

Maria Valtorta

e'E

THE GOSPEL
AS REVEALED
TO ME

THE GOSPEL AS REVEALED TO ME

7 parts

The birth and Hidden Life of Mary and Jesus
chapters 1-43

The first year of the Public Life of Jesus
chapters 44-140

The second year of ~~the~~ Public Life of Jesus
chapters 141-312

The third year of the Public Life of Jesus
chapters 313-540

Preparation for the Passion of Jesus
chapters 541-600

Passion and Death of Jesus
chapters 601-615

Glorification of Jesus and Mary
chapters 616-651

Farewell to the work, chapter 652

10 volumes

Volume One, chapters 1-78

Volume Two, chapters 79-159

Volume Three, chapters 160-225

Volume Four, chapters 226-295

Volume Five, chapters 296-363

Volume Six, chapters 364-432

Volume Seven, chapters 433-500

Volume Eight, chapters 501-554

Volume Nine, chapters 555-600

Volume Ten, chapters 601-652

Maria Valtorta

THE GOSPEL
AS REVEALED
TO ME

VOLUME EIGHT
Chapters 501-554

CENTRO,
EDITORIALE
VALTORTIANO

Original title:
Maria Valtorta,
L'Evangelo come mi ^ stato rivelato
Copyright© 2001 by
Centro Editoriale Valtortiano srl.,
Viale Piscicelli 89-91,
03036 Isola del Liri (fr) - Italy.

Translated from Italian
by Nicandro Picozzi
revised by Giulia Scognamiglio

Maria Valtorta,
The Gospel as revealed to me.
10 volumes.
Second edition
All rights reserved in all countries
Copyright © 2012 by
Centro Editoriale Valtortiano srl.,
Viale Piscicelli 89-91,
03036 Isola del Liri (fr) - Italy.

ISBN 978-88-7987-188-4
(Volume eight)

ISBN 978-88-7987-180-8
(Complete work in 10 volumes)

Graphic and printing:
Centro Editoriale Valtortiano srl.,
Isola del Liri (Fr) - Italy

Reprinted in Italy, 2014.

Previous edition:
Maria Valtorta, The Poem of the Man-God, 5 volumes,
© 1986 by Centro Editoriale Valtortiano srl

INDEX

The third year of Public Life of Jesus.

501. The parable of the distant children. Healing of two blind children of the man from Petra. 9
502. Another dejection of Peter. A lesson on possessions, divine as well as diabolic. 17
503. The apostles investigate into the Traitor. A Sadducee and the unhappy wife of a necromancer. Knowing how to distinguish the supernatural from the occult. 22
504. Marjiam is prepared for the parting. Return to the village of Solomon and the death of Ananias. 34
505. In the Temple, a grace is granted from incessant prayer. The parable of the judge and the widow. **Lk 18, 1-18** 41
506. In the Temple, the contested speech that reveals the Light of the World in Jesus. **Jn 8, 12-20** 48
507. The great dispute with the Judeans. The escape from the Temple with the help of the levite Zacharias. **Jn 8, 21-59** 54
508. John will be the light of Christ until the end of time. The little Martial-Manasseh welcomed by Joseph of Sephoris. 68
509. The old priest Matan, welcomed with the apostles and the disciples who escaped from the Temple. Little Martial and the new circumcision. 76
510. Healing of a man born blind, caused by a deliberate manoeuvre of Judas Iscariot. **Jn 9, 1-34** 84
511. In the home of John of Nob. More praise for the Co-Redeemer. Lies of Judas Iscariot. 99

512.	Prophecy in front of the site of a destroyed town.	107
513.	In Emmaus on the mountain. A parable OS real wisdom and a warning to Israel	111
514.	Advice on the Holyness of an undecided young man. Re-proaching of the citizens of Beth-horon after the healing of a Roman and of a Jewess. 120	
515.	The causes for the salvific suffering of Jesus. Praise of obedience and a lesson on humbleness.	132
516.	In Gibeon, the miracle of the dumb boy. Praise of wisdom as a sign of love to God.	140
517.	Towards Nob, repentance of Judas Iscariot after a discussion.	145
518.	In Jerusalem. The meeting with the healed blind man. The speech that reveals the good shepherd Jesus. Jn 9, 35-41; 10, 1-21	150
519.	The mysterious absence of Judas of Iscariot and. A short stay in Bethany, in the house of Lazarus who is not leprous.	161
520.	Conversation about the absent Iscariot. The arrival in Tekoah with the elderly Elianna.	168
521.	In Tekoah. Farewell by the citizens and the elderly Elianna. The first of the victims of persecution because of Jesus.	178
522.	Arrival in Jericho. The earthly love of the crowd and the supernatural love of the converted Zacchaeus.	183
523.	In Jericho. Jesus is requested to judge a woman. The parable of the Pharisee and the publican after a comparison between sinners and the sick. Lk 18, 9-14	192
524.	In Jericho. In the house of Zaccaeus with the converted sinners.	201
525.	The prophecies of Sabea of Bethlechi and judgement of her.	211
526.	Healings I the ford of Bettabara. Speech in the memory of John the Baptist.	231

527. Unenlightenment and temptations I the human nature of Christ.	235
528. In Nob, the material comfort of Eliza. The disturbing return of Judas Iscariot.	240
529. Teachings to the apostles while they carry out manual work in the house of John of Nob.	245
530. Another night of sin for Judas Iscariot.	253
531. In Nob, the sick and the pilgrims from every region. Valeria and the divorce. Healing of little Levi.	258
532. Preparations for the Feast of Lights. A prostitute seat to tempt Jesus, who leaves Nob.	280
533. Towards Jerusalem with Judas Iscariot, who seems to make a decision.	294
534. Teachings and healings I the synagogue of the freed Romans. A mandate for the Gentiles.	297
535. Judas Iscariot is called upon to refer, in the house of Caifa.	307
536. The healing of seven lepers. The arrival in Bethany with the apostles reunited. Martha and Mary are prepared by Jesus for the death of Lazarus.	319
537. At the Temple, on the feast of the Dedication, Jesus reveals himself to the Judeans who attempt to stone him. Jn 10. 22-39	330
538. Jesus praying in the grotto of the Nativity, contemplated by the ex-shepherd disciples.	343
539. Perfection explained to John of Zebedee, who accused himself of inexistent faults.	352
540. John will be a "son" for the Mother of Jesus. A meeting with Manaen and a lesson on love for animals. End of the third year.	359

Preparation for the Passion of Jesus.

541. Judeans visiting Bethany.	373
542. The Judeans in the house of Lazarus.	375
543. Martha sends a servant to call the Master.	381
544. Delirium and death of Lazarus.	387
545. The servant from Bethany refers to Jesus Martha's message. Prediction to Simon Peter on Christian Rome. Jn 11, 1-4	400
546. The day of Lazarus' funeral.	407
547. Jesus decides to go to Bethany. Jn 11, 5-16	418
548. The resurrection of Lazarus. Jn 11, 17-46	425
549. The meeting of the Sanhedrin and the hearing of Pilate. Jn 11, 47-53	448
550. Elation among the apostles. A mission of love for Lazarus and of absolute contemplation for his sister Mary. Jesus must take refuge to Samaria.	462
551. After a short stay in Nike's house, the apostles are informed of the ban issued by the Sanhedrin. The arrival at the border of Judaea. Jn 11, 54	477
552. Preparations and welcoming at Ephraim.	488
553. The beginning of the Sabbath in Ephraim. The thieves of the Adummim and help given to three children.	494
554. The Sabbath in Ephraim, on an islet in the torrent. The original sin explained in a parable to the three children. 500 (the "Preparation for the Passion" continues in the ninth volume)	

The third year of Public Life of Jesus.

(continuation and conclusion)

501. The parable of the distant children. Healing
of two blind children of the man from Petra.

24th September 1946.

^{501. 1}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 perennial leaves mixed with annual leaves bring a cheerful note with their little fresh emerald green foliage 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 their 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 rays against the walls blackened by age of a little house.

Jesus sits on a little wall bordering 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 wise. 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.

501. 2 ²Listen. A father had many children. Some had always lived close to Him, some, for various reasons, had been relatively 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 regards 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 close to him 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, be-

cause your places are ready in my house and I do not make any distinction 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 the Kingdom gives 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 the 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. »

³«Oh! continue speaking to us! »

501. 3

«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 pre-

* says, in: Isaiah 1, 11.

ferred 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 forever. »

«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... »

501.4 ⁴«Are You here, Master? » shouts one who is coming up the road, all wrapped in a mantle among many other people.

Jesus turns around 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 exchange the greeting 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! »

* **exclaims, in:** Psalm 51, 18-19.

«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 around with hard eyes at the group surrounding Jesus, he sees Judas of Kerioth and greets him scoffingly.

⁵An 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. 501.5

«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 wrapped 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? »

⁶«Uncover the girl's face» orders Jesus. 501.6

«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 instead of her: «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! »

50.1.7 '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 burns 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.

⁸«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. 501.8

«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 de-

mon, of that impious usurper, blasphemer, deicide! May shadows fall upon my eyes forever. 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 off 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. »

501. 9 ⁹At 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.

«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...

502. Another dejection of Peter. A lesson on possessions, divine as well as diabolic.

25th September 1946.

¹The Bethabara ford has just been crossed. Across the blue river which is quite rich in water as it is nourished by the effluents 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. 502. 1

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! ^{502. 2} 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 per-

son 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 or 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 goodwill to love his God wholly, to give himself up! to His will, to practise virtues and control passions, is 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, where by what has been received is transformed in-

to 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. »

502. 3 ³The 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.

502. 4 ⁴«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, in 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 a 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.

⁵Jesus says: «You will put here the vision dated 3rd October 502. 5 1944: "The Wife of the Sadducean Necromancer"».

503. The apostles investigate into the Traitor.
A Sadducee and the unhappy wife
of a necromancer. Knowing how to distinguish
the supernatural from the occult.

3rd October 1944.

503. 1 ¹Jesus 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

* **Jesus is still travelling** is written with reference to the "vision" of the previous day, included in chapter 419.

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.

²«Master, may I say a word to You? » asks Thomas.

503. 2

«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, be-

cause 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 gossip 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. »

503. 3 ³The 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. At the back, 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 approve 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.

⁴Peter joins Jesus and calls Him.

503. 4

* that stormy evening..., in 481. 5/7.

«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 a piece of 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.

503. 5

A woman comes forward, all wrapped 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 in 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.

503. 6 «Do you wish to speak to me without witnesses? Come. »⁶They 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. »

⁷The woman weeps more loudly. The men who brought her, 503. 7
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

* to the book of Kings, that is: 1 Samuel 28, 15-19; 2 King 1, 16.

** Leviticus, in: Leviticus 19, 4. 26. 31; 20, 6.

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". »

503. 8 8«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 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 Christ 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 the sign of My Lamb is, there is Heaven. And the Earth is subject to Heaven. Be the masters of your brothers, be-

cause 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.

⁹«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. » 503. 9

«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 to! »

«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.

¹⁰«Master... Master,.. » The apostles are terrorised both by Je- 503. 10
sus' 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 sciemmanflorasc? »

«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 Tetragrammaton. The Son speaks the true language with His Father and by means of it, through the mutual 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.

503. 11 ¹¹Jesus 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

* I said, in 265. 7.

- 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 compas-

sion 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.

503. 12 ¹²⁰ 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. Proof becomes counter-proof in the hands of the Enemy and of the enemies of My friends. Be careful! Go with My peace. »

504. Marjiam is prepared for the parting. Return to the village of Solomon and the death of Ananias.

26th September 1946.

504. 1 ⁴«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. »

²Peter comes back with James. «No boats, Master, until this ⁵⁰⁴² 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 at 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 sufferings

«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

504. 3 to bear it. ³Marjiam! 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. ^{504. 4}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 around his still slender shoulders and draws him to Himself. «Why do you wish to know the future? We are today. Tomorrow we are no longer. 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 so 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. »

504. 5 ⁵They 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.

⁸And they proceed in the damp day. It does not rain until, in mud up to their knees, they get in five small damp boats, over-spread 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 deserted. 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.

«Every thing 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...

⁷The 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.
504. 8 May God bless you, woman. 8Let 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 around, 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.

505. In the Temple, a grace is granted from incessant prayer. The parable of the judge and the widow.

27th September 1946.

Jesus is once again in Jerusalem. A windy dull Jerusalem in ^{505. 1} 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 olive-trees and two sheep are not enough to keep a woman, to dress her and feed her... » remarks Andrew.

505. 2 ²Jesus, 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

* will of her husband, remembered in 373. 4.

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 serious 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.

³He 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. 505. 3

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.... »

⁴«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 hus- 505. 4

band 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 greeting: «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? »

⁵He looks at the people who have gathered near Him, about 505. 5 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

* stopped the sun, as narrated in: Joshua 10, 12-14; Sirach 46, 4.

** says, in: Deuteronomy 16, 18-20.

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 work 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.

6That is the parable. It is now for you to apply it.

505. 6

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 wraps Himself more tightly in His mantle and strides away towards the Ophel suburb.

506. In the Temple, the contested speech
that reveals the Light of the World in Jesus.

28th September 1946.

506. 1 ¹Jesus 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 Marjam 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 gathering 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

* told Him, in 490. 9.

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.

²When all the whispering is over, Jesus repeats the aforesaid sentence in an even louder voice and He goes on to say: 506. 2

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 Trin-

ity, that makes the blissful heavenly choruses sing because of (In-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. »

³«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, the first says**:

* Moses, in the divine manifestations as narrated in: Exodus 3, 1-6; 19, 16-25; 34, 29-35.

** the first says, in: Ezekiel 1, 26-28.

“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. »

506. 4 4«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.

* Daniel says, in: Daniel 7, 9-10.

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. »

⁵«We cannot hear the voice of the Most High. You say that He ⁵⁰⁶¹⁵ is Your Father... »

«He spoke of Me at the Jordan... »

«A11 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. »

* testimony, as prescribed in: Deuteronomy 19, 15-20.

«You are possessed and a liar. You are a blasphemer as You insist in maintaining that the Almighty 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.

507. The great dispute with the Judeans. The escape from the Temple with the help of the levite Zacharias.

30th September 1946.

507. 1 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. ²Go on. I am staying here to wait for Manaen and Marjiam. » 507. 2

The Twelve and those who are with them go on half-heartedly. 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.

507. 3 ³They 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.

^{507_4}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 regards 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 around 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.

507. 5 ⁵They 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

* when You were put to the test, as explained in 464. 19.

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. Only then, 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.

^{507.6} «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

prophetical 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 Cam 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.

^{507.7} ⁷But 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

* **prophetical words**, that can be found in almost all of the book of Jeremiah and in that of Lamentations, attributed to the same prophet.

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 Egyptians

«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

* Abraham's posterity, in the narration of: Genesis 16-17; 21, 8-20.

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 forever, 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 of the most cruel master forever: 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. ^{507. 8} 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 regards 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. »

⁹«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 glooms, 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 is the proof 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 proof? 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. »

¹⁰«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 around 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 goodwill 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.

¹¹When 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 individual, 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 around 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...

507. 12 ¹²Zacharias, 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 vice versa. 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 let in 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 around 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.»

«Praised 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. »

508. John will be the light of Christ until the end of time. The little Martial-Manasseh welcomed by Joseph of Sephoris.

7th October 1946.

508. 1 ⁴The 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...

²But John soon joins Him.

508. 2

«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 a 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... »

508.3 «Nothing can be added to a full vessel. But do not be discouraged... ³But 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, rank smelling 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. »

⁴They 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. 508. 4

«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 Je-

508. 5 sus to John, who is amazed at the child's reasoning and tears.
5^nd 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? »

* **He has done it...** is said reference to Jesus who took the orphan Jabe, then called Marjiam, giving an example to be followed.

«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 demand 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... 6But I hear Joseph's voice... »

508. 6

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.

* meaning, already seen in 364. 9, which is in: Genesis 41, 51.

«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! »

508.7 «But you do much of what I teach. ⁷I 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 re-

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.

509. The old priest Matan, welcomed with the apostles and the disciples who escaped from the Temple. Little Martial and the new circumcision.

8th October 1946.

509. 1 ¹When 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...

509. 2 ²There 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 Kerioth? 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 Kerioth comes to an end as Joseph of Sefhoris, 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

* friend, as in 505. 1, where the difference between disciples and friends of Jesus is explained. But "friend" can be "more than a disciple for anybody's heart", as Jesus says to Lazarus in 135. 2, and he is the one that "does what I do" as repeated in 581. 5. The difference between disciples and apostles in 165. 8.

say something in the ear of the other one, who reacts with great surprise and turns around for a moment to look at the apostles. He then opens the door.

509. 3 ³Nicodemus and Manaen come in followed by all the shepherd disciples present in Jerusalem, that is, Jonathan and the ex-disciples 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 Anna-leah 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 Sefhoris. 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 around 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.

⁴«I have never seen the like. And it's enough. I have made up ^{509. 4} 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 defender 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 sacrifices 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

* like wise Zechariah, or Onias, in: 2 Chronicles 24, 17-22; 2 Maccabees 4, 30-35.

** The abomination seen by the Prophet, in: Daniel 9, 27; 11, 31; 12, 11.

*** want to light the fire of the sacrifice, in: Genesis 22, 1-18.

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.

509. 5 ⁵The 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

* **promise**, requested and granted in 156. 5/6.

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. »

⁶Manaen and Jonathan are ready to obey, but Jesus stops Jonathan asking him: «So, are you going back to Galilee? » 509. 6

«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. »

⁷«I will go! Bless me, Jesus! » 509. 7

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.

509. 8

⁸Nicodemus 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 humbleness. »

«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

* read, in: Genesis 17, 12.

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... »

⁹There is silence, then Joseph of Arimathea stands up and ^{509.9} says: «I am going, Master. Come to my house tomorrows

«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 dan-

ger 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. »

510. Healing of a man born blind, caused by a deliberate manoeuvre of Judas Iscariot.

10th October 1946.

510. 1 ¹Jesus goes out with his apostles and Joseph of Sefhoris, heading 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, moving 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 Kerieth 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.

²«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? » 510.2

Also the other apostles and Isaac and Marjiam press around 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 He 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 over-

whelm these places and astonish spirits with the orgasm of anguish. But as long as I am in the world, I am Light and Witness,
510.3 Word, Way and Life, Wisdom, Power and Mercy. ³So 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 Sephoris 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 the blind man by the hand 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.

⁴After 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 around 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. 510. 4

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...

510.5 ⁵The 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.

^{510. 6} 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...

510. 7 ⁷«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 be-tide 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 despises of the prophets, go away! » The tumult becomes fiercer and fiercer.

* Jason... Simon... Eleazars... Oniases..., from: 2 Maccabees 4-6.

⁸Joseph of Arimathea, who is crushed against a little wall ^{510. 8} 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 around 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...

510. 9 ⁹They 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 statements

«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 works

«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 bright-ly? »

«We are not here to listen to you. You are not accused. We want to question that man. ¹⁰It's for you to reply. How did you get your eyesight? » 510. 10

«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 blasphemer. Liar! Corrupted! » and they eject him as if he were possessed.

510. 11 ¹¹«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 Cam 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 falsehoods

«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.

510. 12 ¹²«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.

510. 13

¹³The 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.

¹⁴The three go away quickly, followed by their friends. But when he is outside the enclosure, Sidonia turns around 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. » 510. 14

«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.

511. In the home of John of Nob. More praise
for the Co-Redeemer. Lies of Judas Iscariot.

11th October 1946.

⁴Jesus 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. 511. 1

«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.

511.2 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 around 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.

* I already saw, in 314. 2.

«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 God is? 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 around 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...

511.4 4«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 our 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! »

* **hymn**, which is in: Tobit 13, the part quoted begins with verse 23.

«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.

⁵There 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! »^{511. 5}

«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. »

511.6 ⁶«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 in particular, that it was Judas who informed the blind man of 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! I 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 clarifications

«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. ^{511.7}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... »

511.8 ⁸«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. » say 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 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 Sefhoris? »

«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.

512. Prophecy in front of the site of a destroyed town.

12th October 1946.

I do not know in which place Jesus is. 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 holes 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.

512. 2 ²Jesus 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 entangle-

ments 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. ³See. 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 dy-

ing 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?

512. 4

4Oh! 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

* prophecy, which is in: Daniel 9.

** voice, taken from three different quotations from: Isaiah 28, 11-12. 15. 16-19.

*** taught you, in 265. 13.

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...

513. In Emmaus on the mountain. A parable on real wisdom and a warning to Israel

14th October 1946.

†The square in Emmaus is crowded with people. It is really ^{513.1} 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 serious 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 of 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.

513.2 ²A 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 headed 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 not? "

"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 around 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 money wise. 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 avarice 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.

³Do 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 Shed? " 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 forever".

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 the 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

* He says, in: Baruch 3, 10-13. 20-21. 26-28,

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.

513. 4 ⁴Baruch 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! Prophetical 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 triple 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

* **Jacob...**, as in: Baruch 3, 37-38.

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 take them into the wine-cellar* so 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.

⁵Oh! 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 forever? What is life, glory, power? A bubble of dirty water on the surface of a pond used by laundry-men, 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

* wine-cellar, as in: Song of Songs 2, 4.

kisses, and adults His blessing. Only then, after taking leave of Cleopas and Hermas of Emmaus, He can depart.

514. Advice on the Holyness of an undecided young man.
Reproaching of the citizens of Beth-horon
after the healing of a Roman and of a Jewess.

17th October 1946.

514. 1 ¹And 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 curves 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 traveling 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 around 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.

² A young man departs from the crowd and catches up with the Master greeting him respectfully. Jesus exchanges the greeting. 514. 2

«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 impose sible 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 astounds 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... »

514.3 ³«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. »

«A11 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 a 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. ⁴See, son. At ^{514.4} times their very anxiety to be perfect and their humbleness make them be afraid that they can never become so. »

«So are the desire for perfection and humbleness obstacles to becoming perfect? »

«No, son. Desire and humbleness 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 abso-

* for Abraham, in: Genesis 17, 1.

lute 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 neighbours

«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. ^{514.5}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 he 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 branch of flowers offered to the Lord, is to comprise all virtues. Humbleness 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...

⁶They 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. 514. 6

«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 before, and she coughs and coughs... and she will die. »

«No wonder! With such treatments grumbles Matthew between his teeth.

“How long has she been ill? »

⁷The 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? » 514. 7

«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

* You cured him, in 115. 1/2.

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... ⁸He is pensive, until, just at the entrance to the village they find the squad standing around the wounded soldier, who is moaning on the ground. ^{514.8}

«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 naked 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.

⁹Jesus looks at the Roman lying at His feet: «And can you have faith? » ^{514.9}

«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 mountains And He repeats once again: «Be good. Goodbye. »

514.10 ¹⁰The 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.

514. 11

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

* chronicles, that for the parts quoted here are in: Joshua 10, 8-11; 1 Maccabees 3, 13-24.

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.

¹²Beth-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 our 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 Hosea** 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 He Who is to reunite 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 reuniting all men under one sceptre, how can you have a light, a truly divine light, that shows you things contrary to how God

* **the roll of Obadiah**, which is the shortest of the prophetic books: just one chapter of 21 verses.

** the marriage of Hosea, in: Hosea 1.

*** the prophet say, in: Hosea 2, 1-2.

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.

¹³«Why, Rabbi, did You speak to them thus? They will hate You» the apostles ask Him. ^{514.13}

«I am not trying to conquer love through negotiations or falsehoods

«But was it not better not to come here? »

«No. It is necessary not to leave the least doubts

«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.

515. The causes for the salvific suffering of Jesus.
Praise of obedience and a lesson on humbleness.

18th October 1946.

515.1 ¹But 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 Mo-

din, 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, ²until Bartholomew interests Him directly by submitting ^{512. 2} 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 he 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 sustain 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. ³Listen. 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 serious 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. ^{515.4}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 humbleness. 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.

⁵And Judas wisely prefers to change the subject and he asks: ^{515.5}
«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 re-

ally 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 so many Israelites will be damned forever. »

«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 regards 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 falls from the tree because it is 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. »

⁶«Why did You tell the decurion that You will see him on a ^{515.6} 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 Bartholomews

(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.)

516. In Gibeon, the miracle of the dumb boy.
Praise of wisdom as a sign of love to God.

22nd October 1946.

516.1 ¹In spring, summer and autumn, Gibeon, built on the top of a pleasant low hill isolated in a very fertile plain, must be a kind of 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

* decurion, is the head of the Roman maniple, or officer, met in 514. 7/9.

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.

²Beautiful 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 around 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.

516. 3

³Jesus heads 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 follows 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

* When Solomon..., as narrated in: 2 Chronicles 1, 3-12; 1 King 3, 4-15.

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. »

4«Master, can I ask You something? » says a man from Gibeon. ^{516.4}

«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 to each gift corresponds a responsibility. 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

* But later he sinned, as narrated in: 1 King 11, 1-13.

** I have said, in 265. 13.

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 ones: "Father, I have sinned! Forgive me. I love You once again".

516. 5 ⁵Love 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 Book of Wisdom 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 Book of Wisdom 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

* prayer, that is in: Wisdom 9.

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.

517. Towards Nob, repentance of Judas Iscariot after a discussion.

24th October 1946.

^{517. 1} The damp cold wind is brushing the trees on the hill and blowing masses 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? »

517.2 ²When 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 indifferent 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 1 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 around 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...

³They 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. ⁴You 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. ^{517.5}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 ill-repressed 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 mutual 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 head-strong. »

«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.

* says the proverb, in: Sirach 30, 7-8.

518. In Jerusalem. The meeting with the healed blind man.
The speech that reveals the good shepherd Jesus.

25th October 1946.

518.1

¹Jesus, 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, wrapped 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.

²Jesus is already outside the Temple and He is going down towards the street that leads 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. 518.2

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 around 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 be... 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? »

³«So do you believe in the Son of God and in His presence in ^{518.3} 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 his humble believer 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 them-

selves seers, may become blind... »

518. 4 4«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 around 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.

518. 5 3The 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 a murderer, 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 forever 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. »

518. 6 ⁶«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 population? 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! »

* mentioned, in: Isaiah 61, 1.

«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

⁷The 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 Messiahs 518.7

«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.

518. 8 ⁸I 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

* it is stated, as in: Isaiah 11, 1. 10; Jeremiah 23, 5-6.

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... »

⁹With his eyes bright with ecstatic tears Jesus looks at the fac- 518.9

es 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 peoples 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. »

518. 10 ¹⁰And 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

* for forty years, as said in: Exodus 16, 35.

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 he who purchased 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 goodwill 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.

519. The mysterious absence of Judas of Iscariot and. A short stay in Bethany, in the house of Lazarus who is net leprous.

28th October 1946.

^{519.1} 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 around 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.

519. 2

«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 the 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.

³Jesus, who by now has arrived at the heavy gate, calls a servant to have it opened. And He goes in and asks after Lazarus. ^{519.3}

«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. ⁴But the two sisters are about to arrive. Their flourishing, ^{519.4} 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
519. 5 I am saying. 5Lord, 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... Whoever 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

* law on leprosy, which is in: Leviticus 13-14.

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 mutual 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. ⁶Let us go... »

And He is the first to see 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.

⁷«Are You alone? »

519.7

«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 silently.

«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.

520. Conversation about the absent Iscariot.
The arrival in Tekoah with the elderly Elianna.

29th October 1946.

520. 1 ¹They 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.

520. 2 ²Also 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 around 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... ^{520.3}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!... »

520. 4

⁴The 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 analyzing 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 around 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. »

⁵«Lord, I was a great sinner, and I am certainly an example as ^{520.5}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 goodwill 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 hero-

* says, in: Isaiah 2, 22.

ism. 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 blood-brother. 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...

520. 6⁶ 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 kinships

«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 importances

⁷«And since you are a just man, are you not asking anything of God? » Jesus asks kindly. 520.7

«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 welcome 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 refreshments

520. 8 "Jesus bends to say something to Peter and Peter moves aside

* mentioned, in: Isaiah 52, 7-15; 53, 1-15 (especially from verse 6).

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? »

520. 9

«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.

520. 10 ¹⁰The 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 practices

«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

* Eli,... Phinehas, as mentioned in: 1 Samuel 1, 3; 2, 12-17. 22-34; 3, 1-18; 4, 4-18.

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 around them... ^{520. 11}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...

521. In Tekoah. Farewell by the citizens and the elderly Elianna. The first of the victims of persecution because of Jesus.

31st October 1946.

521. 1 The rear of Simon of Tekoah's house is actually a square delimited on two sides by the wings of the edifice, just like this **U** 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 rent 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.

² Jesus comes from the house with Peter and James of Zebedee. 521.2

I do not see the others. But I think they must be going around 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 taste 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.

521.3 ³I 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

* **words**, similar to those in: Isaiah 50, 2.

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.

⁴I bless you, citizens of Tekoah, the town at the border of the ^{521.4} 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 forever. »

«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»...

⁵The old man is beside Him and remains with Him as far as ^{521.5} the outskirts of the town. And only when Jesus blesses Matthew and Philip who will stay 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

* words, as in: Isaiah 30, 19-20.

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...

521. 6 ⁶«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 hot 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.

522. Arrival in Jericho. The earthly love of the crowd and the supernatural love of the converted Zacchaeus.

1st November 1946.

1 Jesus is anxiously awaited. A large crowd is in the fields near ^{522.1}

* my suspicion... what I said..., in 503. 3/4.

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.

522. 2 ²Poor 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 regards 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 rubber. 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, clothes-clasps 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.

³Jesus 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 steps 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 becomes 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? »

522.3

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...

522.4

⁴But 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. By now He is 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.

522.5

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. ⁵I did not seem to be seeing, but I saw everything. And I evaluated everything. And what did I see? I saw a converted sin-

ner, 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.

^{522. 6} '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 mutual love, in being humble and merciful,

* not remember, in the meaning expressed in: Ezekiel 18, 21-22; 33, 14-16.

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 humbleness 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
522.7 life under a veil of seeming health... ⁷Come 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

ill-treat 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.

⁸He 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 hon-

est. 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 soon being 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? »

522.9 «Of everything, Zacchaeus. ⁹I 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. »

«God grant it!... They are calling us. Let us go. »...

* Corban is the holy offering to be given to the Temple, hence taken away from the profane use. Pharisee misused it and Jesus condemned them in 300. 8 just like in Mk 7, 11.

523. In Jericho. Jesus is requested to judge a woman.
The parable of the Pharisee and the publican
after a comparison between sinners and the sick.

2nd November 1946.

523. 1 ¹Jesus 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 around 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.

²«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. ^{523.2}

«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. ³Will You see her at once? »

523. 3

«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 ridden with by arthritis, a paralytic, a dull-witted young man, a girl who I think is suffering from tuberculosis, 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.

523. 4

⁴Then, 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 restored, 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.

^{523.5}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 serious 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 fellow citizens 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, 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 serious and mortal? Does it not deprive one, and forever, 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 serious sins. And why persist in considering soiled, despicable, worthy of remaining isolated, what God and the goodwill 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?

⁶Be 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 re-consecrated altars on which the Love of God descends with its fire to consume the sacrifices 523. 6

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 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.

⁷Listen 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. 523. 7

One day two men, who had gone to Jerusalem on business, went up to the Temple, as is fit of 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 around 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 do 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 confiscated 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 about to die, 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 did not have 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 reminder 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".

⁸Then 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 had given up 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. 523. 8

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 conde-

scended 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 contaminated. 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".

523. 9 ⁹That is the parable. I solemnly tell you that while the Pharisee left the Temple with a fresh sin added to those he had com-

mitted 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 externally, 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 wrapping Himself in his mantle, He goes back to Zacchaeus' house.

524. In Jericho. In the house of Zacchaeus with the converted sinners.

3rd November 1946.

1They are all gathered in a large bare room. It was certainly ^{524.1} 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 around 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 sleep 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 goodwill 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 goodwill once again.

524. 2 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 regards to my fellow-citizens, so I must try and rectify 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. ³Our 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... »

524. 3

«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 around 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 regards 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!... »

524. 4 ⁴The 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 serious. You have much to rectify. 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, oh 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.

^{524.5} 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 slightly 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 superfi-

cial 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! »

524.6 «Did you hear what I said to that man? And yet he was in the depth of the abyss!... ⁶And 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 Cherit*. 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? »

* those who brought You the lamb at the Cherit, as can be found in 380. 3.

** the words You spoke in a valley near Modin, in a previous episode in 223. 6/8.

«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.

7He 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. »

524. 7

«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 goodwill 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. ⁸I 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

money-changer... 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 oppressions

«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 wells

«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. ^{524.9}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. ¹⁰It is not possible to be reincarnated, as it is not possible to go back in time. But it is possible to be recreated 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. ¹¹Have 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.

525. The prophecies of Sabea of Bethlechi and judgement of her.

5th November 1946.

¹The 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... 525. 1

«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. »

525. 2 Then they proceed on the road towards the river, along ploughed fields with dark fertile land, and orchards stripped by the season. ²At 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 regards 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. »

³«Well... we would like You to allow us to put the woman to a test. » 525. 3

«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.

⁴The 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. 525. 4

«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 around, 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 big-nosed 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 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.

⁵Some time passes. Then Jesus comes forward. The scribes 525. 5 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 back 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 casting off 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, particular-

* I greet You, and she does so using the words of: Isaiah 9, 5.

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! »

⁸The woman becomes silent as if her voice were exhausted. In 525. 8

* goes out and brings the olive-branch, as in: Genesis 8, 8-12.

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.

⁹One 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 a circle around the people who have grouped together. 525. 9

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

* **words**, from: Genesis 3, 15, Isaiah 7, 14; 11, 1-2.

us sing a new hymn to the Divine One! Shalom! Shalom! Mal-chich!!... (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!... »

Then she becomes silent all of a sudden. She looks around, 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. Sa-bea 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. »

¹⁰She raises her sorrowful voice again and says: «A voice, a ^{525.10} 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 these 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!... »

525.11

¹¹«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! »

¹²The woman obeys. But she speaks in a low voice, in fact they ^{525. 12} 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 ^{525. 13} homes and from the altar, and perish on the greatest death. ¹³My

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 around 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, and among 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 forever, 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.

525.14 ¹⁴The 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 last 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.

¹⁵The 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... » 525.15

«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 school-boy 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.

¹⁶«But this woman is not a prophetess. It is no longer the time ^{525.16}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. ^{525.17}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 Alamothe.

* issued to you at Kedesh, in 342. 6/7.

«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 humbleness 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 Alamo, 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.

¹⁸Jesus 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. 525.18

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 regards 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! »

525.19

¹⁹He joins again the apostles and Zacchaeus 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...

526. Healings in the ford of Bettabara.
Speech in the memory of John the Baptist.

7th November 1946.

¹«Peace to You, Master! » greet the shepherd disciples who ^{526.1} had gone ahead some days before 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 use-less 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 around 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.

526.2 ²Matthias 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 goodwill 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.

526.3 ³This 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 is good and bad power. 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.

^{526.4} 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 heroical 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

* I said, in 174. 18 and 352. 13.

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.

526.5 ⁵The 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 re-consecrate 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.

526.6 ⁶I 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.

527. Unenlightenment and temptations in the human nature of Christ.

8th November 1946.

¹They 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... 527.1

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... »

²«My Brother knows how to appraise the merits of men. We suffered as well for a long time from a natural human jeal-

ousy, 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.

527.3

³There 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. »

parable, narrated in 233. 1/4.

«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' evil doing. 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.

⁴«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... »

⁵John goes away. «Master! »

527.5

«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 men, 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.

527.6 «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. ⁷I 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. » ^{527.7}

«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. ⁸Now go to ^{527.8}

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...

528. In Nob, the material comfort of Eliza.
The disturbing return of Judas Iscariot.

9th November 1946.

528.1

1«Yes, Master! Judas of Kerioth 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... »

²«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. »

528.3 «She will be with Me in two months' time... »³and 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! »

528.4 ⁴He 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 humbleness, 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...

⁵There 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? » 528. 5

«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. »

6«It's ready, Master. Come to the table. Or... No. Remain there, 528.6 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 around 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 regards to Judas of Kerioth.

529. Teachings to the apostles while they carry out manual work in the house of John of Nob.

12th November 1946.

¹These 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 sun- 529.1

set caresses the kitchen garden verdant with winter vegetables with its rays. 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 around, 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 spring-time, 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.

²«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. 529. 2

«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 some reeds in his mouth 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?... ³The 529.3 hatred 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 Wa-

ter. 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.

⁴The Zealot, Matthew and Judas of Kerioth come back.

529.4

«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 some little plants. This place is as bald as the head of an old man, and it's a pity» he says sententially 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.

5«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 no-

tice 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. »

6«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. 529.6

«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 serious» 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.

529.7

«Me? Ah! Ah! ⁷I 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. »

529.8 «I would remember you just the same, because you have been here with the Master. ⁸Everything 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.

530. Another night of sin for Judas Iscariot.

14th November 1946.

¹All Nob is asleep. It is daybreak. Dawn, in the smooth winter ^{530.1} 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 grey-blue, can be seen 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 semi-circle 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 wrapped in his large mantle that also covers 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.

²The bleating of a sheep is heard from a fold and it fades away ^{530.2} 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. By the fireside? 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... ³He knocks against a body ^{530.3} 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 to-day, 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... »

530.4 4A 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 value 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 dampened 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 forever, and that you may not be able to find Him any more... ⁵Judas, are you

530. 5

* bridegroom of: Song of Songs 5, 2-6.

not speaking?... »

«It's too late 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...

531. In Nob, the sick and the pilgrims from every region.
Valeria and the divorce. Healing of little Levi.

15th November 1946.

531.1 ¹Jesus is in the middle of sick people and pilgrims who have come to Him from many places in Palestine. There is even a sea-man 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 lifeless. 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 struck 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 around, 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.

531.2 ²After 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 coming to life 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. Here there are 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.

531.3 ³I 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.

⁴As - 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 a 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 forever, 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 be with you. »

And Jesus, after blessing the crowd, goes back to the house...

^{531.5} 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 ho[^]y 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...

6Peter 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. » 531.6

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... »

531.7 ⁷There 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.

⁸The 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 around her face. The little girl, a baby because she must be at the 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.

531. 8

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.

531.9 ⁹Valeria 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... Sol 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 forever. »

«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.

¹⁰See. The God Whom you did not know, Whom you perhaps ^{531.10} 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 serious, 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 on-

* He gave her back to you, in 155. 4/5.

ly 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. »

¹¹«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

531.11

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 do not have 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 regards 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.

531.12 ¹²Not 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 re clothe 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.

¹³You 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

531.13

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 con-

sort 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!

¹⁴No. 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.

531.14

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 mutual 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. »

¹⁵«You are severe today, Master. »

531.15

«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 was 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... She then bends over the little girl who is sitting on the floor enjoying herself putting some white little flowers around 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? »

531.16 «Yes, I do... It is just... ¹⁶Master, 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 Dedications

«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.

¹⁷Some time goes by thus. Then someone knocks at the door. 531.17

«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 around 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... ¹⁸Andrew, go upstairs, pick up all the flowers brought by the little girl and take them to little Levi. »

531.18

«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 around 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!... 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 at the rear.

¹⁹The house is at the end of the village. But Jesus arrives there ^{531.19} 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.

531. 20 ²⁰They 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 forever! 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. ²¹Now 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 around 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...

532. Preparations for the Feast of Lights.
A prostitute sent to tempt Jesus, who leaves Nob.

21st November 1946.

532.1

¹People 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 the tom-tom of savages at their idolatrous festivals or in their war-like enterprises.

Also the apostles, in the imminence of the Feast of Lights, are in that state of light-heartedness. Talkative and cheerful as they are, they begin to make plans, to remember past festivities, a touch of melancholy as 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 wisp for praise, His mind is absent, as one can easily see.

²Night 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. 532.2

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 skillfully. 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 wrapping the hand in her linen veil.

The lid, the cause of so much trouble, is conquered. The carv-

ing 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... ³Be quiet! There is someone outside... There ^{532.3} 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 Kerieth, 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 there is a knock 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 Kerieth! »

«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.

532.4 ⁴John, 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 Judas is.

«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 conversations

«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. »

⁵Jesus goes out into the kitchen garden. In the dark moonless night it is not possible to see anything. 532.5

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!

532.6 ⁶Do 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.

⁷Do you know exactly who I am? You do not know. You did not even know the significance of what you were going to accomplish.^{532.7} And I forgive you for that, without you asking for it. You did now 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 instead for you 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.

532.8

8Oh! 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... »

⁹Jesus, 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. 532.9

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... ^{532.10} ¹⁰My 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 ^{532.11} is nothing of my past, nothing of... ¹¹You 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 humbleness. 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... ¹²But 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. »

532.12

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... Good-bye, 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.

532.13 ¹³She 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 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 around 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.

533. Towards Jerusalem with Judas Iscariot,
who seems to make a decision.

25th November 1946.

533.1 ¹The 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 and with one hand He smooths 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 heading 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.

533.2 ²Judas 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... ³Why have You been so severe with me recently? Do 533.3 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? »

533.4 «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... ⁴Oh! 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 humbleness, 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.

533.5 ⁵The 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 harm Your health... »

«The elements do not harm 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...

534. Teachings and healings in the synagogue of the freed Romans. A mandate for the Gentiles.

26th November 1946.

¹The 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. 534.1

«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 Temples

«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.

534.2

2«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 around 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. ³The true life is not lived by the body in these few days. 534.3
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 per-

fection 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 forever where there is no separation, no fear of estrangement, no pain, where the spirits will rejoice in the love of God and in their mutual 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, forever. »

534.4

⁴The 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. »

⁵Jesus in the singing tone used by synagogue leaders and rab- 534.5
bis 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

* **says**, quoting from: Ezekiel 37, 4-6. 12-14.

** **first-born**, of the ones narrated in: Exodus 11, 4-8; 12, 29-30.

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.

534.6

⁶A dignified old man, murmurs between his teeth.

«What did you say, man?» asks Jesus turning around.

«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 be-

ing quiet, reproaches a shameful action of yours. You will find it in the fear 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. »

534.7 ⁷«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.

534.8 ⁸I 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 forever 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. »

534.9 ⁹And 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 ad-

* we read, in: Ezekiel 17, 5-8; 189, 10-11.

vice 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...

535. Judas Iscariot is called upon to refer, in the house of Caifa.

2nd December 1946.

¹I do not see Jesus, or Peter, or Judas of Alphaeus, or Thomas. ^{535.1}
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; They are 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.

²The Iscariot, who is almost at the rear and is speaking to a little group of disciples full of goodwill 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 around. 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. »

³He 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.

⁴«There is Thomas coming» says simultaneously John. And Judas takes advantage of that not to reply. 535.4

«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 ful-

filled 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.

535.5

5«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...

⁶Judas 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 how and again he turns around 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.

⁷Among 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 olive-trees 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-pharisaical 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 Callascebona 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.

⁸Judas 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 before. 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... »

⁹«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! » 535.9

«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.

535.10

¹⁰They 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! ^{535.11}But remember what I have already told you. He met your father, Simon, and your brother-in-law, 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.

535.12

¹²But 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.

¹³They 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

535.13

of the consequences they may have to suffer. Some reproach for one thing, some for another, some about the past, some about 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... »

536. The healing of seven lepers. The arrival in Bethany with the apostles reunited. Martha and Mary are prepared by Jesus for the death of Lazarus.

4th December 1946.

¹Jesus 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. 536.1

«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. Everyone 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.

²The gloomy Hinnon valley appears with its sepulchres of living beings. 536.2

«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.

536.3

«Then apply to the Master with faith. ³Look! He is coming

* **is the Immanuel**, as in: Isaiah 7, 14; 8, 8; which means "God is with us", as in: Psalm 46, 8. 12; Isaiah 8, 10. Already in 76. 7. 9 and in 478. 9.

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... »

⁴The 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! » 536.4

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 caves a fight has started among the three bad lepers for the sharing of the food...

536.5 ⁵The 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.

⁶«You cannot remain here. Come with Me. No harm will be- ^{536.6}fall 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.

536.7

⁷They 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 around 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.

⁸They 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 the 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 in stages 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 fright-

ened. 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... »

^{536.9} 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

* Your words, in 265. 8.

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. »

536.10

¹⁰«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.

536.11

¹¹Jesus 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 love 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 see 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.

537. At the Temple, on the feast of the Dedication,
Jesus reveals himself to the Judeans
who attempt to stone him.

9th December 1946.

537.1

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 wrapped 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 !! If only I could never see 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 ap-

proach 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. »

²«I think we should go. They are spying upon us from over there... » says Peter. 537.2

«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 sufferings The Iscariot picks up the money.

Later, they bring on a litter an elderly man, whose legs are diseased. And Jesus cures him.

³The third to come is a group of people who ask Jesus to go out 537.3
side 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 around 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... » The 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,

537.4 ⁴Many 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 realizes 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 rec-

ognised 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. »

^{537.5}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 have

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 to 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. »

537.6 ⁶«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 goodwill. 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 out 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 goodwill 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 ema-

nated 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. »

537.7 ⁷Jesus stops for a moment. He gazes at a Judaeen 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 goodwill, 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 a 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.

⁸¹I 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. 537.8

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 billy goats 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 triple 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... »

537.9

⁹«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 Judaeen 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 Judaeen:

«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. »

¹⁰«We have never rejected the words of the true prophets. We have always respected John, who was the last prophet» replies a Judaeans angrily, and his companions echo him. 537.10

«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 proph-

et 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...

537.11 ¹¹Jesus 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. »

¹²The storm of shouts and violence begins all over again and is louder than before. 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". » 537.12

The incitements of the leaders stimulate the wrath of the Jews, 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 shout-

* written, in: Psalm 82, 6.

** It is written, in: Leviticus 24, 16.

ing. 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 non-commissioned 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 ap-

pear 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.

538. Jesus praying in the grotto of the Nativity,
contemplated by the ex-shepherd disciples.

11th December 1946.

^{538.1} Jesus is behind the Templa, 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 manifestations

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
538.2 that it was enough to launch a boat!... ²An 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.

³«Here is Levi. He is coming in haste» says Andrew who is looking from the roadside. 538.3

«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 in twos around the towns: "Go, preach, announce that the Kingdom of Heaven is very near at hand. Cure sick people, cleanse lepers,

* the boy of the remote night, in 30. 2/3. 6.

** in Solomon's village, that is beyond the Jordan, as in the piece by John 10, 40-42.

*** the words which I spoke, in 265.

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.

538.4

⁴They all depart reluctantly and turn around 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 wrapped 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 around 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.

⁵John 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. » 538.5

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, wrapped 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 witch-laughter 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.

538. 6 6Then 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 around 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... »

⁷They 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! » 538.7

«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. ⁸Samuel, 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 538.8

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 as 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. »
9«But how painful and fatiguing it is to resist looking at Him ^{538.9} 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.

¹⁰The moon stops illuminating the cave because it moves ^{538.10} 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 goodwill, 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.

539. Perfection explained to John of Zebedee,
who accused himself of inexistent faults.

14th December 1946.

539.1 ¹It 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 terribly 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 be-

comes 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! »

²Jesus appears at once: «John? What are you doing? What is the matter with you? » 539.2

«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 apos-

tie, 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.

539.3

«Because I am full of remorse, Lord... and... ³Yes! 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 most serious 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 Kerieth, 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! »

⁴«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? » 539.4

«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 serious? »

«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. »

539.5 ⁵«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,

* like that day, in 464. 14/15.

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. 539.6 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 popu-

late 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. ⁷So 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! ⁸Take 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 goodwill, 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.

540. John will be a "son" for the Mother of Jesus.

A meeting with Manaen and a lesson on love for animals.

End of the third year.

16th December 1946.

^{540.1} 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 is my thought 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. ²John, 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 forever 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. »

540.3 ³«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...

540.4 ⁴They 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 around 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. »

⁵They 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. 540.5

«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. »

540. 6 «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. ^{540.7}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 aroused 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
540.8 able to doubt any more that I was the Son of God. ⁸Come 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.

^{540.9}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

* **prescribed**, for example in: Deuteronomy 22, 1-4. 6-7. The speech on creation finds confirmation in: Genesis 1-2.

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.

540.10

¹⁰You 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 justices

«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. »

¹¹And 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. 540.11

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.

¹²Jesus 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 get-

540.12

ting ready for His apotheosis, and around Him were concentrated and elevated to this highest peak not people, but the passion 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 react 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 grandeur 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.

¹³Will all this be understood by modern society, to which I 540.13 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 goodwill, 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. »

* saying, just like the disciple of Emmaus, in 625. 11.

Preparation for the Passion of Jesus.

541. Judeans visiting Bethany.

18th December 1946.

¹A large imposing group of Judaeans enter Bethany on magnificent mounts. They are scribes and Pharisees, some Sadducees and Herodians, whom I have seen previously, if I am not mistaken, at the banquet in Chuza's house to induce Jesus to proclaim Himself king. They are followed by servants on foot. 541.1

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

«Have you seen that? »

«All the members of the Sanhedrin from Jerusalem. »

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

«Nor the most famous Pharisees. »

«Nor the scribes. »

«And who was the one on horseback? »

«They are certainly going to Lazarus' house. »

«He must be on the point of dying. »

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

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

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

«Praised be the Lord that He isn't! »

²«Do you know what they said to my husband, at the market in Jerusalem? To be ready, because He will soon proclaim Himself king, and we shall all have to help Him to... What did they say? Well! A word that meant something like... if I said that I will send everybody away from the house, and make myself the landlady. » 541.2

«A plot?... A conspiracy?... A rebellion?... » they ask, making

suggestions at the same time.

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

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

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

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

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

«But they are His disciples. »

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

541.3 ³«That is true. Strange things have happened for some time and they always say that the Rabbi's disciples are the cause of them. The day before the Sabbath, some of them manhandled a woman who was taking eggs to the market, and they said: "We want them in the name of the Galilean Rabbi". »

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

Another man who approached the group and has been listening says: «You are right. And what about the other thing they say? That the Rabbi will bring about great trouble, because the Romans will punish us all owing to His urging the crowds? Do you believe it? I say - and I don't think I am wrong because I am old and wise - I say that those who tell us poor people that the Rabbi wants to usurp the throne and drive away the Romans - I wish He did! if it were possible to do so! - and those who do violence in His name, and those who incite us to rebel promising future profit, and those who would like us to hate the Rabbi as a

dangerous person who will lead us into trouble, are all enemies of the Rabbi and they are anxious to ruin Him so that they may triumph. Don't believe them! Don't believe the false friends of the poor people! Did you notice how arrogantly they passed by? They almost gave me a blow with a cudgel, because I had difficulty in moving the sheep aside and I was preventing them from proceeding... And you say they are our friends? Never. They are our vampires, and, God forbid it, they are also His vampires. »

⁴«As you live near Lazarus' fields, do you know whether he is dead? » 541.4

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

«Well, why did they come? »

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

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

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

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

The adults are commenting.

542. The Judeans in the house of Lazarus.

19th December 1946.

¹Martha, although broken-hearted and exhausted, is always 542.1
a lady who knows how to welcome guests, honouring them with

the perfect urbanity of a true-born lady. Thus, after leading the group into one of the halls, she gives instructions to bring the refreshments that are customary, so that the guests may have what can restore them.

The servants move around pouring hot drinks or vintage wines and offering beautiful fruit, dates as fair as topazes, raisins, something like our sweet grapes, in bunches fantastically perfect, liquid honey, all served from precious amphorae, cups, plates and trays. And Martha watches carefully that no one is neglected, nay, she instructs her domestics to serve the guests according to their ages and to each individual, whose tempers are well known to her. She stops a servant, who is going towards Helkai with an amphora full of wine and a chalice and she says to him: «Tobias, don't offer him wine, but honied water and the juice of dates. » And she says to another one: «I am sure John will prefer wine. Offer him some of our white raisin wine. » And she personally offers old Hananiah, the scribe, warm milk, which she sweetens with plenty of golden honey, saying: «It will do your cough good. You sacrificed yourself by coming here, particularly as you are poorly, and it is a cold day. ²It affects me to see you all so thoughtful. »

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

³«There is nothing to be concealed in our brother's room. 542.3 There is nothing hidden in it. There is only a dying man, who for pity's sake ought to be spared all painful memories. And you, Helkai, and you all, are painful memories for Lazarus» says Mary in her beautiful harmonious voice, appearing at the door and holding the curtain to one side with her hand.

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

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

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

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

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

«But not to you, is that right? But I am going to place it right

under your eyes, to tell you that birds of a feather, flock together. In those days, unfortunately, I was near you, and I was like you. Now I am near the Holy One, and I am becoming honest. »

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

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

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

542.4 «No, Jonathan ben Annas. He did not make me weak. He made me stronger with the boldness of one who is honest, of one who wants to become honest once again and has broken all ties with the past to start a new life. ⁴Come on! Who is coming to see Lazarus? » She is as authoritative as a queen. She dominates them all with her frankness, with no mercy even towards herself. Martha, instead, is dejected, with tears in her eyes looking imploringly at Mary that she may keep quiet.

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

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

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

«No, woman. No. Only to greet the great Judaeen who is dying. For no other reason! You must not take our good intentions amiss. We heard from Joseph and Nicodemus that he was growing worse, and we came... as they did, the two great friends of

*struck, with Sadoc and others in 340. 8.

the Rabbi and of Lazarus. Why do you want to treat us differently, since we love the Rabbi and Lazarus, as they do? You are not fair. Can you deny that they have come with John, Eleazar, Philip, Joshua and Joachim, to hear how Lazarus was, and that also Manaen has come?... »

«I am not denying anything. But I am surprised that you are so well informed. I did not think that also the interior of houses is pried into by you. I did not know that there is a new precept in addition to the six hundred and thirteen: that is, to inquire into and spy upon the intimate affairs of families... ⁵Oh! Excuse me! I am offending you! Sorrow is depriving me of my senses and you are aggravating it. » 542.5

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

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

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

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

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

«Why do you not want to try, then? He has raised the dead... At least so they say... Perhaps you do not know where He is? If

you wish, we will look for Him, we will help you» says Felix in an insinuating way.

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

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

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

542.6 ⁶«No! It is not necessary. The Master... You are speaking of Him, are you not? The Master said that we must hope beyond hope, and in God only. And we will do that» says Mary in a thundering voice, as she comes back with Helkai, who departs from her at once and goes towards three Pharisees bending down to speak to them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

woman looks like an enraged archangel...

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

⁷Martha collapses on the carpet bursting into tears.

542.7

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

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

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

«But what they said to you... »

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

543. Martha sends a servant to call the Master.

20th December 1946.

¹I am still in Lazarus' house and I see Martha and Mary go out into the garden in the company of a rather elderly man, who looks very dignified and I would say that he is not a Hebrew because his face is clean-shaven, as is customary with Romans. As soon as they are at a little distance from the house, Mary asks him: «Well, Nicomedes? What do you think of our brother? We see that he is seriously... ill... Tell us. »

543.1

The man opens his arms in a gesture of commiseration and acknowledgement of the ineluctable situation, and he stops and says: «He is very ill... I have never deceived you since I began to attend him. I have tried everything, as you know. But to no avail.

I also... hoped, yes, I hoped that he might at least live reacting against the exhaustion of the disease with the good nourishment and the cordials I prepared for him, I tried also with poisons that preserve the blood from corruption and support one's strength, according to the old schools of the great masters in medicine. But the disease is stronger than the means we use to cure it. Such diseases are like corrosions, they can destroy one. And when they appear exteriorly, the inside of the bones has already been affected, and like the lymph that in a tree ascends from the roots to its top, also in this case, the disease has spread from his feet to his whole body... »

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

«Yes, but a high temperature causes damage to parts of the body that instead you think are healthy. Look at this little branch that has fallen off that tree. It seems to be worm-eaten only here, where it is broken. But, look... (he crumbles it with his fingers). See? Under the bark, which is still smooth, it is rotten right to the top, where there still seems to be life, because there are still some little leaves. Lazarus is now... dying, poor sisters! The God of your fathers, and the gods and demigods of our medicine have not been able to do anything... or they did not want to do it. I am speaking of your God. Therefore... I do foresee that his death is close at hand, also because his temperature has risen, a symptom of the deterioration of his blood brought about by his disorderly heart beats, and by the lack of stimuli and reactions in the invalid and in all his organs. As you can see, he gets no nourishment any more, he cannot hold the little food he takes and he does not assimilate the little he can hold. It's the end... And - believe a doctor who is grateful to you because he remembers Theophilus - the thing to be most desired now is death... Such diseases are dreadful. For thousands of years they have destroyed man and man cannot destroy them. ²Only the gods could if... » He stops, he looks at them rubbing his clean-shaven chin. He is pensive. He then says: «Why do you not call the Galilean? He is a friend of yours. He can cure him because He can do everything. I have examined people who were doomed and who have been cured. A strange power emanates from Him. It is a mysterious fluid that revives and gathers together the scattered reactions and makes them wish to recover... I don't know. I know that I have followed

Him, being also mingled with the crowd, and I have seen wonderful things... Send for Him. I am a Gentile. But I pay homage to the mysterious Thaumaturge of your people. And I would be happy if He could do what I could not do. »

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

«Is it very far? »

«No, Nicomedes. »

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

³«What shall we do, Mary? » asks Martha after she sees the doctor depart. 543.3

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

«But when he is dead... what is the use of having the Master here? It will only help our hearts, I agree. But with regard to La-

zarus!... I am going to send a servant to call Him. »

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

«But don't you see how much Lazarus is suffering? Have you not heard, when he recovers consciousness, how he longs to see the Master? You are hard-hearted if you want to deny our poor brother this last joy!... Our poor brother! We shall soon have no brother! No father, no mother, no brother! The family is destroyed, and we are all alone, like two palm-trees in a desert. » She is overwhelmed by grief and I would say that she falls into hysterics, in typically eastern style, and she tosses herself, striking her face and ruffling her hair.

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

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

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

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

«She would obey the Master, because she was a just woman. You are trying to move me in vain. You can say to me that I murdered my mother through the pains I gave her. I will say to you. "You are right". But if you want to make me say that you are right in wanting the Master, I say to you: "No". And I will always

say: "No". And I am sure that from Abraham's bosom she approves of me and blesses me. Let us go into the house. »

«We have nothing left! Nothing left! »

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

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

«Are you still thinking of the chattering of those crows, of the cheeping of those vultures? Let them spit out what they have inside! What does the world matter to you? What is the world as compared with God? Look: it is less than this filthy bluebottle, which is benumbed or poisoned with the filth it has sucked and which I trample on thus» and with a vigorous blow of her heel she crushes a horse-fly that is creeping slowly on the gravel of the avenue. She then takes Martha by the arm saying: «Come into the house and... »

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

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

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

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

⁴Marcella runs out of the house followed by Maximinus: ^{543.4} «Martha! Mary! Quick! Lazarus is not well. He does not reply any more... »

The two sisters rush back into the house... and shortly afterwards one can hear Mary's loud voice giving orders for the

circumstance, and see servants run with cordials and basins steaming with boiling water, whispering and making gestures of sorrow...

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

543.5 ⁵Martha appears again. She is as white as death. She turns around to see whether she is being followed. She looks at the servants who press around her anxiously. She turns around again to see whether anyone has come out of the house to follow her. She then says to a servant: «Come with me. »

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

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

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

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

«The Master is in that village. Anybody will tell you the house

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

The servant repeats them patiently.

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

«Yes, I have, mistress. »

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

«I will do so, mistress. »

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

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

544. Delirium and death of Lazarus.

21st December 1946.

¹They have opened all the doors and windows in Lazarus' room, to make it easier for him to breathe. And around him, who is unconscious, in a coma - a deep coma like death, from which it differs only because of his breathing movement - there are ^{544.1}

his two sisters, Maximinus, Marcella and Naomi, intent on the slightest act of the dying man.

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

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

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

544.2 ²At a certain moment Mary says: «His hands seem to become warm. Look, Martha, his lips are not so pale. »

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

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

«It's one hour past sunset. »

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

prayer. A smile brightens her face.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

³«Mistresses, Nicomedes has come back» says a servant appearing at the door. 544.3

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

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

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

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

«I am Mary. Mary! Your sister! »

«Mother! »

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

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

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

544.4 Nicomedes' entrance prevents a reply. They all address him telling him how after his departure Lazarus had grown worse, so much so that he was on the point of dying, and in fact they believed that he was dead, then, with some aids they had made him come to himself, but only as far as to make him breathe. And how, a short time ago, with a spicy wine prepared by one of the women, he had begun to warm up again, he had swallowed some and tried to drink, and he had also opened his eyes and had spoken... They are all speaking together, with revived hope, contrasting with the somewhat sceptical calmness of the doctor who lets them speak without uttering one word.

At last, when they have finished, he says: «All right. Let me see. » He pushes them aside as he approaches the bed and asks them to bring some lights and to close the window, as he wants to uncover the patient. He bends over him, he calls him, he questions him, he moves an oil lamp to and fro in front of the face of Lazarus, who has now opened his eyes and seems amazed at everything; he then uncovers him, studies his breathing, his heartbeats, the temperature and stiffness of his limbs... They are all anxiously awaiting his word. Nicomedes covers the patient again, looks at him and is pensive. He then turns around looking at the people present and says: «It is undeniable that he has recovered strength. He has improved since the last time I saw him. But do not delude yourselves. It is nothing but the fictitious

improvement of death. I am so certain, as I was certain that it is the end, that, as you can see, I have come back, after freeing myself of my commitments, to make his death less painful, as far as I can do so... or to see the miracle if... ⁵Have you taken action? » 544.5

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁶They hear Lazarus' voice coming from his room. A loud authoritative voice that startles them because it is unexpected from such a weak person. He calls them: «Martha! Mary! Where are you? I want to get up. I want to get dressed! I want to tell the Master that I am cured! I must go to the Master. A wagon! At once. And a fast horse. It was certainly He Who cured me... » 544.6

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

«No! Let him go. The miracle! The miracle! Oh! I am so happy that I provoked it! As soon as Jesus was told! God of our fathers,

may You be blessed and praised for Your power and because of Your Messiah... » Martha, who has dropped on her knees, is beside herself with joy.

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

544.7 ⁷The doctor, called by someone, comes in. He looks at him: «It's delirium. I was expecting it. The corruption of the blood affects the brains. » He strives to lay him down and exhorts the others to hold him carefully, and he goes out again to attend to his decoctions.

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

«He is really delirious» moans Mary.

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

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

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

Lazarus in fact is saying: «I bent my head to the decree of

* **I am not Job**, after having recalled the contents of: Job 42, 10-17.

** **I am Jonah**, according to the story of: Jonah 2.

*** **the three children**, in the story of: Daniel 3.

death and I tasted how bitter it is to die, and God has now said that He is satisfied with my resignation and He is restoring me to life and giving me back to my sisters. I shall still be able to serve the Lord and sanctify myself with Martha and Mary...

With Mary! ⁸What is Mary? Mary is Jesus' gift to poor Lazarus. ^{544.8} He had told me... What a long time since then! "Your forgiveness will do more than anything else. It will help Me". He promised me: "She will be your joy". And on that day that I was upset because she had brought her shame here, near the Holy One, what words He spoke inviting her to come back! Wisdom and Charity had joined together to touch her heart... And the other day, when He found me offering myself for her redemption?... I want to live to rejoice with my redeemed sister! I want to praise the Lord with her! Streams of tears, insults, shame, bitterness... everything has pierced me and killed my life because of her... Here is the fire, the fire of the furnace! It is coming back, with its memory... Mary of Theophilus and Eucheria, my sister, the prostitute. She could have been a queen and she became the filth that even a pig tramples on. And my mother who dies. And not being able to go among people any longer without having to put up with their mockery. Because of her! Where are you, you wretch? Were you lacking bread, perhaps, that you should sell yourself? What did you suck from the nipple of your wet-nurse? What did your mother teach you? Lust the former? Sin the latter? Go away! Disgrace of our family! »

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

«One, two, ten lovers. The shame of Israel passed from one embrace to another one... Her mother was dying, she was rejoicing in her obscene love affairs. Beast! Vampire! You sucked your mother's life. You destroyed our joy. Martha was sacrificed because of you. No one marries the sister of a prostitute. I... Ah! !! Lazarus, a knight, the son of Theophilus... The urchins in Ophel used to spit at me!! "Here is the accomplice of an adulteress and of a prostitute" the scribes and Pharisees used to say shaking

their garments meaning that they rejected the sin of which I was foul through her contact! "Here is the sinner! He who is not capable of striking the culprit is guilty himself" the rabbis used to shout when I went up to the Temple, and I was bathed in perspiration under the fiery eyes of the priests... The fire. You! You vomited the fire that was within you. Because you are a demon, Mary. You are filthy. You are anathema. Your fire clung to everybody, because your fire comprised many fires, and there was some for lustful people who looked like fish caught in a drag-net whenever you passed by... Why did I not kill you? I shall burn in Gehenna for allowing you to live ruining so many families, scandalising thousands of people... Who said: "Alas for the man who provides scandal"? Who said so? Ah! the Master! I want the Master! I want Him! That He may forgive me. I want to tell Him that I could not kill her because I loved her... Mary was sunshine in our house... I want the Master! Why is He not here? I don't want to live! But I want to be forgiven for the scandal that I stirred up by allowing the cause of scandal to live. I am already enveloped in flames. It's the fire of Mary. It is burning me. It burnt everybody. To give lust to her, to bring hatred against us, to burn my flesh. Take these blankets away, take everything away! I am on fire. It is burning my flesh and my spirit. I am lost because of her. Master! Master! Forgive me! He is not coming. He cannot come to Lazarus' house. It's a dunghill because of her. So... I want to forget. Everything. I am no longer Lazarus. Give me some wine. Solomon says*: "Give wine to those who are broken-hearted, let them drink and forget their misery, so that they may remember their grief no more". I don't want to remember any more. Everybody says: "Lazarus is rich, the richest man in Judaea". It's not true! It is all straw. It is not gold. And the houses? They are clouds. His vineyards, oases, gardens, olive-groves? Nothing. Deceit. I am Job. I have nothing. I had a pearl. Beautiful! Of infinite value. She was my pride. Her name was Mary. I no longer have her. I am poor. The poorest of them all. The most deceived... Jesus also deceived me. Because He told me that He would give her back to me, instead she... Where is she? There she is. The woman of Israel, the daughter of a holy mother, looks like

* says, in: Proverbs 31, 6-1,

a heathen hetaera! Half-naked, drunk, mad... And around her, with their eyes fixed on the naked body of my sister, the pack of her lovers... And she enjoys being admired and craved for thus. I want to make amends for my crime. I want to go through Israel saying: "Don't go near the house of my sister. Her house is the path to hell and it descends into the abyss of death". Then I want to go to her and tread on her, because it is written*: "Every unchaste woman will be trampled on like dung on the road". Oh! Have you the nerve to show yourself to me who am dying like a dishonoured man, destroyed by you? After I offered my life to redeem your soul, and to no avail? Are you asking me how I wanted you? How I wanted you in order not to die thus? This is how I wanted you: like the chaste Susanna. Are you saying that they tempted you? And did you not have a brother to defend you? Susanna, who was all alone, replied**: "I prefer to fall innocent into your power, than to sin in the eyes of the Lord", and God made her innocence shine. I would have spoken the necessary words to those who tempted you and I would have defended you. Instead, you went away. Judith was a widow and she lived in seclusion, wearing sack cloth and fasting and she was held in high esteem by everybody, because she feared the Lord and people sing*** of her: "You are the glory of Jerusalem, the joy of Israel, the honour of our race, because you acted in a manly manner and bravely, because you loved chastity and after your marriage you have known no other man. That is why the hand of the Lord made you strong and you will be blessed forever". If Mary had been like Judith, the Lord would have cured me. But He could not cure me because of her. That is why I did not ask to be cured. There can be no miracle where she is. But it is nothing to die, to suffer. I would suffer ten times as much and die several times, provided she were saved. Oh! Most High Lord! I am prepared to suffer all deaths and all sorrows, but let Mary be saved! To enjoy her company for one hour, for one hour only, when she has become holy and as pure as she was in her childhood! One hour of that joy! To be proud of her, the golden flower of my house, the kind ga-

* **it is written**, in: Ecclesiasticus 9, 10 according to the vulgate (because the piece has been taken from the book of Sirach of the neo-vulgate).

** **replied**, as can be read in: Daniel 13, 23.

*** **sing**, in: Judith 15, 10-11 of the vulgate (as this text has been reduced and modified in Judith 15, 9-10 of the neo-vulgate).

zelle with meek eyes, the evening nightingale, the loving dove... I want the Master to tell Him that that is what I want: Mary! Mary! Come! Mary! How grieved is your brother, Mary! But if you come, if you redeem yourself, my sorrow will turn into delight. Look for Mary! ^{544.9} I am at the end! I am dying! Mary! Light! Air... I... I'm suffocating... Oh! what I feel!... »

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

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

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

Martha casts a severe glance at Mary. Mary understands the meaning of that glance, and still crushed by her brother's frenzy, she is conscience-stricken and kneeling against the bed, she bends to kiss Lazarus' hand saying plaintively: «I am the guilty one. Martha wanted to do so two days ago. I did not let her. Because He told us that we had to inform Him only after your death. Forgive me! I have been the cause of all the grief of your lifetime... And yet I loved you and I love you, brother. After the Master, I love you more than anybody and God knows that I am not lying. Tell me that you absolve me of my past, that I may have peace... »

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

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

«Mary! Jesus came here for you... and He comes because of you... because you know how to love... more than all the rest... You have loved me more than the rest... A life... of delights would not have given me... not have given me... the joy that I experienced because of you... I bless you... I say to you... that you did the right thing... in obeying Jesus... I did not know... I know...

I say... it is right... ¹⁰Help me to die!... Naomi... you knew 544.10
once... how to... make me fall asleep... Martha... blessed... my peace... Maximinus... with Jesus. Also... for me... My share... to the poor... to Jesus... for the poor... And forgive... everybody... Ah! what atrocious pangs!... Air!... Light!... Everything is trembling... There a kind of light around you and it dazzles me if... I look at you... Speak... loud... » He has laid his left hand on Mary's head and has abandoned his right one into Martha's hands. He is panting...

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

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

«I can't hear. Speak louder! »

Mary repeats in a louder voice...

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

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

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

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

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

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

545. The servant from Bethany refers to Jesus Martha's message. Prediction to Simon Peter on Christian Rome.

22nd December 1946.

545.1 ¹It is already nightfall when the servant, who is proceeding through the brushwood near the river, spurs his horse, steaming with perspiration, to overcome the difference in level between the river and the road leading to the village. The poor animal's sides are heaving because of the long fast run. Its dark coat is all veined with perspiration and its breast is spread with the white foam of the bit. It puffs arching its neck and shaking its head.

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

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

back tomorrow. »

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²They go into the large room where the beds are and they tie the horse in a corner to protect it from draughts; the servant covers it with a blanket that was tied to the saddle, he gives it some fodder and the grass that Peter has brought from I do not know where. They go out again and Peter takes the servant into the kitchen and gives him a cup of warm milk that he takes from a pot near the fire, instead of the water that the servant had asked for. While the servant drinks it and warms himself near the fire, Peter, who is heroic in not asking curious questions, says: «Milk is better than the water you wanted. And since we have it! Did you come all the way without a stop? »

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

«Yes. But with the exception of the Master, Who speaks so much that His chest aches, and of the older ones, we, who are sturdy, prefer food that keeps our teeth busy. Take some. It's the milk of the sheep left by the old man. When we are here, the woman brings it to us. But, if we want more, everybody is willing to give it to us. They like us, here, and they help us. ³And... tell me: were there many members of the Sanhedrin? »

545.3

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

«What did you say? »

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

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

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

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

«You are right. Como

^{545.4}He takes him towards a door and knocks saying: «Master, there is one of Lazarus' servants who wants to speak to You. »

«Let him come in» says Jesus.

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

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

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

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

«But his condition is very serious, Master! His body is affect-

ed with gangrene and he no longer takes any food. I have worn out my horse to arrive here in the shortest possible time... »

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

«But will You come? »

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

The servant greets Him and withdraws.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6He goes to Jesus, Who is still sitting on the little bed, leaning His hands on its edge, engrossed in thought. But He rouses Himself when He hears Peter come close to Him and look at Him inquisitively. He smiles at the apostle.

«Are You smiling, Master? »

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

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

«That is all right. »

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

«Of what, My dear Simon? No harm will befall us for the time being, believe Me. Set your mind at rest and imitate Thomas who is always cheerful. You, on the contrary, have been very sad for some time. »

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

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

«Really? »

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

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

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

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

«To see whether I was there. Well, they did not find Me. Cheer

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

«Oh! if that is what You mean!... In place of the lake I have the river and... I make it suffice. With regard to Judas... I have You Who make up for him fully... And with regard to the other things!... Trifles! And they help me to become less coarse and more like You. How happy I am to be here with You! In Your arms! Caesar's palace would not seem more beautiful than this house, if I could always be in it thus, in Your arms. »

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

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

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

«In neither. Anathema! »

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

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

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

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

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

546. The day of Lazarus' funeral.

23rd December 1946.

¹The news of Lazarus' death must have had the same effect 546.1
as a stick stirred inside a beehive. Everybody in Jerusalem talks about it. Notables, merchants, common people, poor people, the townspeople, people from the nearby country, foreigners passing through but familiar with the place, strangers who are there for the first time and ask who is the man whose death is the cause of so much commotion, Romans, legionaries, members of the staff, and Levites and priests who continually gather together and then part, running here and there... Small knots of people discussing the event with different words and expressions. Some utter words of praise, some weep, some feel they are more pauper than usual now that their benefactor is dead, some moan: «I shall never have such a master again», some mention his merits, some describe his wealth and kindred, his father's services and offices and his mother's beauty and riches and her «regal» birth; some, on the contrary, recall family events over which one should draw a veil of kindness, particularly when a dead man is involved who has suffered through them...

²The small groups of people come up with the most varied 546.2
news on the cause of Lazarus' death, on the place of his burial, on the absence of Christ from the house of His great friend and protector just in that circumstance. The prevailing opinions are two: one is that all this happened, nay, was brought about by the bad behaviour of Judaeans, members of the Sanhedrin, Pharisees and the like towards the Master; the other, that the Master, being faced with a real deadly disease, sneaked away because His deceit would not be successful in this case. Also without being astute one can understand the source of the latter opinion,

which embitters many who retort: «Are you a Pharisee as well? If you are, take care of yourself because the Holy One is not to be cursed in our presence! You abominable vipers born of hyenas coupled with Leviathan! Who pays you to curse the Messiah? » Squabbles, insults, also some blows, pungent rude remarks addressed to the richly dressed Pharisees and scribes, who pass by giving themselves the airs of gods, without condescending to look at the common people shouting in favour or against them, in favour or against the Messiah, resound in the streets. And how many accusations!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

«Have you seen that? How mischievous they are! And they almost caught me! My father-in-law was right! ³There is Joseph ^{546.3} the Elder with John and Joshua. Let us go and ask them whether it is true that the Master wants to assemble an army. They are just and they know. » They all rush towards the three members of the Sanhedrin and ask their question.

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

Also John (the man who was jealous*) says: «He is a peace-

* the man who was jealous, as narrated in chapter 409.

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

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

«Yes, I will. But let your husband be quiet. Do you think that you are assisting the Master by means of these agitations and that you are honouring the dead man? You are wrong. You are harmful to both of them» replies Joseph ⁴and he leaves them to go towards Nicodemus, who is coming from one of the streets, followed by servants, and he says to him: «I was not hoping to meet you, Nicodemus. I do not know myself how I managed. Lazarus' servant came to me at the end of the fourth watch to inform me of the sad event. »

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁵«And you say that they held a meeting at the Temple? Why? » 546.5

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

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

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

«Whether they should go to the funeral, after Mary has driven them away. Some wanted to go, some were against it. Those who wanted to go were the majority and for three reasons. To see whether the Master was there, the first reason agreed to by everybody. To see whether He will work a miracle, the second reason. The third reason: the remembrance of words spoken recently by the Master to some scribes at the Jordan near Jericho» explains Joshua once again.

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

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

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

«Yes. But Uziel and Sadoc have recalled a challenge of many months ago. The Christ said that He will give proof that He can recompose also a decomposed body. And Lazarus is such. And Sadoc, the scribe, also says that, near the Jordan, the Rabbi spontaneously told him that at the new moon he would see half

of the challenge being accomplished. That is: a decomposed person that revives, without further decomposition or disease. And their opinion prevailed. If that happens, it is because the Master is there. And if that happens, there will be no more doubts about Him. »

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

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

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

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

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

«And what did Simeon say? »

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

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

«There is agitation in town... »

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

546.6 ⁶They arrive at the gate and they are stopped like everybody else.

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

«It is the order of the Centurion. The Commander is about to enter the town and we want to know who comes out of the gates, particularly of this one that opens onto the Jericho road. We know you. But we also know the feelings of the Judaeans towards us. You and those who are with you may go on. And if you have influence on the people tell them that it is better for them to be calm. Pontius does not like to change his habits because of subjects who cause him trouble... and he might be too severe. A

piece of sincere advice to you who are sincere. » They go on.

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

⁷The Bethany road is crowded with people all going in the same direction: to Bethany. They are all going to the funeral. One can see members of the Sanhedrin and Pharisees mingled with Sadducees and scribes, with peasants, servants, with the stewards of the various houses and estates that Lazarus owned in town and in the country, and the more one approaches Bethany, the more people pour into the main road from paths and other side roads. 546.7

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

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

Really! How many people. They are all supercilious, some with an expression for the occasion, some with the signs of true grief on their faces. They are all swallowed up by the wide open gate, and I see pass by all those who in successive stages appeared to be friendly or hostile to the Master. Everybody, with the exception of Gamaliel and of Simon, the member of the San-

hedrin. And I see also other people, whom I have never seen before, or whom I may have seen without knowing their names, disputing around Jesus... Rabbis pass by with their disciples, and scribes in close groups. And Judaeans go along while I hear their riches being listed... The garden is full of people who, after going to express their sympathy with the sisters - who, probably according to the local custom, are sitting under the porch, and are therefore outside the house - come back and spread out in the garden in continuous blending of colours and bowing in salutation.

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

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

546.8 ⁸Helkai comes back with the more intransigent members of the Sanhedrin, to whom he has been speaking for a long time and he asks: «Could we see the dead body? »

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

As Gamaliel's son is there, Helkai stands aside without insisting further, and he talks the matter over with the others who point out to him: «Can you not smell the stench? Do you wish to doubt it? In any case we shall see whether they wall up the sepulchre. One cannot live without air. »

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

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

⁹Then Johanan comes forward with Doras, the son of Doras, and with Ishmael, Hananiah, Sadoc and others whom I do not know. Their viperous faces express their intentions before their words do. But in order to strike they wait till Joseph goes away with Nicodemus to speak to three Judaeans. It is old Hananiah who with his clucking voice of a decrepit old man delivers the blow: «What do you think, Mary? Your Master is the only one to be absent among the many friends of your brother. Peculiar friendship! So much love while Lazarus was well! And so much indifference when it was time to love him! Everybody receives miracles from Him. But there is no miracle here. What do you say, woman, of such a situation? He has deceived you bitterly, the handsome Galilean Rabbi, hey! Did you not say that He told you to hope beyond what can be hoped for? So did you not hope, or is it of no avail to hope in Him? You were hoping in the Life, you said. Of course! He says that He is the "Life", hey! But in

546.9

there there is your dead brother. And over there the entrance of the sepulchre is already open. But the Rabbi is not here. Hey! Hey! »

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

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

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

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

546.10 ¹⁰Maximinus approaches them saying: «It is time. Give the order. It's for you to give it. »

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

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

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

It is too much! With her face wet with tears, tortured but still faithful, in the semicircle formed by the guests who have gathered together to see the corpse go out, Mary proclaims: «If Jesus of Nazareth has done that, it is well done, and great is His

love for us all in Bethany. Everything for God's glory and His own! He said that this will bring about glory to the Lord because the power of His Word will shine completely. Execute the order, Maximinus. The sepulchre is no obstacle to the power of God... »

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

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

“Maximinus remains to dismiss the guests and thank them on behalf of all the relatives. He remains to hear them all say that they will come back to condole every day... 546.11

They disperse slowly. The last to depart are Joseph, Nicodemus, Eleazar, John, Joachim, Joshua. And at the gate they find Sadoc with Uriel, who laugh maliciously saying: «His challenge! And we were afraid of it! »

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

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

547. Jesus decides to go to Bethany.

24th December 1946.

547.1

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

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

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

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

«Then go with this man. He will take you home on his donkey. »

At last all the people have gone, and Peter can rest with James, Judas, the other James and Thomas, who have helped him to send the more obstinate ones home.

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

^{547.2}He looks at Jesus Who is sitting near the table, engrossed in thought, with one elbow on the table and His head resting on His hand. Peter approaches Him and laying his hand on His shoulder he says: «You are tired, eh! So many people! They come from all parts of the country notwithstanding the season. »

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

Peter looks for a cup to give some milk to Jesus Who looks very tired. But he does not find the milk and he asks the others about it.

«The boy drank the last drop of milk we had. The rest was given to the old beggar and to the woman whose husband was ill» explains Bartholomew.

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

«He wanted that... »

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

^{547.5} «Peace! Peace! Are there not twelve hours in the day? A man who walks in the daytime does not stumble because he has the light of this world to see by, but if he walks at night he stumbles because he cannot see. I know what I am doing because the Light is in Me. Allow yourselves to be guided by Him Who can see. And bear in mind that until the hour of darkness comes, nothing sinister will take place. But when that hour comes, no distance or power, not even Caesar's armies, will be able to save Me from the Judaeans. Because what is written must take place and the powers of evil are already working secretly to accomplish their deed. Do let Me do as I wish and do good while I am free to do so. The hour will come when I shall no longer be able to move a finger or utter one word to work the miracle. The world will be devoid of all My power. A dreadful hour of punishment for man. Not for

Me. For man who will have refused to love Me. An hour that will repeat itself, through the will of man who will have rejected Divinity to the extent of making himself godless, a follower of Satan and of his cursed son. An hour that will take place when the end of this world is close at hand. The prevailing lack of faith will make My power of miracle of no use, not because I can lose it, but because no miracle can be granted where there is no faith and no will to have it, where a miracle would be made a butt of and an instrument of evil, by using the good received to turn it into greater evil. Now I can still work miracles, and work them to give glory to God. ^{547.6} «So let us go to our friend Lazarus who is sleeping. Let us go and wake him from his sleep, that he may be fresh and ready to serve his Master. »

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

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

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

«Thomas, Thomas, and you all who are criticising and grumbling in your hearts, you ought to know that he who wants to follow Me must have for his life the same care that a bird has for a passing cloud. That is, to let it pass and go wherever the wind blows it. The wind is the will of God Who can give you life or take it away as He wishes, neither you must regret it, as the bird does not regret the passing cloud, but it sings just the same as it is sure that the sky will clear up again. Because the cloud is the incident, the sky is reality. The sky is always blue even if clouds seem to make it grey. It is and remains blue above the clouds. The same applies to true Life. It is and remains, even if human life ends. He who wants to follow Me must not be anxious about his life or afraid for it. I will show you how one conquers Heaven. But how can you imitate Me if you are afraid to come to Judaea, whereas no harm will be done to you now? Are you hesitating about showing yourselves with Me? You are free to leave Me. But if you want to stay you must learn to defy the world, with its criticism, its snares, its mockery, its torments, in order to conquer My Kingdom. ^{547.7} So let us go and bring back from the dead

Lazarus, who has been sleeping in his sepulchre for two days, as he died on the evening that his servant came here from Bethany. Tomorrow at the sixth hour, after dismissing those who have been waiting for the morrow to be comforted by Me and receive the reward for their faith, we shall depart from here and cross the river, stopping for the night in Nike's house. Then at dawn we shall set out towards Bethany, via En-shemesh. We shall be in Bethany before the sixth hour. And there will be many people and their hearts will be roused. I promised it and I will keep My promise... »

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

«To those who hate Me and those who love Me, to both in the most clear manner. Do you not remember the dispute* with the scribes at Kedesh? It was still possible for them to say that I was mendacious, as I had raised from the dead a girl who had just died and a man who had been dead for one day. They said: "You have not yet recomposed a decomposed body". In fact God only can make a man from dust and remake a healthy living body from rot. Well, I will do that. At the moon of Chislev, on the banks of the Jordan, I Myself reminded** the scribes of this challenge and I said: "At the new moon it shall be accomplished". That with regard to those who hate Me. I promised the sisters, who love Me in a perfect manner, to reward their faith if they continued to hope against credibility. I have tried them severely and grieved them deeply and I alone am aware of how much their hearts suffered in the past days and I only know how perfect is their love. I solemnly tell you that they deserve a great reward because they grieve more at the possibility that I may be derided than over the fact that they cannot see their brother raised from the dead. I looked absorbed, tired and sad. I was close to them with My spirit and I could hear their wailing and I counted their tears. Poor sisters! I am now eager to bring a just man back to the Earth, a brother to the embrace of his sisters, a disciple back to My disciples. Are you weeping, Simon? Yes, you and I are Lazarus' greatest friends, and in your tears there is your sorrow for Martha's and Mary's grief and there is also the agony of a friend, but there

* the dispute, in 342. 6.

** reminded, in 525. 16.

is also the joy of knowing that he will soon be brought back to our love. ^{547.8}Let us move and prepare our bags and go to rest in order to get up at dawn and tidy up here where... our return is not certain. We shall have to hand out to the poor everything we have and tell the most active ones to keep pilgrims from looking for Me until I am in a safe place. We shall also have to tell them to warn the disciples to look for Me at Lazarus' house. There are so many things to be done. They shall be done before the pilgrims arrive... Let us go. Put the fire out and light the lamps and let everyone do what is to be done and go to rest. Peace to you all. » He stands up, blesses them and withdraws to His little room...

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

«That is a miracle! » exclaims Thomas.

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

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

«The evening before Friday» replies Peter.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And they go away speaking thus.

548. The resurrection of Lazarus.

26th December 1946.

^{548.1}Jesus is coming towards Bethany from En-shemesh. They must have marched really hard up the difficult paths on the Ad-ummim mountains. The apostles, who are out of breath, find it difficult to follow Jesus Who walks rapidly, as if love carried

Him on its ardent wings. A smile brightens Jesus' face as He proceeds ahead of them all, with His head raised, in the mild mid-day sunshine.

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

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

548.2 ²The little town, as seen from the fountain, which is a little higher up, seems quiet as if it were deserted. Only the grey smoke rising from chimneys indicates that in the houses women are busy preparing the midday meal, and the thick voices of men in the vast silent olive-groves and orchards inform one that men are working. Even so Jesus prefers to take a path that runs around the rear of the village, so that He may arrive at Lazarus' house without drawing the attention of the citizens.

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

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

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

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

«No, Lord. The sisters are not preparing anything, because they do not know. They would not let me tell them. They got hold of me when I entered the garden saying: "The Rabbi is here" and they drove me out saying: "You are a liar or a fool. He is not coming any more because He knows by now that He cannot work the miracle any more". And as I said that it was really You, they gave me two mighty slaps as I never had before... Look how red my cheeks are. They are smarting! And they pushed me away say-

ing: "That will purify you for looking at a demon". And I was looking at You to see whether You had become a demon. But I can't see any... You are always my Jesus, as beautiful as an angel, as my mother tells me. »

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

³They are now at the garden railing. They walk along it. Many mounts are tied to it, watched by the owners' servants. Their whispering draws the attention of some Judaeans who turn towards the open gate just when Jesus sets foot on the border of the garden. 548.3

«The Master! » exclaim the first to see Him, and the word flies from group to group like the rustling of the wind; it spreads, like a wave that comes from afar and breaks on the shore as far as the

walls of the house and enters it, certainly carried by the many Judaeans present, or by some Pharisees, rabbis or scribes or Sadducees, scattered here and there.

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

548.4

⁴Martha comes out of the house with a group of Judaeans visitors among whom there are Helkai and Sadoc. With her hand she shades her eyes tired of weeping from the sun, as the light hurts them, so that she may see where is Jesus. She sees Him. She departs from those accompanying her and she runs towards Jesus Who is at a few steps from the fountain shining in the sunshine. She throws herself at Jesus' feet after bowing to Him and kisses them, while bursting into tears she says: «Peace to You, Master! »

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

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

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

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

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

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

«I am the Resurrection and Life. Whoever believes in Me, even if he dies, will live. And whoever believes and lives in Me will never die. Do you believe all that? » Jesus, Who had previously spoken in a rather low voice, addressing Martha only,

raises His voice when saying these sentences in which He proclaims His power of God, and its perfect timbre resounds like a golden blare in the vast garden. The people present quiver with an emotion resembling fear. Then some sneer shaking their heads.

Martha, into whom Jesus seems to wish to instil a stronger and stronger hope by holding His hand on her shoulder, raises her lowered head. She raises it towards Jesus staring with her sad eyes at the Christ's bright ones and pressing her hands against her breast with a different anxiety she replies: «Yes, I do, my Lord. I believe all that. I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God, that You have come to the world and that
548.5 You can do everything You want. I believe. ⁵I am now going to tell Mary» and she disappears quickly into the house..

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

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

548.6 ⁶With her usual cry: «Rabboni! » Mary runs out of the house with her arms stretched out towards Jesus and throws herself at His feet, which she kisses sobbing deeply. Several Judaeans who were in the house with her and who have followed her, weep with her with doubtful sincerity. Also Maximinus, Marcella, Sara, Naomi have followed Mary, as well as all the servants and their wailing is loud and high-pitched. I think that there is no one left

in the house. When Martha sees Mary cry thus, she cries copiously, too.

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

But Mary does not listen to the words that aim at preparing her for too great a joy after so much anguish, and being able to speak at last, she shouts: «Oh! Lord! Why did You not come sooner? Why did You go away from us? You knew that Lazarus was ill! If You had been here my brother would not have died. Why did You not come? I still had to prove to him that I loved him. He should have lived. I had to show him that I persevered in honesty. I afflicted my brother so much! And now! And now that I could have made him happy, he has been taken away from me! You could have left him with me. You could have given poor Mary the joy of comforting him after grieving him so deeply. Oh! Jesus! Jesus! My Master! My Saviour! My hope! » and she collapses again, her forehead on Jesus' feet, which are washed once again by her tears, and she moans: «Why have you done that, Lord?! Also on account of those who hate You and are now rejoicing at what has happened... Why have You done that, Jesus?! » But there is no reproach in Mary's tone as there was in Martha's, there is only the anguish of a woman, who is grieved not only as a sister but also as a disciple who feels that the opinion of her Master is diminished in the hearts of many people.

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

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

Jesus says in an even louder voice: «But I tell you: do not weep. Stand up! Look at Me! Do you think that I, Who loved you

548.7 so much, have done this without a reason? Can you believe that I have grieved you thus in vain? Come. ⁷Let us go to Lazarus. Where have you put him? »

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

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

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

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

548.8 ⁸«Remove that stone» shouts Jesus all of a sudden, after wiping His tears.

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

Jesus repeats His order in a louder voice astonishing even more the people, who urged by opposed feelings react at first as if they wanted to run away, but immediately afterwards they

wish to draw closer, to see, defying the stench of the sepulchre that Jesus wants opened.

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁹Jesus does not reply to her. He raises His eyes to the sky, He stretches out His arms crosswise and prays in a very loud voice syllabising the words: «Father! I thank You for hearing Me. I knew that You always hear Me. But I said so for those who are present here, for the people surrounding Me, that they may believe in You, in Me, and that You have sent Me! » 548.9

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

An «oh! » is uttered more and more clearly by the lips previously closed by the anxiety of suspense: from a whisper hardly distinguishable it changes into a voice, from a voice into a powerful cry.

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

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

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

¹¹The servants rush to carry out the instructions, Naomi is the first to run away and to come back with garments folded on her arm. Some untie the bandages after rolling up their sleeves and tucking up their garments so that they may not touch the dripping rot. Marcella and Sarah come back with amphoras of perfumes followed by servants carrying basins and jugs of water steaming hot or trays with cups of milk, wine, fruit, honey cakes. 548.11

The very long narrow bandages, which I think are of linen, with selvedge on each side, obviously woven for that purpose, unroll like rolls of tape from a reel and pile up on the ground,

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

548.12 ¹²When they uncover Lazarus' face and he can look, he directs his gaze towards Jesus before looking at his sisters, and he seems absent-minded and does not pay attention to what is happening while he looks at his Jesus with a loving smile on his lips and tears shining in his deep-sunken eyes. Jesus also smiles at him, His eyes shining with tears, and without speaking He directs Lazarus' gaze towards the sky; Lazarus understands and moves his lips in silent prayer.

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

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

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

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

They make him sit down to untie his legs and wash them. As soon as they appear Martha and Mary utter a loud cry pointing to the legs and bandages. And whilst on the bandages tied around the legs and on the shroud placed under the bandages the putrid matter is so copious as to stream down the cloth, the legs

are completely healed. Only red cyanotic scars indicate the parts affected by gangrene.

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

¹³They now put sandals on Lazarus' feet and he stands up, agile and steady. He takes the tunic that Martha hands him, he puts it on by himself, he fastens his belt and adjusts the fold of the garment. And there he is, lean and pale, but like everybody else. He washes again his hands and arms as far as his elbows, after tucking up his sleeves. And with clean water he washes his face and head again, until he feels that he is thoroughly clean. He dries his hair and face, hands the towel to the servant and goes straight towards Jesus. He prostrates himself. He kisses His feet. 548.13

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

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

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

¹⁴Jesus seems to see no one but Lazarus, but in actual fact 548.14
He observes everything and everybody and when He sees with

what furious gestures Sadoc, Helkai, Hananiah, Felix, Doras and Cornelius and others are about to go away, He says in a loud voice: «Wait a moment, Sadoc. I want to have a word with you, with you and your friends. »

They stop with the sinister look of criminals.

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁵He turns around and sees Simon, the member of the Sanhedrin, the son of Elianna. He gazes at him. He leaves the previous group and when He is face to face with him, He says in a low but incisive voice: «You are fortunate that Lazarus does not remember his stay among the dead! What have you done with your father, o Cain? » 548.15

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

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

¹⁶The garden slowly becomes empty. The Judaeans are dumb-founded, but most of them are bursting with wrath. If glances could reduce one to ashes, Jesus would have been pulverised a long time ago. They speak and discuss among themselves while going away, and they are so upset by their defeat that they are unable to conceal the purpose of their presence here under the hypocritical appearance of friendship. They go away without saying goodbye to Lazarus or to the sisters. 548.16

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

know, but they must be influential people.

In the meantime Lazarus, surrounded by his more intimates, has withdrawn into the house. Joseph, Nicodemus and other good people greet Jesus and go away. The Judaeans who were staying with Martha and Mary depart giving low bows. The servants close the gate. The house becomes peaceful again.

548.17 ¹⁷Jesus looks about Himself. He sees smoke and flames at the end of the garden, towards the sepulchre. All alone, standing in the middle of a path Jesus says: «Rottenness that is being destroyed by fire... The rottenness of death... But no fire will ever destroy the corruption of hearts... of those hearts... Not even the fire of Hell. It will last forever... How horrible!... Worse than death... Worse than putrefaction... And... But who will save you, o Mankind, if you love so much to be corrupt? You want to be corrupt. And I... I have torn a man from his sepulchre with one word... And with a multitude of words... and a multitude of sorrows I shall not be able to tear away from sin man, men, Nations of men. » He sits down and with His hands He covers His face dejectedly...

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

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

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

548.18 ¹⁸They go into one of the halls. Lazarus is not there, neither is the Zealot. But Martha is there, she is happy, transfigured by joy. She turns towards Jesus explaining: «Lazarus has gone to the bathroom. To purify himself further. Oh! Master! Master! What shall I tell You? » She adores Him with her whole being. She becomes aware of Jesus' sadness and says: «Are You sad, Lord? Are You not happy that Lazarus... » She becomes suspicious: «Oh! You are serious with me. I have sinned. It is true. »

«We have sinned, sister» says Mary.

«No. You did not. Oh! Master, Mary did not sin. Mary obeyed.

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

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

«Master... I... I suffered then only as a woman. I suffered because... Martha, swear, swear here, before the Master that you will never tell Lazarus of his frenzy... my Master... I have known You completely, o Divine Mercy, during Lazarus' last hours. Oh! my God! How much You have loved me, as You have forgiven me. You, God, You, Pure, You..., if my brother, who does love me, but is a man, only a man, has not forgiven me everything from the bottom of his heart?! No. I am wrong. He has not forgiven my past and when his weakness on the point of death blunted his goodness, which I thought was oblivion of the past, he shouted his grief and his indignation against me... Oh!... » Mary weeps...

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

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

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

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

«And what about you, Martha? Have you learned? No. Not yet. You are My Martha. But you are not yet My perfect wor-

shipper. Why do you act and you do not contemplate? It is holier. See? Your strength, as it is too inclined towards earthly things, yielded to the ascertainment of earthly matters that at time seem without remedy. In actual fact earthly matters are without remedy, unless God intervenes. That is why human creatures must be able to believe and contemplate, and love to the utmost power of their whole being, with thought, soul, flesh, blood; I repeat: with all the strength of man. I want you to be strong, Martha. I want you to be perfect. You did not obey because you did not believe and hope completely, and you did not believe and hope because you did not love absolutely. But I absolve you. I forgive you, Martha. I raised Lazarus today. I will now give you a stronger heart. I gave him life. I will instil into you the strength to love, believe and hope perfectly. Be happy now and in peace. Forgive those who offended you in the past days... »

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

548.19 «You spoke the truth, but do not contend with the wicked, Mary. And forgive. Forgive if you want to imitate Me...¹⁹Here is Lazarus. I can hear his voice. »

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

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

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

«What did you regret most to leave dying? »

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

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

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

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

«Because it is my constant thought. »

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁰Marginal notes on Lazarus' resurrection and in connection with a sentence of St. John. Jesus says: 548.20

«In the Gospel of John, as it has now been read for ages, it is written: "Jesus had not yet come into the village of Bethany" (John 9, 30). To avoid possible objections I wish to point out that, with regard to this sentence and the one of the Work which states that I met Martha a few steps away from the fountain in Lazarus' garden, there is no contradiction of events, but only a discrepancy of translation and description. Three quarters of the village of Bethany belonged to Lazarus. Likewise a large part of Jerusalem belonged to him. But let us speak of Bethany. As three quarters of it belonged to Lazarus, one could say: Bethany of Lazarus. So the text would not be wrong even if I had met Martha in the village or at the fountain, as some people wish to say. In actual fact I had not gone into the village, to prevent the people of

Bethany, who were all hostile to the members of the Sanhedrin, from rushing towards Me. I had gone round the back of Bethany to reach Lazarus' house, which was at the opposite end with respect to one who entered Bethany coming from En-shemes. So John rightly says that I had not yet entered the village. And equally right is little John who says that I had stopped near the basin (fountain for the Jews) already in Lazarus' garden, but still very far from the house. One should also consider that during the period of mourning and uncleanness (it was not yet the seventh day after Lazarus' death) his sisters did not leave the house. So the meeting took place within the enclosure of their property. Note that little John states that the people of Bethany came into the garden only when I had ordered the stone to be removed. Previously the people of Bethany did not know that I was in Bethany, and only when the news was spread they rushed to Lazarus' house. »

548.21 ²¹Jesus says: «The dictation dated 23rd March 1944 on Lazarus' Resurrection can be put here. »

23rd March 1944.

548.22 ²²Jesus says:

«I could have intervened in time to prevent Lazarus' death. But I did not want to do that. I knew that his resurrection would be a double-edged weapon, because it would convert the righteous-minded Judaeans and would make the non-righteous-minded ones even more rancorous. The latter, because of this final blow of my power, would sentence Me to death. But I had come for that and it was now time that that should be accomplished. I could have gone at once, but I needed to convince the most stubborn incredulous people by means of a resurrection from advanced rottenness. And also my apostles, destined to spread my Faith in the world, needed a faith supported by miracles of the first magnitude.

There was so much humanity in the apostles. I have already said so*. It was not an insurmountable obstacle, on the contrary it was a logical consequence of their condition of men called to

* **already said so**, on 13th February 1944, in 106. 12.

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

²³I loved and still love little and weak people - you are an example - providing they are willing to love and follow Me, and I turn such "nonentities" into my favourites, my friends, my ministers. I still make use of them, and they are a continuous miracle that I work to lead others to believe in Me, and not to kill the possibility of miracles. How languishing that possibility is at present! Like a lamp lacking oil it is in the throes of death and it dies, killed by the scanty or lacking faith in the God of miracles. 548.23

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

You complain that I no longer work collective miracles. How could I work them? Where are the communities that believe in Me? Where are the true believers? How many true believers are there in a community? Like surviving flowers in a wood burnt by a fire I can see a believing spirit now and again. Satan has burnt the rest with his doctrines. And he will burn them more and more.

548.24

²⁴I beg you to bear in mind my reply to Thomas*, as a supernatural rule for yourselves. It is not possible to be My true disciples if one cannot give human life the importance it deserves: a means to conquer the true Life, not an aim. He who wants to save his life in this world will lose eternal Life. I have told you and I repeat it. What are trials? Passing clouds. Heaven remains and is waiting for you after the trial.

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

548.25

²⁵Martha's grief is different from Mary's because of the different psyche of the two sisters and because of their different behaviour. Happy are those who behave in such a way as to have no remorse for grieving one who is now dead and can no longer be comforted for the sorrow caused to him. But how much happier is he who has no remorse for grieving his God, Me, Jesus, and is not afraid of the day he will have to meet Me, on the contrary he pines for it, as for a joy anxiously dreamt of for a whole lifetime and at long last achieved.

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

548.26

²⁶In My prayer to the Father there is repeated what I said at

*my reply to Thomas, in 547. 6.

the beginning: it was necessary to arouse the opacity of the Jews and of the world in general by means of a main miracle. And the resurrection of a man who had been buried four days and had gone down into the tomb after a long, chronic, disgusting well-known disease is not an event that can leave people indifferent or doubtful. If I had cured him while he was alive, or if I had infused the spirit into him as soon as he had breathed his last, breath the acridity of enemies might have raised doubts on the entity of the miracle. But the stench of the corpse, the putrefaction of the bandages, the long period in the sepulchre left no doubts. And, a miracle in the miracle, I wanted Lazarus to be freed and cleaned in the presence of everybody so that they could see that not only life but also the wholesomeness of the limbs had been restored where previously the ulcerated flesh had spread the germs of death in the blood. When I grant a grace I always give more than what you ask for.

²⁷I wept before Lazarus' tomb. And many names have been given to My tears. In the meantime you must bear in mind that graces are obtained through grief mixed with unfaltering faith in the Eternal Father. I wept not so much because of the loss of My friend and because of the sorrow of the sisters, as because three thoughts that had always pierced My heart like three sharp nails surfaced then, more lively than ever, like depths stirred up. 548.1

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

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

The mental vision of My imminent death. I was God. But I was also Man. And to be the Redeemer I was to feel the weight of expiation. Therefore the horror of death and of such a death. I was a living healthy being who was saying to himself: "I shall

soon be dead, I shall be in a sepulchre like Lazarus. Soon the most dreadful agony will be my companion. I must die". God's kindness spares you the knowledge of the future. But I was not spared it.

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

549. The meeting of the Sanhedrin and the hearing of Pilate.

27th December 1946.

549.1 ¹If the news of the death of Lazarus had shaken and agitated Jerusalem and a large part of Judaea, the news of his resurrection ended by shaking and penetrating also where the news of the death had not caused any excitement.

Perhaps the few Pharisees and scribes, that is the members of the Sanhedrin present at the resurrection, did not mention it to the people. But the Judaeans certainly have spoken about it, and the news has spread in a flash, and the voices of women repeat it from house to house, from terrace to terrace, while the common people propagate it in the streets with great jubilation for Jesus' triumph and for Lazarus. People fill the streets running here and there, thinking they are the first to give the news, but they are disappointed because it is already known in Ophel as well as in Bezetha, in Zion as at the Sixtus market. It is known in synagogues, in warehouses, in the Temple and in Herod's palace. It is known at the Antonia and from there, or vice versa, it spreads to the guard-rooms at the gates. It fills mansions and hovels: «The Rabbi of Nazareth has raised from the dead Lazarus of Bethany, who died the day before Friday and was buried before the beginning of the Sabbath and he rose again today at the sixth hour. » The Jewish acclamations to the Christ and to the Most High mingle with the various «By Jove! By Pollux! By Libitina! » etc. of the Romans.

549.2 ²The only ones I do not see among the crowds talking in the

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

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

«A good protection for you. That is true. But not so good as the Master's love. That is the only protection that matters... »

Chuza does not reply. He is pensive... I lose sight of them.

³Joseph of Arimathea comes forward hurriedly from Beze- 549.3
tha. He is stopped by a group of citizens who are still uncertain whether they should believe the news. They ask him.

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

«So... He is really the Messiah! »

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

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

⁴There is a group of legionaries and one of them says: «I will 549.4
go to Bethany tomorrow if I can. By Venus and Mars, the gods I prefer! I may travel all over the world, from the hot deserts to the

icy German lands, but never again shall I find a man who comes to life again after being dead for days. I want to see what a man, who comes back from death, is like. He will be black with the water of the rivers of the beyond... »

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

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

«If Pontius will allow us... »

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

«That is true. The arrival of the galley bringing Longinus and

his century was already notified at Caesarea. New officers and new troops... and all because of those crocodiles of the Temple. I liked this place. »

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

They also move away.

⁵Some guards of the Temple pass by with wax-tablets. People watch them and say: «The Sanhedrin is meeting with urgency. What are they going to do? » ^{549.5}

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

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

⁶The inside of the Temple, now empty, desert, enveloped in moonlight, seems immense. The members of the Sanhedrin slowly gather in their meeting hall. They are all there, exactly as they were for Jesus' death sentence, but those who were then* acting as clerks are not present. Only the members of the Sanhedrin are there, some sitting in their places, some in groups near the doors. ^{549.6}

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

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

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

The present chapter was written after the one describing Je-

* **then**, because MV had already written (in March 1945) the episode of the death sentence, that will be indicated in chapter 604.

sus being sentenced to death and which is part of volume 5.

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

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

«And those cursed Romans full of nonsense! What about them? They say that He is Jupiter Maximus. And if they get that idea into their heads! They made us acquainted with their stories, and it was a curse. Cursed be those who wanted Hellenism* among us and out of flattery desecrated us with foreign usages! But it helps us to know people. And we know that the Romans are quick in demolishing and elevating by means of plots and coups d'état. Now if anyone of these mad people goes into raptures over the Nazarene and proclaims Him Caesar, and therefore, divine, who will ever dare touch Him? »

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

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

549.7 ⁷«I wish we had not gone there and we had not almost ordered

***who wanted Hellenism**, as narrated in: 1 Maccabees 1, 10-15; 2 Maccabees 4, 7-20; 6, 1-11. Other hints at Hellenism in: 86. 4 - 132. 2 - 272. 3 - 283. 6 - 356. 4 - 596. 14.

the most mighty Judaeans to go as well! If Lazarus had risen without witnesses... »

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

«How? »

«By offending and destroying His! »

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

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

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

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

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

⁸«There is nothing wrong if Joseph loves Him. I also admit ^{549.8} that He is the greatest Rabbi in Israel. »

«Are you, Gamaliel, saying that? »

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

«But what are you saying, Gamaliel? »

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

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

«No. Because God is not with us. Moses parted the waters and he struck the rock, Joshua stopped the sun, Elijah raised the boy from death and made the sky give rain, but God was with them. I remind you* that there are six things that God hates and the seventh He abhors: a haughty look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that weaves wicked plots, feet that hurry to do evil, a false witness who lies and he who sows dissension among brothers. We do all these things. I say: we. But you only do them. Because I refrain from shouting "Hosanna" and

^{549.9}from crying "Anathema". ⁹I am waiting. »

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

Gamaliel stretches his hands and arms forward, and with closed eyes and lightly lowered head, looking most serious, he says in a slow distant voice: «I have anxiously asked the Lord to show me the truth, and He enlightened for me the words of

*I remind you what is said in: Proverbs 6, 16-19.

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

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

* **These ones**, that can be read in: Sirach 24, 8-18-26. 28-32.

«He is not the Messiah. »

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

«He is He Who is. »

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

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

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

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

549.10

¹⁰«We are talking, digressing, wasting time. And the crowds in the meantime are excited» says Hananiah in a croaking voice.

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

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

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

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

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

¹¹I leave them there discussing, and I see the scene at the Antonia. 549.11

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

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

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

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

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

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

There is no sign of Pilate. Eleazar, being familiar with the place, tries the doors. They are all closed. The Judaeans in the hall are seized with fear. Frightening stories come to light again. They regret having come. They feel that they are already lost.

¹²At long last, on the side opposite to them, who are near the door through which they came in and thus close to the only chair available in the hall, a door is opened and Pilate comes in, wearing a tunic as white as the hall. He comes in speaking to some guests. He is laughing. He turns around to instruct a slave, who is holding up the curtain beyond the door, to throw essences into a brazier and to bring scents and water for their hands and a slave to come with mirror and combs. He pays no attention to the Hebrews, as if they were not there. They get enraged but they dare not react. 549.12

Over there, in the meantime, they bring braziers, they spread resins on the fire and pour scented water on the hands of the Romans. And a slave, with skilful movements, tidies their hair ac-

cordova to the fashion of rich Romans of those days. And the Hebrews get enraged.

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

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

549.13 When the short dance is over Pilate dismisses them putting in the hand of each a cup full of sweets and he throws a bracelet into each cup nonchalantly. ¹³And at last he condescends to turn around and look at the Hebrews saying to his friends in a weary voice: «And now... I must pass from dreams to reality... from poetry... to hypocrisy... from gracefulness to the filthy things of life. The miseries of being a Proconsul!... Hail, friends, and have pity on me. »

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

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

The Hebrews approach Pilate in an attitude that is always

servile until he shouts: «That's enough. Don't come too close» and his words seem to nail them to the floor. «Speak! And stand up straight because animals only stoop towards the ground» and he laughs.

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

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

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

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

The members of the Sanhedrin quiver with indignation, but they do not react. ^{549.14}Helkai speaks on behalf of everybody: «We must inform you, o Pontius, that a man was raised from the dead today at Bethany. »

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

«We are not delirious, Pontius. We are telling you that unless you take a decision you will go through a sad time. You will cer-

tainly be punished, if not killed, by the usurper. The Nazarene will soon be proclaimed king, king of the world, do you understand? Your very legionaries will proclaim Him. They have been enticed by the Nazarene and today's event has elated them. What servant of Rome are you, if you do not take care of her peace? So, do you want to see the Empire upset and divided because of your inertness? Do you want to see Rome defeated, the ensigns pulled down, the Emperor killed, everything destroyed... »

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

the Nazarene wants to redeem you? If He were God, He ought to strike you by lightning! Thus the most revolting stain would disappear from the world. Out! And dare not conspire, or you will become acquainted with sword and whip. »

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

¹⁵They go back to the hall in the Sanhedrin. They make their report. The excitement is great. The news of the arrest of many highwaymen and of raids into caves to catch more upsets very much all the members who have remained. Many, in fact, tired of waiting, have gone away. 549.15

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

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

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

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

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

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

«But... Caiaphas! Consider! He... »

«I have spoken. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, the High Priest. Woe to those who do not respect the Pontiff of Israel. The

thunderbolts of the Lord upon them! We have waited enough! We have had enough flurry! I order and decree that whoever knows where the Nazarene is must come and inform us of the place, and anathema on those who will not obey my word. »

«But Annas... » say some objecting.

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

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

550. Elation among the apostles. A mission of love
for Lazarus and of absolute contemplation
for his sister Mary. Jesus must take refuge to Samaria.

30th December 1946.

550.1

¹It is pleasant to rest among loving friends and near the Master in sunny days that show the early charms of springtime, contemplating the fields growing verdant with the tender sprouts of corn, admiring the meadows that break the even green winter shade with the first little many-coloured flowers, gazing at the hedges displaying gems that begin to open smiling in the more sunny spots, looking at almond-trees the tops of which are covered with early foam-like flowers. And Jesus rejoices at the sight, as well as the apostles and the three friends at Bethany. And everything seems far and remote: malevolence, sorrow, sadness, illness, death, hatred, envy, all the painful, tormenting, worrying things on the Earth.

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

they are, making plans for the future, dreaming... dreaming so much... and so humanly.

550. 2 ²The most elated, also because of his psyche that carries him to extremes, is Judas of Kerioth. He congratulates himself on having waited, on his ability in acting, on his lasting faith in the Master's triumph, on defying the threats of the Sanhedrin... He is so elated that he ends up by telling what he has concealed so far, amid the utter astonishment of his companions: «Yes, they wanted to bribe me, they wanted to entice me with blandishments, and when they saw that they were of no avail, with threats. If you only knew! But I gave them a taste of their own medicine. I pretended to love them as they feigned to love me. I allured them as they allured me, I betrayed them as they wanted to betray me... Because that is what they wanted to do. They wanted to make me believe that they were testing the Master to be able to proclaim Him the Holy Man of God solemnly. But I know them, I know them very well. And in all their plans of which they informed me, I contrived to make Jesus' holiness shine more brightly than the sun at midday in a cloudless sky... It was a dangerous game! If they had realised that! But I was prepared for every eventuality, even to die, to serve God in my Master. And thus I was informed of everything... Eh! at times I must have seemed to be mad, wicked, bad-tempered. If you had known what the situation was like! I alone know what I suffered at night, the precautions I had to take to do a good turn without attracting anybody's attention! You were somewhat suspicious of me. I know. But I bear you no grudge. My behaviour could have roused suspicion. But my purpose was good and that was all I worried about. Jesus is not aware of anything. That is, I think that He also suspects me. But I will keep quiet without wishing to be praised by Him. And I ask you not to say anything either. One day, one of the first times I was with Him - and you, Simon Zealot, and you, John of Zebedee, were with me - He reproached me because I boasted of having a practical sense. Since then... I never enhanced this quality of mine in His presence, but I continued to make use of it, for His own good. I did what a mother does for her inexperienced child. She removes obstacles from his way, she bends a thornless branch towards him, she pushes aside one that may hurt him, or with shrewd acts she gets him to do what

he must learn to do and to avoid what is bad, without the child being aware of it. On the contrary, the son believes that he succeeded by himself in walking without stumbling, in picking a lovely flower for his mother, in doing this and that thing spontaneously. I did the same with the Master. Because holiness is not sufficient in a world of men and demons. It is necessary to fight with equal weapons, at least as men... and at times... it is not a bad thing to add a pinch of infernal cunning to the other weapons. That is my idea. But He will not listen to me... He is too good... Well. I understand everything and everybody, and I excuse everybody for the evil thoughts you might have had about me. You now know. And now we love one another as good companions, and we do everything for His love and His glory» and he points at Jesus Who is walking farther away in a sunny alley speaking to Lazarus, who listens to Him smiling ecstatically.

550.3 ³The apostles go away towards Simon's house. Jesus instead comes closer with His friend. I listen to them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

«But why do you want to remember? There is your future in front of you. Your past was left in the sepulchre. Nay, it was not even left there. It was burnt with the funeral bandages. But if it serves to give you peace, I will tell you your last words to your sisters. To Mary in particular. You said that it was because of Mary that I came and I come here, because Mary knows how to

love more than anybody else. That is true. You said that she has loved you more than all the others who have loved you. That is also true, because she has loved you renovating herself for God's sake and for yours. You said to her, and quite rightly, that a whole life of delights would not have given you the joy that you received through her. And you blessed your sisters as a patriarch used to bless his dearest creatures. You equally blessed Martha, whom you called your peace; and Mary, whom you called your joy. Are you happy now? »

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

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

«It is so, Master. »

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

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

550.4 «The man was left down there. The man! Your spirit... ⁴You know what happens at the death of a man... »

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

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

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

«It is so. And the judgement of God is just and inviolable. And it has infinite value. If the soul is judged mortally guilty it becomes a damned soul. If it is lightly guilty it is sent to Purgatory. If it is just it goes to the peace of Limbo awaiting Me to open the gates of Heaven. So I called your soul back after it had been judged by God. If you had been damned I could not have called you back to life, because by doing so I would have cancelled my Father's judgement. For damned souls no further changes are possible. They are judged forever. So you belonged to the number of those who were not damned. So you either belonged to the class of the blessed souls, or to the class of those

*I remember nothing, as in 548. 15, 562. 5, 585. 2, 587. 5 and, for the resuscitation of Naim, in 300. 4. Another case in 632. 47.

who will be blessed after being purified. But consider this, my dear friend. If the sincere will of repentance that man can have while being still a man, that is, body and soul, is valid as purification; if the symbolical rite of baptism in water, that one wants out of spirit of contrition to be cleansed of the foulness contracted in the world and because of one's flesh, has the value of purification for us Hebrews; what value will repentance have, a more real and perfect repentance, a much more perfect repentance of a soul freed from the body, aware of what God is, enlightened on the gravity of its errors, enlightened on the extent of the joy that had moved away for hours, for years, for ages: the joy of the peace of Limbo that will soon be the joy of the achieved possession of God: the double, triple purification of perfect repentance, of perfect love, of the bath in the ardour of the flames lit by the love of God and by the love of spirits, in which and by which the spirits are stripped of all impurity and emerge as beautiful as seraphim, crowned with what does not even crown seraphim: their earthly and ultra-earthly martyrdom against vices and for the sake of love? What will it be? Tell Me, My dear friend. »

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

«There you are: you have said the right word. The soul becomes as if it were created again. It becomes like the soul of an infant. It is new. The past no longer exists. Its past of man. When the original Sin falls, the soul without stain and the shadow of stain, will be super-created and worthy of Paradise. I called back your soul that had been re-created through your willing attachment to Good, through the expiation of pain and death, and through your perfect repentance and your perfect love, achieved beyond death. So your soul is as innocent as the soul of a baby a few hours old. And if you are a new-born baby, why do you want to put on your spiritual childhood the heavy cumbersome clothes of an adult? The cheerful spirit of a child has wings, not chains. They imitate Me quite easily as they have not yet assumed any personality. They become like Me, because my figure and my doctrine can be impressed on their souls devoid of all traces without any confusion of lines. Their souls are free from human memories, from resentment, from prejudice. There

is nothing in them, so I can be there, perfect and absolute as I am in Heaven. You, who are born again, a new-born, because in your old flesh the driving power is new, clean, without past and without traces of what it was, you, who have come back to serve Me, and only for that purpose, you must be as I am, more than anybody else. Look at Me. Look at Me carefully. Look at yourself in Me, and mirror Me in yourself. Two mirrors that look at each other to reflect in each other the figure of what they love. You are a man and a child. A man by age, a child by the purity of your heart. You have the advantage over children of being already acquainted with Good and Evil, and of choosing Good even before your Baptism in the fire of love. Well, I say to you, to the man whose spirit has been cleansed by the purification received: "Be as perfect as our Father in Heaven is perfect and as I am. Be perfect, that is, be like Me Who have loved you so much as to go against all the laws of life and death, of heaven and the earth, in order to have once again on the Earth a servant of God and a true friend of mine, and a blessed soul, a great blessed soul in Heaven". I say that to everybody: "Be perfect". And they, the majority, do not have the heart that you had, worthy of the miracle, worthy of being used as an instrument to glorify God in His Son. And they do not have your debt of love with God... I can say that, I can exact it from you. And first of all I exact it by asking you to bear no grudge on those who offended you and now offend Me. Forgive, Lazarus, forgive. You have been immersed in the burning flames of love. You must be "love", so that you may no longer know anything but the embrace of God. »

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

«By doing so you will fulfil it. »

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

«May the Almighty Lord God be always blessed. »

550.5

5They go towards the house stopping now and again to watch

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

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

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

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

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

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

«And because they are good servants. »

«A good master makes servants good. »

«So I shall certainly become a good servant because I have You as a perfect Master» and he goes away smiling, walking nimbly, so different from the poor Lazarus as he had been for years.

⁶Mary remains with Jesus.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

«I love those who love Me, Mary. »

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

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

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

«I will help you, Mary. ⁷¹I will help you also when I have gone away. » ^{550. 7}

«How, my Lord? »

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mary takes the flowers but she does not stand up and in ad-

vance of her balms of love she kisses and sheds tears on the feet of her Master.

⁸Lazarus joins them and says: «Master, there is a little boy ^{550.8} who wants You. He had gone to Simon's house looking for You and found only John who brought him here. But he does not want to speak to anybody but You. »

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

«Peace to you, Martial. »

The boy runs away as swift as a swallow.

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

* I saw, in 508. 4/5.

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

550.9 ⁹«I wonder what Joseph wants? If he sent a boy with so much secrecy... »

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

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

«I am certain, my dear friend. »

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

«Hatred becomes more furious when urged by facts. »

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

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

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

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

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

550.10 ¹⁰Joseph is walking up and down the street at the beginning of the village. He has his back turned when Jesus and Lazarus come out of a path concealed by a hedge. Lazarus calls him.

«Oh! Peace to you. Come, Master. I waited for You here so that I might see You at once, but let us go into the olive-grove. I do not want anybody to see us... »

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

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

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

«It is not enough, Lazarus. They are furious. He must go where they do not go... »

«But they go everywhere, they do! You surely do not want the Master to leave Palestine!... » says Lazarus excitedly.

«Well! What can I tell you?! That's what the Sanhedrin wants... »

«Because of me, is that right? Tell me! »

«H'm! Well... yes. Because of you... that is, because everybody is being converted to Him, and they... they do not want that. »

«But it is a crime! It's a sacrilege... It's... »

Jesus, pale but calm, lifts His hand imposing silence and He says: «Be silent, Lazarus. Everybody is doing their work. Everything is written. I thank you, Joseph, and I assure you that I will go away. Go, you may go, Joseph. So that your absence may not be noticed... May God bless you. I will get Lazarus to let you know where I am. Go. I bless you, Nicodemus and all righteous-hearted people. » He kisses him and they part. Through the olive-grove Jesus goes towards Bethany with Lazarus, while Joseph goes towards the town.

¹¹«What will You do, Master? » asks Lazarus who is anguished. 550.11

«I do not know. In a few days' time the women disciples will be

coming with my Mother. I would have liked to wait for them... »

«With regard to that. I could receive them in Your name and then I would bring them to You. But, in the meantime, where are You going? I don't think You can go to Solomon's house... nor to any of the well-known disciples. Tomorrow!... You must go away at once! »

«I have a place. But I would like to wait for my Mother. Her anguish would begin too early if She did not find Me... »

«Where would You go, Master? »

«To Ephraim. »

«To Samaria? »

«To Samaria. The Samaritans are less Samaritans than many people and they love Me. Ephraim is at the border... »

«Oh! and to spite the Judaeans they honour and defend You! But... wait! Your Mother will either come via Samaria or along the Jordan. I will go with some servants along one route, Maximinus with other servants along the other, and either one or the other will find Her. We will come back only when we meet them. You know that no one in Lazarus' house will betray You. In the meantime You will go to Ephraim. At once. Ah! it was my destiny that I should not enjoy Your company! But I will come. Across the Adummim mountains. I am sound now. I can do what I like. Nay! Yes. I will make them believe that I am going to Ptolemais via Samaria to sail to Antioch. Everybody knows that I own land there... My sisters will remain at Bethany... You... Yes. I will now have two carts equipped for You and you can all go to Jericho in them. Then tomorrow at dawn you will resume the journey on foot. Oh! Master! My Master! Take care of Yourself! » After the excitement of the first moment Lazarus becomes sad and weeps.

Jesus sighs, but does not say anything. What can He say?...

550.12

¹²They are now in Simon's house. They part. Jesus goes into the house. The apostles, who are surprised that the Master had gone away without saying anything, press around Him as He says: «Take your garments. Prepare your bags. We must depart from here at once. Be quick. And join Me in Lazarus' house. »

«Also the clothes that are damp? Can we not get them when we come back? » asks Thomas.

«We shall not come back. Take everything. »

The apostles go away casting meaningful glances at one another.

Jesus goes to get his belongings in Lazarus' house and He says goodbye to the dismayed sisters...

The two carts are soon ready. Two heavy carts with tilts, drawn by strong horses. Jesus says goodbye to Lazarus, to Maximinus and to the servants who have rushed there. They get on the carts that are waiting at one of the gates at the rear of the house. The drivers urge on the horses and the journey begins along the same road by which Jesus had come a few days previously to raise Lazarus.

551. After a short stay in Nike's house, the apostles are informed of the ban issued by the Sanhedrin.
The arrival at the border of Judaea.

2nd January 1947.

^{551.1} In the fresh clear early dawn the fields around Nike's house are all green with new shoots of corn only a few centimetres high, as delicate in shade as very clear emeralds. The orchard, which is closer to the house and is still bare, looks even darker and more massive, compared with the delicate stems and with the paradisiac serenity of the airy sky. The white house is crowned in the early sunshine with the flights of doves.

Nike is already up and she is diligently ensuring that the departing persons have what may comfort them during their journey. First of all she dismisses Lazarus' two servants who were kept by her for that night and who, after taking some refreshment, go away trotting their horses. She then goes back into the kitchen where the maidservants are preparing milk and food on big fires. And from a large earthen pot she pours some oil into two smaller ones, and then some wine into two small wineskins. She urges a servant who is preparing loaves of bread as thin as buns to take them to the stone oven that is ready. From large boards, on which cheese is desiccated in the warmth of the kitchen, she picks the best whole ones. She takes some honey and pours it slowly into some small vessels fitted with firm taps. She then makes up several bundles containing the foodstuffs, and

one of them contains a whole kid or lamb that a servant takes off the spit on which it was roasted. Another contains apples as red as corals. In another there are edible olives. In a third one there are dried currants. There is one of peeled barley.

551.2

²She is closing this last package when Jesus enters the kitchen and greets all the people present.

«Master, peace to You. Are You up already?»

«I should have been up earlier. But My disciples were so tired that I let them sleep on. What are you doing, Nike?»

«I am preparing... They will not be heavy, see? Twelve parcels. And I have taken into consideration the strength of the bearer s. »

«And what about me?»

«Oh! Master! You already have Your burden... » and tears begin to shine in Nike's eyes.

«Let us go outside, Nike. We shall be able to speak in peace. »

They go out and they move away from the house.

«My heart is aching, Master... »

«I know. But it is necessary to be strong considering that you have not grieved Me... »

«Oh! Let that never happen! But I thought that I would be able to stay near You and that is why I came to Jerusalem. Otherwise I would have stayed here, where I own these fields... »

«Also Lazarus, Mary and Martha thought they would be able to be with Me. And you can see!... »

«Yes, I can see. I am not going back to Jerusalem any more as You are not there. I shall be closer to You if I remain here and I shall be able to help You. »

«You have already given so much... »

«I have not given anything. I would like to be able to take my house wherever You go. But I will come, I will certainly come to see what You need. What You told me to do now is right. I shall stay here until they are convinced that You are not here. But later... »

«It is a long and difficult road for a woman, and it is not safe either. »

«Oh! I am not afraid. I am too old to be pleasant and attractive as a woman, and I do not carry treasures to be sought as a prey. Highwaymen are better than many people who consider

themselves holy and instead are thieves and want to rob you of your peace and freedom... »

«Do not hate them, Nike. »

«That is more difficult for me than anything else. But I will try not to hate them for Your sake... I wept all night, Lord! »

«I heard you go to and fro in the house as indefatigable as a bee. And you seemed a mother anxious about her persecuted son... Do not weep. Guilty people must weep. Not you. God is good to His Messiah. In the most grievous hours He always makes Me find a motherly heart close to Me... »

«And what are You going to do about Your Mother? You told me that She was coming soon... »

³«She will come to Ephraim... Lazarus is going to inform Her. Here is Simon of Jonah with My brothers... » 551.3

«Do they know? »

«Not yet, Nike. I will tell them when we are far away... »

«And when I come, I will tell You what happens here and in Jerusalem. »

They join the apostles who are coming out of the house one after the other looking for Jesus.

«Come, brothers. Take some food before departing. Everything is ready. »

«Nike did not sleep last night to provide for us. Thank the good disciple» says Jesus entering the large kitchen where on a refectory table - it is so long - there are cups full of milk steaming hot and sweet smelling buns just out of the oven. And Nike spreads butter and honey generously on them, saying that they are invigorating food for people who have to go on a long journey when the weather is still cold.

The meal is soon over. Nike in the meantime has made up the last parcels with the crisp fragrant bread just taken out of the oven. Each apostle takes his bundle that has been tied in such a way as to be carried without much trouble.

It is time to go. Jesus greets and blesses. The apostles say goodbye. But Nike wants to go with them as far as the border of her fields and she then goes back slowly weeping in her veil, while Jesus with His apostles goes away along a secondary road pointed out to Him by Nike.

⁴The country is still desert. The path runs through fields of

551.4

new corn and bare vineyards. Thus there are no shepherds either, as they do not take their flocks into cultivated fields. The morning air is warmed a little by the sun. The first little flowers on the edges of the fields are shining like gems under the veil of dew brightened by sunshine. The birds are singing the first love songs. The good season is coming. Everything is beautiful and fresh. Everything is love... And Jesus is going into the exile that precedes His death brought about by hatred.

The apostles are silent. They are pensive. The sudden departure has disconcerted them. They were so certain that everything was settled by now! They are proceeding with their backs more curved than the weight of their bags and of Nike's provisions can bend them. They are bent by disappointment and by the ascertainment of what the world and men are.

Jesus instead, although He is not smiling, is neither sad nor dejected. He is walking with His head erect, ahead of everybody, without arrogance, but also without fear. He is Proceeding like one who knows where to go and what to do. He walks courageously, like a hero, whom nothing shakes or frightens.

The secondary road joins with a main one, which Jesus takes going northwards. And the apostles follow Him, without speaking. As the road comes from Galilee and through the Decapolis and Samaria goes to Judaea, there are wayfarers on it, mostly caravans of merchants.

As time goes by the sun becomes pleasantly warmer and warmer, when Jesus leaves the main road to take another path that across corn fields goes towards the first hills.

The apostles cast glances at one another. Perhaps they begin to understand that they are not going towards Galilee along the road in the Jordan valley, but are instead going towards Samaria. But they remain silent.

When they arrive at the first woods on the hills, Jesus says: «Let us stop and rest while we take some food. The sun indicates that it is midday. »

They are near a torrent with little water in it as it has not rained for some time. But its little water is clear in the gravel-bed and its banks are spread with large stones that can be used as tables and seats. They sit down after Jesus has blessed and offered the food and they eat in silence and as if they were

lost in thought.

⁵Jesus arouses them saying: «Are you not asking Me where we are going? Do your worries of the future make you dumb or do I no longer seem to you to be your Master? »^{551.5}

The Twelve raise their heads: twelve distressed or at least bewildered faces that turn towards the tranquil face of Jesus and one only «Oh! » is exclaimed by twelve mouths. And the exclamation is followed by the reply of Peter who speaks on behalf of everybody: «Master, You know that we always consider You our Master. But since yesterday we are like people who have received hard blows on their heads. And everything seems a dream to us. And although we see and know that it is You, You seem to be already... far away. We somehow have had this impression since You spoke to Your Father before calling Lazarus, and since You brought him out of his sepulchre, tied as he was, only by means of Your will, and You made him live only by the strength of Your power. You almost frighten us. I am speaking of myself... but I think it is the same for everybody... And now... We... This departure... so sudden and so mysterious! »

«Have you a double fear? Do you feel that the danger is more impending? Do you not have, do you feel that you do not have the strength to face and overcome the last trials? Speak without restraint. We are still in Judaea. We are near the low roads that take one to Galilee. Everyone may go if he wishes, and you can go in time to avoid being hated by the Sanhedrin... »

The apostles are aroused by these words. Those who were almost lying on the grass warmed by the sun, sit up. Those who were sitting, stand up.

Jesus goes on: «Because as from today I am the legally Persecuted One. Bear that in mind. Just now they are about to proclaim in the five hundred and more synagogues in Jerusalem and in those of the towns that have received the ban issued yesterday at the sixth hour, that I am the great sinner, and that whoever knows where I am must denounce Me to the Sanhedrin so that I may be captured... »

The apostles shout as if they already saw Him captured. John clings to His neck moaning: «Ah! I have always foreseen that! » and he sobs loud. Some curse the Sanhedrin, some invoke divine justice, some weep, some become petrified.

«Be silent and listen. ⁶¹I have never deceived you. I have always told you the truth. When possible I defended and protected you. Your presence near Me has been as pleasant as that of sons. I did not even hide My last hour... My dangers... My passion from you. But those were problems that concerned Me exclusively. Now your dangers, your safety, and that of your families are to be taken into consideration. I ask you to do that. With absolute freedom. Do not consider them in the light of your love for Me, or of your election made by Me. As I am releasing you from every obligation towards God and His Christ, just imagine that we have met here, now, for this first time and that, after listening to Me, you decide whether it is convenient for you or not to follow the Unknown man whose words have moved you. Imagine that you hear and see Me for the first time and that I say to you: "Bear in mind that I am persecuted and hated and that whoever loves Me is persecuted and hated as I am, in his person, his interests, his affections. Remember that persecution may end up with death and the confiscation of the family property". Think it over and decide. I will love you just the same if you say to me: "Master, I cannot come with You any more". Are you becoming sad? No, you must not. We are good friends who decide with peace and love what is to be done, with reciprocal compassion. I cannot let you face the future without making you ponder over it. I do not disesteem you. I love you all. I am the Master. It is obvious that the Master should know His disciples. I am the Shepherd and it is obvious that a shepherd should know his lambs. I know that My disciples, if they had to face a test without being sufficiently prepared not only in the wisdom coming from their Master, and which is therefore good and perfect, but also in their own ponderation of the situation, might fail, or at least they would not triumph like athletes in a stadium. To measure oneself and to evaluate circumstances is always a wise rule. In little and great things. I, the Shepherd, must say to My lambs: "Here, I am now going to enter a place of wolves and butchers. Have you enough strength to go among them? ". I could also tell you now which of you will not have the strength to withstand the trial, although I can assure and reassure you that none of you will fall at the hands of the executioners who will sacrifice the Lamb of God. My capture is of such weight that it will suffice them... So I say to you: "Think

it over". Once I said to you: "Be not afraid of those who kill". I said: "He who, having laid his hand on the plough, looks back to consider the past and what he may lose or acquire, is not fit for My mission". But they were rules to give you the measure of what it meant to be disciples, and rules for the future that will take place when I am no longer the Master, but My believers are the masters. They served to strengthen your souls. But even such strength, which is undeniable you have acquired, as compared with the nonentities you were - I am referring to your spirits - is still too little with respect to the greatness of the trial. Oh! do not think in the secrecy of your hearts: "The Master is scandalised at us! ". I am not scandalised. On the contrary I tell you that you must not be scandalised, neither now nor in the future, at your own weakness. In all future times there will always be people among the members of My Church, both lambs and shepherds, who will be inferior to the greatness of their mission. There will be periods when the idol shepherds and the idol believers are more numerous than the true shepherds and the true believers. Periods of eclipse of the spirit of faith of the world. But an eclipse is not the death of a star. It is only a temporary more or less partial obscuring of a star. Afterwards its beauty reappears and it looks brighter. The same will happen to My Fold. I say to you: "Ponder over it". I say so to you as your Master, Shepherd and Friend. I leave you completely free to discuss the matter among yourselves. I am going over there, to that thicket, to pray. One by one will come and tell Me what you have decided. And I will bless your sincere honesty, whatever it may be. And I will love you for what you have given Me so far. Goodbye. » He stands up and goes away.

^{551.7} The apostles are terrified, puzzled, moved. At first they cannot even speak. Then Peter is the first to say: «May hell swallow me if I want to leave Him! I am sure of myself. Even if all the demons in Gehenna led by Leviathan should come against me, I would not move away from Him out of fear! »

«Neither would I. Am I to be inferior to my daughters? » says Philip.

«I am sure that they will do Him no harm. The members of the Sanhedrin threaten but they do so to convince themselves that the Sanhedrin still exists. They know very well that they have no power if Rome is not agreeable. Their sentences! It's

Rome that judges! » says the Iscariot boldly.

«But the Sanhedrin is still concerned with religious matters» remarks Andrew.

«Are you afraid perhaps, brother? Bear in mind that there have never been cowards in our family» says Peter threateningly, as he feels that his heart is overflowing with warlike spirit.

«I am not afraid and I hope I shall be able to prove it. I am only telling Judas what I think. »

«You are right. But the mistake of the Sanhedrin consists in wishing to make use of a political weapon, as they do not wish to say or to be told that they have lifted their hands against the Christ. I know that for certain. They would like, that is, they would have liked to make Jesus commit sin and thus make Him contemptible to the crowds. But with regard to killing Him! Ehi! No. They are afraid! Their fright has no human comparison, because their souls are frightened. They do know that He is the Messiah! They know that very well. So much so that they realise that they are done for, because the new time is coming. And they want to overthrow Him. But will they overthrow Him!? No. That is why they are seeking a political reason so that the Proconsul, that is Rome, should overthrow Him. But the Christ does no harm to Rome, and Rome will do no harm to Him, and the members of the Sanhedrin are howling in vain. »

«So are you staying with Him? »

«Of course. More than anybody else! »

«I have nothing to lose or to gain by staying or going away. I have only to love Him. And I will do that» says the Zealot.

«I recognise Him as the Messiah and consequently I will follow Him» says Nathanael.

«So will I. I have believed Him to be the Messiah since John the Baptist pointed Him out to me as such» says James of Zebedee.

«We are His brothers. To our faith we add the love of kinship. Is that right, James? » says Thaddeus.

«He has been my sun for years and I follow His course. If He falls into the abyss dug by His enemies, I will follow Him» replies James of Alphaeus.

«And what about me? Can I forget that He has redeemed me? » asks Matthew.

«My father would curse me seven times seven if I should leave Him. In any case, even if it were only for Mary's sake, I would never part from Jesus» says Thomas.

⁸John does not speak. His head is lowered, he looks dejected. 551.8
The others mistake his attitude for weakness and many ask him.

«And what about you? Are you the only one who wants to go away? »

John looks up, so pure also in his attitude and eyes, and fixing his limpid blue eyes on those who are questioning him he says: «I was praying for all of us. Because we want to say and do things and we rely on ourselves, and by doing so we do not realise that we challenge the words of the Master. If He says that we are not prepared, it means that we are not. If we have not become prepared in three years, we shall not become so in few months... »

«What are you saying? In few months? What do you know? Are you a prophet, perhaps? » They assail him with questions, almost reproaching him.

«I know nothing. »

«So? What do you know? Has He perhaps told you? You always know His secrets... » says Judas of Kerioth with envy.

«Do not hate me, my friend, if I understand that the fine weather is over. When will it be? I do not know. I know that it will happen. He says so. How many times has He said so! We do not want to believe it. But the hatred of the others confirms His words... So I pray. Because there is nothing else to be done. I pray God to make us strong. Do you not remember, Judas, when He told us* that He had prayed His Father to have strength against temptations? All strength comes from God. I imitate my Master, as is right to do... »

«Well, are you staying or not? » asks Peter.

«And where do you want me to go if I do not stay with Him Who is my life and welfare? But as I am a poor boy, the most miserable of all, I ask everything of God, the Father of Jesus and ours. »

«That is settled. So we are all staying! ⁹Let us go to Him. As 551.9
He is certainly sad, our loyalty will make Him happy» says Peter.

*He told us, in 80. 10.

Jesus is prostrated in prayer. With His face on the ground, in the grass, He is certainly imploring His Father, but at the shuffling of feet He stands up and looks at His apostles. He looks at them rather sadly.

«Be happy. Master. None of us are going to leave You» says Peter.

«You have decided too soon and... »

«Hours or ages will not change our minds» says Peter.

«Neither will threats change our love» proclaims the Iscariot.

Jesus stops looking at them as a group and He gazes at them one by one. A long look which everyone withstands fearlessly. His eyes delay in particular on the Iscariot, who looks at Him more resolutely than the others. He opens His arms in a gesture of resignation and He says: «Let us go. You, all of you, have signed your destiny. » He goes back to the place where He was, He picks up His bag and says: «Let us take the road to Ephraim, the one they pointed out to us. »

«To Samaria?! » They are utterly astonished.

«To Samaria. Or, at least, to its borders. John also went to live there until the hour fixed for his preaching the Christ. »

«But that did not save him! » objects James of Zebedee.

«I am not trying to save Myself, but to save. And I will save at the appointed hour. The persecuted Shepherd is going to the most unfortunate sheep. So that, forlorn as they are, they may have their share of wisdom to prepare them for the new time. »

He strides away, after the stop that has served both to rest and to respect the Sabbath, as He wishes to arrive before the paths become impassable at night.

551.10 ¹⁰When they arrive at the little torrent that flows from Ephraim towards the Jordan, Jesus calls Peter and Nathanael and gives them a bag saying: «Go ahead and look for Mary of Jacob. I remember that Malachi told Me that she is the poorest woman in the village, in spite of her large house, now that she has no sons and daughters in it. We shall stay with her. Give her plenty money so that she may give us hospitality without applying to many people. You know where the house is. It is the large one, shaded by four pomegranate-trees, near the bridge across the torrent. »

«We know, Master. We will do as You say. » They go away

quickly and Jesus follows them slowly with the others.

From the dell, in the middle of which the torrent flows, one can see the white houses of the village in the late daylight and in the early moonlight. There is not a soul about when they arrive at the house that is all white in the moonlight. Only the torrent can be heard in the silence of the night. Turning around and looking at the horizon, one can see a large stretch of the starry sky bend over a large expanse of ground that slopes downwards towards the desert plain that stretches as far as the Jordan. A solemn peace reigns over the Earth.

They knock at the door. Peter opens it. «Everything is settled, Lord. The old woman wept when we gave her the money. She had not a coin left. I said to her: "Do not weep, woman. There is no more pain where Jesus of Nazareth is". She replied to me: "I know. I have suffered all my life and just now I was at the very limit of endurance. But Heaven opened on the evening of my life and brought me the Star of Jacob to give me peace". She is now preparing the rooms that have been closed for such a long time. H'm! There isn't very much. But the woman appears to be very good. Here she is! ¹¹Woman! The Rabbi is here! »

551.11

A very thin old woman comes forward, her meek eyes full of melancholy. She stops perplexed a few steps from Jesus. She feels uneasy.

«Peace to you, woman. I shall not give you much trouble. »

«I wish You could walk on my heart, to make it more pleasant for You to enter my poor house. Come in. Lord, and may God enter with You. » She has recovered her breath and taken heart in the light of Jesus' glance.

They all go in and close the door. The house is as large as a hotel and as empty as a desert. Only the kitchen looks cheerful because of a bright fire in the fireplace in the middle of the room.

Bartholomew, who was tending the fire, turns around and says smiling: «Console the woman, Master. She is sad because she cannot honour You. »

«Your heart is enough for Me, woman. Do not worry about anything. We will provide tomorrow. I am poor as well. Bring her our provisions. Poor people share their bread and salt without shame, but with brotherly love. Filial love in your case, woman. Because you could be My mother. And I honour you as such... »

The woman weeps the silent tears of an old distressed soul, wiping her tears with her veil and she whispers: «I had three sons and seven daughters. One of the sons was carried away by the torrent and another one by a disease. The third one has left me. Five of the girls caught the same disease as their father had and died, the sixth died of childbirth and the seventh... What death did not do, sin did. In my old age I am not honoured by my children and it makes me so... In the village they are good to me... that is, to the poor woman. You are kind to the mother... »

«I have a mother, too. And in every woman who is a mother I honour Her. But do not weep. God is good. Have faith, and the children who are still left may come back to you again. The others are in peace... »

«I think it is a punishment, because I come from this place... »

«Have faith. God is more just than men... »

The apostles who had gone to their rooms with Peter come back. They bring provisions. They warm up on the fire the little lamb that Nike had roasted. They put it on the table. Jesus offers and blesses them and He wants the little old woman to sit at the table with them, instead of sitting in her little corner, eating the poor chicory of her supper.

The exile at the border of Judaea has begun...

552. Preparations and welcoming at Ephraim.

8th January 1947.

552.1 ¹«Peace to You, Master» say Peter and James of Zebedee coming back home laden with pitchers full of water.

«Peace to you. Where are you coming from? »

«From the stream. We went to get some water, and we shall go for more, to keep the house clean. Considering that we are stopping... And it is not fair that the old woman should work for us. She is in the other room where she lit a fire to warm the water. My brother went to the wood to get some firewood. It has not rained for some time and it burns like heath» explains James of Zebedee.

«Of course. But the trouble is that, although it was hardly daybreak, they saw us both at the stream and in the wood. And I

went to the stream to avoid going to the fountain... » says Peter.

«Why, Simon of Jonah? »

«Because there are always people at the fountain, and they might have recognised us and come here... »

While they are speaking, Alphaeus' two sons, Judas of Kerioth and Thomas have come into the long corridor that divides the house, and thus they can hear Peter's last words and Jesus' reply: «What might not have happened at daybreak today, would certainly have happened later, tomorrow at the latest, because we are staying here... »

«Here? But... I thought we were stopping only to rest... » many of them say.

«We are not stopping to rest. But to stay. We shall depart from here only to go back to Jerusalem for Passover. »

«Oh! I thought that when You referred to the place of wolves and butchers, You meant this region through which You wanted to pass, as You did in the past, to go to other places without taking the roads frequented by Judaeans and Pharisees... » says Philip who has just arrived, and others say: «I also thought that. »

«You have misunderstood. This is not the place of wolves and butchers, although real wolves hide in its mountains. But I am not referring to animals... »

«Oh! that was quite clear! » exclaims Judas of Kerioth somewhat ironically. «As You refer to Yourself as the Lamb, one understands that the wolves are men. We are not completely stupid

«No. You are not stupid but in what you do not want to understand. That is, in what concerns my nature and mission, and the grief you give Me by not working assiduously at preparing your future. It is for your own good that I speak and teach you by means of deeds and words. But you reject what upsets your human nature through presage of sorrows or what exacts efforts against your egos. ²Listen to Me before strangers come here. I will now divide you into two groups of five apostles and guided by the head of each group you will go across the nearby countryside, as you did when I sent you in the early days. Remember what I told you then and put it into practice. The only exception is that now you will pass through villages announcing also

552.2

to Samaritans that the day of the Lord is close at hand, so that they may be ready when it comes, and it may be easier for you to convert them to the Only God. Be full of charity and wisdom and devoid of prejudice. You can see, and you will realise this even more, that we are granted here what we are denied in other places. So be kind to these people who, although innocent, are expiating the sins of their ancestors. Peter will be at the head of Judas of Alphaeus, Thomas, Philip and Matthew. James of Alphaeus will be the guide of Andrew, Bartholomew, Simon Zealot and James of Zebedee. Judas of Kerieth and John will stay with Me. That will apply as from tomorrow. Today we shall rest making the necessary preparations for future days. We shall spend the Sabbath together. So you must be here before the Sabbath, in order to leave the day after it. It will be a day of love for us, after loving our neighbour in the flock that has left the fold of the Father. Go now and attend to your tasks. »

He remains alone and withdraws to a room at the end of the corridor.

The house resounds with steps and voices, although they are all in their rooms and no one can be seen but the old woman who goes up and down the corridor several times, attending to her household duties, one of which is certainly baking bread because her hair is spread with flour and her hands are covered with dough.

552.3 ³After some time Jesus comes out and goes up to the terrace of the house. He walks up and down meditating up there and now and again He looks at the view around Him.

He is joined by Peter and Judas of Kerieth who do not look very cheerful. Perhaps it is painful for Peter to part from Jesus. And perhaps it is painful for the Iscariot not to be able to do so and show off in the villages. They certainly look very thoughtful when they go up to the terrace.

«Come here. Look what a beautiful view you can see from here. » And He points at the varied landscape. To north-west high woody mountains stretching like a spine from north to south. One of them behind Ephraim is a real giant overlooking the others. To northeast and south-east there are mild undulating hills. The village is in a green valley with distant flat backgrounds between the two higher and lower chains, that from

the central part of the region slope down to the Jordan plain. Through a fissure in the lower mountains it is possible to see the green plain beyond which flows the blue Jordan. At the height of springtime this must be a beautiful place, all green and fertile. At present the dark shades of vineyards and orchards interrupt the green of fields of cereals, the tender stems of which sprout from the clods of earth, and the verdant pastures nourished by the rich soil.

If what lies beyond Ephraim is called a desert* by John, it means that the desert of Judaea was a very mild one, at least in this area, or at least it was a desert only because it was devoid of villages, all covered with woods and pastures among cheerfully gurgling streams, quite different from the land near the Dead Sea, an and land that can rightly be called a «desert», as it is devoid of vegetation, with the exception of the low thorny twisted shrubs that grow in deserts among scattered stones and the sand rich in salt. But this pleasant desert, which lies beyond Ephraim, is widely adorned with vineyards, olive-groves and orchards, and the almond-trees are now smiling at the sun, scattered here and there like white-pink tufts, on the slopes that will soon be covered with the festoons of the new vine-shoots.

«I almost seem to be in my own town» says Judas.

«It looks also like Juttah. The only difference it that there the torrent is down in the plain and the town up on the hill. Here instead the town seems to be in a wide valley with the river in the middle. A country rich in vines! It must be lovely and very profitable, for owners, to own such land» remarks Peter.

«It is written**»: “May his land be blessed by Yahweh with the fruit of the sky and with dews, with the springs gushing from the abyss, with the fruit blessed by the sun and the moon, with the fruit from the tops of the ancient mountains, with the fruit of the eternal hills and with plentiful crops of the land”. And on those words of the Pentateuch they base their proud obstinacy in considering themselves superior. It is so. Even the word of God and the gifts of God, if they descend into hearts full of pride, become the cause of ruin. Not through their own fault, but because of the pride that adulterates their good juice» says Jesus.

* is called a desert in: John 11, 54.

** It is written, in: Deuteronomy 33, 13-16.

«Of course. And of just Joseph they have kept only the fury of a hull and the neck of a rhinoceros. ⁴I do not like to stay here. Why do You not let me go with the others?» says the Iscariot.

«Do you not like to stay with Me?» asks Jesus, Who stops looking at the landscape and turns around to look at Judas.

«I do love to be with You, but not with the people of Ephraim.»

«What a very fine excuse! And what about us then? As we shall be going through Samaria and the Decapolis - because we shall be able to go only to these places in the time prescribed between one Sabbath and the next one - are we perhaps going among saints?» says Peter, reproaching Judas who does not reply.

«What does it matter to you who is near you, if you can love everything through Me? Love Me in your neighbour, and all places will be alike as far as you are concerned» says Jesus calmly.

Judas does not reply to Him either.

«Just think of it! I have to go away... whereas I would stay here so willingly. After all... considering what I can do. At least appoint Philip or Your brother head of the group, Master. I... as long as I have to say: let us do this, let us go to that place, I can still manage. But if I have to speak!... I spoil everything.»

«Obedience will make you do everything well. What you do will please Me.»

«In that case... if it pleases You, it will please me. It is enough for me make You happy. ⁵But there they are! I told You! Half of the town is coming... Look! The head of the synagogue... the notables... their women... the children and the people!... »

«Let us go down and meet them» says Jesus and He hastens down the staircase calling the apostles so that they may leave the house with Him.

The inhabitants of Ephraim are coming forward with signs of the deepest respect, and after the customary salutations, one of them, perhaps the head of the synagogue, speaks on behalf of everybody: «May the Most High be blessed for this day, and blessed be His Prophet Who has come to us because He loves all men in the name of the Most High God. May You be blessed, Master and Lord, as You have remembered our hearts and our words, and You have come to rest among us. We will open our hearts and homes to You, asking You to speak to us for our health. May

this day be blessed, because through it he who receives Him with upright spirit will see the desert bear fruit. »

«What you said is correct, Malachi. He who knows how to receive with an upright spirit Him Who has come in the name of God, will see his desert bear fruit and the sturdy but wild plants in it become cultivated. I shall stay with you. And you will come to Me. As good friends. And My apostles will take My word to those who can accept it. »

«Will You not teach us, Master? » asks Malachi somewhat disappointed.

«I have come to collect My thoughts and pray, to prepare Myself for the great events of the future. Are you sorry that I have chosen your town for My tranquillity? »

«Oh! no. The very fact of seeing You pray will make us wise. Thank for choosing us for that purpose. We shall not disturb Your prayers and we will not allow Your enemies to disturb them. Because it is already known what happened and happens in Judaea. We shall keep good watch. And we shall be satisfied with Your word when it is not troublesome for You to give it to us. Accept in the meantime our gifts of hospitality. »

«I am Jesus and I do not reject anybody. So I will accept what you are offering Me to prove to you that I do not reject you. But if you want to love Me, from now on give to the poor people of the village or to those passing by what you would give Me. I need only peace and love. »

«We know that. We know everything. And we feel sure that we shall give You what You need, so as to make You exclaim: "The land that was to be for Me like Egypt, that is sorrow, was for Me, as for Joseph of Jacob, the land of peace and glory". »

«If you love Me by accepting My word, I will say so. »

The citizens hand their gifts to the apostles and then withdraw, with the exception of Malachi and two more men who speak to Jesus in low voices. The children also stay, captured by the usual charm emanating from Jesus; they remain, turning deaf ears to their mothers who call them, and they only go away after Jesus has caressed and blessed them. Then, as garrulous as swallows, they run away, followed by the three men.

553. The beginning of the Sabbath in Ephraim. The thieves of the Adummim and help given to three children.

11th January 1947.

553.1

¹The ten apostles, tired and covered in dust, have come back to the house. When the woman greets them opening the door, they ask her at once: «Where is the Master? »

«I think He is in the wood, praying as usual. He went out very early this morning and has not come back yet. »

«And has no one gone to look for Him? What are those two doing?! » shouts Peter excitedly.

«Don't become impatient, man. He is as safe among us, as He would be in His Mother's house. »

«Safe! Of course! Do you remember the Baptist? Was he safe? »

«He was not because he could not read the hearts of those who spoke to him. But if the Most High allowed that for the Baptist, He will certainly not allow it for His Messiah. You must believe that more than I do, as I am a woman and a Samaritan. »

«Mary is right. But where did He go exactly? »

«I don't know. At times He goes one way, at times He goes another. At times He is all alone, at times with children who are so fond of Him. He teaches them how to pray by seeing God in everything. He is probably alone today because He did not come back at midday. When the children are with Him, He always comes back because they are little birds who want to be fed at the right time... » says the old woman smiling, as she perhaps remembers her ten children, and then she sighs... because joys and sorrows are in all the memories of one's life.

«And Judas and John, where are they? »

«Judas has gone to the fountain, John to get firewood. I have none left as I finished it all washing all your clothes to let you have them clean when you depart. »

«May God reward you, mother. We are making you work hard... says Thomas laying his hand on her thin bent shoulder, as if he wished to caress her.

«Oh!... It is not hard work. I feel as if I had my children again... she says smiling again as tears begin to shine in her hollow eyes.

553.2

²John comes in bent under a huge bundle of sticks, and the

rather dark corridor seems to brighten up as he enters it. I have always noticed the brilliance that seems to light up wherever John is. His childish smile that is so sweet and candid, his limpid eyes that smile like a beautiful April sky, his joyful voice that is so affectionate in greeting his companions, are like sunbeams or a rainbow of peace. Everybody loves him except Judas of Kerioth; I do not know whether he loves him or hates him, he certainly envies him, he often makes a fool of him and at times offends him. But Judas for the time being is not here.

They help him to lay down his load and they ask him where Jesus may be. John also becomes somewhat frightened at the delay. But, confiding in God more than the others he says: «His Father will deliver Him from evil. We must believe in the Lord. » And he adds: «But... come. You are tired and covered in dust. We have prepared food and hot water for you. Come... »

Judas of Kerioth also comes back with his dripping pitchers. «Peace to you. Have you had a good trip? » he asks, but there is no kindness in his voice. It is mingled with mockery and discontent.

«Yes. We began from the Decapolis. »

«Because you were afraid of being pelted with stones or of being contaminated? » asks the Iscariot ironically.

«We were afraid of neither. We did it out of prudence as beginners. And the proposal was made by me, who - I do not wish to reproach you for anything - have grown hoary over parchments» says Bartholomew.

Judas does not reply. He leaves the kitchen where the apostles who have just come back refresh themselves with what has been prepared.

Peter looks at the Iscariot depart and shakes his head. But he does not say anything. Thaddeus instead plucks at John's sleeves and asks: «How did he behave these past days? Always so cross? Be frank... »

«I'm always sincere, Judas. But I can assure you that he caused no trouble. The Master is almost always isolated. I stay with the old mother who is so kind, and I listen to those who come to speak to the Master, and then I tell Him. Judas instead goes about the village. He has made some friends... What can we do! He is just like that... He cannot live tranquilly, as we would do... »

«As far as I am concerned he can do what he likes. I am happy providing he does not cause grief. »

553.4

«No. He does not do that. He certainly grows weary. ⁴But Here is the Master! I can hear His voice. He is speaking to somebody... »

They rush out and see Jesus coming forward, in the deepening twilight, carrying two children in His arms and one clinging to His mantle, and He is comforting them as they are weeping.

«May God bless You, Master! But where are You coming from at this late hour? »

Jesus on entering the house replies: «I am coming from the highwaymen. I got my prey as well. I walked after sunset, but my Father will absolve Me because I accomplished a deed of mercy... John, and you, Simon, take them... My arms are aching with tiredness... I am really tired. » He sits on a stool near the fireplace. He smiles: He is tired but happy.

«From the highwaymen? But where have You been? Who are these children? Have You had anything to eat? But where were You? It is not wise to be out when it is dark and to be so far away!... We were worried. Were You not in the wood? » they all ask at the same time.

«I was not in the wood. I went towards Jericho... »

«How imprudent of You! On those roads You may find someone who hates You! » says Thaddeus reproaching Him.

«I took the path that they told us. I had been wanting to go there for days... There are poor wretches to be redeemed. They could do Me no harm. And I went just in time for these children. Give them something to eat. I do not think they have had any food, because they were afraid of the highwaymen. And I had no food with Me. If at least I had found a shepherd!... But because of the oncoming Sabbath all the pastures had been deserted... »

553.5

⁵«Of course! We are the only ones who for some time have not kept the Sabbath... » remarks Judas of Kerioth who is always sharp.

«What are you saying? What are you insinuating? » they ask him.

«I am saying that for two Sabbaths we have worked after sunset. »

«Judas, you know why we had to walk on last Sabbath. It is

not always the sin of the person who commits it, but also of those who force one to commit it. And today... I know. You want to tell Me that also today I have infringed the Sabbath. My reply is that if the law of the Sabbatic rest is great, the precept of love is very great. I am not obliged to justify Myself with you. But I am doing it to teach you meekness, humbleness and the great truth that in the case of a holy necessity one must apply the law with resilience of spirit. Our history has many instances of such necessity. At dawn I went towards the Adummim mountains, because I know that there are some wretches there, whose souls are affected with the leprosy of crime. I was hoping to meet them, speak to them and come back before sunset. I found them. But I was not able to deliver them the intended speech, because there were other things to be said... They had found these three children weeping at the entrance of a poor fold in the plain. They had gone down during the night to steal lambs and also kill, if the shepherd had opposed resistance. Hunger pains are dreadful in the mountains in winter... And when cruel hearts suffer them, they make men more ferocious than wolves. These children were there with a little shepherd not much older than they are, but just as frightened as they were. The father of the children, I do not know why, had died during the night. Perhaps he had been bitten by some beast, or because of heart failure... His cold body was lying on the straw near the sheep. The oldest son, who was sleeping beside him, became aware of it. So the highwaymen, instead of making a massacre, found a dead man and four weeping children. They left the dead man and drove away the sheep and the little shepherd, and as even in the most wicked people there can be a piety hard to be beaten, they took also the children... I found them while they were consulting one another on what to do. The more ferocious ones wanted to kill the ten year old boy, who was a dangerous witness of their theft and refuge; the less fierce ones wanted to send him away after threatening him and they intended to keep the flock. They all wanted to keep the little ones. »

«To do what? Have they no family? »

«Their mother is dead. That is why the father had taken them with him to the winter pastures, and he was now going back to his lonely home crossing these mountains. Could I have left the

little ones to the highwaymen to bring them up like themselves? I spoke to them... In all truth I tell you that they understood Me more than many other people. So much so that they left the little ones with Me and tomorrow they will take the little shepherd to the road to Shechem. Because the brothers of the children's mother live in that part of the country. In the meantime I accepted the children. I shall keep them until their relatives arrive. »

«And You flatter Yourself that the highwaymen... » says the Iscariot and he laughs...

«I am sure that they will not hurt the little shepherd in the least. They are wretches. We must not judge why they are such, but we must try to save them. A good deed may be the beginning of their salvation... » Jesus bends His head, absorbed in I wonder what thought.

553.6 ⁶The apostles and the old woman speak to one another pitying the frightened children whom they do their best to comfort...

Jesus raises His head when the youngest one, a brunet hardly three years old, begins to weep, and He says to James, who in vain busies himself to give the child some milk: «Give Me the boy and go and get My bag... » and He smiles as the little one calms down on His knees and greedily drinks the milk that he had previously refused. The others, who are a little older, eat the soup placed before them, but tears stream from their eyes.

«Dear me! How much misery! Now! It is fair that we should suffer, but innocent children!... » says Peter who cannot bear to see children suffer.

«You are a sinner, Simon. You are reproaching God» points out the Iscariot.

«I may be a sinner. But I am not reproaching God. I am only saying... Master, why must children suffer? They have not committed any sin. »

«Everybody has sins, at least the original one» says the Iscariot.

Peter does not reply to him. He awaits Jesus' reply. And Jesus, Who is lulling to sleep the child now sated and drowsy, replies: «Simon, sorrow is the consequence of sin. »

«All right. So... after You have removed sin, children will no longer suffer. »

«They will still suffer. Do not be scandalised, Simon. Sorrow

and death will always be on the Earth. Also the purest people suffer and will suffer. Nay, they are the ones who will suffer on behalf of everybody. The victims propitiatory to the Lord. »

«But why? I don't understand... »

«There are many things that you do not understand on the Earth. You must at least believe that they are wanted by the perfect Love. And when Grace restored to men makes the holiest men know the hidden truths, then one will see the holiest people wish to be victims, because they will have understood the power of sorrow... ⁷The child has fallen asleep. Mary, will you take him with you? »

553.7

«Certainly, Master. We say: a frightened child sleeps little and weeps much, and a bird without nest needs a motherly wing. My bed is a very large one now that I am its only occupant. I will put the children in it and watch over them. These other ones are also about to fall asleep and forget their sorrow. Come, let us put them to bed. »

She picks up the little one from Jesus' lap and she goes out followed by Peter and Philip as James of Zebedee comes back with Jesus' bag.

Jesus opens it and rummages in it. He pulls out a heavy tunic, he unfolds it and examines its width. He is not satisfied. He looks for the mantle of the same dark shade as the tunic. He puts them aside, closes the bag and hands it back to James.

Peter comes back with Philip. The old woman has remained with the three children and Peter sees at once the garments unfolded and laid aside and he asks: «Are You going to change your clothes, Master? Tired as You are, a hot bath should refresh You. There is hot water and we will warm Your clothes, then we shall have supper and go to bed. This story of the poor children has moved me deeply... »

Jesus smiles but He does not make any remark on the matter. He only says: «Let us praise the Lord Who. has led Me here in time to save the innocent childrens He then becomes silent, as He is obviously tired...

The old woman comes back with the children's garments. «They should be changed... They are torn and dirty... But I no longer have my children's garments to replace them. I will wash them tomorrow... »

«No, mother. When the Sabbath is over you will make three small garments out of Mine... »

«But, Lord, do You realise that You have only three tunics left? If You give one away, what will You be left with? Lazarus is not here, as when You gave Your mantle to the leprous woman! » says Peter.

«Never mind! There will be two left, and they are too many for the Son of man. Take this, Mary. Tomorrow at sunset you will begin your work, and the Persecuted One will rejoice in helping the poor whose worries He understands. »

554. The Sabbath in Ephraim, on an islet in the torrent.
The original sin explained in a parable to the three children.

12th January 1947.

554.1

1«Get up and let us go along the stream. Like the Jews who live abroad and where there are no synagogues, we shall celebrate the Sabbath among ourselves. Come children... » says Jesus to the apostles idling in the kitchen garden, and He stretches out His hand to the three poor children who are in a group in a corner.

They go towards Him with an expression of timid joy on their faces prematurely pensive of children who have seen things far greater than themselves, and the two older ones put their hands in those of Jesus, but the little one wants to be taken in His arms, and Jesus satisfies him saying to the oldest one: «You will stay beside Me just the same and you will hold on to My tunic as you did yesterday. Isaac is too tired and too young to walk by himself... » The boy is delighted with Jesus' smile and he agrees, being satisfied with walking like a little man beside Jesus.

«Give me the child, Master. You must be tired after yesterday's fatigue, and Ruben is not happy because You are not taking him by the hand... » says Bartholomew and he stretches his arms to take the child who clings to Jesus' neck.

«He is as stubborn as all his race! » exclaims the Iscariot.

«No. He is frightened. You have no experience of children. Babies are like that. When they are distressed or seared they seek shelter in the first person who has smiled at them and comforted

them» replies Bartholomew, and as he cannot take the youngest one in his arms, he takes the oldest one by the hand after caressing his head and smiling at him in a fatherly way.

²They leave the house where only the old woman remains and they follow the stream beyond the village. Its banks are beautiful, covered as they are with fresh grass and studded with wild flowers. The clear water gurgles among stones and, although meagre, it sounds as sweet as a harp and rustles breaking against the larger stones scattered in its bed or insinuating itself into the recesses of some tiny island covered with reeds. Birds fly away from the trees near the banks trilling merrily, or they perch on boughs in the sunshine singing the first songs of springtime, or they fly down to the ground gracefully and lively, seeking insects and worms or drinking near the banks. Two wild turtle-doves are bathing at a bend of the stream pecking at each other and cooing; they then fly away carrying in their beaks strands of wool left by some sheep on a plant of hawthorn, the top branches of which are beginning to bloom.

«They do that to build their nest» says the oldest boy. «They certainly have young ones... » He lowers his head and, after smiling faintly when uttering the first words, he weeps silently wiping his eyes with his hand.

Bartholomew takes him in his arms, as he realises what anguish the two turtle-doves have brought about with their care for their nest. And Bartholomew, who has the kind heart of a good father of a family, sighs deeply. The boy weeps on his shoulder and the other one, the second one, seeing him weep, begins to cry as well, imitated by the third one who calls his father in the thin voice of a little child who has just begun to speak.

«This is going to be our Sabbath prayer today! You could have left them at home! Women are better suited to such cases and... » remarks the Iscariot.

«But she does nothing but weep herself! As I feel like doing myself... Because such situations... do make one weep... » replies Peter taking the second boy in his arms.

«Yes, they do make one weep. That is true. And Mary of Jacob, a poor old distressed soul, is not very good at consoling... » confirms the Zealot.

«We do not think that she is very successful either. ³The only

one capable of consoling was the Master. And He did not do it. »

«He did not do it? And what else should He have done? He convinced the highwaymen, He walked for miles with the children in His arms, He had their relatives informed... »

«All trifling matters. Since He has power also over death He could, nay He should have gone down to the fold and raised the dead shepherd. He did it for Lazarus, who was of no use to anybody! In this case there was a father, and a widower into the bargain, and there are children who are left all alone... That resurrection should have been worked. I do not understand You, Master... »

«And we do not understand you, as you are so disrespectful... »

«Peace, peace! Judas does not understand. He is not the only one who does not understand the reasons of God and the consequences of sin. You also, Simon of Jonah, do not understand why children should suffer. So do not judge Judas of Simon, who does not understand why the man has not been raised from the dead. If Judas ponders on the matter, since he always reproaches Me for going far away all alone, he will realise that I was not able to go so far... Because the fold was in the Jericho plain, but beyond the town, near the ford. What would you have said if I had been away for at least three days? »

«You could have ordered the man to rise again with Your spirit. »

«Are you more exacting than the Pharisees and scribes, who wanted the proof of a decomposed body, so that you may say that I really do raise the dead? »

«They wanted that because they hate You. I would like it because I love You and I would like to see You crush all Your enemies. »

«Your old feelings and your disorderly love. You have not been able to extirpate the old plants from your heart and replace them with new ones; and the old ones, fertilised by the Light that you approached, have become even sturdier. Many people make your error at present and many will make it in future. It is the error of those who, notwithstanding the assistance from God, do not improve themselves because they do not correspond to God's help with heroic wills. »

«Have these men, who, like me, are Your disciples, destroyed the old plants? »

«They have at least pruned them down and engrafted them considerably. You did not. You did not even examine them carefully to see whether they deserved to be engrafted, pruned or removed. You are an improvident gardener, Judas. »

«But only with regard to my soul. Because I know what to do with gardens. »

«You know what to do. You are an expert with all earthly matters. I would like to see you equally capable in matters concerning Heaven. »

«But Your light should work wonders in us by itself! Is it really good? If it fertilises evil and invigorates it, it cannot be good, and it is its fault if we do not become good. »

«Speak for yourself, my friend. As far as I know, the Master has not made my bad tendencies any stronger» says Thomas.

«I agree. »

«I agree, too» say Andrew and James of Zebedee.

«With regard to me, His power has freed me from evil and has made a new man of me. Why do you say that? Do you not consider what you say? » asks Matthew.

^{554.4} Peter is about to say something, but he prefers to go away, and he begins to walk fast with the child astride his shoulders imitating the rolling of a boat to make him laugh, and when he passes near Thaddeus he takes him by the arm and shouts: «Come on, let's go to that island! It's full of flowers like a basket. Come, Nathanael, Phillip, Simon, John... In one bound we are there. The torrent, divided as it is, is only two brooks, one on each side of the island... » And he is the first to jump resting his foot on a sandy protrusion a few metres wide, covered with grass like a meadow and so full of early flowers that it looks like a carpet, with in its middle only one tall thin poplar, the top of which is swaying in a light breeze. He is slowly joined by those he called and then by the others who were closer to Jesus, Who is left behind speaking to the Iscariot.

«But has he not finished yet? » Peter asks his brother.

«The Master is working at his heart» replies Andrew.

«Eh! it is easier for me to make figs grow on this tree than it is for justice to enter Judas' heart. »

«And his mind» adds Matthew.

«He is a fool because he wants to be so, and when he likes» says Thaddeus.

«He is upset because he has not been selected to evangelize. I know» says John.

«As far as I am concerned... If he wants to go in my place... I am not at all anxious to wander about! » exclaims Peter.

«None of us are anxious. But he is. And my Brother does not want to send him. I spoke to Him this morning because I was aware of Judas' mood and of its causes. But Jesus said: "Just because his heart is so unsound I am keeping him with Me. Those who suffer and are weak need a doctor and someone to support them". »

554.5 «Of course!... Well!... ⁵Come, children. We shall now take these lovely reeds and make little boats with them. See how beautiful they are! And we shall put these little flowers in them to act as fishermen. Look: do they not seem heads with white and red caps?... We shall make the harbour here, and here... the fishermen's little houses... Now let us tie the boats to these lovely slender grass-blades, and you will put them in the water, like that... then you will beach them when you finish fishing... You can also make the tour of the island... and watch the rocks, eh!... » Peter's patience is wonderful. He cuts the reed into pieces with a knife, from knot to knot, removing one side to make little boats, he puts daisies still in bud in them as fishermen, he digs a Lilliputian harbour in the sand and makes some little houses with the damp sand, and when he is successful in pleasing the children he sits down satisfied whispering: «Poor children!... »

Jesus sets foot on the island just when the two children are beginning to play and He caresses them putting down the little one who joins in the game of his brothers.

«Here I am with you. Let us speak of God now. Because to speak of God and to God is a preparation for one's mission. And after praying, that is, after speaking to God, we shall speak of God, Who is present in everything to teach men good things. Stand up and let us pray» and He intones some psalms in Hebrew and the apostles join Him singing in chorus.

The children, who had moved aside with their little boats, on hearing the men sing, stop playing and prattling in their shrill

voices, and approach the group. They listen attentively, their eyes fixed on Jesus Who is everything to them, then, with the spirit of imitation of children, they take the same posture of the praying apostles humming the tune as they do not know the words of the psalms. Jesus looks at them with a smile that encourages the humming of their innocent voices. They feel as if He approved of them and they are encouraged...

The singing of the psalms comes to an end. ^{554.6} Jesus sits down on the grass and begins to speak: «When the kings of Israel, of Edom and of Judah united to fight the king of Moab and they applied to the prophet Elisha for advice, he replied to the kings' messenger: "If I did not respect Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, I should not even look at you. Now bring me someone who can play the lyre". And as the harpist played, God spoke to His prophet ordering ditch on ditch to be dug in the wadi so that it might be filled with water for men and animals. And the following morning at the hour of the oblation, although there was neither wind nor rain, the torrent was filled as the Lord had said. According to you, what is the teaching of that episode? Speak up! »

The apostles consult with one another. Some say: «God does not speak to an agitated heart. Elisha wants to appease his anger, brought about by seeing the king of Israel appear in his presence, so that he may hear God. » Some instead say: «It is a lesson of justice. Elisha, in order not to punish the innocent king of Judah, saves also the guilty one. » Others say: «It is a lesson of faith and obedience. They dug the ditches obeying an apparently silly order, and they waited for the water although it was a clear windless day. »

«Your replies are correct but not complete. God does not speak to an agitated heart. That is true. But lyres are not required to calm a heart. It is sufficient to have charity, which is the spiritual lyre with paradisiac notes. When a soul lives in charity, its heart is calm and it can hear and understand the voice of God. »

«So Elisha did not have charity because he was upset. »

«Elisha lived at the time of Justice. We must learn to transfer ancient episodes to the time of Charity and see them not in the light of thunder and lightning but in the light of stars. You belong to the new times. So why are you so often more irascible and agitated than people of the ancient times? Divest your-

selves of the past. I repeat that to you, although Judas does not like to hear it being repeated. Extirpate, prune, engraft, plant new trees. Renovate yourselves, dig the ditches of humbleness, obedience and faith. Those kings were able to do so although two of them did not come from Judah, and they did not hear God but the prophet of God repeat the orders of the Most High. Had they not obeyed they would have died of thirst in the and land. They obeyed and the water filled the ditches they had dug, and they were not only saved from dying of thirst but they also defeated their enemies. I am the Water of Life. Dig ditches in your hearts in order to be able to receive Me. ⁷And now listen. I am not going to make long speeches. I will just give you some simple thoughts on which you can meditate. You will always be like these children and even inferior to them, because they are innocent and you are not, and thus the spiritual light will be dimmer in you, if you do not get accustomed to meditation. You always listen but you never remember, because your intelligence is asleep instead of being awake. So listen*. When the son of the woman of Shunem died, she wanted to go to the prophet although her husband told her that it was not the first day of the month or the Sabbath. But she knew that she had to go, because for certain matters no delay is allowed. And as she was able to understand the matter from a spiritual point of view, she had her son restored to life. What do you say about that? »

«That it is a reproach to me because of the Sabbath» says the Iscariot.

«So, Judas, do you realise that you understand things when you want to? So open your heart to justice. »

«Yes... but You did not infringe the Sabbath to raise the man from the dead. »

«I did more than that. I prevented their ruin and death, their true death. And I reminded the thieves that... »

«Wait before consoling Yourself with the idea of having done some good! I don't believe they obeyed You.. »

«If the Master says so... »

«Also Elisha, in the story of the woman of Shunem, says: "The Lord has hidden it from me". So not even the prophets al-

*listen as narrated in: 2 King 4, 18-37.

ways know everything» replies the Iscariot.

«Our Brother is greater than a prophet» remarks Thaddeus.

«I know. He is the Son of God. But He is also the Man. And as such He may be subject to being unaware of secondary matters like this one concerning a conversion and a return... Master, do You always, really always, know everything? I often wonder... » says the Iscariot with stubborn insistence.

«And with what mind do you wish to know? For the sake of peace, of advice, or to be upset? » asks Jesus.

«Well... I do not know. I wonder and... »

«And you seem to be upset even in wondering» says Thomas.

«Me? Of course perplexity always upsets one... »

«How many quibbles! I do not worry about so many problems. I believe without inquiring, and I am not perplexed or upset about anything. But let us allow the Master to speak. I do not like this lesson. Tell us a beautiful parable, Master. The children also will like it» says Peter.

⁸«I have still one question to ask you. This one. According to you, what is the meaning of the flour that removed the bitterness from the soup of the prophet's children? » 554.8

Dead silence is the reply to the question.

«What? Can you not reply? »

«Probably because the flour absorbed the bitterness... » says Matthew with no certainty.

«Everything would have been bitter, also the flour. »

«Because of a miracle of the prophet who did not want to mortify his servant» suggests Philip.

«Yes. But not only for that. »

«The Lord wanted the power of the prophet to shine also on common matters» says the Zealot.

«Yes. But it is not yet the right meaning. The lives of prophets anticipate what will take place in the fullness of time: Mine, they reflect my earthly days by means of symbols and figures. So... »

There is silence. They look at one another. Then John lowers his head blushing and he smiles.

«Why do you not express your thought, John? » asks Jesus. «There is no lack of love in speaking, because you do not intend to mortify anybody. »

«I think it means this. That in the time of hunger for Truth

and of famine of Wisdom, that is, this time when You came, every tree has become wild and has yielded bitter fruits as inedible as poison for the sons of men, who thus in vain pick them and prepare them to nourish themselves. But the Eternal Father's Bounty sends You, the flour of selected corn, and with Your perfection You remove the poison from all food, restoring both the trees of the Scriptures again, perverted throughout ages, and the palates of men, corrupted by concupiscence. In this case it is the Father Who orders the flour to be brought and He pours it into the bitter soup, and You are the flour that sacrifices itself to become food for men. And after Your consummation no bitterness will be left in the world, because You will have re-established our friendship with God. ⁹I maybe wrong. »

«You are not wrong. That is the symbol. »

«Oh! and what made you think that? » asks Peter, who is astonished.

Jesus replies to him: «I will tell you with the very words you spoke a few minutes ago. One bound and you are in the peaceful flowery island of spirituality. But one must have the courage to make a leap leaving the shore, the world. It is necessary to jump without worrying whether there is someone who may laugh at our clumsy jump or may deride us for our simplicity in preferring a lonely islet to the world. One must jump without being afraid of getting hurt or wet or being disappointed. You must leave everything to take refuge in God. One must remain on the island separated from the world and leave it only to distribute the flowers and pure water picked up on the island of the spirit, where there is only one tree, the tree of Wisdom, to those who are left on the shores. By being close to that tree, away from the noise of the world, one catches all its words and becomes a master, being aware of being a disciple. Also that is a symbol. ¹⁰But we shall now tell the children a lovely parable. Come here close to Me. »

The three children go so close to Him as to sit on his knees. Jesus embraces them and begins to speak.

«One day the Lord God said: "I will make man, and man will live in the Earthly Paradise where the great river is that then divides into four water-courses, which are the Pishon, the Gihon, the Euphrates and the Tigris, that flow on the Earth. And man

will be happy as he will have all the beautiful and good things of Creation and my love for the joy of his spirit". And He did so. It was as if man were in a large island, more flowery than this one, with all kinds of trees and animals, and upon him there were the love of God shining like a sun on his soul, and the voice of God were heard in the winds, more sweet-sounding than the songs of birds.

But suddenly a serpent crept into that beautiful flowery garden, among all the animals and plants, and that serpent was different from all those that had been created by God and were good, without poisonous teeth and without fierceness in the spires of their flexuous bodies. Also that serpent had dressed itself with a skin having the shades of gems as the other snakes had, nay, it was even more beautiful than they were, so much so that it looked like a huge jewel of a king wriggling among the wonderful trees in the Garden. It went and coiled around a tree growing in the middle of the garden, a beautiful solitary tree that was much taller than this one and it was covered with marvellous leaves and fruits. And the serpent looked like a beautiful jewel around the lovely tree, and it shone in the sun, and all the animals were looking at it because none of them remembered seeing it being created, or seeing it before. But none of them approached it, nay, they all moved away from the tree, now that the snake was round its trunk.

Only the man and woman went near it, and the woman before the man, because she liked that bright thing shining in the sun and moving its head like a flower still half-closed, and she listened to what the serpent was saying, and she disobeyed the Lord and she made Adam disobey. Only after their disobedience they saw the snake for what it was and they understood sin, as by now they had lost the innocence of their hearts. And they hid themselves from God Who was looking for them and then they lied to God Who was questioning them.

God then put some angels at the borders of the Garden and drove the men out. And they felt as if they had been thrown from the safe shore of Eden into the rivers on the earth full of water, as when they are flooded in springtime. But in the hearts of the men who had been driven out God left the remembrance of their eternal destiny, that is, of the passage from the beautiful Gar-

den, where they heard the voice of God and felt His love, to Paradise where they would enjoy God completely. And with that remembrance He left the holy incentive to ascend to the place they had lost, by means of a life of justice.

But, My dear children, you have just now experienced that as long as the boat sails with the stream its voyage is easy, whereas while it sails against the stream it finds it difficult to keep afloat, without being swept away by waves or being wrecked among the vegetation, sand or stones of the river. If Simon had not tied your little boats with the thin withes of the shores, you would have lost them all, as it happened to Isaac who did not hold his withe.

The same happens to men thrown into the streams of the Earth. They must always remain in the hands of God, trusting their will, which is like a withe, to the hands of the good Father Who is in Heaven and Who is the Father of all men, and in particular of innocent people, and they must be on the look-out to avoid herbs and bog grass, stones, whirlpools and mud that might hold back, shatter or swallow up the boat of their souls by tearing away the thread of the will that keeps them joined to God. Because the Serpent, which is no longer in the Garden, is now on the Earth, and it really tries to wreck souls, preventing them from going up the Euphrates, the Tigris, the Gihon and the Pishon to the Great River that flows in the eternal Paradise and nourishes the trees of Life and Health, that yield perpetual fruits, that will be the delight of all those who have been able to go upstream to be united to God and to His angels, without having to suffer any further forever. »

554.11

¹¹«My mother also used to say that» says the oldest boy.

«Yes, she did» lisps the youngest one.

«You don't know. I do, because I am big. But if you say things that are not true you will certainly not go to Paradise. »

«But our father used to say that it was not true» says the second-born son.

«Because he did not believe in the Lord of our mother. »

«Was your father not a Samaritan? » asks James of Alphaeus.

«No. He came from another place. But mother was, and we are as well, because she wanted us to be like her. And she told us of Paradise and of the Garden, but not so well as You did. I was afraid of the serpent and of death, because mother used to

say that one was the devil and our father said that death puts an end to everything. That is why I was so unhappy to be alone and I also said that it was quite useless to be good now, because as long as father and mother lived, we made them happy by being good, but now there was nobody to make happy if we were good. But now I know... And I will be good. I will never take my thread away from the hands of God so that I will not be carried away by the waters of the Earth. »

«Did mother go upstream or downstream? » asks the second son perplexedly.

«What do you mean, child? » asks Matthew.

«I mean: where is she? Did she go to the river of the eternal Paradise? »

«Let us hope so, my child. If she was good... »

«She was a Samaritan... » says the Iscariot contemptuously.

«Then is there no Paradise for us, because we are Samaritans? Then shall we not have God? He called Him the "Father of all men". As an orphan I liked to think that I still have a Father... But if there is not one for us... » he says lowering his head sadly.

«God is the Father of everybody, My child. Have I loved you less because you are a Samaritan? I contended with the highwaymen for you, and I will contend with the demon for you, in the same way as I would contend for the little son of the High Priest of the Temple in Jerusalem, if he did not consider it disgraceful that the Saviour should save his son. Nay: I would contend for you more firmly because you are alone and unhappy. There is no difference for Me between the soul of a Judaeon and that of a Samaritan. And before long there will be no division between Samaria and Judaea, because the Messiah will have one people only that will bear His Name and will comprise all those who love Him. »

«I love You, Lord. But will You take me to my mother? » asks the oldest of the three boys.

«You do not know where she is. That man over there said that we can only hope... » says the second-born son.

«I do not know, but the Lord knows. He knew even where we were, whereas we do not even know where we were. »

«With the highwaymen... They wanted to kill us... » Terror appears again on the little face of the second son.

«The highwaymen were like demons. But He saved us because our angels called Him. »

«The angels saved also my mother. I know because I always dream of her. »

«You are a liar, Isaac. You cannot dream of her because you do not remember her. »

The little one weeps saying: «No. No. I dream of her. I do... »

«Don't call your brother a liar, Ruben. His soul can really see his mother, because the good Father Who is in Heaven can grant that the little orphan may dream of her and may know her partly, as He allows us to know Him, so that from such limited knowledge we may be willing to know Him perfectly, which ^{554.12} is achieved by being always good. ¹²And now let us go. We have spoken of God, and the Sabbath has been sanctified. » He stands up and intones more psalms.

Upon hearing the chorus some people from Ephraim go towards them and they respectfully wait until the psalm is ended in order to greet Jesus and say to Him: «Did You prefer to come here instead of coming to us? Do You not love us? »

«None of you invited Me. So I came here with My apostles and these childrens

«That is true. But we thought that Your disciple had informed You of our wish. »

Jesus looks at John and Judas. And Judas replies: «I forgot to tell You yesterday; and today, with these children, I never thought of it. »

Jesus in the meantime leaves the islet and He crosses the tiny stream of water and goes towards the people of Ephraim. The apostles follow Him while the children delay unfasting the two remaining little boats, and as Peter urges them, they reply: «We want to keep them to remember the lesson. »

«And what about me? I lost mine. And I will not remember. And I will not go to Paradise» says the youngest one weeping.

«Wait! Don't weep. I'll make a little boat for you at once. Of course, you must remember the lesson as well. Eh! We ought all to have a little boat with a withe tied to its prow in order to remember. And we men more than you children! Well! » and Peter makes another little boat with its withe. He then takes the three children in his arms, in one armful, and jumps the stream going

towards Jesus.

«Are these the ones? » asks Malachi of Ephraim.

«Yes, they are. »

«And are they from Shechem? »

«That is what the young shepherd said. He said that their relatives lived in the country. »

«Poor children! But if their relatives should not come, what would You do? »

«I would keep them with Me. But they will come. »

«Those highwaymen... Will they not come, too? »

«They will not come. Do not be afraid of them. Even if they came... I would be their plunderer, and they would not be your pillagers. I have already snatched four preys from them and I hope I have also snatched part of their souls from sin, at least in some of them. »

«We shall help You with these children. You will let us do that. »

«Yes, I will. But not because they come from your region, but because they are innocent, and love for innocent people leads one quickly to God. »

«But You are the only one who makes no distinction between innocents and innocents. Neither a Judaeen nor a Galilean would have picked up these little Samaritans. People do not love us. And they dislike not only us but also those who do not even yet know what a Samaritan or a Judaeen is. And that is cruel. »

«Yes, it is. But it will no longer be so when people follow My Law. See, Malachi? They are in the arms of Simon Peter, of My brother and of Simon Zealot. None of them are Samaritans or fathers. And yet not even you would press your own children to your heart as these disciples of Mine are pressing the orphans of Samaria. The Messianic idea is this: to reunite everybody in love. This is the truth of the Messianic idea. One people only on the Earth under the sceptre of the Messiah. One people only in Heaven under the glance of one God only. »

They go away... speaking, towards the house of Mary of Jacob.