. Jesus overtakes him in a few steps, descending the hill, His head lowered, closed in His grief. Judas then makes a gesture of mockery, of threat, I would say like a cruel oath behind the back of the Innocent One. His face, so far masked by a hypocritical gloss of kindness and humility, becomes bony, hard, ugly, cruel: really demoniac. All the hatred, but not a human hatred, is in the fire of his dark eyes, and that fiery hatred is concentrated on Jesus' tall person. Then shrugging his shoulders and striking his foot angrily, Judas ends his internal reasoning. And he sets out, composedly, like one who has made a decision past recall.

The town walls are now close at hand. People are crowding at the gates: strangers, market-gardeners, people from nearby villages. Among them, near the walls, are the eleven apostles who go to meet the Master as soon as they see Him.

« Master, while we were waiting here, a man came looking for You. He said that Valeria begs You to go to the synagogue of the Roman freedmen; to make sure that You go because she will be there. »

« All right. We shall go. Let us go to Joseph of Sephoris first, because My mantle is not clean. »

« Where did You sleep, Lord? » asks Peter.

« Nowhere, Peter. I prayed on the mountain. The ground was damp and muddy, as you can see. »

« Why pray out in the open air, Lord? It may injure Your health... »

« The elements do not injure the Son of man. The things of God are good... It is men that hate the Man. »

Peter sighs... They go away towards the house of the Galilean, followed by the others...

### **532. In the Synagogue of the Roman Freedmen.**

26th November 1946.

The synagogue of the Romans is exactly on the other side of the Temple, near the Hippicus tower. People are waiting for Jesus. And when He is pointed out at the beginning of the street, some women are the first to meet Him. Jesus is with Peter and Thaddeus.

« Hail, Master. I am grateful to You for hearing me. Have You come into town just now? »

« No, I have been here since the first hour. I went to the Temple. »

« The Temple? Did they not insult You? »

« No. It was early morning and people were not aware of My coming. »

« That is why I sent for You... and also because there are some Gentiles who would like to hear You speak. For days they have been going to the Temple waiting for You. But they were derided and even threatened. I was there as well yesterday and I realised that they are waiting for You to insult You. I sent men to each gate. With gold one achieves everything... »

« I am grateful to you. But it is not possible for Me not to go up to the Temple, as I am the Rabbi of Israel. Who are these women? »

« My freed woman Tusnilde. Twice a barbarian, Lord. She comes from the Teutoburger Wald. A prey of those rash advances that have cost so much blood. My father gave her to my mother, who gave her to me, at my wedding. She passed from her gods to ours, and from ours to You, because she does what I do. She is so good. The other women are the wives of Gentiles waiting for You. They come from every region. Most of them are suffering. They came in the husbands' ships. »

« Let us go into the synagogue... »

The synagogue leader, standing at the door, bows and introduces himself: « Mattathias, a Sicilian, Master. Praise and blessings to You. »

« Peace to you. »

« Come in. I will close the door so that we may be at peace. Such is the hatred that the bricks are eyes and the stones ears to watch You and denounce You, Master. Perhaps these people are better, as providing one does not interfere with their business, they leave us alone » says the old synagogue leader walking beside Jesus, taking Him through a little yard into a large room, which is the synagogue.

« Let us cure the sick people first, Mattathias. Their faith deserves a reward » says Jesus. And He passes from one woman to another imposing His hands. Some are healthy, but the little son they are holding in their arms is ill, and Jesus cures the child.

One is a little girl completely paralysed, and as soon as she is cured, she shouts: « Sitare kisses Your hands, Lord! »

Jesus, Who had already passed on, turns round smiling and asks: « Are you Syrian? »

Her mother explains: « Phoenician, Lord. From beyond Sidon. We live on the banks of the Tamiri. And I have ten more sons and two more daughters, one is Syra, the other Tamira. And Syra, although little more than a girl, is a widow. So much so, that being free, she settled here in town with her brother, and is one of Your believers. She told us that You can do everything. »

« Is she not with you? »

« Yes, Lord, she is. She is over there, behind those women. »

« Come forward » says Jesus.

The woman comes forward timidly.

« You must not be afraid of Me, if you love Me » says Jesus encouraging her.

« I do love You. That is why I left Alexandroscene. Because I thought that I would hear You again... and I would learn to accept my sorrow... » She weeps.

« When did you become a widow? »

« At the end of your month of Adar... If You had been there, Zeno would not have died. He said so... because he had heard You and he believed in You. »

« Then he is not dead, woman. Because he who believes in Me, lives. The true life is not lived by the body in these few days. The true life is achieved believing in and following the Way, the Truth, the Life, and acting according to His word. Even if a person believes and follows for a short time, and acts for a short time, soon interrupted by the death of the body, even if it were for one day only, for one hour only, I solemnly tell you that that person

will not know death any more. Because My Father, Who is also the Father of all men, will not take into account the time spent in My Law and in My Faith, but the will of man to live until death in that Law and Faith. I promise eternal Life to those who believe in Me and act according to what I say, loving the Saviour, propagating that love and practicing My teaching during the time granted to them. The workers of My vineyard are all those who come and say: "Lord, accept me among Your workers", and they persevere in that will until My Father considers that their day has come to an end. I solemnly tell you that there will be workers who have worked for one hour only, their last hour, and will receive their reward more promptly than those who have worked since the first hour, but always with tepidness, urged to work only by the idea of not deserving hell, that is by the fear of punishment. That is not the way to work that My Father rewards with immediate glory. On the contrary such clever selfish people, who are anxious to do good and only so much of it as is sufficient not to deserve eternal punishment, will be given a long expiation by the eternal Judge. They will have to learn at their own expense, through a long expiation, to achieve a spirit active in love, and in true love, entirely directed to the glory of God. And I also tell you that in future there will be many, particularly among the Gentiles, who will be the workers of one hour and even less than one hour, and they will become glorious in My Kingdom, because in that hour of harmony with Grace inviting them to enter the Vineyard of God, they reached heroic perfection of Charity. So be cheerful, woman. Your husband is not dead, he lives. You have not lost him, he is only separated from you for some time. Now, like a bride who has not yet entered the house of her bridegroom, you must prepare yourself for the true immortal wedding with him whom you are mourning. Oh! the happy wedding of two spirits who have become sanctified and are rejoined for ever where there is no separation, no fear of estrangement, no pain, where the spirits will rejoice in the love of God and in their reciprocal fondness! Death is true life for the just, because nothing can threaten the vitality of the spirit, that is its permanency in Justice. Do not weep for or mourn what is transient, o Syra. Raise your spirit, and see with justice and truth. God has loved you by saving your husband from the danger that the deeds of the world might demolish his faith in Me. »

« You have consoled me, Lord. I will live as You say. May You be blessed and may Your Father be blessed with You, for ever. »

The leader of the synagogue, while Jesus is about to move forward, says: « May I make an objection, without meaning any offence? »

« Tell Me. I am here, the Master, to give wisdom to those who ask for it. »

« You said that some will become glorious at once in Heaven. Is Heaven not closed? Are the just not in Limbo awaiting to enter it? »

« It is so. Heaven is closed. And it will be opened only by the Redeemer. But His hour has come. I solemnly tell you that the day of Redemption is already dawning in the east and it will soon be broad daylight. I solemnly tell you that no other feast will come, after this one, before that day. I solemnly tell you that I am already forcing the gates, as I am already on the top of the mountain of My sacrifice... My sacrifice is already pressing against the gates of Heaven because it is already active. Remember, man, that when it is accomplished, the sacred curtains and the celestial gates will be opened. Because Jehovah will no longer be present with His glory in the Holy of Holies, and it will be useless to put a veil between the Incognoscible One and mortals, and Mankind, who preceded us and was just, will go back to where it was destined, with the First-Born heading it, already a complete whole in body and spirit, and His brothers wearing the garment of light that they will have until also their bodies are called to the jubilation. »

Jesus in the singing tone used by synagogue leaders and rabbis repeating biblical words or psalms, says: « And He said to me: "Prophesy over these bones and say to them: 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord... I am going to inspire the spirit into you and you will live. I shall put sinews in you, I shall make flesh grow on you, I shall cover you with skin and give your breath and you will live and you will learn that I am the Lord... I am now going to open your graves... I shall raise you from your graves... When I put My spirit in you, you will live and I shall resettle you on your own soil'". »

He resumes His normal way of speaking and lowering His arms that He had stretched out He says: « Two are the resurrections of what is arid and dead to life. Two are outlined in the words of the prophet. The first is resurrection to Life and in Life, that is, in Grace which is Life, of all those who receive the Word of the Lord, the spirit generated by the Father, and is God like the Father, Whose Son He is, and is named Word, the Word Who is Life and gives Life. That Life of which everybody is in need, and of which Israel, like the Gentiles, is devoid. Because if so far it was sufficient for Israel to hope for and await the Life coming from Heaven, in order to have eternal Life, from now on Israel will have to accept the Life in order to live. I solemnly tell you that those of My people who do not accept Me-Life, will not have the Life, and My coming will be for them cause of death, because they will have rejected the Life that was coming to them to be communicated to them. The hour has come when Israel will be divided into those who are alive and those who are dead. It is the hour to choose to live or die. The Word has spoken, He has shown His Origin and

Power, He has cured, taught, raised people from the dead, and He will soon have accomplished His mission. There is no more excuse for those who do not come to the Life. The Lord passes by. Once He has passed, He does not come back. He did not go back into Egypt to give life back to the first-born of those who had scoffed at and oppressed Him in His children. He will not come back this time either, after the sacrifice of the Lamb has decided destinies. Those who do not receive Me before My passing, and who hate and will hate Me, will not have My Blood to sanctify their spirits, they will not live and will not have their God with them for the remainder of their pilgrimage on the Earth. Without Divine Manna, without the protective bright cloud, without the Water coming from Heaven, devoid of God, they will go wandering through the vast desert that is the Earth, all the Earth, entirely a desert, if those who cross it lack union with Heaven, the closeness of the Father and Friend: God. And there is a second resurrection: the universal one, when the bones which have been dry and scattered for ages, will become fresh and covered with sinews, flesh and skin. And it will be the Judgement. And the flesh and blood of the just will rejoice with their spirits in the eternal Kingdom, and the flesh and blood of the damned will suffer with their spirits in the eternal punishment. I love you, o Israel; I love you, o Gentilism; I love you, o Mankind! And because of this love I invite you to Life and to the blissful Resurrection. »

Those who have gathered in the vast hall are fascinated. There is no difference between the amazement of the Hebrews and that of the others, from different places and religions. Nay, I would say that the ones to be most reverently surprised are the foreigners.

A dignified old man, murmurs between his teeth.

« What did you say, man? » asks Jesus turning round.

« I said that... I was repeating to myself the words I heard in my youth from my teacher: "Man has been granted to rise to divine perfection through virtue. In man there is the brightness of the Creator and the more man ennobles himself through virtue, by almost consuming matter in the fire of virtue, the more that brightness is revealed. And man has been granted to know the Being Who, at least once in man's lifetime, with severe or paternal affection, shows Himself to man, so that he may say: 'I must be good. Poor me, if I am not so! Because an immense Power flashed in front of me to make me understand that virtue is an obligation and a sign of the noble nature of man'. You will find that flash of Divinity in the beauty of nature, or in the word of a dying man, or in the glance of an unhappy person who looks at you and judges, or in the silence of a beloved person who, by being quiet, reproaches a shameful action of yours, you will find it in the fright of a child seeing a violent action of yours, or in the silence of night when you

are all alone with yourselves, and in the most closed and solitary room, you will become aware of another I, much more powerful than yours, Who speaks with a soundless sound. And that will be the God, this God Who must exist, this God Whom Creation worships perhaps without being aware of it, this God, Who the Only One, really satisfies the feelings of virtuous men, who are not sated and comforted by our ceremonies and our doctrines, or before the empty altars, quite empty, notwithstanding that a statue dominates them". I know these words well because for many years I have been repeating them as my code and my hope. I have lived, worked, and I have suffered and wept. But I endured everything, and I hope virtuously, hoping to meet, before my death, this God that Hermogenes promised that I would meet. Now I was saying to myself that I have really seen Him. And not as a flash, and I have not heard His word as a soundless sound. But the Divine One has appeared to me in the clear and most beautiful shape of man, and I heard Him and I am replete with sacred astonishment. The soul, this thing that true men admit, my soul receives You, o Perfection, and says to You: "Teach me Your Way and Your Life and Your Truth, so that one day I, a lonely man, may be joined to You, Supreme Beauty". »

« We shall be rejoined. And I tell you that, later, you will be united again to Hermogenes. »

« But he died without knowing You! »

« Material knowledge is not the only necessary one to possess Me. The man who through his virtue succeeds in feeling the unknown God and in living virtuously in homage to that God, can be really said to have known God, because God revealed Himself to him, as a reward for his virtuous life. It would be dreadful if it were necessary to know Me personally. Very soon it would not be possible for anyone to be united to Me. Because, I tell you, the Living One will soon leave the kingdom of the dead to go back to the Kingdom of Life, and men will have no further possibility to know, except through faith and the spirit. But the knowledge of Me will not stop, nay it will spread and in a perfect way, as it will be devoid of everything that makes senses dull. God will speak, God will act, God will live, God will reveal Himself to the souls of His believers by means of His unknowable and perfect Nature. And men will love the God-Man. And the God-Man will love men with the new means, with the ineffable means that His infinite love will leave on the Earth before going back to the Father, after everything has been accomplished by Him. »

« Oh! Lord! Lord! Tell us how we shall be able to find You and to know that it is You Who are speaking to us and where You are, after You have gone away! » many of them exclaim. And some go on: « We are Gentiles, and we do not know Your law. We have not

enough time to stay here and follow You. How shall we acquire that virtue that makes one worthy of knowing God? »

Jesus smiles, brightly handsome in the happiness of His conquests in Gentilism and He kindly explains:

« Do not worry about learning many laws. These will come (and He lays His hands on the shoulders of Peter and Thaddeus) to bring My Law to the world. But until they come, follow as a rule the following few sentences in which all My Law of Salvation is summarised. Love God with all your hearts. Love authorities, relatives, friends, servants, people, and also your enemies, as you love yourselves. And to be sure that you do not commit sin, before every action, whether you have been ordered to do it or it is a spontaneous one, ask yourselves: "Would I like what I am about to do to this fellow, to be done to me?". And if you feel that you would not like it, do not do it. With these simple lines you are able to trace in yourselves the way by which God will come to you and you will go to God. Because no man would be pleased if a son were ungrateful, or if someone killed him, or another robbed him, or took his wife, or seduced his sister or his daughter or usurped his house, his fields, or his faithful servants. With that rule you will be good children and good parents, good husbands, brothers, merchants, friends. So you will be virtuous, and God will come to you.

I have around Me not only Hebrews and proselytes, in whom there is no wickedness, I mean that they do not come to Me to catch Me at fault, as those do who drove you out of the Temple so that you might not come to the Life, but I have also Gentiles from every part of the world. I see Cretans and Phoenicians mingled with people from Pontus and Phrygia and there is one from the shores of the unknown sea, a route to unknown lands where I will also be loved. And I see Greeks with Sicilians and people from Cyrenaica and Asia. Well, I say to you: go! Tell the people in your countries that the Light is in the world, and let them come to the Light. Tell them that Wisdom left Heaven to become bread for men, water for languishing men. Tell them that Life has come to cure and to revive what is sick or dead. And tell them that... time flows as rapidly as lightning in summer. Let those come who wish to have God. Their spirits will know God. Let those come who want to be cured. As long as My hand is free, it will cure those who invoke it with faith.

Say... Yes! Go quickly and say that the Saviour is waiting for those who expect and wish to have divine assistance at Passover in the holy City. Tell those who are in need and also those who are only curious. The spark of faith in Me, of the Faith that saves, may originate from an impure impulse of curiosity. Go! Jesus of Nazareth, the King of Israel, the King of the world assembles the representatives of the world to give them the treasures of His graces

and have them witnesses of His exaltation that will consecrate Him triumpher for ever and ever, King of kings and Lord of lords. Go!

At the dawn of My earthly life the representatives of My People came from different areas to worship the Child in Whom the Immense One was concealed. The will of a man, who considered himself powerful and was a servant of the will of God, had ordered the census of the Empire. As he obeyed an unknown and intransgressible order of the Most High, that pagan was to become the herald of God, Who wanted all the men of Israel, spread all over the world, in the Land of this people, near Bethlehem Ephrathah, to wonder at the signs that had come from Heaven at the first wailing of a new-born Baby. And as if it were not enough, other signs spoke to the Gentiles and their representatives came to worship the little poor King of kings, Who was then far from His earthly coronation, but was already King in the eyes of angels.

The hour has come when I will be King in the sight of peoples, before I return whence I came. At the end of My earthly day, in the evening of My human lifetime, it is fair that men of all peoples should be here to see Him Who is to be worshipped and in Whom all Mercy is concealed. And may all good people enjoy the early fruit of this new harvest, of this Mercy that will burst like a cloud in Nisan to swell rivers with wholesome waters, capable of making fructiferous the trees planted on their banks, as we read in Ezekiel. »

And Jesus resumes curing sick people and listens to their names, as now they all wish to say their own: « I Zilla I Zabdi... I Gail... I Andrew... I Theophanus... I Selina... I Olyntus I Philip I Elissa... I Berenice... My daughter Gaia... I Argenide I... I... I »

He has finished and He would like to go away. But how insistently they beg Him to stay, to speak again!

And a man, probably blind in one eye, that is covered with a bandage, in order to keep Him a little longer, says: « Lord, I was struck by a man, who was jealous of my good trade. I saved myself with difficulty. But I lost an eye, burst by the blow. Now my enemy has become poor and unpopular and he has fled to a village near Corinth. I come from Corinth. What should I do to him who almost killed me? It is fair that I should not do to other people what I would not like to receive. But I have already received from him... harm; much harm... » and his face is so expressive that one can read on it the thought he has not spoken: « so I should take my revenge on him... »

Jesus looks at him with His smiling sapphire eyes, but with the dignified countenance of the Master, and says: « And you, a man from Greece, are asking Me? Did your great men not say that mortals become like God when they respond to the two gifts that God

grants them to make them like Himself, that is: to be able to be in the truth and to assist one's neighbour? »

« Of course, Pythagoras! »

« And did they not say that man approaches God not through science, power or other means, but by doing good? »

« Yes, Demosthenes! But excuse me, Master, if I ask You... You are a Hebrew and Hebrews are not fond of our philosophers... How do You know such things? »

« Man, because I am the Wisdom that inspired the minds that thought those words. I am wherever Good is active. You, a Greek, should listen to the advice of the wise men, through which advice I still speak. Do good to those who have done you wrong, and God will say that you are holy. And now let Me go. I have other people waiting for Me. Goodbye, Valeria. And do not be afraid for Me. It is not yet My hour. And when My hour comes, not even Caesar's armies could stop My enemies. »

« Hail, Master. And pray for me. »

« That peace may possess you. Goodbye. Peace to you, leader of the synagogue. Peace to My believers and to those who seek peace. »

And with a gesture that is a greeting and a blessing, He leaves the hall, He goes across the yard and out into the street...

### **533. Judas Iscariot and Jesus' Enemies.**

2nd December 1946.

I do not see Jesus, or Peter, or Judas of Alphaeus, or Thomas. But I see the other nine walking towards the Ophel suburb.

The people in the streets are nothing like the large crowds at the Feasts of Passover, Pentecost and of the Tabernacles; it is mostly town people. It would appear that the Feast of Lights was not an important one and the Hebrews were not compelled to be present in Jerusalem. Only those who happened to be in town, or those of the villages near Jerusalem, came to town and went up to the Temple. The others, both because of the season and of the peculiarity of the feast, remained at home in their towns.

But there are many disciples in Jerusalem: those, who out of love for the Lord, have left home and relatives, business and work, and have joined the apostles. But I do not see Isaac, or Abel, or Philip, or Nicolaus, who went to take Sabea to Aera. They are speaking to one another in a friendly manner, telling and listening to all the events that have taken place while they were separated. I would think that they have already seen the Master, probably at the Temple, because they are not surprised at His absence. They are walking slowly, stopping now and again, as if they were waiting for someone, looking ahead and behind, at the streets

descending from Sion towards this one, that takes one to the southern gates of the town.

The Iscariot, who is almost in the rear and is speaking to a little group of disciples full of good will but lacking in knowledge, is called twice by name by some Judaeans, who are following the group without mingling with it, I do not know with what intentions or task. And twice the Iscariot shrugs his shoulders without even turning round. But the third time he is forced to do so, because one of the Judaeans departs from his group, elbows his way through the group of the disciples, gets hold of Judas by the sleeve, and compels him to stop saying: « Come away for a moment, we must speak to you. »

« I have no time and I cannot » replies the Iscariot resolutely.

« You may go. We will wait for you. In any case we cannot leave town until Thomas comes » says Andrew, who is the one nearest to him.

« All right, go ahead, I will come at once » says Judas who does not appear to be willing to do what he has to do.

When he is alone, he says to the pestering fellow: « So? What do you want? What do you all want? Have you not yet finished bothering me? »

« Oh! what a high-and-mighty manner you are putting on! But when we sent for you to give you money, you did not think that we were bothering you! You are proud, man! But there is someone who can make you humble... Bear that in mind. »

« I am a free man and... »

« No. You are not free. He is free whom we cannot enslave in any way. And you know His name. You! ... You are a slave to everything and to everybody, and first of all to your pride. In short. Bear in mind that if you do not come to Caiaphas' house before the sixth hour, there will be trouble for you! » A real threat of trouble.

« All right! I will come. But you had better leave me alone if you want... »

« What? You swindler... a good-for-nothing... »

Judas frees himself pushing away the man who was holding him, and he runs off saying: « I will tell you when I am there. »

He joins his group. He is pensive and somewhat grim. Andrew asks him kindly: « Bad news? No, eh? Perhaps your mother... »

Judas, who at first had looked askance at him, quite ready to give a sharp reply, becomes more humane, and says: « Yes. Not very good... You know... the season... Now... I have just remembered an order of the Master. If that man had not stopped me, I would have forgotten about it... But he mentioned the place where he lives and that name reminded me of the task I was given. Now when I go for it, I will call also on that man and I shall have

more details... »

Andrew, so simple and honest as he is, is far from suspecting that his companion is lying. And he kindly says: « Well go, go at once. I will tell the others. Go and get rid of your worry... »

« No. I must wait for Thomas, on account of the money. A moment sooner or later... »

The others, who had stopped waiting for them, look at them approaching.

« Judas has received sad news » says Andrew thoughtfully.

« Yes... only vaguely. But I shall have more information when I go to do what I have... »

« What? » asks Bartholomew.

« There is Thomas coming » says simultaneously John. And Judas takes advantage of that not to reply.

« Have I kept you waiting long? The fact is that I wanted to do the job properly... And I did. Look what a beautiful purse. Very good for the poor. The Master will be pleased. »

« We needed it. We did not have a farthing left for beggars » says James of Alphaeus.

« Give me it » says the Iscariot stretching out his hand towards the heavy purse that Thomas is tossing in his hands.

« Actually... Jesus entrusted me with the task of the sale and I must give the proceeds to Him. »

« You will tell Him how much you got. Now give me it, because I am in a hurry to go away. »

« No, I am not going to give it to you! When we were going through the Sixtus market Jesus said to me: "Then you will give Me the money". And that is what I am going to do. »

« What are you afraid of? That I may take part of it or that I may deprive you of the merit of the sale? I sold at Jericho, too, and very well. For years I have been responsible for the money. It is my right. »

« Oh! listen! If you want to quarrel over that, take it. I fulfilled my task and I am not interested in the rest. Here it is, take it. There are many things much nicer than that!... » and Thomas hands the purse to Judas.

« Really, if the Master said... »-says Philip.

« Don't let us quibble! We had better go, now that we are all together. The Master told us to be at Bethany before the sixth hour. We shall hardly be in time » says James of Zebedee.

« I will leave you, then. Go on, because I will go and come back at once. »

« No! He said very clearly: "Remain all together" » says Matthew.

« You are to remain all together. But I must go. Particularly now that I heard of my mother!... »

« His words could be interpreted also like that. If he received instructions

of which we are unaware... » says John conciliatorily.

The others, with the exception of Andrew and Thomas, are not very inclined to let him go. Finally they say: « Well, go. But be quick and prudent... »

And Judas runs away along a narrow street towards the hill of Zion, while the others set out again.

« However, it is not fair. We have not done the right thing. The Master had said: "Be always together and be good". We have disobeyed Him. I am upset » say Simon Zealot after some time.

« I thought that, too... » replies Matthew.

The apostles are all in a group since they had to discuss their business. I noticed that the disciples always stand aside respectfully every time the apostles gather together to discuss something.

Bartholomew says: « Let us do this. Let us dismiss now these who are following us, without waiting to be on the Bethany road. Then we shall divide into two groups and we shall wait for Judas, one group on the lower road, the other on the upper one. Those who walk faster, on the lower road, the others on the upper one. If the Master should precede us, He will see us arrive together, because one group will wait for the other outside Bethany. »

They all agree. They dismiss the disciples. Then they go together as far as the spot where one can divert towards Gethsemane taking the upper road on the Mount of Olives, or go along the Kidron, taking the lower one that also goes to Bethany and Jericho...

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Judas in the meantime has been running as if he were chased. He continues for some time to go up the narrow street that takes him towards the top of Zion westwards, he then turns into a narrower street, almost a lane, that instead of going up runs down southwards. He is suspicious. He runs, and now and again he turns round as if he were frightened. He is clearly suspicious of being followed. The narrow street, winding among the corners of houses built without any town planning, end in the open country. Beyond the valley, outside the walls, there is a hill. It is a low hill covered with olive-trees, beyond the arid stony Hinnom valley. Judas is still running fast, passing between the hedges bordering the small kitchen gardens of the last houses near the walls, the poor houses of the poor people in Jerusalem and he does not go out through the Zion gate, although it is close to him, to leave the town, but he runs up towards another gate, which is rather on the western side. He is out of town. He is running like a colt to be quick. He passes like the wind near an aqueduct, and then close to the gloomy caves of the lepers of Hinnom, but he turns a deaf ear to their lamentations. It is obvious that he is seeking places avoided by other people.

He goes straight towards the hill covered with olive-trees, the solitary hill, south of the town. He draws a sigh of relief at the foot

of the hill and slackens his pace, he tidies his headgear, his belt and pulls down his tunic, which had come up, and shading his eyes from the sunshine, he looks eastwards, towards the lower road for Bethany and Jericho. But he does not see anything that may upset him. On the contrary a side of the hill acts as a curtain between him and that road. He smiles. He begins to climb the hill slowly, to take breath after so much panting. And he is pensive, and the more he thinks, the grimmer he becomes. He is certainly talking to himself, but silently. At a certain moment he stops, he takes the purse from his bosom, he watches it carefully, then he puts it back in his bosom after dividing its contents, part of which he puts into his own purse, probably to ensure that what he has concealed in his bosom may not seem too bulky.

Among the olive-trees there is a house. A beautiful house. The most beautiful one on the hill, because the other little houses spread over the slopes, I do not know whether they are part of the estate or they belong to other people, are really modest. He arrives there along a kind of avenue covered with sand among the olivetrees planted orderly. He knocks at the door. He makes himself known. He goes in. He goes resolutely beyond the hall into a square yard on the sides of which there are many doors. He pushes one of them. He enters a large room in which there are many people, among whom I recognise the sly and at the same time resentful face of Caiaphas, the ultra-pharisaic face of Helkai, the stonemarten face of Felix, the member of the Sanhedrin, together with the viper's face of Simon. Farther back there is Doras, the son of Doras, whose features are more and more like his father's, and with him there are Cornelius and Ptolmai. And there are the scribes Sadoc and Hananiah, old and wrinkled with age, but young in malice, and Callasebona the Elder, and Nathanael ben Phaba and then a Doro, a Simon, a Joseph, a Joachim, whom I do not know. Caiaphas mentions the names, I write them. He ends saying: «... gathered here to judge you. »

Judas' face is strange: it shows fear, anger and violence at the same time. But he is silent. He does not display his haughtiness. The others surround him, scoffing at him, each in his own way.

« Well? What have you done with our money? What are you going to tell us, you wise man, who can do everything quickly and well? Where is the fruit of your work? You are a liar, a charlatan, a good-for-nothing. Where is the woman? You have not her either? And so instead of serving us you are serving Him, eh? Is that how you help us? » It is a furious charge of people shouting and bawling threateningly, but many of their words escape me.

Judas lets them howl. When they are tired and breathless, he begins to speak: « I have done what I could. Is it my fault if He is a man whom no one can induce to commit sin? You said that you

wanted to test His virtue. I have given you the proof that He does not sin. So I have served you with regard to what you wanted. Have you, all of you, succeeded in putting Him in a situation whereby He may be prosecuted? No, you have not. From every attempt of yours to make Him appear a sinner, to lure Him into a trap, He has come out greater than previously. So, if you have not been successful with your hatred, was I to succeed, when I do not hate Him, and I am only disappointed of following a poor innocent man, who is too holy to be a king, a king capable of crushing his enemies? What harm has He done to me that I should injure Him? I am saying so because I think that you hate Him to the extent of wanting His death. I can no longer believe that you only want to convince the people that He is mad, and convince us, me, for our own good, and Him as well, out of pity for Him. You are too generous to me, and too furious seeing that He is above evil, for me to believe you. You have asked me what I have done with your money. I used it as you know. I had to spend it extravagantly to convince the woman... And I was not successful with the first one and... »

« Be quiet! That is not true. She was mad on Him and she certainly came at once. In any case you guaranteed it, because you told us that she had admitted it. You are a thief. I wonder for what purpose you have used the money! »

« To ruin my soul, you murderers of souls! To make a sly man of myself, one who has no more peace, and feels he is suspected by Him and by his companions. Because, you had better know that He has found me out... Oh! I wish He had rejected me! But He does not reject me. No. He does not drive me away. He defends me, He protects me, He loves me!... Your money! Why did I ever accept the first farthing? »

« Because you are a wretch. You have enjoyed our money and now you are weeping because you had a good time with it. Liar! In the meantime we have concluded nothing and the crowds around Him are growing in numbers and are more and more enchanted. Our ruin is drawing closer, through your fault! »

« My fault? Why then did you not dare to arrest Him and accuse Him of wanting to be made king? You also told me that you wanted to tempt Him notwithstanding that I had told you that it was quite useless, as He does not crave for power. If you are so clever, why did you not induce Him to commit a sin against His mission? »

« Because He slipped out of our hands. He is a demon and He vanishes like smoke whenever He wishes. He is like a snake: He enchants you, and there is nothing you can do if He looks at you. »

« If He looks at His enemies: at you. Because I see that if He looks at those who do not hate with all their strength, as you do, then

His eyes make them move and be active. Oh! His eyes! Why does He look at me thus and make me good, since I am a monster by myself and you make me ten times more monstrous?! »

« How many words! You assured us that you would help us for the welfare of Israel. Do you not understand, you miserable wretch, that this man is our ruin? »

« Ours? Of whom? »

« Of the whole population! The Romans... »

« No. He is only your ruin. You are afraid of your own ruin. You know that Rome will not be pitiless towards us because of Him. You are aware of that, as well as I am and the people are. But you are trembling because you know, you fear that He may throw you out of the Temple, out of the Kingdom of Israel. And He would do the right thing. He would do a good thing to clean His threshing floor of you, filthy hyenas, dirty asps!... » He is furious.

They get hold of him, they shake him, as they are now furious themselves, they almost knock him down... Caiaphas shouts in his face: « All right. It is so. And if it is so, we are entitled to defend what belongs to us. And since little means are not sufficient any more to convince Him to go away, and not interfere with us, we will arrange the matter by ourselves, leaving you out, you fainthearted servant and chatterbox. And after Him we will deal with you as well, do not doubt it and... »

Helkai keeps Caiaphas quiet and with his ice-cold calmness of a poisonous snake he says: « No. Not so. You are exaggerating, Caiaphas. Judas has done what he could. You must not threaten him. After all has he not the same interests as we have? »

« Don't be silly, Helkai. His interests? I want Him to be crushed! Judas wants Him to triumph, so that he may triumph with Him. And you say... » shouts Simon.

« Peace, peace! You always say that I am severe. But to day I am the only good one. We must understand and pity Judas. He helps us as best he can. He is our good friend, but, of course, he is also the Master's friend. His heart is anguished... He would like to save the Master, himself and Israel... How can he conciliate things so opposed. Let him speak. »

The uproar calms down. Judas can speak at last and he says: « Helkai is right. I... What do you want of me? I do not yet know precisely what you want. I have done what I could. I cannot do more than that. He is by far greater than I am. He reads my heart... and He never treats me as I deserve. I am a sinner and He knows and He absolves me. If I were not such a coward I should... I should kill myself to make it impossible for me to hurt Him. » Judas sits down crushed by the situation. With his face in his hands, his eyes wide open gazing at the void, he is clearly suffering in the struggle between his opposed instincts...

« Nonsense! What do you expect Him to know? You are behaving like that because you are sorry that you pushed yourself forward! » exclaims the one named Cornelius.

« And even if it were so? Oh! I wish it were so! If I were really repentant and capable of remaining in such repentance!... »

« See that! Have you heard him? Our poor money! » says Hananiah moaning.

« We are having to deal with one who does not know what he wants. We have chosen one who is worse than a blockhead! » exclaims Felix aggravating the situation.

« A blockhead? A puppet, you should say! The Galilean pulls him with one string and he goes to the Galilean. We pull him and he comes to us » shouts Sadoc.

« Well, if you are so much cleverer than I am, go on by yourselves. As from today I will take no further interest in the matter. Do not expect any more warnings or words from me. In any case I could not give you any, as He suspects and watches me... »

« Did you not say that He absolves you? »

« Yes. He does. Because He knows everything! Oh! » Judas presses his hands against his face.

« Go away, then, you woman dressed as a man, you disfigured wretch! Go away! We will carry on by ourselves. And make sure you do not speak to Him about this, or you will have to pay for it. »

« I am going! I wish I had never come! But remember what I have already told you. He met your father, Simon, and your brother-inlaw, Helkai. I do not think that Daniel has spoken. I was present and I have never seen them speak standing aside. But your father! He did not speak, so my fellow-disciples told me. He did not even mention your name. He only said that his son had driven him away because he loved the Master and did not approve of your behaviour. But he said that we meet, that I come to your house... And he may tell also the rest. Tekoah is not at the end of the world... Do not say that I have given you away, when we are already too many to be informed of your intentions. »

« My father will never speak again. He died » says Simon slowly.

« He is dead? Did you kill him? How horrible! Why did I tell you where he was!... »

« I did not kill anybody. I have not been out of Jerusalem. There are many ways of dying. Are you surprised that an old man, an old man who goes around collecting money, is killed? In any case... it's his fault. If he had lived quietly, if he did not have eyes to see, ears to hear and a tongue to reproach, he would still be honoured and served in his son's house... » Simon says with exasperating slowness.

« In short... did you get someone to kill him? Parricide! »

« You are mad. The old man was struck, he fell, he hurt his head

and died. An accident. A simple accident. It was his bad luck that he had to collect the toll from a rascal... »

« I know you, Simon. And I cannot believe... You are a murderer... » Judas is dismayed.

Simon laughs in his face saying: « And you are raving. You see a crime where there is only an accident. I was informed only the day before yesterday and I have done the necessary, to take vengeance and to give honour. But if I was able to honour the corpse, I was not able to get hold of the murderer. Certainly a highwayman, who had come down from the Adummim mountains to sell at the markets what he had stolen... Who will ever be able to catch him? »

« I don't believe it... Go away! Let me go!... You are... worse than jackals... Away with you! » and he picks up his mantle that had fallen on the floor and he moves to go out.

But Hananiah gets hold of him with his rapacious hand, saying: « And the woman? Where is the woman? What did she say? What did she do? Do you know? »

« I know nothing... Let me go... »

« You are lying! You are a liar! » shouts Hananiah.

« I do not know. I swear it. She came. That is certain. But no one saw her. I did not, because I had to leave at once with the Rabbi. My companions did not see her either. I questioned them carefully... I saw the broken jewels that Eliza brought into the kitchen... and I know nothing else. I swear it by the Altar and the Tabernacle! »

« And who can believe you? You are a coward. As you betray your Master, you can betray us as well. But be careful! »

« I am not betraying. I swear it by the Temple of God! »

« You are a perjurer. You look it. You are serving Him, not us... »

« No. I swear it by the Name of God. »

« Say it, if you dare confirm your oath! »

« I swear it by Jehovah! » and he turns pale in pronouncing the Name of God thus. He trembles, stammers, he does not succeed in saying it as it is usually pronounced. It sounds as if he says a J, and H and a V, all drawled and with an aspiration at the end. Something like: Jeocveh. In short, his way of pronouncing it is very strange.

An almost frightening silence is reigning in the room. They have even moved away from Judas... Then Doras and another one say: « Repeat the same oath to confirm that you will serve us only... »

« No! May you be cursed! I will not! I swear that I have not betrayed you and that I will not denounce you to the Master. And that is already a sin. But I am not going to have my future bound up with you, because tomorrow, on the strength of my oath you could compel me to do anything, even to commit a crime. No! Denounce me as a impious person to the Sanhedrin, denounce me as a

killer to the Romans. I will not defend myself. I will let them kill me... And it will be a good thing for me. But I am not going to swear any more... » and with violent efforts he frees himself from those holding him, and he runs away shouting: « But you had better know that Rome is watching you, that Rome loves the Master... » A mighty bang of the door resounding all over the house is the clear sign that Judas has left that den of wolves.

They look at one another... Rage, and perhaps fear, makes them deadly pale... And as they cannot give vent to their anger and fear on anybody, they quarrel among themselves. They try to lay on each other the responsibility for the steps taken and of the consequences they may have to suffer. Some reproach for one thing, some for another, some with regard to the past, some to the future. Some shout: « It was you who wanted to seduce Judas »; some say: « It was a mistake to ill-treat him. You have given yourselves away! »; some suggest: « Let us run after him with money, with excuses... »

« Oh! no » screams Helkai who is the most reproached. « Leave it to me and you will have to say that I am wise. Judas, when he has no more money, will become meek. Oh! as meek as a lamb! » and he laughs venomously. « He will not give in today, tomorrow, perhaps for a month... But then... He is too depraved to be able to live in the poverty offered to him by the Rabbi... and he will come to us... Ha! Ha! Let me see to it! I know... »

« Yes. But in the meantime... Did you hear what he said? The Romans are spying upon us! The Romans love Him! And it is true. Also this morning and yesterday, and the day before yesterday there were some waiting for Him in the Court of the Gentiles. The women of the Antonia are always there... They come from as far as Caesarea to hear Him... »

« Whims of females! I would not worry about that. The man is handsome. He is a good speaker. They are mad for loquacious demagogues and philosophers. As far as they are concerned the Galilean is one of them, nothing else. And it helps them to divert their minds in their idle time. It takes patience to succeed! Patience and cunning. And courage, too. But you have none. And you want to do things, but you do not want to show yourselves. I told you what I would do. But you do not want it... »

« I am afraid of the crowds. They are too fond of Him. Love here. Love there. Who would touch Him? If we drive Him out, we will be driven out ourselves... We must... » says Caiaphas.

« We must not miss any more opportunities. How many have we lost! At the first one we get, we must put pressure on those who are hesitant among us, and then take action also with the Romans. »

« Easily said! But when and where have we had the opportunity to act? He does not sin, He does not aim at power, He does not... »

« If there isn't one, we must create it And now let us go. Meanwhile we will keep an eye on Him The Temple is ours. Rome rules outside. Outside there are the crowds defending Him. But inside the Temple »

### **534. The Seven Lepers Cured. Instructions to the Apostles and Arrival at Bethany.**

4th December 1946.

Jesus with Peter and Judas Thaddeus is walking fast in a gloomy stoney place, on one side of the town. As I cannot see the green olive-grove, but I only see the hill, or rather the hills with little or no greenery to the west of Jerusalem, among which is the gloomy Golgotha, I think that I am outside the eastern side of the town.

« We shall be able to give them something with what we purchased. It must be terrible to live in the sepulchres in winter » says Thaddeus who is laden with parcels just like Peter.

« I am glad we went to the freedmen as we received this money for the lepers. Poor wretches! During these feast days no one thinks of them Every one is enjoying himself... they will remember their lost homes... Alas! If they only believed in You! Will they believe, Master? » asks Peter, who is always so simple and so attached to his Jesus.

« Let us hope so, Simon, let us hope so. Let us pray in the meantime... » And they proceed praying.

The gloomy Hinnon valley appears with its sepulchres of living beings.

« Go ahead and supply them » says Jesus.

The two go on speaking in loud voices. The faces of lepers appear at the openings of caves or shelters.

« We are disciples of Rabbi Jesus » says Peter. « He is coming and has sent us to assist you. How many are you? »

« Seven here. Three on the other side, beyond En Rogel » says one on behalf of everybody.

Peter opens his bundle and Thaddeus his. They make ten portions. Bread, cheese, butter, olives. The oil, where can they put the oil that is in a little jar?

« One of you should bring a vessel. Over there, at the rock. You will divide the oil among you, like brothers and in the name of Jesus, Who preaches love for our neighbour » says Peter.

Meanwhile a leper comes down limping towards them near a large rock, and he lays a chipped jug on it. He looks at them while they pour oil into it and as he is greatly surprised he asks: « Are you not afraid to be so close to me? » In fact only the rock is between the two apostles and the leper.

« We are only afraid of offending love. He sent us here telling us to assist you, because those who follow the Christ must love as the Christ loves. May this oil open your hearts, may it give them light as if it were already burning in the lamps of your hearts. The time of Grace has come for those who hope in the Lord Jesus. Have faith in Him. He is the Messiah and He heals bodies and souls. He can do everything because He is the Immanuel » says Thaddeus with his usual imposing dignity.

The leper is standing with the little jug in his hands looking at him as if he were enchanted. He then says: « I know that Israel has her Messiah, because the pilgrims who come to town looking for Him, speak of Him and we hear their conversation... But I have never seen Him as I came here only recently. And do you think that He would cure me? Among us there are some who curse Him and some who bless Him, and I do not know which I should believe. »

« Are those who curse Him good people? »

« No, they are cruel and they maltreat us. They want the best places and the biggest portions. In fact we do not know whether we shall be able to stay here because of that. »

« So you can see that only those who are the guests of hell hate the Messiah. Because hell realises that it is already defeated by Him and consequently it hates Him. But I tell you that He is to be loved, and with faith, if we want to receive Grace from the Most High here and hereafter » says Thaddeus again.

« If I want to have Grace! I have been married two years and I have a little son who does not know me. I became leprous only a few months ago, as you can see. » In fact he has only a few stains.

« Then apply to the Master with faith. Look! He is coming. Tell your companions and come back here. He will pass by and will cure you. »

The man waddles up the slope and calls: « Uriah! Joab! Adina! And also you who do not believe. The Lord is coming to save us. »

One, two, three lepers appear: three wrecks come forward looking more and more dreadful. The woman just shows herself. She is a living horror... Perhaps she is weeping and speaking, but it is not possible to understand anything, because her voice sounds like a yelp coming from what was a mouth and now is nothing but two horrible uncovered jaws devoid of teeth...

« Yes. I tell you that they asked me to come and call you, because He is coming to cure us. »

« No! I am not coming because I did not believe Him the other times He came... and He will not listen to me any more... in any case I cannot walk » the woman says more distinctly, with I wonder how much difficulty. She even helps herself with her fingers to hold the edges of her lips to make herself understood.

« We will take you, Adina... » say the two men and the one with the little jug.

« No... No... I sinned too much... » and she collapses where she was...

Three more come running, as best they can, and say overbearingly: « Give us the oil at once and then you can also go to Beelzebub if you wish so. »

« The oil is for everybody! » says the man with the little jug striving to defend his little treasure. But the three violent cruel men overwhelm him and snatch the jug from his hands.

« There you are! It is always the same... A little oil after such a long time!... But the Master is coming... Let us go to Him. Are you really not coming, Adina? »

« I dare not... »

The three come down towards the rock. They stop waiting for Jesus, as the apostles have gone to meet Him. And when He arrives there, they shout: « Have mercy on us, Jesus of Israel! We hope in You, Lord! »

Jesus raises His head, He looks at them in His incomparable way. He asks: « Why do you want your health again? »

« For the sake of our families, for ourselves... It is dreadful to live here... »

« You are not only bodies, My children. You have also a soul, and it is worth more than your bodies. You must be anxious about it. So do not ask to be cured only for yourselves and your families, but to have time to become acquainted with the Word of God, and to live deserving His Kingdom. Are you just? Become more so. Are you sinners? Ask to live so that you may have time to make amends for the wrong you have done... Where is the woman? Why is she not coming? Dare she not confront the face of the Son of man, when she was not afraid of having to meet the face of God when she was sinning? Go and tell her that she was forgiven much because of her repentance and resignation and that the Eternal Father has sent Me to absolve all the sins of those who have repented their past. »

« Master, Adina is no longer able to walk. »

« Go and help her to come down here. And bring another vessel. We will give you some more oil... »

« Lord, there is just enough for the others » Peter says in a low voice while the lepers are going to get the woman.

« There will be enough for everybody. Have faith. Because it is easier for you to have faith in that, than for those poor wretches to believe that their bodies will become as they were. »

In the meantime, up in the eaves a fight has started among the three bad lepers for the sharing of the food...

The woman is carried down in the arms of her companions... and

she is moaning, as much as it is possible for her, saying: « Forgive me! My past! For not asking to be forgiven in the past!... Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! »

They lay her at the foot of the rock. And on the rock they put a kind of pot that is all chipped.

Jesus asks: « What do you say? Is it easier to increase the oil in a vase or to make flesh grow where leprosy has destroyed it? »

There is silence... Then the woman says: « The oil. But also the flesh, because You can do everything. And You can also give me the soul of my early years. I believe, Lord. »

Oh! the divine smile! It is like a light that spreads gently, cheerfully, softly! And it is in His eyes, and on His lips, and in His voice as He says: « Because of your faith be cured and forgiven. And you as well. And take this oil and food to nourish yourselves. And show yourselves to the priest, as it is prescribed. Tomorrow, at dawn I will come back with some clothes, and you will be able to go being decently dressed. Cheer up! Praise the Lord. You are no longer lepers! »

Only then the four, who so far have had their eyes fixed on the Lord, look at themselves and shout their amazement. The woman would like to stand up, but she is too naked to do so. Her dress hangs in bits and pieces and what is nude is more than what is covered. Half hidden by the rock, out of a sense of decency not only with regard to Jesus, but also to His companions, her face recomposed in its features, which are only thinned by privations, she is weeping saying without interruption: « Blessed! Blessed! Blessed! » and her blessings mingle with the horrible blasphemies of the three wicked lepers, who are now furious seeing that the others have been cured. And they fling dirt and stones.

« You cannot remain here. Come with Me. No harm will befall you. Look. The road is empty. At the sixth hour all the people are at home. You will stay with the other lepers, until tomorrow. Be not afraid. Follow Me. Take this, woman » and He gives her His mantle to cover herself.

The four, a little frightened and amazed, follow Him like four lambs. They cover the remainder of the Hinnom valley. They cross the road and go towards the Siloam pool, another gloomy place for lepers.

Jesus stops at the foot of the cliff and says: « Go up and tell them that I shall be here at the first hour tomorrow. Go and rejoice with them and preach the Master of the Gospel. » He tells the apostles to give them all the food they have and He blesses them before dismissing them...

« Let us go now. It is already past the sixth hour » says Jesus turning round to go back to the lower Bethany road.

But He is soon called back by a cry: « Jesus, Son of David, have

mercy also on us. »

« These ones have not waited for dawn... » remarks Peter.

« Let us go to them. So few are the hours in which I can do some good, without the peace of the people I help being disturbed by those who hate Me! » replies Jesus and He retraces His steps looking at the three lepers of Siloam, who are looking out from the terrace of the little hill and are repeating their cry, helped by those who have already been cured and who are behind them.

Jesus does nothing but stretch out His hands and say: « Let it be done to you as you ask. Go and live in the ways of the Lord. » He blesses them while leprosy vanishes from their bodies as a thin layer of snow melts in the sun. And Jesus runs away followed by the blessings of those who have been cured and who from their terrace are stretching out their arms in an embrace more real than if they had physically done so.

They go back to the Bethany road, that follows the course of the Kidron and forms a hairpin bend after a few hundred steps from Siloam. But when they have passed the bend and they can see the other part of the road to Bethany, there is, all alone, Judas of Kerioth, walking fast.

« It's Judas! » exclaims Thaddeus who is the first to see him.

« Why are you here? Alone? Hey! Judas! » shouts Peter.

Judas turns round suddenly. He is wan, even greenish. Peter says to him: « Have you seen the devil, that you are the same colour as lettuce? »

« What are you doing here, Judas'? Why did you leave your companions? » Jesus asks at the same time.

Judas has recovered his self-control. He says: « I was with them. I met a man who had news of my mother. Look... » He searches his belt. He strikes his forehead with his hand saying: « I left it at that man's house! I wanted You to read the letter Or I lost it on the way... She is not very well. Or rather she is ill But there are our companions over there They have stopped. They have seen You... Master, I am upset »

« I can see that. »

« Master here are the purses. I made two... to avoid attracting attention I was alone... »

The apostles Bartholomew, Philip, Matthew, Simon and James of Zebedee are somewhat embarrassed. They approach Jesus affectionately, but they are aware of having made a mistake.

Jesus looks at them and says: « Do not do it again. It is not right for you to part from one another. If I tell you not to do it, it is because I know that you need to support one another. You are not strong enough to be able to do things by yourselves. When united, one checks or supports the other. If you are divided... »

« It was I, Master, who gave the wrong advice, because later we

remembered that You had told us not to divide, but to go all together to Bethany, and Judas had gone away with a just reason, and we did not think of going with him. Forgive me, Lord » says Bartholomew humbly and frankly.

« Yes, I forgive you. But I repeat: do not do it again. Consider that obedience always saves one from at least one sin: that of presuming of being able to do by oneself. You do not know how much the demon moves around you seeking all pretexts to make you sin and make you harm your Master, Who is already so fiercely persecuted. These days are becoming more and more difficult for Me and for the organism that I have come to form-So, much care is required, so that I shall not say it may not be wounded and killed - because that will never happen until the end of time - but it may not be stained with dirt. Its enemies are watching you carefully, they never lose sight of you, and likewise they weigh every action and word of Mine. And they do that to have valid reasons for disparagement. If they see that you are quarrelsome, divided, somehow imperfect, even in trifling matters, they pick up and adulterate what you have done and they will make use of it like dirt and a charge against Me and My Church that is now forming. See! I am not reproaching you, but I am advising you. For your own good. Oh! My friends, do you not know that they will adulterate even the best things and will exhibit them in order to be able to accuse Me with an appearance of justice. So, in future be more obedient and prudent. »

The apostles are all moved by Jesus' kindness.

Judas changes colour continuously. He is dejected, a little behind them all, until Peter says to him: « What are you doing there? You are not to be blamed more than the others. So come forward and stay with the others » and he is obliged to obey.

They are walking fast because, although there is sunshine, a cold breeze is blowing making them walk fast to warm themselves. And they have already walked a good distance when Nathanael, who is cold and it is obvious as he wraps himself up in his mantle more than ever, notices that Jesus has, on only His tunic: « Master, but what have You done with Your mantle? »

« I gave it to a leprous woman. We cured and consoled seven lepers. »

« But You must be cold. Take mine » says the Zealot and he adds: « I became accustomed to the winter winds in the ice-cold sepulchres. »

« No, Simon. Look. There is Bethany. We shall soon be in the house. And I am not cold at all. I have had much spiritual joy today and it is more comfortable than a warm mantle. »

« Brother, You reward us for what we have not done. You cured and consoled, not us... » says Thaddeus.

« You prepared their hearts to have faith in the miracle. So with Me and like Me you helped to cure and comfort. If you knew how I rejoice in associating you with Me in every deed! Do you not remember the words of My cousin John of Zacharias: "He must grow greater, I must grow smaller"? He rightly said so, because every man, no matter how great he may be, even if he were Moses or Elijah, becomes obscured like a star assailed by sunbeams, at the appearance of Him Who comes from Heaven and is greater than any man, because He comes from the Most Holy Father. But I also, the Founder of an Organism that will last throughout centuries and will be as holy as its Founder and Head, of an Organism that will last to represent Me, and will be one thing with Me, just as the limbs and body of man are one thing with the head dominating them, I must say: "That body must brighten and I must grow dim". You will have to continue My work. Soon I shall no longer be here among you, here on the Earth, here materially, to guide My apostles, disciples and followers. However, I shall always be with you spiritually, and your spirits will perceive My Spirit and receive My Light. But you will have to appear, in the first line, while I have gone back whence I came. That is why I am preparing you by degrees to appear as the first. At times you object saying: "In the early days You sent us out more". You had to be known. Now that you are known, now that for this little spot of the Earth you already are "the Apostles", I always keep you near Me, taking part in every action of Mine, so that the world may say: "He makes them His partners in the work He accomplishes, because they will remain after Him to continue His work". Yes, My friends. You will have to proceed more and more, and become enlightened, continuing Me, being Me, whereas I, like a mother who little by little stops supporting her little son who has learned to walk, will withdraw... The handing over from Me to you must not take place violently. The little ones of the flock and the humble believers would be frightened. I will hand them over to you gently so that they may not feel to be alone even for one moment. And love them so much, as I love them. Love them in memory of Me as I have loved them... »

Jesus becomes silent engrossed in thought. And He comes back to reality only when, a little outside Bethany, He meets the other apostles who have come along the other road. They proceed all together towards Lazarus' house. John says that they are already expected, because the servants have seen them. He also says that Lazarus is dangerously ill.

« I know. That is why I told you that we shall be staying in Simon's house. But I did not want to go away without greeting him again. »

« But why do You not cure him? It would also be fair. You let all

Your best servants die. I do not understand... » says the Iscariot, who is always bold, even at his best moments.

« There is no need for you to understand in advance. »

« Yes. There is no need. But do You know what Your enemies are saying? That You cure when You can, not when You want, that You protect when You can... Do You not know that that old man from Tekoah is already dead? And that he was killed? »

« Dead? Who? Elianna? How? » they all ask excitedly. Peter only asks: « And how do you know? »

« I heard of it by chance a short while ago in the house where I was, and God knows whether I am lying. Apparently it was a highwayman, who came down in the guise of a merchant, and instead of paying the toll, killed him... »

« Poor old soul! What an unhappy life! What a sad death! Are You not saying anything, Master? » many say.

« I have nothing to say except that the old man served the Christ until his death. I wish they were all like him! »

« Tell me, son of Alphaeus, is it not as you said, by any chance, eh? » Peter asks Thaddeus.

« It may well be. A son who expels his father out of hatred, and of this kind of hatred, may be capable of anything. Brother, Your words are quite true: "And a brother will be against his brother, and a father against his children". »

« Yes, and those who do that will think that they are serving God. Their eyes are blind, their hearts hard, their spirits without light. And yet you will have to love them » says Jesus.

« But how shall we be able to love those who treat us thus? It will be a great effort if we do not react and we put up with their behaviour with resignation... » exclaims Philip.

« I will set an example for you and it will teach you. In due time. And if you love Me, you will do what I do. »

« Here are Maximinus and Sarah. Lazarus must be very ill, if his sisters do not come to meet You! » remarks the Zealot.

The two rush towards them and prostrate themselves. Also in their faces and garments there is the modest appearance impressed by sorrow and fatigue on the members of families struggling with death. They only say: « Master, come... » but so sorrowfully that those two words are more expressive than a long speech. And they lead Jesus at once to the door of Lazarus' little flat, while other servants take care of the apostles.

At their light knocking Martha comes to the door and half-opens it, showing her thinned wan face through the opening: « Master! Come. May You be blessed! »

Jesus goes in, and He enters Lazarus' room after going through the one preceding it. Lazarus is sleeping. Lazarus? A skeleton, a yellowish mummy that is breathing... His face is already a skull,

and in his sleep its destruction, that has already turned it into a head unfleshed by death, is even more visible. His waxen drawn skin shines on the sharp angles of his cheek-bones and jaws, on his forehead, on his eye-sockets that are so deeply sunken as to seem devoid of eyes, on his sharp nose that seems to have grown excessively so much the contour of the cheeks has vanished. His lips are so pale that they are hardly visible, and seem unable to close on the two rows of his half-covered open teeth... already the face of a dead man.

Jesus bends to look at him. He draws Himself up. He looks at the two sisters who look at Him with their souls concentrated on their eyes, two sorrowful hopeful souls. He nods to them and goes out noiselessly, into the little yard outside the two rooms. Martha and Mary follow Him. They close the door after them.

All alone, the three of them, inside the four walls, with the blue sky above them, look at one another. The sisters are not even able to ask, or to speak. But Jesus speaks: « You know Who I am. I know who you are. You know that I love you. I know that you love Me. You are aware of My power. I am aware of your faith in Me. You also know, and you in particular, Mary, that the more one loves the more one achieves. To be able to hope and to believe above all limits and above all realities that disprove faith and hope is to love. Well, for the sake of that, I tell you to hope and believe against all contrary realities. Do you understand Me? I say: hope and believe against every contrary reality. I can only stop for a few hours. As the Man, the Most High knows how much I would like to stop here with you, to assist and comfort him, to assist and comfort you. But as the Son of God I know that I must go, that I must depart... That I must not be here when... you will be wanting Me more than the air you breathe. One day, very soon, you will understand these reasons that now may seem cruel to you. They are divine reasons. Sorrowful to Me Man, as they are to you. Sorrowful now. Because now you cannot embrace and contemplate their beauty and wisdom. Neither can I reveal them to you. When everything is accomplished, then you will understand and rejoice... Listen. When Lazarus is... dead. Do not weep thus! Then send for Me at once. And in the meantime make the arrangements for the funeral inviting a large number of people, as becomes Lazarus and your household. He is a great Hebrew. Few people appreciate him for what he is. But he exceeds many in the eyes of God... I will let you know where I am, so that you can always find Me. »

« But why not be here at least at that moment? We are resigning ourselves to his death, yes... But You... But You... But You... » Martha sobs not being able to say anything else, stifling her tears in her dress...

Mary instead gazes at Jesus, as if she were hypnotised and does not weep.

« Obey, believe, hope always say yes to God Lazarus is calling you Go. I will come in a moment And if I should not have the opportunity to speak to you aside, remember what I told you. »

And while they go in hastily, Jesus sits down on a stone bench and prays.

### **535. At the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple.**

9th December 1946.

It is impossible to stand still in the cold windy morning. A biting wind blowing on the top of the Moriah from north-east is causing garments to flutter and eyes and faces to redden. And yet there are people who have come up to the Temple to pray. But there are no rabbis with their respective groups of disciples. And the Court looks larger and above all more dignified, deprived of the bawling pompous gang that usually dwells there.

And it must be very odd to see it so empty, because everybody is surprised, as if it were something new. And Peter becomes suspicious as well. But Thomas, who looks even more robust, enveloped as he is in a wide heavy mantle, says: « They must have locked themselves in some room, lest they should lose their voices. Are you missing them? » and he laughs.

« Not V I wish I never saw them again! But I would not like it to be... » and he looks at the Iscariot who is silent, but when he is aware of Peter's glance at him, he says: « Actually they promised not to trouble us any more, unless the Master... should scandalise them. They will certainly be watching us, but as no one here sins or offends, they are not showing themselves. »

« So much the better. And may the Lord bless you, boy, if you succeeded in making them reason. »

It is still early. There are only few people in the Temple. I say « few », and that is what they seem to be, because of its vastness, considering that it takes crowds of people to make it look full. Two or three hundred people are hardly noticed in that complex of courts, porches, halls, corridors...

Jesus, the only Master in the vast Court of the Gentiles, is walking up and down speaking to His disciples and to the other ones He already found in the enclosure of the Temple. He replies to their objections or questions, He clarifies points that they were not able to clarify to themselves and to other people.

Two Gentiles come, they look at Him and go away without saying anything. Two employees of the Temple pass by, they look at Him, but they do not say anything either. Some believers approach Him, they greet Him and listen to Him. But they are still

few.

« Are we staying here any longer? » asks Bartholomew.

« It is cold and there is nobody. But it is pleasant to be here so peacefully. Master, today You really are in the House of Your Father. And as the landlord » says James of Alphaeus smiling. And he adds: « This is what the Temple must have looked like in the days of Nehemiah and of the wise pious kings. »

« I think we should go. They are spying upon us from over there... » says Peter.

« Who? Pharisees? »

« No. Those who passed by previously, and others. Let us go away, Master... »

« I am waiting for some sick people. They saw Me come into town, and the news must have already spread. They will come when it is warmer. Let us stay at least until one third of the sixth hour » replies Jesus. And He resumes walking backwards and forwards to avoid standing still in the biting air.

In fact, shortly afterwards, when the sun tries to mitigate the effects of the north wind, a woman comes with a sick girl and asks Jesus to cure her. Jesus contents her. The woman lays her offering at Jesus' feet saying: « This is for other children who are suffering. » The Iscariot picks up the money.

Later, they bring on a litter an elderly man, whose legs are diseased. And Jesus cures him.

The third to come is a group of people who ask Jesus to go outside the walls of the Temple to drive a demon out of a girl, whose rending cries can be heard even in there. And Jesus sets out behind them, going out into the street that takes one to town. Some people, among whom there are foreigners, have gathered round those who are holding the young girl, who is frothing at the mouth, writhing and rolling her eyes. She is uttering all sorts of coarse words and the more Jesus approaches her, the more she utters them and the more she struggles. Four young sturdy men are holding her with difficulty. And with insults she utters cries recognising the Christ and anxious entreaties of the spirit possessing her not to be driven out. And she monotonously repeats also some truths: « Away! Don't let me see that cursed one! Go away! The cause of our ruin. I know who You are. You are... You are the Christ. You are... No other oil anointed You but that from up there. The power of Heaven covers and protects You. I hate You! Cursed one! Don't expel me. Why do You drive us out and You do not want us, whilst You are keeping close to Yourself a legion of demons in one man only? Don't You know that the whole of hell is in one man only? Of course You know... Let me stay here, at least until the hour of... » His words stop at times, as if they were choked, at times they change, or they stop first and then they are drawled

amid cruel howls, as when she shouts: « At least allow me to go into him. Don't send me down into the Abyss! Why do You hate us, o Jesus, Son of God? Are You not satisfied with what You are? Why do You want to rule also over us? We do not want orders! Why have You come to persecute us, since we denied You? Go away! Don't pour the fire of Heaven on us! Your eyes! When they become extinguished, we will laugh... Ha! No! Not even then... You defeat us! You defeat us! May You be cursed and Your Father Who sent You, and He Who proceeds from You and is You... Ha! »

The last shout is really dreadful, the howl of a creature being slaughtered with a murderous sword piercing it slowly, and it is brought about by the fact that Jesus, after interrupting the words of the possessed girl several times, by means of a mental order, puts an end to them touching the forehead of the girl with His finger. And the shout ends in a frightful convulsion until with a loud noise resembling a guffaw and the howl of a wild beast in a nightmare, the demon leaves her shouting: « But I am not going far... Ha! Ha! Ha! » immediately followed by a sharp crash like that of a thunderbolt, although the sky is perfectly clear.

Many people run away in terror. Many crowd even closer to watch the girl who has calmed down all of a sudden, collapsing into the arms of those supporting her. She remains thus for a few moments, then she opens her eyes, she smiles, she realises that she is among people with no veil on her head and face, she lowers her head, to conceal it by raising her arm against her face.

Those who are with her would like her to thank the Master. But He says: « Do not disturb her modesty. Her soul is already thanking Me. Take her home, to her mother. It is the right place for a girl... » and leaving the people behind Him He goes back to the Temple, to the same place as before.

« Lord, did You notice that many Judaeans followed us? I recognised some of them... There they are over there! They are the ones who were spying upon us previously. Look how they are discussing among themselves... » says Peter.

« They must be discussing into which of them the demon has gone. There is also Nahum, Annas' trustee. He is the right type... » says Thomas.

« Yes. But you did not see because you had your back turned on him. But the fire burst out just over his head » says Andrew while his teeth are almost chattering. « I was close to him and I got a fright!... »

« Actually, they were all gathered together. But I saw the fire burst over us and I thought I was going to die... And more than that, I trembled for the Master. It seemed to be suspended over His head » says Matthew.

« Not at all. I saw it come out of the girl and burst over the wall of

the Temple » states Levi, the shepherd disciple.

« Do not argue with one another. The fire did not point out at anybody. It was only the sign that the demon had fled » says Jesus.

« But he said that he was not going far!... » objects Andrew.

« Words of a demon... They are not to be listened to. Let us instead praise the Most High for these three children of Abraham whose bodies and souls have been cured. »

In the meantime many Judaeans, who have come out from here and there - but there is neither a Pharisee, nor a scribe, nor a priest in their group - approach Jesus and surround Him, and one of them comes forward saying: « You have done great things today! The real work of a prophet, of a great prophet. And the spirits of the abyss have said great things of You. But their words cannot be accepted unless Your word confirms them. We are dismayed at those words. But we are seriously afraid of being deceived because Beelzebub is known to be the spirit of falsehood. We would not like to be mistaken or to be deceived. So tell us who You are, speaking the truth and justice. »

« Have I not told you many times who I am? I have been telling you for almost three years, and before Me, John told you at the Jordan and the Voice of God from Heaven. »

« That is true. But we were not there then. We... Since You are just, You must understand our worry. We would like to believe that You are the Messiah. But too often the people of God has been deceived by false Christs. With an unerring word comfort our hearts that are hoping and waiting, and we will worship You. »

Jesus looks at them severely. His eyes seem to be piercing their flesh and laying their hearts bare. He then says: « Very often men can really tell lies better than Satan. No, you will not worship Me. You never will, no matter what I tell you. And even if you did, whom would you worship? »

« Whom? Our Messiah! »

« Would you be worth so much? Who is the Messiah according to you? Tell Me, that I may know what you are worth. »

« The Messiah? The Messiah is he who by God's order will gather together the scattered people of Israel making it the triumphant people under whose power the whole world will be subject. What? Do You not know what the Messiah is? »

« I know, but not as you know. So according to you is He a man Who excelling David and Solomon and Judas Maccabee will make Israel the Nation that will rule over the world? »

« That is what He is. God promised it. All vengeance, all glory, all vindication will come from the promised Messiah. »

« It is written: "You shall worship no one but the Lord your God". Why then should you worship Me if in Me you can only see the Man-Messiah? »

« What else should we see in You? »

« What? And have you come to question Me with such feelings? Race of sly and venomous vipers! And sacrilegious as well. Because if you could see in Me only the human Messiah and you worshipped Me, you would be idolaters. God only is to be adored. And I solemnly tell you once again that He Who is speaking to you is greater than the Messiah, who you pretend has the missions and duties and powers that you, devoid of spirit and wisdom, imagine. The Messiah is not coming to give His people a kingdom such as you believe, He is not coming to take vengeance upon other powerful people. His Kingdom is not of this world and His power exceeds all the limited power of the world. »

« You are humiliating us, Master. If You are a Master and we are ignorant, why do You not want to teach us? »

« I have been doing that for three years, and you are more and more in darkness because you reject the Light. »

« It is true. Perhaps it is true. But what happened in the past, may not take place in the future. What? You Who pity publicans and prostitutes and You absolve sinners, are You going to be merciless towards us, only because we are stubborn people and we find it difficult to understand who You are? »

« It is not that you find it difficult. The trouble is that you do not want to understand. To be dull-witted would not be a fault. God has so much light that He could enlighten the dullest intellect providing it were full of good will. You lack that will. Nay you have the very opposite will. That is why you do not understand who I am. »

« It may be as You say. You can see how humble we are. But we beg You in the name of God. Answer our questions. Do not keep us in doubt any longer. How long must our minds be uncertain? If You are the Christ, tell us openly. »

« I have told you. I told you in your houses, in your squares, in the streets, in villages, upon the mountains, along rivers, in front of the sea and the deserts, in the Temple, in your synagogues, in your markets, and you do not believe Me. There is no place in Israel where My voice has not been heard. Even the places that abusively have borne the name of Israel for ages, but are separated from the Temple, even the places that gave the name to this Land of ours, but from rulers have become subjects, and never got completely rid of their errors to come to the Truth, even Syro-Phoenicia, shunned by rabbis as the land of sin, have heard My voice and known who I am. I told you, and you do not believe My words. I acted, and you have not paid attention to My action with good spirit. If you had done that, with the right intention of making sure about Me, you would have ended by having faith in Me, because the deeds I accomplish in the name of My Father bear witness to Me. Those of

good will who have followed Me because they recognised Me as the Shepherd, have believed in Me and in the witness that My deeds bear. What? Do you perhaps think that what I do has no beneficial purpose for you? No beneficial purpose for all creatures? Do not believe it. And do not think that the benefit consists in the health of the individual, recovered through My power, or in being freed from being possessed or from the sin of this one or that one. That is a benefit limited to individuals. Too little compared with the power emanated from the supernatural source, from the source which is divine, rather than supernatural, to be considered as the only benefit. There is the collective benefit of the deeds I perform. The benefit of removing all doubts in uncertain people, of convincing opponents in addition to reinforcing the faith in believers. My Father gives Me the power to do what I do for that collective benefit, in favour of all men, present and future, because my works will bear witness to Me with all future generations and will convince them of Me. Nothing is done in the works of God without a good purpose. Always bear that in mind. Meditate on the truth. »

Jesus stops for a moment. He gazes at a Judaeon who is standing with his head lowered and then He says:

« You who are so pensive over there, you with the tunic the shade of ripe olives, you are wondering whether even Satan has good purposes. Do not be foolish in order to oppose Me and find errors in My words. My reply to you is that Satan is not the work of God, but of the free will of the rebellious angel. God had made him His glorious minister and thus had created him for a good purpose. Now, speaking to your own ego, you are saying: "Then God is foolish because He gave glory to a future rebel and entrusted His Will to a disobedient angel". I reply to you: "God is not foolish but He is perfect in His thoughts and deeds. He is the Most Perfect One. Creatures are imperfect, even the most perfect ones. There is always a point of inferiority in them, as compared with God. But God, Who loves them, has granted them free will so that through it the creature may be perfected in virtue and thus become more like God Father". And I also tell you, o mocker and shrewed seeker of sin in My words, that God draws a good purpose also from Evil brought about voluntarily: that of making men possess a glory they deserved. The victories over Evil are the crowns of the chosen ones. If Evil could not give rise to good consequences for people full of good will, God would have destroyed it. Because nothing in Creation must be completely devoid of incentives or good consequences.

Are you not replying to Me? Is it hard for you to have to admit that I read your heart and I defeated the unfair illations of your twisted thought? I will not compel you to do so. In the presence of so many people I will leave you to your own pride. I do not claim to

be declared winner by you. But when you are alone with these people, who are like you, and with those who sent you, then do admit that Jesus of Nazareth read the thoughts of your mind and choked your objections in your throat with the only weapon of His word of truth. But let us leave this personal interruption and revert to the many people who are listening to Me. If one person only among many should convert his spirit to the Light after hearing My words, My fatigue of speaking to stones, nay, to sepulchres full of vipers, would be recompensed.

I was saying that those who love Me have recognised Me as the Shepherd because of My words and My deeds. But you do not believe, you cannot believe, because you are not My sheep.

What are you? I am asking you. Ask yourselves in the depth of your hearts. Do not be foolish. You can know yourselves for what you are. It is enough to listen to the voices of your souls that are not happy to continue offending the Son of Him Who created them. Even if you know what you are, you will not admit it. You are neither humble, nor sincere. But I will tell you what you are. You are partly wolves and partly wild goats. But none of you, notwithstanding that you wear the skins of lambs pretending to be lambs, are true lambs. Under the soft white fleece you have all the cruel colours, the pointed horns and the fangs and claws of billygoats or wild beasts, and you want to remain such, because you delight in being such, and you dream of ferocity and rebellion. That is why you cannot love Me and you cannot follow and understand Me.

If you come into the flock, you do so to harm, to cause sorrow and to create disorder. My sheep are afraid of you. If they were like you, they should hate you. But they are not capable of hating. They are the lambs of the Prince of peace, of the Master of love, of the merciful Shepherd. And they cannot hate. They will never hate you as I will never hate you. I leave hatred to you, as it is the wicked fruit of the treble concupiscence with the unrestrained ego in the animal man, who lives forgetting that he is also a spirit, besides being flesh. I keep for Myself what is Mine: love. And I transmit it to my lambs and I offer it also to you, to make you good. If you became good, you would understand Me and you would belong to My flock, like the others who are already in it. We would love one another. I and My sheep love one another. They listen to Me, they recognise My voice.

You do not understand what it really means to know My voice. It means that one has no doubts about its origin and one can distinguish it among a thousand other voices of false prophets as the true voice that came from Heaven. Now and always, also among those who consider themselves followers of the Wisdom, and they partly are, there will be many who will not be able to tell

My voice from other voices speaking of God, more or less with justice, but which will be voices inferior to Mine... »

« You always say that You will be going away soon, then You say that You will always speak? If You go away, You will not be able to speak any more » objects a Judaeon in the scornful tone in which one would speak to a person of unsound mind.

Jesus replies again in His patient sorrowful tone that sounded severe only when He began to speak to the Judaeans and later, when He replied to the internal objections of a Judaeon:

« I will always speak, that the world may not become completely idolatrous. And I will speak to My disciples, who have been chosen to repeat My words to you. The Spirit of God will speak, and they will understand what even wise men will not be able to understand. Because scholars will study the word, the sentence, the manner, the place, the how, the instrument through which the Word speaks, whereas My chosen ones will not get lost in such useless studies, but, lost in love, they will listen and they will understand because the Love will speak to them. They will distinguish the ornate pages of learned people or the false pages of false prophets, of the rabbis of hypocrisy, who teach polluted doctrines or teach what they do not practise, from the simple, true deep words coming from Me. But the world will hate them because of that, because the world hates Me-Light and it hates the children of the Light, the dark world that loves darkness propitious for its sins. My sheep know and will know Me and will always follow Me, also on the ways of blood and sorrow, along which I will be the first one to go, and they will come along them after Me. The ways that lead souls to Wisdom. The ways that the blood and tears of those, who are persecuted because they teach justice, will illuminate so that they may stand out in the dark fumes of the world and of Satan, and they may be like trails of stars leading those who seek the Way, the Truth, the Life, but do not find who can take them there. Because that is what souls are in need of: of a guide who may lead them to the Life, to the Truth, to the right Way. God is merciful towards the souls that seek and do not find, not through their fault, but because of the laziness of shepherds who are like idols. God is merciful towards the souls that get lost when they are abandoned to themselves and are received by Lucifer's ministers, who are always ready to welcome those who have lost their way, to make them proselytes of their doctrines. God is merciful towards those who have been deceived only because the rabbis of God, the so-called rabbis of God, have taken no interest in them. God is merciful towards all those who come up against depression, darkness, death, through the fault of false teachers who have only the appearance of teachers and the pride of being called such. And for those poor souls, as He sent the prophets

for His people, as He sent Me for the whole world, so later, after Me, He will send the servants of the Word, of Truth and Love to repeat My words. Because My words give the Life. Therefore My sheep of the present times and of the future will have the Life that I give them through My Word, and it is eternal Life for those who accept it, and they shall never perish and no one will ever be able to snatch them from My hands. »

« We have never rejected the words of the true prophets. We have always respected John, who was the last prophet » replies a Judaeen angrily, and his companions echo him.

« He died in time not to be hated and persecuted also by you. If he were still alive, his "it is against the Law" uttered for an incest, would be repeated also to you as you commit spiritual adultery by fornicating with Satan against God. And you would kill him as you intend to kill Me. »

The Judaeans become angrily uproarious and are ready to strike, as they are tired feigning to be meek.

But Jesus is not worried. He raises His voice to dominate the tumult and He shouts: « And you have asked Me who I am, hypocrites? You said that you wanted to know to be certain? And now you say that John was the last prophet? And twice you condemn yourselves for lying. Once because you say that you have never rejected the words of the true prophets, and then because, by saying that John is the last prophet and that you believe the true prophets, you deny that I also am a prophet, at least a prophet, and a true one. Lying lips! Deceitful hearts! Yes, I solemnly tell you, here in the house of My Father, that I am more than a Prophet. I have what My Father gave Me. What My Father gave Me is more precious than everything and everybody, because it is something on which the will and power of men cannot lay their rapacious hands. I have what God gave Me and although it is in Me, it is still God, and no one can snatch it from the hands of My Father or from Me, because it is the same Divine Nature. My Father and I are One. »

« Ah! How horrible! Blasphemy! Anathema!! » The howling of the Judaeans resounds in the Temple, and once again the stones used by the money-changers and vendors of animals to hold their enclosures fast, supply those who are looking for suitable weapons to strike.

But Jesus rises with His arms folded on His chest. He has climbed on a stone bench to be taller and more visible and He thus dominates the crowds with His sapphire eyes. He dominates and darts piercing glances at them. He is so solemn that He paralyses them. Instead of throwing the stones, they drop them or hold them in their hands, no longer daring to throw them at Him. Also their shouting subsides in a strange bewilderment. It is really God flashing in His Christ. And when God flashes thus, even the most

arrogant man becomes mean and frightened. I wonder what mystery is concealed in the fact that the Judaeans could be so cruel on Good Friday. What mystery there was in the fact that the Christ lacked that power of domination on that day. It was really the hour of Darkness, the hour of Satan, and they were the only ones who reigned... The Divinity, the Paternity of God had abandoned the Christ, Who was nothing but the Victim...

"Jesus remains thus for a few moments. He then resumes speaking to that corrupt and pusillanimous rabble that has lost all arrogance seeing only a divine flash. « Well? What do you want to do? You asked Me who I was. I told you. You became furious. I reminded you of what I have done, I have shown you and reminded you of many good deeds coming from My Father and accomplished with the power given to Me by My Father. For which of those deeds are you going to stone Me? Because I taught justice? Because I brought the Gospel to men? Because I came to invite you to the Kingdom of God? Because I cured your sick people, making the blind see, the paralytic walk, the dumb speak, because I freed those who were possessed, I raised the dead, I assisted the poor, I forgave sinners, I loved everybody, also those who hate Me, you and those who sent you? So, for which of these deeds do you want to stone Me? »

« It is not because of the good actions You have done, that we want to stone You, but because of Your blasphemy, because You, Who are a man, are making Yourself God. »

« Is it not written in your Law: "I said: you are gods, and children of the Most High"? Now if God called "gods" those to whom He spoke, giving an order: to live so that the likeness and image of God existing in man may appear clearly, and man may not be a demon or a brute; if men are called "gods" in the Scriptures, all inspired by God, whereby they cannot be modified or cancelled according to the will and interest of man; why do you say to Me that I blaspheme, I Whom the Father consecrated and sent to the world, because I say: "I am the Son of God"? If I did not work the deeds of My Father, you would be right in not believing Me. But I do them. And you do not want to believe Me. Believe at least those deeds, so that you may know and acknowledge that the Father is in Me and that I am in the Father. »

The storm of shouts and violence begins all over again and is louder than previously. From one of the terraces of the Temple, on which priests, scribes and Pharisees were certainly concealed to listen, many voices shout: « Get hold of that blasphemer. His sin is now a public one. We have all heard Him. Death to the blasphemer who proclaims Himself God! Punish Him as you punished the son of Shelomith of Dibri. Take Him out of town and stone Him! It is our right! It is written: "He who blasphemes must die". » The incitements of the leaders stimulate the wrath of the Judaeans,

who try to seize Jesus, tie Him up and hand Him over to the magistrates of the Temple, as they are already rushing there followed by the Temple guards.

But once again the legionaries are faster than they are, as watching from the Antonia they have seen the tumult and they come out of the barracks towards the spot where they are shouting. And they respect no one. The shafts of the lances fall heavily on heads and backs. And they stimulate one another with jeers and insults, to deal with the Judaeans: « Lie down, you dogs! Make way! Strike that stingy fellow hard, Licinus. Go away! Fear makes you stink more than ever! What do you eat, you dirty ravens, to be so fetid? You are right, Basso. They purify themselves, but they still stink. Look at that big-nosed fellow over there! Put them against the wall and we will take their names! And you, owls, come down from there. In any case we know you. The Centurion will have to write a good report for the garrison-commander. No! Leave that one. He is an apostle of the Rabbi. Don't you see that he looks like a man and not like a jackal? Look! Look how they are running away over there! Let them go! To have them all convinced we should have them all transfixed on our shafts! Only then they would be tamed. I wish it happened tomorrow! Ah! I caught you and you are not getting away. I saw you, you know? The first stone was yours. And you will have to answer for striking a soldier of Rome... And this one, too. He cursed us insulting our insignia. Ah? Did he? Really? Come here, we will make you love them in our prison... » And so, charging and sneering, catching some and putting some to flight, the legionaries clear the vast court.

But only when the Judaeans see two of them being arrested, they reveal themselves for what they are: real cowards! They either run away making a din like hens that see a hawk fly down towards them, or they throw themselves at the feet of the soldiers imploring mercy with revolting servility and flattery. A noncommissioned officer, to whose calf an old wrinkled man clings, one of the fiercest against Jesus, calling him « noble and just », gets rid of him with a vigorous jerk that makes the Judaeans tumble three steps backwards and he shouts: « Go away, you old stingy fox. » And addressing one of his companions, showing his calf, he says: « They have nails like foxes, and slaver like snakes. Look here. By Jove Maximus! I am going to the thermae at once to get rid of the marks of that slobbery old man! » and he goes away angrily with his calf marked with scratches.

I have lost sight of Jesus completely. I could not say where He has gone or by which gate He has gone out. I only saw for some time the faces of the two sons of Alphaeus and of Thomas appear and disappear in the confusion, struggling to make their way, and the faces of some shepherd disciples intent on the same work. Then

they also disappeared and I was left with the last din of the wicked Judaeans intent on running here and there to avoid being captured and identified by the legionaries, who I got the impression enjoyed themselves being able to hit the Jews hard, making up for all the hatred with which they had been gratified.

### **536. Jesus Goes to the Grotto of the Nativity to be Alone.**

11th December 1946.

Jesus is behind the Temple, near the Gate of the Sheep, outside the town. Around Him there are the apostles and the shepherd disciples, with the exception of Levi, and they are dismayed and very angry. I do not see any of the other disciples who were previously at the Temple with Him.

They are discussing among themselves. I should say that they are discussing among themselves and with Jesus, and in particular with Judas of Kerioth. They are reproaching the latter for the fury of the Judaeans, and they do so with rather biting irony. Judas lets them speak repeating: «I spoke to Pharisees, scribes and priests, and not one of them was among the crowd. » They reproach Jesus for not breaking off the discussion after making it subside the first time. And Jesus replies: « I had to complete My manifestation. »

And they are also at variance on where they should go, as the Sabbath is close at hand and the oncoming days are feast days. Simon Peter suggests Joseph of Arimathea, Bethany being out of the question as they do not want to disturb the people there, particularly because Jesus has stated that they must not go to Bethany any more.

Thomas replies: « Neither Joseph nor Nicodemus is there. They have gone away, for the feast. I greeted them yesterday when we were waiting for Judas and they told me. »

« Let us go to Nike, then » suggests Matthew.

« She is at Jericho for the feast » replies Philip.

« To Joseph of Sephoris » says James of Alphaeus.

« H'm! Joseph... We would not be giving him a present! He has had trouble and... Well, I may as well tell you! He venerates the Master, but he wants to be at peace. He seems to be a boat caught between two opposed currents... and to keep afloat... he takes into account all the ballast, including little Martial... so much so that he could not believe that Joseph of Arimathea would take him » says Peter.

« Ah! is that why he was with him yesterday?! » exclaims Andrew.

« Of course! So it is better to let him calm down in a little safe harbour... Eh! we are not very brave! Everybody is frightened of the Sanhedrin! » says Peter.

« Please speak for yourself. I am not afraid of anybody » says the

Iscariot.

« Neither am I. I would defy all the legions to defend the Master. But we are in a different position... The others... Eh! They have their business, their homes, wives, daughters... They bear that in mind. »

« Well, we have them, too » remarks Bartholomew.

« But we are apostles, and... »

« And you are like the others. Do not criticise anybody, because the trial has not yet come » says Jesus.

« It has not come? And what would You expect more than what we have suffered? And yet You saw how I defended You today! We have all defended You, and I more than anybody else! I elbowed our way through the crowd pushing with such strength that it was enough to launch a boat!... An idea! Let's go to Nob. The old man will be happy! »

« Yes. To Nob » they all say approving.

« John is not there. You would be walking all the road for nothing. You can go to Nob, but not to John's. »

« We can! And can You not? »

« I do not want to go, Simon of Jonas. I already have somewhere to go these evenings of the Feast of the Dedication. But once I have gone away, you can remain peacefully anywhere. So I say to you: go wherever you wish. I bless you. I remind you to be united physically and spiritually, subject to Peter, who is your head, not as a master, but as an elder brother. As soon as Levi comes back with My bag, we shall part. »

« No, my Lord! Never let it be said that I let you go alone! » exclaims Peter.

« Let it always be said, if I want it, Simon of Jonas. But be not afraid. I shall not be in town. No one, but an angel or a demon, will find out my refuge. »

« And that is good. Because too many demons hate You. I am telling You that You will not go by Yourself! »

« There are also angels, Simon. And I will go. »

« But where? To which house, if You refused the best ones by Your own will or because of circumstances?! You are not going to stay in a cave on the mountains in this season? »

« And if I were? It would be less icy than the hearts of men who do not love Me » Jesus says almost to Himself, lowering His head to conceal tears shining in His eyes.

« Here is Levi. He is coming in haste » says Andrew who is looking from the roadside.

« Then let us exchange greetings of peace and part. If you want to go to Nob you will be just in time before sunset. »

Levi arrives panting: « They are looking for You everywhere, Master... Those who love You told me... They have been to many

houses, particularly to those of poor people... »

« Have they seen you? » asks James of Zebedee.

« Certainly. They even stopped me. But as I was already aware, I said: "I am going to Gibeon" and I came out by the Damascus Gate and I ran behind the walls... I did not lie, Lord, because I and these people are going to Gibeon after the Sabbath. We shall spend the night in the country of the town of David... These are days of memories for us... » and he looks at Jesus with an angelical smile on his virile bearded face, a smile that revives in his features the boy of the remote night.

« All right. You may go. And you, too. I am going as well. Each his own way. You will precede Me in Solomon's village, where I shall be in a few days' time. And before leaving you, I will repeat to you the words which I spoke before sending you by twos around the towns: "Go, preach, announce that the Kingdom of Heaven is very near at hand. Cure sick people, cleanse lepers, raise the dead of the spirit and of the body, ordering the resurrection of the spirit in My Name, the pursuit of Me Who am life, or the resurrection from death. And do not pride yourselves on what you do. Avoid disputes with one another and with those who do not love us. Do not exact anything for what you do. Prefer to go among the lost sheep of Israel than among Gentiles and Samaritans, not out of disgust, but because you are not yet able to convert them. Give what you have without worrying about the morrow. Do what you have seen Me do, and with the same spirit as Mine. Now, I give you the power to do what I do and what I want you to do, so that God may be glorified". » He breathes on them, He kisses them one by one and dismisses them.

They all depart reluctantly and turn round several times. He waves His hand to them, until they have all gone, and then He goes down to the river-bed of the Kidron, among bushes, and sits on a rock near the babbling water. He drinks of the water, which is clear and certainly ice-cold. He washes His face, hands and feet. He puts His clothes on and sits down again. He is pensive... And He does not notice what is happening around Him, that John, the apostle, who was already far away with his companions, has come back all alone and is imitating Him hiding in a thick bush...

Jesus remains there for some time, then He gets up, He puts His bag across His back, and following the Kidron, among bushes, he arrives at the well of En-Rogel, He then turns south-west until He takes the Bethlehem road. And John, about a hundred steps behind Him, follows Him, all enveloped in his mantle not to be recognised.

And He goes on and on, along the roads stripped by winter. Jesus, striding, devours the road. John follows Him with difficulty, also because he has to be careful not to be seen. Twice Jesus

stops and turns round. The first time when passing near the little hill where Judas went to speak to Caiaphas, the second time near a well, where He sits down and nibbles at a piece of bread and then drinks from the amphora of a man. He then resumes walking while the sun descends... and it is twilight. He arrives at Rachel's tomb when the last red sunbeams at sunset fade into violet. The sky to the west looks like a pergola of wistaria in bloom, whereas to the east it is already the pure cobalt-blue of a cold eastern winter sky and the first stars are already appearing on the farthest end of the firmament.

Jesus quickens His pace in order to arrive before it is dark. But when He is on a high spot from which He can see all the town of Bethlehem, He stops, looks and sighs... He then goes down quickly. He does not enter the town. He goes round the last houses. He goes straight to the ruins of the house or tower of David, where He was born. He crosses the stream flowing near the grotto, He goes on to the little open space covered with dry leaves... He scans the ruins. There is no one. He goes in... John stops a little farther on, he is cautious not to be heard or seen. He searches, he looks. He finds another dilapidated stable groping rather than by sight. He goes in as well and strikes a light in a corner. In it there is some straw, some dirty litter, a few dry branches and some hay in the manger.

John is content. He talks to himself: « At least... I shall hear... and... We either die together or I will save Him. » He then sighs and says: « And He was born here! And He comes here to weep tears of grief... And... Ah! Eternal God! Save Your Christ! My heart is trembling, o Most High God, because He always wants to be alone before great deeds... And what great deed can He accomplish, but manifest Himself as the King Messiah? Oh! all His words are here within me... I am a silly boy and I understand very little. We all understand very little, o Eternal Father! But I am afraid. I really am afraid! Because He speaks of death. Of a painful death, of betrayal and of horrible things... I am afraid, my God! Fortify my heart, o Eternal Lord. Fortify my heart of a poor boy, as You certainly fortify the heart of Your Son for future events... Oh! I can feel it! That is why He came here. To be close to You more than ever and fortify Himself in Your love. I want to imitate Him, o Most Holy Father! Love me and let me love You to have the strength to suffer everything without cowardice, to console Your Son. »

John prays for a long time, standing with his arms raised, in the trembling light of a fire he has lit in the rustic fireplace. He prays until he sees the fire about to go out. He then climbs into the large manger and crouches in the hay. He is a shadow in the shadow, enveloped as he is in a dark mantle and as the cave is enveloped in darkness, until the first moonlight penetrates from the east

through an opening in the roof, announcing that it is the dead of night. But John, who is tired, falls asleep. His breathing and the light babbling of the stream are the only noises to be heard in the December night.

High above, groups of angels seem to be flying all over the sky, where clouds as light as veils are illuminated by the moonlight... But there is no singing of angels. At intervals, night birds call one another plaintively, and at times they end up with the witchlaughter typical of owls, and from afar, a lamentation like a howl is heard. Perhaps a dog closed in a fold and yelping at the moon or a wolf scenting prey in the wind, striking its sides with its tail, and howling with eagerness without daring to approach the well watched pens? I do not know.

Then voices and steps are heard and a reddish quivering light appears among the ruins. And then, one after the other, the shepherd disciples come: Matthias, John, Levi, Joseph, Daniel, Benjamin, Elias, Simeon. Matthias is holding a lighted branch to see the way. But the one who runs ahead is Levi and he is the first to look into Jesus' grotto. And he soon turns round and beckons to the others to stop and be silent and he looks again... and then, with his right arm stretched backwards, he beckons to the others to come and he moves aside to make room for them, holding his finger on his lip to tell them to be silent, as one after the other they look in and then withdraw as deeply moved as Levi.

« What shall we do? » asks Elias in a whisper.

« Let us stay here and contemplate Him » says Joseph.

« No, it is not right to violate the spiritual secrets of souls. Let us withdraw over there » says Matthias.

« You are right. Let us go into the next stable. We shall still be here and close to Him » says Levi.

« Let us go » they say. But before going away they look hastily once again into the grotto of the Nativity and then withdraw, deeply affected, trying not to make any noise.

But when they are at the entrance of the adjoining stable, they hear John snore. « There is someone here » says Matthias stopping.

« What does it matter? Let us go in as well. As a beggar, for it must be a beggar, took shelter in here, we can take shelter as well » replies Benjamin.

They go in holding up the branch ablaze. John, all curled up in his improvised uncomfortable bed, his face half veiled by his hair and mantle, continues to sleep. They approach him slowly with the intention of sitting on the straw spread near the manger. In doing so Daniel looks more carefully at the man asleep and recognises him. He says: « It's the apostle of the Lord, John of Zebedee. They have taken shelter here to pray... and sleep has overcome the apostle... Let us withdraw. He might feel mortified knowing that he

has been found asleep instead of praying... »

They go out again and reluctantly enter the other grotto beyond this one. Simeon complains about it saying: « Why not stay at the entrance of His grotto, and see Him now and again? For years we have got wet with heavy dew under an open sky to watch over our lambs! And can we not do the same for the Lamb of God? We are entitled to do it, because we worshipped Him in His first sleep! »

« You are right as a man and as a worshipper of the Man-God. But what did you see, when you looked in there? A man, perhaps? No. Without knowing it, we have crossed the impassable threshold after removing the treble veil laid to protect the mystery and we have seen what not even the High Priest sees, when he enters the Holy of Holies. We have seen the ineffable love of God for God. It is not right to spy on it again. The power of God might punish our bold eyes that have seen the ecstasy of the Son of God. Oh! let us be happy with what we have had! We had come here to spend the night in prayer before going away on our mission. We came to pray and to remember the night of long ago... We have instead contemplated the love of God! Oh! The Eternal Father has really loved us very much, by giving us the joy of contemplating the Child and suffering for Him, and the joy of announcing Him to the world as disciples of the Child God and of the Man-God! He has now granted us this mystery as well... Let us bless the Most High and do not let us wish for anything else! » says Matthias, who I think is the most authoritative in wisdom and justice among the shepherds.

« You are right. God has loved us very much. We must not pretend more. Samuel, Joseph and Matthias had but the joy of worshipping the Child and suffering for Him. Jonas died without being able to follow Him. Isaac is not here either to see what we have seen. And if there is one who deserves it, it is Isaac, who is wearing himself out to announce Him » says John.

« That is true! Very true! How happy Isaac would have been to see all this! But we shall tell him » says Daniel.

« Yes. Let us remember everything in our hearts to tell him » says Elias.

« And the other disciples and believers! » exclaims Benjamin.

« No. Not the others. Not out of selfishness, but out of prudence and respect for the mystery. If God wants, the hour will come when we are able to speak. For the time being we must be quiet » says Matthias again, and addressing Simeon he goes on: « You and I were disciples of John. Remember how he taught us prudence concerning holy things: "If God, who has already blessed you, will grant you extraordinary gifts one day, do not let that make intoxicated chatterboxes of you. Remember that God reveals Himself to the spirits, which are enclosed in the flesh, because they are celestial gems not to be exposed to the filth of the world. Be holy in

your bodies and in your senses in order to be able to control every carnal instinct, in your eyes and your ears, in your tongues and in your hands. And be holy in your thoughts checking the pride of letting other people know what you have. Because your senses, organs and intellects must serve and not reign. They must serve the spirit, not rule over the spirit. They must protect, not upset the spirit. So put the seal of your prudence on the mysteries of God in you, unless He gives you an explicit order otherwise, as the spirit has the seal of temporary imprisonment in the body. Our bodies and intellects would be completely useless, harmful and dangerous, if they did not serve to give us merit through the afflictions we compel them to suffer in reply to the wicked incentives by which they urge us, and if they did not serve as temple for the altar over which hovers the glory of God: our spirits". Do you remember, John, and you, Simeon? I hope you do, because if you do not remember the words of our first master, he would be really dead as far as you are concerned. A master lives as long as his doctrine lives in his disciples. And even if he is replaced by a greater master - and in the case of Jesus' disciples, by the Master of masters - it is never right to forget the words of the previous one, who prepared us to understand and love the Lamb of God with wisdom. »

« That is true. You speak wisely and we will obey you. »

« But how painful and fatiguing it is to resist looking at Him again, when we are so close to Him! Will He still be as He was? » asks Simeon.

« Who knows?! How His face shone! »

« More than the moon in a clear night! »

« His lips had a divine smile... »

« And His eyes shed divine tears... »

« He did not utter one word. But everything was prayer in Him. »

« What will He have seen? »

« His Eternal Father. Do you doubt it? Only that sight can give such an aspect. Nay, what am I saying? Rather than see Him, He was with Him, in Him! The Word with the Thought! And they loved each other!... Ah!... » says Levi, who seems to be in an ecstasy as well.

« That is exactly why I said that it was not right for us to stay there. Consider that He did not even want His apostle with Him... »

« Of course. That's true! Holy Master! He needs to be overflowed with the love of God, more than dry land needs water! There is so much hatred around Him!... »

« But also so much love. I would like... Yes, I will do it! The Most High is present here. I offer myself and I say: "Most High God, God and Father of Your people, Who accept and consecrate hearts and altars and sacrifice the victims pleasing to You, let Your will

descend like fire and consume me as a victim with Christ, like Christ, and for Christ, Your Son and Your Messiah, my God and Master. I implore You. Hear my prayer". » And Matthias, who had prayed standing up with raised arms, sits down again on the bundle of sticks, where they were sitting.

The moon stops illuminating the cave because it moves westwards. It still shines brightly on the country, but no longer in here, and faces and things disappear in the darkness. Words also become rarer and voices lower, until sleepiness overcomes their good will, and words are intermittent, and at times without reply... The cold, which is biting at dawn, is a stimulant against sleep, and they get up, they light some twigs and warm their limbs numb with cold...

« What will He do, as He certainly will not think of a fire? » says Levi whose teeth are almost chattering with cold.

« Will He have at least some food? » asks Elias and he adds: « Now we have but our love and some poor food... and today is a Sabbath... »

« Do you know what? Let us put all our food at the entrance to the grotto and then we shall go away. We can always find some bread before evening, either at Rachel's or at Elishah's. And we shall be the providence of the Providence, of the Son of Him Who provides for us all » suggests Joseph.

« Yes. Let us light a good fire so that we can see and warm ourselves properly, then we shall take everything there, and go away before He or the apostle may come out at dawn and see us. »

They open their sacks near the blazing fire and take out bread, cheese and some apples. They then load themselves with firewood and go out cautiously while Matthias shows the way with a branch taken from the fire. They put everything at the entrance to the grotto, the faggots on the ground, the bread and the other foodstuffs on top of them. They then withdraw, they cross the river, one after the other, and they go away in the silent first faint light of dawn, broken by the sudden crowing of a cock.

### **537. Jesus and John of Zebedee.**

14th December 1946.

It is a clear but severe winter morning. Frost has covered with its white floury crystals the ground and grass and has turned some dry twigs lying on the ground into precious jewels sprinkled with little pearls.

John is coming out of his grotto. He looks very pale in his dark hazel-brown garment. He must be also very cold or he is not feeling well. I do not know. He is really ghastly pale and he walks like one who is not well. He goes towards the stream and is undecided

whether he should dip his hands into it or not. He then makes up his mind and cupping his hands he drinks a drop of the water, which is clear but certainly very cold. He shakes his hands and finishes drying them with the edge of his tunic. He then becomes uncertain... He looks towards the ruins where Jesus is and towards his own cave, and goes back to it slowly. But when he arrives at the opening through which one enters, he has a kind of fit of dizziness and he staggers. He would fall if he did not hold on to the semi-ruined wall. He rests his head on his folded arm, holding tight to the wall for a short while, then he raises his head and looks around... He does not go into his cave. Grazing the wall and supporting himself on the protruding rugged stones devoid of plaster, he walks the few steps separating him from Jesus' stable, and when he is almost at its entrance, he throws himself on his knees and moans: « Jesus, my Lord, have mercy on me! »

Jesus appears at once: « John? What are you doing? What is the matter with you? »

« Oh! my Lord! I am hungry! I have not had any food for almost two days. I am hungry and cold... » he looks very wan and his teeth are chattering.

« Come! Come inside! » says Jesus helping him to stand up.

And John, supported by Jesus' arm, begins to weep, with his head resting on Jesus' shoulder, and he says with a sigh: « Do not punish me, Lord, if I disobeyed You... »

Jesus smiles replying: « You are already punished. You are like one who is breathing his last... Sit down here, on this stone. I will now light the fire and give you something to eat... » and with the tinder Jesus lights some dry branches and makes a good fire in the rustic fireplace near the door.

The smell of burning branches spreads in the poor cave with the cheerful bright flames, near which Jesus holds two slices of bread after forking them with a stick. When He feels that they are warm He spreads them with the cheese left by the shepherds and when the cheese softens and melts on the bread, Jesus holds the slices flat over the flame, just like a plate.

« Eat now and do not weep » He says smiling all the time and handing the bread to John, who is weeping silently like an exhausted boy, and he does not even stop weeping while eating the comforting food avidly.

Jesus goes to the manger and comes back with some apples, He places them among the ashes already warmed by the wood burning between two stones used as andirons.

« Are you feeling better now? » He asks sitting near His apostle, who still weeping nods assent.

Jesus embraces his shoulders with one arm and draws him to Himself, which increases John's tears, as he is too exhausted and

too upset, probably, by the fear of being reproached and by the emotion of being treated thus, to be able to do anything but weep.

Jesus holds him close to Himself, without saying anything while he is eating. He then says: « That is enough now. You will have the apples later. I would like to give you some wine, but I have none. The morning of the day before yesterday I found the faggots and food outside the stable. But there was no wine. So I cannot give you any. If it were later I could try to get some milk from the shepherds, who I saw pasturing their flock beyond the stream. But they will not bring their flocks out until the frost melts... »

« I am already better, Lord... Do not worry about me. »

« And what are you worried about, as you look just like a tree whose frost is melting in the sun? » says Jesus smiling even more brightly and kissing John's forehead.

« Because I am full of remorse, Lord... and... Yes! Let me go! I must speak to You on my knees and ask You to forgive me... »

« Poor John! The effort, greater than your capability, has really weakened also your intellect. And do you think that I need your words to judge and absolve you? »

« Yes, You know everything, I know. But I shall have no peace until I confess my sin, nay, my sins to You. Let me go. Let me accuse my sins. »

« All right, speak, if that will give you peace. »

John falls on his knees and raising his tearful face he says: « I have committed a sin of disobedience, of presumption, and of... I do not know whether I am right in saying it: humanity... But that is certainly my most recent and gravest sin, that grieves me most and makes me understand what a useless servant I am, and even more than that: how selfish and vile I am. »

Tears are really washing his face, while Jesus' smile make His face brighter and brighter. Jesus bends a little over His weeping apostle and His divine smile is a caress for John's sorrow. But John is so dejected that he is not consoled even by that smile and he continues: « I disobeyed You. You told us not to separate, whereas I parted at once from my companions and I scandalised them. I answered back to Judas of Kerioth, who pointed out to me that I was committing a sin. I said: "You did it yesterday, I am doing it today. You did it to get news of your mother, I am doing it to be with the Master and watch over Him and defend Him"... I relied too much on myself because I wanted to do that... I, a poor fool, wanted to defend You! I presumed also because I wanted to imitate You. I said: "He will certainly pray and fast. I will do what He does and for the same intention as His". Instead... » His weeping changes into sobbing while the confession of the misery of man, of matter overwhelming the will of the spirit is uttered by John's lips: « Instead... I slept. I fell asleep at once! And I woke up

in broad daylight and I saw You go to the stream, wash Yourself, and come back here, and I realised that they could have captured You without me being ready to defend You. And I wanted to do penance and fast, but I have not been able to do so. Little by little, for fear I should finish it, I ate the little bread I had on the first day. You know that I had nothing else. I was not yet full, and I had finished everything. And the following day I was even more hungry, and last night... Oh! the night before last I slept very little because I was hungry and cold, and last night I did not sleep at all... and this morning I could not resist any longer... and I came because I was afraid of dying of starvation... and that is what hurts me more: that I was not able to keep awake to pray and watch over You, whereas I kept awake because of the pangs of hunger... I am a vile foolish servant. Punish me, Jesus! »

« Poor boy! I wish all the world had to shout such sins! But listen, stand up and listen to Me and your heart will be at peace. Did you disobey also Simon of Jonas? »

« No, Master, I did not. I would never have done that because You said that we were to be subject to him as if he were our elder brother. But when I said to him: "My heart is not happy to see Him go away all alone", he replied: "You are right. But I cannot go because I have been ordered to guide you all. You can go, and may God be with you". The others raised their voices and Judas did so more than the rest. They mentioned obedience and they also reproached Simon Peter. »

« Did they? Be sincere, John. »

« It is true, Master. It was Judas who reproached Simon and maltreated me. The others only said: "The Master ordered us to stay together". And they were saying that to me, not to our head. But Simon replied: "God is aware of the purpose of the action, and He will forgive. And the Master will also forgive it, because it is done out of love" and he blessed and kissed me and sent me after You, like that day when You went beyond the lake with Chuza. »

« So I do not have to absolve you of that sin... »

« Because it is too grave? »

« No. Because it does not exist. Come back here, John, beside your Master and listen to the lesson. One must know how to carry out orders with justice and discernment, understanding the spirit of the order, not only the words expressing it. I said: "Do not separate". You parted from them, so you would have sinned. But previously I had said: "Be united physically and spiritually, subject to Peter". With those words I elected My legitimate representative among you, with full faculty to judge and command you. Therefore whatever Peter has done or will do during My absence, is well done. Because as I invested him with the power of guiding you, the Spirit of the Lord, that is in Me, will be also in him and

will advise him in giving those orders required by circumstances and suggested by the Wisdom to the chief Apostle for the welfare of everybody. If Peter had said to you: "Do not go" and you had come just the same, not even the good reason for your action your wish to follow Me out of love to defend Me and be with Me at the moment of danger - would have been sufficient to cancel your sin. Then My forgiveness would have been really necessary. But Peter, your Head, said to you: "Go". Your dutifulness to him justifies you completely. Are you convinced? »

« Yes, Master. »

« Have I to absolve you of the sin of presumption? Tell Me, without considering that I see your heart. Did you presume to imitate Me out of pride, to be able to say: "Through my own will I overcame the needs of my body because I can do what I want"? Think about it carefully... »

John ponders. He then says: « No, Lord. If I examine myself carefully, I did not do it for that. I was hoping to be able to do it, because I have understood that penance is painful for the body, but is light for the spirit. I have realised that it is a means of fortifying our weakness and of obtaining so much from God. That is why You do it. That is why I wanted to do it. And I do not think that I am wrong in saying that if You, Who are so powerful and so holy, do so, I, we all, should always do so, if it were always possible, to be less weak and less material. But I was not successful. I am always hungry and so sleepy... » and tears begin to stream down his face again, slowly, humbly, a true confession of the limitation of human capability.

« Well, do you think that also this little misery of the body has been useless? Oh! how you will remember it in future, when you are tempted to be severe and exacting with your disciples and believers! It will appear again in your mind saying to you: "Remember that you also yielded to fatigue and hunger. Do not expect the others to be stronger than you. Be a father to your believers as the Master that morning was a father to you". You could have kept awake quite well and might not have felt hungry after all. But the Lord allowed you to be subject to such needs of the flesh, to make you humble, more and more humble and compassionate towards your fellow-creatures. Many cannot tell the difference between temptation and accomplished sin. The former is a trial that gives merit and does not deprive one of grace, the latter is a fall that deprives one of merit and grace. Others cannot tell the difference between natural events and sins, and they have scruples about having sinned, whereas, and it is your case, they have only obeyed good natural laws. By saying "good", I distinguish natural laws from unrestrained instincts. So not everything that we now call "law of nature" is really such and

good. All the laws connected with the human nature that God had given the first parents were good: the need for food, rest, for beverage. Then animal instincts, intemperance, all kinds of sensuality replaced through sin the natural laws and mingled with them polluting with their immoderateness what was good. And Satan has kept the fire burning, fostering vices with his temptations. You can now see that it is not a sin to yield to the need for rest and food, whereas debauch, drunkenness and prolonged idleness are sinful. Neither is the need to get married and procreate sinful, on the contrary God gave orders to do so to populate the Earth with men. But the act of copulating only to satisfy one's senses is no longer good. Are you convinced also of that? »

« Yes, Master. But tell me one thing. Those who do not want to procreate... do they sin against God's order? You once said that the condition of virginity is good. »

« It is the most perfect one. As is most perfect the condition of those who, not satisfied with making good use of their wealth, divest themselves completely of it. They are the perfections attainable by a creature. And they will be highly rewarded. Three are the most perfect things: voluntary poverty, perpetual chastity, absolute obedience in what is not sinful. These three things make man like angels. And one is by far the most perfect of them all: to give one's life out of love for God and for one's brothers. That makes the creature like Me, because it raises him to absolute love. And he who loves perfectly is like God, is absorbed in and united with God. So be at peace, My beloved John. There is no sin in you. I am telling you. So why are you weeping even more? »

« Because there is a fault: that I did not come to You when in need, and that I was able to keep awake out of hunger but not out of love. I will never forgive myself. It will never happen to me again. I will not sleep any more when You are suffering. I will not forget You by falling asleep when You are weeping. »

« Do not pledge the future, John. Your spirit is willing, but it could still be overwhelmed by the flesh. And you would be deeply and vainly disheartened if you remembered this promise you made, but you could not keep because of the weakness of the flesh. Look. I will now tell you what you ought to say to be at peace, whatever may happen to you. Say with Me: "I, with the help of God, propose, as far as it will be possible for me, not to yield any more to the heaviness of the flesh". And remain firmly in that decision. And if one day, even against your will, the tired and dejected flesh should defeat your will, then you will say as you say now: "I acknowledge that I am a poor man like all my brothers and may this help me to mortify my pride". Oh! John! It is not your innocent sleep that can grieve Me! Take these. They will help you to recover completely. We shall share them together, blessing him

who offered them to Me » and He takes the apples that are now cooked and very hot, and He gives three to John keeping three for Himself.

« Who gave You them, Lord? Who came to You? Who knew that You were here? I did not hear voices or steps. And yet, after the first night, I was awake all the time... »

« I went out at daybreak. There were faggots of firewood near the entrance and some bread, cheese and apples on top of them. I did not see anybody. But only certain people could have wished to repeat a pilgrimage and a gesture of love... » says Jesus slowly.

« That's true! The shepherds! They did say: "We shall be going to the land of David... These are days of remembrance... But why did they not stop? »

« Why! They worshipped and... »

« They pitied. They worshipped You and pitied me... They are better than we are. »

« Yes. They have kept their good will, and their will has become better and better. The gift that God gave them, did not become harmful to them... »

Jesus no longer smiles. He ponders and becomes sad. Then He rouses Himself. He looks at John who is looking at Him, and He says: « Well? Shall we go? Are you no longer exhausted? »

« No, Master. I may not be very strong, I think, because my limbs are benumbed. But I think I shall be able to walk. »

« Let us go, then. Go and get your sack, while I put what is left into Mine and let us go. We will take the road that leads us towards the Jordan in order to avoid Jerusalem. »

And when John comes back they set out, retracing the way by which they came and moving away through the country that the mild December sun is warming up.

### **538. Jesus with John and Manaen. End of the Third Year.**

16th December 1946.

They are already in the land influenced by the proximity of the Dead Sea, far from tracks for caravans and they are going straight north-eastwards. Apart from the ruggedness of the ground, spread with sharp stones, salt crystals, low thorny grass, they proceed quite well and above all peacefully, because there is not a single soul as far as the eye can see, the temperature is mild and the ground dry.

They are chattering to each other. During the previous days they must have met some shepherds and stayed with them, because they are speaking of them. They are also talking of a boy who has been cured. They proceed thus, peacefully, talking pleasantly to each other. Even when they are silent, they speak to each other

with their hearts as they look at each other with the kind glances of those who are happy to be with a dear friend. They sit down to rest and take some food, they set off again, always with the peaceful appearance that gives peace to my heart only by seeing them.

« Gilgal is over there » says Jesus, pointing forward, to a group of white houses in the sunshine on a little hill to north-east. « We are now close to the river. »

« Are we going to Gilgal for the night? »

« No, John. I have deliberately avoided all towns, and I am going to avoid this one as well. If we meet a shepherd, we shall stay with him. We shall soon reach the road and if we see caravans that are going to stop for the night, we shall ask them to receive us under their tents. The nomads of the desert are always hospitable. And we are likely to meet them at this time. If no one gives us hospitality, we shall sleep under the open sky, covered with our mantles and the angels will watch over us. »

« Oh! It will always be better than that gloomy night, the last night I had at Bethlehem! »

« But why did you not come to Me at once? »

« Because I felt that I was guilty. And I also said: Jesus is so kind that He will not scold me, on the contrary He will comfort me, as You actually did. So what would have happened to the penance I wanted to do? »

« We would have done it together, John. I was without food and fire as well, in spite of the foodstuffs and wood I found in the morning. »

« Yes, but when one is with You, nothing matters. When I am with You, I do not suffer for anything. I look at You. I listen to You. And I am happy. »

« I know. And I also know that in no one My thought is so deeply impressed as in My John. And I also know that you can understand and be quiet when it is necessary to be quiet. You understand Me, because you love Me. John, listen to Me. Before long... »

« What, Lord? » asks John at once interrupting Him, getting hold of His arm, stopping Him to look at Him in the face, with frightened inquisitive eyes and looking very pale.

« Before long I shall have evangelized for three years. I have told the crowds what they were to be told. By now, whoever wants to love and follow Me has the necessary elements to do so with certainty. The others... Some will be convinced by facts. The majority will turn a deaf ear even to facts. And I still have a few things to say to them. And I will tell them. Because justice also is to be served, not only mercy. So far mercy has been silent many times and has not said anything about many things. But before becoming silent for ever the Master will speak also with the severity of a

judge. But I do not want to speak to you about that. I want to tell you that before long, after I have told the flock what I had to say to make it Mine, I will very often withdraw collecting My thought in prayer and preparation. And when I do not pray, I will devote Myself to you all. I will do at the end what I did at the beginning. The women disciples will come. My Mother will come. We shall all prepare for Passover. John, as from this moment I ask you to devote yourself very much to the women disciples. And in particular to My Mother... »

« My Lord! But what can I give Your Mother that She does not already possess plentifully, and so plentifully as to have what She can give us all? »

« Your love. Imagine to be a second son for Her. She loves you and you love Her. You have one only love uniting you: your love for Me. I, the Son of Her body and of Her heart, shall always be more and more... absent, engrossed in My... occupations. And She will suffer because She knows... She knows what is about to happen. You must comfort Her also on My behalf, you must become so friendly with Her, that She may be able to weep on your heart and be consoled. You know My Mother. You have lived with Her. But there is a difference between doing so as a disciple who loves his Master's Mother with reverential love, and doing it as a son. I want you to do so as a son, that She may suffer a little less when She no longer has Me. »

« Lord, are You going to die? You are speaking like one who is about to die! You are grieving me... »

« I have told you all several times that I must die. It is just as if I had talked to absent-minded children or to slow-witted people. Yes, I am going to die. I will tell the others as well. But later. I am telling you now. Remember that, John. »

« I strive to remember Your words, always... But this one is so grievous... »

« That you do everything to forget it, is that what you mean? Poor boy! It is not you who forget, it is not you who remember. You with your will. It is your very humanity that cannot remember this thing that is so much greater than its capability of endurance, the thing that is too great, and you do not even know exactly how great it will be and how monstrous, so great that it stuns you like a weight falling on your head from a height. And yet it is so. I shall die soon, and My Mother will be left alone. I shall die with a drop of sweetness in My ocean of sorrow, if I see you as a "son" for My Mother... »

« Oh! My Lord! If I am able... and if it does not happen to me as in Bethlehem. I will do so. I will watch with the heart of a son. What can I give Her to comfort Her if She loses You? What shall I be able to give Her, if I also am like one who has lost everything and has

become insane with sorrow? How shall I be able, if I could not keep awake and suffer now, in the present calm, for one night and because of a little hunger? How shall I manage? »

« Do not get excited. You must pray very much during this period. I will keep you a good deal with Me and with My Mother. John, you are our peace. And you will be so even then. Be not afraid, John. Your love will do everything. »

« Oh! Lord! Keep me with You as much as possible. You know that I am not anxious to appear or to work miracles, I want, and I can only love... »

Jesus kisses his forehead again, towards his temple, as He did in the grotto...

They are in sight of the road that runs towards the river. There are some pilgrims who goad their mounts or quicken their paces to be in their resting places before night. But they are all muffled up because, as the sun has set, the air has become very cold and no one notices the two wayfarers who are striding towards the river.

A horseman, at a steady trot, almost at a gallop, overtakes them and stops after a few metres where some little donkeys have obstructed the road near a little bridge across a large stream, that gives itself the airs of a torrent and flows foaming towards the Jordan or the Dead Sea. While awaiting his turn to cross it, the horseman turns round and makes a gesture of surprise. He dismounts and holding the horse by the reins he goes back towards Jesus and John, who have not noticed him.

« Master! How come You are here? And all alone with John? » asks the horseman throwing back the edge of his headgear that he had pulled over his face like a hood, and I would say also as a mask to protect himself from the wind and the dust. The swarthy virile face of Manaen appears.

« Peace to you, Manaen. I am going towards the river to cross it. But I doubt whether I shall be able to do so before night falls. And where were you going? »

« To Machaerus. To the filthy den. Have You some place where to sleep? Come with me. I was hastening towards a hotel on the track of the caravans. Or, if You prefer, I will put up the tent under the trees on the river bank. I have everything on the saddle. »

« I prefer the tent. But you certainly prefer the hotel. »

« I prefer You, my Lord. I consider this meeting You a grace. Let us go. I know the banks of the river like the corridors of my house. At the foot of the Gilgal hill there is a wood sheltered from the winds, rich in grass for the horse and in wood for fires for men. We shall be comfortable. »

They walk away fast turning decidedly eastwards, departing from the road to the ford or to Jericho. They soon reach the edge of a thick wood that spreads from the slopes of the hill along the

plain towards the embankment.

« I am going to that house. They know me. I will ask for some milk and straw for all of us » says Manaen, going away on his horse, and he soon comes back with two men carrying bundles of straw on their shoulders and a little copper pail of milk.

They go into the wood without speaking. Manaen orders the two men to spread the straw on the ground and then dismisses them. He takes a tinder box out of the saddle pockets and lights a fire with the many dry branches lying on the ground. The fire cheers them and warms them. The pot, placed on two stones carried there by John, warms up while Manaen, after unsaddling the horse, puts up the tent of soft camel-hair, tying it to two poles driven into the ground and fixing it to the robust trunk of an age-old tree. He lays on the grass a sheepskin that was also tied to the saddle, he places the saddle on it and says: « Come, Master. It is a shelter for horsemen of the desert. But it protects from the dew and from the dampness of the ground. Straw is quite enough for us. And I can assure You, Master, that the precious carpets and canopies, the chairs of the royal palace are less, much less beautiful than this throne of Yours, than this tent and this straw, and the rich food that I have several times tasted, never had the flavour of the bread and milk that we shall relish under this tent. I am happy, Master! »

« I am happy, too, Manaen, and the same certainly applies to John. Providence has gathered us together this evening for our reciprocal joy. »

« This evening, Master, and tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow, until I know that You are safe among Your apostles. I imagine that You are going to join them... »

« Yes. I am going to them. They are waiting for Me at Solomon's house. »

Manaen looks at Him. Then he says: « I came through Jerusalem... And I heard. From Bethany. And I understood why You did not stop there. You are quite right in withdrawing. Jerusalem is a body full of poison and putrefaction. More so than poor Lazarus... »

« Did you see him? »

« Yes, I did. He is afflicted with the tortures of his body and those of his heart, because of You. He is dying a very sad death... But I would rather die myself than see the sin of our fellow countrymen. »

« Was the town in a state of ferment? » asks John who is watching the fire.

« Very much so. Divided into two parties. And, what is strange, the Romans have been merciful towards some people arrested for sedition on the previous day. It is secretly whispered that it was done to avoid increasing the ferment. They also say that the Proconsul

will soon be coming to Jerusalem. Before the usual time. I do not know whether it is a good thing or not. I know that Herod will certainly imitate him. And that will certainly be a good thing as far as I am concerned, because I shall be able to be close to You. With a good horse - and Antipas' stables have some very fast Arab horses - it will take no time to go from town to the river. If You are going to stop there... »

« Yes, I am. At least for the time being... »

John brings the warm milk into which each dips his bread after Jesus has offered and blessed it. Manaen offers some dates as golden as honey.

« Where did you have all these things? » asks John in amazement.

« The saddle of a horseman is a little market, John. There is everything for the rider and for the horse » replies Manaen with a frank smile on his swarthy face. He thinks for a moment and then he asks: « Master, is it lawful to love the animals that serve us and very often do so more loyally than man? »

« Why that question? »

« Because I was recently derided and reproached by some people who saw me cover, with the blanket that is now turned into our tent, my horse wet with perspiration after a race. »

« And did they not say anything else? »

Manaen looks at Jesus disconcertedly... and is silent.

« Speak frankly. You do not backbite anybody or offend Me by telling Me what they said to throw more filth at Me. »

« Master. You know everything. You really know everything and it is useless to conceal our thought and those of other people from You. Yes, they said to Me: "One can see that you are a disciple of that Samaritan. You are a heathen like Him Who infringes the Sabbaths to become unclean by touching unclean animals". »

« Ah! That was certainly Ishmael! » exclaims John.

« Yes. And those who were with him. And I replied: "I would understand you if you said that I am unclean because I live at Antipas' Court, not because I take care of an animal created by God". As in their group there were also some Herodians - which has become obvious for some time and it is very amazing, because previously they were in utter disagreement - they replied to me: "We are not judging Antipas' actions, but yours. Also John the Baptist was at Machaerus and was in touch with the king. But he remained just. You instead are an idolater... As people were gathering around us, I controlled myself, as I did not want to excite the people of the city. In fact for some time they have been roused by some false followers of Yours, who incite the people to rebel against those who oppose You, and also by others who commit abuse of power saying that they are Your disciples and are sent by You... »

« That's too much! Master? What will they come to? » John asks excitedly.

« They will not be able to go beyond the limit. I alone will proceed beyond that limit, the Light will shine and no one will be able to doubt any more that I was the Son of God. Come here near Me and listen. But add some wood to the fire first. »

The two are very happy to throw themselves on the thick sheepskin spread on the ground under the feet of Jesus, Who is sitting on the scarlet saddle against the tent fastened to the trunk of the tree. Manaen is almost lying down, one elbow pressed against the ground, his head resting on his hand, looking at Jesus. John sits on his heels, leaning his head on Jesus' chest, embracing Him with one arm, in his usual posture.

« When God created the world, and man, created in His image and likeness, was made its king, He showed all the creatures to man and wanted him to give a name to each of them, in order to be able to tell one from the other. And we read in Genesis "that each name given by Adam was good and was its true name". And also in Genesis we read that God, after creating Man and Woman, said: "Let us make Man in our image and likeness, that he may be the master of the fish of the sea, of the birds of heaven, of the cattle, of all the Earth and of the reptiles that crawl on the Earth". And when God created woman, Adam's helpmate, like him made in the image and likeness of God, as it was not convenient that Temptation, lying in wait, should tempt the male created in the image of God and corrupt him even more obscenely, God said to man and woman: "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the Earth and conquer it, and be masters of the fish of the sea, of the birds of heaven and of all living animals on the Earth", and He also said: "See, I give you all the seed-bearing plants that are on the Earth, and all the trees with seed-bearing fruit, that they may serve as food for you and for all the animals of the Earth and for the birds of heaven and for everything that moves on the Earth and has in itself a living soul, that they may live".

The animals and plants, and everything the Creator made to be useful to man, are a gift of love and a patrimony committed to the care of His children by the Father, so that they may use it with profit and gratitude to the Giver of all providence. Therefore they are to be loved and treated with proper care. What would you say of a son, to whom the father gave clothes, furniture, money, fields, houses, saying: "I give you all this for yourself and your successors, that you may have what will make you happy. Use it with love, in memory of my love that gives it to you", if they allowed everything to be destroyed or they squandered all their wealth? You would say that they did not honour their father, that they did not love him or his gift. Likewise man must take care of what God

with providential love has placed at his disposal. Care does not mean idolatry or immoderate affection for animals or plants, or anything else. Care means feeling of compassion and gratitude for the minor things that serve us and have a life of their own, that is their sensitivity.

The living soul of inferior creatures mentioned by Genesis, is not the same as the soul of man. It is life, simply life, that is, being sensitive to real things, both material and emotional. When an animal dies it becomes insensitive because death is its real end. There is no future for it. But while it lives it suffers cold, hunger, fatigue, it is subject to injuries, to pain, to joy, to love, to hatred, to diseases and to death. And man, in remembrance of God, Who gave him such means to make his exile on the Earth less difficult, must be humane towards animals, his inferior servants. In the Mosaic Book is it not prescribed to have feelings of humanity towards animals, whether they are birds or quadrupeds?

I solemnly tell you that the works of the Creator are to be contemplated with justice. If one looks at them with justice, one sees that they are "good". And good things are to be always loved. We see that they are given for a good purpose and out of an impulse of love, and as such we can and must love them, seeing beyond the finite being, the Infinite Being, Who created them for us. One sees that they are useful, and are to be loved as such. Nothing, bear this in mind, was made without a purpose in the Universe. God does not waste His perfect Power in useless things. This blade of grass is not less useful than the mighty trunk to which our temporary shelter is fastened. The drop of dew, the little pearl of frost are just as useful as the immense sea. A midge is as useful as the elephant and the worm that lives in the mud is not less useful than a whale. There is nothing useless in Creation. God made everything with a good aim and with love for man. Man must use everything with upright purpose and with love for God, Who gave him everything on the Earth, that it may be subject to the king of Creation.

You said, Manaen, that animals often serve man better than men do. I say that animals, plants, minerals, elements exceed man in obeying, by passively following the laws of creation, or actively following the instinct instilled by the Creator, or surrendering to become tamed for the purpose for which they were created. Man, who should be the pearl of Creation, is too often the ugly thing in Creation. He should be the note most in harmony with the heavenly chorus in praising God, whereas he is too often the dissonant note that curses or blasphemes or rebels or dedicates his song to praise creatures instead of the Creator. It is therefore idolatry, offence, filth. And that is a sin.

So be at peace, Manaen. To have compassion for a horse, that has become wet with perspiration serving you, is not a sin. The

tears one makes one's fellow-creatures shed and the uncontrolled love that offends God, Who is worthy of all the love of man, are sins. »

« But do I commit sin by staying with Antipas? »

« Why do you stay there? To have a good time? »

« No, Master. To watch over You. You know: that is why I was going there just now. Because I know that they sent messengers to Herod to incite him against You. »

« Then there is no sin. Would you not prefer to be with Me, sharing My poverty of life? »

« Are You asking me? I said so at the beginning. This night under the tent, the poor food we have relished has no comparison as far as I am concerned. Oh! if it were not necessary to be close to their den to listen to the hisses of snakes, I would stay with You! I have understood the truth of Your mission. I made a mistake one day. It served to make me understand and I will no longer leave justice. »

« See! Nothing is useless. Error also, for those tending to the Good, is a means of achieving the Good. An error falls off like the case of a chrysalis, and out comes a butterfly that is not misshapen, does not stink, does not crawl, but flies seeking calyces of flowers and sunbeams. Good souls are also like that. They may allow themselves to be enveloped by miseries and difficulties for a moment. Then they free themselves and fly from flower to flower, from virtue to virtue, towards Perfection. Let us praise the Lord for His works of continuous mercy, that are active, also unknown to man, in the heart of man and around him. »

And Jesus prays, on His knees, because the low limited tent does not allow any other posture. Then, after kindling the fire in front of the tent and hobbling the horse, they prepare for the night, and make arrangements to watch by turns the fire and the animal, on which Manaen throws the heavy fleece as a mantle to protect it from the night chill.

Jesus and Manaen lie down on the straw and cover themselves with their mantles to go to sleep. John, who is afraid of falling asleep, walks up and down outside the tent adding wood to the fire and watching the horse, which regards him with its intelligent dark eyes and stamps its hooves rhythmically, shaking its head, making the silver chains of the trappings jingly, and crushing aromatic stems of wild fennel growing at the foot of the tree to which it is tied. And as John offers it some which are more beautiful and have come up a little farther away, it neighs with satisfaction and tries to rub its soft pinkish nostrils on the apostle's neck. From afar, in the dead silence of the night, the calm rustling noise of the river is heard.

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Jesus says:

« And also the third year of My public life has come to its end. Now comes the preparatory period for My Passion. That is, the period in which everything seems confined to few actions and few people. It almost decries My figure and My mission. In actual fact He, Who seemed defeated and rejected, was the hero getting ready for His apotheosis, and around Him were concentrated and elevated to this highest peak not people, but the passions of people.

Everything that preceded and that in certain episodes perhaps seemed aimless to ill-disposed or superficial readers, is now illuminated by its gloomy or bright light. Particularly the most important figures. Those that many will not admit are useful to know, just because they contain the lesson for the present masters, who more than ever are to be instructed to become true masters of the spirit. As I said to John and Manaen, nothing of what God does is useless, not even a thin blade of grass. Thus nothing is superfluous in this work. Neither the magnificent figures nor the weak and gloomy ones. On the contrary, the weak and gloomy figures are more useful to the masters of the spirit than the perfected and heroic ones.

As from the height of a mountain, near its summit, it is possible to take in the whole structure of the mountain and the reasons for the existence of woods, torrents, meadow and slopes, to reach the peak from the plain, and one can see all the beauty of the sight, and is more deeply convinced that the works of God are all useful and wonderful, and that one serves and completes another, and they are all present to form the beauty of Creation; thus, always with regard to those whose spirits are righteous, all the different figures, episodes, lessons of these three years of My life spent in evangelizing, contemplated from the height of the summit of My work as a Master, serve to give the right view of that complex, which is political, religious, social, collective, spiritual, selfish to the extent of being criminal, or unselfish to the point of sacrifice, in which complex I was a Master and in which I became the Redeemer. The grandiosity of a drama is not seen in one scene, but in all its parts. The figure of the protagonist emerges from the different lights by which secondary parts illuminate it.

We are now close to the summit, and the summit was the Sacrifice for which I became incarnate, and as all the most secret feelings of hearts and all the intrigues of sects have been disclosed, we can only do what the wayfarer does when he reaches the summit, that is, to look at everything and everybody; to become acquainted with the Jewish world; to know what I was: the Man above senses, selfishness, hatred, the Man Who had to be tempted by all sorts of people to take vengeance, to seek power, to wish for the honest delights of marriage and family life, the Man Who had

to put up with everything living in the world and suffer by it, because infinite was the distance between the imperfection and sin of the world and My Perfection, the Man Who replied "No" to all the voices, to all the allurements, to all the reactions of the world, of Satan and of My human ego. And I remained pure, loyal, merciful, humble, obedient even to death on a Cross.

Will all this be understood by modern society, to which I grant this knowledge of Myself to strengthen it against the more and more powerful attacks of Satan and the world? Also nowadays, as twenty centuries ago, those to whom I reveal Myself will contradict one another. Once again I am the sign that is rejected. But not with regard to Myself, but with regard to what I stir up in them. Good people, those of good will, will have the good reactions of the shepherds and of humble people. The others will react in a wicked manner, like the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees and priests of those days. One gives what one has. A good person who comes in touch with wicked people provokes a surge of greater wickedness in them. And judgement will be passed on men as it was done on Good Friday, according to how they have judged, accepted and followed the Master, Who with a fresh attempt of infinite mercy has made Himself known once again.

How many people's eyes will open and how many will acknowledge Me saying: "It is He. That is why our hearts burnt within us as He talked and explained the Scriptures to us"? My peace to them and to you, My little, faithful, loving John. »