

Maria Valtorta



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 NINE
Chapters 555-600

CENTRO
EDITORIALE
VALTORTIANO

Original title:
Maria Valtorta,
L'Evangelo come mi è 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

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 978-88-7987-189-1
(Volume nine)

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

Preparation for the Passion of Jesus.

(continuation and conclusion)

555. Night lesson to Simon Peter on the examination of sins and the suffering of the good and of the innocent. 11
556. Another Sabbath in Ephraim. Sermon to the Samaritans on the real Temple and on New Times. 21
557. Relatives of the three children, saved from the thieves, arrive from Shechem. 30
558. The parable of the drop that erodes the rock, with the group going back to Shechem. 37
559. In Ephraim, pilgrims from the Decapolis. A secret mission of Manaen. 43
560. Near Gofena, a night meeting with Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus and Manaen. 48
561. The Saphorim Samuel, from a killer to a disciple. 59
562. Hearsay in Nazareth. 72
563. False disciples in Shechem. The dumb slave of Claudia Procula is healed at Ephraim. 76
564. The man from Jabneel. The end of Ermasteus. Reproaching of the Samaritans who lack charity. 82
565. Samuel distressed by Judas Iscariot who does not understand the nature of the salvific suffering. The example of the bees for the workers of God. 93
566. In Ephraim, the day of the arrival of the Holy Mother, Lazarus and the women disciples. The character of Pilate. 106

567. The parable of the torn cloth. A miracle on a woman giving birth. A long lecture to Judas of Kerioth caught while stealing.	129
568. The beginning of the journey in Samaria, starting from Ephraim to Shiloh.	156
569. In Shiloh, the parable of the ill advisers.	163
570. In Lebonah, the parable of the ill advised.	167
571. Arrival and welcoming in Shechem.	176
572. In Shechem. The last parable on advice given and received.	179
573. Departure for Enon after a quarrel between the Iscariot and Eliza, who remain in Shechem.	185
574. Going from Enon to Tersa. Jesus rescues a young shepherd after having given blindness to an evil man and sight to a blind man.	189
575. Hostile reception in Tirzah. An extreme attempt to redeem Judas Iscariot. Lk 9,51-56	201
576. Towards Doco, the meeting with the young rich man. Mt 19,16-30; Mk 10,17-31; Lk 18,18-30	216
577. The third announcement of the Passion. Mary of Alphaeus recalls the figure of Joseph. The foolish request of the sons of Zebedee. Mt 20,17-28; Mk 10,32-45; Lk 18,31-34	224
578. Meeting with both disciples and men of worth guided by Mannaen. Arrival in Jericho.	234
579. A small group of Jews secretly relates about the accusations of the Sanhedrin. Allegory for Jerusalem.	238
580. Treacherous information by the Iscariot and prophecies on Israel. Miracles along the road from Jericho to Bethany. Mt 20,29-34; Mk 10,46-52; Lk 18,35-43	246
581. In Bethany, in the house of Lazarus.	254
582. The eve of the Sabbath before the entering in Jerusalem. An extreme offer for the salvation of Judas Iscariot.	262

583. The eve of the Sabbath before the entering in Jerusalem. Farewell to the women disciples. The unhappy niece of Nahum. 274
584. The Sabbath before the entering in Jerusalem. The parable of the two lamps the living parable of the small deformed boy restored. Sorrow in the future of Humanity. 295
585. The Sabbath before the entering in Jerusalem. Judaeans and pilgrims in Bethany. The Sanhedrin has decided. Mt 26,1-5; Mk 14,1-2; Lk 22,1-2; Jn 12,9-11 307
586. The Sabbath before the entering in Jerusalem. The supper at Bethany. Judas of Kerioth has decided. Mt 26,6-13; Mk 14,3-9; Jn 12,1-8 312
587. Farewell to Lazarus. 325
588. Judas Iscariot with the heads of the Sinhedrin. Mt 26,14-16; Mk 14,10-11; Lk 22,3-6 336
589. From Bethany to Jerusalem, preparing the apostles for the imminent Passion. 346
590. Tears over Jerusalem. The triumphal entrance into the Holy city. The death of Annaleah. Mt 21,1-17; Mk 11,1-11.15-19; Lk 19,28-48; Jn 12,12-19 352
591. The evening at the Gethsemane. The apostles brought back to reality after the elation of the triumph. 368
592. Holy Monday. Comfort to the mother of Annaleah. The meeting with the roman soldier Vitale. The unfruitful fig-tree and the parable of the evil vine-dressers. The questions on Jesus' authority and on John's baptism. Mt 21,18-19.23-27.33-46; Mk 11,12-14.27-33; 12,1-12; Lk 20,1-19 372
593. Monday night at Gethsemane with the apostles. 391
594. Holy Tuesday. Lessons from the withered fig-tree. Questions on the tribute to Caesar and on resurrection. Mt 21,20-22; 22,15-33; Mk 11,20-26; 12,13-27; Lk 20,20-40 397
595. Tuesday night at Gethsemane with the apostles. 404

596. Holy Wednesday. The greatest of the commandments. The widow's offering. The reproach against the scribes and the Pharisees. A rest with His Mother and the women disciples. The establishment of the Church. The End of Times. Mt 22, 34-46; 23, 1-39; 24, 1-51; 25, 31-46; Mk 12, 28-44; 13, 1-37; Lk 17, 26-37; 20, 41-47; 21, 1-38 408
597. Wednesday night at Gethsemane with the apostles. 448
598. Holy Thursday. Preparations for the Passover Supper. The voice of the Father. The sign agreed with the Traitor. Respects paid by the notables. Mt 26, 17-19; Mk 14, 12-16; Lk 22, 7-13; Jn 12, 20-50 456
599. Arrival at the Supper-room. Jesus' farewell to His Mother. 473
600. The Last Supper. Mt 26, 20-35; Mk 14, 17-31; Lk 22, 14-38; Jn 13-17 477

Preparation for the Passion of Jesus.

(continuation and conclusion)

555. Night lesson to Simon Peter on the examination of sins and the suffering of the good and of the innocent.

15th January 1947.

Jesus is alone in a little room. He is thinking or praying sitting on a little bed. The tiny yellowish flame of a small oil lamp is quivering on a shelf. It must be night-time because there is no noise in the house or in the street. Only the rustling of the stream outside the house seems to sound louder in the silence of the night. 555.1

Jesus raises His head and looks at the door. He listens. He stands up and goes to open it. He sees Peter outside. «Is it you? Come in. What do you want, Simon? Are you still up and you have to walk such a long way?» He has taken him by the hand and pulled him inside, closing the door silently. He makes him sit on the bed beside Him.

«I wanted to tell You, Master... Yes, I wanted to tell You that even today You have seen what I am worth. I am only capable of making poor children enjoy themselves, of comforting an old woman, of reconciling two shepherds who are quarrelling over a ewe-lamb that has lost its milk. I am a poor man, so dull that I do not even understand what You explain to me. But that is another matter. Now I wanted to tell You that just because of that, You should keep me here. I am not anxious to go around when You do not come with us. And I am not good at anything... Content me, Lord.» Peter is speaking eagerly with his eyes fixed on the coarse chipped bricks of the floor.

«Look at Me, Simon» Jesus orders him. And, as Peter obeys, Jesus stares at him intensely asking: «Is that all? Is that the only reason for your being awake? The only reason why you are begging Me to keep you here? Be sincere, Simon. You are not grumbling if you tell your Master the other part of your thoughts. You must be able to tell the difference between an idle word and a

useful one. A word is idle, and sin generally flourishes in idleness, when one speaks of other people's faults with someone who can do nothing about them. Then it is plainly lack of charity, even if what one says is true. As it is lack of charity to reproach someone more or less sharply without giving advice at the same time. And I am referring to just reproaches. The others are unfair and they are a sin against our neighbour. But when one sees one's neighbour commit sin, and one suffers because that person offends God and injures his soul, and one realises that one cannot estimate the gravity of someone else's sin, neither does one feel wise enough to speak words that may work a conversion, and then one applies to a just and wise person confiding one's anxiety, then one does not commit sin, because one's disclosure aims at putting an end to a scandal and at saving a soul. It is the same as if one had a relative suffering from a shameful disease. One will certainly try to conceal it from people, but one will go secretly to a doctor and say: "My relative is suffering from so and so and I do not know how to advise and cure him. Please come or tell me what I must do". Does one in that case lack love for one's relative? No. On the contrary one would lack love if one feigned not to notice the disease and allowed it to progress and bring about death, through a mistaken feeling of prudence and love. ^{555. 2}One day, and that day is not remote, you and your companions will have to listen to the secrets of hearts. Not as you listen to them now as men, but as priests, that is doctors, masters, and pastors of souls, as I am a Doctor, Master and Pastor. You will have to listen, decide and give advice. Your judgement will have the same value as if God Himself had passed it... »

Peter frees himself from Jesus Who was holding him close to Himself and standing up he says: «That is not possible Lord. Never impose that on us. How can You expect us to judge like God, if we are not even able to judge like men? »

«Then you will be able, because the Spirit of God will hover over you and will penetrate you with its light. You will know how to judge taking into consideration the seven conditions of the facts proposed to you in order to have your advice or to be forgiven. Listen to Me carefully and try to remember. In due time the Spirit of God will remind you of My words. But at the same time try to remember with your own intelligence, as God

gave it to you so that you may use it without laziness and spiritual presumptions that lead one to expect and pretend everything from God. When you are Master, Doctor and Pastor in My place and My stead, and when a believer comes to weep at your feet over his perturbation brought about by his own or other people's deeds, you must always bear in mind the following seven questions:

Who: Who sinned?

What: What is the matter of the sin?

Where: In which place?

How: In which circumstances?

With what or with whom: The instrument or person that was the material for the sin?

Why: Which incentives brought about a favourable environment to the sin?

When: In which conditions and reactions, and whether by accident or by unwholesome habit?

Because see, Simon, the same sin may have infinite nuances and grades according to all the circumstances that caused it and to the people who committed it. For instance... Let us take into consideration two of the most common sins: lust of the flesh and lust for riches.

A man has committed a sin of lewdness, or he thinks that he has committed such a sin. Because at times man mistakes temptation for sin, or he considers of the same degree the incentives brought about artificially by an unwholesome appetite, and considers also to be equal those thoughts that are the consequence of a painful disease or come to one's mind because the flesh and blood at times have sudden voices resounding inwardly before the mind has time to be wary of them and suffocate them. He comes to you and says: "I committed a sin of lewdness". An imperfect priest would say: "Anathema on you". But you, My Peter, must not say so. Because you are Jesus' Peter, you are the successor of the Mercy. So before condemning you must consider and touch the heart weeping before you, kindly and prudently, in order to ascertain all the aspects of the sin or supposed sin, and of the scruple.

I said: kindly and prudently. You must remember that besides being a Master and Pastor, you are a Doctor. A doctor does not

irritate wounds. If there is gangrene he will cut it off, but he also knows how to uncover and treat a wound with a light hand when lacerated tissues are to be re-united, not removed. And you are to remember that in addition to being a Doctor and Pastor, you are a Master. A master adapts his words to the age of his pupils. And scandalous would be that teacher who should disclose animal laws to innocent children who were unacquainted with them and would thus acquire mischievous knowledge precociously. And in dealing with souls one must be prudent in asking questions. You must respect yourself and other people. It will be easy for you if in every soul you see a son of yours. A father is by nature the master, doctor and guide of his children. So love with fatherly love every person who comes to you upset by sin, or by fear of sin, and you will be able to judge without hurting or scandalising anybody. ^{555.3}3Do you follow Me?»

«Yes, I do, Master. I have understood You very well. I must be cautious and patient, I will have to convince people to disclose their wounds, but I shall have to examine them by myself, without attracting the attention of other people to them, and only when I should see that there is a real wound, I ought to say: "See? You have hurt yourself here by doing so and so". But if I see that a person is only afraid of being hurt, having seen ghosts, then... I should blow away the fog without giving, through useless zeal, explanations capable of throwing light on real sources of sin. Is that right?»

«Yes, quite right. So. If one says to you: "I have committed a sin of carnal lust", you must consider the person who is in front of you. It is true that sin can be committed at every age. But it is easier to find it in adults than in children, so the questions to ask or the answers to give a man or a boy will be different. Consequently, after the first question, comes the second one on the matter of the sin, then the third one on the place of the sin, then the fourth on the circumstances, then the fifth on the accomplice to the sin, then the sixth on the causes of the sin, and the seventh on the time and number of the sin.

In general you will find that in the case of adults living in the world a circumstance of true sin will appear to correspond to each question, whereas in the case of children by age or by spirit, for many questions you will have to say: "There is only

the fear of sin here, but no real sin". Nay, at times you will see that instead of filth there is a lily that quivers with fear of being splashed with mud, and mistakes the drop of dew that descended on its calyx for a splash of mud. They are souls so eager for Heaven that fear, as a stain, also the shadow of a cloud that overshadows them for a moment, interposing between them and the sun, and then passes leaving no trace on the spotless corolla. They are souls so innocent and so anxious to remain such, that Satan frightens them with fanciful temptations or instigating the incentives of the flesh or the flesh itself, taking advantage of true diseases of the flesh. Those souls are to be comforted and supported, because they are not sinners, but martyrs. Always bear that in mind.

And always remember to judge with the same method also those who commit the sin of greed for other people's riches or property. Because if it is a cursed sin to be greedy without need and without pity, robbing the poor, and acting against justice by harassing citizens, servants, or peoples, the sin of him who steals some bread to appease the hunger of his children and his own, after his neighbours refused to give him some, is by far less serious. Remember that if for a lustful man and a thief, the number, circumstances and gravity of the sin are to be taken into account when judging them, one must also consider what knowledge the sinner had of the sin when he was committing it. Because he who acts with full knowledge, sins more than he who acts out of ignorance. And he who acts with the free consent of his will sins more than he who was forced to sin. I solemnly tell you that there will be deeds that are apparently sinful, but are really martyrdom and they will be given the reward that is granted to those who suffered martyrdom. And above all remember that in each case, before condemning, you must bear in mind that you have been a man as well and that your Master, in Whom no one was ever able to find sin, never condemned anyone who had repented of having sinned.

Forgive seventy times seven, and even seventy times seventy, the sins of your brothers and children. Because to shut the doors of Salvation upon a sick man, only because he had a relapse, is to want to let him die. ⁴Have you understood?»

555.4

«Yes, I have. I have understood that very clearly...»

«Well, then, tell Me what you have in mind.»

«Yes! I will tell You, because I can see that You know everything, and I realise that I am not grumbling if I tell You to send Judas around in my place, because he suffers if he does not go. I am not telling You meaning that he is jealous or because I am scandalised, but to give peace to him and... to You. Because it must be really troublesome for You to have such a stormy wind near You all the time...»

«Has Judas complained again?»

«Well! He has! He said that every word of Yours hurts him. Also what You said to the children. He says that it is true that You were referring to him when You said that Eve went to the tree because she liked that thing that shone like a king's crown. Truly, I did not think of any comparison. But I am ignorant. Bartholomew and the Zealot, instead, said that Judas has been "touched oh the raw", because he is bewitched by everything that shines and allures one's vainglory. And they must be right because they are wise. Be good to Your poor apostles, Master! Make Judas happy and me as well. In any case! See? I am good only at amusing children... and at being a child in Your arms» and he presses against His Jesus, Whom he really loves with all his strength.

«No. I cannot please you. Do not insist. You, because you are what you are, will go to evangelize. He, because he is what he is, will stay here. My brother also mentioned it to Me, and although I love him so much, I replied "no" also to him. I would not yield even if My Mother should ask Me. It is not a punishment, but a medicine. And Judas must take it. If it does not help his spirit, it will help Mine, because I will not have to reproach Myself for omitting anything that might sanctify him.» Jesus is severe and authoritative in saying so.

Peter lets his arms droop and lowers his head with a sigh.

«Do not worry about it, Simon. We shall have an eternity to
^{555.5} be together and love each other. ⁵But you had something else to tell Me...»

«It's late, Master, and You must sleep.»

«And you more than I, Simon, as you have to set out at dawn.»

«Oh! as far as I am concerned! I rest more staying here with You than I would in bed.»

«Speak up, then. You know that I sleep very little...»

«Well! I am a blockhead, I know and I say so without being ashamed. And if it depended on me, I would not care to be very learned, because I think that the greatest wisdom consists in loving, following and serving You wholeheartedly. But You send me here and there. And people ask me questions and I must reply to them. I think that what I ask You, other people may ask me. Because the thoughts of men are alike. Yesterday You said* that innocent and holy people will always suffer, nay they will be the ones who will suffer on behalf of everybody. I find it difficult to understand that, even if You say that they will wish that themselves. And I think that as it is difficult for me, it may be so also for other people. If they ask me, what shall I tell them? In this first journey a mother said to me: "It was not fair that my little girl should die with so much pain, because she was good and innocent". And as I did not know what to say, I repeated Job's words**: "The Lord has given. The Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord". But I was not convinced myself. And I did not convince her. The next time I would like to know what to say...»

«It is just. †Listen. It seems an injustice, but it is a great justice that the best should suffer on behalf of everybody. Now tell Me, Simon. What is the Earth? All the Earth?» 555.6

«The Earth? A great, a very great expanse, made of dust and water, of rocks, with trees, animals and human beings.»

«And then?»

«Then, nothing else... Unless You want me to say that it is the place of punishment and exile for man.»

«The Earth is an altar, Simon. A huge altar. It was to be the altar of everlasting praise to its Creator. But the Earth is full of sin. Therefore it must be the altar of endless expiation and sacrifice, on which the victims are consumed. The Earth, like the other worlds with which Creation is strewn, ought to sing psalms to God Who created it. Look!»

Jesus opens the wooden shutters, and through the wide open window the cool of the night, the noise of the torrent, a moon-

* You said, on a topic already mentioned 436.4, 553.6, 554.3. The suffering in the last speech of Jesus in 638.14/15.

** words, that are in: Job 1,21.

beam comes in, and one can see the sky studded with stars.

«Look at those stars! They are singing the praises of God with their voices that are light and motion in the infinite spaces of the firmament. Their song, which rises from the blue fields of the sky to the Heaven of God, has lasted for thousands and thousands of years. We can imagine stars, planets and comets as sidereal creatures that like sidereal priests, levites, virgins and believers are to sing the praises of the Creator in an unlimited temple. Listen, Simon. Listen to the breeze rustling among the leaves and to the noise of the stream in the night. Also the Earth, like the sky, sings with the winds, with the water, with the voices of birds and animals. But if the luminous praise of the stars that people the sky is sufficient for the vault of heaven, the song of winds, waters and animals is not sufficient for the temple that is the Earth. Because on it there are not only winds, waters and animals unconsciously singing the praises of God, but there is also man, the perfect creature, superior to all beings living in time and in the world, gifted with matter, like the animals, minerals and plants, and with spirit, like the angels of Heaven, and like them destined, if faithful in the trial, to know and possess God, through grace at first, and in Paradise later. Man, the synthesis comprising all natures, has a mission that no other creature has and that should be for him a joy, besides being his duty: to love God. To give God a cult of love intelligently and voluntarily, repaying God for the love that He gave man by granting him life and Heaven in addition to life. To give an intelligent cult.

Consider this, Simon. What benefit does God get from Creation? What profit? None. Creation does not make God greater, it does not sanctify Him, it does not make Him rich. He is infinite. He would have been such even if Creation had never existed. But God-Love wanted to have love. And He created to have love. God can get only love from Creation, and that love, which is intelligent and free only in angels and in men, is the glory of God, the joy of angels, the religion for men. The day that the great altar of the Earth should omit the praises and entreaties of love, the Earth would cease existing. Because once love is extinguished also expiation would cease, and the wrath of God would destroy the Earth that had become an earthly hell. So the Earth must love in order to exist. And also: the Earth must be the Temple that loves

and prays with the intelligence of men. But which victims are always offered in the Temple? The pure, spotless, faultless victims. Those are the only victims agreeable to the Lord. They are the early fruits. Because the best things are to be given to the Father of the family, and the first fruits of everything and choice things are to be given to God, the Father of the human family.

⁷But I said that the Earth has a double duty of sacrifice: that ^{555.7} of praise and that of expiation. Because Mankind that has spread over the Earth sinned in the first men, and continuously sins by adding to the sin of estrangement from God the other countless sins of its consent to the voices of the world, of the flesh and of Satan. A guilty, very guilty Mankind that, although it has likeness to God, having its own intelligence and divine help, is more and more sinful. Stars obey, plants obey, elements obey, animals obey and they praise the Lord as best they can. Men do not obey and do not praise the Lord enough. Hence the necessity of victim-souls that may love and expiate on behalf of everybody. They are the children who, innocent and unaware, pay the bitter punishment of sorrow for those who can do nothing but sin. They are the saints who willingly sacrifice themselves for everybody.

Before long - a year or a century is always a short time when compared to eternity - no more sacrifices will be celebrated on the altar of the great Temple of the Earth, that is, of victim-men, consumed with the perpetual sacrifice: victims with the perfect Victim. Do not be upset, Simon, I am not saying that I will establish a cult like those of Molech, Baal and Ashtoreth. Men themselves will immolate us. Do you understand? They will immolate us. And we shall face death happily to expiate and love on behalf of everybody. And then the days will come when men will no longer immolate men. But there will always be pure victims that love consumes with the Great Victim in the perpetual Sacrifice. I mean the love of God and the love for God. Truly they will be the victims of the future days and of the future Temple. No longer lambs and kids, calves and doves, but the sacrifice of one's heart is what pleases God. David realised that*. And in the new times, the times of the spirit and of love, only that sacrifice will be pleasant.

* realised that, in: Psalm 51,18-19.

Consider, Simon, that if a God had to become incarnate to appease divine Justice for the great Sin, for the many sins of men, in the times of the truth, only the sacrifices of the spirits of men can appease the Lord. You are thinking: "Why then did He, the Most High, order* men to immolate the offspring of animals and the fruits of plants to Him"? I Will tell you: because, before I came, man was a stained holocaust and Love was not known. Now it will be known. And man, who will know Love, because I will give Grace back to him, and through it man will know Love, man will come out of his lethargy, he will remember, understand, live and he will replace kids and lambs, as a victim of love and expiation, on the model of the Lamb of God, his Master and Redeemer. Sorrow, so far a punishment, will turn into perfect love, and blessed are those who will embrace it out of perfect love.»

«But children...»

«You mean those who cannot yet offer themselves... And do you know when God speaks in them? The language of God is spiritual. A soul understands it and a soul has no age. Nay, I tell you that a child's soul, as it is without malice, with regards to its capacity of understanding God, is more adult than the soul of an old sinner. I tell you, Simon, that you will live so long as to see many children teach adults, and even yourself, the wisdom of heroic love. But in those little ones who die for natural reasons, God acts directly for motives of so high a love that I cannot explain to you, as they are part of the wisdom written in the books of Life, and that only in Heaven will be read by the blessed souls. I said read, but in actual fact it will suffice to look at God to know not only God, but also His infinite wisdom... We have let

^{555.8} the moon set, Simon... ⁸It will soon be dawn and you have had no sleep...»

«It does not matter, Master. I have lost a few hours of sleep and I have gained so much wisdom. And I have been with You. But if You allow me, I will now go. Not to sleep. But to think of Your words again.» He is already at the door and is about to go out, when he stops pensively and then says: «One more question, Master. Is it right for me to say to someone who suffers, that

* order, as in Exodus 22,28-29; 34,19.

sorrow is not a punishment but a... grace, something like... like our vocation, beautiful even if toilsome, beautiful even if it may seem an unpleasant and sad thing to people who do not know?»

«Yes, you can say that, Simon. It is the truth. Sorrow is not a punishment, when one knows how to accept it and use it rightly. Sorrow is like a priesthood, Simon. A priesthood open to everybody. A priesthood that exerts great force on the heart of God. It is a great merit. Sorrow that was born at the same time as sin can appease the Justice. Because God can use for good purposes also what Hatred created to give sorrow. I did not chose any other means to cancel the Sin. Because there is no means greater than this one.»

556. Another Sabbath in Ephraim. Sermon to the Samaritans on the real Temple and on New Times.

17th January 1947.

^{556.1} It must be another Sabbath because the apostles are once again all together in the house of Mary of Jacob.

The children are still with them, near Jesus, by the fireside. And just because of that Judas Iscariot says: «So a week has gone by and their relatives have not come» and he laughs shaking his head.

Jesus does not reply to him. He caresses the second-born son.

Judas asks Peter and James of Alphaeus: «And you say that you went along the two roads lead one to Shechem?»

«Yes, we did. But thinking it over, it was quite useless. Highwaymen certainly do not take busy roads, particularly now that Roman squads patrol them continuously» replies James of Alphaeus.

«Why did you go along them, then?» insists the Iscariot.

«Well!... It's the same to us to go here or there. So we took those roads.»

«And was nobody able to tell you anything?»

«We did not ask anybody.»

«And how were you expecting to know whether they had passed or not? Do people carry banners or leave traces when they go along a road? I don't think so. Because otherwise we would

have been found at least by our friends. Instead not one of them has been here since we came» and he laughs sarcastically.

«We do not know why no one has come here. The Master knows. We don't. When people withdraw to a place unknown to everybody, as we did, without leaving any trace of their passage, no one can go to them unless one is informed of the place of their refuge. Now we do not know whether our Brother has told our friends» says James of Alphaeus patiently.

«Oh! Would you believe or make us believe that He did not tell at least Lazarus and Nike?»

Jesus does not say anything. He takes one of the children by the hand and goes out...

«I do not want to believe anything. But even if it is as you say, you and none of us can yet pass judgement on the reasons for our friends' absence...»

«Those reasons are easily understood! No one wishes to have trouble with the Sanhedrin, least of all who is rich and powerful. That's all! ^{556.2}We are the only ones who are good at endangering our lives.»

«Be fair, Judas! The Master did not force any of us to stay with Him. Why did you stay, if the Sanhedrin frightens you?» remarks James of Alphaeus.

«And you can go away whenever you wish. You are not in chains...» says the other James, the son of Zebedee.

«No! Never! We are here, and we are staying here. All of us. Who wanted to go away, should have gone away before. Not now. I oppose that, if the Master does not» says Peter slowly but decidedly, striking the table with his fist.

«Why? Who are you that you want to give orders instead of the Master?» Judas asks him violently.

«A man who reasons not like God, as He does, but as a man.»

«Are you suspecting me? Do you think I am a traitor?» asks Judas excitedly.

«You have said it. Not because I think that you would do it deliberately; but you are so... thoughtless, Judas, so fickle! And you have too many friends. And you are too keen on standing out, in everything. Oh! you would not be able to keep quiet! You would speak, either to confute some wicked enemy, or to show that you are the Apostle. So you are here and you are staying here. This

way you will do no harm and you will not feel any remorse.»

«God does not force the freedom of man, but you wish to do so?»

«Yes, I do. But after all, tell me. Is it raining on you? Have you not enough bread? Is the air harmful to you? Do the people offend you? None of all that. The house is solid, even if it is not a rich one, the air is good, we have never been short of food, the people honour you. So why are you so restless here, as if you were in jail?»

«There are two nations that my soul detests, and the third one hated by me is not even a nation: the inhabitants of Mount Seir, the Philistines and the stupid people living at Shechem». I have replied to you with the words* of the Wise Man. And I am right in thinking so. Consider whether these people love us!»

«H'm! To tell you the truth I don't think that the other peoples, yours and mine, are much better. We were pelted with stones in Judaea and in Galilee, in Judaea even more than in Galilee, and in the Temple in Judaea more than in any other place. I cannot say that we have been ill-treated in the territory of the Philistines, or here, or anywhere else...»

«Anywhere else? We have not been anywhere else, fortunately. But even if we had had to go somewhere else I would not have come with you, neither will I come in future. ^{556.3} I do not want to get more contaminated.»

«Contaminated That is not what worries you, Judas of Simon. You do not want to alienate those of the Temple. That is what troubles you» says calmly Simon Zealot, who has remained in the kitchen with Peter, James of Alphaeus and Philip. The others have gone out, one after the other together with the two boys and have joined the Master. A meritorious flight as it was made to avoid being uncharitable.

«No. Not because of that. But because I do not like to waste my time and give wisdom to fools. Look! What good has it served to take Ermasteus with us? He went away and has never come back. Joseph told us that he parted from him saying that he would come back for the feast of the Tabernacles. Have you seen him? A renegade...»

* words, that are in: Sirach 50,25-26.

«I do not know why he has not come back and I cannot judge him. But I ask you: is he the only one who left the Master and has become His enemy? Are there no renegades among us Judaeans and among the Galileans? Can you prove that?»

«No. It's true. But I am ill at ease here. If they only knew that we are here! If they knew that we familiarise with the Samaritans to the extent of going to their synagogues on Sabbaths! He wants that... Woe to us if we were found out! The charge would be justified...»

«And you mean that the Master would be condemned. But He is already condemned. He has been condemned before people know. Nay He was condemned after He raised a Judaeans from the dead in Judaea. He is hated and accused of being a Samaritan and the friend of publicans and prostitutes. He has been... all the time. And you know better than anybody else whether He has been hated.»

«What do you mean, Nathanael? What do you mean? What have I got to do with that? What do I know more than you do?» He is very excited.

«You look like a mouse surrounded by enemies, my boy! But you are not a mouse, neither are we provided with clubs to capture and kill you. Why are you so frightened? If you are at peace with your conscience, why do you become upset over innocent words? What did Bartholmai say to make you so excited? Is it not true that no one more than we, His apostles, who sleep and live near Him, can be aware and witness that He does not love the Samaritan, the publican, the sinner, the prostitute, but He loves their souls, and He takes care of them alone, and only because of them He goes with Samaritans, publicans and prostitutes, and only the Most High knows what effort His Most Pure Son must make to approach what we men and sinners call "filth"? You do not understand and you do not know Jesus yet, my boy! You know Him less than the very Samaritans, Philistines, Phoenicians and any other peoples you may wish...» says Peter and he utters the last words sadly.

Judas does not speak any more and also the others become silent.

^{556.4} 4The old woman comes back in saying: «In the street there are some people from the town. They say that it is the Sabbath

prayer time and that the Master has promised to speak...»

«I will go and tell Him, woman. You can tell those from Ephraim that we are coming» replies Peter and he goes out into the kitchen garden to inform Jesus.

«What are you going to do? Are you coming? If you do not want to come, go away' go out before He is grieved by your refusal» says the Zealot to Judas.

«I am coming with you. One cannot speak here! I seem to be the greatest sinner. Every word of mine is misunderstood.»

As Jesus enters the kitchen, they stop speaking.

They go out into the street and join the people from Ephraim and they go into town with them. They stop only when they are before the synagogue, at the door of which there is Malachi, who greets them and invites them to go in.

I do not notice any difference between the Samaritan place of prayer and those I have seen in other regions. There are always the usual lights, the usual lecterns or shelves with rolls, the seat of the head of the synagogue or of the person who teaches in his stead. If anything, the rolls are much fewer here than in the other synagogues.

«We have already said our prayers while waiting for You. If ⁵You wish to speak... Which roll do You want, Master?»

556.5

«I do not need any. In any case you would not have what I wish to explain*» replies Jesus, and He then turns towards the people and begins to speak:

«When the Hebrews were sent back to their country by Cyrus, the king of the Persians, so that they might rebuild Solomon's Temple that had been destroyed fifty years previously, the altar was rebuilt on its base, and the daily holocaust was offered on it morning and evening, as well as the extraordinary one on the first day of each month and those of the solemnities sacred to the Lord and the holocausts of voluntary offerings made by individuals. Later, after accomplishing what is essential and indispensable for the cult, in the second year after their return, they began to deal with what can be called the frame of the cult, its outward appearance, which is not guilty because it is done to

* what I wish to explain is in: Ezra 3. Of all the Books of the Bible the Samaritans accepted only the five Books of the Pentateuch. Lo ha anche ricordato MV in 483.1.

honour the Eternal Father, but it is not vital. Because the cult of God is love for God, and love is perceived and consumed in one's heart, not by means of dressed stones, precious woods, gold and perfumes. All that is outward appearance that aims more at satisfying one's national or civic pride than at honouring the Lord.

God wants the Temple of the spirit. He is not satisfied with a Temple of walls and marbles that is devoid of spirits full of love. I solemnly tell you that the temple of a pure loving heart is the only one that God loves and in which He dwells with His light, and that foolish are the contests that divide regions and towns with regards to the beauty of their places of prayer. Why vie in the riches and ornaments of the houses in which God is invoked? Can the finite satisfy the Infinite, even if it were a finite ten times more beautiful than Solomons' Temple and all the royal palaces put together? God, the Infinite Who cannot be contained and honoured by any space or by any material magnificence, finds one place only worthy of honouring Him as befits Him, and He can be, nay He wants to be contained in the heart of man, because the spirit of a just man is a temple over which the Spirit of God hovers, among the perfumes of love; and it will soon be a temple in which the Spirit will really dwell, One and Trine, as It is in Heaven.

And it is written that as soon as the masons had laid the foundations of the Temple, the priests went with their ornaments and trumpets and the Levites with cymbals, according to David's orders. And they sang that "God is to be praised because He is good and His mercy is everlasting". And the people rejoiced. But many priests, heads of families, Levites, elderly people were shedding torrents of tears thinking of the previous Temple, and thus the sound of the people's weeping could not be distinguished from the shouts of joy, as they were so confused. And we also read that the peoples of nearby districts disturbed those who were building the Temple to avenge themselves on the builders who had rejected them when they had offered to build with them, as they also sought the God of Israel, the Only True God. And those disturbances interrupted the work until God was pleased to let them continue. That is what we read in the book of Ezra.

556.6 ¶How many and what lessons does the passage that I mentioned give us? First of all the one already mentioned on the ne-

cessity that the cult is perceived by one's heart and not professed by stones or wood or also by clothes or cymbals and songs, which are devoid of the spirit. Then that the lack of mutual love is always the cause of delays and trouble, even when a good purpose is involved. Where there is no charity, God is not there either. It is useless to seek God unless we put ourselves in a suitable condition to find Him. God is found in charity. He or those who settle in charity find God also without having to make any painful search. And he who has God with him is successful in all his enterprises.

In the psalm that sprang from the heart of a wise man* after meditating on the painful events that accompanied the reconstruction of the Temple and of the walls it is said: "If the Lord does not build the house, in vain the masons toil at it. If the Lord does not guard the city and protect it, in vain the sentries watch".

Now how can God build the house, if He knows that its inhabitants do not have Him in their hearts, since they do not love their neighbours? And how will He protect the city and give strength to its defenders, if He cannot be in them as they are devoid of Him through their hatred for their neighbours? Has it helped you, peoples, to be divided by barriers of hatred? Has it made you greater? Richer? Happier? Neither hatred nor rancour is ever of any avail, he who is alone is never strong, he who does not love is never loved. And it is of no use, as the psalm says, to get up before daybreak to become great, rich and happy. Let every man rest to console himself in the sorrows of life, because sleep is a gift of God as is light and all the other things that man enjoys; let every man rest but let him have charity as his companion in his sleep and in his watch, and his work, his family and his business will thrive, and above all his spirit will prosper and conquer the royal crown of the children of the Most High and heirs to His Kingdom.

⁷It is written that while the crowd was singing hosannas, some people were shedding torrents of tears because they were thinking about and regretting the past. But it was not possible to distinguish the different voices in the clamour of shouts. 556.7

Children of Samaria! And you, My apostles, children of Ju-

* a wise man is Salomon, and quotations correspond to the Psalm 127,1-2.

daea and of Galilee! Also nowadays there are people who sing hosannas and people who weep while the new Temple of God is rising on eternal foundations. Also nowadays there are people who hinder the work and people who seek God where He cannot be found. Also nowadays some people want to build according to Cyrus' order and not according to God's, that is according to the order of the world and not according to the voices of the spirit. And also nowadays there are people who weep with foolish human regret over an inferior past, a past that was neither good nor wise, so much so that it roused the anger of God. Also nowadays we have all those situations, as if we were still in the obscurity of remote days and not in the days of Light.

Open your hearts to the Light, fill yourselves with the Light, so that at least you, to whom I-Light am speaking, may see. This is the new time in which everything is rebuilt. But woe to those who will refuse to enter it and will hinder those who are building the Temple of the new faith, of which I am the corner Stone* and to which I will give my whole-self to make mortar for the stones, so that the building may rise holy and strong, admirable for ages, as wide as the Earth that will be completely covered by its light. I say light, not shadow, because My Temple will be made of spirits, not of opaque matters. I shall be its stone with My Eternal Spirit, and all those who follow My word and the new faith will be incorporeal bright holy stones for it. And the light will spread over the Earth, the light of the new Temple, and will cover it with wisdom and holiness. And only those will be left out of it who with impure tears weep and regret the past, because it was for them the source of completely human profits and honours.

^{556.8} ⁸Open to the new time and to the new Temple, o men of Samaria! Everything is new in it, and the ancient separations and borders, of thought and spirit, no longer exist. Sing, because the exile out of the city of God is about to come to an end. Are you happy to be considered as exiles and lepers by the other peoples of Israel? Do you rejoice feeling that you are like people rejected by the bosom of God? Because that is what you feel, what your souls feel, your poor souls, which are closed in your bodies and are under the control of your arrogant thought that refuses to say to

* corner Stone, alluding to: Psalm 118,22; Isaiah 28,16.

other men: "We erred, but like lost sheep we are now going back to the Fold". You do not want to say that to other men: and that is wrong. But at least say so to God. Even if you stifle the cries of your souls, God hears their groaning, as they are unhappy to be exiled from the house of the universal and most holy Father.

Listen to the words of the gradual psalm*. You really are pilgrims who for ages have been going towards the high city, towards the true Jerusalem, the celestial one. From there, from Heaven, your souls descended to vivify a body, and they sigh to go back there. Why do you want to sacrifice your souls and disinherit them of the Kingdom? Which fault is theirs if they descended into bodies conceived in Samaria? They come from Only One Father. They have the same Creator as the souls of Judaea and Galilee, of Phoenicia and of the Decapolis. God is the aim of every spirit. Every soul tends to that God, even if all kinds of idolatry, or baleful heresies, schisms, or lack of faith, keep it in the ignorance of the true God, an ignorance that would be absolute if the soul did not have an indelible embryonal remembrance of the Truth and did not yearn for it. Oh! make that remembrance and yearning grow greater. Open the doors to your souls. Let the Light enter! Let the Life enter! Let the Truth enter! Let the Way be open! Let everything gush in brightly and vitally, like the rays of sunlight and the waves and the winds of equinoxes, so that the plant may grow from its embryo and rise upwards, closer and closer to its Lord.

Come out from your exile! Sing with Me: "When the Lord brings captives home, their souls seem to dream with joy. Our mouths are filled with smiles and our lips with songs. We shall now say: 'The Lord has worked marvels for us'". Yes, the Lord has done great things for you and you will be overflowing with delight.

⁹Oh! My Father! I pray to You for them as I pray for everybody. O Lord, let these prisoners of ours come back home, because, for You and for Me, they are prisoners in the chains of obstinate error. Lead them back, of Father, like a torrent that flows into the great river, lead them to the great sea of Your mercy and peace. My servants and I, shedding tears, are sowing Your truth in them.

556.9

* the gradual psalm or Song of Ascents, hinted here, is Psalm 122. Already mentioned in 195.4. Further down reference is made to Psalm 126.

Father, grant that at the time of the great harvest, we, Your servants in teaching Your Truth, may reap the chosen corn of Your granaries with joy in these furrows, which now seem spread only with bramble and poison. Father! Father! Through our fatigue, and tears, and grief, and labours, and dead companions, who were and will be our companions in sowing, grant that we may come to You carrying, as sheaves, the choice part of this people, the souls reborn to Justice and Truth for Your glory. Amen.»

556.10 ¹⁰The silence, which was really impressive, so absolute as it was in such a large crowd that filled the synagogue and the square in front of it, is broken by a whispering that grows louder and louder and becomes a murmur... a cry... a hosanna. The crowds gesticulate, comment and applaud...

What a difference from the conclusion of the speeches in the Temple! Malachi says on behalf of everybody: «You only can tell the truth thus, without offending and mortifying anybody! You are really the Holy One of God! Pray for our peace. We have been hardened by ages of... beliefs and by ages of insults. And we must break this hard crust of ours. Bear with us.»

«Even more than that: I love you. Be of goodwill, and the crust will break by itself. May the Light come to you.»

He makes His way through the crowd and goes out followed by the apostles.

557. Relatives of the three children, saved from the thieves, arrive from Shechem.

18th January 1947.

557.1 ¹Jesus is all alone in the little island in the middle of the stream. The three children are playing on the bank on the other side of the stream and they are whispering in low voices in order not to disturb Jesus' meditation. Now and again the youngest one utters a cry of joy when he finds a beautifully coloured pebble or a fresh little flower, and the others tell him to be quiet saying: «Be quiet! Jesus is praying...» and their whispering resumes when their little swarthy hands build sand blocks and cones that in their childish imagination are supposed to be houses and mountains.

The sun is shining high in the sky causing gems to swell on trees and buds to open in meadows. The green-grey leaves of the poplar tree are quivering in the breeze, and the birds up there, on the top, are engaged in love or rivalry skirmishes that at times end in a song, at times in a screech of pain.

Jesus is praying. Sitting on the grass, with a tuft of bog grass separating Him from the path along the bank, He is absorbed in His mental meditation. At times He looks up to watch the little ones playing over there on the grass. He then lowers His eyes again and becomes engrossed in His thoughts.

²The shuffling of feet among the plants on the bank and the sudden arrival of John on the little island put to flight the birds that fly away from the top of the poplar putting an end to their carousel with screeches of fear. 557.2

John does not see Jesus at once, as He is concealed by the bog grass and he shouts rather perplexedly: «Where are You, Master?»

Jesus stands up while the three children shout from the other bank: «He is there! Behind the tall grass.»

But John has already seen Jesus and goes to Him saying: «Master, the relatives have come. The children's relatives. And many people from Shechem are with them. They went to Malachi, and Malachi brought them to our house. I have come looking for You.»

«And where is Judas?»

«I do not know. He went out immediately after You came here, and he has not come back yet. He must be in town. Shall I look for him?»

«No, it is not necessary. Stay here with the children. I want to speak to the relatives first.»

«As You wish, Master.»

Jesus goes away, and John joins the children and begins to help them in the enterprise of building a bridge across an imaginary river made of long reed leaves placed on the sand to simulate water...

³Jesus enters the house of Mary of Jacob, who is at the door waiting for Him and says to Him: «They have gone up to the terrace. I took them there to let them rest. But here is Judas coming from the village. I will wait for him and then I will prepare some 557.3

food for the pilgrims who are very tired.»

Jesus also waits for Judas in the vestibule, which is rather dark compared to the light outside. Judas does not see Jesus at once and while going in he says to the woman arrogantly: «Where are those from Shechem? Have they already left? And the Master? Is no one calling Him? John...» He sees Jesus and changes tone saying: «Master! I ran here when I was told, just by sheer chance... Were You already at home?»

«John was here and he came looking for Me.»

«I... I should have been here as well. But at the fountain they asked me to explain certain things to them...»

Jesus does not reply. He speaks only to greet those who are waiting for Him, some sitting on the low walls of the terrace, some in the room that opens on to it, and they all stand up to pay their respects to Him as soon as they see Him.

After greeting the group collectively, Jesus greets some of them calling them by their names, and they are so pleasantly surprised that they say: «Do You still remember our names?» They must be the people from Shechem.

And Jesus replies: «Your names, your faces and your souls. Did you come with the children's relatives? Are they the ones?»

«Yes, they are. They have come to take them and we joined them to thank You for Your pity for the little children of a woman from Samaria. You alone can do such things!... You are always the Holy One Who does nothing but holy things. We have always remembered You, too. And we came, because we heard that You were here. To see You and tell You that we are grateful to You for choosing us as Your shelter place and for loving us in the children of our blood. ^{557.4}But listen to the relatives.»

Jesus, followed by Judas, moves towards them greeting them once again and inviting them to speak.

«We, I do not know whether You know, are the brothers of the children's mother. And we were very angry at her, because she foolishly and against our advice wanted this unhappy marriage. Our father was weak with the only daughter of his numerous offspring, so much so that we got angry with him as well, and for several years we did not speak to him or see him. Later, knowing that the hand of God lay heavy on the woman and there was poverty in her house, because an impure marriage is

not defended by divine blessings, we took our old father in our house again, so that his only grief might be the poverty in which the woman languished. Then she died and we were told. You had passed by recently and people spoke of You... And overcoming our indignation, we suggested to her husband, through these two men from Shechem, that we would take the children. They were, by half, of our blood. He said that he would rather see them all die a bad death than live on our bread. He would not give us the children and not even the corpse of our sister, that it might be buried according to our rites! So we swore hatred to him and to his seed. And hatred struck him like a curse, so that from a free man it made him a servant and from a servant... a dead body like a jackal in a stinking den. We would never had known, because for a long time everything had come to an end between us. ⁵And we had a terrible fright, only that, when a week ago we saw those highwaymen appear on our threshing-floor. Then, when we heard why they had come, disdain, not grief, tormented us like poison, and we sent them away hurriedly offering them a good reward to make them friendly, and we were surprised to hear them say that they had already made their profit and did not want anything else.»

557.5

Judas suddenly breaks the dead silence of everybody with an ironical laugh and he shouts: «Their conversion! Complete! Really!»

Jesus looks at him severely, the others look at him seized with astonishment, and the man who was speaking, continues: «And what else could you expect from them? Is it not quite a lot that they came leading the young shepherd and daring danger, without accepting any reward? A miserable custom befits a miserable life. The prey taken from the foolish man who died like a tramp, was not a rich one! It wasn't rich at all! Hardly sufficient for those who had to stop plundering for at least ten days. And we were so astonished at their honesty, that we asked them which voice had spoken to them instilling so much pity into their hearts. So we learned that a rabbi had spoken to them... A rabbi! You only. Because no other rabbi in Israel could do what You did. And after they left we questioned the frightened shepherd boy in detail and we obtained a more accurate account of the events. At first we only knew that our sister's husband was dead and that the

children were at Ephraim with a just man, and then that the just man, who was a rabbi, had spoken to them and we at once thought that it was You. And when we arrived at Shechem at dawn, we consulted with these people, because we had not yet made up our minds whether we should accept the children. But these people said to us: "What? Has the Rabbi of Nazareth loved the children in vain? Is that what you want? Because it is certainly Him, have no doubt. Nay, let us all go to Him, because the kindness of His heart towards the children of Samaria is great". And after settling our business, we came here. ^{557.6} «Where are the children?»

«Near the stream. Judas, go and tell them to come.»

Judas goes away.

«Master, it is a difficult meeting for us. They remind us of all our troubles, and we are still undecided whether we should accept them. They are the sons of the worst enemy we ever had...»

«They are the children of God. They are innocent. Death cancels the past and expiation obtains forgiveness, also from God. Do you want to be more severe than God? And more cruel than the highwaymen? And more obstinate than they? The highwaymen wanted to kill the young shepherd and keep the children: the former as a prudent measure of defence, the latter out of human pity for defenceless children. The Rabbi spoke to them, and they did not kill and they have agreed, to the extent of bringing the young shepherd to you. Shall I have to admit defeat in righteous hearts, when I defeated crime?...»

«The matter is... We are four brothers, and there are already thirty-seven children in our house...»

«And where thirty-seven little sparrows find food, because the Father in Heaven makes them find grains, will forty not find any? Will the power of the Father not be able to provide food for three, nay, four more children of His? Is there a limit to His divine Providence? Will the Infinite God be frightened to fecundate your seeds, your plants and your sheep more than at present, so that bread and oil and wine and wool and meat be sufficient for your children and for four more poor boys who are now all alone?»

«They are three, Master!»

«They are four. The young shepherd is an orphan as well. If God should appear to you here, would you be able to maintain

that your bread is so measured that you cannot feed an orphan? Pity for an orphan is prescribed by the Pentateuch...»

«No, we would not, Lord. That is true. We shall not be inferior to the highwaymen. We will give bread, clothes and lodging also to the young shepherd. And out of love for You.»

«Out of love. Out of all the love. For God, for His Messiah, for your sister, for your neighbour. That is the homage and the forgiveness to be paid to your blood! Not a cold sepulchre for her dust. Forgiveness is peace. Peace for the spirit of man, who sinned. But it would only be false and entirely exterior forgiveness, and no peace for the spirit of the dead woman, who is your sister and the children's mother, if to the just expiation of God you add to torment her, the knowledge that her sons, although innocent, are expiating her sin. God's mercy is infinite. But add your own to give peace to the dead woman.»

«Oh! We will do that! We will! Our hearts would not have submitted to anybody, but they yield to You, o Rabbi, as You passed one day among us, sowing a seed that did not and will not die.»

«Amen! ⁷Here are the children...» and Jesus points at them on the bank of the stream, coming towards the house, and He calls them.

557.7

And they leave the hands of the apostles and run shouting: «Jesus! Jesus!» They go in, they climb the steps, they are on the terrace and they stop frightened by the presence of so many strangers looking at them.

«Come, Ruben, and you, Elisha, and you, Isaac. These men are the brothers of your mother and they have come to get you and join you to their sons. See how good the Lord is? Just like Mary of Jacob's pigeon, that we saw the day before yesterday feed a young one that was not its own, but of its dead brother. He has gathered you and gives you to these people so that they may take care of you and you will thus be no longer orphans. Come on! Greet your relatives.»

«The Lord be with you, gentlemen» says the oldest one shyly, looking at the ground, and the two younger ones repeat his words.

«This one is very much like his mother, and this one also, but this other one (the oldest) is his father's double» remarks one of the relatives.

«My friend, I do not think that you are so unfair as to love differently because of a resemblance of faces» says Jesus.

«Oh! no. Certainly not. I was watching him... and thinking... I would not like him to have the same heart as his father.»

«He is still a tender child, and his simple words disclose that his love for his mother is by far deeper than any other love.»

557.8 ⁸«She kept them much better than we expected. Their clothes and shoes are decent. Perhaps she made her fortune...»

«My brothers and I have new garments because Jesus clothed us. We had neither shoes nor mantle, we were exactly like the shepherd» says the second-born who is not so timid as the first-born.

«We will compensate You for everything, Master» replies one of the relatives and he adds: «Joachim of Shechem had the offerings of the town, but we will add some more money...»

«No, I do not want any money. I want a promise: that you will love these children whom I snatched from the highwaymen. The offerings... Malachi, take them for the poor who are known to you and give some to Mary of Jacob, because her house is really poor.»

«As you wish. If they are good we will love them.»

«We will be good, lord. We know that we must be so to find our mother and go up the river, as far as the bosom of Abraham, and that we must not take away the ropes of our boats from the hands of God in order not to be carried away by the current of the demon» says Ruben all in one breath.

«But what is the boy saying?»

«A parable I told them. I told it to comfort their hearts and to guide their spirits. And the children have understood it and they apply it to each of their actions. Familiarise with them while I speak to these people from Shechem...»

557.9 ⁹«Master, one more word. What amazed us in the highwaymen was their request to tell the Rabbi, Who had the children, to forgive them, if it had taken them a long time to come, considering that not every road is open to them and that the presence of a boy among them prevented them from marching long distances through wild gorges.»

«Did you hear that, Judas?» says Jesus to Judas who does not reply.

Then Jesus moves to one side with the people from Shechem, who wring the promise from Him of a visit, even a short one, before the summer heat. And in the meantime they inform Jesus of events of the town, and they tell Him that those who were cured by Him, in their bodies or souls, do remember Him.

Judas and John in the meantime are busy getting the children to fraternise with their relatives...

558. The parable of the drop that erodes the rock,
with the group going back to Shechem.

21st January 1947.

Jesus is walking along a solitary road. The children's relatives are ahead of Him, the people from Shechem are beside Him. They are in a wild area. No town is in sight. The children have been put on the backs of some donkeys and their relatives are holding the reins and watching them. The donkeys without any rider, as the people of Shechem have preferred to go on foot to be near Jesus, are going ahead of the men, in a herd and are braying, now and again, for joy of going back to their stables, without any load, on a wonderful day, between banks covered with fresh grass into which they dip their nostrils now and again to enjoy a mouthful of it, and then they caracole with joyful amble and join their companions laden with riders. This makes the children laugh. 558.1

Jesus is speaking to the people of Shechem or is listening to what they say. The Samaritans are obviously proud to have the Master with them and they are dreaming more than is convenient. So they say to Jesus, pointing at the high mountains on the left of people going northwards: «See? Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim have a bad reputation. But, at least as far as You are concerned, they are much better than Zion. And they would be completely so, if You wanted that, by choosing them as Your dwelling place. Zion is always the den of the Jebusites. And the present ones are more hostile to You than the ancient ones were to David*. By making use of violence David captured the cita-

* David in the storming of Jerusalem, narrated in: 2 Samuel 5,6-10\ 1 Chronicles 11,4-9.

del; but as You do not make use of violence, You will never reign there. Never. Stay with us, Lord, and we will honour You.»

Jesus replies: «Tell Me: would you have loved Me if I had tried to conquer you through violence?»

«Not... really. We love You because You are all love.»

«So it is through love that I reign in your hearts?»

«Yes, it is, Master. But it is so because we have accepted Your love. But those in Jerusalem do not love You.»

558.2 «That is true. They do not love Me. ²But since you are all expert traders, tell Me: when you want to sell, buy and make a profit, do you lose heart because in certain places people do not love you, or do you do your business just the same, as you are only anxious to make good purchases and good sales, without worrying whether the money you have earned is devoid of the love of those who sold to you or bought of you?»

«We are only anxious to do good business. It does not matter if it lacks the love of those who deal with us. Once the business is done, there is no more connection. Only the profit remains, the rest... is of no importance.»

«Well, I do the same. Since I came to look after the interests of My Father, I must take care of them only. Then if I find love or derision or harshness where I look after them, it does not worry Me. In a trading town one does not make a profit, purchases or sales with everybody. But even if you deal with one person only and you make a good profit you say that your journey was not a useless one and you go back again and again. Because what you achieve with one person only the first time, you achieve with three people the second time, with seven the fourth time, with ten and ten thereafter. Is it not so? I act for the conquests for Heaven, as you do for your business. I insist, I persevere, I find that the little, in number, or the great are sufficient, because even only one soul saved is a great thing, the great reward obtained through My work. Every time that I go somewhere and I overcome what may be the reaction of the Man, so that as King of the spirit I may conquer only one subject, I do not say that My going there was useless or that I suffered or worked in vain. But I say that mockery, insults, accusations were holy, loving and desirable. I would not be a good conqueror if I stopped before the obstacles of granitic fortresses.»

«But it would take You ages to defeat them. You... are a man. You will not live forever. Why waste Your time where You are not wanted?»

«I shall live much less. Nay, I shall soon be no longer among you, I shall no longer see dawns and sunsets like milestones of days that rise and of days that end, but I shall only contemplate them as the beauties of creation and for them I will praise the Creator Who made them and Who is My Father; I shall no longer see trees blossom and corn ripen, neither shall I need the fruits of the earth to keep alive, because when I go back to My Kingdom, I will feed on love. And yet I will demolish the many fortresses closed in the hearts of men.

³Look at that stone up there, under that spring, on the slope of the mountain. The spring is a very scanty one, I would say that the water does not flow, but it drips: a drop that has been falling for ages on that rock protruding from the side of the mountain. And the stone is a very hard one. It is not crumbly limestone or soft alabaster, it is very hard basalt. And yet see how at the centre of the convex rock, and despite its shape, a tiny sheet of water has formed, not any larger than the calyx of a water-lily, but sufficient to reflect the blue sky and quench the thirst of birds. Did man perhaps make that cavity on the convex rock to place a blue gem on the dark rock and a refreshing cup for birds? No. Man took no part in it. In the many centuries during which men have passed before this rock that a drop of water has been hollowing out for ages with unrelenting rhythmical erosive action, we are perhaps the first to notice this dark basalt with its liquid turquoise in its centre, we admire its beauty and we praise the Eternal Father Who wanted it to delight our eyes and to refresh the birds that nest in the vicinity. But tell Me. Was it perhaps the first drop that leaked under the basaltic ledge above the rock and fell from that height on this block, was it that drop that excavated the cup which reflects the sky, the sun, clouds and stars? No. Millions and millions of drops have followed one another, leaking through like tears up there, sparkling as they descended to strike the rock and dying on it with the note of a harp, and excavated the hard material for so tiny a depth that is immeasurable. And thus for ages, marking the time like a sand-glass, so many drops an hour, so many during a watch, so many between

dawn and sunset, and between night and daybreak, so many a day, so many from Sabbath to Sabbath, so many from new moon to new moon, so many from Nisan to Nisan, and from one century to the next one. The rock resisted, the drop persisted. Man, who is proud and thus impatient and lazy, would have thrown away mallet and gouge after the first strokes saying: "It cannot be scooped out". The drop excavated it. It was what it had to do. What it was created for. And it groaned, one drop after the other, for ages, until it hollowed out the rock. And afterwards it did not stop, saying: "Now the sky will see to nourishing the cup, which I excavated, with dews and rain, with frost and snow". But it continued to drop and by itself it fills the tiny cup during the warm summer months, during the rigours of winter, while pelting or drizzling rains wrinkle the sheet of water but cannot embellish or widen or deepen it, because it is already full, useful and beautiful. The spring knows that its daughters, the drops, go to die in the little basin, but does not hold them back. On the contrary it urges them towards their sacrifice, and to avoid them being left alone and becoming sad, it sends new sisters after them, so that the dying ones are not lonely and they see themselves perpetuated in the others.

558.4

⁴Likewise, being the first to strike the solid fortresses of hardened hearts thousands of times and being perpetuated in My successors, whom I will send until the end of time, I will open a way into them and My Law will enter like a sun wherever there are human creatures. If they refuse the Light and close the ways opened with unexhausted work, My successors and I will not be guilty in the eyes of our Father. If that spring of water had followed a different course, seeing the hardness of the rock, and had fallen in drops farther away, where the soil is covered with grass, tell Me, would we have that shining gem, and would the birds have that clear refreshment?»

«No, it would not have even been seen, Master»; «At the most... some grass, thicker also in summer, would have indicated the spot where the spring dripped»; «Or also... less grass than elsewhere, as its roots rotted in the perpetual dampness»; «And slush. Nothing else. Thus a useless trickle.»

«You are right. Useless, or at least worthless. I also would accomplish an imperfect task, if I were to prefer only those places

where hearts are willing to accept Me out of justice or fondness. Because I would work but without any fatigue, nay, with great satisfaction of My ego, with a complaisant compromise between duty and pleasure. It is not toilsome to work where one is surrounded by love and where love makes souls ductile to work on. But if there is no fatigue there is no merit, neither is there much profit because few conquests are made if one limits oneself to those who are already in justice. I would not be Myself if I did not try to redeem all men first to the Truth and then to Grace.»

⁵«And do You think that You will succeed? What else can You do in addition to what You have already done to persuade Your enemies to accept Your word? What, if not even the resurrection of the man in Bethany has served to make the Jews say that You are the Messiah of God?» 558.5

«I have still something greater to do, something much greater than that.»

«When, Lord?»

«When the moon of Nisan will be full. Pay attention then.»

«Will there be a sign in the sky? They say that when You were born the sky made it known by means of lights, songs and unusual stars.»

«It is true. To tell men that the Light had come to the world. Then, in Nisan, there will be signs in the sky and on the earth, and it will seem to be the end of the world, because of the darkness and the shaking and the roaring of thunder in the firmament and of the earthquakes in the opened bowels of the Earth. But it will not be the end. On the contrary, it will be the beginning. Previously, when I came, Heaven gave birth to the Saviour for men, and as it was a deed of God, peace was the companion of the event. At Nisan the Earth, of its own free will, will give birth to the Redeemer for itself, and as it will be a deed of men, peace will not be its companion. But there will be a dreadful convulsion. And in the horror of the hour of the century and of hell, the Earth will tear its bosom under the burning arrows of divine wrath, and will shout its will, too inebriated to understand its purport, too strongly possessed by Satan to stop it. Like a mad woman in labour, it will think it is destroying the fruit believed to be cursed, and will not understand that it is instead rising it thus to places where neither sorrow nor snares will reach it. The

tree, the new tree, will then spread out its branches all over the Earth, forever and ever, and He Who is speaking to you will be acknowledged, either with love or with hatred, as the true Son of God and the Messiah of the Lord. And woe to those who will recognise Him without admitting it and without being converted to Me.»

558.6 6«Where will that happen, Lord?»

«In Jerusalem. It is the city of the Lord.»

«So we shall not be there because in the month of Nisan we have to stay here for Passover. We are faithful to our Temple.»

«It would be better if you were faithful to the living Temple that is neither on the Moria nor on the Gerizim, but being divine, is universal. But I can wait for your hour, when you will love God and His Messiah in spirit and truth.»

«We believe that You are the Christ. That is why we love You.»

«To love is to leave the past and enter My present time. You do not love me perfectly yet.»

The Samaritans look at one another stealthily without speaking. Then one of them says: «For Your sake, to come to You, we would do it. But even if we wanted, we cannot enter where there are Judaeans. You know that. They do not want us...»

558.7 «And you do not want them. But be at peace. Before long there will no longer be two regions, two Temples, two opposed opinions, but one people only, one Temple only, one faith only for all those eager for the Truth. 7But I will leave now. The children by now have been comforted and their attention has been distracted; and long is My way back to Ephraim to arrive there before it gets dark. Do not become excited. Your behaviour might attract the attention of the little ones, and it is better if they do not notice My departure. Go on, I am stopping here. May the Lord guide you along the paths of the Earth and on those of His Way. Go.»

Jesus draws close to the mountain and lets them go away. The last thing that is noticed, of the caravan going back to Shechem, is a child's joyful laughter that spreads along the silent mountain way.

559. In Ephraim, pilgrims from the Decapolis.
A secret mission of Manaen.

22nd January 1947.

¹The news that Jesus is in Ephraim, either because the citizens themselves have boasted about it, or for some other reason unknown to me, must have spread because many people come now looking for Jesus: mostly sick people, some distressed people and also some who wish to see Him. I realise that because I hear the Iscariot say to a group of pilgrims who have come from the Decapolis: «The Master is not here. But John and I are here and it is the same thing. So tell us what you want and we will please you.» 559.1

«But you will never be able to teach what He teaches» says one protesting.

«We are His representatives and are just like Him, man. Always bear that in mind. But if you really want to hear the Master come back before the Sabbath and go away after it. The Master now is a true Master. He no longer speaks in all the streets, in woods or rocky mountains like a stray, and at all hours like a servant. He speaks on the Sabbath here, as befits Him. And He is right, considering what He gained by wearing Himself out with fatigue and love!»

«But it is not our fault if the Judaeans...»

«Everybody! Everybody! Both Judaeans and non Judaeans! You are all alike and will always be so. He has given you everything. You have given Him nothing. He gives. You do not give; not even the mite that one gives a beggar.»

«But we have an offering for Him. Here it is, if you do not believe us.»

²John who has been silent all the time, but with evident embarrassment, looking at Judas with eyes that implore and reproach, or rather admonish him, can no longer be silent. And when Judas is already stretching out his hand to take the offering, he lays his hand on his companion's arm to hold him back and says to him: «No, Judas. Don't. You know the Master's order» and he addresses the pilgrims saying: «Judas has explained himself badly and you have misunderstood him. That is not What my companion meant. It is only an offering of sincere faith, of 559.2

loyal love that we, I, my companions, you, everybody must give for what the Master gives us. When we travelled around Palestine, He accepted your offerings because they were necessary for our journeys and because we met with many beggars, or we became acquainted with concealed miseries. Now, here, we need nothing - may Providence be praised for that - and we do not meet with beggars. Keep your offering and give it to distressed people in Jesus' name. That is the desire of our Lord and Master, and the order He gives to those among us who go evangelizing through the various towns. If you have sick people with you or anyone really needs to speak to the Master, tell us. And I will look for Him where He withdraws to pray, as His spirit is eager to collect its thoughts in the Lord.»

Judas grumbles something between his teeth but he does not contradict openly. He sits beside the fireplace in which the fire has been lit, as if he wished to take no further interest in the matter.

«Actually... we are not in need of anything special. But We heard that He was here and we crossed the river to come and see Him. But if we have done wrong...»

«No, brothers. It is not wrong to love Him and look for Him also by going to a lot of trouble and fatigue. And your goodwill will be rewarded. I will go and tell the Lord that you are here and He will certainly come. And if He should not come I will bring you His blessing.» And John goes out into the kitchen garden to go and look for the Master.

«Never mind! I will go» says Judas imperiously and he stands up and runs out.

John looks at him go away and does not make any objection. He goes back into the kitchen where the pilgrims are thronged. But almost at once he suggests: «Shall we go and meet the Master?»

«But if He did not want...»

«Oh! Please do not attach importance to a misunderstanding.

559.3 ³You are certainly aware of the reasons why we are here. It is other people who compel the Master to take these measures of restraint, it is not according to His will or His heart. He is always as fond of you all as ever.»

«We know that. On the first days after the ban was announced

publicly everybody was looking for Him beyond the Jordan and wherever they thought He might be. At Bethabara, at Bethany, at Pella and at Ramoth-Gilead and also farther away. And we know that the same happened in Judaea and in Galilee. The houses of His friends were closely watched because... if many are His friends and disciples, many are also those who are not such, and who think they serve the Most High by persecuting the Master. Then searches suddenly stopped and the rumor spread that He was here.»

«But who told you?»

«His disciples.»

«My companions? Where?»

«No. None of them. They were different, new ones, because we never saw them with the Master or with the old disciples. In fact we were surprised that He should send people unknown to us to tell us where He was, then we thought that He might have done it because the new people were not known to the Judaeans as His disciples.»

«I do not know what the Master will say to you. But I think that as from now on you should listen only to the familiar disciples. Be prudent. Everybody in this country knows what happened to the Baptist...»

«Do you think that...»

«If John, who was hated only by one* woman, was captured and killed, what will happen to Jesus, Who is hated both by the Royal Palace and the Temple, as well as by Pharisees, scribes, priests and Herodians? So be on the alert, so that later you may not have to repent... But here He comes. Let us go and meet Him...»

⁴It is the dead of night. A moonless but starry night. I could not say what time it is as I cannot see the position or the phase of the moon. I can only see that it is a clear night. The whole of Ephraim has disappeared in the black veil of the night. The torrent also is only a noise, nothing else. Its foaming and sparkling have completely disappeared under the green vault of the trees on its banks as they hinder the faint light of the stars. 559.4

* only by one, therefore Herodias, as in 266.3 and in 270.5.

A night bird is lamenting somewhere. Then it becomes silent because of the rustling noise of broken branches and reeds, a noise that comes nearer and nearer the house following the torrent and coming from the mountain side. Then a tall strong figure comes up from the bank on to the path that climbs towards the house. It stops for a moment as if it wanted to find its bearings. It grazes the wall groping with its hands. It finds the door. It touches it lightly and goes on. Still groping it turns the corner of the house, and proceeds as far as the little gate of the kitchen garden. It feels it, opens it, pushes it and goes in. It now skims the walls along the kitchen garden. It is perplexed at the kitchen door. It then proceeds as far as the outside staircase, it climbs it gropingly and sits on the last step, a dark shade in the shadow. But over there, to the east, the colour of the night sky - a dark velarium that is recognised for what it is only through the stars studding it - is beginning to change its shade, that is, it takes a hue that the eye can perceive as such: a slate-grey that looks like thick smoky fog and is nothing but the first light of dawn coming forth. And it is the new daily miracle of light slowly coming back.

The person that was crouched on the step, a heap covered with a dark mantle, moves, stretches its arms, raises its head drawing its mantle behind it. It is Manaen. Dressed like an ordinary man in a heavy brown tunic and mantle of the same colour. A rough cloth, as workers or pilgrims wear, without ornaments, buckles or belts. An interlaced woollen cord tightens the garment at his waist. He stands up and stretches himself. He looks at the sky, where the advancing light enables the surroundings to be seen.

559.5 ⁵A door downstairs opens squeaking. Manaen leans out without making any noise to see who is coming out of the house. It is Jesus, Who cautiously closes the door again and moves towards the staircase. Manaen withdraws a little and clears his throat to attract the attention of Jesus, Who looks up, stopping half-way up the staircase.

«It is I, Master, Manaen. Come quickly because I must speak to You. I have been waiting for You...» whispers Manaen and he bows to greet Jesus.

Jesus climbs the last steps: «Peace to you. When did you come? How? Why?» He asks.

«I think I set foot here immediately after the cock's crowing. But I was in the bushes, down there at the bottom, at the second watch.»

«All night in the open air!»

«It could not be done any other way. I had to speak to You by myself. I had to know which way to come, which was the house, without being seen. So I came by day and I hid in the wood up there. I saw life calm down in town. I saw Judas and John go into the house. Nay, John passed very close to me with his load of firewood, but he did not see me because I was well concealed in the thick of the wood. While there was sufficient light to see, I saw an old woman go in and come out of the house, and the fire blaze in the kitchen, and I saw You descend from here in the deepening twilight. Then the house was closed. Then I came here in the light of the new moon and I studied the road. I also entered the kitchen garden. The little gate is more useless than no gate at all. I heard your voices. But I had to speak to You alone. I went away to come back here at the third watch and be here. I know that You usually get up before daybreak to pray. And I was hoping that You would do the same today. I praise the Most High that it is so.»

6«But why had you to see Me with so much trouble?»

559.6

«Master, Joseph and Nicodemus want to speak to You and they are thinking of doing it in such a way as to elude everybody's surveillance. They made other attempts, but Beelzebub must be helping Your enemies very much. In each occasion they had to give up coming, because their houses and that of Nike were continuously watched. Actually the woman was to come before me. She is a strong woman and she had set out by herself towards mount Adummim. But they followed her and stopped her at the Bloody slope, and in order not to reveal Your abode and to justify the foodstuffs she had on her mount, she said: "I am going up to one of my brothers who is in a grotto in the mountains. If you wish to come, as you teach the doctrine of God, you will accomplish a holy deed, because he is ill and in need of God". And with her daring she convinced them to go away. But she did not dare to come here any more and she really went to see one who she says lives in a grotto and was entrusted to her by You.»

«That is true. But then, how was Nike able to let the others know?»

«By going to Bethany. Lazarus is not there. But his sisters are. Mary is there. And is Mary a woman to be frightened of anything? She dressed herself perhaps more sumptuously than Judith did to go to the king, and she went to the Temple publicly with Sarah and Naomi and then to her mansion in Zion. And from there she sent Naomi to Joseph with the necessary information. And while... the Jews cunningly went or sent people to her house to... honour her, and everybody could see her, the mistress of the house, old Naomi wearing modest clothes went to Bezetha to inform the Elder. It was then agreed that I should come, as I am the nomad who does not arouse suspicion if I am seen riding at full gallop from one of Herod's dwelling places to another, to tell You that on Friday night Joseph and Nicodemus, the former coming from Arimathea, the latter from Ramah, will meet before sunset at Gofena and will wait for You there. I know the place and the road and I will come here in the evening to take You there. You can trust me. But trust me only, Master. Joseph begs You not to let anybody know that we are meeting. In everybody's interest. »

«Yours also, Manaen? »

«Lord... I am I. But I have no wealth or family interests to protect as Joseph has. »

«And that confirms My statement that material riches are always a burden... But you can tell Joseph that no one will be informed of our meeting. »

«I can go, then, Master. The sun has risen and Your disciples may get up. »

«You may go, and God be with you. I will come with you to show you the spot where we shall meet on Friday night... »

They go downstairs without making any noise and they go out of the kitchen garden and descend at once to the banks of the torrent.

560. Near Gofena, a night meeting with Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus and Manaen.

23rd January 1947.

560.1 ¹The road taken by Manaen to lead Jesus to the place where

He is expected is really a difficult one. A mountain road, narrow, covered with stones, running through maquis and woods. A very bright moonlight, in the first phase of the moon, can hardly penetrate the tangle of branches and at times it disappears completely, and Manaen makes up for the lack of light with torches that he has prepared and brought with him carrying them baldricwise like weapons under his mantle. He leads the way, Jesus follows him and they proceed in silence in the dead of the night. Two or three times a wild animal running in the wood simulates the noise of steps, which makes Manaen stop suspiciously. But apart from that nothing else disturbs their journey, which is toilsome by itself.

«Look, Master. That is Gofena over there. Now let us go round here. I shall count three hundred steps and we shall be at the grottoes where they have been waiting for us since sunset. Did You find the journey a long one? And yet we have taken short cuts that I think have complied with the legal distance.»

Jesus makes a gesture meaning: «We could not do it any other way.»

Manaen does not speak any more, intent as he is on counting his steps. They are now in a barren rocky corridor, like an ascending cavern, between the two mountain faces that almost touch each other. One would say that it is a fracture brought about by a cataclysm, so strange it looks. A huge knife-wound in the mountain rock, splitting one third of it from its summit. High above, beyond the sheer mountain faces, beyond the tossing branches of the trees that have grown on the edge of the huge cut, the stars are shining, but the moon gives no light down here, in this abyss. The smoky light of the torch awakes birds of prey, that cheep flapping their wings on the edges of their nests among the fissures.

²Manaen says: «Here we are!» and he utters a cry similar to the wailing of a big owl, towards a cleft in the rocky slope. 560.2

Moving from the other end a reddish light comes forth along another rocky corridor, the upper part of which is closed like a lobby. Joseph appears: «The Master?» he asks not seeing Jesus Who is a little behind.

«I am here, Joseph. Peace to you.»

«Peace to You. Come! Come. We lit a fire to see snakes and

scorpions and to warm the place. I will show You the way.»

He turns around and along the undulations of the path in the bowels of the mountain he leads them towards a place lit up by flames. Near a fire there is Nicodemus who is throwing branches and junipers on it.

560.3 «Peace to you, too, Nicodemus. Here I am with you. ³Speak.»

«Master, has anybody noticed Your coming?»

«Who on earth could, Nicodemus?»

«Are Your disciples not with You?»

«John and Judas of Simon are with Me. The others are evangelizing from the day after the Sabbath to sunset on Fridays. But I left the house before midday telling them not to wait for Me before dawn on the day after the Sabbath. I am too accustomed by now to being absent for several hours to arouse suspicion in anybody. So you need not worry. We have plenty time to talk without worrying about being caught. The place here... is propitious.»

«Yes. Nests of snakes and vultures... and of highwaymen in the good season, when these mountains are full of herds. But nowadays highwaymen prefer other places from which to descend suddenly on folds and caravan tracks. We are sorry that we dragged You so far. But we shall be able to depart from here taking different roads, without attracting anybody's attention. Because, Master, the attention of the Sanhedrin is directed wherever they suspect that You are loved.»

«Well, I disagree with Joseph with regards to that. I think that we now see ghosts where there are none. I also think that the situation has calmed very much these last days...» says Nicodemus.

«You are wrong, my friend. I tell you. It has calmed down because there is no spur to look for the Master, because now they know where He is. That is why He is being watched, and we are not. And that is why I begged Him not to tell anybody that we were going to meet. So that no one might be ready... for anything» says Joseph.

560.4 ⁴«I don't think that the people of Ephraim...» remarks Ma-naen.

«Neither the people of Ephraim or anybody else from Samaria. For the only purpose of doing the opposite of what we do on the other side...»

«No, Joseph, not for that. But because they do not have in their hearts the evil serpent that you have. They are not afraid of being despoiled of any prerogative. They have no sectarian or caste interests to defend. They have nothing but an instinctive need to feel that they are loved and forgiven by Him Whom their ancestors offended and Whom they continue to offend by remaining outside the perfect Religion. Outside because, as they are as proud as you are, neither part can lay aside the hatred dividing them and stretch their hands in the name of the Only Father. Even if they had so much goodwill, you would demolish it. Because you cannot forgive. You cannot say, trampling on all foolishness: "The past is dead because the Prince of the future Century has risen and He gathers us all under His Sign". I have in fact come and I gather. But you! Oh! for you, also what I considered worthy of being gathered is always anathema!»

«You are severe with us, Master.»

«I am just. ⁵Can you perhaps say that you do not reproach Me, 560.5 in your hearts, for some of My deeds? Can you say that you approve of My mercy being the same for Judaeans and Galileans as for Samaritans and Gentiles, nay, even greater for the latter and for big sinners, just because they are in greater need of it? Can you say that you would not expect gestures of violent majesty from Me in order to manifest My supernatural origin, and above all, mind you, and above all, to manifest My mission of Messiah according to your idea of the Messiah? Speak the real truth: apart from the joy of your hearts for the resurrection of your friend, would you not have preferred to such joy that I should have arrived in Bethany as a handsome cruel warrior, as our ancestors were with the Amorites and the Bashanites, and as* Joshua was with the people of Ai and of Jericho, or better still: making stones and walls collapse on My enemies with My voice, as Joshua's trumpets did with the walls of Jericho, or drawing huge stones on My enemies from Heaven as it happened on the descent of Beth-horon still in the days of Joshua or, as in more recent times, calling celestial knights galloping through the air, in cloth of gold, troops of lancers fully armed, squadrons of cavalry in order of battle, attacks and charges this way and that, a

* as in the feats narrated in: Numbers 21,21-35; Deuteronomy 2,26-37; Joshua 6,8; 10; 2 Maccabees 5,1-4.

flourish of shields and armies with helmets brandishing swords and hurling missiles to terrorise My enemies? Yes, that is what you would have preferred because, although you love Me very much, your love is still impure, and it is kindled, in wishing what is not holy, by your thoughts of Israelites, by your old thoughts. What is in Gamaliel as well as in the last man in Israel, what is in the High Priest, in the Tetrarch, in the peasant, in the shepherd, in the nomad, in the man of the Diaspora. The fixed idea of the Messiah conqueror. The nightmare of those who are afraid of being crushed by Him. The hope of those who love the Fatherland with the violence of human love. The eagerness of those who are oppressed under foreign powers, in foreign countries. It is not your fault. The pure concept, as had been given by God with regards to what I am, has been covered, throughout centuries, with layers of useless scum. And only few know how to take the Messianic idea back to its initial purity, and they do so through their own sufferings. And now, as the time is close when the sign, which Gamaliel is expecting, and the whole of Israel with him, is to be given, and now that the time of My perfect manifestation is drawing closer, Satan is working to deteriorate your love and to adulterate your thoughts. His hour is now coming. I tell you. And, in that hour of darkness, also those who at present can see or are only a little blind, will be completely blind. Only few, very few people will recognise the Messiah in the demolished Man. Only few will recognise Him as the true Messiah, exactly because He will be demolished as the prophets saw Him. For the sake of My friends, I would like them to be able to see Me and know Me, while it is still daytime, so that they may recognise Me and see Me also when I am disfigured and in the darkness of the hour of the world...^{560.6} ⁶But tell Me now what you wanted to tell Me. Time passes quickly and it will soon be dawn. I am saying this for your sake, because I am not afraid of any dangerous encounter.»

«Well. We wanted to tell You that someone must have said where You are and that someone is certainly not I or Nicodemus, or Manaen, or Lazarus, or his sisters, or Nike. To whom else have You spoken of the place You chose for Your shelter?»

«To nobody, Joseph.»

«Are You sure?»

«Most definitely. »

«And did You tell Your disciples not to mention it? »

«Before departing I did not speak to them of the place. When we arrived in Ephraim I told them to go and evangelize and to act in My stead. And I am sure of their obedience. »

«And... Are You alone in Ephraim? »

«No. I am with John and Judas of Simon. I have already told you. He, Judas, as I can read his thoughts, cannot have done any harm to Me, through his heedlessness, because he never left the town, and in these days no pilgrims from other places pass through it. »

«Then... it is really Beelzebub that has spoken. Because at the Sanhedrin they know that You are there. »

«So? What are their reactions to My behaviour? »

«Several, Master. And very different. Some say that it is logical. Since they banned You from the holy places, You had no option but to take shelter in Samaria. Others instead maintain that this proves what You are: a Samaritan in Your soul, even more than by race, and that that is enough to condemn You. And they all exult at having been successful in reducing You to silence and at being able to point You out to the crowds as a friend of the Samaritans. They are saying: "We have already won the battle. The rest will be child's play". But we beg You, do not allow that to happen. »

«It will not happen. Let them speak. Those who love Me will not be upset by appearances. Allow the wind to drop completely. It is a wind of the earth. Then the wind of Heaven will blow, the velarium will open and the glory of God will appear. ^{560.7} Have you anything else to tell Me? »

«No, nothing concerning You. Be on the alert, be careful, do not leave the place where You are now. And we will keep You informed... »

«No. It is not necessary. Stay where you are. I shall soon have the women disciples with Me and, yes, tell Eliza and Nike to join the other women disciples, if they so wish. Tell the two sisters as well. As My place is now known, those who are not afraid of the Sanhedrin can now come for our mutual comfort. »

«The two sisters cannot come until Lazarus comes back. He left with much pomp, and everybody in Jerusalem knew that he

was going to his remote estates, but it is not known when he will come back. But his servant has already come back from Nazareth and he said - and we must tell You also this - he said that Your Mother will be here with the other women disciples before the end of this moon. She is well and so is Mary of Alphaeus. The servant saw them. But they are delaying a little because Johanna wants to come with them, but she cannot until the end of
560.8 this moon. ⁸And then... well, if You will allow us, we would like to help You... as faithful friends even if... imperfect as You say.»

«No. The disciples who go around evangelizing, every Friday evening bring what is necessary for them and for us who remain in Ephraim. Nothing else is required. A workman lives on his wages. That is fair. The rest would be superfluous. Give it to some poor wretch. That is what I told also those in Ephraim and My apostles. My instructions are that when they come back they must not have one farthing left over and that on their way they must give away all the offerings, keeping for us only what is necessary for our very frugal food for one week.»

«Why, Master?»

«To teach them detachment from riches and the superiority of the spirit over the worries of the morrow. And for that and for other good reasons of Mine as a Master, I ask you not to insist.»

«As You wish. But we are sorry that we cannot help You.»

560.9 «The day will come when you will do that... ⁹Is that not the first light of dawn?» He says looking eastwards, that is to the side opposite to the one He came, and pointing at a timid gleam that becomes visible on remote backgrounds.

«It is. We must part. I am going back to Gofena where I left my horse, and Nicodemus will go down on this other side towards Beeroth, and from there to Ramah, when the Sabbath is over.»

«And what about you, Manaen?»

«Oh! Without hiding myself I will go along the main roads towards Jericho, where Herod is now. My horse is in the house of some poor people who for a mite do not loathe anything, not even a Samaritan, as they believe me to be. But I am staying with You just now. In my bag I have food for two.»

560.10 «Well, let us say goodbye. ¹⁰We shall meet again at Passover.»

«No! You are not going to put Yourself to that test!» say Joseph and Nicodemus.

«Don't do that, Master!»

«You are really bad friends, because you are advising Me to commit sin and to be cowardly. Would you then be able to love Me, considering what I had done? Tell Me. Be sincere. Where should I go and worship the Lord at the Passover of the Unleavened Bread? Perhaps on Mount Gerizim? Or should I not appear before the Lord in the Temple in Jerusalem, as every male must do at the three great yearly festivities? Do you not remember that they are already accusing Me of not respecting the Sabbath, although - and Manaen can witness this - even today, to satisfy your request, I departed in the evening from a place that conciliated your desire with the sabbatic law?»

«We also stopped at Gofena for that reason... We will offer a sacrifice to expiate an involuntary transgression brought about by a motive that could not be derogated from. But You, Master!... They will see You at once...»

«Even if they should not see Me, I will try to make them see Me.»

«You want to ruin Yourself! It is the same as if You committed suicide...»

«No. Your minds are enveloped in darkness. It is not the same as if I wanted to kill Myself, it is only obedience to the voice of My Father Who says to Me: "Go. It is Your hour". I have always endeavoured to reconcile the Law with necessities, also on the day that I had to flee from Bethany and take refuge at Ephraim because it was not My hour to be caught. The Lamb of Salvation can only be sacrificed at the Passover of the Unleavened Bread. And if I behaved thus for the Law, do you want Me to do otherwise with regards to the order of My Father? Go, you may go! Do not grieve thus. And why did I come, if it was not that I should be proclaimed the King of all peoples? Because that is the meaning of "Messiah", is it not? Yes, that is what it means. And "Redeemer" also means that. The only trouble is that the meaning of these two words does not correspond to what you fancy. ¹¹But I ^{560.11} bless you, imploring a celestial ray to descend upon you with My blessing. Because I love you and you love Me. Because I would like your justice to be entirely bright. Because you are not wicked, but you, too, are "Old Israel", and you do not have the heroic will to despoil yourselves of the past and become new. Goodbye,

Joseph. Be just. Just like him who was My guardian for so many years and who was capable of every renovation to serve the Lord his God. If he were here, among us, oh! how he would teach you to serve the Lord perfectly, to be just, just, just. But it is right that he should already be in Abraham's bosom!... In order not to see the injustice of Israel. Holy servant of God!... A new Abraham, with a broken heart, but with perfect will, he would not have advised Me to be cowardly, but he would have spoken the words that he used to utter when anything painful weighed heavily on us: "Let us raise our spirits. We shall meet the yes of God and we shall forget that it is men who grieve us. And let us do whatever is burdensome, as if the Most High presented it to us. In this way we shall sanctify also the least things, and God will love us". Oh! He would have said so also to comfort Me to suffer the deepest sorrows... He would have comforted us... Oh! My Mother!...»

Jesus releases Joseph whom He had clasped in His arms and He lowers His head remaining silent, undoubtedly contemplating His imminent martyrdom and that of His poor Mother... He then raises His head and embraces Nicodemus saying: «The first time you came* to Me as a secret disciple, I told you that to enter the Kingdom of God and to have the Kingdom of God in you it is necessary for your spirits to be born again and for you to love the Light more than the world loves it. Today, and this is perhaps the last time we shall meet secretly, I repeat the same words to you. Be born again in your spirit, Nicodemus, to be able to love the Light, which I am, and I may dwell in you as King and Saviour. Go now. And God be with you.»

560.12 ¹²The two members of the Sanhedrin go away in the opposite direction to the one in which Jesus came. When the noise of their steps has faded away, Manaean, who had gone to the entrance of the grotto to see them go away, comes back and with an expressive countenance he says: «And for once they will be the ones who infringe the Sabbatic law! And they will have no peace until they settle their debt with the Eternal Father by sacrificing an animal! Would it not be better for them to sacrifice their tranquillity by declaring themselves "Your disciples" openly? Would that not be more pleasing to the Most High?»

* came, in 116.4/11.

«It would certainly be. But do not judge them. They are doughs that rise slowly. But at the right moment, when many, who think they are better than they are, collapse, they will rise against the whole world.»

«Are You referring to me, Lord? Please take my life, but do not let me deny You.»

«You will not deny Me. But there are constituents in you, different from theirs, and they will help you to be faithful.»

¹³«Yes, I am... the Herodian. That is: I was the Herodian. Because as I turned my back on the Council, so I turned my back on the party, when I saw it was vile and unfair towards You just like the others. To be a Herodian!... To the other castes it means being little less than a heathen. I do not mean that we are saints. That is true. For an impure purpose we committed impurity. I am speaking as if I were still the Herodian I was before being Your disciple. According to human opinion, therefore, we are twice impure, because we are the allies of the Romans, and because we did it for our own profit. But tell me, Master, as You always speak the truth and never refrain from it for fear of losing a friend. Between us who have entered into an alliance with Rome to... have fleeting personal triumphs and the Pharisees, the Chief Priests, the scribes, the Sadducees, who enter into an alliance with Satan to crush You, which are more impure? I, see? Now that I have realised that the party of the Herodians is siding with Your enemies, I left it. I am not telling You to be praised by You, but to tell You what I think. And they, I mean the Pharisees and priests, the scribes and Sadducees, are convinced of getting a profit out of this sudden alliance of the Herodians with them! The wretches! They do not know that the Herodians do it to gain more merits, and thus greater protection from the Romans, and later... once the cause and the reason joining them are defined and finished, they will demolish those with whom they now form an alliance. And they trifle with each other like that. Everything is based on deceit. And that disgusts me so much that I have made myself completely independent. You... You are a great frightening ghost. For everybody! And You are also the pretence for the foul game of the various parties' interests. The religious motive? The sacred indignation for the "blasphemer", as they call You? It's nothing but lies! The only motive is neither the defence of Re-

560.13

ligion, nor the sacred zeal for the Most High, but their greedy, insatiable interests. They make me sick like filthy things. And I would like... Yes, I would like the few who are not corrupt to be more daring. Ah! A double life is troublesome to me now! I would like to follow You alone. But I can serve You better thus than if I followed You. It's a burden to me... But You say that it will soon be... What... ¹⁴But will You really be sacrificed as the Lamb? But is it not figurative language? The life of Israel is woven with symbols and figures...»

«And you would like it to be so for Me... But Mine is not a figure.»

«Is it not? Are You really sure? I could... Many of us could repeat ancient gestures and have You anointed Messiah, and defend You. One word would suffice and the defenders of the holy wise Pontiff would rise in thousands and thousands. I do not mean an earthly king, as I now know that Your Kingdom is entirely spiritual. But as we shall never again be humanly free and strong, let at least Your holiness support and heal corrupt Israel. No one, as You are aware, loves the present priesthood and those supporting it. Do You want that, Lord? Tell me, and I will do it.»

«You have already gone a long way with your thought, Ma-naen. But you are still as far from your goal as the Earth is from the sun. I will be Priest, and forever, immortal Pontiff in an organism that I will enliven to the end of time. But I shall not be anointed with the oil of delight, neither shall I be proclaimed and defended by the gestures of violence brought about by a handful of believers to throw our Fatherland into a wild schism and make it more enslaved than it ever was. And do you think that the hand of a man can anoint the Christ? I solemnly tell you that it cannot. The true Authority that will anoint Me Pontiff and Messiah is that of Him Who sent Me. No other person, who is not God, could anoint God as King of kings and Lord of lords, forever.»

«So, nothing!? There is nothing we can do!? How grieved I am!»

«Everything, by loving Me. It is everything. By loving not the person whose name is Jesus, but what Jesus is. By loving Me with your humanity and your spirit, as I love you with Spirit and Humanity, in order to be with Me beyond Humanity. ¹⁵Look how

beautiful dawn is. The quiet light of the stars did not shine in here. But the triumphant light of the sun does. The same will happen in the hearts of those who succeed in loving Me with justice. Come outside, in the silence of the mountain, clear of the hoarse human voices of interests. Look over there at those eagles, how with wide flights they soar away in search of prey. Can we see that prey? No, we cannot, but they can. Because the eyes of an eagle are more powerful than ours and from above where they rove, they can see a wide horizon and can choose. I do the same. I see what you cannot see, and from above where it hovers, My spirit can choose My sweet preys. Not to tear them to pieces as vultures and eagles do, but to take them with Me. We shall be so happy there, in the Kingdom of My Father, we who loved each other!...»

And Jesus, Who while speaking has gone outside to sit in the sun at the entrance of the grotto, embraces Manaen, who was beside Him, and He smiles silently at I do not know which vision...

561. The Saphorim Samuel, from a killer to a disciple.

5th February 1947.

^{561.1} Jesus is alone. He is still in the grotto. A fire is lit to give light and warmth, and a strong smell of resins and leafy branches spreads in the cavern amid crackling and sparks. Jesus has withdrawn to the end, in a recess where dry branches have been thrown and He is meditating. The flames waver now and again, they abate and brighten up successively because of gusts of wind blowing through the woods and howling upon entering the cavern that resounds like a bugle-horn. It is not a steady wind. It drops, then it rises like long sea waves. When it whistles louder, ashes and dry leaves are blown towards the narrow rocky corridor through which Jesus has come into the larger part of the grotto, and the flames bend lapping the floor on that side, then, when the gush of the wind drops, they rise again, still sparkling, and they resume shining straight upwards. Jesus pays no attention to them. He is meditating. The sound of the wind is joined by the fall of rain that patters, at first lightly then heavily, on the leafy boughs of the underwood. A real downpour soon changes the paths on the slopes into little roaring torrents. The noise

of the water is now the prevailing one as the wind has slowly dropped. The very faint light of the stormy twilight, and that of the fire, which is reddish but does no longer blaze, for want of fuel, scarcely light up the cavern and the corners are in darkness. Jesus, dressed in dark robes as He is, can no longer be seen; only when He lifts his head, which is bent on his raised knees, it is possible to see a faint gleam against the dark wall.

561.2 ²Outside the grotto, on the path there is the noise of steps and of anxious words, as if they were uttered by someone who is tired and weary. Then in the empty space at the entrance, a dark shadow is outlined dripping water on all sides. The man, because it is a man with a heavy dark beard, utters an «oh!» of relief and throws his drenched headgear on the floor, he shakes his mantle and says to himself: «H'm! Samuel, you can give it a good shaking! It seems to have dropped into a fulling-mill! And my sandals? Boats! Boats sunk in a river! I am drenched to the skin! Look how my hair is dripping! I look like a broken roof gutter leaking through a thousand holes. It's a good start! Is perhaps Beelzebub on His side defending Him? Him! It's a beautiful stake... but...» He sits on a stone near the fire, in which, as the flame is dead, there are reddish embers forming the strange designs that are the last life of burnt out wood, and he tries to rekindle it by blowing on it. He takes off his sandals and tries to dry his muddy feet with the drier parts of the edge of his mantle. But it is the same as if he were drying himself with water. His effort serves only to remove the mud from his feet and put it on the mantle. He continues to speak to himself: «Cursed be they, He and everybody! And I lost also my bag. Of course! It's a good job I have not lost my life... "It's the safest road" they said. Certainly! But they don't take it! If I had not seen this fire! Who will have lit it? Some poor wretch like me. But where will he be now? There is a hole over there... Perhaps another grotto... They won't be highwaymen, will they? But... what a fool I am! What can they take off me if I have not got even a farthing? But it does not matter. This fire is worth more than a treasure. I wish I had some more branches to rekindle it! I would take my clothes off and dry them. Ho! I say! This is all I have until I go back!...»

561.3 ³«If you want more branches, my friend, there are some here» says Jesus without moving from His place.

The man, whose back was turned towards Jesus, starts at the sudden voice and jumps to his feet turning around. He looks frightened. «Who are you?» he asks, opening his eyes wide trying to see.

«A wayfarer like you. I lit the fire and I am glad it served to guide you.» Jesus approaches him with a bundle of sticks in his arms and He throws them near the fire saying: «Rekindle the flame before everything is covered with ash. I have neither flint nor tinder-box because the man from whom I borrowed them went away after sunset.» Jesus speaks in a friendly way, but He does not come forward so that the fire may illuminate Him. On the contrary, He goes back to his corner and remains well wrapped in His mantle.

⁴The man, in the meantime, bends to blow hard on some leaves he has thrown on the fire and he remains thus, busy, until the flame rises. He laughs throwing thicker and thicker branches that rekindle the fire. Jesus, sitting in his place, watches Him. 561.4

«I should now take my clothes off and let them dry. I prefer to be nude rather than be wet. But I cannot even do that. A slope slid down and I found myself under a fall of earth and water. Ah! I am settled now! Look! I have torn my tunic. Cursed journey! I wish I had infringed the Sabbath! I didn't! I stopped until sunset. Later... And what shall I do now? To save myself I let my bag go and now it will be down at the bottom of the valley or it will be entangled in some bush I wonder where...»

«Here is My tunic. It is dry and warm. My mantle is enough for Me. Take it. I am in good health. Be not afraid.»

«And You are good. A good friend. How can I thank You?»

«By loving Me as if I were your brother.»

«By loving You as is You were my brother! But You do not know who I am. And if I were wicked, would you wish to have my love?»

«I would, to make you good.»

The man, who is young, about the same age as Jesus, lowers his head, meditating. He is holding Jesus' garment in his hands, but he cannot see it. He is pensive. And he automatically slips it on over his bare skin because he has stripped himself completely, also of his vest.

⁵Jesus, Who had gone back to his corner asks him: «When did 561.5

you have some food?»

«At the sixth hour. I was to have a meal when I arrived in the village, down in the valley. But I lost my way, my bag and my money.»

«I have still some remnants of food here. I was to eat them tomorrow. Take them. Fasting is no burden to Me.»

«But... if You have to walk, You will need some strength...»

«Oh! I am not going far. Only as far as Ephraim...»

«Ephraim?! Are You a Samaritan?»

«Does that irritate you? I am not a Samaritan.»

«In fact... Your accent is Galilean. Who are You? Why do You not uncover Your face? Have You to hide Yourself because You are guilty? I will not denounce You.»

«I am a wayfarer. I have already told you. My Name would mean nothing to you, or it would mean too much. In any case, what is a name? When I give you a garment for your frozen body, some food to appease your hunger, and above all my pity for your heart, do you need to know my Name to feel the comfort of dry clothes, of food and love? But if you wish to give Me a name, call Me "Pity". There is nothing disgraceful compelling Me to hide Myself. But not because of that you would give up denouncing Me. Because in your heart there is a bad thought. And bad thoughts yield fruits of evil deeds.»

The man starts and approaches Jesus. But only Jesus' eyes can be seen and they are almost veiled by His lowered eyelids.

«Take the food, my friend. There is nothing else to be done.»

561.6 ⁶The man goes back to the fire and begins to eat slowly, without speaking. He is pensive. Jesus is all curled up in his little corner. The man refreshes himself slowly. The warmth of the flames, the bread and roasted meat given to him by Jesus, make him happy. He stands up, he stretches himself, he lays the cord, which he used as a belt, from a rock splinter to a rusty hook, goodness knows who fixed it there and how long ago, and hangs his tunic, mantle, headgear to dry on it, he shakes his sandals and puts them near the fire, which he tends generously.

Jesus seems to be dozing. The man also sits down and is pensive. He then turns around to look at the Unknown Man. He asks: «Are You sleeping?»

Jesus replies: «No. I am thinking and praying.»

«For whom?»

«For all the unhappy people. Of every kind. And they are so many!»

«Are You a penitent?»

«I am a penitent. The Earth is in great need of repentance so that the weak living on it may be given strength to reject Satan.»

«You are right. You speak like a rabbi. I am a good judge because I am a saphorim. I am a disciple of rabbi Jonathan ben Uzziel. His dearest disciple. And now, if the Most High helps me, I shall become even dearer to him. My name will be exalted all over Israel.»

Jesus does not reply.

⁷The other man, after a few moments, stands up and sits near Jesus. With one hand he smooths his hair that is almost dry and tidies his beard saying: «Listen. You said that You are going to Ephraim. Are You going there just by chance, or do You live there?» ^{561.7}

«I live in Ephraim.»

«But You are not a Samaritan, so You said!»

«I repeat it. I am not a Samaritan.»

«And who can live there if not... Listen: they say that the cursed outlawed Rabbi of Nazareth has taken shelter at Ephraim. Is it true?»

«It is true. Jesus, the Christ of the Lord, is there.»

«He is not the Christ of the Lord! He is a liar! He is a blasphemer! He is a demon! He is the cause of all our troubles. And no avenger of all the people rises to overthrow Him!» he exclaims with fanatic hatred.

«Has He perhaps done any harm to you, since you speak of Him with so much hatred in your voice?»

«Not to me. I saw Him just once at the feast of the Tabernacles, and in such a tumult, that I would find it difficult to recognise Him. Because, while it is true that I am a disciple of the great rabbi Jonathan ben Uzziel, I have been at the Temple definitively only for a short time. Previously... I was not able for many reasons, and only when the rabbi was at home I used to sit at his feet to drink in justice and doctrine. But You... You asked me whether I hate Him, and I perceived a hidden reproach in Your words. Are You perhaps a follower of the Nazarene?»

«No, I am not. But hatred is condemned by anybody who is just.»

«Hatred is holy when it is against an enemy of God and of the Fatherland. The Nazarene Rabbi is such. And it is holy to fight Him and hate Him.»

«To fight the man or the idea that He represents and the doctrine that He proclaims?»

«Everything! Everything! You cannot fight one thing if you spare the other. In man there is his doctrine and his idea. You either overthrow everything, or it serves no purpose. When you embrace an idea, you embrace the man who represents it and his doctrine at the same time. I know because I experience that with my master. His ideas are mine. His wishes are my law.»

«In fact a good disciples behaves thus. But one must be able to tell whether the master is good, and follow only a good master. Because it is not lawful to lose one's soul for the love of a man.»

«Jonathan ben Uziel is good.»

«No. He is not.»

«What are You saying? And are You telling me? While we are here all alone and I could kill You to avenge my master? I am strong, You know?»

«I am not afraid. I am not afraid of violence. And I am not afraid as I know also that if you strike Me, I will not react.»

561.8 ⁸«Ah! I see! You are a disciple of the Rabbi, an "apostle". That is how He calls his most faithful disciples. And You are going to join Him. Perhaps the man who was with You was another one like You. And You are waiting for someone like You.»

«Yes, I am waiting for someone.»

«For the Rabbi, perhaps?»

«There is no need for Me to wait for Him. He does not need my word to be cured of his disease. His soul is not diseased, neither is his body. I am waiting for a poor soul that is poisoned and rav-ing. To cure it.»

«You are an apostle! We know in fact that He sends them to evangelize as He is afraid to go Himself, since He was condemned by the Sanhedrin. That is why You follow His doctrine! It is His doctrine not to react against those who offend.»

«It is His doctrine because He teaches love, forgiveness, justice, meekness. He loves both enemies and friends. Because He

sees everything in God.»

«Oh! If He should meet me, if, as I hope, I will meet Him, I don't think He will love me! It would be foolish of Him! But I cannot tell You, as You are His apostle. And I regret what I have already told You. You will inform Him.»

«There is no need. But I solemnly tell you that He will love you, nay, He loves you, notwithstanding that you are going to Ephraim to ensnare Him and hand Him over to the Sanhedrin, who have promised a large reward to whoever will do that.»

«Are You... a prophet or have You the python spirit? Has He transmitted his power to You? So You are cursed as well? And I accepted Your bread, your garment, You have been friendly to me! It is written: "You shall not raise your hand against your benefactor". You have done that! Because, if You knew that I... Perhaps to prevent me from acting? But if I spare You, because You have given me bread and salt, fire and clothes, and I would sin against justice by harming You, I will not spare Your Rabbi. Because I do not know Him, and He has not done me any good, but He has done me evil»

«Oh! poor wretch! Do you not realise that you are raving? How can one whom you do not know have done evil to you? How can you respect the Sabbath, if you do not respect the precept not to kill?...»

«I do not kill.»

«Materially, you do not. But there is no difference between him who kills and him who hands the victim over to the killer. You respect the word of a man who says that you must not harm your benefactor, but you do not respect the word of God, and with a snare, for a handful of money, for a little honour, the filthy honour of being able to betray an innocent person, you are getting ready to commit a crime!...»

«I am not doing it just for the sake of money and honour. But to do something pleasing to Jehovah and beneficial to our Fatherland. ⁹I am repeating the gestures of Jael and Judith*.» He is ^{561.9} more fanatic than ever.

«Sisara and Holofernes were enemies of our Fatherland. They were invaders. They were cruel. But what is the Rabbi of Naz-

* the gestures of Jael in: Judges 4,17-22, and Judith in: Judith 12,10-20; 13.

areth? What does He invade? What does he usurp? He is poor and He does not seek riches. He is humble and does not want honours. He is good. To everybody. Thousands of people have been assisted by Him. Why do you all hate Him? Why do you hate Him? It is not lawful to injure your neighbour. You serve the Sanhedrin. But will the Sanhedrin judge you in future life, or will God judge you? And how will He judge you? I do not mean: how will He judge you as killer of the Christ, but I mean: how will He judge you as killer of an innocent. You do not believe that the Rabbi of Nazareth is the Christ, and consequently, because of your belief that He is not, you will not be charged with that crime. God is just and He does not consider guilty an action accomplished without full knowledge. So He will not judge you for killing the Christ, because, as far as you are concerned, Jesus of Nazareth is not the Christ. But He will accuse you of killing an innocent. Because you know that He is innocent. They have poisoned you and by means of words of hatred they have intoxicated you, but not to the extent that you do not understand that He is innocent. His works speak in His favour. Your fear, and your masters are more frightened than their disciples, dreads and sees what does not exist. You are afraid that He may supplant you. Be not afraid. He stretches out his arms towards you saying: "Brothers"! He does not send soldiers against you. He does not curse you. He would only like to save you, both the great ones and their disciples, as He wishes to save the last person in Israel. And He wishes to save you, more than the least person in Israel, more than the child who does not yet know what are hatred and love. Because you are in greater need than ignorant people and children, because you know, and you knowingly sin. Can your conscience of a man, if you clear it of the ideas they have instilled into it, if you cleanse it of the poison that makes you rave, can it tell you that He is guilty? Tell Me. Be sincere. Have you ever seen Him infringe the Law, or advise people to infringe it? Have you ever seen Him being quarrelsome, greedy, lustful, hard-hearted, have you heard Him utter slander? Speak up! Have you seen Him being disrespectful towards the Sanhedrin? He is living like an outlaw, in order to obey the verdict of the Sanhedrin. He could utter a cry and the whole of Palestine would follow Him to march against the few who hate Him. He, instead, advises peace

and forgiveness to His disciples. As He gives back life to dead people, sight to the blind, motion to the paralysed, hearing to the deaf, freedom to demoniacs, as neither Heaven nor Hell are insensible to his will, He could strike you by his divine lightning and thus get rid of his enemies. He, instead, prays for you and cures your relatives, He cures your hearts, He gives you bread, clothes, fire. ^{561.10}Because I am Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, Whom you are looking for to have the price promised to whoever hands Him over to the Sanhedrin, and the honour of being the liberator of Israel. I am Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. Here I am. Take Me. As Master and as Son of God I free you from the obligation of not raising your hand and I absolve you of the sin of raising it against your benefactor.»

Jesus has stood up removing his mantle from his head, and He stretches out his hands as if they were to be caught and tied. But tall as He is - and He seems even more slender as He is left with only his short close-fitting vest on, with his dark mantle hanging from his shoulders, holding Himself upright, his eyes, fixed at the face of his persecutor, in the mobile reflection of the flames that illuminate highlights in his flowing hair and make the large pupils of His eyes shine within the sapphire circles of the irises - so majestic, so frank and fearless, He commands more respect than if He were surrounded by an army of defenders.

The man is fascinated... paralysed with astonishment. Only after some time he is able to whisper: «You! You! You!» He does not seem to be able to say anything else.

Jesus insists: «So, take Me! Take that useless cord that you put up to hold a dirty torn tunic, and tie my hands. I will follow you as a lamb follows a butcher. And I will not hate you for taking Me to die. I told you. It is the purpose that justifies an action and changes its nature. As far as you are concerned, I am the ruin of Israel and you think that by killing Me you will save Israel. You believe that I am guilty of all crimes and therefore you are serving justice by suppressing a criminal. So you are not more guilty than the executioner who carries out the order he received. Do you wish to sacrifice Me here, on the spot? Over there, at my feet, there is the knife with which I sliced your bread. Take it. From a blade that served for the love for my neighbour, it can be changed into the knife of the sacrificer. My flesh is not harder

than the roasted lamb that my friend had left Me to appease my hunger and that I gave you, to satisfy the hunger of my enemy. But you are afraid of the Roman patrols. They arrest the murderers of an innocent. And they do not allow justice to be administered by us. Because we are the subjects and they are the rulers. That is why you dare not kill Me and then go to those who sent you, with the slaughtered Lamb on your shoulders, like goods that make one earn money. Well: leave my corpse here and go and inform your masters. Because you are not a disciple, you are a slave, so much have you renounced the sovereign freedom of thought and will that God Himself leaves to men. And you serve your masters servilely, to the extent of committing a crime. But you are not guilty. You are "poisoned". You are the poisoned soul that I was waiting for. Come on, then! The night and the place are propitious to crime. I am wrong: to the redemption of Israel!

561.11 ¹¹Oh! poor boy! You are speaking prophetic words without being aware of it! My death will really be redemption, and not of Israel only, but of all Mankind. And I have come to be sacrificed. And I am longing to be sacrificed, so that I may be the Saviour. Of everybody. You, the saphorim of learned Jonathan ben Uziel, certainly know Isaiah. Here is the Man of sorrows in front of you. And if I do not seem to be such, if I do not seem to be the man whom also David saw, with my bones laid bare and disjointed, if I am not like the leper seen by Isaiah, it is because you do not see my heart. I am one big sore. Your indifference, your hatred, your hardness and injustice have wounded and broken Me completely. And did I not hide my face, while you were despising Me for what I really am: the Word of God, the Christ? But I am the man accustomed to suffering! And do you not consider Me as a man struck by God? And do I not sacrifice Myself because I want to do so to

561.12 cure you through my sacrifice? ¹²So! Strike Me! Look: I am not afraid and you must not be afraid. I, because I am the Innocent and I do not fear the judgement of God, and also because by offering my neck to your knife, I have God's will fulfilled, anticipating my hour a little for your welfare. Also when I was born I anticipated the time for your sake, to give you peace before the time. But you have turned my anxiety of love into a weapon of denial... Be not afraid! I do not invoke the punishment of Cain on you or the lightning of God. I pray for you. I love you. Nothing

else. Am I too tall for your hand of a man? Well, it is true! Man in fact could not strike God if God of his own will did not put Himself into the hands of man. Well, I kneel down before you. The Son of man is before you, at your feet. So, strike Me!»

Jesus in fact kneels down, and offers the knife, holding it by the blade, to His persecutor, who withdraws whispering: «No! No!»

«Come on! A moment of courage... and you will be more famous than Jael and Judith! Look! I am praying for you. Isaiah says so: "...and He prayed for sinners". Are you not coming yet? Why are you going away? Ah! perhaps you are afraid you may not see how a God dies. Well, I will come there, near the fire. There is always a fire at sacrifices. It is part of them. Here you are. Now you can see Me well.» He has knelt down near the fire.

«Don't look at me! Don't look at me! Oh! where shall I run not to see your eyes staring at me?» shouts the man.

«Whom? Whom do you not wish to see?»

«You... and my crime. Really, it is my crime that is in front of me! ¹³Where shall I run, where?» The man is terrorised...

561.13

«On my heart, son! Here, in my arms nightmares and fears disappear. There is peace here. Come! Do come! Make Me happy!» Jesus has stood up and is stretching out His arms. The fire is between them. Jesus shines in the reflection of the flames.

The man falls on his knees, covering his face and shouting: «Have mercy on me, God! Have mercy on me! Cancel my sin! I wanted to strike Your Christ! Mercy! Ah! there can be no mercy for such a crime! I am damned!» He weeps with his face on the ground, sobbing, and he moans: «Mercy» and he swears: «The cursed ones!»...

Jesus walks around the fire and goes towards him, He bends, He touches his head saying: «Do not curse those who led you astray. They obtained the greatest gift for you: that I should speak to you. Thus. And that I should hold you thus in my arms.»

He has taken him by his shoulders and has lifted him up, and sitting on the ground He draws him to his heart, and the man leans on his knees shedding tears that are less phrenetic, but so purifying! Jesus caresses his dark hair to calm him.

The man at last raises his head and with changed countenance he moans: «Your forgiveness!»

561.14 Jesus bends and kisses his forehead. ¹⁴The man throws his arms around His neck and with his head resting on Jesus' shoulders he weeps and begins to speak; he would like to tell Him how they had worked on him to make him commit the crime. But Jesus stops him saying: «Be quiet! Be quiet! I am aware of everything. When you came in I knew you, both for what you were and for what you wanted to do. I could have gone away from there and eluded you. I remained to save you. And you are saved. The past is dead. Do not recall it.»

«But... are You so confident? And if I should sin again?»

«No, you will not sin again. I know. You are cured.»

«Yes, I am. But they are so astute. Don't send me back to them.»

«And where can you go and not find them?»

«With You. To Ephraim. If You can read my heart, You will see that I am not laying a snare for You, but I am only begging You to protect me.»

«I know. Come. But I warn you that Judas of Kerioth, who sold himself to the Sanhedrin and is the betrayer of the Christ, is there.»

«Divine Mercy! You know also that?!» He is utterly amazed.

«I know everything. He thinks that I do not know. But I know everything. And I know also that you are so converted that you will not speak to Judas or to anybody else about this. But bear in mind this: if Judas can betray his Master, what will he be able to do to harm you?»

The man is pensive, for a long time. He then says: «It does not matter! If You do not reject me, I am staying with You. At least for some time. Until Passover. Until You join Your disciples. I will join them. Oh! if it is true that You have forgiven me, do not drive me away!»

561.15 «I will not drive you away. ¹⁵We shall now go over there, on those leaves and wait for daybreak, and at dawn we shall go to Ephraim. We shall say that we met by chance and that you have come to stay with us. It is the truth.»

«Yes. It is the truth. At dawn my clothes will be dry and I will give Your garment back to You...»

«No. Leave those clothes there. A symbol. The man who divests himself of his past and puts on a new uniform. The moth-

er of Samuel, the ancient one, sang* in her joy: "The Lord gives death and life, He brings down to Sheol and draws up". You died and are reborn. You are coming from the place of the dead to true Life. Leave the clothes that have been affected by the contact with the sepulchres full of filth. And live! Live for your true glory: to serve God with justice and possess Him forever.»

They sit in the recess where the leaves are piled up and they soon fall silent, because the man, tired as he is, falls asleep with his head resting on the shoulder of Jesus, Who is still praying.

¹⁶...It is a beautiful morning in spring, when they arrive at the house of Mary of Jacob, following the path along the torrent, which is becoming clear after the downpour and is singing more loudly with its increased waters, and is shining in the sun between its banks polished by the rain. 561.16

Peter, who is at the entrance, utters a cry and runs to meet them, hurrying to embrace Jesus, Who is all wrapped in his mantle, and he says: «Oh! my blessed Master! What a sad Sabbath You made me spend! I could not make up my mind to go away without seeing You. I would have been upset the whole week if I had to leave with uncertainty in my heart and without your farewell!»

Jesus kisses him without removing his mantle. Peter is so engaged in contemplating his Master that he does not notice the stranger who is with Him. In the meantime the others have come and Judas of Kerioth utters a cry: «You, Samuel!»

«It is I. The Kingdom of God is open to everybody in Israel. I have come to it» the man replies without hesitation.

Judas has a strange sly laugh, but he does not say anything.

Everybody's attention is focused on the newcomer, and Peter asks: «Who is he?»

«A new disciple. We met by chance. That is: God made us meet, and as I accepted him as one sent to Me by my Father, so I tell you to do the same. And as it is a great feast when one comes to take part in the Kingdom of Heaven, lay down your bags and mantles, you who were about to leave, and let us be all together until tomorrow. ¹⁷And now let Me go, Simon, because I gave 561.17

* sang, in: 1 Samuel 2,6.

my tunic to him and the morning air is nipping Me while I am standing here.»

«Ah! I thought it was! But You will be taken ill, if You do that!»

«I did not want... But He insisted» says the man apologetically.

«Yes. He was swept away by an overflowing large stream and only his will saved him. So to ensure that nothing should remind him of that painful moment, and to enable him to come to us in a clean state, I made him leave his dirty torn tunic where we met, and I made him put on mine» says Jesus and He looks at Judas of Kerioth who repeats his strange sly laugh, as he did at the beginning and when Jesus said that a great feast is made when one comes to take part in the Kingdom of Heaven. He then goes quickly into the house to dress Himself.

The others approach the newcomer expressing their greetings of peace.

562. Hearsay in Nazareth.

6th February 1947.

562.1 ¹«And I tell you that you are all foolish if you believe such things. More foolish and ignorant than wethers that do not even know the rules of instinct, mutilated as they are. Some men are going around towns saying anathema of the Master, while others bring orders that, by the living God, cannot be given by Him! You do not know Him. I do. And I cannot believe that He has changed so much! Let them go about! Are you saying that they are His disciples? And who has ever seen them with Him? Are you saying that some rabbis and Pharisees have mentioned His sins? And who has seen His sins? Have you ever heard Him speak about anything obscene? Have you ever seen Him commit sin? So? And can you believe that God would let Him work such great deeds, if He were a sinner? You are foolish, I tell you, foolish slow-witted and ignorant like country bumpkins who for the first time see a mount bank at a market and believe what he says. That's what you are like. Consider whether those who are wise and open-minded allow themselves to be seduced by the words

of false disciples, who are the true enemies of the Innocent, of our Jesus, Whom you do not deserve to have as a son of our town! Consider whether Johanna of Chuza, I mean the wife of Herod's superintendent, Johanna, the princess, leaves Mary! ²Consider whether... Am I doing the right thing in telling you? Of course! I am doing the right thing because I am not speaking just for the sake of speaking, but to convince you all. Last month, did you see that beautiful wagon that came to our village and stopped outside Mary's house? Do you remember? The one whose tilt was as beautiful as a house? Well, do you know who was in it and who came out of it to prostrate himself at Mary's feet? Lazarus of Theophilus, Lazarus of Bethany, do you understand that? The son of the chief magistrate of Syria, of the noble Theophilus, the husband of Eucheria of the tribe of Judah and of the family of David! Jesus' great friend. The richest and most learned man in Israel, both with regards to our history and to that of the whole world. The friend of the Romans. The benefactor of the poor. And above all the man who was raised from the dead after being in his sepulchre for four days. Did he leave Jesus to believe the Sanhedrin? You say that he did so because Jesus raised him from the dead? No. No, because he knows who is the Christ, Who is Jesus.

562.2

And do you know what he came to tell Mary? To tell Her to be ready because he will take Her back to Judaea. See? As if he, Lazarus, were Mary's servant! I know because I was there when he came in and greeted Her prostrating himself on the floor, on the poor bricks in the little room, dressed as he was like Solomon, a man accustomed to carpets, he was there, on the floor, kissing the hem of Our Lady's dress saying: "Hail, Mary, Mother of my Lord. I, Your servant, the last of Your servants, have come to speak to You of Him and to place myself at Your disposal". See?

I was so moved... that when he greeted me as well calling me: "brother in the Lord", I was not able to speak one word. But Lazarus understood, because he is intelligent. And he slept in Joseph's bed and sent his servants ahead to Sephoris to wait for him. Because he was going to his estates at Antioch. And he told the women to be ready, because at the end of this month he will come and pick them up to spare them the fatigue of the journey. And Johanna will join the caravan with her wagon to take the women disciples of Capernaum and Bethsaida. And does all that

mean nothing to you?»

562.3 ³At last good Alphaeus of Sarah can take breath amid the group standing in the middle of the square. And Aser and Ishmael and also Jesus' two cousins, Simon and Joseph - Simon more openly, Joseph more reticently - help him by approving what he said.

Joseph says: «Jesus is not an illegitimate son. If He needs to notify anything, He has relatives here who are willing to become His ambassadors. And He has faithful and powerful disciples, like Lazarus. Lazarus has not mentioned what the others say.»

«And we are His disciples as well. Before we were ass-drivers and as stupid as our asses. But now we are His disciples and we also are capable of saying: "Do this or do that"» says Ishmael.

«But the sentence hanging at the door of the synagogue was brought by a messenger of the Sanhedrin and it bears the stamp of the Temple» some say objecting.

«That is true. So? Since all over Israel we have the reputation of being able to judge the Sanhedrin for what it really is, and we are consequently despised as rogues, are we going to believe that the Temple is wise only with regards to this? So do we no longer know what scribes, Pharisees and chiefs of Priests are?» replies Alphaeus.

562.4 «That is true. Alphaeus is right. ⁴I have decided to go down to Jerusalem and hear from true friends what is the situation. And I am going tomorrow» says Joseph of Alphaeus.

«And will you stay there?»

«No, I will come back. And I will go back again for Passover. I cannot be away from home for a long time. It is a difficult task I am undertaking, but it is my duty to do so. I am the head of the family and I am responsible for Jesus being in Judaea. I insisted* that He should go there... Man errs in judging. I thought that it was a good thing for Him. Instead... May God forgive me! But I must at least follow the consequences of my advice at close quarters, in order to comfort my Brother» says Joseph of Alphaeus in his slow haughty way of speaking.

«That is not what you used to say. But you have been allured as well by the friendship of the mighty ones. Your eyes are cloud-

* I insisted, in 478.5/11.

ed by vanity» says a Nazarene.

«The friendship of mighty people does not allure me, Eliakim. But my Brother's behaviour convinces me. If I made a mistake and I now mend my ways, I prove to be a just man. Because to err is human, but to be stubborn is beastly.»

⁵«And do you think that Lazarus will really come? Oh! we want to see him! A man that comes back from death, what is he like? He must be dazed, somehow... frightened. What does he say of his stay among the dead?» many ask Alphaeus of Sarah. 562.5

«He is just like you and me. Cheerful, lively, tranquil. He does not speak of the other world, as if he did not remember. But he remembers his agony.»

«Why did you not tell us that he was here?»

«Of course! To let you invade the house! I withdrew myself. Some delicacy is necessary, isn't it?»

«But when he comes back will it not be possible for us to see him? Let us know. You will certainly be the caretaker of Mary's house, as usual.»

«Certainly! It's a grace to be near Her. But I will not inform anybody. You will have to do it yourselves. A wagon is easily seen, and Nazareth is not Antioch or Jerusalem so that such a large wagon may pass by unnoticed. Mount guard... and help yourselves. But that is something vain. ⁶Ensure at least that His town may not have the reputation of being foolish by believing the words of our Jesus' enemies. Don't believe them! Don't believe those who say that He is Satan or those who provoke you to rise in His name. You would repent one day. Then if the rest of Galilee fall into the trap and believe what is not true, so much the worse for them. Goodbye. I am going because it is getting dark...» And he goes away happily, having defended Jesus. 562.6

The others remain to discuss. But although they are divided into two fields and the more numerous is unfortunately the one of those who swallow everything, the proposal of Jesus' few friends prevails in the end, and they decide not to become excited and accept false charges or invitations to rise until the other towns in Galilee do so, as «at present they are more cunning than Nazareth and laugh in the false ambassadors' faces» says Aser, the disciple.

563. False disciples in Shechem. The dumb slave
of Claudia Procula is healed at Ephraim.

7th February 1947.

563.1 ¹The main square in Shechem. A characteristic of springtime is given to it by the new foliage of the trees that surround it in a double row along the square-shaped walls of the houses, forming a kind of gallery. The sun plays among the tender leaves of plane-trees projecting an embroidery of light and shadows on the ground. The basin in the centre of the square is a silver plate in the sunshine. People in groups are discussing their business here and there.

Some people, who are apparently strangers, as everybody is asking who they are, come into the square, they look around and approach the first group they meet. They exchange greetings to everybody's amazement. But when they say: «We are disciples of the Master of Nazareth» all mistrust ends and some go to inform the other groups, while those who remain say: «Did He send you?»

«He did, on a very secret mission. The Rabbi is in great danger. No one loves Him any more in Israel and He, Who is so kind, asks you at least to remain faithful to Him.»

«But that is what we want! What are we to do? What does He want of us?»

«Oh! He wants nothing but love. Because He relies too much on the protection of God. And with what is said in Israel! But you are not aware that He is being accused of satanism and insurrection. Do you know what that means? Reprisals of the Romans against everybody. And we who are already so miserable will be struck even harder! And we shall be condemned by the holy ones of our Temple. It is certain that the Romans... ²Also for your own sake you ought to take action, and persuade Him to defend Himself and defend Him, and make it almost, nay, make it definitely impossible for Him to be caught and thus be harmful, having no intention of being so. Persuade Him to withdraw to the Gerizim. Where He is now, He is still too exposed and He does not appease the anger of the Sanhedrin or the suspicions of the Romans. The Gerizim is certainly entitled to the right of sanctuary! There is no sense in telling Him. If we told Him He would say that we are

anathema because we advise Him to be cowardly. But it is not so. It is love. It is prudence on our part. We are not allowed to speak. But you can! He loves you. He has already preferred your region to the others. So organise yourselves to accept Him. Because you will at least find out for certain whether He loves you or not. If He should refuse your assistance, it would mean that He does not love you, and then it would be better if He went elsewhere. Because, believe us - we are telling you this with sorrow - His presence is a danger for those who give Him hospitality. But you are, of course, the best of His admirers and you do not worry about dangers. However, if you risk reprisals of the Romans, it is fair that you should do so for an exchange of love. We advise you for everybody's sake.»

«You are right. And we will do as you say. We shall go to Him...»

«Oh! be careful! He must not become aware that it was our suggestion!»

«Don't worry! Don't be afraid! We know what to do. Of course! We will let people see that the despised Samaritans are worth a hundred, a thousand Judaeans and Galileans to defend the Christ. ³Come. Come to our houses, you messengers of the Lord. It will be the same as if He came to us! Samaria has been waiting for such a long time to be loved by God's servants!» ^{563.3}

They go away keeping in the middle of their group those whom I do not think I am mistaken in calling emissaries of the Sanhedrin, and they say: «We realise that He loves us because this is the second group of disciples that He has sent to us in a few days. And we did the right thing in being kind to the first one. It is right to be so kind to Him because of the little children of that dead woman of our town! He knows us by now...»

And they go away looking happy.

⁴All the people of Ephraim pour into the streets to see the unusual event of a procession of Roman wagons passing through the town. There are many wagons and covered litters, flanked with slaves and preceded and followed by legionaries. The people make gestures of mutual understanding and whisper. When the procession arrives at the crossroad for Bethel and Ramah it separates into two parts. A wagon and a litter stop with an es- ^{563.4}

cort of armed men, while the rest go on.

The curtains of the litter are drawn for a moment and a lady's white hand studded with gems beckons the head of the slaves to go near it. The man obeys without speaking. He listens. He approaches a group of curious women and asks: «Where is the Rabbi of Nazareth?»

«He lives in that house. But at this time of the day He is usually at the stream. There is a little island there, near those willow-trees, over there, where that poplar is. He stays there praying all day long.»

The man goes back and reports. The litter sets out again. The wagon remains where it was. The soldiers follow the litter as far as the banks of the stream and which bar the way. Only the litter proceeds along the stream as far as the islet, which in the process of the Season has become well-wooded: a huge impenetrable tuft of greenery surmounted by the trunk and the silvery foliage of the poplar. At an order the bearers with tucked up garments enter the water and the litter crosses to the other side of the little water course. Claudia Procula comes out of it with a freedwoman, and Claudia beckons a dark slave escorting the litter to follow her. The others go back to the bank of the stream.

563.5 ⁵Claudia, followed by the two people, proceeds into the islet, towards the poplar standing out in the centre. The tall grass stifles the noise of steps. She thus arrives where Jesus is absorbed in thought, sitting at the foot of the tree. She calls Him advancing by herself while with an authoritative gesture she makes her two faithful attendants stop where they are.

Jesus looks up and He stands up at once as soon as He sees the woman. He greets her holding Himself upright against the trunk of the poplar. He does not appear to be astonished, or annoyed or irritated at the intrusion.

After greeting Him, Claudia takes up to the subject promptly: «Master. Some people have come to me, or rather to Pontius... I do not make long speeches. But as I admire You, I say to You what I would have said to Socrates, if I had lived in his days, or to any other virtuous man unjustly persecuted: "I cannot do very much, but I will do what I can". And in the meantime I will write where it is possible for me to do so, to have You protected... and to make You powerful. So many undeserving people live on

thrones or in high positions...»

«Domina, I have not asked honours and protection of you. May the true God reward you for your thought. But give your honours and protection to those who long for them. I do not crave after them.»

«Ah! There You are! That is what I wanted! So You really are the Just Man I foresaw! And the others, Your worthless slanderers! They came to us and...»

«You need not tell Me, domina. I know.»

«Do You also know that they say that because of Your sins You have lost all power and consequently You live here as an out-cast?»

«I know that, too. And I know that it was easier for you to believe the latter rumour than the former. Because your heathen mind can descry the human power or the human meanness of a man, but it cannot yet understand what is the power of the spirit. You are... disappointed by your gods who in your religion appear to be quarrelling continuously and to have such a failing power, subject to easy interdictions because of their mutual contrasts. And you think that the true God is the same. But it is not so. As I was the first time you saw Me cure a leper, such I am now. And such I shall be when I appear to be completely destroyed. ^{563.6}That is your dumb slave, is it not?»

«Yes, Master.»

«Tell him to come forward.»

Claudia utters a cry and the man moves forward and prostrates himself on the ground between Jesus and his mistress. His poor heart of a savage does not know whom he should venerate more. He is afraid that to venerate the Christ more than his mistress may cause him to be punished. But even so, after casting a suppliant glance at Claudia, he repeats the gesture he made at Caesarea*: he takes Jesus' bare foot in his big dark hands and stooping with his face on the ground he lays the foot on his head.

«Domina, listen. According to you, is it easier for a man to conquer a kingdom by himself, or to make grow again a part that no longer exists of a human body?»

«To conquer a kingdom, Master. Fortune favours the brave.

* the gesture he made at Caesarea, in 426.9.

But no one, that is, only You can make a dead man revive and give eyes to the blind.»

«Why?»

«Because... Because God can do everything.»

«So according to you I am God?»

«Yes... or, at least God is with You.»

«Can God be with a wicked person? I am talking of the true God, not of your idols that are the frenzy of those who seek what they perceive to exist without knowing what it is, and they imagine phantoms to satisfy their souls.»

«No... I would not say so. Even our priests lose their power as soon as they fall into sin.»

«Which power?»

«Well... the power to read the signs of the sky and the responses of victims, the flights and singing of birds. You know... Augurs, haruspices...»

«I know. So? Look. Raise your head and open your mouth, man, whom a cruel human power deprived of a gift of God. And by the will of the true, only God, the Creator of perfect bodies, have what man took away from you.»

He has put His white finger into the open mouth of the dumb man. The freedwoman, who is very curious, cannot remain where she is, and she comes forward to see. Claudia has bowed to watch. Jesus removes His finger shouting: «Speak, and make use of the reborn part to praise the true God.»

And, all of a sudden, like the blast of a trumpet, of an instrument so far mute, a guttural but clear cry replies: «Jesus!» and the negro falls to the ground weeping for joy and he licks, he really licks Jesus bare feet, just as a grateful dog would do.

«Have I lost My power, domina? Give this reply to those who throw out such innuendos. And you... stand up and be good thinking how much I have loved you. I have had you in My heart since that day at Caesarea. And with you all those like you, who are regarded as gods, considered inferior even to brutes, whereas you are men, equal to Caesar, by conception and probably better because of the goodwill of your hearts ... ⁷You may withdraw, domina... There is nothing else to be said.»

«Yes. There is something. There is the fact that I doubted... that I, with grief, almost believed what they said about You. And

I was not the only one. Forgive us all, except Valeria, who has never changed her mind, nay, nay her mind is more determined than ever. And there is my gift to be accepted: this man. He could no longer serve me now that he can speak, and my money.»

«No, neither.»

«So, are You not forgiving me?»

«I forgive also those of My people, who are twice guilty of not knowing Me for what I am. And should I not forgive all of you, deprived as you are of all divine knowledge? Here. I said that I would not accept your money or the man. I will now accept both and with the money I will free the man. I give your money back to you because I am buying the man. And I am buying him to make him free, so that he may go back to his country to say that on the Earth there is the Man Who loves all men, and the more He sees their unhappiness the more He loves them. Keep your purse.»

«No, Master, it is Yours. The man is free just the same. He is mine. I have given him to You. You are freeing him. No money is needed for that.»

«Well... Have you a name?» He asks the man.

«We used to call him Callisto scoffingly. But when he was caught...»

«It does not matter. Keep that name, and make it real by becoming very handsome in your spirit. Go. Be happy because God has saved you.»

Go! The negro does not tire of kissing and saying: «Jesus! Jesus!» and he lays Jesus' foot once again on his head saying: «You. My only Master.»

«I. Your true Father. Domina, you will take upon yourself to let him go back to his country. Use the money for that and give him the rest. Goodbye, domina. And never listen to the voices of darkness. Be just. And strive to know Me. Goodbye, Callisto. Goodbye, woman.»

And Jesus puts an end to the conversation by jumping across the stream to the side opposite to the one where the litter is and He disappears among the bushes, the willows and the reed thickets.

⁸Claudia calls the litter bearers and enters the litter again with a pensive countenance. But if she is silent, the freedwoman

563.8

and the free slave talk as much as ten people and even the legionaries forget their rigid discipline in the presence of the wonder of a reborn tongue. Claudia is too absorbed in thought to order them to be silent. Reclined in the litter, one elbow resting on pillows, her head supported by her hand, she does not hear anything. She is engrossed in thought. She does not even notice that the freedwoman is not with her but is chattering like a magpie, with the litter bearers while Callisto is speaking to the legionaries who, if they keep lined up, do not keep silent. They are too excited to do so!

Going back the same way, they arrive at the Bethel and Ramah crossroads; the litter leaves Ephraim to join the rest of the procession.

564. The man from Jabneel. The end of Ermasteus.
Reproaching of the Samaritans who lack charity.

7th February 1947.

564.1 ¹Several days must have gone by. I am say this because I see that the corn, which in the last visions was hardly a span high, after the last downpour and the lovely sunshine that followed it, is already tall and is about to give ear. Cereals, still tender in their calami, are waved by a light breeze, that plays with the new leaves of the early fruit trees, which after blossoming or while the petals flutter about and fall, have already opened their light-emerald tender shiny little leaves, as beautiful as everything that is pure and new. The vines, still bare and knotty, blossom later, but on the twisted vine-shoots, which interlace with one another from trunk to trunk, the buds have already burst the dark bark that contained them, and, although still closed in it, they display the silver-grey down that is the nest for future new vine-leaves and tendrils, and the woody twisted festoon-like branches seem to be softened by a fresh gracefulness. The sun, which is already warm, has begun its action by colouring everything and distilling vegetable essences, and while with brighter hues it paints what only a few days ago looked paler, it warms and thus extracts various types of scents from clods of earth, from flowery meadows, from fields of cereals, from vegetable gardens and or-

chards, from woods, from walls, from the very clothes hanging to dry, blending them harmoniously into a smell that will last throughout the summer until it changes into the strong reek of must in the vats where the squashed grapes become wine.

There is a loud chorus of birds singing among trees, and an eager bleating of rams among herds. And the singing of men along slopes. And the cheerful voices of children. And the smiles of women. It is springtime. Nature is in love. And man gets pleasure from the love of nature, which will make him wealthier shortly, and he takes delight in his own love, which becomes livelier in such serene revival, and his wife seems more loving to him, while he appears to be a greater protector to his wife, and their children dear to both of them, as at present they are their joy and their care, and in future, when they are old, they will be the joy and protection of their declining age.

²Jesus passes along the fields that rise or slope downwards following the inclination of the mountain. He is alone. He is wearing a linen garment, as He gave His last woollen one to Samuel, and a rather bright-blue mantle thrown over one shoulder, softly wrapped around His body and held by His arm across His chest. The strip covering His arm flutters gently in the light breeze and as He is bare-headed, His hair shines in the sunshine. He goes by and where there are children He bends to caress their little innocent heads and to listen to their little secrets, admiring what they hasten to show Him as if they were treasures. 564.2

. A little girl, who is so small that she still stumbles when running and gets entangled in the little skirt that is too long for her as she probably inherited it from a brother born before her, arrives near Jesus with a smile that makes her eyes shine and displays her tiny incisors between her pink lips. She is carrying a bunch of daisies, a big bunch held with both hands, as many as her tender tiny hands can hold, and she holds up her trophy saying: «Take it! It's Yours. To mummy later. A kiss, here!» and with her little hands, now free, as Jesus has taken the little bunch thanking her with words of admiration, she touches her lips and she stands on her bare feet, with her head bent backwards, almost losing her balance, in the vain effort to stretch her tiny person up to the face of Jesus, Who laughs picking her up in His arms and taking her, nestled up there like a little bird on a tall

tree, towards a group of women who are steeping new pieces of cloth in the clear water of a stream, to lay them out in the sunshine later, to bleach them.

The women, bent over the water, stand up greeting and one of them says smiling: «Tamar has been giving trouble to You... But she has been picking flowers here since dawn in the secret hope of seeing You pass by. She would not give me one as she wanted to give them to You first.»

«They are dearer to Me than the treasures of kings. Because they are as innocent as children and have been given to Me by one who is as innocent as a flower.» He kisses the little girl putting her down, and He greets her saying: «May the grace of the Lord come to you.» He greets the women and goes on His way greeting the peasants or shepherds who wave to Him from fields or meadows.

564.3 ³He seems to be going down to the lower part of the country, towards Jericho. But He comes back and takes another path that climbs once again towards the mountains to the north of Ephraim. The crops here are even more beautiful, as the soil is in a more favourable position and sheltered from northern winds. The path runs between two fields and in one of them there are fruit trees planted almost at regular intervals, and the buds of the early fruits are already like pearls on the branches.

A road descending from north to south crosses the path. It must be a rather important road because at the crossroads there is one of the milestones used by the Romans, with: «Neapolis» engraved on its northern side, in the large lapidary letters of the Latins, and strong like them, and under it, in much smaller letters just scratched on the stone: «Shechem»; on the western side: «Shiloh-Jerusalem»; and on the southern one: «Jericho». There is no name on the eastern side.

But one could say that if there is no name of any town, there is the name of a human misfortune. Because on the ground, between the milestone and the ditch along the road, dug to drain rain-water, as in all the roads looked after by the Romans, there is a man, benumbed, a bundle of rags and bones, probably dead.

564.4 ⁴Jesus bends over him when He sees him among the weeds that springtime downpours have made luxuriant in the ditch and He touches him asking: «Man? What is the matter with you?»

A moan is the answer. But the tangle moves, unrolls and an emaciated face as white as death appears and two tired, suffering languid eyes look full of astonishment at Him Who is bent over his misery. He tries to sit up pressing his emaciated hands against the ground, but he is so weak that he could not succeed without Jesus' help.

Jesus helps him and props him with his back against the milestone. And He asks him: «What is the matter with you? Are you ill?»

«Yes.» A very faint «yes».

«But why did you set out all alone, in this state? Have you not got anybody?»

The man nods assent, but he is too weak to reply.

Jesus looks around. There is nobody in the fields. The place is really deserted. To the north, almost at the top of a hill, there is a small group of houses; to the west, among the green vegetation of the slope that rises with more hillocks where fields are replaced by meadows and woods, there are some herdsmen among a flock of restless goats. Jesus looks at the man again and asks him: «If I supported you, do you think you would be able to come to that village?»

The man shakes his head and two tears stream down his cheeks that are so withered that they seem wrinkled by age, whereas his raven beard proves that he is still young. He gathers his strength to say: «They drove me away... Fear of leprosy... I am not... And I am dying... of hunger.» He pants out of weakness. He puts a finger into his mouth and pulls out a greenish pulp, saying: «Look... I have been chewing corn... but it is still green grass.»

«I am going to that shepherd. I will bring you some warm milk. I shall not be long.» And He almost runs where the flock is, about two hundred metres above the road.

He arrives at the shepherd, He speaks to him and shows him where the man is. The shepherd turns around to look, he seems undecided whether he should comply with Jesus' request. He then makes up his mind. He detaches from his belt the wooden bowl that he carries like all shepherds, he milks a goat and gives the full bowl to Jesus, Who goes down the slope cautiously, followed by a boy who was with the shepherd.

564.5 ⁵He is now once again near the starving man. He kneels beside him, He passes one arm around his back to support him and takes the bowl, in which the milk is still covered with foam, close to his lips. He makes him take small sips. He then lays the bowl on the ground saying: «That is enough now. If you take it all at once, it will hurt you. Let your stomach recover some strength with the milk I gave you.»

The man does not protest. He closes his eyes and is silent, while the boy looks at him with much surprise.

After some time Jesus offers him the cup again for a longer drink and He goes on thus, at shorter and shorter intervals, until there is no milk left. He hands the bowl back to the boy and dismisses him.

The man recovers slowly. With gestures that are still shaky he tries to tidy himself somehow. He smiles with gratitude looking at Jesus Who has sat down on the grass beside him. He apologises saying: «I make You waste time.»

«Do not worry! The time spent in loving one's brothers is never lost. When you feel better we shall speak.»

«I am feeling better. My body is warming up and my eyes... I thought I was going to die here... My poor children! I had lost all hope... And up to that moment I had hoped so much!... If You had not come; I would have died... just like that... along the road...»

«It would have been very sad. That is true. But the Most High looked at His son and assisted him. Have a little rest now.»

The man obeys for some time. Then he opens his eyes again and he says: «I feel a new man. Oh! I wish I could go to Ephraim!» «Why? Have you got anyone there waiting for you? Do you come from Ephraim?»

564.6 «No, ⁶I come from the country of Jabneel, near the Great Sea. But I went to Galilee, along the shores, as far as Caesarea. Then I went to Nazareth. Because I have a disease here (he touches his stomach). A disease that no one can cure and it does not let me work the land. And I am a widower. With five children... A man from our place, because I was born at Gaza, of a Philistine father and of a Syro-Phoenician mother, a man of our place was a follower of the Galilean Rabbi and he came to us with another man, and spoke to us of the Rabbi. I heard him, too. And when I was taken ill I said: "I am a Syrian and a Philistine, loathsome

to Israel. But Ermasteus used to say that the Rabbi of Galilee is as good as He is powerful. And I believe it. And I am going to Him". And as soon as the weather improved I left the children to the mother of my wife, I took my few savings, because many had been spent for my disease, And I came looking for the Rabbi. But money does not last long when on travels. Particularly when one cannot eat all kinds of food... and one has to stop at inns when pains prevent one from travelling. At Sephoris I sold my donkey because I had no more money left for myself and to give what was due to the Rabbi. I thought that once I was cured, I would be able to eat everything on the road and thus go back home quickly. And working there in my fields and in those of other people I hoped I would make up for what I had lost... But the Rabbi is neither at Nazareth nor at Capernaum. His Mother told me. She said: "He is in Judaea. Look for Him at the house of Joseph of Sephoris at Bezetha or at Gethsemane. They will be able to tell you where He is". I came back, on foot. I was getting worse and worse... and my money was diminishing. At Jerusalem, where I had been told to go, I found the people but not the Rabbi. They said to me: "Oh! They drove Him away a long time ago. He is cursed by the Sanhedrin. He ran away but we do not know where". I... felt as if I were dying... just like today. Nay, more than today. I inquired of hundreds and hundreds of people in town and in the country. No one knew. Some wept with me. Many struck me. Then one day, when I began to beg outside the enclosure of the Temple, I heard two Pharisees say: "Now that we know that Jesus of Nazareth is at Ephraim...". I lost no time, and weak as I was I came here, begging for some bread, and I was more and more in rags and sick looking. And as I was not familiar with the road, I took the wrong one... Today I came from there, from that village. For two days I had sucked nothing but wild fennels, and I had chewed chicory and green corn. They thought I was a leper because of my pallor and they drove me away pelting me with stones. I was only asking for a piece of bread and to show me the road to Ephraim... I fell here... But I would like to go to Ephraim. I am so close to my goal! Is it possible that I should not reach it? I believe in the Rabbi. I am not an Israelite. But neither was Ermasteus, and He loved him «just the same. Is it possible that the God of Israel may treat me with a

heavy hand to revenge Himself for the sins of those who procreated me?»

564.7 «The true God is the Father of men. He is just, but good. He rewards those who have faith and does not make innocents pay for sins not committed by them. ⁷But why did you say that when you heard that the residence of the Rabbi was unknown, you felt as if you were dying more than you were today?»

«Eh! because I said: "I have lost Him even before finding Him".»

«Ah! because of your health!»

«No. Not only for that. But because Ermasteus said certain things about Him that I thought that if I became acquainted with Him, I would no longer be corrupt.»

«So, do you believe that He is the Messiah?»

«I do believe it. I do not know exactly what the Messiah is, but I believe that the Rabbi of Nazareth is the Son of God.»

Jesus' smile is bright when He asks: «And are you sure that if He is such, He will hear you, although you are not circumcised?»

«I am certain because Ermasteus said so. He said: "He is the Saviour of all men. As far as He is concerned there are no Hebrews or idolaters. But only creatures to be saved because the Lord God has sent Him for that". Many laughed. I believed. If I can say to Him: "Jesus, have mercy on me", He will hear me. Oh! if You come from Ephraim, take me to Him. Perhaps You are one of His disciples...»

564.8 ⁸Jesus smiles more and more and He suggests: «Try and ask Me to cure you...»

«You are good, man. There is so much peace near You. Yes, You are as good as... the Rabbi Himself, and He has certainly granted You the power to work miracles, because to be as good as You are, You can but be one of His disciples. I have found all those, who told me they were such, to be good. But do not be offended if I say to You that You may be able to cure bodies, but not souls. And I would like also my soul to be cured, as it happened to Ermasteus. To become a just man... And only the Rabbi can do that. I am a sinner besides being diseased. I do not want to be cured in my body and then die one day also with my soul. I want to live. Ermasteus said that the Rabbi is the Life of the soul and that the soul that believes in Him lives for good in the

Kingdom of God. Take me to the Rabbi. Be good! Why are You smiling? Probably because You think that I am bold in wanting to be cured without being able to give an offering? But once I am cured I shall be able to cultivate the land once again. I have beautiful fruit. Let the Rabbi come when the fruit ripens and I will pay Him with hospitality as long as He wishes.»

«Who told you that the Rabbi wants money? Ermasteus?»

«No. On the contrary he used to say that the Rabbi takes pity on the poor and He assists them first. But that is the custom with all doctors and... and with everybody, in short.»

«But not with Him. I can assure you. And I tell you that if you can urge your faith to ask for the miracle here, and to believe it possible, you will have it.»

«Is what You say true?» Are You sure? Of course, if You are one of His disciples you cannot lie or be wrong. And although I am sorry not to see the Rabbi..., I want to obey You... Perhaps, persecuted as He is... He does not want to be seen... He trusts no one any longer. You are right. But we shall not be the ones who will ruin Him. It will be the true Hebrews... But, well. I say here (he kneels down with difficulty): "Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me!"»

«And let it be done to you as your faith deserves» says Jesus making His gesture of authority over diseases.

^{564.9} The man seems to be dazzled as if he were struck by a sudden light. The man realises - I do not know whether through a flash of his intellect or through a physical sensation or through both at the same time - who the Man is Who is before him, and he utters such a shrill cry that the herdsman, who had come down towards the road probably to see, quickens his pace.

The man is on the ground with his face in the grass. And the herdsman pointing at him with his crook asks: «Is he dead? More than milk is required when a man is done for!» and he shakes his head.

The man hears and stands up, strong and healthy. He shouts: «Dead? I am cured! I am a new man. He has done this to me. I am no longer languishing with hunger or suffering from any disease. I feel as I did the day I got married! Oh! blessed Jesus! How did I not recognise You before?! Your pity should have told me Your name! The peace I experienced near You! It was silly of

me. Forgive Your poor servant!» And he throws himself on the ground once again, worshipping.

The herdsman leaves his goats and goes towards the little village running and jumping.

564.10 ¹⁰Jesus sits down near the cured man and says: «You were speaking to Me of Ermasteus, as if he were dead. So you know how he died. I want only one thing of you. That you come to Ephraim with Me and mention how he died to a man who is with Me. Then I will send you to Jericho, to a woman disciple of Mine, so that she may help you on your return trip.»

«If You wish so, I will go. But, now that I am healthy, I am no longer afraid of dying on the road. Even grass can nourish me and it is not shameful to beg because I did not spend everything I had on orgies, but for an honest purpose.»

«That is what I want. You will tell her that you have seen Me and that I am waiting for her here. She can come now. No one will annoy her. Will you be able to tell her that?»

«Yes, I will. Ah! Why do they hate You, when You are so good?»

«Because many men are possessed by demons. Let us go.»

Jesus sets out towards Ephraim and the man follows Him without faltering. Only his remarkable leanness is the sign of his past disease and privations.

In the meantime many people are coming down from the little village shouting and gesticulating. They call Jesus. They tell Him to stop. Jesus does not listen to them, on the contrary He quickens His pace. And they follow Him ...

There He is once again near Ephraim. The peasants who are getting ready to go home, as the sun is beginning to set, greet Him and look at the man who is with Him.

564.11 ¹¹Judas of Kerieth appears suddenly from a lane. He starts with surprise seeing the Master.

But Jesus does not show any surprise. He only addresses the man saying: «This is one of My disciples. Tell him about Ermasteus.»

«Eh! it is soon said. He was untiring in preaching the Christ, also after he decided to part from his companion to stay with us. He said that we are in greater need than anybody else to know You, Rabbi, and that he wanted to make You known to

his fatherland; and that he would go back to You after he had announced your name publicly in all the smallest villages. He lived like a penitent. If some pitiful people gave him some bread he blessed them in Your name. If they threw stones at him, he would withdraw blessing them just the same and he fed on wild fruit or on sea molluscs that he picked off reefs or he dug in the sand. Many said that he was "mad". But nobody really hated him. At the most they drove him away as if he were a man of ill omen. One day they found him dead along a road, not far from my place, on the road that takes one into Judaea, almost at the border. It was never known what he died of. But the rumour is that he was killed by somebody who did not want the Messiah to be preached. He had a large wound on his head. They said that he had been trampled by a horse. But I do not believe that. He still smiled stretched out on the dust of the road. Yes. He really seemed to be smiling at the last stars of the clearest night in the month of Elul and at the rising sun in the morning. Some market-gardeners found him at daybreak, while they were going to town with their vegetables, and they told me when they came to collect my cucumbers. I rushed there to see him. He was resting in great peace.»

«Have you heard?» Jesus asks Judas.

«Yes, I have. But did You not tell him that he would serve You and have a long life?»

«I did not say exactly that. The time that has gone by has obscured your mind. Has he not served Me evangelizing in places of mission, and has he not got a long life? Which life is longer than that conquered by those who die in the service of God? Long and glorious.»

Judas has that sly laugh that annoys me so much, but he does not reply.

¹²In the meantime those from the little village have joined many people from Ephraim and they are speaking to them pointing at Jesus. 654.12

Jesus says to Judas: «Take the man home and finish restoring him. He will leave after the Sabbath that is just beginning.»

Judas obeys and Jesus remains all alone and He walks slowly bending to watch some stalks of corn, on which slight indications of ears are beginning to appear.

Some men from Ephraim ask Him: «This corn is beautiful, isn't it?»

«Beautiful. But the same as that of other regions.»

«Of course, Master. It's all corn! It must be the same.»

«Do you think so? Then corn is better than men. Because if it is skilfully sown it yields the same fruit here as in Judaea or Galilee or, we can say, in the plains along the Great Sea. Men, instead, do not yield the same fruit. And also the soil is better than men. Because when a seed is entrusted to it, it is good to the seed without making any difference whether the seed is from Samaria or Judaea.»

«It is so. But why do You say that corn and soil are better than men?»

654.13 «Why?... ¹³Not long ago a man begged for a piece of bread out of pity, at the gate of a village. And he was driven away because the people of that place thought he was a Judaeon. He was expelled as people threw stones at him and calling him a "leper", which he thought referred to his thinness, but was intended for his origin. And that man almost died of starvation along the road. Thus the people of that village, the people that sent you to question Me and would like to come to the house where I live, to see the man who was cured miraculously, are worse than corn and clods of earth. Because they were not able, although they had been well taught by Me for a long time, to bear the same fruit as was yielded by that man, who is neither a Judaeon nor a Samaritan and had never seen or heard Me, but had accepted the words of one of my disciples and believed in Me without knowing Me. And because they are worse than the clods of earth, as they rejected the man because he was of a different seed. They would now like to come to satisfy their hunger for curiosity, whilst they were not able to satisfy the hunger of a languishing man. Tell them that the Master will not satisfy such vain curiosity. And you all had better learn the great law of love without which you will never be able to be my followers. It is not your love for Me that by itself will save your souls. But it is the love for My doctrine. And My doctrine teaches brotherly love without distinction of race and census. So let those hard-hearted people who have grieved my Heart go away, and let them repent if they want Me to love them. Because, bear this in your minds, if I am good,

I am also just; if I make no distinctions and I love you as I love those of Galilee and Judaea, that must not make you so stupidly, proud as to think that you are the favourite people or authorise you to do wrong without being afraid of being reproached by Me. I praise and reproach, according to justice, My relatives and apostles as well as any other person, and there is love in My reproach. And I do so because I want justice in the hearts of people so that one day I may reward those who have practised it. You may go and inform the others so that the lesson may bear fruit in everybody.»

Jesus wraps himself in his mantle and strides towards Ephraim, leaving His interlocutors who go away rather dejectedly to repeat the Master's words to the people of the unmerciful village.

565. Samuel distressed by Judas Iscariot who does not understand the nature of the salvific suffering.
The example of the bees for the workers of God.

10th February 1947.

^{565.1} Jesus is still all alone, engrossed in thought, while walking slowly towards the thick wood to the west of Ephraim. The rustling noise of water rises from the torrent and the songs of birds come from the trees. The bright springtime sunshine is pleasant under the tangle of branches, and silent is the tread on the luxuriant grassy carpet. The sunbeams form a mobile carpet of circles or golden strips on the green grass and some flowers still covered with dew shine as if their petals were precious scales, when a disc of light centres on them while all around there is shadow.

Jesus climbs towards a ledge protruding like a balcony over the empty space underneath. A balcony on which a huge oak-tree grows, and from which the flexible twigs of wild blackberries, or dogroses, or ivy and clematis hang down, as they do not find room or supports in their native place, too narrow for their exuberant vitality, and they hang in the empty space like loose dishevelled hair and they stretch out hoping to find something to which they may cling.

Jesus is now at the level of the ledge. He moves towards the

most projecting spot, shifting aside the tangle of bushes. A flock of small birds fly away whirring and chirping in fear.

565.2 ²Jesus stops watching the man who has preceded Him up there and who, lying on the grass with his face downwards, almost on the edge of the ledge, his elbows pressed on the ground, his face resting in his hands, is looking at the empty space, towards Jerusalem. The man is Samuel, the ex-pupil of Jonathan ben Uziel. He is pensive. He sighs. He shakes his head...

Jesus shakes some branches to attract his attention and, seeing that His attempt has been vain, He picks up a stone from the grass and rolls it down the path. The noise of the stone bouncing down the slope rouses the young man, who turns around surprised saying: «Who is there?»

«It is I, Samuel. You have preceded Me in one of the places where I prefer to pray» says Jesus showing Himself from behind the massive trunk of the oak-tree growing at the edge of the little path and He does so as if He had just arrived there.

«Oh! Master! I am sorry... But I will leave Your place free at once» he says standing up hurriedly and picking up his mantle that he had taken off and he had spread on the ground to lie on it.

«No. Why? There is room for two. The place is so beautiful! So isolated, solitary, suspended over the empty space, with so much light and such a wide view! Why do you want to leave it?»

«Well... to leave You free to pray ...»

«And can we not do so together, or meditate, speaking to each other, elevating our spirits to God... forgetting men and their faults, thinking of God, our Father and the good Father of all those who seek and love Him with goodwill?»

Samuel shows surprise when Jesus says «forgetting men and their faults...» But he does not say anything. He sits down again.

565.3 ³Jesus sits beside him on the grass and says to him: «Sit here. And let us be together. See how clear the view is today. If we had the eyes of an eagle we would be able to see the white villages on the tops of the mountains around Jerusalem. And, perhaps, we could see a spot shining like a gem in the air and that would make our hearts throb: the golden domes of the House of God... Look. There is Bethel. You can see its white houses and there, beyond Bethel, there is Beeroth. How subtly crafty were the inhabitants of that place and of the neighbourhood! But it turned

out well, although' deceit is never a good weapon. It turned out well because it placed them at the service of the true God. It is always better to lose human honours in order to gain closeness to divinity. Even if human honours were many and valuable, and the closeness to divinity is humble and unknown. Is that right?»

«Yes, Master. What You say is right. That is what happened to me.»

«But you are sad, although the change should make you happy. You are sad. You are suffering. You live in isolation. You look at the places you left. You look like an imprisoned bird that, pressed against the bars of its prison, looks with so much regret at the place it loved. I am not asking you not to do that. You are free. You may go and...»

«Lord, has Judas perhaps spoken ill of me that You are saying so?»

«No, Judas has not spoken to Me. He has not spoken to Me, but he spoke to you. That is why you are sad. And you live in isolation as you are down-hearted because of that.»

«Lord, if You know all that, although no one has mentioned that to You, You must also know that I am sad not because I want to leave You, because I regret I was converted, or because I have a longing for the past... or because I am afraid of men, as they would like to instil the fear of their punishments into me. ^{565.4} I was looking over there. That is true. I was looking towards Jerusalem. But not because I am anxious to go back there. I mean: to go back there as I was previously. Because I am certainly eager, like everybody else, to go back as an Israelite who loves to go into the House of God and worship the Most High, and I do not think that You can reproach me for that.»

«I am the first, in my double Nature, to long for that altar and I would like to see it surrounded by holiness, as befits it. As the Son of God, everything that honours Him is a sweet voice to Me and as the Son of man, as an Israelite, and therefore a Son of the Law, I see the Temple and the altar as the most sacred place in Israel, in which our humanity can approach Divinity and become scented with the air surrounding the throne of God. I do not abolish the Law, Samuel. It is sacred to Me because it was given by my Father. I perfect it and complete it with new parts. As the Son of God I can do that. My Father sent Me for that. I have come

to establish the spiritual Temple of My Church, against which Temple neither men nor demons shall prevail. And the tables of the Law will have a place of honour in it, because they are eternal, perfect, untouchable. The commandment "do not commit this or that sin" contained in those tables, which in their lapidary conciseness comprise what is necessary to be just in the eyes of God, is not cancelled by my word. On the contrary! I also give those ten commandments to you. I only tell you to keep them with perfection, that is, not for fear of the wrath of God on you, but out of love for your God Who is your Father. I have come to put your hands of sons into the hands of your Father. For how many ages those hands have been divided! Punishment divided them. Sin divided them. Now that the Redeemer has come, sin is about to be cancelled. Barriers are falling. You are once again the sons of God.»

«That is true. You are good and you comfort. Always. And ^{565.5} you know. So I shall not tell You my worry. ⁵But I ask You: why are men so wicked, insane and foolish? How and with which expedients can they diabolically influence us to do evil things? And why are we so blind as not to see real facts and to believe false ones? And how can we become such demons? And persist when one is close to You? I was looking there and I was thinking... Yes. I was thinking of how many streams of poison come out from there to upset the children of Israel. I was considering how the wisdom of the rabbis can be joined to so much iniquity that misrepresents things in order to deceive people. I was thinking above all of that, because...» Samuel, who had spoken passionately, stops and lowers his head.

Jesus ends the sentence: «...because Judas, my disciple, is what he is, and he grieves Me and those who are around Me or come to Me, as you did. I know. Judas is trying to send you away from here and he makes insinuations and sneers at you...»

«Not only at me. Yes. He poisons my joy of coming to justice. He poisons it so skilfully that I think I am like a traitor here, betraying You and myself. Myself, because I flatter myself that I am better, whereas I shall be the cause of your ruin. In fact I do not know myself as yet... and if I meet those of the Temple I may fail in my purpose and be... Oh! if I had done it then, I would have had the excuse of not knowing You for what You are, be-

cause I knew of You what I was told to make a cursed man of me. But if I did it now! What curse will be that of the traitor of the Son of God! I was here... Pensive, yes. I was wondering where I might flee to save myself from myself and from them. I was thinking of fleeing to some remote place, to join those of the Diaspora. .. Away, far away, to prevent the demon from, making me commit sin... Your apostle is right in not trusting me. He knows me, because he knows us all knowing our Leaders... And he is right in doubting me. When he says: "Don't you know that He tells us that we shall be weak? Just imagine: we are His apostles and have been with Him for such a long time. And you, infected as you are with old Israel, have just come, and you have come when circumstances make us shudder, do you think you have enough strength to remain just?" when he says so he is right.» The man is down-hearted and lowers his head.

6«How much grief the sons of men can give themselves! Sa-^{565.6}tan really knows how to make use of that disposition of theirs to terrorise them completely and separate them from the Joy that comes towards them to save them. Because the sadness of the spirit, the fear of the morrow and worries are always weapons that man puts in the hands of his enemy, who frightens him by means of the same phantoms that man himself imagines. And there are other men who really form an alliance with Satan to help him frighten his brothers. But, My dear son, is there not a Father in Heaven? A Father Who, as this fissure in the rock provides for this blade of grass - this fissure full of earth situated in such a way that the moisture of dews flowing on the smooth stone gathers in that thin furrow, so that the blade of grass may live and yield this tiny little flower, which is not less admirable for its beauty than the great sun shining up there: both the perfect work of the Creator - a Father Who takes care of the blade of grass grown on a rock, will He not take care of one of His sons who firmly wants to serve Him? Oh! God really does not disappoint the "good" wishes of man. Because it is He Who kindles them in your hearts. He providently and wisely creates the circumstances to encourage the wishes of His children, not only, but in the event that a desire to honour Him should follow an imperfect path, He straightens and perfects it so that it may follow the right path. You were among the latter. You believed,

you wanted and were convinced that you were honouring God by persecuting Me. The Father saw that your heart did not hate God, but it longed to give glory to God by removing from the world He Who you were told was the enemy of God and the corrupter of souls. So He created the circumstances to comply with your desire to give glory to your Lord. And here you are now among us. And can you believe that God will abandon you, now that He brought you here? Only if you abandon Him, the power of evil will be able to overwhelm you.»

«I do not want that. My will is sincere!» states the man.

«So what are you worried about? About the word of a man? Speak. He thinks with his own thought. And man's thought is always imperfect. ^{565.7}But I will see to that.»

«I do not want You to reproach him. Your assurance that I will not sin is enough for me.»

«I assure you. It will not happen to you because you do not want it to happen. Because see, son, it would not help you to go to the Diaspora or even to the end of the world to preserve your soul from hating the Christ and from being punished for such hatred. Many in Israel will not sully themselves with the Crime materially, but they will not be less guilty than those who condemn Me and execute the sentence. I can speak to you of these matters. Because you are already aware that everything has been arranged for them. You know the names and the thoughts of My most pitiless enemies. You said: "Judas knows us all because he knows all the Leaders". But if he knows you, you also, the minor ones, because you are like lesser stars near the major planets, you also know what is being done, how it is done and who does it, and what plots are made and which means are studied... Sol can speak with you. I could not do so with the others... What I can suffer and bear with, others cannot...»

^{565.8} «Master, but how can You, knowing that, be so... ⁸Who is coming up the path?» Samuel stands up to look. He exclaims: «Judas!»

«Yes. It is I. I was told that the Master had passed through here, instead I find you. So I will go back, leaving you to your thoughts» and he laughs with his sly laugh that is more mournful than the cry of an owl, so insincere it is.

«I am here as well. Do they want Me at the village?» says Je-

sus appearing behind Samuel's shoulders.

«Oh! You! So you were in good company, Samuel! And You, too, Master...»

«Yes. The company of one who embraces justice is always good.

So you wanted Me, to be with Me, Come, then. There is room for you and also for John, if he were with you.»

«He is down in the village, at grips with other pilgrims.»

«If there are some pilgrims, I must go.»

«No. They will be staying all day tomorrow. John is settling them in our beds for their stay. ^{565.9}He is happy to do so. Of course, everything makes him happy. You are really like each other. I do not know how you manage to be always happy even when things are most... worrying.»

«The same question I was going to ask when you came!» exclaims Samuel.

«Ah! Were you? So you are not happy, and you are surprised that other people, in conditions even more... difficult than ours, can be so.»

«I am not unhappy. I am not speaking for myself. But I am thinking from which sources the serenity of the Master may come, as He is aware of his future and yet He is not upset by anything.»

«From heavenly sources, of course! It is natural! He is God! Do you doubt it? Can a God suffer? He is above sorrow. His Father's love is for Him like... like an exhilarating wine. And the firm belief that his actions... are the salvation of the world is an exhilarating wine for Him. And then... Can He have the physical reactions that we, humble men, have? That is contrary to common sense. If Adam, when innocent, was not aware of any kind of sorrow, neither would he have ever become aware of it if he had remained innocent, Jesus... the Superinnocent, the creature... I do not know whether I should say so: uncreated being God, or created because He has relatives... oh! how many insoluble "whys" for future generations, my Master! If Adam was free from sorrow because of his innocence, can one think that Jesus must suffer?»

Jesus' head is bent. He has sat down once again on the grass. His face is veiled by his hair. So I cannot see his countenance.

Samuel standing in front of Judas, who is also standing, replies: «But if He is to be the Redeemer, He must really suffer. Do you not remember David and Isaiah?»

«I do remember them! But although they saw the figure of the Redeemer, they did not see the immaterial help He would receive to be... shall we say: tortured, without feeling any pain.»

«Which help? A man may love sorrow or suffer it with resignation, according to his perfection of justice. But he will always feel it. Otherwise... if he did not feel it... it would not be sorrow.»

«Jesus is the Son of God.»

«But He is not a ghost! He is true Flesh! And flesh suffers if it is tortured. He is a true Man! And the thought of man suffers if it is offended and despised.»

«His union with God eliminates such human things in Him.»

565.10

¹⁰Jesus raises His head and says: «I solemnly tell you, Judas, that I suffer and shall suffer like every man, and more than every man. But I can be equally happy, enjoying the holy spiritual happiness of those who have achieved freedom from the sadness of the Earth, because they have embraced the will of God as their only bride. I am able to do so because I have overcome the human concept of happiness, the uneasiness of happiness, as men imagine it. I do not pursue what, according to men, happiness consists of; but I place my joy in exactly the opposite of what man pursues as such. The things that are avoided and despised by man, because they are considered burdensome and grievous, are the sweetest thing for Me. I am not interested in one hour. I consider the consequences that one hour may bring about in eternal life. My episode will come to an end, but its fruit will last. My sorrow will end, but the value of my sorrow will not end. And what could I do with one hour of the so called "happy state" on the Earth, an hour achieved after pursuing it for years and years, when that hour could not come with Me as delight in eternal life and I had to enjoy it all by myself, without sharing it with those whom I love?»

«But if You should triumph, we, your followers, would take part in your happiness!» exclaims Judas.

«You? And who are you, compared with the past, present and future multitudes to whom my grief will bring joy? I see far beyond earthly happiness. I look at the supernatural beyond it. I

can see My sorrow change into eternal delight for a multitude of people. And I embrace sorrow as the greatest power to reach the perfect happiness, which is to love one's neighbour to the extent of suffering to give him joy, to the extent of dying for him.»

«I do not understand that happiness» states Judas.

«You are not wise yet. Otherwise you would understand it.»

«And is John wise? He is more ignorant than I am!»

«From a human point of view he is. But he possesses the science of love.»

«All right. But I do not think that love can prevent clubs from being clubs and stones from being stones and both from causing pain to the bodies they strike. You always say that sorrow is dear to You because it is love for You. But when You are really caught and tortured, if that is possible, I do not know whether You will still be of the same mind. You had better think about it while You can shun pain. It will be dreadful, You know? If men will be able to get hold of You... oh! they will have no respect for You!»

Jesus looks at him. He is very pale. His wide open eyes seem to be seeing, beyond Judas' face, all the tortures awaiting Him, and yet, although sad, they remain meek and kind, and above all, serene: two limpid eyes of an innocent at peace. He replies:

«I know. I know also what you do not know. But I hope in God's mercy. He, Who is merciful with sinners, will have mercy also on Me. I will not ask Him not to suffer, but to be able to suffer. ¹¹And ^{565.11} now let us go. Samuel, go a little ahead of us and tell John that I shall soon be in the village.»

Samuel bows and goes away quickly. Jesus begins to descend.

The path is so narrow that they have to proceed one behind the other. But that does not prevent Judas from saying: «You trust that man too much, Master. I told You who he is. He is Jonathan's most hot-headed and excitable disciple. Of course, it is late now.

You have put Yourself into his hands. He is a spy close to You.

And You more than once thought that I was a spy and the others thought so more than You did! I am not a spy.»

Jesus stops and turns around. Grief and majesty mingle on His face and in His eyes fixed on His apostle. He says: «No. You are not a spy. You are a demon: You have stolen the Serpent's prerogative to seduce and deceive in order to take people away from God. Your behaviour is neither a stone nor a club, but it hurts Me

more than a blow with a stone or a club. Oh! in my atrocious suffering there will be nothing greater than your behaviour capable of torturing the Martyr.» Jesus covers his face with his hands, as if He wished to conceal so much horror, and then He begins to run down the path.

Judas shouts after Him: «Master! Master! Why are You grieving me? That liar has certainly made a slanderous report to You... Listen to me, Master!»

Jesus does not listen. He runs, He flies down the slopes. He does not stop when He passes by the woodcutters and shepherds who greet Him. He passes, He waves to them but does not stop. Judas resigns himself to being silent...

565.12 ¹²They are almost down when they meet John who, with his pellucid face brightened by a serene smile, is climbing towards them. He is holding by the hand a little boy who is prattling while sucking a honeycomb.

«Master, here I am! There are people from Caesarea Philippi. They heard that You are here and they came. How strange it is! No one has spoken and everybody knows where You are! They are resting now. They are very tired. I went and asked Dinah to give me some milk and honey because there is a sick person. I put him in my bed. I am not afraid. And little Annas wanted to come with me. Don't touch him, Master; he is all sticky with honey» and kind John, who has many drops and finger-marks of honey on his tunic, laughs. He laughs trying to hold back the boy who would like to go and offer Jesus his half-sucked honeycomb and shouts: «Come. There are so many of them for You!»

«Yes. They are removing the honeycombs at Dinah's. I knew. Her bees swarmed not long ago» says, John.

565.13 ¹³They set out again and arrive at the first house where the bee masters are still making the usual deafening noise near the beehives, I do not know exactly why. Swarms of bees - they look like big bunches of strange grapes - are hanging from some branches and some men are taking them to put them into the new beehives. Farther away, untiring buzzing bees are going in and coming out of beehives already settled.

The men greet Jesus and a woman approaches Him with some lovely honeycombs which she offers Him.

«Why are you depriving yourself of them? You have already

given John some...»

«Oh! My bees have made much honey. It's a pleasure for me to offer it. But please bless the new swarms. Look, they are taking the last one. This year we had to double the beehives.»

Jesus goes towards the tiny towns of the bees and He blesses them one by one raising His hand amidst the humming of the worker bees that do not stop working.

«They are all merry and they are also all excited. A new house...» says a man.

«And a new wedding. They really look like women preparing a wedding feast» says another one.

«Yes, but the women do more talking than work. The bees, instead, work in silence and they work also on the days of wedding feasts. They work all the time to build their kingdom and their wealth» replies a third man.

«To be always working in virtue is lawful, nay, it is dutiful. To work always for the sake of gain, no, it is not. Only those can do it who do not know that they have a God Who is to be honoured on His day. To work in silence is a merit that everybody should learn of the bees. Because holy things are done holily in silence. Be like your bees in justice. Untiring and silent. God sees. God rewards. Peace be with you» says Jesus.

¹⁴And when He is alone with His two apostles He says: «To the workers of God in particular I propose the bees as their model. They deposit in the secrecy of the beehive the honey formed in their interiors through their unremitting work on wholesome corollas. Their fatigue does not even appear to be such, as they do it with so much goodwill, flying, like golden dots, from flower to flower, and then, laden with juice, going in to elaborate their honey in the privacy of their little cells. People ought to imitate them, choosing lessons, sound doctrines and friendships, capable of producing juices of true virtue, then living in isolation to elaborate, using what has been actively gathered, virtue, justice, which are like the honey extracted from many wholesome elements, of which one of the most important ones is goodwill, without which the juices collected here and there would be of no use. It is also necessary to meditate humbly, in the secrecy of one's heart, on the good we have seen and heard, without being envious if queen bees are near working bees, that is, if there is

565.14

someone who is more just than he who meditates. Both queens and workers are necessary in the beehive. It would be a disaster if they were all queens or all workers. Both the former and the latter would die. Because the queens would have no food to procreate if there were no workers, and the workers would no longer exist if the queens did not procreate. And the queens are not to be envied. They have their work and their penitence. They see the sun but once, in their only one nuptial flight. Before it and after it, they are in perpetual seclusion within the amber-coloured walls of the beehive. Each one has its task, and each task is an appointment, and each appointment is an onus besides being an honour. And the working bees waste no time in vain or dangerous flights around diseased or poisonous flowers. They make no adventurous attempts. They do not fail to carry out their mission, they do not rebel against the purpose for which they were created. Oh! Admirable little beings! How much you teach men!...» Jesus becomes silent, lost in His meditation.

565.15 ¹⁵Judas suddenly remembers that he has to go I do not know where, and he almost runs away. Jesus and John remain. And John looks at Jesus without letting Him notice. A keen look of anxious love. Jesus raises His head, turns around a little, meeting the eyes of his favourite apostle who is watching Him. His face brightens when He draws John to Himself.

John, while walking embraced thus, asks: «Judas has grieved You again, has he not? And he must have upset Samuel as well.»

«Why? Has he said anything to you?»

«No. But I have understood. He only said: "Generally speaking when one lives near someone who is really good, one becomes good. But Judas is not, although he has lived with the Master for three years. He is corrupt in the depth of his heart, and the goodness of the Christ does not penetrate him, so full he is of wick-

555.16 edness". I did not know what to say, because it is true... ¹⁶But why is Judas like that? Is it possible that he will never change? And yet... we are all getting the same lessons and when he came among us, he was not any worse than we were.»

«My John! My meek child!» Jesus kisses his forehead, so open and pure, and He whispers through his fair hair that undulates lightly: «There are people who seem to live to destroy the good that is in them. You are a fisherman and you know what a sail

does when a hurricane strikes it. It bends so low near the water that it almost overturns the boat and becomes a danger for it, so that at times it is necessary to lower it, and one is thus left without wings with which to fly towards one's nest, because a sail, struck by a hurricane is no longer a wing, but it becomes ballast that takes one to the bottom, to death and not to salvation. But if the violent blast of the hurricane abates, even for a few moments, then the sail becomes wing at once and the boat sails fast towards the harbour taking the people in it to salvation. The same happens to many souls. It is enough that the hurricane of passions subsides, and the soul that was bent and almost submerged by... by what was not good, begins to yearn for Goodness.»

«Yes, Master. But... so... tell me... will Judas ever reach Your harbour?»

«Oh! Do not make Me look at the future of one of My dearest apostles! I have in front of me the future of millions of souls for whom My sufferings will be useless!... I have in front of Me all the base actions of the world... The nausea upsets Me. The nausea of the seething of filthy things that like a river cover and will cover the Earth, in different ways, but always dreadful for the Perfection, until the end of time. Do not make Me look! Let Me quench My thirst and find comfort at a spring that does not taste of corruption, and let Me forget the verminous rottenness of too many people, by looking at you alone, My peace!» and He kisses, him again between his eyebrows looking deeply into the limpid eyes of the pure loving apostle...

¹⁷They go into the house. Samuel is in the kitchen chopping the wood to spare the old woman work when lighting the fire. 565.17

Jesus asks the woman: «Are the pilgrims sleeping?»

«I think so. I do not hear any noise. I am going to take this water to the mounts. They are in the wood-store.»

«I will do that, mother. You had better go to Rachel's house. She promised me some fresh cheese. Tell her that I will pay her on the Sabbath» says John picking up two tubs full of water.

Only Jesus and Samuel remain. Jesus approaches the man who bending over the fire is blowing to light the flame and He lays His hand on his shoulder saying: «Judas interrupted us up there... I want to tell you that I will send you with My apostles the day after the Sabbath. Perhaps you prefer that...»

«Thank You, Master. I am sorry not to be near You. But in Your apostles I shall find You once again. Yes, I prefer to be far away from Judas. I did not dare to ask You...»

«All right, That is settled. And take pity on him. As I do. And do not tell Peter or anybody else ...»

«I can hold my tongue, Master.»

«The disciples will come later. There is Hermas and Stephen, and there is Isaac, two wise men and a just one, and many more. You will like it, among true brothers.»

«Yes, Master. You understand and help us. You really are the good Master» and he bends to kiss Jesus' hand.

566. In Ephraim, the day of the arrival of the Holy Mother, Lazarus and the women disciples. The character of Pilate.

12th February 1947.

566.1 ¹In Mary of Jacob's house they are already up although it is hardly daybreak. I would say that it must be a Sabbath, because I see that the apostles also are present, whereas they are usually away evangelizing. They are busy lighting fires and boiling water, and Mary is helped in sieving flour and kneading it to bake bread.

The old woman is very excited, as excited as a little girl, and while working actively she asks this one and that one: «Will it really be today? And are the other places ready? Are you sure that they are not more than seven?»

Peter, who is skinning a lamb preparing it to be cooked, replies on behalf of everybody: «They were to be here before the Sabbath, but the women were probably not yet ready and so they have delayed. But they will certainly come today. Ah! I am happy! Has the Master gone out? Perhaps He has gone to meet them...»

«Yes. He went out with John and Samuel towards the road to central Samaria» replies Bartholomew coming out with a pitcher of boiling water.

«Then we can be certain that they are arriving. He always knows everything» states Andrew.

«I would like to know why you are laughing like that. What is

there to laugh at when my brother speaks?» asks Peter who has noticed the sly laugh of Judas, who is idle in a corner.

«I am not laughing because of your brother. You are all happy and I can be happy as well and laugh without any reason.» Peter looks at him meaningly, but he resumes his work.

«Here it is! I managed to find a flowery branch. It is not the branch of an almond-tree, as I wanted. But after the almond-tree has bloomed, She has other branches and She will be pleased with mine» says Thaddeus who comes in dripping dew, as if he had been walking in woods, and carrying a bunch of flowery branches. A miracle of dewy whiteness that seems to brighten and decorate the kitchen.

«Oh! How beautiful! Where did you find them?»

«At Naomi's. I knew that her orchard is late because of its northern position. And I went up there.»

«That's why you look like a forest tree yourself! The dew-drops shine in your hair and have wet your garment.»

«The path was as damp as if it had rained. It is already the plentiful dew of the most beautiful months.» Thaddeus goes away with his flowers, and shortly afterwards he calls his brother to help him arrange them.

«I will come. I am an expert. Woman, have you an amphora with a thin neck, if possible of red clay?» says Thomas.

«I have what you want and other vases as well... The ones I used on feast days... for the weddings of my sons or some other important occasion. If you wait for me to put these cakes in the oven, only a moment, I will come and open the chest where the beautiful things are kept... Ah! they are only few now, after so much misfortune! But I have kept some to... remember... and to suffer, because even if they are memories of happy days, they now make one shed tears because they remind one of what is finished.»

«In that case it would have been better if no one had asked them of you. I would not like what happened to us at Nob to occur again here. So many preparations for nothing...» says the Iscariot.

«I tell you that a group of disciples informed us! Do you think they had dreamt of it? They spoke to Lazarus. He sent them ahead on purpose. They came to tell us that His Mother would

be here before the Sabbath in Lazarus' wagon, with Lazarus and the women disciples...»

«But they have not come...»

566.2 ²«Since you have seen that man, tell me: does he not give you a fright?» asks the old woman drying her hands in her apron after entrusting her cakes to James of Zebedee and Andrew who take them to the stone oven.

«A fright? Why?»

«H'm! a man who comes back from the dead!» She is utterly moved.

«Don't worry, mother. He is exactly like us» says James of Alphaeus comforting her.

«Rather than be afraid you had better make sure that you do not chatter with other women about it, otherwise we shall have the whole of Ephraim here bothering us» says the Iscariot peremptorily.

«I have never spoken imprudently since you came here, either with the people of the town or with pilgrims. I have preferred to be considered foolish rather than appear wise, in order not to disturb the Master and harm Him. And I will be quiet today as well. Come, Thomas...» and she goes out to show him her hidden treasures.

«The woman is frightened thinking that she will be seeing a man who has been raised from the dead» says the Iscariot laughing Ironically.

«She is not the only one. The disciples told me that they were all excited at Nazareth and also at Cana and Tiberias. One that comes back from the dead after being four days in a sepulchre is not as easily found as daisies in springtime. We were also very pale when he came out of the sepulchre! But instead of standing there making idle comments, could you not do some work? Everybody is working and there is still so much to be done... Go to the market, since you can do that today, and buy what is needed. What we bought is no longer sufficient, now that they are coming, and we had no time to go back to town and do some shopping. We would have been held up, where we were, by sunset.»

Judas calls Matthew, who comes into the kitchen dressed up, and they go out together.

566.3 ³The Zealot also comes into the kitchen, he is well dressed as

well, and he says: «Our Thomas! He is really an artist. With very little he has decorated the room as if it were for a wedding dinner. Go and see it.»

They all rush to see it, with the exception of Peter, who is finishing his work. Peter says: «I am dying to see them here. Perhaps Marjiam is with them. In a month's time it will be Passover. He must have already left Capernaum or Bethsaida.»

«I am happy, for the Master's sake, that Mary is coming. She will comfort Him more than anybody else. And He needs it» the Zealot replies to him.

«So much. And have you noticed how sad is John also? I have asked him. But in vain. In his kindness he is more firm than all of us, and if he does not want to speak, nothing can make him do so.

But I am sure that he is aware of something. And he seems to be the Master's shadow. He follows Him all the time. And he is always looking at Him. And when he knows that he is not being watched - because, if he knows, he looks at you with such a smile that would make even a tiger mild - when he knows that nobody is watching him, I say, his countenance is very sad. You should try and ask him. He is very fond of you. And he knows that you are more prudent than I am ...»

«Oh! certainly not. You have become an example of prudence for all of us. No one would recognise the old Simon in you. You are really the stone that by its hard sound compactness supports us all.»

«Not at all! Don't say that! I am a poor man. Certainly... by staying with Him for so many years, one becomes a little like Him. A little... very little, but quite different from what one was previously. We have all... no, not all of us, unfortunately. ^{566.4} Judas is always the same. Here as he was at the Clear Water...»

«And may God grant that he may always be the same!»

«What? What do you mean?»

«Nothing and everything, Simon of Jonah. If the Master heard me He would say: "Do not judge". But I am not judging. I am afraid. I am afraid that Judas is worse than he was at the Clear Water.»

«He certainly is, even if he is as he was then. Because he should have changed very much, he should have grown in jus-

tice, instead he is always the same. So in his heart there is the sin of spiritual indolence, which was not there previously. Because at the beginning... yes, he was mad, but he was full of goodwill... Tell me, the fact that the Master has decided to send Samuel with us and to gather together all the disciples, all those that can be gathered at Jericho for the new moon of Nisan, what does it make you think? Previously He had said that the man was to stay here... and He had also forbidden us to say where He was. It makes me suspicious...»

«No. In my opinion the situation is clear and logical. By now, we do not know by whom and how the news has been spread that the Master is here and it is known all over Palestine. You know that pilgrims and disciples have come here from Kedesh to Engedi, from Joppa to Bozrah. So there is no sense in keeping it secret any longer. Further, Passover is approaching and the Master certainly wants to have His disciples with Him for His return to Jerusalem. You heard that the Sanhedrin says that He has been defeated and has lost all His disciples. And He will reply to it by entering the town at the head of them...»

«I am afraid, Simon. Very much afraid... You have heard that everybody, also the Herodians, have joined together against Him...»

«Yes! It's true. May God help us!...»

«And why is He sending Samuel with us?»

^{566.5} «Certainly to prepare him for his mission. I see no reason why we should worry... ⁵They are knocking! It's certainly the women disciples!...»

Peter throws away his bloodstained apron and runs following the Zealot, who has rushed to the door of the house. All the others who are in the house appear from the various doors and shout: «Here they are! Here they are!»

But when they open the door they are so obviously disappointed in seeing Eliza and Nike, that the two women disciples ask: «Is there anything wrong?»

«No! No! The fact is that... we thought it was the Mother and the women disciples from Galilee...» says Peter.

«Ah! you have taken it badly. But we are very happy to see you and to hear that Mary is about to arrive» says Eliza.

«No, we have not taken it badly... We are disappointed! But

come! Come in! Peace be with our good sisters» says Thaddeus greeting them on behalf of everybody.

«And to you. Is the Master not in?»

«He has gone with John to meet Mary. We know that She is coming along the Shechem road in Lazarus' wagon» explains the Zealot.

They go into the house while Andrew takes care of Eliza's donkey. Nike has come on foot. They speak of what is happening in Jerusalem, they inquire after friends and disciples... after Annaleah, Mary and Martha, old John of Nob, Joseph, Nicodemus and many more. ^{566.6} «The absence of Judas Iscariot allows them to speak peacefully and openly.

Eliza, an elderly experienced woman, who at the time they were at Nob, has been in touch with the Iscariot and by now knows him very well and also «she only loves him out of love for God» as she says openly, asks whether he is in the house and does not want to join the others for some whim of his, and only after she learns that he is out, shopping, she speaks of what she knows: «that everything seems to have calmed down at Jerusalem, that not even the well known disciples are questioned any more, that it is rumoured that it happened because Pilate had spoken in a threatening voice to those of the Sanhedrin, reminding them that he is the only one who administers justice in Palestine and therefore they should put an end to their nonsense»

«But they also say» remarks Nike « - and it is Manaen who says this and other men with him, nay other women, because Valeria is the other voice - that Pilate is really so tired of all the risings that continuously excite the country and that may cause him trouble, and that he is also so struck by the insistence of the Jews in insinuating that Jesus is aiming at proclaiming Himself king, that if he did not have the concordant favourable reports of the centurions and above all, if he were not pressed by his wife, he would end up by punishing the Christ, if only by banishing Him, in order not to be troubled any more.»

«That would be the last straw. And he is capable of doing it! Quite capable! It is the lightest Roman punishment, and the most used after scourging. But can you imagine that! Jesus all alone, goodness knows where, and we scattered here and there...» says the Zealot.

«Of course! Scattered! That's what you say. But they will not scatter me. I will follow Him...» says Peter.

«Oh! Simon! Can you flatter yourself that they would allow you to do that? They tie you up like a galley slave, and they take you wherever they want, even on a galley or to one of their prisons, and you would no longer be able to follow your Master» says Bartholomew. Peter ruffles his hair looking perplexed and downhearted.

«We shall tell Lazarus. Lazarus will go to Pilate frankly. Pilate will certainly see him with pleasure because the Gentiles love to see extraordinary beings ...» says the Zealot.

«He has probably been there before he left, and Pilate may no longer be anxious to see him!» says Peter dejectedly.

«He will then go as Theophilus' son. Or he will take his sister Mary to visit the ladies of rank. They were friends when... well, when Mary was a sinner...»

566.7 ⁷«Do you know that Valeria, after her husband divorced her, has become a proselyte? She has been in earnest. She lives an honest life and is an example to many of us. She freed all her slaves and she instructs them in the true God. She had gone to live in Zion. But now that Claudia has come, she has gone back to her...»

«Then!...»

«No. She said to me: "As soon as Johanna comes I am going to stay with her. But now I want to convince Claudia"... Claudia does not seem to be able to get over the limit of her opinion on Christ. According to her He is a wise man. Nothing else... Nay before she came to town, she seems to have been somewhat upset by the rumours that were spread and to have said sceptically: "He is a man like our philosophers, and not of the best, because His word does not correspond to His life", and she had some... in short she allowed herself certain things that she had previously given up» says Nike.

«That was to be expected. Heathen souls! H'm! There may be a good one... But the others!... Corrupt! Corrupt!» Bartholomew says sententiously.

«And what about Joseph?» asks Thaddeus.

«Who? The man from Sephoris? He is terrified! Your brother Joseph came. He came and left at once, but he passed by Bethany

to tell the sisters that at all costs they should keep the Master from going to town and from remaining there. I was there and I heard him. Likewise I heard that Joseph of Sephoris had a lot of trouble and now he is very much afraid. Your brother asked him to keep well informed of what is plotted in the Temple. The man from Sephoris can find out through that relative who is the husband either of the sister or of the daughter of his wife's sister, I do not know, and who is employed at the Temple» says Eliza.

⁸«How much fear! Now, when we go to Jerusalem, I want to send my brother to Annas. I could go myself, because I also know the sly fox well. But John is more capable. And Annas was very fond of him, when we listened to the words of the old fox believing that he was a lamb! I will send John. He will be able to put up even with abuse without reacting. I... if he said anathema of the Master to me, or even if he only said that I am anathema because I follow Him, I would jump to his neck, I would seize him and squeeze his old stout body as if it were a net out of which water is to be squeezed. I would make him give back the wicked soul he has! Even if all the soldiers and priests of the Temple were around him!» 566.8

«Oh! if the Master heard you speak thus!» exclaims Andrew, who is utterly scandalised.

«I am saying so exactly because He is not here!»

«You are right! You are not the only one to have certain wishes. I have them, too!» says Peter.

«And I, too, and not only with regards to Annas» says Thaddeus.

«Oh! in that case I... would serve several of them. I have a long list... Those three old crocks of Capernaum - I leave out Simon, the Pharisee, because he seems to be tolerably good - those two wolves of Esdraelon, and that old heap of bones of Haniah, and then... a slaughter, a real slaughter, I tell you, at Jerusalem, with Helkai at the head of them all. I cannot bear those snakes lying in wait any longer!» Peter is furious.

Thaddeus, calm in speaking, but even more impressive in his glacial calm than if he were as furious as Peter, says: «And I would give you a hand. But... perhaps I would begin by removing the snakes close at hand.»

«Who? Samuel?»

«No. Not at all! Not only Samuel is close at hand. There are many who show a face but their souls are different from the face they show! I never lose sight of them. Never. I want to be sure before acting. But when I am sure! David's blood is hot, and hot is the blood of Galilee. They are both in me through my paternal and maternal lines.»

«Oh! In the event... tell me! I will help you...» says Peter.

«No. Blood revenge is the concern of relatives. It's for me to take it.»

566.9 ⁹«But, my dear children! Do not speak thus. That is not what the Master teaches! You look like little furious lions instead of being the lambs of the Lamb! Restrain so much spirit of revenge. The days of David went by long ago! The law of blood and retaliation has been cancelled by the Christ. He confirms the ten unchangeable commandments, but He cancels the other hard Mosaic laws. The commandments of Moses concerning pity, humanity and justice remain and are condensed and perfected in His greater commandment: "To love God with our whole-selves, to love our neighbour as we love ourselves, to forgive those who offend us, to love those who hate us". Oh! forgive me, if I, a woman, have dared to teach my brothers, who are greater than I am! But I am an old mother. And a mother can always speak. Believe me, my children! If you yourselves call Satan by hating enemies, by wishing for revenge, he will come into you and corrupt you. Satan is not strength. Believe me. God is strength. Satan is weakness, a burden, he us sluggishness. You would not be able to move a finger any more, not only against your enemies, but not even to caress our distressed Jesus, if hatred and revenge should enchain you. Cheer up, my dear children, all of you! Also those who are as old as I am, perhaps older. You are all sons for a woman who loves you, for a mother who has found once again the joy of being a mother by loving you as her children. Do not make me feel distressed once again, having lost my dear children again and for good; because if you die cherishing hatred or crime, you die forever, and we shall not longer be able to gather all together up there, in joy, around our common love: Jesus. Promise me here, at once, as I implore you, promise me, a poor woman, a poor mother, that you will never have such thoughts again. Oh! they even disfigure your faces. You seem strangers to me, you are dif-

ferent! How ugly hatred makes you! You were so meek! But what is happening? Listen to me! Mary would say the same words as mine to you, with greater power, because She is Mary; but it is better if She is not aware of all the grief... Oh! poor Mother! But what is happening? So have I to really believe that the hour of darkness has already come, the hour that will swallow everybody, the hour in which Satan will be king in everybody, with the exception of the Holy One, and he will lead astray also saints, you also, making you cowards, perjurers, as cruel as he is? Oh! so far I have always hoped! I have always said: "Men will not prevail against the Christ". But now! But now I am afraid and I tremble for the first time! I see the great Darkness, whose name is Lucifer, stretch out and invade this serene sky of Adar and darken all of you, and pour poisons that make you sick. Oh! I am afraid!» Eliza, who for some time had been weeping silently, drops with her head on the table at which she was sitting and sobs sorrowfully.

¹⁰The apostles look at one another. Then, although distressed, they begin to console her. But she does not want consolation and she says so: «One, only one is good for me: your promise. For your own good! So that Jesus may not have the greatest of His sorrows: to see you, His beloved disciples, damned.» 566.10

«Of course, Eliza. If that is what you want! Do not weep, woman! We promise you. Listen. We will not lift a finger against anybody. We shall not even look, so that we may not see. Don't weep. Don't weep! We will forgive those who offend us. We will love those who hate us! Don't weep.»

Eliza raises her face shining with tears and says: «Remember. You have promised it! Repeat your promise!»

«We promise you it, woman.»

«How dear you are, my children! Now I do like you! I see that you are good again. Now that my worry is appeased and that you are once again free from that bitter ferment, let us get ready to receive Mary. What is there to be done?» she asks and she finishes wiping her tears.

«Actually... we have prepared, as men can do. But Mary of Jacob helped us. She is a Samaritan, but she is very good. You will soon see her. She is out at the stone oven watching the bread. She is alone: her children are either dead or have forgotten her, her

riches have vanished, and yet she bears no one ill-will...»

«Ah! see! Can you see that there is who knows how to forgive also among heathens and Samaritans? And it must be dreadful you know to have to forgive a son!... Better dead than a sinner.

566.11 Ah. ¹¹Are you sure that Judas is not here.»

«If he has not become a bird, he cannot be here, because the windows are open, but all the doors are closed, except this one.»

«Then ... Mary of Simon has been to Jerusalem with her relative.

She came to offer sacrifices at the Temple. Then she came to us. She seems a martyr. How depressed she is! She asked me and everybody whether we had any news of her son. Whether he was with the Master. Whether he had always been with Him.»

«What is the matter with that woman?» asks Andrew quite astonished.

«Her son. Do you not think that it is enough?» asks Thaddeus.

«I comforted her. She wanted to go back to the Temple with us. We all went there together to pray... Then she left, always with her worry. I said to her: "If you stay with us, we shall be going to the Master shortly. Your son is there". She already knew that Jesus is here. It has been known as far as the borders of Palestine. But she said: "No, no! The Master told me not to be in Jerusalem in spring. I am obeying Him. But I wanted to go up to the Temple before He returned. I am in such need of God". And she said a strange word... She said "I am blameless. But I am so tortured that hell is in me and I am in it" ... We repeatedly asked her why. But she would not say anything else, with regards to her torture or to the reasons for Jesus' prohibition. She asked us not to say anything to Jesus or to Judas.»

«Poor woman! So will she not be there at Passover?» asks Thomas.

«No, she will not.»

«Well! If Jesus told her that, He must have a reason... Did you hear what she said, eh? It is really known everywhere that Jesus is here!» says Peter.

«Yes. And Some people said that those who were spreading the news were doing so to gather men in His name, to rise "against the tyrants". Others said that He is here because He realises that He has been unmasked...»

«Always the same reasons! They must have spent all the gold of the Temple to send those... servants of theirs everywhere!» remarks Andrew.

¹²There are some knocks on the door. «They are here!» they say and they rush to open. 566.12

It is instead Judas with his shopping. Matthew follows him. Judas sees Eliza and Nike and he greets them asking: «Are you alone?»

«All alone. Mary has not come yet.»

«Mary is not coming from the southern regions and thus she cannot be with you. I was asking whether Anastasica is here.»

«No. She remained at Bethzur.»

«Why? She is a disciple, too. Do you not know that from here we shall be going to Jerusalem for Passover? She should be here. If the women disciples and the believers are not perfect, who will be so? Who will form the train of the Master, to discredit the legend that everybody had abandoned Him?»

«Oh! with regards to that, it will not be a poor woman to fill the gaps! Roses are all right among thorns and in enclosed gardens. I act as her mother and I ordered that.»

«So will she not be there at Passover?»

«No, she will not.»

«And that makes two!» exclaims Peter.

«What are you saying? Which two?» asks Judas suspiciously.

«Nothing, nothing! A calculation of mine. Many things can be counted, can they not? Also... flies, for instance; that alight on my skinned lamb.»

Mary of Jacob comes in followed by Samuel and John who are carrying loaves just taken out of the oven. Eliza greets the woman and so does Nike. And Eliza has a kind word to make her feel at ease: «You are among sisters, in sorrow, Mary. I am alone as I lost husband and children, and she is a widow. So We will love one another, because only who has wept can understand.»

¹³In the meantime Peter says to John: «How come you are here? And the Master?» 566.13

«On the wagon. With His Mother.»

«And are you not saying anything?»

«You have not given me time. All the women are there. But you will see how worn out Mary of Nazareth is! She seems to

have aged years and years. Lazarus says that She was very upset when he told Her that Jesus had taken shelter here.»

«Why did that fool tell Her? Before dying he was intelligent. Perhaps His brain became mushy in the sepulchre and It has never recovered. One does not lie dead with impunity!...» says Judas of Kerioth ironically and scornfully.

«Nothing of the kind. You had better wait and listen, before speaking. Lazarus of Bethany told Mary when they were already on the way, as She was surprised at the road that Lazarus was taking» says Samuel sternly.

«Yes. The first time he passed through Nazareth he only said: "I will take You to Your Son in a month's time". He did not even say to Her: "We are going to Ephraim" when they were about to leave, but...» says John.

«Everybody knows that Jesus is here. Was She the only one who did not know?» asks always rudely Judas, interrupting his companion.

Mary knew. She had heard it being said. But since a muddy stream of several lies flows through Palestine, She did not accept any news as true. She was wasting away with grief, In silence, praying. But once they were on the road, as Lazarus had taken the road along the river, in order to bewilder the Nazarenes, and all those at Cana, Seforis, Bethlehem of Galilee...»

«Ah! Is Naomi also there with Myrtha and Aurea?» asks Thomas.

«No. They were ordered by Jesus not to come. When Isaac came back to Galilee he brought His order.»

«So... also these women will not be with us as last year.»

«No, they will not be with us.»

«And that's three!»

«Neither our wives and daughters. The Master told them before leaving Galilee. Nay, He repeated His order. Because my daughter Marian told me that Jesus had informed them since last Passover.»

«But... very well! Is at least Johanna there? Salome? Mary of Alphaeus?»

«Yes. And Susanna.»

566.14 «And Marjiam certainly... ¹⁴But what is that noise.»

«The wagons! The wagons! And all the Nazarenes who have

not surrendered and have followed Lazarus... and those from Cana...» replies John running away with the others.

Once the door is opened, a tumultuous sight can be seen. Besides Mary sitting near her Son and the women disciples, besides Lazarus, besides Johanna, in her wagon with Mary and Matthias, Esther and other maidservants and faithful Jonathan, there is a crowd of people with known faces and unknown ones. From Nazareth, Cana, Tiberias, Nain, Endor. And Samaritans from all the villages they passed through on their journey and from other nearby ones. And they rush to the front of the wagons, obstructing the passage to those who want to come out or go in.

«But what do these people want? Why have they come? How did they know?»

«Eh! those of Nazareth were on the look-out, and when Lazarus came in the evening to leave the following morning, during the night they ran to the nearby towns, and those from Cana did the same because Lazarus had passed there to get Susanna and to meet Johanna. And they followed and preceded him, to see Jesus and to see Lazarus. And also those of Samaria heard about it and they joined the rest. And here they are, all of them!...» explains John.

«Listen! You who were afraid that the Master would have no train do you think this one is sufficient?» Philip says to the Iscariot.

«They came for Lazarus ...»

«Once they had seen him, they could have gone away. Instead they remained and have come here. Which means that there are also some who came for the Master.»

«Well. Let us have no idle talk. Instead let us make way to let them go in. Come on, boys! In order to get into practice again! We have not elbowed our way through the crowd for the Master for a long time!» and Peter is the first to begin to open a passage through the crowd that sings hosannas, is curious, devout, talkative according to the various moods. And when he succeeds with the help of other people and of many disciples who, spread out among the crowds, are trying to join the apostles, he keeps the space empty so that the women may take shelter in the house with Jesus and Lazarus. He then closes the door, being the last one to go in, and he bars it and bolts it and sends the others to

close the door on the side of the kitchen garden.

566.15 ¹⁵«Oh! at long last! Peace be with You, blessed Mary! At last I see You! Now everything is beautiful because You are with us!» says Peter greeting Her and he stoops before Mary. A Mary with a sad pale tired face, it is already the face of Our Lady of Sorrows.

«Yes, everything is now less sorrowful because I am here near Him.»

«I had assured You that I was telling nothing but the truth!» says Lazarus.

«You are right... But the sun became obscured for Me and I had no peace when I heard that My Son was here... I understood. .. Oh!» More tears stream down Her wan cheeks.

«Do not weep, Mother! Do not weep! I was here among these good people, near another Mary who is a mother...» Jesus leads Her towards a room that opens onto the peaceful kitchen garden. They all follow Him.

Lazarus says apologising: «I had to tell Her, because She knew the road, and She could not understand why I was taking that one. She thought that He was with me at Bethany... And at Shechem also a man shouted: "We are going to Ephraim, too, to the Master". It was impossible for me to find an excuse... I was also hoping to outdistance those people by setting off at night along strange routes. Nothing doing! They were on the alert everywhere, and while one group followed me, another went around spreading the news.»

566.16 ¹⁶Mary of Jacob brings some milk, butter and new bread and offers them to Mary first. She looks Lazarus up and down stealthily, half-curious, half-frightened, and her hand jerks when, offering Lazarus some milk, she touches his hand lightly and she cannot help exclaiming «oh!» when she sees Him eat his cake like everybody else.

Lazarus is the first to laugh and he says in an affable gentlemanly manner, with the confidence of all men of high birth: «Yes, woman. I eat just like you, and I like your bread and your milk. And am sure I shall like your bed, because I feel tired exactly as I feel, hungry.» He turns around saying: «There are many who touch me with some excuse to feel whether I am flesh and bones, whether I am warm and I breathe. It is a bit of a nui-

sance. And when my mission is over, I will retire to Bethany. If I were near You, Master, I would stir up too many distractions. I have shone, I have borne witness to Your power as far as Syria. I shall now disappear. You alone must shine in the sky of miracles, in the sky of God and in the eyes of men.»

Mary in the meantime says to the old woman: «You have been good to My Son. He told Me how good you have been. Let Me kiss you to tell you how grateful I am to you. I have nothing to give you as a reward, except My love. I am poor, too... and I also can say that. I no longer have a son, because He belongs to God and to His mission... And may it always be so, because holy and just is what God wants.»

Mary is kind, but she is already heart-broken ... All the apostles look at Her compassionately to the extent of forgetting those who are rioting outside, and of inquiring after their far away relatives.

But Jesus says: «I will go up to the terrace to dismiss and bless the people», ¹⁷and Peter then rouses himself and asks: «But where is Marjiam? I have seen all the disciples but not him.» 566.17

«Marjiam is not here» replies Salome, the mother of James and John.

«Marjiam is not here? Why? Is he ill?»

«No. He is well. And your wife is well. But Marjiam is not here. Porphirea did not let him come.»

«Silly woman! In a month's time it will be Passover and he has to come for Passover! She could have let him come with you now and make the boy and me happy. But she is more backward than a sheep in understanding certain things...»

«John and Simon of Jonah, and you, Lazarus with Simon Zealot, come with Me. You, all of you, stay here where you are, until I dismiss the crowd, separating the disciples from it» orders Jesus, and He goes out with the four closing the door.

Through the corridor and the kitchen He goes out into the kitchen garden followed by Peter, who is grumbling, and by the others. But before setting foot on the terrace, He stops on the little staircase, He turns around laying a hand on the shoulder of Peter who raises his unhappy face.

«Listen to Me carefully, Simon Peter, and stop accusing and reproaching Porphirea. She is innocent. She obeyed an order of

Mine. Before the feast of the Tabernacles I ordered her not to let Marjiam come to Judaea...»

«But Passover, Lord!»

«I am the Lord. You say that. And as the Lord I can order anything, because every order of Mine is just. So do not be upset by scruples. Do you remember what is stated* in Numbers? "If anyone of your country becomes unclean by touching a dead body or is on a journey abroad, such person shall keep Passover for the Lord on the fourteenth day of the second month, in the evening".»

«But Marjiam is not unclean, I hope that Porphirea does not want to die just now, and he is not on a journey...» says Peter objecting.

«It does not matter. That is what I want. There are things that make one unclean more than a dead body. Marjiam... I do not want him to be contaminated. Let Me do as I wish, Peter. I know. Be obedient as your wife is and Marjiam, too. We shall keep the second Passover with him, on the fourteenth day of the second month. And we shall be so happy then. It's a promise.»

Peter makes a gesture as if to say: «Let us resign ourselves», but he makes no objection.

566.18 ¹⁸The Zealot remarks: «It is a lot if you do not continue your calculation of how many will not be in town at Passover!»

«I do not feel like counting any more. All this gives me a strange sensation... An icy feeling... Can the others be told?»

«No. I took you aside deliberately.»

«Then... I also have something to tell Lazarus in particular.»

«Tell me. If I can, I will reply to you» says Lazarus.

«Oh! even if you do not reply it does not matter. It is enough for me if you go to Pilate - the idea is of your friend Simon - and talking of various matters, you worm out of him what he is thinking of doing for Jesus, in good or in evil... You know... craftily... Because there are so many rumours!...»

«I will. As soon as I arrive in Jerusalem. I will go to Bethany via Bethel and Ramah instead of Jericho, and I will stop in my mansion in Zion, and I will go to Pilate. Don't worry, Peter, because I shall be skilful and sincere.»

* is stated in: Numbers 9,10-11.

«And you will waste your time for nothing, My dear friend. Because Pilate - you are aware of it as a man, I as God - is but a reed that bends to the side opposite the hurricane, endeavouring to avoid it. He is never insincere. Because he is always convinced that he wants to take action, and he does what he says in that moment. But a moment later, because of the howling of a storm from another direction, he forgets - oh! he does not break his promise or his will - he forgets, just that, what he wanted previously. He forgets because the cry of a will stronger than his makes him lose his memory, it blows away all the thoughts that another cry had placed in it, and replaces them with new ones. And then, above all the storms that with numerous voices, from that of his wife who threatens to separate if he does not do what she wants - and once he is separated from her, that is the end of all his strength, of his protection with "divine" Caesar, as they say, although they are convinced that this Caesar is more abject than they are... But they can see the Idea in the man, nay the Idea annihilates the man representing it, and one cannot say that the idea is unclean: every citizen loves and it is fair that he should love his Fatherland, and should want it to triumph... Caesar is the Fatherland... so also a miserable man is... great because of what he represents... But I did not want to speak of Caesar, but of Pilate! - So I was saying that above all the voices, from that of his wife to those of the crowds, there is the voice, oh! what a voice! of his ego. Of the small ego of the small man of the greedy ego of the greedy man, of the proud ego of the proud man; that smallness, that greed, that pride want to reign to be great, they want to reign to have superabundance of money, they want to reign to be able to rule over a multitude of subjects stooping to pay homage to them. Hatred is smouldering underneath, but the little Caesar named Pilate, our little Caesar does not see it... He can only see the backs bent feigning homage and fear before him or really feeling both. And because of the stormy voice of his ego he is prepared to do anything. I say: anything. Provided he may continue to be Pontius Pilate, the Proconsul, the servant of Caesar, the Ruler of one of the many regions of the empire. And because of all that even if now he is My defender, tomorrow he will be My judge, and inexorable. The thought of man is always uncertain. Most uncertain when that man's name is Pontius Pilate.

But, Lazarus, you may satisfy Peter... If that is to console him...»

«Not to console me, but... to calm me a little...»

«Then please our good Peter and go to Pilate.»

«I will go Master. But You have described the Proconsul as no historian or philosopher could have done. A perfect portrait!»

566.19 «I could likewise depict every man in his real image: his character. ¹⁹But let us go to these people who are rioting.»

He climbs the last steps and shows Himself. He raises His arms and says in a loud voice: «Men of Galilee and of Samaria, disciples and followers. Your love, your wishes to honour Me and My Mother and My friend by escorting their wagon, tell Me what your thoughts are. I can but bless you for such thoughts. But go back to your homes, to your business, now. You from Galilee, go and tell those who remained there that Jesus of Nazareth blesses them. Men of Galilee, we shall meet again in Jerusalem at Passover, and I will enter the town the day after the Sabbath before Passover. Men of Samaria, you may go, too, and do not confine your love for Me to following and looking for Me on the routes of the Earth, but on those of the spirit. Go and may the Light shine in you. Disciples of the Master, part from the believers and remain in Ephraim to receive My instructions. Go. Be obedient.»

«He is right. We are disturbing Him. He wants to be with His Mother!» shout the disciples and the Nazarenes.

«We are going away. But we want His promise first: that He will come to Shechem before Passover. To Shechem! To Shechem!»

«I will come. Go. I will come before going to Jerusalem for Passover.»

«Don't go! Don't go! Stay with us! With us! We will defend You! We will make You King and Pontiff! They hate You! We love You! Down with the Jews! Long live Jesus!»

«Silence. Stop rioting! My Mother suffers because of this shouting that can harm Me more than a voice cursing Me. My hour has not yet come. Go. I will come to Shechem. But remove from your hearts the thought that I, for base human cowardice and a sacrilegious rebellion against the will of My Father, may not fulfil My duty as an Israelite, worshipping the true God in the only Temple in which He can be worshipped, and as Messiah, by being crowned anywhere but in Jerusalem, where I shall be

anointed universal King according to the words and the truth foreseen by the great prophets*.»

«Down! There is no other prophet but Moses! You are a day-dreamer.»

«And you, too. Are you perhaps free? No, you are not. What is the name of Shechem? Its new name? And what happened to Shechem, happened also to many other towns in Samaria, Judaea and Galilee. Because the Roman mangonel has levelled us all alike. Is its name Shechem? No. Its name is Neapolis. As Beth-Shean is named Scythopolis, and many other towns that either by will of the Romans or by the will of adulating vassals have taken the names imposed by domination or by adulation. And you, as individuals are you going to be worth more than a town, more than our rulers, more than God? No. Nothing can change what is destined for the salvation of everybody. I follow the straight road. Follow Me, if you want to enter the eternal Kingdom with Me.»

²⁰He is about to withdraw. But the Samaritans are uproarious so much so that the Galileans react and those who were in the house rush out at the same time into the kitchen garden, and then up the staircase and on to the terrace. The sad pale distressed face of Mary is the first to appear behind Jesus' shoulders, and She embraces and clasps Him as if She wished to defend Him from the insults rising from below: «You have betrayed us! You took refuge among us making us believe that You loved us whereas now You despise us! And we shall be more despised through Your fault!» and so forth. 566.20

Jesus is approached also by the women disciples, by the apostles, and last by Mary of Jacob, who is frightened. The shouts from below explain the origin of the uproar, a remote but certain origin: «So why did You send Your disciples to us to tell us that You are persecuted?»

«I did not send anybody. Those from Shechem are over there. Let them come forward. What did I say to them one day on the mountain?»

«That is true. He said to us that He can only be a worshipper in the Temple, until the new time comes for everybody. Master,

* foreseen by the great prophets, as in: Isaiah 2,3.

we are not to be blamed, believe us. But they have been deceived by false messengers of Yours.»

«I know. But go now. I will come to Shechem just the same. I am not afraid of anybody. But go now so that you may not harm yourselves and those of your blood. Can you see over there the cuirasses of the legionaries shine in the sun as they go down the road? They have certainly followed you at a distance, seeing such a procession and they have remained waiting in the wood. Your shouting is now attracting them here. Go, for your own sake.»

In fact, far away on the main road that can be seen rising towards the mountains, the one on which Jesus found the starving man, it is possible to see lights gleam and move forward. The people disperse slowly. Those from Ephraim, the Galileans and the disciples remain.

«You may go to your homes as well, you people from Ephraim. And you, too, Galileans, please go away. Obey Him Who loves you.»

566.21

They also go away. ²¹Only the disciples remain and Jesus orders the apostles to let them go into the house and the kitchen garden. Peter goes downstairs with the others to open.

Judas of Kerioth does not go down. He laughs! He laughs saying: «You will now see how “the good Samaritans” hate You! To build the Kingdom You are scattering the stones. And stones dis-pelled from a building become weapons to strike. You have de-spised them!

And they will not forget.»

«Let them hate Me. I will not avoid doing My duty for fear of their hatred. Come, Mother. Let us go and tell the disciples what they are to do before I dismiss them» and between Mary and Lazarus He goes downstairs into the house where the disciples who gathered at Ephraim are crowded, and He orders them to spread everywhere informing all their companions to be at Jericho for the new moon of Nisan and wait for Him until He arrives, and to let the people or the villages through which they pass know that He will leave Ephraim and that they should look for Him, in Jerusalem at Passover.

He then divides them into three groups entrusting the new disciple Samuel to Isaac, Hermas and Stephen. Stephen greets Samuel saying: «The joy in seeing you relieves my pain to see

that everything becomes an obstacle for the Master.» Hermas instead greets him thus: «You left a man for a God. And God is now really with you.» Isaac, humble and bashful, only says: «Peace be with you brother.»

After handing out bread and milk that the people from Ephraim kindly think of offering, also the disciples depart and at last there is peace...

²²But while the lamb is being prepared, Jesus has still something to do. He approaches Lazarus and says to him: «Come with Me along the torrent.» Lazarus obeys promptly as usual. 566.22

They move away from the house about two hundred metres. Lazarus is silent waiting for Jesus to speak. And Jesus says: «I wanted to tell you this. My Mother is very depressed, as you can see. Send your sisters here. I will really go towards Shechem with all the apostles and women disciples. But then I will send them on to Bethany, while I will stay for some time in Jericho. I can still dare to keep some women here in Samaria, but not anywhere else...»

«Master! You really fear... Oh! if so why did You raise me from the dead?»

«To have a friend.»

«Oh!!! If that is the case, well, here I am. All sorrows, if I can comfort You with my friendship, are nothing to me.»

«I know. That is why I use and will use you as the most perfect friend.»

«Must I really go to Pilate?»

«If you think so. But for Peter. Not for Me.»

«Master, I will let You know... When are You leaving this place?»

«In eight days time. There is just enough time to go where I want and then be with you before Passover. I want to acquire new strength at Bethany, the oasis of peace, before plunging into the turmoil of Jerusalem.»

«Are You aware, Master, that the Sanhedrin is quite determined to create charges, since there are none, to compel You to flee for good? I learned that from John, the member of the Sanhedrin, when I met him by chance at Ptolemais, and he was very happy because of the son about to be born to him. He said «to me: "I am sorry that the Sanhedrin is so determined. Because I

would have liked the Master to be present at the circumcision of my child, as I hope it will be a boy. He is to be born early in the month of Tammuz. But will the Master still be among us by that time? And I would like... Because I would like little Immanuel, and that name will tell you what I think, to be blessed by Him at his first appearance in the world. Because my son, lucky fellow, will not have to struggle to believe, as we had to. He will be brought up in the Messianic times and it will be easy for him to accept the idea". John has arrived at believing that You are the Promised One.»

«And that one out of many compensates Me for what the others do not do. Lazarus, let us say goodbye here, in peace. And thank you for everything, My dear friend. You are a true friend. With ten friends like you it would have been pleasant to live among so much hatred ...»

«Now You have Your Mother, my Lord. She is worth ten... one hundred Lazarus. But remember that whatever You may need, if it is at all possible, I will get it for You: Give me Your orders, and I will be Your servant, in everything. I may not be wise or holy, like other people who love You, but if You exclude John, You will not be able to find another one more faithful than I am. I do not think that I am being proud saying this. ²³And now that we have spoken of You, I will tell You about Syntyche. I saw her. She is as active and wise as only a Greek woman, who has been able to become Your follower, can be. She suffers to be so far away. But she says that she enjoys preparing Your way. She hopes to see You before she dies.»

«She will certainly see Me. I do not disappoint the hopes of the just.»

«She has a little school attended by many girls of all places. But in the evening she keeps some poor little girls of mixed race, and thus of no religion. And she instructs them in Your doctrine. I asked her: "Why do you not become a proselyte? It would be of great help to you". She replied: "Because I do not want to devote myself to those of Israel, but to the empty altars awaiting a God. I prepare them to receive my Lord. Then, once His Kingdom is established, I will return to my Fatherland, and under the sky of Hellas I will spend my life preparing hearts for the masters. That is my dream. But if I should die before, of a disease or in a

persecution, I shall go away equally happy, because it means that I have fulfilled my work and that He calls to Himself the servant who has loved Him since the first time she met Him".»

«It is true. Syntyche has really loved Me since our first meeting.»

«I did not want to tell her how distressed You are. But Antioch resounds like a shell with all the voices of the vast Roman empire, and consequently also with what happens here. And Syntyche is aware of Your grief. And she suffers even more to be far away. She wanted to give me some money, which I refused, and I told her to use it for her girls. But I took a headgear woven by her with two types of byssus of different thickness. Your Mother has it. With the yarn Syntyche has described Your story, her own and that of John of Endor. And do You know how? By weaving a hem all around the square and representing on it a lamb that defends two doves from a pack of hyenas, one of the doves has both wings broken and the other has a broken chain that held it fastened. And the story proceeds, alternately, to the flight towards the sky of the dove with the broken wings and the voluntary captivity of the other at the feet of the lamb. It looks like one of those stories that Greek sculptors carve on the marble festoons of temples and on the stelae of their dead relatives, or painters paint on vases. She wanted to send it to You by my servants. I brought it.»

«I shall wear it because it comes from a good disciple. Let us go towards the house. When are you thinking of leaving?»

«Tomorrow at dawn. To let the horses rest. Then I will not stop until I arrive in Jerusalem and I will go to Pilate. If I succeed in speaking to him, I will send You his replies by Mary.»

They go slowly back into the house, talking of minor topics.

567. The parable of the torn cloth. A miracle on a woman giving birth. A long lecture to Judas of Kerieth caught while stealing.

15th February 1947.

^{567.1} Jesus is with the women disciples and the two apostles on one of the first undulations on the mountain behind Ephraim. Neither the children nor Esther are with Johanna. I think that they

have been sent to Jerusalem with Jonathan. So, besides Jesus' Mother there are only Mary Clopas, Mary Salome, Johanna, Eliza, Nike and Susanna. Lazarus' two sisters are not yet present.

Eliza and Nike are folding garments, which have certainly been washed in a stream that shines down in the valley, or have been brought here from the stream and then laid out on this sunny tableland. And Nike, after examining one of them, takes it to Mary Clopas saying: «Your son has unstitched also the hem of this one.» Mary of Alphaeus takes the garment and puts it near the others that are spread close to her on the grass.

All the women disciples are busy sewing and mending the damages done in the many months when the apostles were alone.

Eliza, who comes close to them with other dry garments, says: «One can see that for three months you have not had an experienced woman with you! There is not one garment in good order, with the exception of that one of the Master, Who on the other hand, has only got two, the one He is wearing and the one washed today»

«He has given them all away. He seemed to be seized with the mania for not possessing anything. He has been wearing linen clothes for many days» says Judas.

«Fortunately Your Mother thought She should bring You some new ones. The one dyed purple is really beautiful. You needed it, Jesus, although You look so handsome dressed in linen. You really look like a lily!» says Mary of Alphaeus.

«A very tall lily, Mary!» says Judas satirically.

«But He is so pure as you are certainly not and neither is John.

You are wearing a linen garment as well, but believe me, you do not look like a lily!» replies frankly Mary of Alphaeus.

«My hair is dark and so is my complexion. That is why I am different.»

«No. It does not depend on that. The fact is that your candour is on your exterior, His is instead within Him and it transpires through His eyes, His smile, His word. That is the situation. Ah! How lovely it is to be with my Jesus.» And the good Mary lays her toil-worn honest hand of an elderly hard working woman on the knee of Jesus, Who caresses it.

^{567.2} ²Mary Salome, who is inspecting a tunic, exclaims: «This is worse than a tear! Oh! son! Who closed this hole like that for

you?» and scandalised as she is, she shows her companions a kind of... very wrinkled navel, forming a raised ring on the cloth, held together by some very coarse stitches, enough to horrify a woman. The strange repair is the epicentre of a series of puckers that widen out radially on the shoulder of the tunic.

They all laugh. And John is the first - he did the mending - and he explains: «I could not go about with the hole, so... I closed it.»

«I can see that, poor me! I see that! But could you not get Mary of Jacob to mend it for you?»

«She is almost blind, poor woman! And then... the trouble was that it was not a tear! It was a real hole. The garment got stuck to the faggot I was carrying on my shoulder, and when I dropped the faggot from my shoulder, also a piece of the cloth came off. So I just repaired like that!».

«You spoiled it like that, son. I would need...» She inspects the tunic but shakes her head. She says: «I was hoping I could use the hem. But it is no longer there...»

«I took it off at Nob, because it was cut at the fold. But I gave your son the bit I removed...» explains Eliza.

«Yes. But I used it to make cords for my bag...»

«Poor sons! How badly you need us near you!» says the Blessed Virgin mending a garment belonging to whom I do not know.

«And yet some cloth is needed here. Look. The stitches have ended up by tearing the cloth all around, and a great damage has become an irreparable one; unless... I can find something to replace the missing cloth. Then... one will still see it... but it will be passable.»

«You have given Me the starting point for a parable ...» says Jesus, and Judas at the same time says: «I think I have a piece of cloth of that shade at the bottom of my bag, the scrap of a tunic that was too discoloured to be worn; so I gave it to a little man who was so much smaller than I am, that we had to cut almost two palms off it. If you wait, I will go and get it for you. But I should like to hear the parable first.»

«May God bless you. Listen to the parable first. In the meantime I will fit the cords on to this tunic of James. These ones are all worn out.»

«Speak, Master. Then I will make Mary Salome happy.»

«Yes. ³I compare the soul to a cloth. When it is infused, it is new, without tears. It has only the original stain, but it has no injuries in its structure, or stains or waste. Then with time and the acquisition of vices, it wears out at times to the extent of tearing, it becomes stained through imprudence, it breaks through disorder. Now, when it is torn one must not mend it clumsily, which would be the cause of many more tears, but it is necessary to mend it patiently and perfectly and for a long time to remove the damage already caused as much as possible. And if the cloth is too badly torn, nay if it has been so rent as to be deprived of a bit of it, one must not be so proud as to pretend to repair the damage by oneself but one must go to Him, Who is known to be able to make the soul strictly honest once again, as He is allowed to do everything and He can do everything. I am referring to God, My Father, and to the Saviour, Who I am. But the pride of man is such that the greater is the ruin of his soul, the more he tries to patch it up with unsuitable means that make the damage more and more serious. You may object that a tear can always be seen. Salome also said so. Yes, one will always see the damage a soul has suffered. But a soul fights its battle, it is therefore obvious that it may be struck. There are so many enemies around it. But no one, seeing a man covered with scars, the signs of as many wounds received in battle to gain victory, can say: "This man is unclean". On the contrary one will say: "This man is a hero. There are the purple marks of his worth". Neither will anyone ever see a soldier avoid being cured, because he is ashamed of a glorious wound, on the contrary he will go to the doctor and say to him with holy pride: "Here I am, I fought and I won. I did not spare myself, as you can see. Now heal my wounds that I may be ready for more battles and victories". He instead who is suffering from foul diseases, brought about by shameful vices, is ashamed of his sores before relatives and friends, and also before doctors and at times he is so silly that he conceals them until their stench reveals them. Then it is too late to remedy. The humble are always sincere, and they are also valiant fighters who have not to be ashamed of the wounds received in the struggle. The proud are always false and base, through their pride they end up by dying, as they do not want to go to Him Who can cure, and say: Him: "Father I have sinned. But, if You want, You can cure me".

Many are the souls that because of their pride in not wanting to confess an initial sin end up by dying. Then, also for them, it is too late. They do not consider that divine mercy is more powerful and more extensive than any plague, however powerful and extensive the latter may be, and that it can heal everything. But they, the souls of the proud when they realise that they have despised all means of salvation: fall into despondency, because they are without God, and when they say: "It is too late", they condemn themselves to the last death: to damnation. ^{567.4}And now, Judas, you may go and get the cloth...»

«I am going. But I did not like Your parable. I did not understand it.»

«But if it is so clear! I have understood it, and I am a poor woman!» says Mary Salome.

«And I have not. Once Your parables were more beautiful... Now... bees... cloth... towns changing names... souls that are boats... Such mean things, and so confused, which I do not like any more and I do not understand... But now I will go and get the cloth, because I say that it is in fact needed, but the garment will always be a spoilt one» and Judas stands up and goes away.

Mary lowered Her head more and more over her work, while Judas was speaking. Johanna instead raised hers, fixing her eyes on the imprudent apostle with indignant authority. Eliza also raised her head, but then she imitated Mary and Nike did the same. Susanna opened her big eyes wide, being astonished, and looked at Jesus and not at the apostle, wondering why He does not react. But no one has spoken or made any gesture. Mary Salome and Mary of Alphaeus, two women with common manners, looked at each other shaking their heads, and as soon as Judas goes away, Salome says: «It is his head that is spoilt!».

«Yes. That is why he understands nothing, and I do not think that even You will be able to mend it. If my son were like that, I would break his head. Yes, as I made it for him that it might be the head of a just man, so I would break it. It is better to have a disfigured face than a disgraced heart!» says Mary of Alphaeus.

«Be indulgent, Mary. You cannot compare your sons, who were brought up in an honest family, in a town like Nazareth, to this man» says Jesus.

«His mother is good. His father was not a wicked man, so I heard» replies Mary of Alphaeus.

«Yes. But his heart was not lacking in pride. That is why he took his son away from his mother too early, and he also helped in developing the moral heritage, that he had given his son, by sending him to Jerusalem. It is painful to say, but the Temple is certainly not the place where hereditary pride may diminish...» says Jesus.

«No place in Jerusalem, even if it is a place of honour, is suitable for diminishing pride or any other fault» says Johanna with a sigh. And she adds: «And not even any other place of honour, whether at Jericho or Caesarea Philippi, at Tiberias or at the other Caesarea...» and she sews quickly bending her face over her work more than is necessary.

«Mary of Lazarus is imperious, but not proud» remarks Nike. «Now. But previously she was very proud, just the opposite of her relatives, who were never such» replies Johanna.

«When are they coming?», asks Salome.

«Soon, if we are to leave in three days time.»

«Let us work quickly, then. We shall just manage to finish everything in time» says Mary of Alphaeus urging them.

567.5 ⁵«We were late in coming because of Lazarus. But it was better so because Mary was spared much work» says Susanna.

«But do You feel You can do so much walking? You are so pale and tired, Mary!» asks Mary of Alphaeus laying her hand on Mary's lap and looking at Her anxiously.

«I am not ill, Mary, and I can certainly walk.»

«No, You are not ill, but You are so distressed, Mother. I would give ten and ten years of my life, and I would embrace all sorrows, to see You once again as I saw You the first time» says John who looks at Her compassionately.

«Your love is already a medicine, John. I can feel My heart calm down when I see how you all love My Child. Because there is no other cause for My suffering. None, except seeing that He is not loved. I am already recovering here, close to Him, and among you, who are so faithful. Of course... those months... all alone at Nazareth... after seeing Him depart so distressed, already so persecuted... and hearing all those rumours... oh! How much! How much grief. Now, being near Him, I see, I say: "At least My

Jesus has His Mother to comfort Him and say words that drown other words” and I see also that love is not completely dead in Israel. And I have peace. A little peace. Not much... because...» Mary does not say anything else. She lowers Her face that She had raised to speak to John, and it is only possible to see the top of Her forehead that blushes through a mute emotion... and then two tears shine on the dark garment She is mending.

Jesus sighs and stands up, He goes and sits down at Her feet in front of Her, and He rests His head on Her knees, kissing Her hand that is holding the cloth and remaining thus like a child who is resting. Mary removes the needle from the cloth, in order not to hurt Her Son, and then She lays Her right hand on His head bent on Her knees and She looks up towards the sky, and She certainly prays although She does not move Her lips; from Her whole attitude it is clear that She is praying. She then bends to kiss Her Son’s hair near His bare temple.

6The other women do not speak until Salome says: “But how long is it taking Judas? The sun will be setting and I shall not be able to see!» 567.6

«Someone has probably detained him» replies John and he asks his mother: “Shall I go and tell him to hurry?»

«You had better go. Because if he has not found the cloth, I will shorten your sleeves, as it will soon be summer, and I will make another garment for you for autumn, because you cannot wear this one any longer, and with the piece I take off, I will mend this one here. It will be all right to go fishing. Because after Pentecost you will certainly come back to Galilee...»

«I will go, then» says John and being always kind he asks the other women: «Have you any garments already mended that I can take to our lodging’s? If you have, give them to me. You will have less to carry on your way back.»

The women gather together what they have already mended and give it to John, who turns round to go away ⁷but he stops at once seeing Mary of Jacob running towards them. 567.7

The old woman is plodding along as fast as her old age allows her, and she shouts to John: «Is the Master there?»

«Yes, mother. What do you want?»

The woman replies while continuing to run: «Adah is ill, very ill... And her husband would like to call Jesus to comfort her.

But as those Samaritans have been... so wicked, he does not dare I said: "You do not know Him yet. I will go and... He will not say no to me".» The old woman is panting after hurrying uphill.

«Don't rush any farther. I will come with you. Nay, I will go ahead. Follow us slowly. You are old, mother, to hurry thus» Jesus says to her. Then He says to His Mother and the women disciples: «I am staying in the village. Peace to you.»

He takes John by the arm and runs down fast with him. The old woman takes breath and would like to follow Him after replying to the women who ask her questions: «H'm! Only the Rabbi can save her. Otherwise she will die like Rachel. She is becoming cold and is losing her strength and she is writhing in the spasms of pain.»

But the women detain her saying: «But have you tried with hot bricks under her kidneys?»

«No! It is better to wrap her in woollen cloth soaked in wine with spices, as warm as possible.»

«I was helped, for James, by unctions with oil and then by hot bricks.»

«Make her drink a lot.»

«If she could stand straight and take a few steps while a woman rubbed her kidneys hard.»

The women mothers, that is all of them, except Nike and Susanna, and Mary, Who did not suffer the labour pains of every woman when She gave birth to Her Son, advise this or that remedy.

«Everything! They have tried everything. But her kidneys are too tired. It is the eleventh child! But I am going now. I have taken breath. Pray for that mother! That the Most High may keep her alive until the Rabbi arrives there.» And she toddles away, the poor good lonely old woman.

567.8 ⁸Jesus in the meantime is going down fast towards the town that is warmed by the sun. He enters the town at the side opposite the one where their house is, that is at north-west of Ephraim, whereas Mary of Jacob's house is south-east of it. He walks fast, without stopping to speak to those who would like to detain Him. He greets them and goes on.

A man remarks: «He is angry with us. Those from other villages behaved badly. He is right.»

«No. He is going to Janoe. His wife is dying at her eleventh delivery.»

«Poor children! And is the Rabbi going there? How good He is. Although offended, He helps.»

«Janoe did not offend Him. None of us offended Him!»

«But they were men of Samaria.»

«The Rabbi is just and He can tell one from another. Let us go and see the miracle.»

«We shall not be able to go in. It's a woman and she is giving birth.»

«But we shall hear the new-born baby cry and it will be the voice of a miracle.»

They run to join Jesus. Other people also gather together to see. ^{567.9} Jesus arrives at the house, which is disconsolate because of the impending misfortune. The ten children - the oldest is a young girl in tears pressed by younger brothers who are weeping - are in a corner in the vestibule near the wide open door. Old wives are going and coming, whispers are heard and the shuffling of bare feet moving on the brick floor.

A woman sees Jesus and shouts: «Janoe! You can hope! He has come!» and she runs away with a steaming pitcher.

A man rushed and prostrates himself. He makes only a gesture and says: «I believe. Mercy! For them» and he points at his children.

«Stand up and take heart. The Most High helps those who have faith and He has mercy on His distressed children.»

«Oh! come, Master! Come! She is already black. Choked by convulsions. She can hardly breathe. Come!» The man, who has lost his head, and ends up by losing it completely upon hearing the cry of an old woman who shouts: «Janoe, run! Adah is dying!», pushes and pulls Jesus to make Him go quick towards the room of the dying woman, deaf to Jesus' words: «Go, and have faith!»

The poor man has faith, but what he lacks is the capability to understand the meaning of those words, the secret meaning of the certainty of a miracle. And Jesus, pushed and pulled, climbs the steps to go into the room upstairs, where the woman is. But He stops on the landing of the staircase, at about three metres from the open door, through which it is possible to see the deadly

pale face that is already livid and contracted in the mask of agony. The old wives make no further efforts. They have already covered the woman up to her chin and are looking at her. They are petrified awaiting her death.

Jesus stretches out His arms and shouts: «I want it!» and He turns round to go away.

The husband, the old women, the curious people who have gathered together are disappointed, because they probably expected Jesus to do something more astonishing and to see the baby be born at once. But Jesus, elbowing His way and fixing His eyes on their faces while passing before them, says: «Do not be in doubt. Have faith for a little longer. For a moment. The woman has to pay the bitter tribute of childbirth. But she is out of danger.» And He goes downstairs leaving them disconcerted.

But when He is about to go out onto the road, saying to the ten frightened children when passing near them: «Be not afraid! Your mummy is all right» - and in saying so He touches their scared faces with His hand - a loud cry resounds in the house and spreads as far as the road where Mary of Jacob is just arriving and who shouts: «Good gracious!» thinking that that cry meant death.

«Be not afraid, Mary! And go quickly! You will see the baby being born. She has recovered strength and she is in labour again. But there will soon be great joy.»

567.10

¹⁰He goes away with John. No one follows Him because everybody wants to see whether the miracle will take place, nay, more people rush towards the house, because the news has spread that the Master had gone to save Adah. And so, slipping into a secondary little street, Jesus can go without any hindrance to a house which He enters calling: «Judas! Judas!» Nobody replies.

«He went up there, Master. We can go home as well. I will put here the garments of Judas, of Simon and of Your brother James, and then I will put those of Simon Peter, Andrew, Thomas and Philip in Anna's house.»

They do so and I realise that in order to make room for the women disciples, the apostles, if not all of them, at least part of them, have spread out in other houses.

As they have now got rid of all the garments, they go towards the house of Mary of Jacob, talking to each other, and they go

in through the kitchen garden little gate, which is always left ajar.

The house is silent and empty. John sees a pitcher full of water laid on the floor, and probably thinking that the old lady had put it there before being called to assist the woman in childbed, he picks it up and goes towards a room that is closed. Jesus loiters in the corridor taking off His mantle and folding it with His customary care before putting it on the chest in the vestibule.

¹¹John opens the door and utters «ah!» almost in terror. He drops the pitcher and covers his eyes with his hands, bending as if to grow smaller, to disappear, not to see. From the room comes the noise of coins falling on the floor tinkling. 567.11

Jesus is already at the door. It took me longer to describe the scene than it took Him to arrive. He vehemently pushes aside John who moans: «Away! Go away!». He opens the door that was ajar and goes in.

It is the room where they take their meals, now that the women are there. In it there are two old coffers reinforced with iron fittings and in front of one of them, opposite the door, there is Judas livid, his eyes full of anger and dismay at the same time with a bag in his hands... The coffer is open... there are coins on the floor and more fall on it from an open bag, half inclined on the edge of the coffer. Everything testifies, in a manner that leaves no doubt to what was happening. Judas entered the house, he opened the coffer and stole. He was stealing.

No one speaks. No one moves. But it is worse than if they all shouted and rushed at one another. Three statues. Judas the demon, Jesus the Judge, John terrorised by the revelation of his companion's baseness.

The hand of Judas holding the bag trembles, and the coins in it tinkle with a dull sound.

John is trembling from head to foot, and although he still has his hands pressed against his mouth, his teeth are chattering while his frightened eyes look more at Jesus than at Judas.

Jesus does not quiver. He is straight and glacial, so stiff as to be glacial. At last He takes a step, He makes a gesture, and utters one word. A step towards Judas; a gesture: to make a sign to John to withdraw; a word: «Go!»

But John is afraid and moans: «No! No! Don't send me away.

Let me stay here. I will not say anything... but leave me here, with You.»

«Go away! Be not afraid! Close all the doors... and if anybody comes... whoever it may be... even My Mother... do not let them come here. Go! Obey!»

«Lord!...» John is so entreating and broken-hearted that he seems to be the guilty one.

«Go, I tell you. Nothing will happen. Go» and Jesus moderates His order by laying His hand on the head of His Favourite and caressing it. And I now see that His hand is trembling. And John feels that it is trembling and takes it and kisses it with a sob that says so many things. He goes out.

567.12 ¹²Jesus bolts the door. He turns around to look at Judas who must be really crushed if he, who is so daring, dare not say one word or make one gesture. Jesus goes straight in front of him, going around the table, which is in the middle of the room. I cannot say whether He moves fast or slow. I am too frightened by His face to be able to measure time. I can see His eyes and I am afraid like John. Judas himself is afraid, he draws back between the coffer and a wide open window, the red light of which, as it is sunset, is projected on Jesus.

What a sight are Jesus' eyes! He does not say one word. But when He sees a kind of picklock stick out from the belt of Judas' tunic, He has a fearful outburst of rage. He raises His arm with its clenched fist as if He wanted to strike the thief, and His lips begin to utter the word: «Cursed!» or «Curse!». But He controls Himself. He stops His arm that was about to strike, and He breaks the word at the first three letters. And with an effort of self-control that makes His whole body tremble, He just unclenches His fist and lowers His raised arm to the level of the bag that Judas has in his hand and He snatches it and throws it on the floor, saying in a dull voice while He tramples on bag and coins and scatters them with controlled but dreadful fury: «Away! Filth of Satan! Cursed gold! Spittle of hell! Snake's poison! Away!»

Judas who uttered a stifled cry when he saw Jesus on the point of cursing him, does not react any further. But another cry is heard from beyond the closed door when Jesus throws the bag on the floor. And John's cry irritates the thief. It gives him back his demoniac daring. It makes him furious. He almost flings himself

on Jesus shouting: «You had me spied upon to bring dishonour on me. Spied by a foolish boy who cannot even keep quiet. Who will shame me in front of everybody! That's what You wanted. In any case... Yes. That's what I want, too. I want that! To force You to drive me away! To force You to curse me! To curse me! To curse me! I have tried everything to make You reject me.» He is hoarse with rage and as ugly as a demon. He is panting as if something were choking him.

In a low but dreadful voice Jesus repeats to him: «Thief! Thief! Thief!» and He ends saying: «A thief today. A murderer tomorrow. Like Barabbas. Worse than him.» He breathes that word on his face as they are now very close to each other, at each sentence of the other.

¹³Judas takes breath and replies: «Yes. A thief. Through Your fault. All the evil I do is attributable to You, and You never get tired of ruining me. You save everybody. You give love and honours to everybody. You accept sinners, prostitutes do not disgust You, You treat thieves, usurers and Zacchaeus' procurers in a friendly way, You welcome the spy of the Temple as if he were the Messiah. You fool! And You have appointed an ignorant man as our chief, an excise-man as Your treasurer, a fool as Your confidant. But with me, You ration even farthings, You do not leave me a coin, You keep me close to You as a galley-slave is tied to the rowing bench, You do not even want us, I say us, but it is I, only I who must not accept the offerings of pilgrims. Because You do not want me to touch money, You ordered everyone not to take money from anybody. Because You hate me. Well: I hate You, too! You were not able to strike and curse me a little while ago. Your curse would have reduced me to ashes. Why did You not lay Your curse upon me? I would have preferred that, rather than see You so inept, so enfeebled such a finished defeated man...» 567.13

«Be quiet!»

«No! Are You afraid that John may hear? Are You afraid that at long last he may realise who You are and he may leave You? Ah! So You are afraid, although You play the hero! Yes, You are afraid! And You are afraid of me. You are frightened! That's why You could not curse me. That's why You pretend to love me whereas You hate me! To blandish me! To keep me quiet. You know that I am powerful. You know that I am the power. The

power that hates You and will defeat You! I promised You that I will follow You until death offering You everything, and I have offered You everything, and I will be near You until Your hour and mine. What a magnificent king who cannot curse and drive people away! King of clouds! Idol king! Foolish king! Liar! Betrayer of Your own destiny. You have always despised me, since the first time we met. You have not corresponded to me. You thought You were wise. You are an idiot. I taught You the good road. But You... Oh! You are the pure one! You are the creature that is man but is God, and You despise the advice of the Intelligent One. You have been mistaken since the first moment and You are mistaken. You... You are... Ah!»

567.14 ¹⁴The torrent of words stops suddenly and a lugubrious silence replaces so much clamour and a lugubrious stillness after so many gestures. Because, while I was writing without being able to say what was happening, Judas, bending just like a wild dog that points a prey and approaches it ready to dash on it, has come closer and closer to Jesus, with a face that it was impossible to look at his fingers hooked like claws, his elbows pressed against his sides as if he were on the point of assailing Jesus, Who does not show the least sign of fear and moves turning around to open the door with His back to the other, who could attack Him seizing Him by His neck. But he does not do that and Jesus opens the door and looks to see whether John has really gone away. The corridor is empty and almost dark, as John has closed the door opening onto the kitchen garden after going out. Jesus then bolts the door and leans against it, waiting, without a gesture or word, for the fury to abate.

I am not competent, but I do not think that I am wrong. If I say that Satan himself spoke through Judas' lips and that this is a moment of obvious possession by Satan of the perverted apostle, who is already on the threshold of the Crime and is damned through his own will. The very manner how the torrent of words stopped, leaving the apostle dumbfounded, reminds me of other scenes of possession seen in the three years of Jesus public life.

Jesus, leaning against the door, all white against the dark wood, does not make the least gesture. Only His eyes, powerful in grief and fervour look at the apostle. If one could say that eyes pray, I should say that Jesus' eyes are praying while

He looks at the wretch. Because not only authority transpires from those eyes, which are so distressed, but also the fervour of prayer. Then, towards the end of Judas' words, Jesus opens His arms, so far held pressed against His body, but He does not open them to touch Judas or to make any gesture towards him, or to raise them towards the sky. He opens them horizontally, taking the posture of the Crucified, there, against the dark wood and the reddish wall. It was then that the last words from Judas' lips slow down and he utters that «Ah!» that interrupts his speech.

Jesus remains still, with His arms stretched out, with His eyes always fixed on the apostle, with a look of sorrow and prayer. And Judas, like one coming out of delirium, rubs his forehead and sweaty face with his hand... he thinks, he recollects, and remembering everything he collapses on the floor, whether weeping or not, I do not know. He certainly falls on the floor, as if his strength failed him.

¹⁵Jesus lowers His eyes and arms, and in a low but clear voice 567.15
He says:

«Well? Do I hate you? I could strike you with My foot, I could tread on you calling you "worm", I could curse you, as I freed you from the power that makes you rave. You thought that My impossibility to curse you was weakness. Oh! it is not weakness! It is because I am the Saviour. And the Saviour cannot curse. He can save. He wants to save... You said: "I am the strength. The strength that hates You and will defeat You". I also am the Strength, nay, I am the only Strength. But My strength is not hatred. It is love. And love does not hate and does not curse, never.

The Strength could also win single battles, like this one between you and Me, between Satan who is in you, and Me, and remove your master from you, for good, as I did now by transforming Myself into the sign that saves, the Tau that Lucifer abhors. It could win also these single battles as it will win the oncoming one against incredulous murderous Israel, against the world and against Satan defeated by Redemption. It could win also these single battles as it will win the last one, remote for those who count by centuries, close at hand for those who measure time with the measure of eternity. But of what avail would it be to infringe the perfect rules of My Father? Would it be justice? Would it be merit? No. It would be neither justice nor merit.

It would not be justice with regards to guilty men, who have not been deprived of the freedom of being so, and who on the last day could ask Me the reason for their damnation and reproach Me for My partiality for you alone. Ten thousand and one hundred thousand people, seventy times ten thousand and one hundred thousand people will commit the same sins as yours and will become demons through their own wills, and they will be the offenders of God, the torturers of their fathers and mothers, killers, thieves, liars, adulterers, lewd and sacrilegious people, and in the end deicides, killing the Christ materially on a day close at hand, killing Him spiritually in future times. And each of them could say to Me, when I will come to separate lambs from billy-goats, to bless the former and curse, then, yes, to curse the latter, to curse them because there will be no further redemption then, but glory or damnation, to curse them once again after cursing them individually at their death, first, and at their individual judgement. Because man, and you know this because you have heard Me say so a hundred, a thousand times, because man can save himself while he is alive, up to his last breath. An instant, a thousandth of a minute is sufficient for a soul to say everything to God, to ask to be forgiven and obtain absolution... Each of them, I was saying, each of these damned souls could say to Me: "Why did You not tie us to Good, as You did with Judas?". And they would be right.

567.16 ¹⁶Because every man is born with the same natural and supernatural things: a body, a soul. And while the body, being generated by men, may be more or less robust and healthy at birth, the soul, created by God, is the same for everybody, endowed by God with the same properties and gifts. Between the soul of John, I mean the Baptist, and yours, there was no difference, when they were infused into your bodies. And yet I tell you that, even if Grace had not presanctified him, so that the Herald of the Christ might be without stain, as all those who announce Me ought to be, at least with regards to actual sins, his soul would have been, would have become, quite different from yours. Nay, yours would have become quite different from his. Because he would have preserved his soul in the freshness of innocence, nay, he would have adorned it more and more with justice complying with the will of God, Who wishes you to be just, developing the gratuitous

gifts received with greater and greater heroic perfection. You instead... You have ruined and dissipated your soul and the gifts God had given it. What have you done with your free will? What with your intellect? Have you kept for your spirit the freedom that belonged to it? Have you used the intelligence of your mind intelligently? No, you have not. You who do not want to obey Me, I do not say Me-Man, but not even Me-God, you have obeyed Satan. You have used the intelligence of your mind and the freedom of your spirit to understand Darkness. Voluntarily. Good and Evil were placed before you. You chose Evil. Nay, only Good was placed before you: I. Your eternal Creator, Who followed the evolution of your soul, Who was aware of such evolution because the Eternal Thought is aware of everything that happens since Time began to exist, placed Good before you, Good only, because He knows that you are weaker than an alga growing in a ditch.

¹⁷You shouted to Me that I hate you. Now, as I am One with the ^{567. 17} Father and with the Love, One here as One in Heaven - because if there are two Natures in Me, and the Christ, because of His human nature and until victory will free Him from human limitations, is at Ephraim and cannot be elsewhere at the same moment; as God, the Word of God, I am in Heaven as on the Earth as My Divinity is always omnipresent and omnipotent - now, as I am One with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the charge you made against Me, you made it against God One and Trine. Against that God Father Who created you out of love, against that God Son Who became Incarnate to save you out of love, against that God Spirit Who has spoken to you so many times to instil good wishes into you, out of love. Against that God One and Trine Who has loved you so much, Who brought you on My way, making you blind to the world to give you time to see Me, deaf to the world, to enable you to hear Me. And you!... And you!... After seeing and hearing Me, after coming freely to the Good, realising with your intellect that that was the only path of true glory, you rejected the Good and you have freely given yourself to Evil. But if through your free will you wanted that, if you have always more and more rudely rejected My hand that was offered to you to pull you out of the vortex, if you have always moved farther and farther away from the harbour to plunge into the raging sea of passions, of Evil, can you say to Me, to Him from Whom I

come, to Him Who formed Me as Man to try to save you, can you say that We have hated you?

You reproached Me for wanting what is evil for you... Also a sick child reproaches the doctor and his mother for the bitter medicines they make him drink and for the things he wishes to have and they deny him for his own good. Has Satan made you so blind and mad that you do not understand the true nature of the action I took on your behalf, and that you can call malevolence and wish to ruin you what is a provident cure of your Master, of your Saviour, of your Friend to restore you to health? I kept you close to Me... I took money away from your hands. I prevented you from touching that cursed metal that drives you crazy... But do you not know, do you not feel that it is like one of those magic potions that bring about an unquenchable thirst, and produce in the blood a fierce heat, a fury that leads one to death? I can read your thoughts. You are asking yourself: "Why, then, for such a long time You allowed me to be the administrator of the money?" Why? Because if I had prevented you from touching money earlier, you would have sold yourself and you would have stolen earlier. You sold yourself just the same because there was little you could steal... But I had to try to avoid that without doing violence to your freedom. ¹⁸Gold is your ruin. Because of gold you have become lustful and treacherous...»

«There You are! You believed Samuel's words! I am not.»

Jesus, Who had become more and more animated in speaking, without ever assuming a violent tone or threatening punishment, suddenly utters a cry of authority, I would say a cry of anger. He darts a furious look at Judas who has raised his face to speak those words and imposes «Be quiet!» in a voice that sounds like the roar of thunder.

Judas falls back on his heels again and speaks no more.

There is silence and Jesus with visible effort recomposes His humanity in such a composure and with such powerful control that testifies by itself the divinity that is in Him. He resumes speaking in His usual voice that is warm and kind also when it is severe, persuasive, conquering... Demons only can resist that voice.

«I am not in need of information from Samuel or anybody else to know what you do. But, you wretch! Do you know in front of

Whom you are? It is true! You say that you do not understand My parables any longer. You no longer understand My words. Poor wretch! You do not even understand yourself any more. You do not even understand good and evil any more. Satan, to whom you have given yourself in many ways, Satan whom you have followed in all the temptations he presented to you, has made you stupid. And yet once you understood Me. You believed that I am He Who I am! And you still retain a clear memory of that. And can you believe that the Son of God, that God needs the words of a man to know the thought and the actions of another man? You are not yet perverted to such an extent as not to believe that I am God, and that is where your greatest fault lies. The proof that you believe Me to be such is that you are afraid of My wrath. You realise that you are not struggling against a man, but against God Himself, and you shiver. You shiver, Cain, because you can but see and think of God as the Avenger of Himself and of innocents. You are afraid that it may happen to you as it happened to Korah, Dathan and Abiram* and their followers. And yet, as you know Who I am, you struggle against Me. I should say to you: "Cursed!". But I would no longer be the Saviour...

¹⁹You would like Me to reject you. You do everything, you say, to achieve that. Such reason does not justify your actions. Because it is not necessary to commit sin in order to part from Me. You can do that, I tell you. I have been telling you since Nob, when you came back to Me, one pure morning, filthy with lies and lust, as if you had come out of hell to fall into the mud of a pigsty, or on the litter of libidinous monkeys, and I had to struggle against Myself not to repel you with the tip of My sandal like a revolving rag and to check the nausea that was upsetting not only My spirit but also My bowels. I have always told you. Even before accepting you. Even before coming here. Then, I made that speech just for you, only for you. But you always wanted to stay. For your own ruin. You! My greatest grief! But you, o heretical founder of a large family that will come after you, you think and say that I am above sorrow. No. I am only above sin. I am only above ignorance. Above the former, because I am God. Above the

* Korah, Dathan and Abiram, whose rebellion and its consequences are narrated in Numbers 16 and remembered in: Leviticus 10,1-3; Psalm 106,16-18; Sirach 45,18-20.

latter, because there can be no ignorance in the soul unspoiled by the Original Sin. But I am speaking to you as a Man, as the Man, as Adam the Redeemer Who has come to make amends for the Sin of Adam the sinner, and to show what man would have been if he had remained as he was created: innocent. Among the gifts given by God to that Adam was there not an intelligence without impairment and a very great science, as the union with God instilled the light of the Almighty Father into His blessed son? I, the new Adam; am above sin through My own will...

567.20 ²⁰One day, a long time ago, you were surprised that I had been tempted, and you asked Me whether I had ever yielded to temptation. Do you remember? And I replied to you. Yes, as I could reply to you... Because since then you were such... an impoverished man that it was useless to open the most precious pearls of Christ's virtues under your eyes. You would not have understood their value and... you would have mistaken them for... stones, as they were of such an exceptional size. Also in the desert I replied to you repeating the words, the meaning of the words I had spoken to you that evening while going towards Gethsemane. If John or also Simon Zealot had repeated that question to Me, I would have replied in a different manner, because John is pure and he would not have asked with the malice with which you asked, as you were full of malice... and because Simon is an old wise man, and although he is not unacquainted with life, as John is, he has achieved that wisdom that can contemplate every episode without being upset in its ego. But they did not ask Me whether I had yielded to temptations, to the most common temptation, to that temptation. Because in the irreproachable purity of the former there are no memories of lust, and in the contemplative mind of the latter there is so much light to see purity shine in Me. You asked... and I replied to you. As I could. With that prudence that must never be separated from sincerity, both being holy in the eyes of God. That prudence that is like the treble veil, stretched between the Holy and the people, to conceal the secret of the King*. That prudence that adapts words to the person listening to them, to his intellectual power of understanding, to his spiritual purity and to his justice. Because certain truths mentioned

* the secret of the King, as in: Tobit 12,7.

to corrupt people become for them the object of laughter, not of veneration...

²¹I do not know whether you remember all those words. I do. ^{567.21}

And I am repeating them here, just now that we are both on the brink of the Abyss. Because... But it is not necessary to say that. I said in the desert, in reply to the question that My first explanation had not satisfied: "The Master never felt that He was superior to man to be the 'Messiah', on the contrary knowing that He was the Man, He wanted to be so in everything except sin. To be masters it is necessary to have been pupils. I knew everything as God. My divine intelligence was able to make Me understand also the struggles of man through intellectual power and intellectually. But one day some poor friend of Mine could have said: 'You do not know what it means to be a man and to have senses and passions'. It would have been a just reproach.

I came here to get ready not only for My mission, but also for temptation. A satanic temptation. Because man could not have had power over Me. Satan came when My solitary union with God ceased and I perceived that I was the Man with real flesh subject to the weaknesses of the flesh: hunger, tiredness, thirst, cold. I felt matter with its needs, morale with its passions. And if through My will I subdued evil passions at birth, I allowed the holy ones to grow". Do you remember those words? And I also said, the first time, to you, to you alone: "Life is a holy gift and is to be loved holily. Life is a means serving a purpose, which is eternity". I said: "Then let us give life what it needs to last and to serve the spirit in its conquest: continence of the flesh in its lusts, continence of the mind in its wishes, continence of the heart in all the passions belonging to humanity, infinite ardour for Heavenly passions, love for God and our neighbour, goodwill to serve God and our neighbour, obedience to the voice of God, heroism in good and in virtue".

²²Then you told Me that I was able to do that because I was ^{567.22} holy, but you could not do it because you were a young man, full of life. As if to be young and strong were an excuse to be vicious, and only old and sick people, being impotent, because of their age or weakness to do what you were thinking, burning as you are with lewdness, were free from sensual temptations! I could have replied to you with many arguments, then. But you were not able

to understand them. You are not able even now, but at least now you cannot smile with your incredulous smile, if I tell you that a healthy man can be chaste, if he does not accept the allurements of the demon and of senses, of his own free will. Chastity is spiritual love, it is an impulse that influences the body and pervades it all, elevating, scenting and preserving it. He who is imbued with chastity has no room for any other evil incentives. Corruption does not affect him. There is no room for it. And then! Corruption does not enter one from the outside. It is not an impulse penetrating inside from the outside. It is an impulse that from inside, from the heart, from thoughts comes out and penetrates and pervades the exterior: the flesh. That is why I said* that corruption comes from the heart. Every adultery, every lust, every sensual sin does not originate outside. But it comes from the intense activity of the mind, which being corrupt, clothes everything it sees with alluring appearance. All men have eyes to see. How come then that a woman who leaves ten men impassive, as they look at her as a creature like themselves and they also consider her a beautiful work of Creation without feeling obscene incentives and phantoms rise in them, upsets the eleventh man and leads him to shameful concupiscence? Because the heart and thought of the eleventh man are corrupt and where ten see a sister, he sees a female.

567.23 ²³Although I did not say that to you then, I told you that I had come just for men, not for the angels. I have come to give back to men their royalty of children of God teaching them to live as gods. God is without lewdness, Judas. But I want to show to all of you that man also can be without lewdness. I wanted to show you that one can live as I teach you. To show you that I had to take a real body and thus be able to suffer the temptations of man and say to man, after instructing him: "Do as I do". And you asked Me whether I had sinned when I was tempted. Do you remember? As I saw that you could not understand that I had been tempted without sinning, because you thought that temptation was unbecoming for the Word and that it was impossible for the Man not to sin, I replied to you that everybody can be tempted, but only those are sinners who want to become so. Great was your surprise and

* I said, in 301.6.

you were incredulous, so much so that you insisted saying: "Have You ever sinned?". It was then possible for you to be incredulous. We had known each other only for a short time. Palestine is full of rabbis whose lives are the antitheses of their doctrine.

But now you know that I have not sinned, that I do not sin. You know that even the fiercest temptation provoking a healthy virile man, who lives among men and is circumvented by them and by Satan, does not disturb Me to the extent of making Me commit sin. On the contrary, every temptation, although its virulence increased when it was rejected, because the demon made it fiercer to overcome Me, was a greater victory. And not only with regard to lewdness, a whirl that revolved around Me without succeeding in shaking or scratching My will There is no sin where there is no consent to temptation, Judas. There is instead sin, even without consummating the act, when one accepts the temptation and contemplates it. It may be a venial sin, but it prepares the way to mortal sin in you. Because when one accepts the temptation and allows one's thought to linger over it, following the phases of a sin mentally, one grows weaker. Satan is aware of that, and that is why he repeatedly hurls blazing thrusts, always hoping that one may penetrate and work inside... Afterwards... it would be easy to change the person who is tempted into a sinner.

You did not understand that then. You could not understand it. You can now. Now you are less deserving to understand than you were then, yet, I repeat those words that I spoke to you, for you, because it is in you, not in Me, that the repelled temptation does not subside... It does not calm down because you do not repel it completely. You do not consummate the act, but you brood over the thought of it. That is what happens today, and tomorrow... Tomorrow you will fall into real sin. That is why I taught you, then, to ask the help of the Father against temptation, I taught you to ask the Father not to lead you into temptation. I, the Son of God, I, Who had already defeated Satan, asked the Father for help, because I am humble. You did not. You did not ask salvation and preservation of God. You are proud. That is why you collapse...

²⁴Do you remember all that? And can you now understand what it means to Me, true Man, with all the reactions of man, and true God, with all the reactions of God, to see you thus: lustful, 567.24

liar, thief, betrayer, homicide? Do you realise what stress you impose on Me, having to put up with your being near Me? Do you know how laborious it is for Me to control Myself, as I am doing now, to fulfil My mission for you till the very end? Any other man would have seized you by your throat, seeing you, a thief, intent on picking the lock of a coffer and stealing money, and learning that you are a traitor and worse than a traitor... I have spoken to you, still with pity. Look. It is not yet summer and the cool breeze of the evening is coming in through the window, and yet I am perspiring as if I had been working at a very hard task. But do you not realise how much you cost Me? Or what you are? Do you want Me to drive you away? No, never. When a man is drowning, he who lets him go is a murderer. You are between two forces attracting you, Satan and Me. But if I leave you, you will have him only. And how will you save yourself? And yet you will leave Me... You have already left Me with your spirit... Well, I will still keep Judas' chrysalis near Me. Your body deprived of the will to love Me, your body inert towards Good. I will keep it until you exact also claim this nonentity, that is, your mortal remains, to join them to your spirit and sin with your whole-self

567.25 ²⁵Judas!... Will you not speak to Me? Have you not one word for your Master? Not even a prayer? I do not expect you to say: "Forgive me!". I have forgiven you too many times in vain. I know that that word is a mere sound on your lips. It is not an impulse of your contrite spirit. I would like an impulse of your heart. Are you so dead as to have no further wishes? Speak! Are you afraid of Me? Oh! if you were afraid! At least that! But you are not afraid of Me. If you were afraid of Me, I would repeat the words that I spoke to you on that remote day when we spoke of temptations and sins: "I tell you that also after the Crime of Crimes, if its culprit should rush to the feet of God with true repentance, and implored Him with tears to be forgiven, offering himself to expiation with confidence, without despairing, God would forgive him, and through expiation, the culprit would still save his soul". Judas! If you are not afraid of Me, I still love you. Have you nothing to ask My infinite love in this hour?»

«No. Or at the most one thing only: that You order John not to speak. How do You expect me to make amends if I am a disgrace among you?». He says so with arrogance.

And Jesus replies to him: «And you say so like that? John will not speak. But at least you, and I ask you this, must behave in such a way that nothing may leak out about your ruin. ²⁶Pick up ^{567. 26} those coins and put them back into Johanna's bag... I will try to close the coffer... with the tool you used to open it... »

And while Judas with a bad grace picks up the coins that had rolled everywhere, Jesus leans on the open coffer, as if He were tired. The light is fading in the room, but not so much as to prevent one from seeing Jesus weep silently, looking at His apostle stoop to pick up the scattered coins.

Judas has finished. He goes towards the coffer. He takes Johanna's large heavy bag, puts the coins in it and closes it saying: «There it is! » He moves aside.

Jesus stretches out His hand to take the coarse picklock made by Judas and with a trembling hand He gets the spring-lock to work closing the coffer. He then rests the iron bar on His knee and bends it in V shape, pressing it down completely with His foot, making it unserviceable. He then picks it up and hides it in His chest. In doing so some tears fall on His linen tunic.

Judas at long last has a gesture of resipiscence. He covers his face with his hands and bursts into tears saying: "I am cursed! I am the opprobrium of the Earth! »

«You are the eternal wretch! And to think that, if you wanted, you could still be happy! »

«Swear it to me! Swear that no one will be told... and I swear to You that I will redeem myself» shouts Judas.

«Do not say: "and I will redeem myself". You cannot. I alone can redeem you. He who was speaking through your lips a short while ago, can be defeated only by Me. Tell Me the words of humbleness: "Lord, save me! ", and I will free you from your ruler. Do you not understand that I am waiting more for that word of yours, than for a kiss of My Mother? »

Judas is weeping, but he does not say that word.

«Go. Go out of here. Go up to the terrace. Go wherever you wish, but make no noisy scene. Go. Go. No one will find you out, because I shall be watching. As from tomorrow you will keep the money. Everything is quite useless now. »

Judas goes out without replying. Jesus, now all alone, drops on a seat near the table and with His head resting on His arms

folded on the table He weeps distressingly.

567.27 ²⁷After some minutes John enters quietly and stops for an instant at the door. He is as white as death. He then runs towards Jesus and embraces Him imploring: «Do not weep, Master! Do not weep! I love You also for that wretch...» He lifts Him, kisses Him, drinks the tears of his God and weeps, too.

Jesus embraces him and the two fair-haired heads, close to each other, exchange tears and kisses. But Jesus soon controls Himself and says: «John, for my sake forget what happened. I want that.»

«Yes, my Lord. I will try to do that. But do not suffer any more... Ah! How sorrowful! And he made me sin, my Lord. I lied. I had to lie because the women disciples came back. No. The relatives of the woman came first. They wanted You to bless You. A baby boy was born without complications. I said that You had gone back to the mountain... Then the women disciples came and I lied again saying that You were out and that You had probably gone to the house where the baby was born... I could not find any other excuse. I was so dumbfounded! Your Mother saw that I had wept and She asked me: "What is the matter with you, John?". She was excited... She seemed to know. I lied for the third time saying: "I am moved because of that woman...". Being close to a sinner can lead to such an extent! To falsehood... Absolve me, my Jesus.»

«Be at peace. Forget all about this hour. Nothing. It was nothing... A dream...»

«But it is Your sorrow! Oh! how changed You are, Master! Tell me this, only this: has Judas at least repented?»

«And who can understand Judas, son?»

«None of us. But You can.»

Jesus replies only with fresh silent tears streaming down His tired face.

«Ah! He has not repented! ...» John is terrified.

«Where is he now? Have you seen him?»

«Yes. He looked out of the terrace. He looked to see whether there was anybody, and when he saw me all alone, as I was sitting under the fig-tree, utterly anguished, he ran downstairs and went out through the little gate of the kitchen garden. Then I came in...»

«You have done the right thing. Let us tidy up in here, putting the chairs back in their places, and pick up the amphora, so that there are no traces ...»

«Did he scuffle with You?»

«No John. He did not.»

²⁸«You are too upset, Master, to remain here. Your Mother ^{567.28} would understand... and She would be grieved.»

«That is true. Let us go out... Give the key to our next-door neighbour. I will go ahead, along the banks of the stream, towards the mountain...»

Jesus goes out and John remains to tidy up the place. Then he goes out as well. He gives the key to a woman who lives in a house nearby and he runs away, hiding among the bushes on the bank, not to be seen.

At about one hundred metres from the house there is Jesus sitting on a rock. Upon hearing the steps of the apostle He turns around. His face is pale in the evening light. John sits on the ground close to Him and rests his head on His lap, raising his face to look at Him. He sees that there are still tears on Jesus' cheeks.

«Oh! do not suffer any more! Do not suffer any more, Master! I cannot bear to see You suffer!»

«And am I not to suffer because of that? My deepest grief! Remember that John: this will be forever My deepest grief! You cannot understand everything yet... My deepest grief...» Jesus is depressed. John is holding Him close to himself, with his arms round His waist, anguished at not being able to console Him.

Jesus raises His head, opens His eyes that He had closed to refrain His tears and says: «Remember that we are in three to know: the culprit, you and I. And no one else must know.»

«No one will learn it from me. But how could he do that? While he took the money of the community... But that!... I thought I had become mad when I saw... Horrible!»

«I told you to forget...»

«I am trying hard, Master. But it is too horrible...»

«It is horrible. Yes, John, it is! Oh! John!» And Jesus, embracing His Favourite rests His head on his shoulder and weeps desolately.

The shadows, which become rapidly deep in the thicket, hide in their darkness the two who are embracing each other.

568. The beginning of the journey in Samaria,
starting from Ephraim to Shiloh.

24th February 1947.

568.1 ¹«Let us follow You, Master. We shall not trouble You» implore many people of Ephraim who have gathered in front of the house of Mary of Jacob, who is weeping all her tears leaning against the post of the wide-open door.

Jesus is in the middle of His twelve apostles; farther away, in a group around His Mother there are Johanna, Nike, Susanna, Eliza, Martha and Mary, Salome and Mary of Alphaeus. The men and the women are in traveling clothes, with tunics tucked up and girded to leave their feet free, with new sandals fastened not only at their ankles but also at the lower part of their legs by means of small strips of interlaced leather, as is customary when one has to take impassable roads: The men have burdened themselves also with the bags of the women disciples.

The people implore Jesus to let them follow Him, while the little ones scream, with their little faces and arms raised: «A kiss! Take me in Your arms! Come back, Jesus! Come back soon to tell us many beautiful parables! I will keep the roses of my garden for You! I will not eat any fruit to keep it for You! Come back, Jesus! My little sheep is about to lamb and I want to give You the lambkin with its wool You can have a tunic made like mine... If You come soon I will give You the cakes my mother makes with the early corn...» They chirrup like many little birds around their great Friend, they pull His tunic, hang on to His belt trying to climb up to His arms lovingly despotic, so much so that Jesus is prevented from replying to the adults, because there is always another face to kiss.

«Away! That's enough! Leave the Master alone! Women! Take your children!» shout the apostles who are anxious to set off in the early morning hours. And stretching out their hands they give gentle slaps to the most intrusive ones.

«No. Leave them. Their kindness is fresher to Me than this dawn. Leave them and Me alone. Allow Me to be comforted by their love, which is pure and free from interests and trouble» says Jesus defending His little friends and as he stretches out His arms, His wide mantle hangs down and receives them under its

blue protecting wings. And the little ones press against one another in the warm blue dim light and become happily silent, like chicks under motherly wings.

²Jesus at last can say to the adults: «You may come, if you think you can do so.» 568.2

«And who will stop us, Master? We are in our region!»

«The corn, the vines and orchards need all your work, and the sheep are to be shorn and this is their mating time, and those that mated in the past season are about to lamb, and it is time to make hay...»

«It does not matter, Master. The elderly people can see to the shearing and mating of the sheep, and the children, and women to their lambing, and also to the hay. The orchards and fields can wait. Because if the corn is already hardening in the ears, it is still early to cut it, and vineyards, olive-groves and orchards have only to let their abundant fruit ripen in the sunshine. There is nothing we can do for them until harvest-time, just like the mother of a family who can do nothing to bake the bread until the dough rises. The sun is the yeast of fruits. It's for him to act now, as the wind did previously fecundating the blossoms along the branches. In any case... If we should lose some bunches of grapes, or some fruits, or if bearbines or darnels should suffocate some ears of corn, it would be a very small damage as compared with losing one of Your words!» says an old man whom I have always seen highly honoured in the village.

«You are right. So let us go. ³Mary of Jacob, I thank you and I bless you, because you have been a good mother to Me. Do not weep! Those who have accomplished a good deed must not weep.» 568.3

«Ah! I am losing You and I shall not see You again!»

«We shall certainly meet again.»

«Are You coming back here, Lord?» asks the woman smiling through her tears. «When?»

«I shall not come back, as now...»

«Then, where shall we meet again, if I, a poor old woman, cannot come along the roads of the world looking for You?»

«In Heaven, Mary. In the House of our Father. Where there is room for Judaeans and for Samaritans, where there is a place for those who will love Me in spirit and truth. You are already doing

so, because you believe that I am the Son of the true God...»

«Oh! I do believe that! But there is no hope for us because You alone love us without discrimination.»

«When I have gone, these (and He points at the apostles) will come in my stead. And in memory of Me they will not ask who it is who requests to join the flock of the true and only Shepherd.»

568.4 «I am old, Lord. I shall not live so long as to see that. You are young and strong, and Your Mother will have You for a long time, and those who love You and belong to Your people will have You ... ⁴Why are You weeping, O Mother of the Blessed Lord?» she asks, amazed at seeing tears drop from the Blessed Virgin's eyes.

«I have nothing but My grief... Goodbye, Mary. May God bless you for what you have done to My Son. And remember that if your sorrow is great, there is no sorrow greater than Mine, and there never will be on the Earth. Never! Remember the sorrowful Mary of Nazareth... Goodbye!» And Mary parts from the old woman weeping after kissing her on the doorstep and She sets off among the women, with John beside Her.

And John, with his usual lightly bent posture and his face raised looking at Her, says: «Do not weep thus, Mary. If many hate Your Jesus, many love Him. Comfort Your spirit, Mother, looking at these who now and in the course of ages will love Your Son with their whole selves» and he concludes in a low voice, almost whispering the words to Mary alone, Whom he guides and supports holding Her elbow so that She may not stumble against the stones of the path, blinded as She is by Her tears: «Not every mother will be able to see her child loved... There are some who will shout distressingly: "Why did I conceive him?"»

568.5 ⁵Jesus joins them, as Mary and John have remained alone, a little behind the women disciples. James of Alphaeus is with Jesus. The others are behind in a group, as pensive and sad as the women disciples, who are ahead of them all. Last, in a group, many men from Ephraim, talking in low voices to one another.

«Goodbyes are always sad, Mother. Particularly when one does not know that an end is the beginning of something more perfect. It is the sad consequence of sin. And it will remain even after forgiveness. But men will bear it with greater courage as they will have God as their friend.»

«You are right, Jesus. But there is a sorrow that God lets us

relish although He is the most fatherly Friend there can be. He is such to Me. Oh! God is good! So good. I should not like James and John, or anybody else to be scandalised by My tears. God is good. He was always good to poor Mary. I have repeated that to Myself every day since I was able to think. And now... now I say so every hour... every moment. The more grief is impending the more I say so to Myself... God is good. He gave You to Me: a loving holy Son and such, even only as a creature, as to compensate every sorrow of a woman... He gave You to Me, a poor girl elevated to Mother of His incarnate Word... And the joy of being able to call You "Son", My adored Lord, is so great that no tear should drop from My eyes, whatever the torture may be, if I were as perfect as You teach us. But I am a poor woman, Son! And You are My Creature... And... Which mother can refrain from weeping when she knows that her creature is hated, and she knows?... Son, succour Your maid-servant... Certainly there was still pride in Me when I thought I was strong... But then... the time was still remote ... Now it is here... I perceive it... Succour Me, Jesus, My God! If God allows Me to suffer thus, it is certainly for a good purpose for Me. Because if He wanted, He could let Me suffer only for what happens... It was He Who formed You in My womb thus!...How... There is no comparison to explain how You made Yourself... But He wants Me to suffer... and may He be blessed for that... always. But help Me, Jesus. Help Me all of you... all of you... because it is so bitter the sea in which I have to quench My thirst»

«Let us say the prayer. The four of us, who love You with all our hearts, Mother. Here, I Your Son, and John and James who love You as if You were their mother... Our Father, Who art in Heaven...» and Jesus, guiding the little chorus of the three voices that follow Him in a low tone, says all the Lord's Prayer, stressing certain sentences such as: «thy will be done» ... «lead us not into temptation.» He then says: «Well. The Father will help us to do His will, even if our weakness of human beings is such that we think we are not able to do it, and He will not lead us into the temptation of thinking that He is not so good, because while we drink of the very bitter chalice, He will send His angel to wipe our embittered lips with heavenly comfort.» Jesus is holding by the hand His Mother Who has bravely struggled with Her

tears restraining them in the bottom of Her heart. The two apostles are beside them: John is near Mary and James of Alphaeus is near Jesus, and they look at them deeply moved.

568.6 ⁶The women disciples have looked back now and again hearing Mary weep and the prayer of the four. But they have refrained from joining them.

In the rear, the apostles have asked one another: «But why is Mary weeping thus?» I said the apostles, but I mean all of them with the exception of Judas of Kerioth, who is proceeding all alone, and looks very pensive, almost gloomy, so much so that Thomas notices it and says to the others: «But what is the matter with Judas that he looks like that? He looks like one sentenced to death!»

«Who knows?! He may be afraid to go back to Judaea» replies Matthew.

«I... What did the Master tell you about the money?» asks the Zealot.

«Nothing in particular. He said to me: "We are now going back to the previous situation. Judas will be the treasurer and you the bestowals of alms. The women disciples want to help us with regard to expenses". I could not believe that it was true! I have handled so much money that I hate it.»

«And the women disciples are helping very well. These sandals are so safe... One does not feel as if one were walking on a mountain. I wonder how much they cost!» says Peter looking at his feet shod with the new sandals that protect both heels and toes and support ankles with the thin leather strips.

«Martha got them. One can see her rich provident hand. In the past we used to tie them like this as well, but the strings were a torture. We did not lose the soles, but we lost the skin of our legs...» says Andrew.

«And they hurt heels and toes... That's why he who is behind us always wore them like these!» says Peter pointing at Judas of Kerioth.

568.7 ⁷The road climbs towards the crest of the mountain. Looking back one can see Ephraim all white in the sun, and the village seems already so far below them...

Then the apostles mingle with the women disciples to help them climb up the path that is very steep on that spot, and Bar-

tholomew, who has been left behind, says to the people from Ephraim: «You have shown us a very difficult path, my friends. »

«Yes, but beyond that wood there is a good road that will take you to Shilo in a short time. So you will be able to rest there longer than if you arrived by night along a different road» replies one.

«You are right. The harder the road, the quicker it takes you to your destination. »

«Your Master is aware of that. That is why He does not spare Himself! Ah! we shall never forget!... Above all that He has helped us these last days, although He had heard some people of our region insult Him so unfairly. He alone is good and so He helps also those who hate Him. »

«You did not hate Him. »

«No, we did not. But there are many more whom we do not hate and yet we are hated without any reason. »

«Do what He does, without any fear, and you will see that... »

«Then, why do you not do so? It's the same thing. We are here, you are there, and a mountain between us: the one raised by common errors. Above: the common God. Then, why do neither we nor you climb the slope to meet up there, at the feet of God, close to one another? »

Bartholomew understands the just reproach, because in his undeniable virtue, he has the fixed idea of being an Israelite and is inflexible with regards to what is not Israel. He changes the subject without giving a direct reply and says: «It is not necessary to climb. God has come down among us. It is sufficient to follow Him. »

«To follow Him, we agree. We should like to do that. But if we went to Judaea with Him, would we not damage Him? You, too, are aware of what He is accused and of what we are accused: of being Samaritans, that is, demons. »

Bartholomew sighs and parts from them saying: «They are beckoning to me to go... » and he quickens his step.

Those from Ephraim look at him go away and one whispers: «Ah! »He is not like Him! How much we lose by losing Him! » and he makes a gesture of discouragement.

⁸«Do you know, Elias, that yesterday evening He took a large sum of money to the head of the synagogue, who is to hand it to

568. 8

Mary of Jacob, so that she may not suffer the pangs of hunger any more?»

«No, I don't. Why did He not give it to her?»

«He did not want to be thanked by the old woman. She does not know yet. I know because the head of the synagogue told me, to ask my advice whether he ought to buy her John's property, that his brother wants to sell, or he should give her the money a little at a time. I advised him to buy John's property. It will give her enough corn, oil and wine to live without starving. Whereas the money... That...»

«So it is really a large sum?!» says a third man.

«Yes. Our head of the synagogue received quite a lot, also for other poor people in town and in the country. That "they also may keep the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, to greet the new time" the Master said.»

«He must have said the new year.»

«No. He said: "the new time". In fact the head of the synagogue is not going to use that money before the Feast of the Unleavened Bread.»

«Oh! and what did He mean?» ask many.

«What does it mean? I don't know. Nobody knows. Not even John, His beloved apostle, nor Simon of Jonah, who is the head of the disciples. I asked them and the former became pale, the latter became engrossed in thought like one who is trying to guess.»

«And what about Judas of Kerioth? He is important among them. Perhaps more than the other two He knows everything, so he says. He may know also that. Let us go and ask him. He likes to say what he knows.»

568.9 ⁹They hurry to join Judas who is lonely as at the beginning, all alone, by now, on the path, because the others have gone around a bend and they seem to have been swallowed up by the green thicket on the slope.

«Judas, listen to us. The Master says that He wants a great celebration for the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, to greet the new time. What does He mean?»

«I don't know. Am I perhaps in the mind of the Master? Ask Him since He loves you so much» and he quickens his step leaving them disappointed,

«He is not the Master either. There is not one who has His

pity...» they say shaking their heads.

«Well, are we following them? We are following Him! And we are doing the right thing. Let us go. Perhaps, we may learn from His lips, before He goes to Judaea, what He meant to say.»

And they quicken their paces joining the others, who are resting in a wood of age-long oak-trees, facing one of the most beautiful views in Palestine.

569. In Shiloh, the parable of the ill advisers.

27th February 1947.

^{569.1} Jesus is speaking in the middle of a square planted with trees.

The sun which is just beginning to set, brightens it with a yellow-green light, glimmering through the new leaves of gigantic plane-trees. A thin precious velarium seems to be spread over the large square filtering the sun-light without obstructing it.

Jesus says:

«Listen. Once a great king sent his beloved son to a part of his kingdom, whose justice he wanted to test and he said to him:

“Go everywhere, do good to the people in my name, inform them of me, make me known and loved. I grant you full powers, and everything you do will be well done”. The king’s son, after being blessed by his father, went where he had been sent and with some squires and friends he began, working untiringly, to cover that part of his father’s kingdom.

Now, through a series of unhappy events, that region was morally broken up into parts opposed to one another. Each part was making a great fuss on its own account, and was sending urgent entreaties to the king to tell him that each was the best and the most loyal, and that the neighbouring ones were perfidious and deserved to be punished. So the king’s son found himself in front of citizens whose humours varied according to the town to which they belonged, but were alike in two things; first: each town believed it was better than the others; secondly: each town wanted to ruin the neighbouring enemy, making it disreputable in the opinion of the king. As the son of the king was just and wise, with much clemency he tried to instruct each part of

the region in justice, to make them all friendly with his father and beloved by him. And as he was good, he was succeeding, although slowly, because, as it always happens, only the upright-hearted people of each province of the region followed his advice. Nay, it is right to say that he found more goodwill to listen to him and become wise in the truth, exactly where they scornfully said that there was less goodwill and wisdom.

Then those of the neighbouring provinces said: "Unless we take pains, the grace of the king will go entirely to those whom we despise. Let us go and overthrow those whom we hate and let us go feigning that we are converted and willing to forget our hatred in order to honour the king's son". And they went. In the guise of friends they spread among the towns of the rival province and with deceitful kindness they advised what to do to pay greater and greater honour to the son of the king and consequently to his father the king. Because the honour paid to the son, the messenger of his father, is also honour paid to him who sent him. But they did not honour the king's son, on the contrary they hated him cordially, to the extent of wishing to make him loathsome to his subjects and to the king himself. They were so astute in their false geniality, they succeeded so well in presenting their advice as the best policy, that many people of the neighbouring region accepted as good what was wicked, and they left the right path that they had followed, and took an unjust one, and the king's son realised that his mission was a failure with regard to many.

569.2 ²Now tell Me: who was the greatest sinner in the eyes of the king? What was the sin of those who advised, and of those who took their advice? And I ask you another question: with whom will the good king be more severe? Do you not know the answers? I will tell you.

The greatest sinner in the eyes of the king was he who incited his neighbour to do evil out of hatred for him, as he wanted to thrust him into deeper darkness of ignorance, out of hatred for the king's son, whom he wanted to defeat in his mission by making him appear incapable in the eyes of the king and of his subjects, out of hatred for the king himself, because if the love given to the son is also love given to the father, likewise the hatred for the son is hatred also for the father. So the sin of those who gave

evil advice, knowing fully well that they were giving evil advice, was a sin of hatred in addition to a sin of falsehood, a sin of premeditated hatred, and the sin of those who took the advice thinking that it was good, was only a sin of stupidity.

But you know very well that only he who is intelligent is responsible for his actions, whereas he who through disease or other reasons is foolish, is not responsible personally, but his relatives are responsible for him. That is why while a boy is not of age, he is considered irresponsible, and it is his father who answers for the actions of his son. So the king, who was good, was severe with the intelligent ill advisers, but he was benign with those who had been deceived by them, and he only reproached them for believing this or that subject before asking the king's son himself, in order to learn from him what was really to be done. Because only the son of the father really knows the will of his father.

³That is the parable, O people of Shiloh, of Shiloh where several times in the course of ages advice of different nature was given by God, by men or by Satan, and that advice bore good fruit when it was taken as advice for good purposes or when it was rejected by people who recognised it as leading to evil, and it bore bad fruit if it was not accepted when it was holy or it was taken when it was wicked. 569.3

Because man has his wonderful free will and he can freely choose between good and evil, and he has the other magnificent gift of an intellect capable of distinguishing between right and wrong, so reward or punishment may be brought about not so much by the piece of advice itself, as by the way in which it may be taken. Because if no one can forbid wicked people to tempt their neighbour to ruin him, nothing can interdict good people from rejecting the temptation and remaining faithful to good.

The same piece of advice may harm ten people, and avail other ten. Because if he who follows it does harm to himself, he who does not follow it does his soul good.

So no one may say: "We were told to do so". But everybody must sincerely say: "I wanted to do it". Then you will at least receive the forgiveness that is given to sincere people. And if you are doubtful about the goodness of the advice given to you, meditate before taking it and putting it into practice. Meditate imploring

the Most High Who never denies the spirits of goodwill His light. And, if your conscience, enlightened by God, sees only one tiny imperceptible spot, but such that cannot exist in a deed of justice, then say: "I will not do that because it is an impure justice".

569.4 ⁴Oh! I solemnly tell you that he who makes good use of his intellect and of his free will and invokes the Lord to see the truth in things, will not be ruined by temptation, because the Father Who is in Heaven will help him to do what is good in spite of all the snares of the world and of Satan.

Remember* Anna of Elkanah and Eli's sons. The bright angel of the former had advised Anna to make a vow to the Lord if He made her fecund. Eli, the priest, advised his sons to go back to a life of justice, and not to sin any further against the Lord. And yet, although it is easier for man, because of his heaviness, to understand the voice of another man than the spiritual - but imperceptible by physical senses - speech of the Lord's angel speaking to the spirit, Anna of Elkanah took the advice, because she was good and upright in the eyes of God, and she gave birth to a prophet, whereas Eli's sons, as they were wicked and far from God, did not take their father's advice and were punished by God with a violent death.

569.5 ⁵Advice has two values: that of the source from which it comes, and it is already great because it may have incalculable consequences, and that of the heart to which it is given. The value given to it by the heart to which it is proposed is not only incalculable, but also immutable. Because if the heart is good and follows a good piece of advice, it gives that advice the value of a just deed, and if it does not follow it, it deprives it of the second part of its value, as it remains just a piece of advice, but not a deed, that is, it is a merit only for the adviser. And if it is a wicked piece of advice and is rejected by a good heart, which has been tempted in vain through blandishments or terrors to put it into practice, it achieves the value of victory over Evil and of martyrdom for loyalty to God, and thus it prepares a great treasure in the Kingdom of Heaven.

So when your hearts are tempted by other people, meditate, guided by the light of God, whether it is a good word, and if with

* Remember what is narrated in: 1 Samuel 1-2.

the help of God, Who allows temptations but does not want your ruin, you see that it is not a good thing, have the courage to say to yourselves and to those tempting you: "No. I will remain loyal to my Lord and may my loyalty absolve me of my past sins and allow me to enter the gates of the Kingdom and not be left outside, near them, because the Most High sent His Son for me also, to lead me to eternal salvation".

Go. If anybody needs Me, you know where I rest during the night.

May the Lord enlighten you.»

570. In Lebonah, the parable of the ill advised.

28th February 1947.

^{570.1}They are about to enter Lebonah, a town which I do not think is very important or beautiful, but on the other hand is very busy as there are many caravans going to Jerusalem for Passover from Galilee, Ituraea, Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Hauran and the Decapolis. I would say that Lebonah was a track for caravans, or rather a junction of such tracks coming from those regions, from the Mediterranean to the mountains on the eastern side of Palestine, and from the north of it, and that they join here on the main road that takes pilgrims to Jerusalem. People probably prefer this road because it is garrisoned by the Romans and consequently they feel safer from the danger of unpleasant meetings with highwaymen. That is what I think. But it may be preferred for other reasons, because of historical or religious memories, I do not know.

As it is the right time - judging by the sun I would say that it is about eight o'clock in the morning - the caravans are about to set off amid a great uproar of voices, shouts, brayings, harness-bells, wheels. Women call their children, men spur their animals, vendors offer their goods, Samaritans haggle over prices with those... less rigid Jews, that is, those from the Decapolis and from other regions, as they are not so intolerant, being more mingled with the heathen element, and if a wretched vendor from Samaria approaches a champion of Judaism offering his goods, he is repulsed scornfully and almost abused. They

shout so much at the anathema that they seem to have been approached by the devil himself... stirring up fierce reactions from the offended Samaritans. And there would be an odd scuffle if the Roman soldiers did not keep a good watch.

570.2 ²Jesus proceeds through so much confusion. The apostles are around Him, the women disciples follow them, and behind, at the rear, the train of the people from Ephraim, whose number has been increased by many people from Shiloh.

A murmur precedes the Master. It spreads from those who see Him to those who are farther away and cannot as yet see Him. Another murmur, a louder one, follows Him.

And many put off their departure to see what is happening.

They ask one another: «What? Is He going farther and farther away from Judaea? What? Is He preaching in Samaria now?»

A voice says in the typical singing tone of Galileans: «The holy ones have rejected Him, and He is going to those who are not holy, to sanctify them, to shame the Judaeans.»

A reply more sour than acid poison is heard: «He has found His nest and who understands His word of a demon.»

Another voice shouts: «Be quiet, you murderers of the Just One! This persecution of yours will mark you with the most ill-famed name for ages. You are three times more corrupt than us from the Decapolis.»

Another sharp voice of an old man exclaims: «He is so just that He is running away from the Temple for the Feast of Feasts. Ha! Ha! Ha!»

A man from Ephraim, red with anger, says: «It is not true. You are lying, you old snake! He is now going to His Passover.»

A bearded scribe remarks disdainfully: «Via Gerizim.»

«No. Via the Moriah. He is coming to bless us, because He is love, then He will ascend to your hatred, you cursed people!»

«Be quiet, Samaritan!»

«You be quiet, demon!»

«Those who stir up a rebellion will be imprisoned. That is Pontius Pilate's order. Bear that in mind. Disperse now» orders a Roman non-commissioned officer getting his men to separate those who are about to come to blows in one of the many regional and religious quarrels, always ready to rise in Palestine in the days of Christ.

The crowd disperses. But no one departs any more. Donkeys are taken back to stables or to the place where Jesus is going, Women and children dismount and follow husbands or fathers, or they remain in chattering groups, if their husbands' or fathers' humour so orders «that they may not hear the demon speak». But friendly or enemy or simply curious men rush towards the place where Jesus has gone. And while running they cast evil glances at one another or they take courage from such unexpected joy, or they ask questions, according to whether they are friends with enemies, or friends with friends or with curious people.

³Jesus has stopped in a square near the inevitable fountain in the shade of trees. He is there, leaning against the damp wall of the fountain that here is covered by a small porch open only on one side. Perhaps it is more a well than a fountain. It is like the well at En Rogel. 570.3

He is speaking to a woman who is showing Him the little child she is holding in her arms. I see Jesus nod assent and lay His hand on the child's head. And immediately afterwards I see the mother raise the child and shout: «Malachi, Malachi, where are you? Our boy is no longer deformed», and the woman trills her hosanna which is joined by the shouts of the crowd, while a man makes his way to prostrate himself before the Lord.

The people make their comments. The women, mostly mothers, congratulate the woman who received the grace. Those who are farther away stretch their necks and ask: «What happened?» after shouting «hosannas», to join those who are aware of what took place.

«A hunchbacked boy, so hump-backed that he could stand on his legs only with difficulty. He was that size, I tell you, just that, so bent he was. He looked like a boy three years old, but he was seven. Look at him now! He is as tall as everybody, as straight as a palm-tree and lively. See him over there how he climbs on the little wall of the fountain to be seen and to see. And how happily he laughs!»

⁴A Galilean turns towards a man, who, judging by the large tassels on his belt I think I am right in saying is a rabbi, and asks him: «Ehi? What do you say? Is that work of the demon, too? Really, if the demon does that, removing misfortunes to make men 570.4

happy and have God praised, shall we not have to say that he is God's best servant!»

«Blasphemer, be silent!»

«I am not blaspheming, rabbi. I am commenting on what I see. Why does your holiness bring us nothing but burdens, misfortunes, making us speak abuse, and mistrust the Most High, whereas the works of the Rabbi of Nazareth give us peace and the certainty that God is good?»

570.5 The rabbi does not reply, he moves aside and goes to speak in a low voice to other friends of his. ⁵And one of them leaves the group, elbows his way going in front of Jesus, Whom he asks, without greeting Him first: «What do You intend doing?»

«I intend to speak to those who ask for my word», replies Jesus staring at his eyes, without disdain, but also without fear.

«You are not allowed. The Sanhedrin forbids You.»

«That is the will of the Most High, Whose servant the Sanhedrin ought to be.»

«You have been condemned, You know. Be silent or...»

«The Word is My name. And the Word speaks.»

«To the Samaritans. If it were true that You are Who You say You are, You would not give Your word to the Samaritans.»

«I have given it and will give it to Galileans, to Judaeans, to Samaritans, because there is no difference in the eyes of Jesus.»

«Try to give it in Judaea, if You dare!...»

«I solemnly tell you that I will. Wait for Me. Are you not El-eazar ben Parta? Are you? Then you will certainly see Gamaliel before I see him. Tell him, in My name, that I will give him also, after twenty one years, the reply for which he is waiting. Have you understood? Remember this carefully: after twenty one years I will give him also the reply that he awaits. Goodbye.»

«Where? Where do You want to speak, where do You want to reply to the great Gamaliel? He has certainly already left Gamala in Judaea to go to Jerusalem. But even if he were still in Gamala You could not speak to him.»

«Where? And where do the scribes and rabbis of Israel meet?»

«In the Temple? You, in the Temple? And would You dare? But do You not know...»

«That you hate Me? I do know. It is sufficient for Me not to be hated by My Father.»

Before long the Temple will tremble because of My words.»
And without minding His interlocutor any longer He opens His arms to impose silence on the people who are excited and divided into opposite tendencies and are shouting at disturbers.

^{570.6}There is soon silence and in the silence Jesus speaks: «At Shiloh I spoke of ill advisers and of how much good or evil a piece of advice can do. I now propose this parable not only to you, people of Lebonah, but to the people of all Palestine. We shall call it: "The parable of the ill-advised".

Listen. Once there was a very large family, so large as to form a tribe. Numerous sons had got married forming, around the first family, many more families rich in offspring, who in turn got married and had formed more families. So that the old father had found himself, so to say, at the head of a small kingdom, of which he was the king. As it always happens in families, among the many children and children's children, there were different characters: some were good and just, some were overbearing and unjust.

Some were content with their situation and some were envious, as they thought that their shares were inferior to those of brothers or relatives. And near the most wicked one there was the best one. And it was natural that this very good one should be the most tenderly loved by the father of all the large family. And, as it always happens, the wicked one and those more like him, hated the good one because he was the most loved, not considering that they could have been loved as well, if they had been as good as he was. And the good son, to whom his father confided his thoughts that he might repeat them to everybody, was followed by other good ones. So that after years and years, the large family was divided into three parts. The part of the good members of the family and that of the bad ones. And between the two there was the third part, formed by the uncertain members, who were attracted towards the good son, but were afraid of the wicked one and of those of his party. This third part was keeping in with both sides and was not able to make up its mind resolutely in favour of one or the other.

Then the old father, seeing such uncertainty, said to his beloved son: "So far you have spent your word particularly for those who love it and for those who do not love it, because the former

ask you for it, so that they may love me more and more according to justice, and the latter are fools who need to be taken back to justice. But you can see that those fools not only do not accept your word, and they remain what they were, but to their first unjust attitude towards you, the messenger of my wishes, they add the unfairness of corrupting, by means of evil advice, those who are not yet firmly willing to follow the better road. So go to them and explain to them what I am, what you are, and what they must do to be with you and with me.”⁷The son, who was always obedient, went as his father wished, and he conquered some hearts every day. So the father was able to clearly see who were his rebellious children, and he looked at them severely but without reproaching them, because he was their father and he wanted to attract them to himself with patience, love and the example of the good sons.

But when the wicked ones realised that they were all alone they said: “It is now too obvious that we are the rebels. Previously they mistook us for those who were neither good nor bad. Look at them now over there! They are all following the beloved son. We must take action and destroy his work. Let us go, feigning that we want to mend our ways, to those who have just been converted and also to those who are the most simple souls among the best ones and let us spread the rumour that the beloved son pretends that he wants to serve his father, but in actual fact he is gathering supporters to rebel against him; or we can also say that the father wants to eliminate his son and those who follow him, because they are becoming too powerful and are outshining the glory of the father-king, and that consequently, in order to defend the beloved betrayed son, it is necessary to keep him among us, far from the paternal house where betrayal is awaiting him.” And they went and were so shrewdly subtle in suggesting advice and spreading rumours, that many were caught in the snare, particularly the recent converts, to whom the evil advisers gave the following bad piece of advice: “Do you realise how much he loved you? He preferred to be among you rather than stay with his father, or at least with his good brothers. He has been so clever that in the sight of all the world he has raised you from your abjection of persons who did not know what they wanted and were thus ridiculed by everybody. Because of his

partiality for you, it is your duty to defend him, and to keep him in your fields, even by force, if your words are not sufficient to convince him. Or rise, proclaiming him your leader and king, and march against the iniquitous father and his sons who are as iniquitous as he." And when anyone hesitated and remarked: "But he wants, he wanted us to go with him to honour our father and he has obtained blessing and forgiveness for us", they replied to them: "Don't believe that! Not everything he told you is true, neither did the father show you all the truth. He has behaved like that because he realises that his father is about to betray him and he wanted to test your hearts to find out where he can find protection and shelter. But may be... he is so good! perhaps he will repent of doubting his father and may want to go back to him. Do not allow him to do that." And many promised: "We will not allow him" and they were filled with enthusiasm planning what to do to detain the beloved son, without noticing that while the evil advisers were saying: "We will help you to save the blessed man", their eyes were shining with falsehood and cruelty, and that they were winking at one another rubbing their hands and whispering: "They are being caught in the snare! We shall win!" every time somebody gave assent to their sly words.

⁸Then the evil advisers went away. They went away spreading the rumour in other places that the betrayal of the beloved son would soon become known, as he had left the land of his father to establish a kingdom against his father, with the help of those who hated the father or whose love was at least uncertain. In the meantime those influenced by the evil advice were conspiring to induce the beloved son to rebel against his father, a sin that would scandalise the world. Only the wisest among them, those into whom the word of the just son had penetrated more deeply and had taken root because it had fallen on soil anxious to receive it, after pondering said: "No. It is not right to do so. It is a wicked action against the father, against the son and us. We are aware of the justice and wisdom of both of them. We are aware of it although unfortunately we have not always followed it. And we must not think that the advice of those who have always been openly against the father and justice, and also against the beloved son of the father, may be more just than the advice given to us by the blessed son." And they did not follow them. On the contra-

570.8

ry, with love and sorrow, they let the son go where he had to go, and they only accompanied him with gestures of affection as far as the boundaries of their fields, and on taking leave of him they said to him as a promise: "Go. We shall stay. But your words are in our hearts and from now on we will do what the father wants. Go and do not worry. You have raised us for good from the state in which you found us. Now that we are on the good path we will go forward on it until we arrive at the house of our father so that we may be blessed by him." On the contrary some gave assent to the bad advice and they sinned tempting the beloved son to commit sin and gibing at him as being foolish because he was obstinate in fulfilling his duty.

570.9 ⁹I now ask you: "Why did the same piece of advice have different effects?" Are you not replying? I will tell you as I told those of Shiloh. Because advice achieves value or becomes void according to whether it is taken or not. Man is tempted in vain by evil advice. If he does not want to sin, he will not sin. And he will not be punished for having to hear the insinuations of wicked people. He will not be punished because God is just and He does not punish anyone for sins not committed. He will only be punished if, after having to hear the Evil tempting him, he puts it into practice, without using his intellect to meditate on the nature and source of the advice. Neither can he say as an excuse: "I thought it was a good piece of advice." What is pleasant to God is good. Can God approve of and be delighted with disobedience or with what induces to disobedience? Can God bless what is in contrast with His Law, that is, with His Word? I solemnly tell you that He cannot. And I also solemnly tell you that one must prefer to die rather than infringe the divine Law.

At Shechem I will speak to you again to make you wise in wanting or not wanting to take the advice given to you. You may go now.»

570.10 ¹⁰The people go away making their comments.

«Did you hear that? He knows what they told us! And He exhorted us to want what is just» says a Samaritan.

«Yes. And did you notice how upset were the Judaeans and the scribes who were present?»

«Yes. They did not even wait until the end to go away.»

«Poisonous vipers! But... He says what He wants to do. He is

wrong. He may cause Himself trouble. Those from Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim are really elated!... »

«I... I have never flattered myself. The Rabbi is the Rabbi. And that means everything.

Is it possible for the Rabbi to sin by not going up to the Temple in Jerusalem? »

«He will be put to death. You will see!... And that will be the end!... »

«For whom? For Him? For us? Or... for the Judaeans? »

«For Him. If He dies! »

«You are foolish, man. I come from Ephraim. I know Him well. I have lived near Him for two full months, even longer. He always spoke to us. It will be sorrowful... But not the end. Neither for Him, nor for us. The Saint of all the saints cannot die, cannot end.

Neither can that be the end for us. I... am ignorant, but I feel that the Kingdom will come when the Judaeans think it is all over... And it will be all over for them... »

«Do you think that the disciples will avenge the Master? A rebellion? A massacre? And the Romans?... »

«Oh! There is no need of disciples, of revenge of men, of massacres. It will be the Most High Who will defeat them. He has punished us, for ages, and for much less! Do you think that He will not punish them for their sin of tormenting His Christ? » "

«To see them beaten! Ah! »

«Your heart is not as the Master would like it. He prays for His enemies... »

«I... am going to follow Him tomorrow. I want to hear what He will say at Shechem. »

«I also. »

«And I, too... »

Many people of Lebonah are of the same mind and fraternising with those from Ephraim and Shiloh they go to make preparations for their departure on the following morning.

571. Arrival and welcoming in Shechem.

1st March 1947.

571.1 ¹Here is Shechem, beautiful and ornate, crowded with people of Samaria going to the Samaritan temple, and with pilgrims from all regions going to the Temple in Jerusalem.

The town is all flooded with sunshine, stretched as it is on the eastern slopes of Mount Gerizim, that dominates it from its western side and is all green as the town is all white.

To the north-east Mount Ebal, the appearance of which is even wilder, seems to protect it against northern winds. The fertility of the land, rich in the waters that come down from the mountain watershed and form two charming little rivers, nourished by many brooks, flow towards the Jordan, is wonderful and brims over the walls of gardens and the hedges of kitchen gardens. Every house is decked with greenery, with flowers, with branches on which tiny fruits are swelling. Looking around at the environs, which are clearly visible owing to the configuration of the ground, one sees nothing but the green of olive-groves, of vineyards, or orchards and the golden hue of fields in which every day the glaucous shade of the unripe corn changes more and more into the delicate yellowness of straw, of ripe ears, that the sun and winds bend and blow, making them look almost like white gold.

The corn is really «yellowing», as Jesus says, and is really golden, after being «white» when springing up, then the green of a precious jewel, while it grew and formed ears.

The sun is now preparing it to die, after preparing it to live. And it is difficult to say when it should be blessed more, whether now that it leads it to the sacrifice, or when it paternally warmed the earth to make it germinate and it painted its pale stem, which had just sprung up, with a beautiful green shade, full of vigour and promises.

571.2 ²Jesus, Who has spoken of that while entering the town and pointing at the place where they met* the Samaritan woman and remembering that remote speech, says to His apostles, to all of them except John, who is already near Mary to comfort Her, as

* where they met, in 143.

She is so sorrowful: «And is what I said then not being fulfilled now? We were unknown and lonely when we came in here. We sowed. Now, look! That seed has given a rich crop.

And it will grow greater and you will reap it. And others will reap more than you...»

«And will you not, Lord?» asks Philip.

«I have reaped where My Precursor sowed. Then I sowed that you might reap and sow with the seed I had given you. But as John did not reap what he sowed, so I shall not harvest this crop. We are...»

«What, Lord?» asks Judas of Alphaeus worriedly.

«The victims, My brother. The sweat of one's brow is required to fertilise fields. But sacrifice is necessary to fertilise hearts. We rise, we work, we die. One, after us, replaces us, rises, works, dies... And there is who reaps what we watered with our death.»

«Oh! no! Don't say that, my Lord!» exclaims James of Zebedee.

«Are you, the disciple of John before being Mine, saying that? Do you not remember the words of your first master? "He must grow greater, I must grow smaller." He understood the beauty and justice of dying to give justice to other people. I shall not be inferior to him.»

«But, Master, You are You: God! He was a man.»

«I am the Saviour. As God I must be more perfect than man. If John, a man, was able to grow smaller to make the true Sun rise, I must not dim the light of My sun with clouds of cowardice. I must leave you a clear memory of Me, so that you may be able to proceed, and the world may grow in the Christian Idea. ³The Christ will go away, He will go back to the place whence He came, and He will love you from there following you in your work, preparing the place that will be your reward. But Christianity will remain. Christianity will grow through My going away... and through that of all those who, without attachment to the world and earthly life, will be able to go away, as John and Jesus, did... and die to make other people live.»

571.3

«So do You think that it is right that You should be put to death?...» asks the Iscariot almost panting.

«I do not think that it is right that they should put Me to death. I think that it is just to die because of what My sacrifice

will yield. A homicide will always be a homicide with regards to him who commits it, even if it has a different value and appearance for him who is murdered.»

«What do You mean?»

«I mean that if he who is a homicide, because he has been ordered or forced, such as a soldier in battle or an executioner who must obey a magistrate, or he who defends himself against a highwayman, has not a guilty conscience, or is relatively guilty of killing a fellow man, he who without order or necessity kills an innocent or cooperates in his murder, will appear before God with the dreadful face of Cain.»

571.4 «But could we not speak of something else? The Master suffers because of all this, your eyes are like those of one who is tortured, we feel as if we were in agony, if His Mother hears, She will weep. She is already shedding so many tears under Her veil! There is so much to talk about!... 4Oh! Look! The notables are coming. That will make you keep quiet. Peace to you! Peace to you!» Peter, who was a little ahead and had turned around to speak, bows greeting a large group of pompous people from Shechem, who are coming towards Jesus.

«Peace to You, Master. The houses that gave You hospitality the last time are ready to receive You, and there are many more for the women disciples and those who are with You. Those whom You helped recently and the first time, will come to see You. One woman only will be missing because she departed from here to lead a life of expiation.

So she said, and I believe her, because when a woman divests herself of everything she loved and rejects sin and gives all her property to the poor, it means that she wants to follow a new life. But I could not tell You where she is. No one has seen her any more since she left Shechem. One of our people thought he had seen her dressed as a servant in a village near the Phial. Another one swears that he recognised her, although she was dressed poorly, at Bersabea. But what they say is not certain. When she was called by her name she did not answer and they heard her being called Johanna in the former place, and Agar in the latter.»

«It is not necessary to know more except that she has been redeemed. All other knowledge is vain and every research is intru-

sive curiosity. Leave your fellow-citizen in her secret peace, and be pleased that she no longer causes scandal. The angels of the Lord know where she is to give her the only help she needs, the only one that cannot hurt her soul... ^{571.5}Be so charitable as to take the women to the houses, as they are tired. I will speak to you tomorrow. I will listen to everybody today and I will receive your sick people.»

«Are You not staying with us for a long time? Are You not spending the Sabbath here?»

«No. I am spending the Sabbath elsewhere, in prayer.»

«We were hoping to have You for a long time...»

«I have just time to go back to Judaea for the feasts. I will leave the apostles and women with you, if they want to remain, until the Sabbath evening. Do not look at one another thus. You know that I must honour the Lord our God more than anybody else, because to be what I am does not exempt Me from being faithful to the Law of the Most High.»

They go towards the houses into each of which go two women disciples and one apostle: Mary of Alphaeus and Susanna with James of Alphaeus, Martha and Mary with the Zealot, Eliza and Nike with Bartholomew, Salome and Johanna with James of Zebedee. Then Thomas, Philip, Judas of Kerioth and Matthew go all together in a group into one house; Peter and Andrew into another one; and Jesus with Judas of Alphaeus and John, and Mary, His Mother, goes into the house of the man who has always spoken on behalf of the citizens. The followers and the people from Ephraim, Shiloh and Lebonah and other pilgrims who were going to Jerusalem and broke their journey to follow Jesus, scatter through the village looking for lodgings.

572. In Shechem. The last parable on advice given and received.

2nd March 1947.

¹The main square in Shechem is incredibly crowded. I think ^{572.1}that the whole town is there and that also the people from the country and nearby villages have gathered, too.

The inhabitants of Shechem, in the afternoon of the first day,

must have spread everywhere informing people and everybody has come: healthy and sick people, sinners and innocents. As the square and roof-terraces are filled up, many people have even perched on the trees shading the square. In the first row, near the place kept clear for Jesus, facing a house built up on four steps, are the three children whom Jesus saved from the highwaymen, and their relatives. How anxious are the little ones to see their Saviour! Every shout makes them turn around looking for Him. And when the door is opened and Jesus appears at it, the three children rush forward shouting: «Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!» and they climb the steps without waiting until He comes down to embrace them.

And Jesus bends and embraces them and then lifts them up - a living bunch of innocent flowers - and He kisses their little faces and is kissed by them.

A compassionate whisper runs through the crowd and some voices say: «He is the only one who knows how to kiss our innocent children.» And other people say: «See how He loves them? He saved them from the highwaymen, He gave them a home after feeding and clothing them, and He is now kissing them as if they were His own sons.»

572.2 ²Jesus, Who has put the children down, on the top step, close to Himself, replies to everybody by answering the last anonymous words: «Really they are more than My own children to Me. Because I am their father with regards to their souls, which are Mine, not for the time that passes, but for the eternity that remains. I wish I could say that of every man who from Me, the Life, did draw life to come out of death! I invited you to do that the first time I came here, and you thought that you had plenty time to make up your minds to do so. Only one woman was prompt to follow My call and go on the path of Life: the biggest sinner among you. Perhaps just because she felt that she was dead and, she saw herself dead, rotten in her sin, she was in a hurry to come out of death. You do not feel and see yourselves dead, and you are not in that hurry. But which sick man waits to die before taking the medicines of life? A dead body needs only a shroud, aromas and a sepulchre in which to lie to become dust after being putrefaction. If the putridity of Lazarus, whom you look at with eyes opened wide by fear and amazement, was re-

stored to life by the Eternal Father for His wise purposes, that must not tempt anyone to arrive at the death of the spirit saying: "The Most High will restore me to the life of the soul." Do not put the Lord your God to the test. ³You are to come to Life. There is no more time to wait. 572.3

The grapes of the Vine are about to be gathered and pressed. Prepare your spirits for the Wine of Grace that is about to be given to you. Do you not do that when you are to take part in a great banquet? Do you not prepare your stomachs to receive the choice food and wines by wisely fasting before the banquet, as that refines your taste and invigorates your stomachs making you enjoy and relish food and drinks? And does the vine-dresser not do the same to taste the wine that has just matured? He does not spoil his palate, the day that he wants to taste the new wine. He does not do that, because he wants to taste the good qualities and faults accurately, to boast of the former and correct the latter, and sell his goods at a good price. But if a person invited to a banquet can do that to enjoy food and wines with greater pleasure, and if the vine-dresser does that to sell his wine at a good price, or to make saleable what being faulty would be refused by buyers, should man not be able to do so for his spirit, to enjoy Heaven, to gain the treasure to be able to enter Heaven? Take My advice. Yes, take it. It is a good piece of advice. It is the just advice of the Just One Who is ill-advised in vain, and wants to save you from the consequences of evil advice given to you. Be as just as I am. And give the just value to the advice given to you. If you become just, you will give it its just value.

⁴Listen to a parable. It closes the cycle of those I said at Shiloh and Lebonah, and deals once again with advice given and taken. 572.4

A king sent his beloved son to visit his kingdom. The kingdom of that king was divided into many provinces, as it was a very large one. Those provinces had a different knowledge of their king. Some knew him so well as to consider themselves the favourite ones and to be proud of it. According to them, they were the only perfect ones and they alone knew the king and what the monarch wanted. Some knew him but, without considering themselves wise because of that, they did their best to know him better and better. Some knew the king, but they loved him their own way, as they had adopted a special code of laws, which was

not the true code of the kingdom. Of the true code they had taken what they liked and as far as they liked it, then they had adulterated also that little by means of other laws copied from other kingdoms, or which they had made themselves, and were not good. No. They were not good. Some were even less acquainted with their king, and some only knew that there was a king. Nothing else.

And they thought that was only an idle story.

The king's son came to visit his father's kingdom to give all the various regions an exact knowledge of the monarch, correcting arrogance here, encouraging dejected people there, redressing wrong ideas elsewhere, convincing people to remove the impure elements from the pure law in another region, teaching other subjects how to fill gaps, instructing people of other regions in order to give them the minimum knowledge and faith in the real king, as every man was his subject. But the king's son was of the opinion that the first lesson for everybody was the example of justice, in conformity with the code of laws, both in serious matters and in minor ones. And he was perfect. So much so that the people of goodwill were improving themselves by following both the deeds and the words of the king's son, as his actions corresponded to his words without the least difference.

^{572.5} But the people of the provinces that considered themselves perfect only because they knew the code word by word, but did not possess its spirit, realised that from the observance of what the king's son did and what he exhorted to do, it appeared too clearly that they knew the letter of the code but did not possess the spirit of the king's law, and thus their hypocrisy was unmasked. They then decided to remove what made them appear what they really were. And to do that they chose two different ways: one against the king's son, the other against his followers. For the former: evil advice and persecutions. For the latter: evil advice and threat. Many things are evil advice. It is a bad piece of advice to say: "Do not do that, as it may damage you", pretending to be favourably interested, and it is a bad piece of advice to persecute in order to convince him, whom one wants to lead astray, to fail in the fulfillment of his mission. It is a bad piece of advice to say to followers: "Defend at all costs and by any means the just man who is persecuted", or to say to followers: "If you defend

him, you will provoke our anger." But I am not referring now to advice given to followers. I am referring to the advice that people gave or had given to the king's son, with false simple-heartedness, with livid hatred, or through the words of innocent people used as instruments to do harm, while they thought they were being used to do good.

The king's son listened to that advice. He had ears, eyes, intellect and a heart. Therefore he could but hear them, see them, understand them and weigh them. But above all he had the upright spirit of a true just man, so to each piece of advice, given to him consciously or unconsciously to make him sin, setting a bad example to his father's subjects and causing infinite sorrow to his father himself, he replied: "No. I will do what my father wants. I will follow his code of laws. The fact that I am his son does not exempt me from being the most faithful of his subjects in the observance of the Law.

You, who hate me and want to frighten me, should bear in mind that nothing will make me infringe the Law. You, who love me and wish to save me, should know that I bless you for your thoughts, but bear also in mind that your love for me and my love for you, as you are more loyal to me than those who say that they are 'wise', must not make me unfair in my duty towards the greatest love, which is the love to be given to my father." ^{572.6} "That is the parable, My children. And it is so clear that each of you can understand it.

And righteous spirits can only exclaim: "He is really just because no human advice can lead Him astray." Yes, children of Shechem. Nothing can lead Me into error. Woe to Me if I should fall into error! Woe to Me and to you. Instead of being your Saviour, I should be your traitor, and you would be right in hating Me. But I will not do that.

I do not reproach you for accepting suggestions or for thinking of measures against justice. You are not guilty since you did it out of a spirit of love. But I say to you what I said at the beginning and at the end: you are dearer to Me than if you were My own children, because you are the children of My spirit. I have led your spirits to the Life and I will do so even more. Bear in mind, in memory of Me, bear in mind that I bless you for the thoughts you had in your hearts. But grow in justice, by wanting

only what gives honour to the true God for Whom you must have absolute love, such as is given to no other creature. Come to this perfect justice that I am setting as an example to you, the justice that tramples on the selfishness of one's own welfare, on the fear of enemies and of death, on everything, to do the will of God. Prepare your spirits. The dawn of Grace is rising. The banquet of Grace is being prepared. Your souls, the souls of those who want to come to the Truth, are at the eve of their wedding, of their liberation, of their redemption. Prepare yourselves in justice for the feast of Justice.»

572.7 ⁷Jesus beckons to the children's relatives, who are near them, to go into the house with Him, and He withdraws after taking the three children in His arms as He did at the beginning.

Comments are exchanged in the square. And they differ considerably.

The best people say: «He is right. We were betrayed by those false messengers.»

Those who are not so good say: «Then He should not have flattered us. He makes us more hateful. He mocked at us. He is a true Judaeen.»

«You cannot say that. Our poor people are aware of His assistance, and our sick people of His power. Our orphans experienced His goodness. We cannot expect Him to commit sin to please us.»

«He has already sinned, because He hated us by making us hated...»

«By whom?»

«By everybody. And He mocked at us. Yes, He mocked at us.»

The square is full of the different opinions, which, however, do not upset the house in which Jesus is with the notables, the children and their relatives. Once again the prophetic word* is confirmed: «He will be a stone of contradiction.»

* the prophetic word: that of Simeone in 32.5 (Lk 2,34).

573. Departure for Enon after a quarrel between
the Iscariot and Eliza, who remain in Shechem.

3rd March 1947.

¹Jesus is meditating, sitting all alone under a gigantic holm-oak, which has grown on a slope of the mountain dominating Shechem. The city, of a rosy-white shade in the early sunshine, is below, spread out on the lower slopes of the mountain. From above it looks like a handful of huge white cubes thrown by a big boy on a green sloping meadow. 573.1

The two water courses, near which it rises, form a silvery blue semicircle around the city; then one of them enters it gurgling and glittering among the white houses, it then comes out and flows through the greenery towards the river Jordan, appearing and disappearing under olive-groves and luxuriant orchards.

The other river, smaller in size, remains outside the walls, almost lapping on them, and irrigates fertile vegetable gardens; it then flows away watering flocks of white sheep grazing on meadows reddened by the capitula of clover flowers.

The view in front of Jesus is a wide one. After lower and lower undulating hills one can see the green Jordan valley foreshortened, and beyond it, the mountains of the region beyond the Jordan, ending to north-east in the typical summits of Hauran. The sun rising behind them has lit up three strange clouds resembling three light gauze ribbons placed horizontally on the turquoise veil of the firmament, and the light gauze of the three long narrow clouds has become the orange-pink hue of certain precious corals.

The sky seems to be barred by this airy railing and is beautiful. Jesus stares at it, that is, He looks in that direction engrossed in thought. I wonder whether He even sees it. With His elbow pressed on His knee, His hand supporting His chin resting in the hollow of the palm of His hand, He looks, thinks, meditates. Above Him birds are making a hullabaloo chirping and flying around joyfully.

²Jesus lowers His eyes looking at Shechem that is awakening more and more in the morning sunshine. The shepherds and flocks, so far the only ones animating the view, are now joined by groups of pilgrims, and the jingling of herd-bells mingles with 573.2

the tinkling of the harness bells of donkeys and with the noise of voices, the shuffling of feet and the babble of words. The noise of the awakening city and of the people ending their night's rest is carried in waves as far as Jesus. Jesus stands up. With a sigh He leaves His quiet place and goes down quickly towards the town, along a short cut. He goes in among caravans of market-gardeners and pilgrims, while the former are hurrying to unload their goods, and the latter to buy them before setting off.

Waiting in a group in a corner of the square there are already the apostles and the women disciples, and around them there are the people from Ephraim, Shilo, Lebonah and many from Shechem. Jesus goes towards them and greets them. He then says to those of Samaria: «And now let us part. Go back to your homes. Remember My words. Grow in justice.» He then says to Judas of Kerioth: «Have you given alms for the poor of every place, as I told you?»

«Yes, I have. With the exception of those of Ephraim, as they have already had them.»

«Go, then. Ensure that every poor person may be comforted.»

«We bless You on their behalf.»

«Bless the women disciples. They gave Me the money. Go. Peace be with you.»

They go away unwillingly, sorrowfully. But they obey.

573.3

³Jesus stays with the apostles and the women disciples. He says to them: «I am going to Enon. I want to visit the place of the Baptist. I shall then go down to the road in the valley. It is more comfortable for the women.»

«Would it not be better to take the road through Samaria?» asks the Iscariot.

«There is no reason why we should be afraid of highwaymen, even if our road is close to their dens. Who wants to come with Me can do so. Who does not feel like coming as far as Enon, can remain here until the day after the Sabbath. On that day I shall go to Tirzah, and whoever remains here can join Me there.»

«Actually I... should prefer to stay here. I am not very well... I am tired...» says the Iscariot.

«One can see that. You look like one who is not well. You look gloomy indeed, also with regards to your humour and complexion. I have been watching you for some time...» says Peter.

«But no one asks me whether I am unwell, however...»

«Would that have pleased you? I never know what you like. But if it pleases you, I shall ask you now, and I am willing to stay with you to look after you...» Peter replies to him patiently.

«No, no! I am only tired. You may go. I shall stay where I am.»

4«I shall stay as well. I am old. I shall rest assisting you as a mother» says Eliza all of a sudden. ^{573.4}

«Are you staying? You had said...» interrupts Salome.

«If everybody went, I would have come as well, in order not to be left here all alone.

But since Judas is going to stay...»

«Then I will come, too. I do not wish to sacrifice you, woman. You will certainly go willingly to see the refuge of the Baptist...»

«I come from Bethzur and I never felt the need to go to Bethlehem to see the grotto where the Master was born. That is something I shall do when I shall no longer have the Master. So you can imagine whether I am aflame with the desire to see where was John... I prefer to practice charity, as I am sure that it has more value than a pilgrimage.»

«You are reproaching the Master. Do you not realise that?»

«I am speaking for myself. He is going there and is doing the right thing. He is the Master. I am an old woman in whom grief has removed all curiosity and the love for the Christ has removed all desires except that of serving Him.»

«So, according to you, it is a service to spy upon me.»

«Are you doing anything blameworthy? Only those who do harmful things are watched.

But I have never spied upon anybody, man. I do not belong to the snake family. Neither do I betray.»

«Neither do I.»

«God grant it for your own good. But I fail to understand why you are so against my staying here to rest...»

⁵Jesus, Who so far has been listening in silence, in the middle of the others, amazed at the petty quarrel, raises His head that was somewhat lowered, and says: «That is enough. A woman, who is older than you, can with more reason have the same desire as you have. You will stay here until the dawn of the day after the Sabbath. You will then join Me. In the meantime, Judas, go and buy what we will need during the next days. ^{573.5}

Go and be quick.»

Judas goes away against his will to buy foodstuff.

Andrew is about to follow him, but Jesus holds him back by the arm saying: «Stay here. He can manage by himself.» Jesus is very severe.

Eliza looks at Him and then approaches Him saying: «Forgive me, Master, if I displeased You.»

«I have nothing to forgive you, woman. You, rather, should forgive that man, as if he were your son.»

«I will stay with him with that feeling... even if he thinks the very opposite... You understand me...»

«Yes, and I bless you. And I tell you that you were right in saying that pilgrimages to My places will be a necessity when I am no longer amongst you... a necessity to comfort your spirits. For the time being they only serve the desires of your Jesus. And you have understood one of My wishes, because you are sacrificing yourself to protect an imprudent spirit...»

The apostles look at one another... and also the women disciples do likewise. Mary only is completely covered with Her veil and does not raise Her head to look at anybody.

And Mary of Magdala, standing upright like a queen who is judging, has never lost sight of Judas, who is going around the vendors, and her eyes blaze with anger while her closed lips express contempt. Her countenance says more than words...

573.6 ⁶Judas comes back. He gives his companions what he bought. He tidies up his mantle that he had used to carry the goods he purchased, and makes the gesture of handing the purse to Jesus. Jesus rejects it with His hand: «It is not necessary. Mary is still with us for alms. You are to do the necessary to be charitable here. There are many beggars who come down from all places these days and go towards Jerusalem. Give them alms without prejudice, with charity, bearing in mind that, with regards to God, we are all beggars of His mercy and of His bread... Good-bye. Goodbye, Eliza. Peace be with you.» And He turns around quickly and begins to walk fast along the road that was near Him without giving Judas time to say goodbye to Him...

They all follow Him in silence. They come out of the town turning their steps northeastwards through the beautiful country...

574. Going from Enon to Tersa. Jesus rescues a young shepherd after having given blindness to an evil man and sight to a blind man.

4th March 1947.

^{574.1}Enon, a handful of houses, is farther to the north. The place where the Baptist stayed is here: a grotto among the luxuriant vegetation. Not far away some spring-waters gurgle forming a stream rich in waters that flow towards the Jordan. Jesus is sitting outside the grotto, where He was when He said goodbye to His cousin*. He is alone.

Dawn is tinging the east with a rosy hue and the woods are reawakening again with the twittering of birds. Bleatings are heard coming from the folds in Enon. A bray rends the quiet air.

Then the trampling of feet is heard on the path and a herd of goats passes by led by an adolescent who stops for a moment, doubtfully, to look at Jesus. He then goes away.

But shortly afterwards he comes back because a kid has stopped there, to look at the Man Whom she was not used to seeing there and Who stretches out His long hand to offer her a stalk of marjoram and caresses her intelligent head. The young shepherd remains disconcerted. He is undecided whether he should take the animal away or let Jesus caress her smiling, as if He were pleased that she came fearlessly to squat at His feet, resting her head on His knees. The other goats also come back grazing the grass spread with little flowers.

The young shepherd sisks: «Do You want some milk? I have not yet milked two reluctant goats which butt whoever presses their udders if they are not satiated. Just like their owner who beats us if he is not sated with profit.»

«Are you a servant shepherd?»

«I am an orphan. I am alone. And I am a servant. He is a relative of mine because he is the husband of my grandmother's sister. And while Rachel was alive... But she died many months ago... And I am very unhappy... Take me with You! I am accustomed to living on nothing... I will serve You... a little bread is sufficient pay for me. Even here I do not get anything... If he paid

* when He said goodbye to His cousin, as narrated in chapter 148.

me, I would go away. But he says: "Is this your money? But I am keeping it because I clothe and feed you." He clothes me!... See? He feeds me!... Look at me... And these are blows... This is the bread I got yesterday...» And he shows bruises on his very thin arms and shoulders.

«What had you done?»

«Nothing. Your companions, I mean the disciples, were speaking of the Kingdom of Heaven, and I was listening to them... It was the Sabbath. Even if I was not working, I was not idle because it was the Sabbath... He gave me a good thrashing, so much so... that I do not want to stay with him any longer. Take me. Or I will run away... I came here on purpose this morning. I was afraid to speak. But You are good and I am speaking.»

«And what about the herd? You are certainly not going to run away with it...»

«... I will take it back to the fold... Before long that man will be going to the forest to cut wood... I will take the herd back and then I will run away. Oh! take me!»

574.2 2«But do you know who I am?»

«You are the Christ! The King of the Kingdom of Heaven. He who follows You will be blessed in the other life. I have never had any joy here... but, do not reject me... that I may have it there...» he says weeping at Jesus' feet near the kid.

«How come you know Me so well? Have you ever heard Me speak?»

«No. As from yesterday I know that You are here, where the Baptist was. But Your disciples used to pass here now and again coming from Enon. I heard them. Their names are Matthias, John, Simeon, and they were often here because the Baptist was their master before You. And then Isaac... In Isaac I found my father and mother. Isaac wanted to take me away from my master and he gave him some money. But he!... He took the money, but did not let me go and he sneered at your disciple.»

«You know many things. But do you know where I am going?»

«To Jerusalem. But it is not written on my face that I come from Enon.»

«I am going farther away. I shall soon be going. I cannot take you with Me.»

«Take me for the little time You can.»

«And then?»

«And then... I shall weep, but I will go with John's disciples who were the first to tell a poor boy that the joy that men do not give on the Earth, God gives it in Heaven to those who had goodwill. I, in order to have it, have received so many blows and suffered so much hunger asking God to give me that peace. You can see that I have had goodwill...

But if You reject me now... I shall not be able to hope any longer. ...» He weeps silently imploring Jesus more with the tears of his eyes than with his lips.

³«I have no money for your ransom. Neither do I know whether your master would agree to it.» 574.3

«But my ransom has already been paid. I have witnesses. Eli, Levi and Jonah saw and reproached the man. And they are the most important people in Enon, You know?»

«If that is the case... Let us go. Stand up and come with Me.»

«Where?»

«To your master.»

«I am afraid! You go, by Yourself. He is up there, on that mountain among the trees that he is cutting. I shall wait here.»

«Be not afraid. Look, my disciples are coming here. We shall be so many against him.

He will do you no harm. Stand up. We shall go to Enon to look for the three witnesses and then we shall go to your master. Give Me your hand. Afterwards I will hand you over to the disciples you know. What is your name?»

«Benjamin.»

«I have two more little friends with that name. You will be the third one.»

«Friend? Too much! I am a servant.»

«Of the Most High Lord. Of Jesus of Nazareth, you are a friend. Come. Gather the herd and let us go.»

⁴Jesus stands up and, while the young shepherd gathers and urges the reluctant goats on the way back, Jesus beckons to the apostles, who are coming forward on the path looking towards Him, to come at once. They quicken their paces. But the herd by now is on its way, and Jesus holding the young shepherd by the hand goes towards them... 574.4

«Lord! Have You become the shepherd of kids? Samaria can

really be called the goat... But You...»

«But I am the Good Shepherd and I change also kids into lambs. And boys are all lambs, and this fellow is little more than a boy.»

«Is he not by any chance the boy that that man took away yesterday in such a coarse manner?» asks Matthew looking at him.

«I think that it's him. Are you?»

«Yes, I am.»

«Oh! poor boy! Your father is certainly not fond of you!» says Peter.

«My master. I have no other father but God.»

«Yes. John's disciples taught him some doctrine and consoled his heart, and at the right moment the Father of all men made us meet. We are going to Enon to take three witnesses with us, then we are going to his master...» says Jesus.

«To ransom the boy? And where is the money? Mary has handed out the last she had...» remarks Peter.

«There is no need of money. He is not a slave and money has already been given to take him away from his master. Isaac gave it as he felt sorry for the boy.»

«And why did he not get him?»

«Because many are the mockers of God and of their neighbour. There is my Mother with the women. Go and tell them not to come any farther.»

James of Zebedee and Andrew run away as fast as gazelles. Jesus hastens towards his Mother and the women disciples, and He reaches them when they have already been informed and are watching the youth pitifully.

574.5 ⁵They go back quickly towards Enon and enter the village. Led by the boy they go to the house of Eli, who is an old man with eyes dimmed by age but still strong. When young he must have been as robust as an oak-tree of this place.

«Eli, the Rabbi of Nazareth will take me if...»

«Will take you? There is nothing better He could do. You would end up by becoming wicked if you stayed here. A heart hardens when injustice is too hard. And it is too hard. Did you find Him? So the Most High has seen your tears, even if they are of a Samaritan boy. You are happy then, as, because of your age, you are free from all chains and you can follow the Truth, with-

out anything preventing you from doing so, not even the will of a father or a mother. So what for many years seemed to be a punishment now appears to be providential. God is good. But what do you want of me now that you have come here? My blessing? I give it to you as the Elder of the place.»

«I want your blessing, because you are good. Then I came also because you with Levi and Jonah should go, with the Rabbi, to my master, so that he may not ask for more money.»

«But where is the Rabbi? I am old and I can hardly see, and I can recognise only those I know very well. But I do not know the Rabbi.»

«He is here. In front of you.»

«Here? Eternal power!» The old man stands up and bows to Jesus saying: «Forgive the old man whose sight is darkened. I greet You because only One is just in Israel. And You are that One. ⁶Let us go. Levi is in his kitchen garden working at a tub, ^{574.6} and Jonah is attending to his cheese.» The old man stands up once again - he is as tall as Jesus although bent with age - and he sets out, walking along the wall, avoiding the obstacles on the road with the help of his stick.

Jesus, Who has greeted him with His peace, helps him when three coarse steps make it dangerous for a half blind man to proceed. Before setting off Jesus had told the women disciples to wait for Him at that place. Benjamin in the meantime goes to his fold.

The old man says: «You are good. But Alexander is a beast. He is a wolf. I do not know whether... But I am rich enough to give You money for Benjamin, should Alexander want more. My sons do not need my money. I am almost one hundred years old and money does not serve for the other life. A kind action of humanity, yes, is of value...»

«Why did you not do it before?»

«Do not reproach me, Rabbi. I satisfied the boy's hunger and I consoled him, so that he might not become an evil-doer. Alexander is such that he could make a little dove become wild. But I could not take the boy from him, and nobody else could do it, You... You will be going far away. But we... we remain here and we are afraid of his revenge. One day a man of Enon intervened, because being drunk he was beating the boy to death, and

I do not know how he did it, he succeeded in poisoning the man's flock.»

«Is that not just an evil suspicion?»

«No. He waited for months, until winter, when the sheep are in the fold, and he poisoned the water in the vat. They drank it. They swelled. They died. All of them. We are all shepherds here, and we understood... To be certain, they made a dog eat some of that meat and the dog died. And there is someone who saw Alexander steal into the fold... Oh! he is an evil-doer! We are afraid of him... He is cruel, always drunk in the evening. He was merciless towards all his relatives. Now that they are all dead, he tortures the boy.»

«Then do not come, if...»

574.7 «Oh! no. I am coming. The truth is to be told. ⁷Here we are. I can hear the hammer.

That's Levi.» And he calls in a loud voice near a hedge: «Levi! Levi!»

An old man comes out, but not so old as Eli, with his tunic tucked up, with a mallet in his hand. He greets Eli and asks him: «What do you want, my friend?»

«The Rabbi of Galilee is beside me. He has come to take Benjamin. Come, because Alexander is in the wood, to witness that he has already had the money for the boy from that disciple.»

«I am coming. They always told me that the Rabbi was good. Now I believe it. Peace to You!» He puts the mallet down, he shouts to I do not whom to wait for him, and he goes away with Eli and Jesus.

They soon arrive at Jonah's fold. They call him and explain...

«I am coming. You carry on with the work» he says to an apprentice. He dries his hands with a piece of cloth that he then throws on a peg, and follows Jesus, after greeting Him, with Levi and Eli.

In the meantime Jesus speaks to the old man and says to him: «You are a just man. God will give you peace.»

«I hope so. Just is the Lord! It is not my fault if I was born in Samaria...»

«It is not your fault. In the other life there are no boundaries for the just. Sin only lays a barrier between Heaven and the Abyss.»

«That is true. How I would love to see You. Your voice is gentle, and soft is your hand in leading an old blind man. Soft and strong. It feels like that of my beloved son: Eli, like me, the son of my son Joseph. If your appearance is like Your hand, blessed are those who can see You.»

«It is better to hear Me than see Me. It makes the spirit ho-
lier.»

«That is true. I listen to those who speak of You. But they pass through only seldom... ⁸But is that not the noise of an axe strik-
ing trunks?» 574.8

«Yes, it is.»

«Then... Alexander is close at hand... Call him.»

«Yes. You stay here. If I can manage by Myself, I will not call you. Do not show yourselves, unless I call you.» He goes on and calls in a loud voice.

«Who wants me? Who are you?» says a very strong elderly man, with a very hard profile and the thorax and limbs of a wrestler. A blow from those hands must be like a stroke of a club: brutal.

«It is I. An unknown Person Who knows you. I have come to take what is Mine.»

«Yours? Ha! Ha! What is Yours in this wood of mine?»

«Nothing in the wood. In your house Benjamin is Mine.»

«Your are mad! Benjamin is my servant.»

«And your relative. And you are his galley-sergeant. And one of my messengers gave you the money you asked for, to have the boy. And you took the money and refused to give the boy. My messenger, a peaceful man, did not react. But I have come in the name of justice.»

«Your messenger must have drunk the money. I did not get any. And I am keeping Benjamin. I am fond of him.»

«No. You hate him. You are fond of the pay that you do not give him. Do not lie. God punishes liars.»

«I did not receive any money. If You have spoken to my servant, You had better know that he is an astute liar. And I will give him a good thrashing for slandering me. Goodbye!» and he turns his back on Jesus and is about to go away.

«Be careful, Alexander, because God is present. Do not defy His goodness.»

«God! Has God to defend my interests? I only have to defend them and I do so.»

«Mind you!»

574.9 ⁹«But Who are You, You miserable Galilean? How dare You reproach me? I don't know You.»

«You do know Me. I am the Rabbi of Galilee and...»

«Ah! yes! And You think You can frighten me? I fear neither God nor Beelzebub. And You expect me to be afraid of You? Of a madman? Go, away You go! Let me work.

Go, I say. Don't look at me. Do You think that Your eyes can frighten me? What is it that You want to see?»

«Not your crimes, because I know them all. All of them. Also those that no one knows.

But I want to see whether you do not even understand that this is the last hour of mercy that God grants you to repent. I want to see whether remorse does not rise to split your stone heart, whether...»

The man, who has an axe in his hands, hurls it towards Jesus, Who bends quickly.

The axe flies over His head and strikes a young holm-oak that is cut clean and falls with a loud rustling noise of branches and whirr of frightened birds.

574.10 ¹⁰The three men, who were hiding not far away, jump out shouting, fearing that Jesus might have been hit, and the one who cannot see cries: «Oh! to see! If I could only see whether He has been wounded! O Eternal God, my eyesight just for that!» And turning a deaf ear to the assurances of the others he moves forward groping, because he has lost his stick and he wants to touch Jesus to feel whether any part of his body is bleeding, and he moans: «A beam of bright light, and then darkness. But to see, to see without this veil that hardly allows me to guess where obstacles are...»

«I am all right, father, touch Me» says Jesus touching him and having Himself touched.

In the meantime the other two utter harsh words against the violent man and they throw sins and lies in his face, while he, deprived of his axe, pulls out a knife and hurls himself at them to strike them, cursing God, scoffing at the blind man, threatening the others, just like a raging wild beast. But he staggers,

he stops, he drops the knife, he rubs his eyes, opens them, closes them, then utters a frightful cry: «I can't see any more! Help! My eyes... Darkness... Who will save me?»

Also the others shout, out of amazement. And they deride him saying: «God has listened to you.» In fact among other curses he also said: «May God blind me if I am lying and if I have sinned. And may I blind myself rather than worship a mad Nazarene! And with regards to you I will revenge myself and I will break Benjamin in two like that tree...» And they laugh at him saying also: «You can now revenge yourself...»

«Do not be like him. Do not hate, advises Jesus and He caresses the very old man who is worried only about the safety of Jesus, Who to reassure him says: «Raise your face! Look!»

And the miracle is accomplished. As over there, for the brutal man, darkness; so here, for the just man, light. And a different cry, a blissful one rises under the robust trees: «I can see! My eyes! The light! May You be blessed!» And the old man stares at Jesus with his eyes bright with a new life and he then prostrates himself to kiss His feet.

«We two will go together. You will take that wretched man back to Enon. And be merciful because God has already punished him. And God is enough. Let man be kind with every misfortune.»

«Take the boy, the sheep, the wood, the house, the money. But give me back my eyesight. I cannot remain like this.»

«I cannot. I leave you everything through which you became a sinner. I am taking the innocent boy because he has already suffered his martyrdom. In the darkness may your soul open to the Light.»

¹¹Jesus says goodbye to Levi and Jonah and goes down quickly with the old man who seems rejuvenated and who shouts his joy as soon as he arrives at the first houses... The whole of Enon is stirred up. 574.11

Jesus makes his way through the crowd, He goes to the young shepherd who is with the apostles and says: «Come! Let us go, because they are waiting for us at Tirzah.»

«Free? Free? With You? Oh! I could not believe it! I will say goodbye to Eli. And the others?» The boy is excited...

Eli kisses and blesses him and says to him: «And forgive the

poor wretch.»

«Why? I will forgive him, yes. But why poor wretch?»

«Because he cursed the Lord and light died out in his eyes. None of us will have to fear him any more. He is blind and ill. How dreadful the power of God!...» The old man seems an inspired prophet, with his arms raised, looking at the sky, meditating on what he has seen.

Jesus says goodbye to him and elbows His way through the excited little crowd; He goes away followed by the apostles and women disciples; and Benjamin goes away greeted by the women who want to give tokens to the favourite of the Lord: a fruit, a bag, some bread, a garment, what they can find there and then. And happy as he is, he greets them, thanks them and says: «You are always good to me! I will remember you. I will pray for you. Send your children to the Lord. It is lovely to be with Him. He is the Life. Goodbye! Goodbye!...»

574.12 ¹²Enon is left behind. They go down towards the Jordan, towards the plain in the Jordan valley, towards new events still unknown...

But the youth does not turn round to look back. He makes no comment. He does not think. He does not sigh. He smiles. He looks at Jesus, there, ahead of them all, the true Shepherd followed by His flock, of which he also, the poor boy, is part... and all of a sudden he begins to sing, in a loud voice...

The apostles smile saying: «The boy is happy.»

The women smile saying: «The imprisoned bird has found freedom and a nest once again.»

Jesus smiles, turning round to look at him, and his smile, as usual, seems to brighten everything and He calls the boy saying: «Come here, little lamb of God. I want to teach you a beautiful song.» And He intones, followed by the others, the psalm: «The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall lack nothing. He placed me where there are abundant pastures», etc. (Psalm 22)*... and so forth. Jesus' beautiful voice spreads through the fertile country, it excels all the others, even the best ones, so powerful it is in His joy.

574.13 ¹³«Your Son is happy, Mary» says Mary of Alphaeus.

«Yes, He is happy. He still has something joyful...»

* Psalm 22, that in the neo-vulgate became Psalm 23.

«No journey is without its fruit. He passes spreading graces and there is always someone who really meets the Saviour. Do you remember that evening* at Bethlehem of Galilee?» asks Mary of Magdala.

«Yes, but I would not like to remember those lepers and this blind man...»

«You would always forgive. You are so good! But justice also is necessary» remarks Mary Salome.

«It is necessary. But luckily for us mercy is greater» says Mary Magdalene once again.

«You can say that. But Mary...» replies Johanna.

«Mary wants nothing but forgiveness, even if She is in no need of forgiveness. Is that right, Mary?» asks Susanna.

«I should like nothing but forgiveness. Yes. Only that. To be bad must be a dreadful suffering by itself...» She sighs in saying so.

«Would You forgive everybody, really everybody? But would it be fair to do so? There are people who are obstinate in wickedness and spoil all forgiveness by deriding it as weakness» says Martha.

«I should forgive. As far as I am concerned I should forgive. Not out of stupidity. But because I see every soul as a more or less good baby. As a son... A mother always forgives... even if she says: "Justice exacts a just punishment." Oh! if a mother could die to generate a new good heart for her wicked son, do you think that she would not do that? But it is not possible. There are hearts that reject all help... And I think that pity has to forgive them as well. Because the burden on their hearts is already a very heavy one: their sins, God's severity... Oh! let us forgive guilty people... And would to God that our absolute forgiveness could be accepted to diminish their debit...»

«But why do You always weep, Mary? Even now that Your Son had an hour of joy!» says Mary of Alphaeus moaning.

«His joy was not complete because the culprit did not repent. Jesus is completely happy when He can redeem...»

I wonder why Nike, who has never spoken, suddenly says: «We shall be with Judas of Kerieth once again before long.»

that evening, in 248.5/10.

The women look at one another as if the simple sentence meant something exceptional, as if the words concealed I do not know what important matter. But no one replies.

574.14 ¹⁴Jesus has stopped in a beautiful olive-grove. They all stop. Jesus blesses the food, divides it and hands it out.

Benjamin looks and puts in order what they gave him: garments too long or too wide, sandals not fitting his feet, almonds still in the husks, the last walnuts, some cheese, an odd wrinkled apple, a little knife, He is happy with his treasures. He wants to offer the victuals. He folds the garments saying: «I will put on the most beautiful one at Passover.»

Mary of Alphaeus promises: «At Bethany I will sort them all for you. In the meantime leave this one out. At Tirzah there will be water to wash it and farther away there will be thread to mend it. With regards to the sandals... I do not know what to do.»

«We shall give these to the first poor person we meet and whose foot will be the right size, and we will buy a new pair at Tirzah» says Mary of Magdala calmly.

«With what money, sister?» Martha asks her.

«Ah! that is true! We have not a farthing left... But Judas has some money... Benjamin cannot go far like that. And then, poor boy! His soul has had a great joy, but also his human nature must have a smile... certain things make people happy.»

Susanna, who is young and merry, laughs saying: «You are speaking as if you knew from experience that a new pair of sandals are the joy of those who never possessed such a pair!»

«That is true. But it is because I know how pleasant is a dry garment when you are wet, and a fresh one when you have but one. I remember*...» And she bends her head on the Blessed Virgin's shoulder saying: «Do You remember, Mother?» and kisses Her fondly.

574.15 ¹⁵Jesus gives the order to set off, to be at Tirzah before night: «Those two, who are not aware of the events, will be worrying...»

«Shall we go ahead to tell them that You are about to arrive?» asks James of Alphaeus.

* I remember... the arrival in Capernaum during a storm, in 238.3/6.

«Yes. All of you, except John and James and My brother Judas. Tirzah is not far now... So you may go. Look for Judas and Eliza and prepare lodgings for us in the meantime, because it is better to stop for the night since we are so late and we have the women with us... We will follow you. Wait for us at the first houses...»

The eight apostles go away quickly, and Jesus follows them slowly.

575. Hostile reception in Tirzah. An extreme attempt to redeem Judas Iscariot.

5th March 1947.

¹Tirzah is so surrounded by luxuriant olive-groves, that it is necessary to be very close to the town to realise that it is there. A belt of wonderful fertile vegetable gardens is the last screen of the houses. In the kitchen gardens chicory, salads, legumes, young plants of gourds, fruit-trees and bowers, blend and inter-lace their different green shades and their blossoms promising fruit or the little fruits promising delights. Vines and early olive-trees, blown by a rather strong breeze, shed their little blossoms spraying the ground with greenish-white snow. 575.1

From behind the screen of reeds and willows, which have grown near a dry canal, the bottom of which, however is still damp, appear the eight apostles who had been sent ahead, upon hearing the shuffling of the new-comers. They are openly upset and grieved and they beckon to the arrivals to stop. At the same time they rush forward.

When they are sufficiently close to be heard without having to shout, they say: «Come away! Away! Let's go back, into the country. It is not possible to enter the town. They almost stoned us. Come away, to that thicket, and we shall speak...» And anxious as they are to go away without being seen, they push back Jesus, the three apostles, the boy and the women along the dry canal and they say: «We do not want to be seen here. Let's go! Let's go!»

In vain Jesus, Judas and Zebedee's two sons try to find out what has happened. In vain they ask: «But what about Judas

of Simon? What about Eliza?» The eight do not listen to them. Walking in the tangle of stalks and water-plants, their feet cut by bog grass, their faces hurt by willows and reeds, slipping on the mud in the bottom, getting hold of weeds, seeking support on the edges and getting bespattered with mud, they move away, pressed from behind by the eight who proceed with their heads almost turned around to see whether anyone from Tirzah is following them. But there is no one on the road but the sun, which is beginning to set, and a lean stray dog.

575.2 ²At long last they are near a large clump of bushes that delimit a property. Behind the shrubs there is a field of flax the long stems of which, undulating in the wind, are beginning to show their sky-blue flowers.

«Here, in here. If we sit down, no one will see us and when it gets dark we shall go away...» says Peter wiping his perspiration. ..

«Where?» asks Judas of Alphaeus. «The women are with us.»

«We shall go somewhere. In any case the meadows are full of hay cut recently. It will do as a bed. We will make tents with our mantles for the women and we will keep watch.»

«Yes. It is sufficient not to be seen and then to go down to the Jordan at dawn. You were right, Master, in not wanting to take the road through Samaria. For poor people like us, highwaymen are better than Samaritans...» says Bartholomew, who is still panting.

«But what happened, in a word? Has Judas done some...» says Thaddeus.

Thomas interrupts him saying: «Judas has certainly been beaten. I am sorry for Eliza...»

«Have you seen Judas?»

575.3 «I have not. But it is easy to prophesy right. If he said that he is your apostle, he certainly got a thrashing. ³Master, they do not want You.»

«Yes. They have all revolted against You.»

«They are true Samaritans.»

They are all speaking at the same time.

Jesus imposes silence and says: «Let one only speak. You, Simon Zealot, as you are the calmest.»

«Lord, it is soon said. We entered the town and no one trou-

bled us until they learned who we were, as long as they thought that we were pilgrims passing by. But when we asked - and we had to ask! - whether a young, tall, swarthy man, wearing a red mantel and a talith with white and red stripes, and an elderly thin woman, with almost white hair and dark grey clothes had entered the town and had looked for the Galilean Master and His companions, then they got angry at once... Perhaps we should not have spoken of You. We certainly made a mistake... But in the other places we had been received so well that... We do not understand what has happened!... Those who only three days ago were so respectful to You, are now like vipers!...»

Thaddeus interrupts him: «The work of Judaeans...»

«I do not think so. I do not think so because of what they said when they reproached and threatened us. I think... Nay, I am, we are sure that the fact that Jesus refused their offer of protection is the cause of the Samaritan fury. They were shouting: "Away! Go away, you and your Master! He wants to go and worship on the Moria. Well, let Him go and may He and all His followers die. There is no room among us for those who do not consider us as friends, but only as servants. We do not want further trouble unless there is profit as compensation. Stones, not bread for the Galilean. Our dogs should attack Him, instead of our homes receiving Him." That, and even more than that, they were saying. And as we insisted on learning at least what had happened to Judas, they picked up stones to hit us and they really set their dogs on us. And they were shouting to one another: "Let us station ourselves at all the entrances. If He comes we will avenge ourselves." We ran away. A woman - there is always a good soul among wicked people - pushed us into her kitchen garden and then she led us along a path through vegetable gardens to the canal, in which there was no water as they had irrigated before the Sabbath. And she hid us there. Then she promised to let us have news of Judas. But she has not come any more. But we are to wait for her here, because she said that if she does not find us in the canal, she will come here.»

^{575.4} There are many comments. Some continue to accuse the Judaeans. Some reproach Jesus lightly, a reproach concealed in their remarks: «You spoke too clearly at Shechem and then You went away. During the last three days they decided that there is

no sense in deceiving oneself and causing damage to oneself for one who does not satisfy them... and they drive You away...»

Jesus replies: «I do not regret speaking the truth and doing My duty. They do not understand at present. They will shortly understand My justice and will worship Me more than if I had had no justice or if it had been greater than My love for them.»

«There! There is the woman on the road. She is so bold as to show herself...» says Andrew.

«She will not betray us, will she?» says Bartholomew suspiciously.

«She is alone!»

«But she may be followed by people hiding in the canal...» But the woman, who is coming forward carrying a basket on her head, goes on passing the fields of flax where Jesus and the apostles are waiting, then she takes a narrow path and disappears... reappearing suddenly behind those who were waiting and who turn around almost frightened when they hear the rustling of the vegetation.

The woman speaks to the eight men she knows: «Here I am! Forgive me for keeping you waiting so long... I did not want anybody to follow me. I said that I was going to my mother's... I know... And I brought some food for you. The Master... Which is the Master? I would like to venerate Him.»

«That is the Master.»

The woman, who has laid down her basket, prostrates herself saying: «Forgive the sin of my fellow-citizens. If no one had instigated them... But many have taken advantage of Your refusal...»

575.5 «I have no grudge, woman. ⁵Stand up and speak. Have you any news of My apostle and of the woman who was with him?»

«Yes, I have. Driven out like dogs, they are out of town, on the other side, waiting for night-time. They wanted to go back, towards Enon, looking for You. They wanted to come here, as they knew that their companions were here. I told them not to do that, and to remain quiet as I will take you to them. And I will do so as soon as it gets dark.

Fortunately my husband is away, so I am free to leave the house. I will take you to one of my sisters who is married down in the plain. You will sleep there, without saying who you are, not because of Merod, but because of the men who are with her. They

are not Samaritans, they come from the Decapolis and are settled here. But it is always wise...»

«May God reward you. Have the two disciples been injured?»

«The man, a little. The woman, nothing. And the Most High certainly protected her because she is bold and she protected her son with her own body when the citizens began to pick up stones. Oh! what a strong woman! She shouted: "Is that how you strike a man who has not offended you? And will you not respect me, who am defending him and am a mother? Have you no mothers, since you do not respect a mother? Were you born of wolves or are you made of mud and manure?" and she looked at the assailers holding her mantle wide open to defend the man, and at the same time she was withdrawing pushing him out of town... And even now she comforts him saying: "May the Most High grant, o my Judas, that the blood you have shed for the Master may become the balm for your heart." But it is a small wound. Perhaps the man is more frightened than hurt. But take some food now. Here is some fresh milk, for the women, and bread, cheese and fruit. I could not cook any meat. I should have been too late. And here is some wine for the men. Eat while it is getting dark. Then along safe roads we shall go to the two disciples and then to Merod's house.»

«May God reward you again» says Jesus, and He offers and divides the food, putting some aside for the two who are not present.

«No. I have seen to them, as I took them eggs and bread, which I concealed under my clothes, and some wine and oil for the wounds. This is for you. Eat now, as I will watch the road...»

^{575.6}They eat, but the men are devoured by indignation and the women feel listless through depression. All of them, with the exception of Mary of Magdala, as what for the others is fear or dejection affects her like a liqueur that stimulates nerves and courage. Her eyes flash with anger as she looks at the hostile town. Only the presence of Jesus, Who has already said that He has no grudge, keeps her from uttering violent words. And as she cannot speak or act, she gives vent to her anger by snapping at her innocent piece of bread in such a meaningful way that the Zealot cannot help saying to her smiling: «Luckily for those of Tirzah they cannot fall into your hands! You look like a wild beast in chains, Mary!»

«I am. You are right. And in the eyes of God, this restraining myself from going in there, as they deserve, has more value than what I have done so far to expiate.»

«Be good, Mary! God has forgiven you sins graver than theirs.»

«That is true. They have offended You once, my God, and through the instigation of other people. I many times... and by my own will... and I cannot be intolerant and proud...» She lowers her eyes on her bread and two tears fall on it.

Martha lays her hand on her sister's lap saying to her in a low voice: «God has forgiven you. Don't lose heart any more... Remember what you have had: our Lazarus...»

«It is not dejection. It is gratitude. It is emotion... And it is also the ascertainment that I am still devoid of that mercy which I received so plentifully... Forgive me, Rabboni!» she says raising her wonderful eyes to which humbleness has restored kindness.

«Forgiveness is never denied to humble-hearted people, Mary.»

575.7 ⁷Night is falling tinging the air with a delicate fading violet hue. Also things not far away become confused. The stalks of flax, previously visible in their beauty, have blended into a uniform dark mass. The birds among leafy branches become silent. The first star begins to shine. The first cricket chirps in the grass. It is night-time.

«We can go. Here, in the fields, we shall not be seen. Come without being afraid. I am not betraying you. And I am not doing this for retribution. I only ask Heaven to have mercy on me, for we are all in need of mercy» says the woman with a sigh.

They stand up and set out after her. They pass round Tirzah at a distance, through fields and half-dark vegetable gardens, but not so far as not to be able to see men around fires at the entrances of roads...

«They are lying in wait for us...» says Matthew.

«Cursed!» whistles Philip between his teeth.

Peter does not speak but he shakes his arms towards the sky in a silent invocation or protest.

But James and John of Zebedee, who have been speaking to each other animatedly, a little ahead of the others, come back and say: «Master, if You do not want to have recourse to pun-

ishment because of Your perfect love, shall we have it? Shall we say to the fire of heaven to descend on these sinners and devour them? You told us that we can do everything that we ask with faith and...»

Jesus, Who was walking with His head bowed, as if He were tired, suddenly straightens Himself and casts withering glances at them as His eyes flash in the moonlight. The two withdraw and become silent, frightened as they are by His glances. Jesus, His eyes fixed on them all the time, says: «You do not know what spirits are within you. The Son of man has not come to lose souls, but to save them. Do you not remember what I told you? In the parable* of the wheat and the darnel I said: "For the time being let the wheat and the darnel grow together. Because if you tried to separate them now you might pull up also the wheat with the darnel. So leave them till the harvest. At harvest time I shall say to the reapers: collect the darnel now and tie it in bundles to be burnt, then gather the good wheat into my barn."»

⁸Jesus has already moderated His anger towards the two who, out of wrath excited by their love for Him, were asking to punish those from Tirezah and who are now standing with their heads lowered in front of Him. He takes them by their elbows, one on His right, the other on His left side and He resumes walking, leading them thus and speaking to everybody, as they have all gathered around Him when He stopped. «I solemnly tell you that harvest time is close at hand. My first harvest. And for many there will not be a second one. But - and let us praise the Most High for this - some people who were not able to become ears of good wheat in My time, after the purification of the Passover Sacrifice, will be born again with new souls. Until that day I shall not be pitiless towards anybody... Afterwards there will be justice...»

«After Passover?» asks Peter.

«No. After the time. I am not speaking of these men of the present. I am looking at future ages. Man is renewed continuously like crops in fields. And harvests follow one another. And I will leave what is necessary for future generations to become good wheat. If they do not want to do that, at the end of the world

* parable, that is in 181.3/4.

My angels will separate the darnel from the good wheat. Then it will be the eternal Day of God alone. At present in the world it is the day of God and of Satan. The Former sows Goodness, the latter throws his damned darnel, his scandals, his wickedness, his seeds that stir up wickedness and scandals, among the seeds of God. Because there will always be those who rouse people against God, as here, with these people, who are really less guilty than those who incite them to do wrong.»

«Master, every year we purify ourselves at the Passover of the Unleavened Bread, but we always remain what we were. Will it be different this year?» asks Matthew.

«Very different.»

«Why? Explain it to us.»

«Tomorrow... Tomorrow, or when we are on the way, and Judas of Simon is with us, I shall tell you.»

«Oh! yes. You will tell us and we shall become better... In the meantime forgive us, Jesus» says John.

«I really called you with the right name*. But thunder does no harm. A thunderbolt, yes, can kill. But thunder often is a forewarning of thunderbolts. The same happens to those who do not remove from their spirits every disorder that is against love. Today they ask to be allowed to punish. Tomorrow they punish without asking. The day after tomorrow they punish even without any reason. It is easy to descend... That is why I tell you to divest yourselves of all harshness against your neighbour. Do as I do and you will be certain of never doing wrong. Have you ever seen Me revenge Myself on those who grieve Me?»

«No, Master. You...»

575.9 ⁹«Master! Master! We are here. Eliza and I. Oh! Master, how worried we were about You! And how afraid I was of dying...» says Judas of Kerioth coming out from behind rows of vines and running towards Jesus. His forehead is bandaged. Eliza follows him more calmly.

«Have you suffered? Were you afraid to die? Is life so dear to you?» asks Jesus freeing Himself from Judas who embraces Him weeping.

«Not life. I was afraid of God, to die without being forgiv-

* the right name, that of "sons of thunder", in 330.3.

en by You... I always offend You. I offend everybody. Also this woman... And she reacted acting as a mother to me. I felt I was guilty and I was afraid of death...»

«Oh! a beneficial fear, if it can make a saint of you! But I always forgive you, you know that, provided you are willing to repent. And what about you, Eliza? Have you forgiven him?»

«He is a big unruly boy. And I can be indulgent.»

«You have been brave, Eliza. I know.»

«If she had not been there, I do not know whether I would have seen You again, Master!»

«So you can see that she remained with you out of love, not out of hatred... Have you been injured, Eliza?»

«No, Master. The stones fell around me without hurting me. But my heart was in agony thinking of You...»

«It is all over now. Let us follow the woman who wants to take us to a safe house.»

They set forth again along a lane that is white in the moonlight and takes them eastwards.

¹⁰Jesus has taken the Iscariot by the arm and has gone ahead with him. He Speaks to him kindly. He tries to work upon his heart upset by his recent fear of God's judgements: «You can see, Judas, how easily one can die. Death is always on the look-out around us. You can see how what seems negligible when we are full of life becomes important, fearfully important when death skims us. But why should one wish to have such frights, why should one create them to have them present at the moment of death, when with a holy life one can ignore the terror of the impending divine judgement? Do you not think that it is worth living a just life in order to have a peaceful death? Judas, My friend. The divine paternal mercy has allowed that to happen, so that it might be an appeal to your heart. You are still in time, Judas... Why do you not want to give your Master, Who is about to die, the great, the very great joy of knowing that you have come back to Good?»

«But can You still forgive me, Jesus?»

«And would I speak to you like this if I could not? How little you still know Me! I know you. I know that you are like one who is seized by a giant octopus. But if you wanted, you «could still free yourself. Oh! you would certainly suffer. It would be

painful to tear off those chains that torture and poison you. But later, how much joy, Judas! Are you afraid that you may not have enough strength to react against those who influence you? I can absolve you in advance of the sin of infringing the Passover rite... You are ill. Passover is not compulsory for sick people. No one is more sick than you are. You are like a leper. Lepers do not go up to Jerusalem, while they are such. You must realise, Judas, that to appear before the Lord with an unclean spirit, such as you have, does not honour Him, but it offends Him. First it is necessary...»

575.11 ¹¹«Why do You not purify and cure me, then?» asks Judas, and he already sounds hard and indocile.

«I will not cure you! When a man is ill he seeks cure by himself, unless it is a child or a fool who are devoid of will-power...»

«Treat me as such. Treat me as a fool and see to it, without my being aware of it.»

«It would not be just because you can use your will-power. You know what is good and what is evil for you. And My curing you would be of no avail without your will to remain cured.»

«Give me such will as well.»

«Give you it? So should I impose a goodwill on you? And your free will? What would it become? What would your ego of a man, of a free creature be? Dominated?»

«As I am dominated by Satan, I may also be dominated by God!»

«How you hurt Me, Judas! You pierce My heart! But I forgive you what you do to Me... Dominated by Satan, you said. I did not mean such a dreadful thing...»

«But You were thinking of it because You know that it is true, and because You are aware of it, if it is true that You can read the hearts of men. If it is so, You know that I am no longer free to do what I like... He has seized me and...»

«No. He approached you, tempting you, testing you, and you received him. There is no possession if at the beginning there is no assent to some satanic temptation. The snake introduces his head between the bars closely placed to defend hearts, but he would not be able to enter if man did not widen a passage to admire his alluring aspect and listen to and follow him... Only then man becomes dominated, possessed, because he wants it.

God also darts the very kind lights of His paternal love from the heavens, and His lights penetrate us. Or rather: God, to Whom everything is possible, descends into the hearts of men. It is His right. Since man knows how to become a slave dominated by the Dreadful one, why does he not know how to become a servant of God, nay a son of God, and he drives away his Most Holy Father? Are you not replying to Me? Are you not telling Me why you wanted Satan and preferred him to God? And yet, you would still be in time to save yourself! ^{575.12} You know that I am going to die. No one knows as well as you do... I do not refuse to die... I am going. I am going towards death because My death will be the Life for so many. Why do you not want to be one of them? Only for you, my friend, my poor sick friend, shall I die in vain?»

«Your death will be of no use for so many, do not delude Yourself. You had better run away and live far from here, enjoying life and teaching your doctrine, because it is a good one, but without sacrificing Yourself.»

«Teach my doctrine! What truth could I teach, if I did the opposite of what I teach? What Master should I be if I preached obedience to the will of God and I did not obey it, and love for men and I did not love them, to renounce flesh and the world and I loved both flesh and the honours of the world, not to give rise to scandals and I scandalised not only men, but also the angels, and so forth? Satan is speaking through you just now. As he spoke at Ephraim. As he spoke and acted many times through you, to upset Me. I have recognised all such actions of Satan, accomplished through you, and I did not hate you, I did not get tired of you, but I only felt sorry, infinitely sorry. Like a mother who watches the progress of an illness that will be the cause of her son's death, I have watched the progress of evil in you. Like a father who does not regret anything provided he can find the medicines for his sick son, I regretted nothing in order to save you, I overcame disgust, anger, bitterness, dejection... Like a desolate father and mother, disappointed in all earthly power, turn to Heaven to obtain the life of their son, so I have moaned and I still moan imploring a miracle that may save you, may save you, may save you on the brink of the abyss that is already collapsing under your feet.

¹³Judas, look at Me! Before long my Blood will be shed for the ^{575.13}

sins of men. Not one drop will be left in My veins. The clods of earth, the grass, the garments of My persecutors and Mine... the wood, the iron, the ropes, the thorns of the nabaca... and the spirits awaiting salvation will drink of it... You alone do not want to drink it? I would give all this Blood of Mine for you only. You are My friend. How willingly one dies for one's friend! To save him! One says: "I shall die. But I shall continue to live in the friend to whom I gave life." Like a father, like a mother, who continue to live in their offspring after they have passed away. Judas, I implore you! I am not asking for anything else in this eve of my death. A convict is granted a last grace by his judges and also by his enemies, and his last wish is satisfied. I ask you not to be damned. I do not ask so much Heaven as I ask you and your will... Think of your mother, Judas.

What will your mother be afterwards? And the name of your family? I appeal to your pride, which is as bold as ever, to defend you from dishonour. Do not disgrace yourself, Judas. Consider: years and ages will go by, kingdoms and empires will fall, the stars will lose their brightness, the configuration of the Earth will change, and you will always be Judas, as Cain is always Cain, if you persist in your sin. Time will come to an end, and only Paradise and Hell will remain. And in Paradise and in Hell, for the men raised from the dead and received forever with their souls and bodies where it is right for them to be, you will always be Judas, the cursed greatest culprit, if you do not mend your ways. I will descend to free the spirits from Limbo, I will lead multitudes of them out of Purgatory, and you... I shall not be able to take you where I am... Judas, I am going to die, I am going happily, because the hour I have been awaiting for millennia has come: the hour to reconcile men to their Father. I shall not reconcile many of them. But the number of those saved, whom I shall contemplate when dying, will console Me for the torture of dying in vain for so many. But, I tell you, it will be dreadful to see you, My apostle and friend, among the latter. Do not give Me such a cruel pain!... I want to save you, Judas.

575.14 ¹⁴Look. We are going down to the river. Tomorrow at dawn, when everybody is still sleeping, we will cross it, the two of us, and you will go to Bozrah, to Arbela, to Aera, wherever you wish. You know the houses of the disciples. At Bozrah look for Joachim

and Mary, the woman I cured of leprosy. I will give you a note for them. I will say that a quiet rest in a different place is necessary for your health. It is the truth, unfortunately, because your spirit is diseased and the air of Jerusalem would be lethal to you. But they will think that your body is ill. You will remain there until I come to take you away. I will see to your companions... But do not come to Jerusalem. See? I did not want the women to come, except the strongest ones among them, and those who being mothers are entitled to be near their sons.»

«Also mine?»

«No. Mary will not be in Jerusalem...»

«She is the mother of an apostle as well, and she has always honoured You.»

«Yes. And she would be entitled like the others to be near Me, Whom she loves with perfect justice. But just because of that she will not be there. Because I told her not to come, and she knows how to obey.»

«Why is she not to be there? In what is she different from the mother of Your brothers and from the mother of Zebedee's sons?»

«You. And you know why I am saying this. But if you listen to Me, if you go to Bozrah, I will send word to your mother and will have her brought to you, as being so good, she may help you to recover. ¹⁵Believe Me, we are the only ones to love you thus, without limit. There are three who love you in Heaven: the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Who have contemplated You and Who are awaiting your decision to make you the jewel of Redemption, the greatest prey snatched from the Abyss; and three on the Earth: your mother, My Mother and I. Make us happy, Judas! Both us in Heaven and us on the Earth, who love you with true love.»

575.15

«You have said it: only three love me; the others do not...»

«Not as we do. But they love you so much. Eliza defended you. The others were worried about you. When you are away from us, You are in everybody's heart and your name is on everybody's lips. You are not aware of all the love that surrounds you. Your oppressor conceals it from you. Believe My word.»

«I believe You. And I will try to please You. But I want to do it by myself. I made the mistake, by myself I must recover from evil.»

«God only can do by Himself. Your thought is a thought of

pride. In pride there is still Satan. Be humble, Judas. Grasp this hand that is offered to you in a friendly way. Take shelter in this heart that opens to protect you. Here, with Me, Satan could do you no harm.»

«I have tried to be with You... I have descended lower and lower... It is useless!»

«Do not say that! Do not say that! React against discouragement. God can do everything. Cling to God. Judas! Judas!»

«Be quiet! Lest the others should hear...»

«And you are worried about the others, but not about your spirit? Poor Judas!...»

575.16 ¹⁶Jesus speaks no more. But He remains beside the apostle until the woman, who was a few metres ahead of them, goes into a house that appears in a thick olive-grove. Jesus then says to His disciple: «I will not sleep tonight. I will pray and wait for you... May God speak to your heart. Listen to Him... I will remain here, where I am now, to pray. Until dawn... Remember that.»

Judas does not reply to Him. The other apostles and the women have arrived and they all stop together waiting for the Samaritan woman to come back. She comes back soon.

She is with another woman, who is like her, and who greets them saying: «I have not got many rooms because the pruners are already here working at the olive-trees. But I have a large barn with plenty straw in it. I have room for the women. Come.»

«Go! I am staying here to pray. Peace to all of you» says Jesus. And while the others go away, He holds back His Mother saying to Her: «I am staying to pray for Judas, Mother. Will You help Me, too?»

«Yes, I will, Son. Is his goodwill reviving?»

«No, Mother. But we must act as if... Heaven can do everything, Mother!»

«Yes. And I can still delude Myself. But You cannot, Son. You know. My Holy Son! But I will always imitate You. Go peacefully, My darling! Even when You are no longer able to speak to him, because he shuns You, I will try to bring him back to You. And if the Most Holy Father will only listen to My grief... Will You let me stay with You, Jesus? We will pray together... and I shall have You for Me alone all those hours...»

«Yes, stay with Me, Mother. I will wait for You here.»

Mary goes away quickly, and She is soon back.

¹⁷They sit on their sacks, under the olive-trees. In the deep si- 575.17
lence one can hear the gurgling of the river not far away and the chirping of crickets sounds louder in the silence of the night. Then nightingales begin to sing. An owl hoots and a homed owl screeches. And the stars move slowly in the firmament, as bright as queens, now that the moon has set and no longer outshines them. Then a cock breaks the calm air with its sharp crowing. Much farther away a cock replies, hardly audible. Then the si-
lence is broken again by the arpeggio of dew drops falling from the tiles of the next-door neighbour's house on the pavement surrounding it. Then a fresh rustling of leafy branches shaking off the dampness of the night, and the isolated cry of a bird that awakes, and at the same time a change in the sky and the awak-
ening of light. It is dawn.

But Judas has not come... Jesus looks at His Mother, as white as a lily against the dark olive tree and He says to Her: «We have prayed, Mother. God will make use of our prayer...»

«Yes, Son. You are as white as death. Your vitality has ex-
haled completely during the night, pressing the gates of Heaven and the decrees of God!»

«You are pale, too, Mother. Great is Your fatigue.»

«Great is My sorrow because of Your sorrow.»

¹⁸The door of the house is opened cautiously... Jesus startles. 575.18
But it is the woman who led them there, who comes out noise-
lessly. Jesus says with a sigh: «I was hoping I might have been
wrong!»

The woman comes forward with her empty basket. She sees Jesus. She greets Him and is about to go on. But He calls her. He says to her: «May the Lord reward you for everything. I should like to reward you as well, but I have nothing with Me.»

«I do not want anything, Rabbi. I do not want any reward, but although I do not want money, there is one thing I should like. And You can give me it!»

«What, woman?»

«That the heart of my husband should change. And You can do that, because You really are the Holy Man of God.»

«Go in peace. It will be done to you as you wish. Goodbye.»

The woman goes away quickly towards her house that must really be a sad one.

Mary remarks: «Another unhappy woman. That is why she is good!...»

575.19 ¹⁹Peter's ruffled head appears from the granary, followed by John's bright one, and then by the severe profile of Thaddeus, the brownish face of the Zealot, and the thin one of young Benjamin... They are all awake. Mary of Magdala is the first woman to come out of the house, and is followed by Nike and then by the others.

When they are all together and the woman who gave them hospitality has brought a pail of milk still frothy, the Iscariot appears. His head is no longer bandaged, but the bruise of the blow tinges half of his forehead and his eye looks even more gloomy in the violaceous ring. Jesus looks at him. Judas looks at Jesus, then he turns his head round looking elsewhere.

Jesus says to him: «Buy of the woman whatever she can give us. We are going ahead. Join us.»

And Jesus, after greeting the woman, sets out. They all follow Him.

576. Towards Doco, the meeting with the young rich man.

7th March 1947.

576.1 ¹¹It is another beautiful April morning. The earth and the sky display all their springtime beauties. One breathes light, songs, scents, so sated is the air with brilliance, with voices of joy and love, with fragrance. Rain must have drizzled during the night as the roads are dark and without dust, but they are not muddy, and the stems and leaves washed by the rain are now quivering, all bright and clean, in a mild breeze blowing down from the mountains towards this fertile plain that foreshows Jericho.

People are coming up continuously from the banks of the Jordan; they have ferried from the other bank or they have followed the road that runs along the river, and have come on this one that heads straight for Jericho and Doco, as indicated on road signs.

With the many Jews who, from all over, are going to Jerusa-

lem for the rite, there are mingled merchants from other places and shepherds with bleating lambs, destined for sacrifices, but unaware of their fate.

Many recognise Jesus and greet Him. They are Jews from Perea and the Decapolis and even from places farther away. There is a group from Caesarea Paneas. They are shepherds, who leading a rather nomadic life with their flocks, have knowledge of the Master, having met Him or heard of Him from disciples.

²A shepherd prostrates himself and says to Him: «May I offer You a lamb?» 576.2

«Do not deprive yourself of it, man. It is your earning.»

«Oh! it is my gratitude. You do not remember me, but I remember You. I am one who was cured by You when You cured so many. You cured the bone of my thigh that no one knew how to cure and made an invalid of me. I will give You a lamb willingly.

The best one. This one. For the banquet of joy. I know that for the sacrifice You are to buy one. But for the joy! You gave me so much of it. Take it, Master.»

«Yes, take it. It is money that we shall save. Or rather, it will enable us to have a meal because with all our lavishness I have no money left» says the Iscariot.

«Lavishness? Since we left Shechem we have not spent a far-thing!» says Matthew.

«Well, I have no more money. I gave the last to Merod.»

«Listen, man» says Jesus to the shepherd to put an end to the Iscariot's words. «I am not going to Jerusalem just now and I cannot take the lamb with Me. Otherwise I would accept it to show you that I welcome your gift.»

«But later You will go to the city. You will stop there for the feasts. You will certainly have a place in which to stay. Tell me where it is, and I shall hand it over to Your friends...»

«I have nothing of the kind... But I have a poor old friend at Nob. Listen to Me carefully: on the day after the Passover Sabbath you will go to Nob at dawn and you will say to John, the Elder of Nob (anyone will tell you where he lives): "Jesus of Nazareth, your friend, sends you this lamb, so that you may celebrate this day with a banquet of joy, because for the true friends of the Christ there is not a greater joy than today's"

Will you do that?»

«If that is what You want, I will do it.»

«And you will make Me happy. Not before the day after the Sabbath. Make sure you remember that. And remember the words I told you. Go, now, and peace be with you. And keep your heart firm in that peace in future days. Remember that as well, and go on believing in My Truth. Goodbye.»

576.3 ³Some people have approached them to listen to their conversation and they disperse only when the shepherd, proceeding with his flock, compels them to scatter. Jesus follows the herd taking advantage of the open space left by it.

The people whisper: «So is He really going to Jerusalem? Does He not know that He is banned?»

«Hey! No one can prohibit a son of the Law from presenting himself to the Lord at Passover. Is He guilty of a public crime? No, He is not. Because if He were, the Proconsul would have had Him arrested, as he did with Barabbas.»

And others say: «Have you heard? He has nowhere to go nor friends in Jerusalem. Have they all abandoned Him? Even the man He raised from the dead? How grateful of him!»

«Be quiet. Those two women over there are Lazarus' sisters. I come from the countryside of Magdala and I know them well. If the sisters are with Him it means that Lazarus' family is loyal to Him.»

«Perhaps He dare not enter the town.»

«He is right.»

«God will forgive Him if He remains outside.»

«It is not His fault if He cannot go up to the Temple.»

«He is wisely prudent. If He were caught it would all come to an end before His time.»

«He is certainly not yet ready to be proclaimed our king, and He does not want to be caught.»

«They say that when it was known that He was at Ephraim, He went everywhere, even to nomadic tribes, to prepare followers and soldiers and to seek protection.»

«Who told you?»

«The usual lies. He is the holy King and not the king of soldiers.»

«Perhaps He will celebrate the supplementary Passover, when it is easier not to be noticed. The Sanhedrin breaks up after the

feasts and all the members go home for harvest time. They do not meet again until Pentecost.»

«And once the members of the Sanhedrin have gone away, who do you think will do Him any harm? They are the jackals!»

«H'm! Is it possible for Him to be so prudent? That is too human! He is more than a man and He will not be cowardly prudent.»

«Coward? Why? No one can say that he who spares himself for his mission is a coward.»

«He would always be cowardly, because every mission is inferior to God. So the cult for God must have priority over everything else.»

Those are the words going from mouth to mouth. Jesus pretends He does not hear them.

⁴Judas of Alphaeus stops to wait for the women and when they arrive - they were with the boy, about thirty steps behind - he says to Eliza: «You have given out a lot of money at Shechem after we left!» 576.4

«Why?»

«Because Judas has not a farthing left. Your sandals, Benjamin, are not likely to come.

It was destined to be so. It was not possible to enter Tirzah, and even if we had been able to go in, as we had no money, we could not have bought anything... You will have to enter Jerusalem as you are...»

«There is Bethany before Jerusalem» says Martha with a smile.

«And before, there is Jericho and my house» says Nike, also with a smile.

«And I am before everything. I promised and I will do it. We have had interesting experiences during this journey! I have experienced what it means not to have a drachma. And now I will experience what one feels like when one has to sell something at need» says Mary of Magdala.

«And what do you want to sell, if you do not wear jewels any longer?» Martha asks her sister.

«My big silver hairpins. I have so many of them. But to keep this useless weight tidy, iron ones will be sufficient. I will sell them. Jericho is full of people who buy such things. And this is

market day as well as tomorrow, and every day because of the festivities.»

«But, sister!»

«What? Are you scandalised at the thought that I may be considered so poor as to have to sell my silver hairpins? Oh! I wish I had always given rise to such scandals in you! It was much worse when, without being in need, I sold myself to the vice of other people and mine.»

«Be quiet! There is the boy, who does not know!»

«He does not know as yet. Perhaps he does not know that I was the sinner. Tomorrow he may be told by someone who hates me because I am no longer such, and with details not pertaining to my sin, which, however, was so serious. So he had better be told by me, so that he may realise what the Lord, Who accepted him, can do: turn a sinner into a repentant soul; turn a dead person into a resurrected one; of me, dead in my spirit, of Lazarus, dead in his body, He made two living beings. Because that is what the Rabbi has done to us, Benjamin. Always bear that in mind and love Him with all your heart, because He really is the Son of God.»

576.5 ⁵An obstacle along the road has stopped Jesus and the apostles, and the women join them. Jesus says to the women: «Go ahead, towards Jericho, and enter the town, if you wish so. I am going to Doco with the apostles. At sunset I shall be with you.»

«Oh! Why are You sending us away? We are not tired» say all the women protesting.

«Because I should like you, or at least some of you, to inform the disciples that I shall be at Nike's tomorrow.»

«If that is the case, Lord, we shall go. Come Eliza, and you Johanna, and you Susanna and Martha. We shall prepare everything» says Nike.

«And the boy and I. We shall do our shopping. Bless us, Master. And come soon. Are You staying, Mother?»

«Yes, with My Son.»

They part. Only the three Maries remain with Jesus: His Mother, Her sister-in-law Mary Clopas, and Mary Salome. And Jesus leaves the Jericho road and takes a secondary one that goes to Doco.

576.6 ⁶And He has not been long on it when from a caravan coming

from I do not know where - a rich caravan that certainly comes from afar, because the women are mounted on camels, closed in swaying palanquins fastened to the humped backs, and the men are riding fiery horses or other camels - a young man departs and, making his camel kneel down, he slides from his saddle and goes towards Jesus. A servant, who has approached him, holds the animal by the reins.

The young man prostrates himself before Jesus, and after his heartfelt greeting, he says to Him: «I am Philip of Canata, the son of true Israelites who have remained such. I was a disciple of Gamaliel until my father's death put me at the head of his business. I have heard You speak more than once. I am aware of Your deeds. I aspire to a better life to have the eternal one that You assure will be possessed by those who create your Kingdom in themselves. So tell me, good Master, what shall I have to do to have eternal life?»

«Why do you call Me good? God alone is good.»

«You are the Son of God, as good as Your Father. Oh! tell me what I must do.»

«To enter eternal life observe the commandments.»

«Which, my Lord? The ancient ones or yours?»

«The ancient ones already contain Mine, mine do not alter the ancient ones. They are always the same: worship the Only true God and respect the laws of cult, do not kill, do not steal, do not commit adultery, do not bring false witness, honour your father and mother, do not injure your neighbour but love him as you love yourself. By doing so you will have eternal life.»

«Master, I have observed all those commandments since my childhood.»

Jesus casts a loving glance at him and kindly asks: «And do you think they are not yet sufficient?»

«No, Master. The Kingdom of God is a great thing in us and in the other life. God Who gives Himself to us is an infinite gift. I feel that what is our duty is very little compared with the All Infinite Perfect Being Who gives Himself to us, and I think that we should obtain Him by means of things that are greater than those commanded, in order not to be damned and be agreeable to Him.»

«You are right. To be perfect you still lack one thing. If you

want to be as perfect as our Father in Heaven wants, go, sell everything you have and give it to the poor, and in Heaven you will have a treasure that will make you loved by the Father Who has given His Treasure to the poor of the Earth. Then come and follow Me.»

The young man becomes sad and pensive. He then stands up and says: «I will remember your advice...» and he goes away sadly.

576.7 ¶ Judas smiles ironically and whispers: «I am not the only one who loves money!»

Jesus turns around and looks at him... then He looks at the other eleven faces around Him and says with a sigh: «How difficult it is for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, the gate of which is narrow, and the way is steep, and those who are laden with the bulky weights of riches cannot go along it and enter! To enter up there only the immaterial treasures of virtue are required and one must be able to part with everything that is attachment to the things of the world and to vanity.» Jesus is very sad... The apostles look stealthily at one another... Jesus, looking at the caravan of the young rich man move away, says: «I solemnly tell you that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.»

«Who can be saved, then? Poverty often makes one sin, through envy and lack of respect for other people's property, and through lack of confidence in Providence... Riches are an obstacle to perfection... So? Who can be saved?»

Jesus looks at them and says: «What is impossible for men, is possible for God, because everything is possible for God. It is sufficient for man to help his Lord with his goodwill. And it is goodwill to take the advice given and strive to achieve freedom from riches. To achieve complete freedom, in order to follow God. Because this is the true freedom of man: to follow the voices that God whispers to his heart, and His commandments, not to be the slave of himself, or of the world, or of respect of public opinion, and consequently not to be the slave of Satan. To make use of the wonderful free will that God gave man to wish Good only and freely, and thus attain the very bright, free and blissful eternal life. Man must not be slave even of his own life, if

to gratify it he must resist God. I said* to you: "He who loses his life for My sake and to serve God will save it forever."

⁸«Well! We have left everything to follow You, even what was lawful. So what about us? Shall we enter Your Kingdom?» asks Peter. ^{576.8}

«I tell you solemnly that those who have followed Me thus and those who follow Me - because there is always time to make amends for laziness and sins committed so far, there is always time while man is on the Earth and has days in front of him during which he can redress wrongs done - those will be with Me in My Kingdom. I tell you solemnly that you, who have followed Me in the regeneration, will sit on thrones to judge the tribes of the Earth with the Son of man Who will be sitting on the throne of His glory. And once again I tell you solemnly that there is no one who in My Name has left house, fields, father, mother, brothers, wife, sons and sisters to propagate the Gospel and continue My work, who will not receive one hundredfold in this present time and eternal life in the world to come.»

«But if we lose everything how can we centuplicate what we have?» asks Judas of Kerioth.

«I repeat: what is impossible for men is possible for God. And God will give one hundredfold of spiritual joy to those who from men of the world became sons of God, that is spiritual men. They will enjoy real happiness, both here and beyond the Earth.

And I also say to you that not all those who seem to be the first, and ought to be the first having received more than everybody, will be such. And not all those who seem to be the last, and even less than the last, as they do not appear to be My disciples or to belong to the chosen People, will be the last. Truly, many who were first will become last, and many who were last, least, will become first... ⁹But there is Doco over there. Go ahead all of you, except Judas of Kerioth and Simon Zealot. Go and announce Me to those who may need Me.» ^{576.9}

And Jesus, with the two apostles He held back, waits for the three Maries, who are following them at a distance of a few meters.

* I said, in 265.12.

577. The third announcement of the Passion.
Mary of Alphaeus recalls the figure of Joseph.
The foolish request of the sons of Zebedee.

8th March 1947.

577.1 ¹Day is hardly breaking at dawn and it is still difficult to travel when Jesus departs from Doco, still asleep. The shuffling of feet is certainly not heard by anybody because they walk cautiously and because people are still sleeping in their houses. No one speaks until they are out of town, in the country that is awaking slowly in the dim light and is pleasantly fresh after the dew.

The Iscariot then says: «A useless journey with no rest. It was better not to have come so far.»

«The few people we met did not use us badly! They lost their night's sleep to listen to us and to bring us their sick people from the country. On the contrary, it has really been a good thing that we came here. Because those who, either through illness or for some other reason, could not hope to see the Lord in Jerusalem, have seen Him here and have been comforted recovering their health or with other graces. We know that the rest have already gone to Jerusalem... When possible, it is our custom to go there a few days before the festivity» says James of Alphaeus kindly, because he is always gentle, the very opposite of Judas of Kerioth who, even in his good moments, is always violent and overbearing.

«Just because we are going to Jerusalem as well, it was useless to come here. They would have heard and seen us there...»

«But not the women and the sick people» replies Bartholomew supporting James of Alphaeus.

Judas pretends he does not hear them and resuming the thread of his discourse he says: «At least I think that we are going to Jerusalem, although I am no longer certain after the conversation with that shepherd...»

«And where do you expect us to go if we do not go there?» asks Peter.

«Who knows! I don't. Everything we have been doing these last months is so unreal, so unforeseeable, so contrary to common sense and also to justice, that...»

«Hey! I saw you drink milk at Doco, and yet you are speaking like a drunken man! Where do you see things contrary to justice?» asks James of Zebedee with eyes promising trouble. And to make himself clearly understood he adds: «Enough of reproaches the Just One! Have you understood that that is enough? You are not entitled to reproach Him. No one is entitled to do so, because He is perfect, and we... None of us are entitled, and you are less entitled than anybody.»

«Yes! If you are not well, take care of yourself, but do not annoy us with your complaints. If you are moody, the Master is over there. Ask Him to cure you and stop it!» says Thomas who has lost his patience.

²Jesus is in fact behind, with Judas of Alphaeus and John, and they are helping the women, who not being accustomed to walking in half-light, are proceeding with difficulty along a rough path, which is even darker than the fields, as it runs through a thick olive grove. And Jesus is speaking animatedly to the women, estranged from what is happening ahead of Him and can also be heard by those who are with Him, because if the words arrive confusedly, their tone gives to understand that they are not kind ones, but they sound rather quarrelsome. 577.2

The two apostles, Thaddeus and John, look at each other... but they do not say anything. They look at Jesus and Mary. But Mary is so wrapped in her mantle that Her face can hardly be seen, and Jesus does not appear to have heard. But when He finishes talking - they were speaking of Benjamin and his future, and they are speaking of Sarah, the widow of Aphek, who has settled at Capernaum and is a loving mother not only to the child of Giscala but also to the children of the woman from Capernaum* who, after she married for the second time, no longer loved the children of her first marriage, and then she came to «such a bad end that people considered her death a divine punishment» says Salome - Jesus goes ahead with Judas Thaddeus to join the apostles and when leaving the group He says: «You may stay, John, if you wish so. I am going to reply to the restless one and bring about peace.»

But John, after walking a few steps with the women, seeing

* the woman from Capernaum, called Meroba, met in 449.6/8.

that the path is now wider and clearer, runs and joins Jesus Who is saying: «So, be reassured, Judas. We will do nothing, as we have done nothing, unreal. Even now we are not doing anything unforeseeable. This is the time when it is foreseeable that every true Israelite, who is not prevented by diseases or very serious reasons, will go up to the Temple. And we are going up to the Temple.»

«But not all of us. I heard that Marjiam will not be there. Is he perhaps ill? Why is he not coming? Do You think You can replace him with the Samaritan?» Judas' tone is unbearable... Peter whispers: «O Prudence, hold my tongue fast, for I am a man!» and he presses his lips together firmly in order not to say anything else. His eyes, which are rather deep set, are deeply touching, so clear is the effort of the man to repress his indignation and distress hearing Judas speak thus.

577.3 ³Jesus' presence holds all tongues. He is the only one who speaks and with a really divine calm He says: «Come ahead a little, so that the women may not hear us. For a few days I have had something to tell you. Something I promised* you in the country of Tirzah. But I wanted all of you to be present to hear Me. But not the women. Let us leave them in their humble peace... What I am going to tell you will explain why Marjiam will not be with us, and the same applies to your mother, Judas of Kerioth, and to your daughters, Philip, and to the women disciples of Bethlehem in Galilee with the girl. It is not for everybody to bear certain things. I, the Master, know what is good for My disciples and what they can or cannot stand. Not even you are strong enough to endure the trial. And it would be a grace for you to be excluded. But you will have to continue Me, and you must be aware of how weak you are, so that in future you may be merciful towards the weak. So you cannot be excluded from this dreadful test that will give you the measure of what you are, of what you have remained after being with Me for three years, and of what you have become after the three years you have been with Me. You are twelve. You have all come to Me almost at the same time. It is not the few days between My meeting with James, John and Andrew and the day on which you were received among us, Judas of Kerioth, or the

* I promised, in 575.8. This is the announcement (the third one after the ones of chapters 346 and 355) of the Passion, now imminent.

day on which you, My brother James and you, Matthew, came to Me, that can justify so much difference in your perfecting.

You were, all of you, even you, My learned Bartholomew, and you, My brothers, very imperfect, absolutely imperfect with regard to what is perfection in My doctrine. Nay, your education, better than that of others among you in the doctrine of old Israel, was an obstacle to your perfecting in Me. And yet none of you have made so much progress as would have been sufficient to bring you all to the same point. One has reached it, others are close to it, others are farther away, others much farther behind, others... yes, I must say also this, instead of coming forwards, have gone backwards. Do not look at one another! Do not try to find out which of you is the first and which the last. He who, perhaps, thinks he is the first and is considered to be the first, has still to undergo probation. He who thinks he is the last, is about to shine in his perfection like a star in the sky. So, once again I say to you: do not judge. Facts will judge with their evidence.

For the time being you cannot understand. But soon, very soon, you will remember these words of Mine and you will understand them.»

«When? You have promised to tell us, to explain to us why the Passover purification will be different this year, but You never do tell us» says Andrew complaining.

«It is just about that that I wanted to speak to you. Because both those words and these are the same, as they are rooted in one only principle. ⁴We are now going up to Jerusalem for Passover. And all the things foretold by the prophets* concerning the Son of man will be fulfilled there. Truly, as the prophets foresaw, as it was already stated in the order** given to the Hebrews in Egypt, as Moses was ordered in the desert, the Lamb of God is about to be sacrificed and His Blood is about to mark the doorposts

577.4

* the things foretold by the prophets, refer to the Messiah, and are mentioned and repeated in: 7.3 - 10.5 - 27.3 - 41.3 - 66.2 - 73.6 - 74.7 - 77.5 - 78.6 - 108.4 - 111.6 - 144.3 - 155.8 - 176.3 - 177.4 - 194.5 - 207.8 - 225.11 - 260.8 - 266.10 - 291.4 - 293.4/5 - 324.4.8 - 340.9 - 342.8 - 348.12 - 354.12 - 378.5 - 382.7 - 390.6 - 399.5 - 405.9 - 414.3 - 436.2.5 - 463.2.5 - 464.10/11 - 471.1 - 478.3.9 - 482.5 - 483.8 - 486.4 - 487.6/8 - 506.3 - 507.6 - 518.6.7 - 520.7 - 525.5.8 - 536.2 - 549.9 - 554.8 - 556.7 - 560.5 - 561.11 - 566.19 - 579.8.10 - 580.3 - 588.9 - 589.3 - 591.5/6 - 592.9 - 593.1 - 595.4 - 596.38 - 597.5.7/11 - 598.7 - 600.9.13 - 601.1 - 604.4.10.25 - 609.3. They are in some way summarised in 625.6/9 and can be found again in 639.3, 645.5 e 647.5.

** the order, that is in Leviticus 12,1-14 related to Easter.

of hearts, and the angel of the Lord will pass without striking those who have upon themselves, and with love, the Blood of the sacrificed Lamb, that is about to be raised on the cross bar, like the precious metal snake, to be the sign for those wounded by the infernal snake, to be salvation for those who look at it with love. The Son of man, your Master Jesus, is about to be handed over to the chief priests, to the scribes and the elders, who will sentence Him to death and will deliver Him to the Gentiles to be sneered at. And He will be smacked, beaten, spat at, dragged along the streets like a dirty rag, and then the Gentiles, after scourging Him and crowning Him with thorns, will condemn Him to die on the cross reserved for criminals, as the Jewish people, gathered in Jerusalem wanted His death in place of that of a robber, and He will be put to death thus. But, as it is mentioned in the signs of the prophecies, after three days He will rise again. That is the trial awaiting you. The one that will show you your spiritual advancement. I solemnly tell you, who think that you are so perfect as to despise those who do not belong to Israel, and to despise even many of our own people, I tell you solemnly that you, the chosen part of My flock, once the Shepherd has been captured, will be seized with fright and you will disperse fleeing as if the wolves, which will fang Me all over, were set on you. But, I tell you, be not afraid. You will not be hurt in the least. I shall suffice to glut the wild wolves...»

577.5 ⁵The apostles, while Jesus is speaking, look like people under a shower of stones. They even bend more and more as Jesus goes on speaking. And when He ends saying: «And what I am telling you is impending. It is not like the other times, when there was time before the hour. The hour has now come. I am going, to be handed over to My enemies and sacrificed for the salvation of everybody. And the bud of this flower will have not yet lost its petals, after flowering, when I shall be already dead», some hide their faces in their hands and some moan as if they had been wounded. The Iscariot is livid, absolutely livid...

The first to collect himself is Thomas who proclaims: «That will not happen to You because we will defend you or we will die with You, and we will thus show that we had reached You in Your perfection and that we were perfect in loving You.»

Jesus looks at him without speaking.

Bartholomew after a long pensive silence says: «You said that You will be handed over... But who can hand You over to Your enemies? That is not mentioned in the prophecies. No, it is not mentioned. It would be too dreadful if one of Your friends, one of Your disciples, one of Your followers, even the last one, should hand You over to those who hate You. No! No one who has heard You with love, even if only once, can commit that crime. They are men, not wild beasts, not demons... No, my Lord. And not even those who hate You will be able... They are afraid of the people, and all the people will be around You!»

Jesus looks also at Nathanael but does not say anything.

Peter and the Zealot are talking animatedly to each other. James of Zebedee reproaches his brother because he sees that he is not upset and John replies: «It's because I have known all that these last three months*» and two tears stream down his face. The sons of Alphaeus speak to Matthew who shakes his head downheartedly.

Andrew says to the Iscariot: "Since you have so many friends in the Temple..." John knows Annas himself, replies Judas and he concludes: «What can we do? What can the word of a man do if that is destined?»

«Do you really think so?» ask Thomas and Andrew together.

«No. I don't think anything. They are useless apprehensions. Bartholomew is right. All the people will be around Jesus. You can already see that by the behaviour of those we meet. And it will be a triumph. You will see that that is what will happen» says Judas of Kerioth.

«In that case why does He...» says Andrew pointing at Jesus Who has stopped waiting for the women.

«Why does He say that? Because He is impressed... and because He wants to test us. But nothing will happen. In any case I will go...»

«Oh! yes. Go and find out!» says Andrew imploring.

«They become silent because Jesus is following them once again, walking between His Mother and Mary of Alphaeus. ^{577.6}

Mary smiles lightly because Her sister-in-law shows Her some seeds, got I do not know where, and says to Her that she

* I have known all that these last three months, confided to him by the Master in 540.3.

wants to sow them at Nazareth, after Passover, just at the little grotto so dear to Mary: «When You were a little girl, I always remember You with these flowers in Your little hands. You called them the flowers of Your coming. In fact when You were born Your garden was full of them, and that evening when the whole of Nazareth came to see Joachim's daughter, the clusters of these little stars looked like diamonds because of the water from the sky and of the last ray of the sun that lit them up while setting, and since Your name was "Star", everybody said looking at those tiny shining stars: "The flowers have adorned themselves to give a hearty welcome to Joachim's flower, and the stars have left the sky to come to the Star", and they all smiled, happy with the omen and with Your father's joy. ^{577.7}And Joseph, my husband's brother, said: "Stars and drops. She is really Mary!" Who could have told him then that You were to become his star? When he came back from Jerusalem, after being chosen as Your spouse? The whole of Nazareth wanted to celebrate the event with him, because great was the honour that had come to him from Heaven and because of his nuptials with You, the daughter of Joachim and Anne, and everybody wanted to feast with him. He kindly but firmly refused all celebrations, amazing everybody. Because which man, destined to such an honourable wedding and by such a decree of the Most High, would not celebrate the happiness of his soul, flesh and blood? But he used to say: "A severe preparation is required for a great appointment." And with sparing use of words and food, because he had always practised all other continence, he spent that time working and praying, because I believe that every hammer-stroke, every chisel-mark became a prayer, if it is possible to pray working. His face was enraptured. I used to go to tidy up the house, to bleach sheets and all other things left by Your mother and which had yellowed with age, and I used to watch him working in the kitchen garden and in the house, making them as beautiful as if they had never been neglected, and I used to speak to him, too... but he was engrossed in thought. He used to smile. Not at me or at anybody else, but at a thought of his, that was not the thought of every man about to get married. That is a smile of mischievous sensual pleasure... He... seemed to smile at the invisible angels of God, and to speak to them and to consult with them... Oh! I am sure they told him

how to treat You! Because later - and this amazed everybody in Nazareth and almost irritated my Alphaeus - he put off the wedding as long as possible, and we never understood why he suddenly made up his mind before the fixed time. And also when we heard You were a mother, how surprised was Nazareth at his contained joy!... Also my James is somewhat like that. And he is becoming so more and more. Now that I watch him carefully - I don't know why, but since we came from Ephraim he seems to have changed completely - I see him thus... just like Joseph.

Look at him even now, Mary, now that he turns around again to look at us. Does he not have the pensive attitude so habitual to Your spouse Joseph? He smiles, but I do not know whether his smile is a sad or vague one. He looks, but he seems to be looking far away, beyond us, as Joseph did so often. Do You remember how Alphaeus used to tease him? He used to say: "Brother, are you still looking at the pyramids?" He would shake his head without speaking, patient and engrossed in thought. He was never talkative. But when You came back from Hebron! He did not even come to the fountain by himself any longer, as he used to do and as everybody does. He was either with You or at his work. And with the exception of the Sabbaths, when he went to the synagogue, or when he went somewhere on business, no one can say that they saw Joseph loitering about during those months. Then you went away... How distressing it was to have no news of you after the slaughter! Alphaeus went as far as Bethlehem... "They went away" they said. But how could we believe them, if they had a mortal hatred of you in town, where the innocent blood was still red and the ruins were still smoking and they blamed you for the blood that had been shed? He went to Hebron and then to the Temple, because it was Zacharias' turn. Elizabeth gave him nothing but her tears, Zacharias only words of comfort. They were both worried about John and fearing fresh cruelties, they had hidden him and trembled for him. They had no news of you and Zacharias said to Alphaeus: "If they are dead, their blood is on me, because I convinced them to remain in Bethlehem." ⁸My Mary! My Jesus so beautiful at the Passover after His birth! And to have no news of You for such a long time! But why never any news?...»

«Because it was better to be silent. Where we were, there were

577.8

many Maries and Josephs, and it was wise to be considered as a normal married couple. Mary replies quietly, then with a sigh She says: «And even in their sadness they were happy days.

Evil was still so far away! If as human beings we lacked so many things, our spirits were sated with the joy of having You, My Son!»

«You have Your Son even now, Mary. Joseph is no longer with You, that is true! But Jesus is here and with His full love of an adult» remarks Mary of Alphaeus.

Mary raises Her head to look at Jesus. Although Her lips smile faintly, Her eyes reveal Her torture. But She does not utter another word.

577.9 ⁹The apostles have stopped waiting for them and they all gather together, including James and John who were behind with their mother. And while they rest after their long walk and some eat a little bread, the mother of James and John approaches Jesus Who has not sat down, anxious as He is to set out again, and she prostrates herself before Him.

As her desire to ask for something is obvious, Jesus asks her: «What do you want, woman? Tell Me.»

«Grant me a grace before You go away, as You say.»

«Which?»

«Arrange for these two sons of mine, who have left everything for Your sake, to sit one at Your right hand and the other at Your left, when You will be sitting in Your glory, in Your Kingdom.»

Jesus looks at the woman and then at the two apostles and He says: «You have suggested this request to your mother, misinterpreting the promises I made yesterday. You will not receive in a kingdom on the Earth the one hundredfold of what you have left. So are you becoming greedy and foolish, too? But it is not your fault. The mephitic twilight of darkness is already advancing and the polluted air of Jerusalem is approaching and is corrupting and blinding you... I tell you that you do not know what you are asking! Can you drink of the cup that I am going to drink?»

«We can, Lord.»

«How can you say so if you have not understood the bitterness of my cup? It will not be only the bitterness that I described to you yesterday, the bitterness of the Man of all sorrows. There will be tortures that you would not be in a position to under-

stand even if I should describe them to you... And yet, yes, although you are still like two boys who do not know the value of what they ask, as you are two just spirits who love Me, you will certainly drink of my cup. But it is not for Me to grant you to sit at my right or at my left. It is granted to those for whom it was prepared by my Father.»

¹⁰The other apostles, while Jesus is still speaking, are very sharp in criticising the request of the sons of Zebedee and of their mother. 577.10

Peter says to John: «How could you?! I no longer recognise you for what you were!»

And the Iscariot with his demoniac smile says: «Truly the first are the last! Surprises and discoveries nowadays...» and he laughs on the wrong side of his mouth.

«Have we perhaps followed our Master to be honoured?» asks Philip reproachingly.

Instead of replying to the two apostles, Thomas addresses Salome saying: «Why did you have your sons mortified? You should have pondered on the matter and prevented all that, if they did not.»

«That is true. Our mother would not have done that» says Thaddeus.

Bartholomew does not speak, but his countenance evidences his disapproval.

In order to calm everybody's indignation, Simon Zealot says: «We can all make mistakes...»

Matthew, Andrew and James of Alphaeus do not say anything, but they are clearly suffering because of the incident that injures John's beautiful perfection.

Jesus makes a gesture to impose silence and says: «What? Is one error going to bring about many? You, who are reproaching with indignation, do you not realise that you are committing a sin as well? Leave these brothers of yours alone. My rebuke is sufficient. Their humiliation is evident, and their repentance is humble and sincere. You must love one another, supporting one another. Because none of you are yet perfect. You must not imitate the world and the men of the world. In the world, as you are aware, princes lord over their nations and their great men exert their power in the names of the princes. But that must not

happen among you. You must not be eager to lord over men and your companions. On the contrary, anyone who wants to be great among you, must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you, must be everybody's servant.

Exactly as your Master did. Did I come to lord over People and oppress them? Or to be served? Certainly not. I came to serve. Thus, as the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many, you must do likewise, if you want to be as I am and where I am. Go now. And be at peace with one another as I am at peace with you.»

577.11 ¹¹Jesus says to me: «Make the following sentence very clear: "... you will certainly drink of My chalice".

In translations you read: "My chalice." I said: "of My chalice", not "My chalice." No man could have drunk My chalice. I alone, the Redeemer, had to drink all My chalice.

My disciples, My imitators and lovers, are certainly allowed to drink of that chalice from which I drank, with regards to that drop, sip or sips, that God's predilection grants them to drink. But no one will ever drink all the chalice as I did. So it is right to say 'of My chalice' and not 'My chalice'.»

578. Meeting with both disciples and men of worth guided by Mannaen. Arrival in Jericho.

11th March 1947.

578.1 ¹The white walls of the houses of Jericho and its palm-trees are already standing out against the ceramic or enamel deep blue of the sky, when, near a thicket of ruffled tamarisks, of sensitive mimosas, of hawthorn with very long thorns, of other plants mostly thorny, which seem to have been thrown there from the rough mountain behind Jericho, Jesus meets with a large group of disciples led by Manaen. They seem to be waiting. They are, in fact, and they say so after greeting the Master, stating that some more have gone along other routes to get information, as the delay of a whole night in arriving at Jericho had worried them.

«I came here with these. And I will not leave You any more until I see You safe with Lazarus» says Manaen.

«Why? Is there any danger?...» asks Judas Thaddeus.

«You are in Judaea... You are aware of the decree. And of their hatred. So we must fear everything, replies Manaen and turning towards Jesus he says: «I brought the strongest men with me because, if they had not caught You, we presumed that You would come this way. And taking into account our worth as disciples and men, we confide in impressing the wicked and having You respected.»

In fact, with him are the ex-disciples of Gamaliel, John the priest, Nicolaus of Antioch, John of Ephesus, and other strong men in the prime of life, more gentlemanly looking than common people, whom I do not know. Manaen introduces some of them quickly, while he does not introduce others. They are men from all the regions in Palestine, and among them there are two from the court of Herod Philip. Thus the names of the most ancient families in Israel resound on the road near the ruffled thicket, where the leaves of mimosas quiver in the wind and the hawthorns bend their new shoots.

²«Let us go. Is there no one with the women, at Nike's?» asks Jesus. 578.2

«The shepherds. All of them, except Jonathan who is waiting for Johanna in the mansion in Jerusalem. But Your disciples have grown exceedingly. They were about five hundred waiting for You yesterday at Jericho. So much so that Herod's servants became upset and informed him. And he did not know whether he should tremble or be pitiless. But he is haunted by the memory of John and he dare no longer lift his hand against any prophet...»

«Good! That will do You no harm!» exclaims Peter and he rubs his hands gladly.

«But he is the one who is worth less. He is an idol that anyone can move as one likes, and those who have him in their hands know how to move him.»

«And who has him in his hands? Pilate perhaps?» asks Bartholomew.

«Pilate does not need Herod to take action. Herod is a servant. The mighty ones do not apply to servants, replies Manaen.

«Who, then?» asks Bartholomew.

«The Temple» replies resolutely one who is with Manaen.

«But Herod is anathema to the Temple. His sin...»

«Notwithstanding your learning and your age, you are very naive, Bartholomew! So do you not know that the Temple can overcome many, too many things to attain its objects? That is why it does not deserve to exist any longer» says Manaen with a gesture of utter contempt.

«You are an Israelite. You must not speak thus. The Temple is always the Temple for us» says Bartholomew in an admonishing tone.

«No. It is the corpse of what it was. And a corpse turns into an unclean carrion when it has been dead for a long time. That is why God sent the living Temple. That we may prostrate ourselves before the Lord without performing an unclean pantomime.»

578.3 ³«Be quiet!» whispers to Manaen another man who is with him, as he speaks too clearly.

He is one of those who were not introduced and he is completely wrapped in his mantle.

«Why should I be silent, if my heart speaks thus? Do you think that my words may harm the Master? If so, I will be quiet. But for no other reason. Even if they should condemn me I will say: "That is what I think and punish no one but me."

«Manaen is right. Enough of being silent for fear. It is time for every man to declare his opinion for or against the Master and to reveal what he has in his heart. I am of your opinion, brother in Jesus. And if that should bring about our death, we shall die together still professing the truth» says Stephen with transport.

«Be wise! Be very wise!» says Bartholomew admonishing them. «The Temple is always the Temple. It may make mistakes, it is certainly not perfect, but it is... it is... But after God there is no greater person, no greater power than the High Priest and the Sanhedrin... They represent God; and we must see what they represent, not what they are. Am I wrong, Master?»

«You are not wrong. In every establishment one must see its origin, in this case the Eternal Father, Who constituted the Temple and the hierarchies, the rites and the authority of the men appointed to represent it. We must refer judgement to the Father.

He knows when and how to intervene, and what action to take so that corruption, by spreading, may not contaminate all men

and make them doubt God... And Manaen is right with regards to that, as he has seen the reason for My coming at the present hour. It is also necessary for you, Bartholomew, to moderate your ultra-conservatism by means of the innovating spirit of Manaen, so that the measure may be just and feelings perfect.

Every excess is always harmful: to him who accomplices it, to him who suffers it, or to him who notices it being scandalised and, if he is not an honest soul, making use of it to inform against his brothers. But that is an action of Cain, and will not be accomplished by the children of the Light, as it is the work of Darkness.»

⁴The man who is all so covered, that only his dark very lively eyes can be seen and who warned Manaen not to speak too much, kneels down and takes Jesus' hand saying: «You are good, Master. I have become acquainted with You too late, o Word of God! But still in time to love You as You deserve, if not to serve You as long as I would have liked, as I would like now.» 578.4

«It is never too late for the hour of God. It comes at the right moment. And it grants as much time to serve the Truth as one's will desires.»

«But who is he?» whisper the apostles to one another, and they ask the disciples, but in vain. No one knows who he is or, if they do, they do not wish to tell.

«Who is he, Master?» asks Peter when he succeeds in approaching Jesus Who is walking in the middle of the group, with the women behind Him, the disciples ahead of Him, His cousins beside Him and the apostles around Him.

«A soul, Simon. Nothing more than that.»

«But... can You trust him, if You do not know who he is?»

«I know who he is. And I know his heart.»

«Ah! I see! Just like the Veiled woman at the Clear Water... I will not ask further questions...» and Peter is happy because Jesus, moving away from James, draws him close to Himself.

⁵They are now at Jericho. A crowd of people singing hosannas rush out of the gate and Jesus can proceed with difficulty to cross the town going to Nike's house, which is out of Jericho on the other side. People implore Him to speak. Children are lifted up as if to form a living impassable barrier, relying on Jesus' love for little ones. People shout: «You can speak. He has already fled 578.5

to Jerusalem.» and with those words gestures are made towards Herod's beautiful palace, which is now closed.

Manaen confirms: «It is true. He went away during the night, noiselessly. He is afraid.»

But nothing stops Jesus. He proceeds saying: «Peace! Peace! Let those who are suffering or grieved come to Nike's house. Let those who wish to hear Me come to Jerusalem. I am the Pilgrim here. Just like all of you. I will speak in the house of the Father. Peace! Peace and blessings! Peace!»

It is already a little triumph, a prelude to the entrance into Jerusalem, now so close at hand.

I am astonished at Zacchaeus' absence until I see him standing at the entrance of Nike's property among his friends with the shepherds and the women disciples. They all run towards Jesus and prostrate themselves, then they escort Him while He, blessing them, proceeds through the orchard towards the hospitable house.

579. A small group of Jews secretly relates about the accusations of the Sanhedrin. Allegory for Jerusalem.

15th March 1947.

579.1 ¹A large number of people have crowded on Nike's meadows, where the hay is drying in the sun. And two heavy tilted wagons are waiting near the meadows. And I realise why they are waiting when I see all the women disciples being led towards them and get on them after the Master has blessed and dismissed them. Also the Blessed Virgin goes away with the other women disciples, and also the young man from Enon joins them, while many disciples place themselves at the sides of the wagons and, when the latter move off at the slow pace of the oxen, also the disciples set out. The apostles, Zacchaeus and his friends remain on the meadows with a small group of individuals, all wrapped in their mantles, as if they did not want to be recognised.

579.2 ²Jesus slowly retraces His steps towards the middle of the meadow and sits on a heap of half-dry hay, which will soon be taken to the hay-loft. He is engrossed in thought, and everybody respects his concentration, remaining in three different groups,

a little aside from Him and from one another.

The meditation is prolonged and so is the wait. The sun becomes stronger and stronger and blazes down on the meadow that smells strongly of drying stems. Those who are waiting take shelter at the edges of the meadow, where the last trees of the orchard cast a refreshing shade.

Jesus remains alone. Alone in the sun that is already strong, all white in his linen tunic and in the headgear of light byssus that blows lightly in the breeze. Perhaps it is the one woven by Syntyche. The slow plaintive bellowing of cows can be heard from a nearby stable, and the chirruping of nestlings from the branches of the trees in the orchard and from the threshing-floors: the chirping of fledglings and the peeping of cheeky chicks.

The life that continues being renewed at each springtime. Doves are wheeling high above, before going back to their nest with steadfast flights. I do not know whether in Nike's nearby house, or in some field, a woman is singing a lullaby, and the thin voice of the child, at first shrill and trembling, like the bleating of a lamb, grows faint and then is silent...

Jesus is pensive. He is still meditating. Always. Insensible to the sun. ^{579.3} I have often noted the exceptional resistance of our blessed Jesus to the rigours of the seasons. I have never understood whether He felt heat and cold severely and endured them without complaining, out of spirit of mortification, or whether, as He dominated unchecked elements, He also dominated excessive heat and cold. I do not know. I know that, although I have seen Him wet to the skin in downpours and wet with perspiration in dog-days, I have never noticed any gesture of discomfort in Him owing to heat or cold, neither have I seen Him take those precautionary measures that men usually take against the excesses of sun or frost.

It was pointed out to me one day that in Palestine it is not customary to go about bareheaded and that consequently I am wrong in saying that Jesus' bare fair-haired head shines in the sunshine. It may be very true that in Palestine it is not possible to go about bare-headed. I have never been there and I do not know. What I know is that Jesus usually does not wear any headgear. And if at the beginning of a journey He has any on, He soon takes

it off, as if He were impatient of encumbrances, and He carries it in His hand, using it, more than anything else, to wipe the dust and perspiration from His face.

When it rains, He covers His head with the edge of His mantle. In strong sunshine, particularly when He is on the way to some place, He looks for the shade of rows of trees, even if they are not close to one another, to protect Himself from sunbeams. But He hardly ever wears a light veil on His head as He is doing today. This comment may seem useless to some people, but it is also part of what I see and I mention it while Jesus is thinking...

579.4 «It will hurt Him to stay there so long!» exclaims one who belongs to a group that is neither the apostolic one nor Zacchaeus'.

«Let us go and tell His disciples... Further... I would like... I would not like to be delayed too long» replies another man.

«Eh! Yes. The Adummim mountains are not very safe by night...»

They go towards the apostles and speak to them.

«All right. I will go and tell them that you want to go away» says the Iscariot.

«No. Not thus. We would like to be at least at En-Shemesh before dark.»

Judas goes away smiling ironically. He bends over the Master and says to Him: «They say that it is because the sun may hurt You - but the truth is that they may be hurt by being noticed too much - but the Jews want to be dismissed.»

«I am coming... I was thinking... They are right» and Jesus stands up.

«Everybody, except me...» grumbles the Iscariot.

Jesus looks at him and is silent. They go together towards those men whom Judas has called Jews.

«I had already dismissed all of you. I told you yesterday. I will speak only in Jerusalem...»

579.5 «That is true. But the fact is that we should like to speak to You, we who...⁵We can speak to you privately.»

«Satisfy them. They are afraid of us, or, more exactly, of me» says Judas of Kerioth again, with his venomous smile.

«We are not afraid of anybody. If we wanted we knew how to protect our tranquillity. But they are not all cowards yet in Palestine. We are descendants of David's valiant men, and if you are

not yet despised and a slave, you must pay homage to our stock, the first by the holy king's side, the first by the Maccabees' side. And the first even now, when honour and advice are to be given to the Son of David. Because He is great. But every creature, no matter how great one may be, may need a friend in the crucial hours of life» replies passionately one who is all clothed with linen garments, including his mantle and headgear, which covers almost all his severe face.

«He has us as friends. We have been such for three years, since you...»

«We did not know Him. Too often we were deceived by false Messiahs to believe every assertion readily. But the latest events have enlightened us. His deeds are the deeds of God, and we say that He is the Son of God.»

«And do you think that He is in need of you?»

«As the Son of God, no. But as the Man, yes. He has come to be the Man. And the Man always needs men, His brothers. In any case, why are you afraid? Why do you not want us to speak? Tell us.»

«Me? Speak! You may speak! People listen more to sinners than to just men.»

«Judas! I thought that such words should feel like fire on your lips! How dare you judge when your Master does not judge? It is Written*: "If your sins were like scarlet, they shall become as white as snow, and if they were as red as crimson, they shall be as white as wool."»

«But You are not aware that among these...»

«Be silent! ⁶Let them speak.»

579.6

«Lord, we know. The charge against You is ready. They accuse You of violating the Law and the Sabbaths, of loving the people of Samaria more than us, of defending publicans and prostitutes, of having recourse to Beelzebub and to other evil powers, of black magic, of hating the Temple and wanting to destroy it, of...»

«That is enough. Anybody can make charges, but it is more difficult to prove the charge.»

«But among them there are those who support it. Do You

* it is written, **in**: Isaiah 1,18.

think that they are just in there?»

«I shall reply to you with the words* of Job, who is a figure of the Patient Man who I am: "Far from me the thought of considering all of you just. But I will maintain my innocence until the end, I will not give up my justification which I have begun, because my conscience does not reproach me for anything in all my life." Now, all Israel can testify, because I will not justify Myself with words that also a liar can speak, all Israel can testify that I have always taught people to respect the Law, nay, even more: that I perfected obedience to the Law, and the Sabbaths have not
579.7 been profaned by Me... ⁷What do you want to say? Speak up! You made a gesture and then you stopped. Speak up!»

One of the... mysterious little group says: «Lord, at the last session of the Sanhedrin they read a denunciation against You. It came from Samaria, from Ephraim, where You were, and it stated that it had been proved that You had violated the Sabbath several times and...»

«And I reply to you once again with Job: "And what is the hope of the hypocrite if he steals out of avarice, and God does not free his soul?" This wretch, who shows one face and has a different heart and wants to commit the great robbery out of envy of My welfare, is already on the road to Hell, and it will be of no use for him to have money, and hope for honours, and dream to ascend where I did not want to go, in order not to betray the holy Decree. Shall we busy ourselves with him, but to pray for him?»

«But the Sanhedrin has derided You saying: "Here is the Samaritans' love for Him! They accuse Him to ingratiate themselves with us."»

«Are you sure that it was a Samaritan hand that wrote those words?»

«No. But Samaria was severe with You during the past days...»

«Because the messengers of the Sanhedrin subverted and roused the people with false advice, exciting foolish hopes that I had to demolish. In any case it is said** of Ephraim and of Judah, and it can be said of every place, because inconstant is the heart of man who forgets favours and yields to threats: "Your goodness

* the words, that are in Job 27,5-8.

** it is said, in: Osea 6,4.

is like morning mist, like dew that disappears in the morning." But that does not prove that they, the Samaritans, are the accusers of the Innocent. A wrong love made them furious against Me, but it is love that is delirious. ^{579.8}Which other proof proves the charge of preference for the Samaritans?»

«You are accused of loving them so much that You always say: "Listen, Israel", instead of saying: "Listen, Judah". And that You cannot reproach Judah...»

«Really? Is it there that the wisdom of the rabbis gets lost? Am I not the Branch of justice sprouted from David and through which, as Jeremiah says, Judah* will be saved? The Prophet foresees that Judah, above all Judah, will then need salvation. And this Branch, says the Prophet again, will be called the Lord, our Just One "because, says the Lord, David shall never lack a male descendant to sit on the throne of the house of Israel." So what? Has the Prophet made a mistake? Was he drunk? With what? Certainly with penance and nothing else. Because no one can maintain that Jeremiah was a guzzler, in order to accuse Me. And yet he says that the Branch of David will save Judah and sit on the throne of Israel. So one should say that the enlightened Prophet sees that Israel rather than Judah will be elected, that the King will go to Israel, and that it will be a grace if Judah receives only salvation. So will it be called the Kingdom of Israel? No. It will be called the Kingdom of Christ. Of He Who joins the scattered parts and rebuilds in the Lord, after having, according to the other Prophet, in a month - what am I saying in a month? - in less than one day, judged and condemned the three false shepherds and closed My soul to them because their souls remained closed to Me, and although they desired Me in figure they did not love Me in Nature.

Now He Who sent Me and gave Me the two staves will break both, so that Grace may be lost for cruel people, and the Scourge may come from the world, not from Heaven.

And nothing is more painful than the scourges that men use for men. It will be so. Oh! so! I shall be struck and two thirds of the sheep will be scattered. Only one third, always one third on-

* Judah (as in 84.6 and in other points) is the name of the kingdom that was then called Judaea. The quotations are from: Jeremiah 32,6-9; 33,15-17; Zechariah 11,4-17.

ly, will be saved and will persevere until the end. And this third part will pass through the fire through which I shall be the first to pass, and it will be purified and tested like silver and gold, and these words will be pronounced: "You are My people" and it will say to Me: "You are my Lord". And there will be who weighs the thirty shekels, the price of the dreadful deed, the foul wages. And they will no longer be able to go back in from where they came out, because also the stones would cry with horror seeing those shekels, stained with the blood of the Innocent and with the perspiration of He Who will be persecuted by the most violent desperation, and they will serve, as it was said, to buy the field for foreigners from the slaves of Babylon. Oh! the field for foreigners! Do you know who they are? Those of Judah and Israel, those who soon, for ages, will have no fatherland any more. Not even the earth of their ancient soil will receive them. It will vomit them out even when they are dead, because they wanted to repel the Life. How horrible!...»

579.9 ⁹Jesus becomes silent, as if He were oppressed, with His head lowered. He then raises it, looks around, He sees those who are present: the apostles, the secret disciples, Zacchaeus and his friends. He sighs like one who awakes from a nightmare. He says: «What else were you saying? Ah! that I am accused of loving publicans and prostitutes. That is true. They are sick, they are dying. I, the Life, give Myself to them as life. Come, my redeemed flock» He says to Zacchaeus and his friends. «Come and listen to My order. To many, who were whiter than you are, I said: "Do not come to Jerusalem". To you I say: "Come". This may seem to be unfair...»

«It is in fact» says the Iscariot interrupting Him.

Jesus feigns He has not heard him. He continues to speak to Zacchaeus and his companions saying to those wrapped in their mantles: «But I say to you: come, because you are plants that need dew more than others, so that your goodwill may be assisted by the Mighty Father and you may now grow freely in Grace. With regards to other matters... Heaven itself will reply by means of unmistakable signs. The living Temple may really be destroyed, and rebuilt in three days, and forever. But the dead Temple, which will only be shaken and will think that it has won, will perish never to rise again. Go! And be not afraid.

Wait for My day, doing penance, and its dawn will bring you to the Light definitely.» He then says to Zacchaeus: «You may all go as well. But not now. Be in Jerusalem at the dawn of the day after the Sabbath. Beside the just I want those who have been raised again, because in the Kingdom of the Christ there are innumerable seats. As many as the men of goodwill.» And He sets out towards Nike's house through a thick shady orchard.

¹⁰A little path is like a yellowish ribbon on the green ground and a clucking hen crosses it with her golden-hued chickens and the timorous mother, in the presence of so many strangers, crouches and spreads out her wings to defend them clucking louder, fearing danger for her little ones. And they rush and hide under the maternal feathers peeping until they feel safe, and do not seem to exist any more... 579.10

Jesus stops to contemplate her... and tears stream from His eyes.

«He is weeping! Why is He weeping? He is weeping!» they all whisper: the apostles, disciples and redeemed sinners. And Peter says to John: «Ask Him why He is weeping...» And John, in his usual attitude, lightly bent out of respect, looking up at Him, asks: «Why are You weeping, my Lord? Perhaps because of what You were told and what You said previously?»

Jesus rouses Himself, He smiles sadly and pointing at the hen, which is still protecting her offspring with love, He says: «I also, One with My Father, saw Jerusalem, as Ezekiel said*, naked and shameful. I saw her and passed close to her, and when the time came, the time of My love, I spread My mantle on her and I covered her nakedness. I wanted to make her queen after being her father, and to protect her, as that hen is protecting her little ones... But, whilst the brood are grateful for the attention of their mother and take shelter under her wings, Jerusalem refuses My mantle... But I will persevere in My plan of love... I... My Father, later, will act according to His will.»

And Jesus goes on to the grass in order not to disturb the brooding-hen and He passes by, and tears stream down His pale sorrowful face once again.

They all imitate Him, following His steps and whispering un-

* said, in: Ezekiel 16.

til they arrive at the threshold of Nike's house. Only Jesus goes in with the apostles and the others proceed to their destinations...

580. Treacherous information by the Iscariot
and prophecies on Israel. Miracles along
the road from Jericho to Bethany.

17th March 1947.

580.1 ¹It is daybreak and its whiteness is shading into the early pink hue of dawn. The fresh silence of the country is broken more and more and is adorned with the trills of the awakened birds.

Jesus is the first to come out of Nike's house, He silently sets the door ajar and heads towards the green orchard resounding with the limpid notes of blackcaps and the flute-like song of blackbirds.

But before He arrives there four people come from it towards Him. Four of those who were in the unknown group yesterday and who had never uncovered their faces. They prostrate themselves to the ground, and at Jesus' order and at the question He asks them, after His greeting of peace: «Stand up! What do you want of Me?», they stand up, throw their mantles behind their backs and push back their linen headgears, with which they had hidden their faces, as do Bedouins.

I recognise the thin pale face of Joel of Abijah, the scribe seen in the vision of Sabea*. I do not know the others until they mention their names: «I, Judas of Beth-Horon, the last of the true Hasidaeans, the friends of Mattathias the Asmonaeon»; «I, Eliel, and my brother Elkanah from Bethlehem in Judah, the brothers of Johanna, Your disciple, and we have no greater title than that. We were absent when You were strong, we are present now that You are persecuted»; «I, Joel of Abijah, whose eyes have been blind for so long, but are now open to the Light.»

«I had already dismissed you. What do you want of Me?»

«To tell You that... if we are covered up, it is not because of You, but...» says Eliel.

«Come on! Speak up!»

* the vision of Sabea, that is in chapter 525. At this point of the manuscript M.V. adds the date of that "vision" in brackets: 5-11-46.

«But Joel, you had better speak, because you are the most informed.

²«Lord What I know is so... horrible... I would not like even the clods of earth to hear, to know what I am about to say...» 580.2

«The clods will really be startled, but I shall not. Because I know what you want to say. But speak just the same...»

«If You know... do not let my lips tremble saying such a dreadful thing. It is not the case that I think that You are lying saying that You know and that You want me to speak to inform You, but just because...»

«Yes. Because it is a thing that cries to the Lord. But I will mention it to persuade everybody that I know the hearts of men. You, a member of the Sanhedrin and won over to the Truth, have found out something that you cannot bear by yourself, because it is too great. And you went to these true Judaeans whose spirits are only good, to consult with them. You did the right thing, although it will be to no avail. The last of the Hasidaeans would be ready to repeat the gesture* of his ancestors in order to serve the true Liberator. And he is not the only one. Also his relative Barzillai would do so and many more with him. And Johanna's brothers for my sake and for the sake of their sister, and also of their Fatherland, would join him. But I shall not triumph by means of lances and swords. Enter the Truth completely. My triumph will be a celestial one.

³You - and this makes you even more pale and emaciated than usual - you know who presented the witnesses for the persecution against Me, the witnesses who, while they are false in their spirits, are truthful with regard to the material meaning of their words, because I did infringe the Sabbath when I had to flee, as my hour had not yet come, and when I saved two innocents from the highwaymen, and I could say that necessity justified the actions as necessity justified David** for eating the consecrated bread. It is true that I took shelter in Samaria, although, when my hour came and the Samaritans suggested that I should remain with them as their Pontiff, I refused honours and safety to remain faithful to the Law, even if that means handing Myself to my enemies. It is true that I love sinners and prostitutes to the

* the gesture that is narrated in: 1 Maccabees 2,42-48.

** necessity justified David, as narrated in: 1 Samuel 21,2-7.

extent of tearing them away from sin. It is true that I preach the ruin of the Temple, even if these words of mine are nothing but the Messiah's confirmation of the words of his prophets. He who makes these and other charges and turns also miracles into indictments, and has made use of everything on the Earth to try to induce Me to sin and be able to add further charges to the previous ones, is one of my friends. That also was said* by the king prophet, from whom I descend through my Mother: "He who shared my bread raised his heel against me." I know. I would die twice if I could, not to prevent him from committing the crime - by now... his will has surrendered to Death, and God does not do violence to man's freedom - but if at least... oh! if at least the torture of the horrible deed accomplished would make him repent at God's feet... That is why you, Judas of Beth-Horon, yesterday admonished Manaen to be quiet. Because the snake was present and he might have damaged the disciple, besides the Master. No. Only the Master will be struck. Be not afraid. It will not be because of Me that you will have sufferings and misfortunes, but because of the crime of a whole population you will all have what the prophets said.

580.4 ⁴Oh! My miserable Fatherland! Miserable land that will experience the punishment of God! Miserable inhabitants and children whom I now bless and I would like to be saved, and who, although innocent, when adults, will suffer the torture of the greatest misfortune. Look at this land of yours: flourishing, beautiful, green and flowery like a wonderful carpet, as fertile as Eden... Impress its beauty on your hearts, and then... when I shall have gone back whence I came... run away. Run away while you can, before the desolation of ruin, like a hellish fury, spreads here demolishing and destroying, making everything sterile and burning more than happened at Gomorrah, more than happened at Sodom... Yes, more than there, where it was nothing but quick death. Here... Joel, do you remember Sabea? For the last time she prophesied the future of God's people who did not want the Son of God.»

The four men are dumbfounded. The fear of the future makes them dumb. Eliel at last says: «What do You advise us to do?...»

* was said, in: Psalm 41,10.

«Yes. Go. There will be nothing left here worthy of detaining the children of Abraham's people. On the other hand, you nobles of the people in particular, would not be left here... The mighty ones made prisoners embellish the triumph of the victor. The new and immortal Temple will fill the Earth with itself and every man seeking Me will have Me, because I shall be wherever a heart loves Me. Go. Take your women, sons and the old ones away... You are offering Me salvation and help. I advise you to save yourselves, and I help you by means of this advice... Do not disregard it.»

«But now... what greater harm can Rome do us? We are dominated. And if her law is a hard one, it is also true that Rome has rebuilt houses and towns and...»

«Really, you had better know that not one stone will be left intact in Jerusalem. Fire, battering-rams, catapults, spears will knock down, demolish, destroy every house and the holy City will become a cavern, and will not be the only one... Our Fatherland will become a cavern. The grazing ground of onagers and jackals, as the prophets say*. And not for one or more years, or for ages, but forever. The desert, aridity, sterility... That is the destiny of this land! The field of contentions, the place of torture, the dream of reconstruction always destroyed by an inflexible sentence, attempts at resurrection stifled at birth. The destiny of the Land that rejected the Saviour and wanted a dew that is fire on culprits.»

⁵«So... will there never again be a Kingdom of Israel? Shall we never again be what we dreamed?» ask the three Jewish nobles in panting voices. Joel, the scribe, is weeping... Have you ever watched an old tree whose medulla has been destroyed by disease? For years it vegetates with difficulty, with so much difficulty that it neither blossoms nor yields fruit. Only rare leaves on the worn out branches reveal that there is still a little lymph rising... Then in April it blossoms miraculously, it becomes covered with dense foliage and the owner, who for many years took care of it without receiving any fruit, rejoices thinking that it has recovered and has become luxuriant after so much decay... Oh! deception! Sudden death follows such an exuberant out-

* say, for example in: Isaiah 32,14; 34,14; Jeremiah 14,6', Daniel 5,21.

burst of life. The blossoms, leaves and little fruit fall off, while they seemed to have already set on the branches promising a rich harvest, and with a sudden crash the tree, rotten at its base, falls to the ground. That is what Israel will do. After ages of sterile scattered vegetation, it will gather on its old trunk and will have an appearance of reconstruction. The dispersed People gathered together at last. Gathered and forgiven. Yes. God will wait for that hour to end the course of ages. Then time will not longer exist, but only eternity.

Blessed are those who, being forgiven, will form the fleeting blossoming of the last Israel that, after so many ages, will have become of the Christ, and will die redeemed, with all the peoples of the Earth, blessed with those who, among them, have not only become acquainted with my existence, but have embraced my Law as the law of salvation and life.

580.6 ⁶I can hear the voices of my disciples. Go before they come...»

«It is not out of cowardice, Lord, that we are trying to remain unknown, but to serve You, to be able to serve You. If they knew that we, I in particular, have come to You, we should be excluded from future resolutions...» says Joel.

«I understand. But bear in mind that the snake is wily. You in particular, Joel, be cautious...»

«Oh! let them kill me! I would prefer my death to Yours! So that I should not see the days You mentioned! Bless me, Lord to fortify me...»

«I bless you all in the name of God One and Trine and in the name of the Word Incarnate to be salvation for the men of goodwill.» He blesses them collectively with a wide gesture and then He lays His hand on each of the four heads bent at his feet.

They then stand up, they cover their faces again and they disappear among the trees of the orchard and the hedges of blackberries, that separate pear-trees from apple-trees and the latter from other trees. Just in time, because the twelve apostles come out of the house in a group looking for the Master, in order to set forth.

580.7 ⁷And Peter says: «In front of the house, towards the town, there is a large crowd of people, whom we held back with difficulty, to let You pray. They want to follow You. None of those You dismissed have left. On the contrary, many have come back and

many have just arrived. We reproached them...»

«Why? Let them follow Me! I wish everybody did so! Let us go!» And Jesus, after putting on the mantle that John hands Him, places Himself at the head of his apostles, He arrives at the house, He passes by it, He takes the Bethany road and intones a psalm in a loud voice.

The people, a real crowd, the men first, then the women and children, follow Him, singing with Him... The town is left behind in its enclosure of greenery.

The road is busy with pilgrims. And on the roadside many beggars raise their plaintive voices to move the crowd to pity and thus receive abundant alms. Cripples, maimed and blind people... The usual miserable people who, in every era and in every region, are in the habit of gathering wherever a festivity assembles crowds. And if the blind people cannot see those who are passing by, the others can see them and as they know how kind the Master is to the poor, they utter their cries louder than usual, attract Jesus' attention. But they do not ask for miracles. They only ask for alms, and Judas gives them alms.

⁸A well-to-do looking woman stops the donkey, which she is riding, near a robust tree that shades a crossroad and she waits for Jesus. When He is close at hand, she slides down from her mount and prostrates herself, with some difficulty, because she is holding in her arms a little child, who is completely inert, She lifts it without saying a word. Her eyes and distressed face are praying. But Jesus is surrounded by people forming a hedge and He cannot see the poor mother kneeling on the roadside. 580.8

A man and a woman, who appear to be with the sorrowful mother, are speaking to her and the man shaking his head says: «There is nothing for us.» And the woman says: «Mistress, He has not seen you. Call Him with faith and He will hear your prayer.»

The mother listens to her and she shouts, in a loud voice, to overcome the noise of songs and steps: «Lord! Have mercy on me!»

Jesus, Who is a few metres ahead, stops and turns around looking for the person who has shouted, and the servant says: «Mistress, He is looking for you. So stand up and go to Him and Fabia will be cured, and she helps her to stand up and leads her towards the Lord Who says: «Who invoked Me, should come to

Me. It is the time of mercy for those who can hope in mercy.»

The two women elbow their way through the crowd, the servant in front preparing the way for the mother who follows her, and they are about to arrive near Jesus, when a voice shouts: «My dead arm! Look! Blessed be the Son of David. Our always mighty and holy true Messiah!»

There is some excitement because many people turn around and bustle about confusedly, moving like opposite waves around Jesus. Everybody wants to know, to see... They question an old man who is waving his right arm as if it were a flag and who replies: «He stopped, I succeeded in getting hold of the hem of His mantle and in covering myself with it, and something like fire and life ran along my arm, and here it is: my right arm is like my left one, only because it was touched by His garment.»

580.9 ⁹In the meantime Jesus asks the woman: «What do you want?»

The woman raises her child and says: «She also is entitled to life. She is innocent. She did not ask to be of one place or of another one, of one blood or of a different one. I am guilty. I am to be punished. Not her.»

«Do you hope that God's mercy is greater than men's?»

«I do, Lord. I believe. On my behalf and on my child's to whom I hope You will give lucidity of mind and motion. You are said to be the Life...» and she weeps.

«I am the Life and those who believe in Me will have the life of the spirit and of their bodies. I want it!»

Jesus has shouted those words in a loud voice, and He now lays His hand on the inert child who thrills, smiles and says one word: «Mummy!»

«She moves! She smiles! She has spoken! Fabius! Mistress!»

The two women have followed the phases of the miracle and have proclaimed them loud. And they have called the father who pushes through the crowd and arrives near the women when they are already at Jesus' feet weeping, and when the servant says: «I told you that He has mercy on everybody!», and the mother says: «And now forgive me also my sin.»

«Does Heaven not show you, through the grace granted to you, that your error has been forgiven? Rise and walk. On the new way, with your daughter and the man you have chosen. Go. Peace be with you. And with you, little girl. And with you, faith-

ful Israelite. Great peace to you, for your loyalty to God and to the daughter of the family you served and you kept close to the Law with your heart. And peace also to you, man, who have been more respectful to the Son of man, than many in Israel.»

He takes His leave of them while the crowd, after leaving the old man, takes an interest in the new miracle for the paralysed dull-witted girl, perhaps the consequence of meningitis, and who is now skipping happily, saying the only words she knows, probably the ones she knew when she was taken ill and which now she finds intact again in her revived mind: «Father, mummy, Eliza. The beautiful sun! The flowers!...»

¹⁰Jesus is about to go away, but from the cross-road that has now been overtaken, two more plaintive cries are heard in the typical Jewish accent, coming from the place where the donkeys have been left by the people who received the miracle: «Jesus, Lord! Son of David, have mercy on me!» And once again, in a louder voice, to overcome the shouts of the crowd who say: «Be quiet. Let the Master go on. The way is a long one, and the sun is becoming stronger and stronger. Let Him reach the hills before it gets hot», they shout: «Jesus, Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me.»

580.10

Jesus stops again saying: «Go and get those who are shouting and bring them here to Me.»

Some volunteers go. They reach the two blind men and say: «Come. He has mercy on you. Stand up because He wants to satisfy you. He sent us to call you in His name and they try to guide the two blind men through the crowd.

But if one lets them guide him, the other, who is younger and probably has more faith, precedes the intentions of the volunteers and moves forward by himself, with his stick pointed forward and the typical smile and attitude of blind people in raising their faces seeking light... and he proceeds so fast and sure of himself that he seems to be led by his angel. If his eyes were not white, he would not seem to be blind.

He is the first to arrive before Jesus Who stops him asking: «What do you want Me to do for you?»

«That I may see, Master. O Lord, let my eyes and those of my companion open.» The other blind man has arrived and they make him kneel near his companion.

Jesus lays His hands on their raised faces and says: «Let it be done as you wish. Go! Your faith has saved you!»

He removes His hands and two cries come from their lips: «I can see, Uriel!», «I can see, Bartimaeus!» and then together: «Blessed He Who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed He Who sent Him! Glory be to God! Hosanna to the Son of David» and prostrating themselves with their faces on the ground they kiss Jesus' feet. They then stand up and the one named Uriel says: «Lord, I am going to let my relatives see me, then I will come back and follow You.» Bartimaeus instead says: «I am not going to leave You. I will send word to them. It will always be a great joy. But I am not going to part from You. You have given me my eyesight. I consecrate my life to You. Have Pity on the wish of the least of Your servants.»

«Come and follow Me. Goodwill makes all statuses equal, and he only is great who knows how to serve the Lord in a better way.»

And Jesus takes to the road again amid the hosannas of the crowd, and Bartimaeus mingles with the people and while going he sings hosannas saying: «I came for a piece of bread and I found the Lord. I was poor, now I am a minister of the holy King. Glory to the Lord and to his Messiah...»

581. In Bethany, in the house of Lazarus.

18th March 1947.

¹They must have stopped half-way between Jericho and Bethany because, when they arrive at the first houses in Bethany, the last drops of dew are evaporating on leaves and stems in meadows and the sun is still rising in the vault of heaven.

The farmers of the area drop their tools and rush around Jesus, Who is passing blessing men and plants, as insistently requested by the peasants. And some women and children come towards Him with the first almonds still wrapped in the light silver-green plush of the husks, and with the last blossoms of the late fruit-trees. I notice, however, that here, in the area of Jerusalem, probably because of the altitude, or because of the winds blowing from the highest mountain tops in Judaea, or I do not

know for which other reason, perhaps also because the trees are different, there are many trees still blossoming and they look like light white-rosy clouds hanging over the green meadows.

The tender vine leaves quiver under the high tree-trunks like large butterflies of a precious emerald hue, tied to the rough vine-shoots.

²While Jesus stops at the fountain, which is located where the country ends and the village begins, and He is respectfully greeted by almost the whole population of Bethany, Lazarus arrives with his sisters and they prostrate themselves before their Lord. 581.2

Although little more than two days have gone by since Mary left her Master, she seems not to have seen Him for ages, so un-tiring she is in kissing his dusty feet in his sandals.

«Come, my Lord. Our home is awaiting You to rejoice at Your presence» says Lazarus standing beside Jesus, while they proceed slowly, as the crowds allow them to do. The people in fact throng around Him and the children cling to Jesus' garments and walk in front of Him, with their heads raised looking at Him, so that they stumble and make Him stumble, so much so that Jesus first and then Lazarus and the apostles pick up the smaller ones in their arms, to be able to walk faster.

At a junction with a lane leading to Simon Zealot's house, there is Mary with her sister-in-law, Salome and Susanna. Jesus stops to greet His Mother, and then He goes on as far as the large wide open gate where Maximinus, Sarah and Marcella are, and behind them all the many servants of the house, beginning with those employed in the house and ending with those working in the fields. They are all in order, very happy and excited in their joy that bursts into hosannas, while they wave their headgears and veils and they throw flowers and leaves of myrtle and laurel, of roses and jasmins, which shine in the sun with their splendid corollas or spread like white stars on the dark ground. The scent of plucked flowers and trodden aromatic leaves rises from the ground warmed by the sun. Jesus passes on the sweet-smelling carpet.

Mary of Magdala, who follows Him looking at the ground, stoops, step by step, looking like a gleaner who follows the man tying the sheaves, to pick up the leaves and corollas and also the

plucked petals that have been pressed by Jesus' feet.

Maximinus, in order to be able to close the gate and give peace to the guests, orders the servants to give cakes, that have already been prepared, to the children. A practical way to distract the children's attention from the Lord and thus send them away without rousing a chorus of complaints. And the servants carry out the order taking out into the street baskets full of small cakes decorated with white-brown almonds.

581.3 ³And while the little ones crowd there, other servants push back the adults, among whom there is still Zacchaeus and his four friends - Joel, Judas, Eliel and Elkanah - and others whom I do not know, because they are all covered with veils, to protect themselves from the dust raised by a rather heavy wind and from the sun, which is already strong.

But Jesus, Who is already far ahead, turns around and says: «Wait! I have something to tell some of you.»

And He goes towards Johanna's brothers and He takes them aside saying: «Please go to Johanna and tell her to come to Me with all the women who are with her and with Annaleah, the disciple from Ophel. Tell her to come tomorrow, because the Sabbath begins at sunset, tomorrow and I want to spend it with my friends of Bethany. In peace.»

«We will tell her, Lord. And she will come.»

Jesus dismisses them and He goes to Joel: «You will tell Joseph and Nicodemus that I have come and that on the day after the Sabbath I will enter the town.»

«Oh! Be careful, Lord!» says the good scribe anxiously.

«Go. And be strong. He who follows justice and believes in my truth must not be afraid. But he must rejoice because the accomplishment of the ancient Promise is about to take place.»

«Ah! I will run away from Jerusalem, Lord. I am a man of a delicate constitution, as You can see and You know, and I am laughed at because of that. I could not stand any...»

«Your angel will guide you. Go in peace.»

«Shall I... see You again, Lord?»

«Of course you will see Me again. But until you see Me again consider that your love has given Me so much joy in the hours of sorrow.»

Joel takes the hand that Jesus had laid on his shoulder and

presses it against his lips; through the thin veil of his headgear kisses and tears descend upon Jesus' hand.

He then goes away and Jesus goes to Zacchaeus: «Where are your friends?»

«They remained at the fountain, Lord. I told them to stay there.»

«Join them and go with them to Bethphage where my earliest and most faithful disciples are. Tell Isaac, their chief, to spread through the town and inform all the groups of disciples that the morning after the Sabbath, about the third hour, I will pass through Bethphage and enter Jerusalem and I will go up to the Temple in a solemn way. Tell Isaac that this information is for the disciples only. He will understand what I mean.»

«I understand as well, Master. You want to surprise the Judaeans so that they may not be able to hinder your entrance.»

«Exactly. So do as I told you. Remember that I am entrusting you with a confidential task. I am making use of you and not of Lazarus.»

«And that tells me how your kindness to me is incommensurable. I thank You, Lord.»

He kisses the Master's hand and goes away.

⁴Jesus is about to go back to his hosts. But from the gate from which the last people are coming out, pushed by the servants, a young man departs and runs towards Jesus, throwing himself at his feet and shouting: «A blessing, Master! Do You recognise me?» raising his head, which is not veiled. 581.4

«Yes. You are Joseph named Barnabas, the disciple of Gamaliel, and you came to meet Me near Giscala*.»

«And I have been following You for many days. I was at Shiloh, on my way from Giscala where I had gone with the rabbi while You were absent, and where I remained studying the rolls until the month of Nisan. I was at Shiloh when You spoke, and I followed You to Lebonah and to Shechem, and I waited for You at Jericho, because I had heard that You...» He suddenly stops as if he realised that he was about to say what he was not to mention.

Jesus smiles kindly and says: «The truth bursts out impet-

* to meet Me near Giscala, in 471.3.

uously from sincere lips, and it often flows over the dams that prudence places before people's mouths. But I will complete your thought... "because you had heard from Judas of Kerioth, who remained at Shechem, that I was going to Jericho to join My disciples and give them My instructions." And you went there to wait for Me without worrying about being seen, about wasting your time and being away from your master Gamaliel.»

«He will not reproach me when he learns that I delayed in order to follow You. I will take him Your words as a gift...»

«Oh! Rabbi Gamaliel does not need words. He is the wise rabbi of Israel!»

«Yes. No other rabbi can teach him anything of what is ancient, nothing, because he knows everything that is ancient. But You can. You have new words, full of the fresh life of what is new. Your word is like the sap of springtime. That is what rabbi Gamaliel says, and he adds that the wisdom by now covered with the dust of ages, and thus dry and dull, becomes lively and bright when Your word explains it. Oh! I will take him Your words.»

«And my greetings. Tell him to open his heart, his intellect, his sight, his hearing; and his more than twenty year old question will be answered. Go. God be with you.»

The youth stoops again to kiss the Master's feet and goes away.

581.5 ⁵The servants can at last close the gate and Jesus can join His friends.

«I took the liberty of inviting the women disciples here for tomorrow» says Jesus standing beside Lazarus on whose shoulder He lays His arm.

«You did the right thing, Lord. My house is Yours, as You know. Your Mother preferred to stay in Simon's house. And I respected Her desire. But I hope that You will stay under my roof.»

«Yes, I will. Although... also the other house is your roof. One of your first generous actions on My friends' behalf and Mine. How many of them you have done, My dear friend!»

«And I hope I shall be able to go on doing them for a long time. Although that is the wrong word, wise Master. I am not being generous to You. You are being generous to me. I am the debtor. And if before the treasures You have given me, I lay a farthing for You, what is my miserable gift as compared with Your treas-

ures? "Give and it will be given to you" You said*. "A shaken and pressed measure will be poured on your lap and you will receive one hundredfold of what you have given" You say. I received one hundredfold of a hundredfold even when I had not given You anything. Oh! I remember our first meeting! You, the Lord and God, Whom seraphim are not worthy to approach, came to me, when I was all alone and distressed... closed in here, in my sadness, You came to Lazarus, the man shunned by everybody, except Joseph and Nicodemus and my faithful friend Simon, who from his sepulchre of a living being did not cease to love me... You did not want my joy in seeing You to be perturbed by the corrosive splashes of the world's contempt... Our first meeting! I could repeat all the words You spoke then... What had I given You then, if I had ever seen You, that I should receive from You, at once, one hundredfold of one hundredfold?»

«Your prayers to our Most High Father. Ours, Lazarus. Mine. Yours. Mine as the Word and as Man. Yours as man. When you prayed then with so much faith, were you not already giving Me your whole self? So you can see that, as it is fair, I gave you one hundredfold of what you were giving Me.»

«Your goodness is infinite, Master and Lord. You reward in advance, and with divine generosity, those whom Your thought acknowledges as Your servants even before they realise to be such.»

«My friends, not my servants. Because, really, those who do the will of my Father and follow the Truth that He has sent, are my friends, not my servants. Even more: my brothers, as I am the first to do the will of the Father. So whoever does what I do is my friend, because only a friend does spontaneously what his friend does.»

«May it be so forever between You and me, Lord. 581.6
When are You going to town?»

«The morning after the Sabbath.»

«I will come as well.»

«No. You will not come with Me. I will tell you why. I have other things to ask of you...»

«As You wish, Master. I have to speak to You as well...»

* You said, in 171.4 (the last lines).

«We shall speak.»

«Do You prefer to spend the Sabbath among ourselves, or can I invite our mutual friends?»

«Please do not invite anybody. I am anxious to spend these hours in prudent peaceful friendship with you alone, without any constraint of thought or formality, in the kind freedom of one who is among such dear friends as to feel at home.»

«As You wish, Lord. In actual fact... that is what I wanted. But I thought I was being selfish towards my friends. They are all inferior in friendship to You, my only Friend, but still so dear. But if that is what You wish... Perhaps You are tired, Lord. Or pensive...» Lazarus questions his Friend and Master more with his eyes than with his words, and Jesus replies to him only with his rather sad and somewhat absorbed eyes and with a faint smile of his lips.

They are now alone near the fountain, whose jet of water sounds like a song... All the others have gone into the house and one can hear voices and the noise of kitchenware...

Mary of Magdala twice or three times puts her fair-haired head out of the door protected by a heavy curtain waving lightly in the wind that is getting stronger, while the sky is overcast with clouds that are becoming more and more ruffled and dark.

581.7 ⁷Lazarus raises his head scanning the sky. «I think we are going to have a storm», he says. And he adds: «It will help the obstinate buds to open, as they have much difficulty in doing so this year... Perhaps the late severity of the weather has delayed the shoots. Also my almond-trees have suffered and much fruit has been lost. Joseph was telling me that one of his kitchen gardens outside the Judicial Gate appears to be completely unfruitful this year. The trees are restraining the buds, as if they had been laid under a spell. So much so that he is undecided whether he should leave them or sell them as firewood. Nothing. Not one blossom. They are now exactly as they were in the month of Tebeth. Tiny heads of buds, so hard and closed that never swell. It is true that the northern wind is very strong there and it blew continuously during winter. Also the fruits of my kitchen garden beyond the Kidron were damaged. But what is happening in Joseph's kitchen garden is so strange that many people go to see that place that refuses to awake in springtime.»

Jesus smiles...

«Are You smiling? Why?»

«Because of the childishness of men, the eternal children. They are charmed by everything that appears to be strange... But the orchard will blossom. At the right time.»

«The right time is already past, Lord. When have many trees in one place not blossomed in the month of Nisan? How long has that place still to wait for the right moment?»

«When it is time to give glory to God with their blossoming.»

«Ah! I see! You will go there to bless that place, for Joseph's sake, and it will blossom giving new glory to God and to His Messiah by means of a new miracle! It is so! You are going there. Can I tell Joseph if I see him?»

«If you think that you should tell him... Yes. I shall be going there...»

«When, Lord? I should like to be there as well.»

«Are you an eternal child, too?» Jesus smiles more heartily shaking His head good-naturedly at the curiosity of His friend who exclaims: «Oh! I am happy that I have cheered You up, Lord. I once again see Your face bright with a smile, as I had not seen for a long time! So... shall I come?»

«No, Lazarus. I shall need you here on Preparation Day.»

«Oh! But on Preparation Day we attend only to Passover! You... Master, why do You want to do something for which You' will be rebuked? Go there some other day...»

«I shall be compelled to go in there just on Preparation Day. But I shall not be the only one to do something which is not in preparation for the old Passover. Also the most severe people in Israel, such as Helkai, Doras, Simon, Sadoc, Ishmael and even Caiaphas and Annas will do entirely new things...»

«So is Israel going mad?!»

«You have said it.»

«But You... Oh! here is the rain. Let us go into the house, Master... I... am worried... Will You not explain to me...»

«Yes. Before leaving you I will tell you... ⁸There is your sister coming with a heavy cloth, as she is afraid we might get wet... Oh! Martha! You are always provident and active. But it is not a heavy rain.»

«My dear sister! Nay, my sisters. They are now both like two

tender girls unaware of malice, both Mary and this one. And when Mary came from Jericho the day before yesterday, she really looked like a young girl, with her plaits hanging down her body, as she had sold her hairpins to buy sandals for a boy, and the thin iron hairpins were not strong enough to support her hair. She laughed and coming off the wagon she said to me: "My dear brother, I have experienced what it means having to sell in order to buy, and I have learned how even the most simple things are difficult for the poor, such as having to keep your hair tidy by means of hairpins, twenty of which are worth a didrachma. I shall remember that to be even more merciful to poor people in future." How much You have changed her, Lord!»

The woman of whom they are speaking while setting foot in the house is already there with amphorae and basins to serve her Lord. She will not surrender the honour of serving Him to anybody, and she is not satisfied until she has restored the limbs and appetite of her Master and she sees Him go, wearing fresh sandals, towards the room allotted to Him and where His Mother is waiting for Him with a fresh linen garment still smelling of sunshine...

582. The eve of the Sabbath before the entering
in Jerusalem. An extreme offer
for the salvation of Judas Iscariot.

19th March 1947.

582.1 ¹«If you wish so, you may go, wherever you like. I am staying here today with Judas and James. The women disciples are to come» says Jesus to the apostles who are gathered around Him under the porch of the house. And He adds: «But make sure that you are all back here before sunset. And be prudent. Try to be unnoticed to avoid retaliations against you.»

«Oh! I am going to stay here. What have I to do in Jerusalem?» says Peter.

«Instead I will go. My father is certainly expecting me. He wants to offer the wine. An old promise*, but always kept, be-

* old promise, made in 363.4.

cause my father is an honest man. What a wonderful wine you will taste at the Passover banquet! My father's vineyards at Ramah! They are famous in the area» says Thomas.

«Also these wines of Lazarus are very good. I will never forget the banquet for the feast of the Dedication...» says Matthew, in an unintentional tone of gluttony.

«In that case your memory will be refreshed more than ever, because I think that Lazarus is giving a great banquet tomorrow. I have seen such preparations...» says James of Zebedee.

«Is that so? Are other people coming?» asks Andrew.

«No. I asked Maximinus. He said no.»

«Ah! Otherwise I would have put on the new tunic that my wife sent me» says Philip.

«That is what I am going to do. I wanted to put it on at Passover. But I will wear it tomorrow. We are going to have more peace here tomorrow, than in a few days' time...» says Bartholomew and he stops pensively.

²«I am going to adorn myself with new clothes to go to town. 581.2 And what about You, Master?» asks John.

«So am I. I will put on purple robes.»

«You will look like a king!» exclaims the favourite apostle full of admiration, as he already imagines Him in the splendid robes...

«But if I had not seen to it! I have had that purple for years...» says the Iscariot boastfully.

«Really? Oh! no one had thought about it... The Master is always so humble...»

«Too humble. The time has now come when He must be King. We have waited long enough! If He is not a king on a throne, at least, to safeguard His dignity, He must have clothes suiting His rank. I see to everything.»

«You are right, Judas. You are aware of the ways of the world. We... are poor fishermen...» say humbly the men who have come from the lake... And as it always happens in the light of the world - in the false twilight of the world - Judas' base metal alloy seems nobler than the unrefined, but pure, sincere, honest gold of the Galilean hearts.

Jesus, Who was speaking to the Zealot and to Alphaeus' sons, turns around and looks at the Iscariot and at those honest men, so

582.3 humble and mortified at being so... deficient as compared with Judas... and He shakes His head without saying anything. ³But when He sees the Iscariot tie the laces of his sandals and sort his mantle as if he were on the point of setting off, He asks him: «Where are you going?»

«To town.»

«I told you that I am keeping you here with James...»

«Ah! I thought that You were referring to Your brother Judas... So... I... am like a prisoner... Ah! Ah!» He sneers.

«I don't think that Bethany has chains or bars. It has only the desire of your Master. And I would love to be the prisoner of it» remarks the Zealot.

«Oh! of course! I was joking... The fact is... I would like to have news of my mother. Pilgrims from Kerieth have certainly arrived in Jerusalem and...»

«No. In two days' time we shall all be in Jerusalem. You are staying here now» says Jesus authoritatively.

Judas does not insist. He takes off his mantle saying: «So? Who is going to town? We ought to know what the humours are... What the disciples are doing... I wanted to go to hear also from friends... I had promised Peter...»

«It does not matter. You are staying. Nothing of what you said is necessary. It is not strictly necessary...»

«But if Thomas is going...»

582.4 ⁴«Master, I should like to go as well. I also promised it. I have friends in Annas' house and...» says John.

«And would you go there, son? And if they catch you?» asks Salome who has approached them.

«If they catch me? What wrong have I done? None. So I must not fear the Lord. And even if they catch me, I will not tremble.»

«Oh! the bold young lion! Will you not tremble? Are you not aware of how much they hate us? It's death, you know, if they catch us» says the Iscariot to frighten him.

«Then why do you want to go? Are you perhaps privileged with immunity? What have you done to be so? Tell me, and I will do it.»

Judas suddenly looks as if he were frightened and angry, but John's face is so clear that the traitor is reassured. He realises that there is no snare, no suspicion in those words, and he says:

«I have not done anything. But I have some good friends near the Proconsul, so...»

⁵«Well! Who wants to come, let him come, as it is not raining any longer. We are wasting time here and by midday it may rain again. Whoever wants to come should hurry up» says Thomas urging them. 582.5

«Shall I go, Master?» asks John.

«Yes, go.»

«There you are! It is always the same! He can, the others can.

I cannot. It's always "no" for me!»

«I will try to find out about your mother» says John to calm him.

«And I will try as well. I am coming with you and Thomas» says the Zealot and he adds: «My old age will check the young ones, Master. And I know those of Kerioth very well. If I see any, I will approach them. I will bring you news of your mother, Judas.

Be good! Be quiet! It is Passover, Judas. We all feel the peace of this festivity, the joy of this solemnity. Why do you alone want to be so upset, so sullen, so discontented, enjoying no peace? Passover is the passage of God... Passover, for us Hebrews, is the feast of our liberation from a hard yoke. The Most High God delivered us. Now, as the ancient event cannot be repeated, its symbol remains, individual... Passover: liberation of hearts, purification, baptism, if you wish, with the blood of the lamb, so that enemy powers may no longer injure those who are marked with it. It is so beautiful to begin the new year with this feast of purification, of liberation, of adoration of God our Saviour... Oh! excuse me, Master! I have spoken when I should have kept quiet, because You are here to correct our hearts...»

«Just what I was thinking, too, Simon. The very same thing: that I have two masters now instead of one, and they seemed too many» says the Iscariot angrily.

⁶Peter... oh! Peter this time cannot control himself and he flies into a rage saying: «And if you don't stop this at once you will have a third one and that will be me. And I swear to you that my arguments will be more persuasive than words.» 582.6

«Would you beat a companion? After so many efforts to keep the old Galilean to the bottom, your true nature is surfacing again, is that so?»

«It is not surfacing. It has always been on the surface, and very clearly I use no duplicity. The trouble is that with wild jackasses such as you are, there is only one argument to break them in: a good flogging. You ought to be ashamed of trespassing on His kindness and our patience! Come, Simon! Come, John! Come, Thomas! Goodbye, Master. I am going away as well, because if I stay... no, thank God, I will no longer be able to check myself.» and Peter grasps his mantle, that was on a seat, and puts it on in a hurry, and he is so angry that he does not realise he has put it on upside-down, so that John has to tell him of his mistake and help him to put it on right. And he goes away headlong, stamping his feet on the ground, to discharge some of his wrath thus. He looks like a furious young bull.

The others... oh! the others are like open books in which one can read what is written.

Bartholomew raises his thin face of an old man towards the sky still cloudy, and he seems to be studying the winds, in order not to have to study faces: Jesus' is in fact too sorrowful, the Iscariot's too perfidious. Matthew and Philip look at Thaddeus whose eyes, so similar to Jesus', are flashing with wrath, and both have the same thought: they take him between them and push him away, towards the inner lane leading to Simon's house, saying: «Your mother wanted us to do that job. You had better come, too, James of Zebedee» and they drag away also Salome's son. Andrew looks at James of Alphaeus and James looks at him: two faces reflecting the same contained sufferings, and as they do not know what to say, they take each other's hand like two boys and move away sadly. Salome is the only woman disciple there and she dare not move or speak, neither can she make up her mind to go away, as if she wished to check other words of the worthless apostle with her presence. Fortunately none of Lazarus' family are present.

The Blessed Virgin is also absent.

582.7 ⁷Judas sees that he is alone with Jesus and Salome. As he does not want to be with them, he turns his back on them and goes away towards the jasmin bower.

Jesus looks at him go away. He watches him. He notices that, after pretending to sit down in the bower, Judas slips away on the quiet from the rear side and disappears among the hedges

of roses, laurels and boxes, that separate the true garden from the beds of spices, where the beehives are. It is possible to go out there through one of the secondary gates open in the walls of the large garden, a real park, two sides of which border on very tall hedges, as wide as an avenue, with openings facing gates here and there to give access to the meadows, fields, orchards and olive-groves, as well as Simon's house, that link the garden to the farms, uniting and separating them at the same time, while on the other two sides there are powerful massive walls opening on to two roads, a secondary one and a main one, that form a cross-road and the former, cutting through Bethany, runs towards Bethlehem.

Jesus straightens Himself up as much as possible and changes position as much as is necessary, to see what the Iscariot is doing, and his eyes are blazing.

⁸Mary Salome sees them and she understands, although she cannot see, not being very tall, she realises what is happening towards the end of the park and she whispers: «Lord, have mercy on us!» Jesus hears her whisper and He turns around for a moment to look at His good simple disciple. She may have had a thought of motherly pride when she asked for a place of honour for her sons, but at least she was in a position to do so as they are good apostles and she humbly accepted the reproof of the Master and she did not feel offended by it, neither did she go away from Him, on the contrary she became more humble and more obliging towards the Master, Whom she follows like his shadow, whenever she can, and Whose least expressions she studies in order to be able, whenever possible, to forestall his wishes and give Him joy. And even now the good and humble Salome tries to comfort the Master and to appease the suspicion that makes Him suffer, saying: «See? He is not going far. He left his mantle there and he has not picked it up. He may go for a walk in the meadows to give vent to his humour... Judas would never go to town unless he were properly dressed...»

582.8

«He would go there even if he were naked, if he wanted. In fact... Look! Come here!»

«Oh!! He is trying to open the gate! But it is locked! He is calling one of the servants of the beehives!»

Jesus shouts in a loud voice: «Judas! Wait for Me! I must speak

to you» and He is about to set out.

«For pity's sake, Lord!! I am going to call Lazarus... Your Mother... Don't go by Yourself!»

Although Jesus is walking fast, He turns round a little and says: «I order you not to do so. On the contrary, be quiet. With everybody. If they ask you about Me: I have gone out with Judas for a short walk. If the women disciples come, let them wait. I shall soon be back.»

Salome does not react, neither does the Iscariot. The former near the house, the latter near the wall, they both remain where Jesus has stopped them and they look at Him: Salome sees Him move away, Judas sees Him come towards him.

582.9 ⁹«Open the door, Jonah. I am going out for a moment with my disciple. And if you are going to stay here, you need not close it behind us. I shall soon be back» He kindly says to the peasant servant who had remained dumbfounded with the big key in his hand.

The heavy iron door squeaks in being opened, as the key screeches in working the lock.

«A door that is seldom opened» says the servant smiling. Eh! You have got rusty! When one is idle one gets spoiled... Rust, dust... urchins... The same happens to us... if we do not always work on our souls!»

«Well said, Jonah! Your thought is a wise one. Many rabbis would envy you it.»

«Oh! it's my bees that suggest them to me... and Your words. It is really Your words. Then the bees also make me understand them. Because everything has a voice, if one can understand it. And I say: if the bees obey the order of Him Who created them, and they are little insects which I do not know where they may have brains and hearts, and I, who have heart, brains and soul, and I hear the Master, shall I not be able to do what they do, working all the time to do what the Master says we must do, and thus make my soul beautiful and bright, without any rust, dust, mud and straw, and stones and other snares placed in the device by hellish enemies?»

«You are quite right. Imitate your bees, and your soul will become a rich beehive full of precious virtues, and God will come to enjoy it. Goodbye, Jonah. Peace be with you.»

He lays his hand on the grey-haired head of the servant, who has stooped in front of Him, and He goes out on the road towards meadows of red clover as beautiful as thick deep-red and crimson carpets. Bees are flying on them from flower to flower sparkling and humming.

¹⁰When they are far enough from the wall so that no one in Lazarus' garden might hear them, Jesus says: «Did you hear that servant? He is a peasant. It is already a great thing if he can read a few words... And yet... His words could have been uttered by my lips and my speech would not have seemed to be foolish. He feels that one must watch to ensure that the enemies of the spirit do not spoil the spirit... I... am keeping you near Me because of such enemies, and that is why you hate Me! I want to defend you from yourself and from them, and you hate Me. I am handing you the means to save yourself, and you can still do it, and you hate Me. I will tell you once again: go away, Judas. Go far away. Do not go to Jerusalem. You are not well. It is not a lie to say that you are so ill that you cannot take part in the celebration of Passover. You will keep the supplementary one. The Law allows people to keep the supplementary Passover, when diseases or other serious reasons prevent them from keeping the solemn one. I will ask Lazarus - he is a prudent friend and will not ask any questions - to take you beyond the Jordan today.» 582.10

«No. I told You many times to reject me. You did not want to. Now I do not want it.»

«You do not want? You do not want to be saved? You take no pity on yourself? On your mother?»

«You should say to me: "Have you no mercy on Me?" You would be more sincere.»

«Judas, my unhappy friend, I am not begging you on my behalf. I am begging you for your own sake. ¹¹Look! We are alone. You and I alone. You know who I am, I know who you are. It is the last moment of grace still granted to us to prevent your ruin... Oh! do not sneer so satanically, My friend. Do not laugh at Me as if I were mad because I say: "your ruin" and not mine. Mine is not a ruin. Yours is... We are alone, you and I, and above us there is God... God Who does not hate you yet, God Who is witness to this supreme struggle between Good and Evil competing for your soul. Above us there is the Empyrean watching us. The 582.11

Empyrean that will soon be filled with saints. They are already exulting, in their place of expectation, because they feel that joy is coming... Judas, your father is among them...»

«He was a sinner. He is not there.»

«He was a sinner, but not a damned soul. So joy is approaching him as well. Why do you want to grieve him in his joy?»

«He is past grief. He is dead.»

«No. He is not past the grief of seeing you guilty, you... oh! do not make Me say that word!...»

«Yes, say it! I have been saying it to myself for months! I am damned. I know. Nothing can be changed.»

«Everything! Judas, I am weeping. The last tears of the Man... do you want to have them shed?... Judas, I beg you. Consider, my friend: Heaven is assenting to my prayers, and you, and you... Will you let Me pray in vain? Consider who is praying in front of you: the Messiah of Israel, the Son of the Father... Judas, listen to Me... Stop, while you can!...»

«No!»

582.12 ¹²Jesus covers his face with his hands and drops to the ground at the border of the meadow. He weeps noiselessly, but bitterly. His shoulders are shaken by his deep sobbing...

Judas looks at Him, there, at his feet, heart-broken, weeping, and out of the desire to save him... and he is moved for a moment. Laying aside the hard tone of a real demon he had previously, he says: «I cannot go away... I have given my word...»

Jesus raises His distressed face and interrupts him saying: «To whom? To whom? To some poor men! And you are worried about them, about being considered dishonourable by them? And had you not given yourself to Me for three years? And you are concerned about the comments of a handful of evil-doers and not about God's judgement? Oh! But what must I do, Father, to revive in him the will not to sin?» And He lowers his head again, oppressed with sorrow, distressed... He already looks like the Jesus suffering in the agony of Gethsemane.

Judas feels sorry for Him and says: «I will stay. Do not suffer thus! I will stay... Help me to stay! Defend me!»

«Always! Always, if you only wish so. Come. There is no sin that I do not excuse and forgive. Say: "I want". And I shall have redeemed you...» Jesus, standing up, has taken him in his arms.

But if the tears of Jesus-God fall on Judas' head, Judas' lips remain closed. He does not say the requested word. He does not even say «forgive me» when Jesus whispers through his hair: «You can perceive whether I love you! I should have reproached you! I kiss you. I should be entitled to say to you: "Ask your God to forgive you" and I only ask you to have the will to be forgiven. You are so ill! You cannot ask much of a person who is very ill. Of all the sinners who came to Me I asked absolute repentance in order to be able to forgive them. I am asking you, my friend, only the will to repent and then... I will act.»

Judas is silent...

Jesus lets him go saying: «Stay here at least until the day after the Sabbath.»

«I will stay... Let us go back to the house. They will notice our absence. The women are perhaps waiting for You. They are better than I am and You must not neglect them because of me.»

«Do you not remember the parable* of the lost sheep? You are the lost sheep... They, the women disciples, are the good sheep closed in the fold. They are in no danger, even if I should have to search all day for your soul to take it back to the fold...»

«Of course! Of course! All right! I will go back to the fold! I will shut myself up in Lazarus library and read there. I don't want to be disturbed. I don't want to see anybody or hear anything. So... You will not suspect me all the time. And if the Sanhedrin is informed of anything that takes place, You will have to look for the snakes among Your favourite ones. Goodbye! I am going in through the main gate. Don't be afraid. I will not run away. You can come and check whenever You wish, and turning his back on Him he strides away.

¹³Jesus, a tall white figure in His linen tunic at the edge of the green-red meadow, lifts up His arms towards the clear sky and raises His very sad face and soul to His Father moaning: «Oh! Father! Will You accuse Me of omitting anything that may save him? You know that I am struggling to prevent his crime for the sake of his soul, not for my life... Father! Oh! Father! I beg You! Hasten the hour of darkness, the hour of the Sacrifice, because it is too cruel for Me to live near the friend who does not want to

582.13

* parable, as narrate in 233.1/4.

be redeemed... The greatest grief!» and Jesus sits down on the thick, tall, beautiful clover.

He bends his head on his raised knees clasped in his arms and He weeps... Oh! I cannot look at those tears! In distress, in solitude, in... the conviction that Heaven will do nothing to comfort Him, and that He must suffer that grief, they are already too similar to those of Gethsemane. And that grieves me too much...

Jesus weeps for a long time in the solitary silent place. Witnesses of His tears the golden-hued bees, the scented clover that waves slowly in a stormy wind, and the clouds that early in the morning were like a thin net in the blue sky and are now thick, dark, piled up threatening more rain.

582.14 ¹⁴Jesus stops weeping. He raises his head listening... The noise of wheels and harness bells comes from the main road. Then the noise of the wheels stops, whilst that of the harness-bells continues.

Jesus says: «Let us go! The women disciples... They are faithful... Father, let it be done as You wish! I offer You the sacrifice of this desire of mine as Saviour and Friend. It is written! He wanted it. That is true. However, Father, let Me continue My work on his behalf until it is all over. And even from this moment I say to You: Father, when I pray for sinners, a victim having no power to take direct action, Father, take My sufferings and force Judas' soul with them. I am aware that I am asking what Justice cannot grant. But Mercy and Love have come from You, and You love what comes from You and is One Thing only with You, God One and Trine, Holy and Blessed. I will give Myself to my beloved ones as food and drink. So, Father, are my Blood and my Flesh to become condemnation for one of them? Father, help Me! A germ of repentance in that heart!...

Father, why are You going away? Are You already moving away from Your Word Who is praying? Father, the hour has come. I know. May Your blessed will be done! But leave Your Son, Your Christ, in Whom, by Your inscrutable decree the certain clairvoyance of the future is diminishing in this hour - and I do not say to You that this is cruelty, but it is Your compassion for Me - leave Me the hope that I may still save him. Oh! Father! I know. I have known since I am I. I have known since, not only as Word, but as Man, I came here to the Earth. I have known since I met

the man in the Temple... I have always been aware of it... But now... Oh! it seems to Me - through Your great pity, Most Holy Father! - it seems to Me but a dreadful dream, brought about by his behaviour, but not something ineluctable... and that I may still hope, always, because infinite is my suffering and infinite will be the Sacrifice, and may it be of some benefit also for him... Ah! I am raving! It is the Man Who wants to hope so! The God Who is in the Man, the God made Man cannot delude Himself! The mist that for a moment was concealing the abyss from Me is dissipating... the abyss already open to swallow the man who preferred Darkness to the Light... It was Your pity that concealed it! It is your pity that shows Me it now that You have recomforted Me. Yes, Father, also that! Everything! And I will be Mercy until the end, because such is my Essence.»

He is still praying, silently, his arms stretched out crosswise, and His distressed face calms down more and more assuming the appearance of solemn peace. It becomes almost bright with the light of interior joy, although there is no smile on His closed lips.

It is the joy of His spirit, in communion with His Father, a joy that leaks out from the veils of the flesh and cancels the marks that grief had impressed and painted on the Master's face, which had become the more emaciated and spiritualised, the more He advanced towards sorrow and sacrifice. In these last mortal days - the face of Christ is no longer a face of the Earth, and no artist will ever be able to give us that face of Man God carved into supernatural beauty by perfect total love and sorrow, even if the Redeemer should show Himself to the artist.

¹⁵Jesus is once again at the gate of the enclosure, He locks it and proceeds towards the house. The servant met previously sees Him and runs to take the big key that Jesus is holding in His hand. He goes on. He meets Lazarus who says: «Master, the women have come. I took them into the white hall because in the library there is Judas, who is reading and is not well.» 582.15

«I know. Thank you for the women. Are there many?»

«Johanna, Nike, Eliza and Valeria with Plautina and another friend or freed woman, I do not know, whose name is Marcella, and an old woman who says she knows You: Anne of Meron, then, Annaleah and there is another young girl with her, named Sa-

rah. They are with the women disciples, your Mother and my sisters.»

«And these voices of children?»

«Anne has brought her grandchildren, Johanna has her children and Valeria her daughter. I took them into the inner courtyard...»

583. The eve of the Sabbath before the entering
in Jerusalem. Farewell to the women disciples.
The unhappy niece of Nahum.

22nd March 1947.

583.1 ¹The beautiful hall - one of those used for banquets, with its white walls and ceiling, its heavy white curtains, the white tapestry covering seats and the sheets of mica or alabaster as window panes and skylights - is full of the chatter of the women. Some fifteen women talking to one another is no small thing. But as soon as Jesus appears at the door, moving the heavy curtain aside, there is dead silence while they all stand up and bow with the utmost respect.

«Peace to all of you» says Jesus with a kind smile... Of the storm of grief that has just subsided there is no trace on His face, which is clear, bright, peaceful, as if nothing grievous had happened or were about to happen with His full knowledge.

«Peace to You, Master. We have come. You sent word: "with as many women as there are with Johanna", and I obeyed You. Eliza was staying with me. I have kept her with me these days. And also this woman, who says is Your follower, was with me. She had come looking for You, because it is well known that I am Your happy disciple. And Valeria also is with me in my house since I came to my mansion. With Valeria there was Plautina, who had come to visit her. And this woman was with them. Valeria will speak to You about her. Annaleah came later, when she heard of Your wish, with this young girl, who I think is a relative of hers. We arranged to come and we did not forget Nike. It is so beautiful to feel that we are all sisters in one faith only in You... And to hope that also those who are still only at a natural love for the Master may rise higher, as Valeria did» says Johanna looking

stealthily at Plautina who... has remained at the natural love...

«Diamonds form slowly, Johanna. Ages of hidden fire are required... One must not be in a hurry, never... And one must never lose heart, Johanna... »

«And when a diamond becomes... ashes again? »

«It is an indication that it was not yet a perfect diamond. Patience and fire are still required. One has to start all over again, hoping in the Lord. What appears to be a failure the first time often becomes a triumph the second time. »

«Or the third or the fourth time, and even more. ²I was a failure many times, but at last You triumphed, Rabboni! » says Mary of Magdala in her harmonious voice from the end of the hall.

«Mary is happy every time she can humble herself by remembering her past... » says with a sigh Martha, who would like that remembrance cancelled in every heart.

«Truly, sister, it is so! I am happy remembering my past. But not to humble myself, as you say, but to rise higher, urged by the memory of the evil done and by gratitude to Him Who saved me. And also so that whoever hesitates for himself or for some person dear to him may pluck up courage and arrive at that faith that my Master says would be able to shift mountains. »

«And you have it! You blessed woman! You do not know what fear is... » says with a sigh Johanna who is so meek and timid, and she appears to be even more so if one compares her with the Magdalene.

«No, I do not know what fear is. It has never been in my human nature. Now that I belong to my Saviour, I am not even aware of it in my spiritual nature. Everything has served to increase my faith. Can one who was revived as I was and who saw one's brother rise from the dead, be in doubt about anything? Nothing will ever make me doubt again. »

«As long as God is with you, that is, the Rabbi is with you...

³But He says that He will soon leave us. What will our faith then be? That is, your faith, because I have not yet gone beyond human frontiers... » says Plautina.

«His material presence or absence will not impair my faith.

I will not be afraid. I am not being proud. I know myself. If the threats of the Sanhedrin should come true... I will not be afraid... »

«You will not be afraid of what? That the Just One is just? I shall not be afraid of that either. We believe that of many wise people whose wisdom we enjoy, I should say that we nourish ourselves with the life of their thought, ages after their death. But if you...» says Plautina insistently.

«I will not even fear for His death. Life cannot die. Lazarus, who was a poor man, rose from the dead...»

«He did not rise by himself, but because the Master evoked his spirit from the beyond. A deed that only the Master can accomplish. But who will evoke the Master's spirit, if the Master is killed?»

«Who? He. That is, God. God made Himself by Himself, God can raise Himself by Himself.»

«God... yes... according to your faith God made Himself by Himself. It is already difficult for us to admit that, as we know that one god descends from another through divine love.»

«Through obscene unreal love affairs, you should say» says Mary of Magdala rashly, interrupting her.

«As you wish...» says Plautina in a conciliatory tone, and is about to end her sentence, but Mary of Magdala precedes her once again and says: «But the Man, you mean, cannot raise Himself by Himself. But as He made himself Man by Himself, because nothing is impossible to the Saint of Saints, so He will by Himself order Himself to rise from the dead. You cannot understand. You do not know the figures of our history of Israel. He and His wonders are in them. And everything will take place as it was stated.

583.4 4I believe in advance, Lord. I believe everything. That You are the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin, that You are the Lamb of salvation, that You are the Most Holy Messiah, that You are the universal Redeemer and King, that Your Kingdom will have no end or boundary, and finally that death will not prevail over You, because life and death were created by God and are subject to Him like all other things. I believe. And if deep will be my sorrow at seeing You disregarded and despised, greater will be my faith in Your eternal Being. I believe. I believe in everything that has been said about You. I believe in everything You say. I believed also with regards to Lazarus, I was the only one who obeyed and believed, the only one who reacted against those

men and those situations that wanted to persuade me not to believe. Only at the end, towards the end of the trial, I became confused... But the trial had lasted so long... and I thought that not even You, blessed Master, could approach the goal after so many days from his death... Now... I would not doubt any more even if, instead of days, a sepulchre were to be opened to give back its prey after it had been in its belly for months. Oh! my Lord!

I know who You are! Filth has recognised the Star!» Mary has squatted at His feet, on the marble floor, no longer vehement, but meek, with an expression of adoration on her face raised towards Jesus.

«Who am I?»

«He Who is. That is what You are. The other part, the human person, is the garment, the necessary garment that has been put on Your brightness and Your holiness, so that it might come among us to save us. But You are God, my God.» And she throws herself on the floor kissing Jesus' feet, and she seems to be unable to remove her lips from the toes protruding from the long linen tunic. «Stand up, Mary. Always hold on fast to your faith.

And raise it like a star in stormy hours so that hearts may stare at it and may hope, at least that...»

^{583.5} He then turns around to all the women disciples and says: «I sent for you because during the next days we shall not be able to be together very often and in peace. The world will be around us. And the secrets of hearts are more modest than the secrets of bodies. Today I am not the Master. I am the Friend. Not all of you have hopes or fears to tell Me. But you all liked to see Me once again in peace.

And I sent for you, you cream of Israel and of the new Kingdom, and you, cream of the Gentiles, who are leaving the place of darkness to enter Life. Keep this in your hearts for the following days: that the honour given by you to the persecuted King of Israel, to the accused Innocent, to the Master Who is not listened to, mitigates My sorrow.

I ask you to be closely united, you of Israel, you who have come to Israel, you who are coming towards Israel. Assist one another. Let those whose spirits are stronger help the weaker ones. And let the wiser ones succour those who know little or nothing at all, and are only craving for fresh wisdom, so that their human de-

sire may evolve into a supernatural desire of Truth, through the care of their more advanced sisters. Be merciful to one another. Let those, whom ages of divine law have formed in justice, be indulgent to those whom Gentilism has brought up... differently. Moral habits cannot be changed between today and tomorrow but in exceptional cases, when a divine power intervenes to work the change in order to favour a very goodwill. Do not be surprised if in the disciples coming from other religions you notice standstills and returns to the old ways. Bear in mind Israel herself in her behaviour towards Me, and do not expect from the Gentile ladies the docility and virtue that Israel was not able to have and did not want to have towards the Master. Consider yourselves sisters, sisters that destiny has gathered around Me, in this last period of My mortal life... Do not weep! And it has gathered you taking you from different places, thus with different languages and habits, which make it rather difficult to understand one another from a human point of view. But, really, love has one language only, which is this: to do what the beloved one teaches and do it to give him honour and joy. Thus you can all understand one another and let those who understand more help the others to understand.

583.6 ⁶Then... in future, in a more or less remote future and under different circumstances, you will be separated again through the regions of the Earth, and some will go back to their native countries, and some will go into an exile that will not be hard to bear, because those who will undergo the trial will already have reached that perfection of truth, that will make them understand that the exile from the true Fatherland does not consist in being led here or there. Because Heaven is the true Fatherland. Because those who are in the truth are in God and have God within themselves. They are already in the Kingdom of God, and the Kingdom of God knows no frontiers and those who from Jerusalem are taken, for instance, to Iberia, or to Pannonia, or to Gaul, or to Illyria, do not leave that Kingdom. You will always be in the Kingdom if you always remain in Jesus, or if you come to Jesus. I have come to gather all the sheep. Those of the paternal flock, those belonging to other people, and also those without any shepherd, the wild ones, the ones that are more lost than wild, sunken into such obscure darkness as not to allow them

to see not even a iota, not only of divine law but also of moral law. Unknown people who are expecting to become known in the hour destined by God for that, and who will then be part of the flock of Christ. When? Oh! years and ages are alike when compared with the Eternal! But you will anticipate those who will go with future Shepherds to gather wild sheep and lambs in Christian love in order to lead them to divine pastures. And let these places be your first proving ground. ⁷The young swallow that raises its wings to fly does not throw itself into great adventures all at once. It tries to fly first from the eaves gutter to the vine shading the terrace. Then it goes back to its nest and it dashes once again to the terrace beyond its own, and goes back. And then again farther away... until it feels the nerves of its wings become strong and its bearings safe, then it plays with wind and space and it goes and comes twittering, chasing insects, skimming waters, rising towards the sun, until at the right time it safely opens its wings for the long flight towards warmer zones rich in new food. And although it is so small, it is not afraid to fly across seas, a spot of burnished steel lost between the two blue immensities of sea and sky, a spot moving on fearlessly, whereas previously it was afraid of the short flight from the eaves gutter to the leafy vine-shoot, a nervous perfect body that cleaves the air like an arrow and it is not known whether it is the air that lovingly carries this little king of the air, or it is the little king of the air that lovingly furrows its domains. Seeing its safe flying that exploits winds and atmospheric density to go faster, who would think of its first clumsy fluttering frightened flight? The same will become of you. Let it become so of you. Of you and of all the souls that will imitate you. One does not become skilful all of a sudden. One must not feel disheartened because of the first defeats, or proud because of the first victories. The first defeats serve to do better the next time. The first victories serve as spur to do even better in future and to convince one that God helps good wills.

583.7

⁸Be always subject to the Shepherds with regards to what is obedience to their advice and orders. Be always like sisters to them with regards to what is help in their mission and support in their work. Tell also those who are not here today. Tell those who will come in future.

583.8

And now and always be like daughters to My Mother. She will guide you in everything.

She can guide girls as well as widows, wives as well as mothers, as She has become aware of all the consequences of every condition through Her own experience as well as through supernatural wisdom. Love one another and love Me in Mary. You will never fail because She is the Tree of Life, the living Ark of God, the form of God in Whom Wisdom made Its Seat and Grace became Flesh.

583.9 ⁹And now that I have spoken to you in general, now that I have seen you all, I wish to listen to My women disciples and to those who are the hope of future women disciples.

Go. I am staying here. Let those who wish to speak to Me come to Me. Because never again shall we have a moment of inner peace as the present one.»

The women consult with one another. Eliza goes out with Mary and Mary Clopas. Mary of Lazarus listens to Plautina who wishes to convince her of something, but Mary does not seem to agree, as she shakes her head resolutely in denial and then goes away leaving her interlocutress, and when passing by she takes her sister and Susanna with her saying: «We shall have time to speak to Him. Let us leave these disciples with Him, as they have to go away.»

«Come, Sarah. We shall come last» says Annaleah.

583.10 ¹⁰They all go out slowly with the exception of Mary Salome who remains undecided at the door.

«Come here, Mary. Close the door and come here. What are you afraid of?» Jesus says to her.

«The fact is... that I am always with You. Did You hear Mary of Lazarus?»

«I did. But come here. You are the mother of my first disciples*. What do you want to tell Me?»

The woman approaches Him with the slowness of a person that has something great to ask and does not know whether he can do it.

Jesus encourages her with a smile and saying: «What? Are you going to ask Me for a third place for Zebedee? But he is wise.

* first disciples, according to the work by Valtorta, it was John and James for Zebedee, as stated in 47.8.10 and in 600.6.

He certainly did not send you to tell me that! So speak up...»

«Ah! Lord! It is just of that place that I wanted to speak to You. You... speak in a way...»

As if You were about to leave us. And before doing that I would like You to tell me that You have really forgiven me. I have no peace thinking that I disgusted You.»

«Are you still thinking of that? Do you not think that I love you as much as before and more than before.»

«Oh! yes, Lord. But do tell me the word of forgiveness, that I may tell my husband how good You have been to me.»

«But there is no need for you, woman, to tell a fault that has been forgiven.»

«Of course I will tell him! Because, see? Zebedee, seeing how much You love his sons, may fall into the same sin as mine and... if You leave us, who would absolve him? I would like all of us to enter Your Kingdom. Also my man. And I do not think that I am being unjust by wishing this. I am a poor woman and I know nothing about books. But when Your Mother reads or tells us women passages of the Scriptures, She often speaks of the chosen women of Israel or of passages that refer to us. And in the Proverbs, that I like so much, it is stated* that the heart of the husband has confidence in his strong wife.

I think that it is right that a woman should give such confidence to her husband, also with regard to celestial matters. If I procure a safe place for him in Heaven, preventing him from sinning, I think I do a good thing.»

«Of course, Salome. You have really opened your mouth to words of wisdom and there is the law of goodness on your tongue. Go in peace. You have more than My forgiveness. Your sons, according to the book that you like so much, will proclaim you blessed, and your husband will sing your praises in the Fatherland of the just. Go tranquilly. Go in peace. Be happy.» He blesses and dismisses her.

Salome goes away joyfully.

¹¹Old Anne of the house near Merom goes in holding by the hands two little boys and with a shy pale little girl following her with lowered head, and already acting as a little mother guiding 583.11

* it is stated, in: Proverbs 31,10-11.26.28.

a little boy who can hardly walk.

«Oh! Anne! So you also wish to speak to Me? And your husband?»

«He is ill, Lord. Ill. Very ill. I am afraid I shall not see him alive again...» Tears stream down her senile wrinkled face.

«And you are here?»

«Yes, I am here. He said: "I cannot go. You may go for Passover and see our sons..."» Her weeping increases and prevents her from speaking.

«Why are you weeping thus, woman? Your husband was right in saying: "Ensure that our sons are not against the Christ for their eternal peace." Judas is a just man. He worries more about the welfare of his sons than about his own life and the comfort it would receive from your care. In the hours preceding the death of the just, the veils are lifted and the eyes of the spirit see the Truth. But your sons do not listen to you, woman. And what can I do if they reject Me?»

«Do not hate them, Lord!»

«Why should I? I will pray for them. And I will impose My hands on these children, who are innocent, to keep away from them the hatred that kills. Come to Me. What is your name?»

«Judas, like my father's father» says the biggest boy, and the smallest one, who is held by the hand by his sister, hops and shouts: «I, I, Judas!»

«Yes, they have honoured their father when giving names to their children. But not in other matters...» says the old woman.

«His virtues will revive in these children. Little girl, come here as well. Be as good and wise as the woman who brought you here.»

«Oh! Mary is good. As I do not want to be alone, I will take her to Galilee with me.»

Jesus blesses the children resting His hand for some time on the head of the little girl who is good. He then asks: «Are you not asking anything for yourself, Anne?»

«That I may find my Judas alive and that I may have the strength to tell a lie saying that his sons...»

«No. Do not lie. Never. Not even to let a dying man die in peace. You will say to Judas: "The Master says that He blesses you and with you He blesses your blood." Also these innocent

children are his blood and I have blessed them. »

«But if he asks whether our sons... »

«You will say: "The Master has prayed for them. " Judas will rest in the certainty that My prayer is powerful, and the truth will be spoken without disheartening who is dying. Because I will pray also for your sons. You may go in peace, too, Anne.

When are you leaving the town? »

«The day after the Sabbath, so as not to be stopped on the road because of the Sabbath. »

«All right. I am glad that you will be here after the Sabbath. Remain closely united to Eliza and Nike. Go. And be strong and faithful. »

The woman is almost at the door when Jesus calls her again saying: «Listen. Your little ones are with you for a long time, are they not? »

«They are always with me, while I am in town. »

«During these days... leave them at home, if you go out to follow Me. »

«Why, Lord? Are You afraid of a persecution? »

«Yes. And it is better if innocents do not hear and see... »

«But... what do You think will happen? »

«Go, Anne. Go. »

«Lord if... if they should do to You what is rumoured, my sons certainly... and then the house will be worse than the street... »

«Do not weep. God will provide. Peace be with you. »

The old woman goes away weeping.

¹²For a short time no one goes in; then Johanna and Valeria go ^{583. 12} in together. They are panting. Johanna in particular. The other woman is pale and she sighs, but she is stronger.

«Master, Anne has frightened us. You told her... Oh! but it is not true! Chuza may be undecided, he may be... shrewd. But he is not a liar! He assured me that Herod has no intention of harming You... I do not know about Pontius... » and she looks at Valeria who is silent. She then resumes: «I was hoping to understand something from Plautina, but I did not understand much... »

«Nothing, you should say, except that she has not advanced by one step from the limit where she was. She did not speak to me either. But, if I am not wrong, the Roman indifference, which is always so strong when an event can have no repercussion on

their Fatherland or on their egos, has badly benumbed those who once seemed so willing to rouse themselves. Their indifference, the indolence of their spirits, so... different by now from mine, separates us, as a cleft separates two clods previously united, more than the fact that I have approached the synagogue. They are happy. They are happy their way... And human happiness does not help to keep one's mind sharp.»

«And to awake the spirit, Valeria» says Jesus.

«It is so, Master. I... there is another matter... Did You see that woman who was with us? She belongs to my family. She is a widow and lonely, and she was sent by my relatives to convince me to go back to Italy. Oh! with many promises of future joys! They are joys that I no longer appreciate and thus they no longer seem to me to be such, and I despise them. I will not go to Italy. Here I have You, I have my little daughter whom You saved for me*, and whom You taught me to love for her soul. I will not leave these places... Marcella... I brought her with me so that she would see You and understand that I am not staying here for a dishonourable love for a Hebrew - it is dishonourable for us - but because in You I found comfort in my grief of a repudiated wife. Marcella is not ill-natured. She has suffered and she understands. But she is still unable to understand my new religion. And she reproaches me a little, because she thinks that my religion is a chimera... It does not matter. If she wants, she will come where I already am. If not, I will stay here with Tusnilde**. I am free. I am rich. I can do what I like. And not doing wrong, I will do what I want.»

583.13

¹³«And when the Master will not be here?»

«His disciples will remain. Plautina, Lydia and even Claudia, who, after me, is the one who follows Your doctrine and honours You more, have not yet understood that I am no longer the woman that they knew and they still think they know. But I am sure that I know myself by now. So much so that I say that, if I lose much by losing the Master, I shall not lose everything, because faith will remain. And I shall remain where it was born. I do not want to take Fausta where nothing speaks of You. Here... Everything speaks of You, and You will certainly not leave us without a guide, as we have decided to follow You. Why should I,

* my little daughter... saved, in 155.4/5; You taught me to love, in 167.9.

** Tusnilde, the unnamed freed woman of 531.16 and presented in 534.1.

the Gentile, have such thoughts, while many of you, and you, too, look as if you were dismayed thinking of the day when the Master will not be among us? »

«Because, Valeria, they have become accustomed to ages of immobilism. They think that the Most High is there, in His House, above the invisible altar, that only the High Priest can see in solemn occasions. That has helped them to come to Me. They also could at last approach the Lord. But now they tremble at the thought of no longer having either the Most High in His glory, or the Word of the Father among them. It is necessary to be indulgent... And to raise one's spirit, Johanna. And I shall be in you.

Remember that. I shall go away. But I will not leave you orphans. I will leave you a house of Mine: My Church. My word: the Gospel. My love will dwell in your hearts.

And finally I will leave you a greater gift that will nourish you through Me and will make Me be among you and in you, not only spiritually. I will do that to give you comfort and strength.

¹⁴But now... Anne is very depressed because of the children... »

583. 14

«She spoke to us about them distressingly... »

«Yes. I told her to keep them away from crowds. I say the same to you, Johanna, and to you, Valeria. »

«I will send Fausta with Tusnilde to Bether before the fixed time. They were to go after the Feast. »

«I will not part from the children. I will keep them at home.

But I will tell Anne to let her children go there. That woman has wicked sons, but they will be honoured by my invitation and they will not contradict their mother. And I... »

«I would like... »

«What, Master? »

«I would like you to be much united these days. I will keep my Mother's sister with Me, Salome and Susanna and Lazarus' sisters. But I would like you to be united, much united. »

«But can we not come where You are? »

«During these days I shall be like lightning that flashes brightly and disappears. I will go up to the Temple in the morning and then I will go out of town. You could meet Me only every morning at the Temple. »

«Last year You stayed with me... »

«This year I will not stay in any house. I shall be like light-

ning that passes...»

«But Passover...»

«I wish to consume it with My apostles, Johanna. If your Master wants that, He certainly wants it for a just reason.»

583.15 «That is true... ¹⁵So I shall be alone... Because my brothers told me that they want to be free during these days, and Chuza...»

«Master, I am going away. It is pouring. I am going to the children as I hear them gathered under the porch» says Valeria and she prudently withdraws.

«There is a heavy rainfall also in your heart, Johanna.»

«That is true, Master. Chuza is so... strange. I no longer understand him. A continual contradiction. Perhaps he has friends who are influencing his mind... or he has been threatened... or he is afraid for his future.»

«He is not the only one. Nay, I can say that few, lonely and scattered here and there are those who, like Me, are not afraid for their future and they will be fewer and fewer. Be very kind and patient with him. He is only a man...»

«But he has received so much from God, from You, that he ought to...»

«He ought to! Yes. But who has not received from Me in Israel? I have helped friends and enemies, I have forgiven, cured, comforted, taught... You can see, and you will see more clearly how God only is immutable, how different are the reactions of men, and how often he who has received more is most willing to strike his benefactor. One will truly be able to say* that he who shared My bread with Me raised his foot against Me.»

«I will not do that, Master.»

«You will not. But many will.»

«Is my husband perhaps one of them? If it were so, I would not go back to my house this evening.»

«No. He is not among them, this evening. But even if he were, your place is there. Because if he sins, you must not sin. If he wavers, you must support him. If he tramples on you, you must forgive him.»

«Oh! Trample on me, no! He loves me. But I would like him

* be able to say, as in the Psalm 41,10.

to be more resolute. He can influence Herod so much. I would like him to wring a promise from the Tetrarch in Your favour. As Claudia is trying to wring it from Pilate. But Chuza has only been able to bring me vague words of Herod... and to assure me that Herod only wishes to see You work some miracles and that he will not persecute You... He thus hopes to silence his remorse for John. Chuza says: "My king always says: 'Even if Heaven ordered me, I would not lift my hand. I am too frightened!'"»

«He speaks the truth. He will not lift his hand against Me. Many in Israel will not do that, because many are afraid to condemn Me materially. But they will ask other people to do so. As if in the eyes of God there were a difference between him who strikes, urged by the will of the people, and him who makes one strike.»

«Oh! but the people love You! Great celebrations are being prepared for You. And Pilate does not want tumults. He has reinforced the troops these days. I hope so much that... I do not know what I hope, Lord. I hope and I despair. My thoughts are inconstant like the weather these days, with alternating sunshine and showers...»

«Pray, Johanna, and be at peace. Always bear in mind that you have never grieved your Master and that He remembers that. Go.»

Johanna, who has become pale and thin these last few days, goes out pensively.

¹⁶And Annaleah's gentle face appears.

583.16

«Come in. Where is your companion?»

«In there, Lord. She wishes to go away, they are about to leave. Martha has understood my wish and she will keep me here until sunset tomorrow evening. Sarah is going home, to say that I am staying here. She would like Your blessing because... But I will tell You later.»

«Let her come. I will bless her.»

The young woman goes out and comes back with her companion, who prostrates herself before Jesus.

«Peace be with you and may the grace of the Lord lead you onto the road where He has led this girl who preceded you. Be affectionate to her mother and bless Heaven that spared you ties and sorrows in order to have you completely for Itself. One day,

more than now, you will bless the Lord for being sterile through your own will. Go.»

The young woman goes away deeply moved.

«You have told her what she hoped to hear. Those words were her dream. Sarah always said: "I like your destiny, although it is so unknown in Israel. I want it, too. As I no longer have my father, and as my mother is as sweet as a dove, I am not afraid of not being able to follow it. But in order to be able to accomplish it and that it may be holy for me, as it is for you, I would like to hear it from His lips." Now You have told her.

And I have peace, too. Because at times I was afraid that I might have elated a heart...»

«Since when has she been with you?»

583.17

«Since... ¹⁷When the order of the Sanhedrin came I said to myself: "The Master's hour has come, and I must prepare myself to die." Because I asked You*, Lord... Today I am reminding You... If You are going to the Sacrifice, I, victim, with You.»

«Are you still firmly wanting the same thing?»

«Yes, Master. I could not live in a world where You were not... and I could not survive Your torture. I am so afraid for You! Many among us delude themselves... I don't! I feel that the hour has come. The hatred is too strong... And I hope that You will accept my offer. I have but my life to give You, because I am poor, as You know. My life and my purity. That is why I convinced my mother to send for her sister. That she may not remain alone... Sarah will be a daughter to her in my stead, and Sarah's mother will comfort her. Do not disappoint my heart, Lord! The world has no attraction for me. It is like a jail, in which many things disgust me terribly. It is perhaps because one who has been on the threshold of death has understood that what represents joy for many people is nothing but emptiness that does not satisfy. It is certain that I wish nothing but sacrifice... and to precede You... that I may not see the hatred of the world cast on my Lord like a weapon of torture, and to resemble You in sorrow...»

«Then we will lay the cut lily on the Altar where the Lamb is sacrificed. And it will become red with the Blood of redemption. And only the angels will be aware that Love was the sacrificer

* I asked You, in 156.5/6.

of a completely white ewe-lamb, and they will mark the name of the first victim of Love, of the first continuator of the Christ.»

«When, Lord?»

«Keep your lamp ready and put on your wedding dress. The Bridegroom is at the door. You will see His triumph, but not his death, but you will triumph with Him entering His Kingdom.»

«Ah! I am the happiest woman in Israel! I am a queen crowned with Your garland! May I, as such, ask a grace of You?»

«Which?»

«I loved a man, as You know. I no longer loved him as my spouse, because a greater love took possession of me, and he no longer loved me because... But I do not want to remember his past. I ask You to redeem that heart. May I? It is not a sin to remember, while I am on the threshold of Life, him whom I loved, to give him eternal Life, is it?»

«It is not a sin. It is to take love to the holy end of the sacrifice for the welfare of the beloved.»

«Bless me, then, Master. Absolve me of all my sins. Make me ready for the wedding and for Your coming. Because it is You Who is coming, my God, to take Your poor servant and make her Your bride.»

The girl, beaming with joy and health, stoops to kiss the Master's feet while He blesses her, praying over her. And the hall, as white as if it were all decorated with lilies, is really the worthy surroundings for this rite, and harmonises beautifully with its protagonists, who are young, lovely, clad in white, shining with angelical and divine love.

¹⁸Jesus leaves the girl there, absorbed in her joy, and goes out quietly to go and bless the children, who with shouts of joy are rushing towards the wagon and they get into it happily, with the women who are going away. Eliza and Nike remain to take Annaleah back to town the following day. It has stopped raining and the sky, once the clouds are scattered, shows its clear blue, and the sunbeams descend to make the raindrops glitter.

583.18

A splendid rainbow bends from Bethany over Jerusalem. The wagon goes away squeaking and goes out through the gate. It disappears.

Lazarus, who is near Jesus, at the end of the porch, asks:

«Have the women disciples given You joy?» and he looks at the Master.

«No, Lazarus, they have not. All of them, with the exception of one, have given Me their sorrows and also some disappointments, if I could delude Myself.»

«The Roman ladies, You mean, have disappointed You? Have they spoken to You of Pilate?»

«No, they have not.»

«Then I must do so. I was hoping that they would speak to You about him. That is why I waited. Let us go into this solitary room. The women have gone with Martha to do their work. Mary, instead, is with Your Mother, in the other house. Your Mother has been so long with Judas, and now She has taken him with Her... Sit down, Master... ¹⁹I have been to see the Proconsul... I had promised and I did so. But Simon of Jonas would not be very satisfied with my mission!... Fortunately, Simon thinks no more about it. The Proconsul listened to me and he replied saying: "I? I should attend to Him? I have not even the most remote and slightest intention of doing that! I only say this: that not because of the Man - You, Master - but because of all the trouble that I get through Him, I have firmly decided not to have anything further to do with Him, for good or for evil. I wash my hands of it. I will reinforce the guard because I do not want disturbances. I will thus satisfy Caesar, my wife and myself. That is, the only ones of whom I take sacred care. And with regards to the rest I will not lift a finger. The quarrels of these people who are eternally dissatisfied. They create them, they enjoy them. With regards to the Man, I ignore Him as an evildoer, I ignore Him as a virtuous man, and I ignore Him as a wise man. And I want to ignore Him. And to continue to ignore Him.

Unfortunately, although I want to ignore Him, I find it difficult to do so, because the leaders of Israel speak to Me about Him with their complaints, Claudia with her praises, the followers of the Galilean with their accusations against the Sanhedrin. If it were not for Claudia, I would have Him arrested and I would hand Him over to them so that they might settle the matter and we should not hear any more of it. The Man is the most peaceful subject in the whole Empire. But in spite of all that, He has given me so much trouble that I would like a solution..." With such hu-

mour, Master...»

«You mean that we cannot be safe. With men one is never safe...»

«But I am told that the Sanhedrin is calmer. They have not recalled the band, the disciples have not been annoyed. Those who went to town will soon be back and we shall hear... They will always contradict You. Will they take action?... The crowds love You too much to challenge them imprudently.»

²⁰«Shall we go along the road, towards those who are coming back?» suggests Jesus. 583.20

«Let us go.»

They go out into the garden and they are half way when Lazarus asks: «But when have You had something to eat? And where?»

«At the first hour.»

«But it is almost sunset. Let us go back.»

«No. I do not feel it is necessary. I prefer to go. I can see a poor child over there, clinging to the gate. Perhaps he is hungry. His clothes are worn-out and he is wan. I have been watching him for some time. He was already there when the wagon left, and he ran away not to be seen and probably driven away: Then he came back and has been looking insistently towards us and the house.»

«If he is hungry I had better go and get some food. Go on, Master. I will join You at once» and Lazarus runs back while Jesus quickens His pace towards the gate.

²¹The boy, a sickly-looking irregular face, in which only the eyes shine beautiful and lively, looks at Him. 583.21

Jesus smiles at him and while opening the lock of the gate He says to him kindly: «Whom are you looking for, child?»

«Are You the Lord Jesus?»

«I am.»

«I am looking for You.»

«Who has sent you?»

«No one. But I want to speak to You. So many people come to speak to You. I have come, too. You satisfy so many people. Me, too.»

Jesus has lifted the latch and He asks the boy to remove his thin hands from the bars, so that He may open the gate. The boy

steps aside and in doing so, as his discoloured garment moves on his distorted body, one can see that he is a poor rickety child, with his head sunken into his shoulders owing to the commencement of a hump, and his unsteady legs wide apart. A true little poor wretch. He is perhaps older than one might think considering his height, which is of a boy about six years old, whilst his face is already that of a man, somewhat flabby, with a protruding chin, almost the face of an old man.

Jesus bends to caress him and says: «So tell Me what you want. I am your friend. I am the friend of all children.» With how much loving kindness Jesus takes the emaciated face in His hands and kisses his forehead!

«I know. That is why I came. See how I am? I would like to die not to suffer any more. And not to belong any more to anybody... Since You cure so many people and raise the dead, let me die, as no one loves me and I shall never be able to work.»

583.22 22«Have you no relatives? Are you an orphan?»

«I have a father. But he does not love me, because I am like this. He rejected my mother, he gave her the libel of divorce, and he drove me out with her, and my mother died. It was my fault, because I am so deformed.»

«But who are you living with?»

«When my mother died the servants took me back to my father. But he got married again and has lovely children, and he expelled me. He handed me over to some of his peasants. But they do what their master does, to find favour in his eyes... and they make me suffer.»

«Do they beat you?»

«No. But they take more care of animals than of me, and they sneer at me, and as I am often ill, they get bored with me. I am becoming more and more deformed, and their sons gibe at me and they make me fall. No one loves me. And last winter, when I had a bad cough and I needed medicines, my father would not spend any money and said that the only good thing I could do was to die. Since then I have been waiting for You to say to You: "Let me die".»

Jesus takes him in His arms, turning a deaf ear to the words of the boy who says: «My feet are muddy and so is my tunic, because I sat on the road. I will dirty Your clothes.»

«Have you come from far?»

«From near the town, because the person who keeps me lives there. I saw Your apostles pass by. I know it was them, because the peasants said: "Here are the disciples of the Galilean Rabbi. But He is not with them." And I came.»

«You are wet, my child. Poor boy! You will be taken ill again.»

«If You do not listen to me, I hope the disease at least will make me die! Where are You taking me?»

«Into the house. You cannot remain thus.»

²³Jesus goes back into the garden with the deformed boy in His arms and He shouts to Lazarus, who is coming: «Close the gate, please. I am carrying this little fellow, who is wet through, in my arms.» 583.23

«But who is he, Master?»

«I do not know. I do not even know his name.»

«Neither will I tell You. I don't want to be known. I want what I told You. My mother used to say to me: "Son, my poor son, I am dying, but I wish you died with me, because in the next world you would no longer be so deformed as to suffer in your bones and in your heart. Those who are born poor wretches have no sneering names there. Because God is good to innocent and unhappy people." Will You send me to God?»

«The boy wants to die. It is a sad story...»

Lazarus, who is staring at the little boy, suddenly says: «But are you not the son of Nahum's* son? Are you not the boy who always sits in the sun near the sycamore that is at the end of Nahum's olive-trees, and whom your father entrusted to his peasant Josiah?»

«Yes, I am. But why did you tell?»

«Poor boy! Not to scoff at you. Believe me, Master, the fate of a dog in Israel is not so sad as the fate of this boy. If he did not go back to the house from which he came, no one would look for him. The servants are like their masters. Heartless men. Joseph knows the story well. It caused a stir. But at the time I was so worried about Mary... But when the unhappy wife died and this boy came to Josiah's, I used to see him when I passed by... He was forsaken on the threshing-floor in the sun or the wind, because

* Nahum, the fiduciary of the priest Annas and enemy of Jesus, met in 123.6 and in 537.4. His miserable destiny in 630.9.

he began to walk very late... and always very little. I do not know how he was able to come so far today. I wonder how long he has been on the way!»

«Since Peter passed there.»

«And now? What shall we do?»

«I am not going back home. I want to die, to go away. Grace and mercy on me, Lord!»

583.24 ²⁴They have gone into the house and Lazarus calls a servant and tells him to bring a blanket and to send Naomi to take care of the boy, who is blue with cold in his wet clothes.

«The son of one of Your fiercest enemies! One of the most wicked in Israel. How old are you, child?»

«Ten years.»

«Ten! Ten years of sorrow!»

«And they are enough!» says Jesus in a loud voice putting down the boy.

He is really misshapen! His right shoulder is higher than his left one, his chest protrudes excessively, his thin neck is sunken between his raised collar-bones, his bow-legs!...

Jesus looks at him pitifully while Naomi undresses him and dries him before wrapping him in a warm blanket. Lazarus also looks at him piteously.

«I will put him in my bed, Lord, after I have given him some warm milk» says Naomi.

«But are You not going to let me die? Have mercy on me! Why let me live to be like this and suffer so much?» and he concludes: «I was hoping in You, Lord.» There is reproach and disappointment in his voice.

«Be good. Be obedient, and Heaven will comfort you.» says Jesus and He bends to caress him once again, gently rubbing his poor deformed body with His hand.

«Take him to bed and watch over him. Then... we will see.» The boy is taken away while he weeps.

«And they are the ones who think they are holy!» exclaims Lazarus thinking of Nahum...

583.25 ²⁵Peter is heard calling his Master...

«Oh! Master! Are You here? All is well. No trouble. Oh! on the contrary much calm. No one disturbed us at the Temple. John received good news. The disciples have been left in peace. People

are waiting for You joyfully. I am glad. And what have You done, Master?»

They go away together speaking, while Lazarus goes where Maximinus calls him.

584. The Sabbath before the entering in Jerusalem.
The parable of the two lamps the living parable
of the small deformed boy restored.
Sorrow in the future of Humanity.

26th March 1947.

¹The weather has cleared up after the past wet days and a bright sun is shining in a very clear sky. The earth, cleaned by the rains, is as clear as the atmosphere. It is so fresh and clean that it seems to have been created only a few hours ago. Everything is bright and everything sings in the clear morning. 584.1

Jesus is walking slowly along the farthest paths in the garden. Only an odd gardener watches the solitary walk in the early morning hours. But no one disturbs the Master.

On the contrary they withdraw silently to leave Him alone. Moreover it is the Sabbath, the day of rest, and the gardeners are not at work. But through a habit as long as their lives, they are out watching plants, beehives, flowers, for which there is no Sabbath, and which smell, rustle and buzz in the sunshine and in the April breeze.

Then the garden slowly becomes busy. The first to appear are the servants employed in the house, then the maidservants, then the apostles and the women disciples, and Lazarus is the last one. Jesus joins them greeting them with His usual greeting.

«How long have You been here, Master?» asks Lazarus, shaking some dew-drops off Jesus' hair.

«Since dawn. Your birds called Me to praise God. And I came out here. To contemplate God in the beauty of Creation is to honour Him and to pray with a moved spirit. And the Earth is beautiful. And in these early hours of the day, on a day like this one, it appears to us as fresh as it was in the first days of its existence.»

«Real Passover weather. And it has improved. It will last because it cleared up during the first phase of the moon with a fa-

vourable wind» states Peter.

«I am glad to hear that. Passover with rain is sad.»

«Even worse, it is detrimental to crops. The corn needs sunshine, now that harvest time is approaching» says Bartholomew.

584.2

«I am happy to be here at peace. ²This is the Sabbath and nobody will come. There will be no strangers among us» says Andrew.

«You are wrong. There is a guest, a young guest. He is still sleeping, Master. A soft bed and a full stomach are letting him have a long sleep. I went in to see him. Naomi is watching over him» says Lazarus.

«But who is he? When did he come? Who brought him? Because you are speaking as if it were a boy» ask both men and women.

«It is a boy. A poor boy. His grief brought him here. He was over there, clinging to the bars of the gate and looking at the house. And the Master brought him in.»

«We knew nothing about it... Why?»

«Because the child was in need of peace» replies Jesus, and His countenance is absorbed in deep thought as He concludes: «And in Lazarus' house they know how to be silent.»

A servant comes to tell Martha something and then withdraws, but comes back soon with other servants carrying trays with jugs of milk, cups, and bread with butter and honey. They all help themselves sitting on the seats scattered here and there.

584.3

³Then they wish to gather once again around the Master and they ask Him to tell them a parable, «a beautiful parable» they say «as serene as this day of Nisan.»

«I will not tell you one, but two. Listen.

A man one day decided to light two lamps to honour the Lord on a feast day. So he took two vases of the same size, he put in each the same quantity and quality of oil, identical wicks, and he lit them at the same hour, so that they might pray while he worked, as he was allowed. After some time he went back and he saw that one lamp was burning brightly, whereas the other had only a very tiny flame, that hardly gave any light in the corner where the two lamps were burning. The man thought that the wick was perhaps faulty. He examined it. No, it was all right. But it would not burn so merrily as the other lamp, the flame of which fluttered like a tongue and seemed to whisper words, so merry it

was, and it blazed so excitedly that it even had a light murmur. "This lamp is really singing the praises of the Most High Lord!" he said to himself. "Whereas this one! Look at it, soul of mine! It seems to find it burdensome to have to honour the Lord, as it does it with so little zeal!" and he went back to his work.

He went back again after some time. One flame had grown even taller, and the other had become even smaller and was burning even more quietly and still, the more the other vibrated shining. He went back a second time. The same situation. A third time, the same thing. But when he came the fourth time, he saw the room full of black foul-smelling smoke, and only one little flame shining through the veils of thick smoke. He went to the shelf where the lamps were, and he noticed that the one that was blazing so brightly previously was completely burnt out and black, and it had also soiled the white wall with its flame. The other one, instead, continued to honour the Lord with its constant light. He was about to remedy the defect when a voice sounded close to him: "Leave things as they are. But meditate on them, for they are a symbol. I am the Lord." The man prostrated himself on the floor adoring and with great fear he dared to say: "I am foolish. Explain to me, o Wisdom, the symbol of the lamps, of which the one that seemed more active in honouring You has caused damage, whilst the other is persevering in giving light." "Yes, I will. The hearts of men are like those two lamps. There are those who at the beginning blaze, are bright and are admired by men, because their flames seem so perfect and constant. And there are those whose light is mild, does not attract anybody's attention and they seem to be tepid in honouring the Lord. But after the first or the second blaze, or the third one, between the third and the fourth one they cause damage and then they go out, still with injury, because their light was not reliable. They wanted to shine more for the sake of men than for the Lord's, and their pride consumed them in a very short time, amid a dark thick smoke that also obscured the air. The others had only one constant will: to honour God only; and without minding whether men praised them, they consumed themselves through a long clear flame, devoid of smoke and stench. Do imitate the constant light, for it is the only one pleasing to the Lord." The man raised his head... The air had been purified of the smoke and the star

of the faithful lamp was now shining all alone, pure, steady, to honour God, making the metal of the lamp gleam as if it were pure gold. And he watched it shine, always steady, for hours and hours, until gently, without smoke or stench, without soiling itself, the flame went out in a flash and it seemed to ascend towards the sky to settle among the stars, having worthily honoured the Lord to the very last moment of its life.

I solemnly tell you that many are those who blaze at the beginning and attract the admiration of the world that can only see the surface of human actions, and then they perish being carbonised and staining with their pungent smoke. And I solemnly tell you that their blazing is not watched by God, because He sees it burn proudly for human purposes. Blessed are those who know how to imitate the second lamp and not to get carbonised, but to ascend to Heaven with the last throb of their constant love.»

584.4 4«What a strange parable! But true! Lovely! I like it! I should like to know whether we are the lamps that rise to Heaven.» The apostles exchange their feelings.

Judas finds the opportunity to bite. And his biting words are addressed to Mary of Magdala and John of Zebedee: «Be careful, Mary, and you, John. You are the blazing lamps among us... Let no evil befall you!»

Mary of Magdala is about to reply to him but she bites her lips not to utter the words that had come up from her heart. She looks at Judas. She only looks at him. But her glare is such that Judas stops laughing and staring at her.

John, whose heart is meek but burning with love, kindly replies: «And that might happen, considering how incapable I am. But I confide in the help of the Lord, and I hope I shall be able to burn till the last drop and till the last moment to honour the Lord our God.»

584.5 5«And the other parable? You promised two» says James of Alphaeus.

«Here is My second parable. It is about to come...» and He points at the door of the house, where the curtain covering it is swaying slowly in the breeze, and then is drawn by the hand of a servant to let old Naomi enter. She rushes to Jesus' feet saying: «But the boy is cured! He is no longer deformed! You cured him during the night. He had woken up and I was preparing the bath

to wash him before putting on him the tunic and the garment I had sewn during the night using a tunic cast off by Lazarus.

But when I said to him: "Come, child" and I removed the blankets, I saw that his little body, so misshapen yesterday, was no longer so. And I shouted. Sarah and Marcella rushed in, but they did not even know that the boy was sleeping in my bed and I left them there, and I ran here to tell You...»

Everybody's curiosity is aroused. Questions, anxiety to see.

Jesus calms the whispering with a gesture. He says to Naomi:

«Go back to the boy. Wash him, dress him and bring him here to Me.» He then addresses His disciples: «Here is the second parable, and it could be entitled: "True justice takes no vengeance and makes no distinction". A man, nay, the Man, the Son of man, has friends and enemies. Few friends, many enemies. And He is aware of the hatred of His enemies, and knows their thoughts and wills, that will not hesitate in front of any action, no matter how horrible it may be. And in that respect they are stronger than his friends, in whom dismay or disappointment, or excess of confidence, act as battering-rams that shatter their fortress to pieces. This Son of man with many enemies and Who is reproached for many things that are not true, yesterday met a poor boy, the most desolate of all children, the son of one of His enemies. And the boy was deformed and crippled and asked for a strange grace: to die. Everybody asks honours and joy, health and life, of the Son of man. This poor boy asked to die in order not to suffer any longer.

He has already experienced all the sorrows of the flesh and of the heart, because the man who procreated him, and who hates Me without any reason, also hates the unhappy innocent wretch whom he generated. And I cured him so that he may no longer suffer, and in addition to physical health he may achieve spiritual salvation. Also his young soul is diseased. The hatred of his father and the mockery of men have injured it and deprived it of love. He is left with faith only in Heaven and in the Son of man and he asks them to let him die. Here he is. Now you will hear him speak.»

⁶The boy, tidy and clean in the new white woollen tunic that ^{584.6} Naomi made for him quickly during the night, comes forward held by the hand by the old nurse. He is small, although, no long-

er being any longer bent and lame, he looks taller than he did yesterday. His face is irregular and somewhat flabby, typical of a child whom sorrow has made prematurely adult. But he is no longer deformed. His bare feet walk steadily on the floor with a step that no longer has the halting of lame people, and his shoulders, although very thin, are straight. His slender neck overhangs them and looks long as compared with yesterday, when it was sunken between his asymmetric clavicles.

«But... but this is the son of Annas of Nahum! What a wasted miracle! Do You think that by doing so You will make friends with his father and Nahum? You will make them more resentful! Because they were only looking forward to the death of this boy, the offspring of an unfortunate marriage» exclaims Judas of Kerioth.

«I do not work miracles to make friends, but out of pity for people and to honour my Father. I never make differences or calculations when I bend pitifully over human miseries. I do not revenge Myself on those who persecute Me...»

«Nahum will consider Your action a revenge.»

«I knew nothing about this boy. I do not even know his name.»

«They call him Mathusala or Mathusalem out of contempt.»

«My mother called me Shalem. She loved me. She was not bad like you and like those who hate me» says the boy, his eyes shining with the light of impotent wrath that men and animals have when they have been tormented too long.

584.7 ⁷«Come here, Shalem. Here with Me. Are you happy that you are cured?»

«Yes... but I preferred to die. I shall not be loved just the same. It would have been beautiful if my mother still lived. But thus!... I shall always be unhappy.»

«He is right. We met this boy yesterday. He asked us whether You were at Bethany, at Lazarus'. We wanted to give him some alms, because we thought that he was a beggar. But he did not want any. He was at the edge of a field...» says the Zealot.

«Did you not know him either? That is strange» says Judas of Kerioth.

«It is even more strange that you know such things so well. Are you forgetting that I was among persecuted people and then among lepers, until I came with the Master?»

«And are you forgetting that I am a friend of Nahum's, who is Annas's trustee? I never hid that from you.»

«Well! Well! That does not matter. What matters is to know what we are now going to do with this child. His father does not love him, that is true. But he always has rights over him. We cannot take his son away from him, thus, without telling him. We must be careful and not upset them, since they seem to be more favourably disposed towards us» says Nathanael.

Judas breaks into a sarcastic laugh, but gives no explanation for his laughing.

⁸Jesus, Who has taken the boy between His knees, says slowly: 584.8
«I will face Nahum... I shall not be hated more because of this. His hatred cannot increase. It is not possible. It is already complete.»

Annaleah, who has never spoken, all engrossed in thoughts that make her happy, says: «If I had stayed here, I would have liked to have him with me. I am young, but I have the heart of a mother...»

«Are you going away? When?» ask the women.

«Soon.»

«For good? And where are you going? Out of Judaea?»

«Yes. Far. Very far. For good. And I am so happy.»

«Other women will be able to do what You cannot do, if his father hands him over to us.»

«I will tell Nahum, if you wish so. He is the one who matters. More than the boy's father. I will, tell him tomorrow» promises Judas of Kerioth.

«If it were not the Sabbath... I would have gone to that Josiah to whom the boy was entrusted» says Andrew.

«To see whether they are distressed having lost him?» asks Matthew.

«I think they would be more upset if one of their bees got lost...» mumbles between his teeth Maximinus, who has approached them for some time.

⁹The boy does not speak. He clings to Jesus, studying the faces 584.9
around him with the sharp eyes often noticeable in sickly people and in those who have lived a miserable life. He seems to be scanning souls rather than faces, and when Peter asks him: «What do you think of us?» the boy replies by putting his hand

into Peter's saying: «You are good», he then rectifies: «You are all good. But... I wish I had not been recognised. I am afraid...» and he looks at Judas of Kerioth.

«You are afraid of me, are you not? That I may speak to your father? I will certainly have to do so, if I have to ask him to leave you with us. But he will not take you away!»

«I know. But it is a different matter... I would like to be far, very far, where that woman is going... In my mother's country. There is a blue sea surrounded by completely green mountains. One can see it down at the bottom, with so many white sails flying on it and beautiful towns around it. And in the mountains there are so many grottoes where wild bees make very sweet honey. I have not had any honey since my mother died and I was entrusted to Josiah. Philip, Joseph, Eliza and the other children did get it. But I did not. If they had kept the vase of honey within reach I would have stolen it, as I was dying for some. But they kept it on the upper shelves, and I could not climb on the tables, as Philip did. I am longing so much for some honey!»

«Oh! poor child! I will go and bring you as much as you want!» says Martha, deeply moved, and she runs away.

584.10

¹⁰«But where did his mother come from?» asks Peter.

«She had houses and land near Saphet. The only daughter, orphan and heiress, already old, ugly and somewhat lame. But very rich. Through the assistance of old Sadoc, who acted as go-between, the son of beloved Annas obtained her in marriage... A contract that was a truly base bargain, all calculation, no love. After selling the property of his wife, saying that it was too far from here, with the exception of a little house that previously belonged to the bailiff, who had received it as a gift from the old owner for himself and his heirs down to the fourth generation, he squandered all the money in unlucky speculations. But... I do not believe that. Because I know that he owns beautiful lands near the shore... and previously he did not have them... Then, after some years of married life, when the woman was already on the threshold of her decline, this son was born... and it was the pretence to expel the woman and take another one from the plain of Sharon, young, beautiful and rich... The divorced woman took refuge at the old bailiff's house and died there. I do not know why they did not keep this child. His father reckoned that

he was dead» explains the Iscariot.

«Because John and Mary were dead, and their children went to work elsewhere as servants. And who was to keep me, if I was not their son and I was not fit to work? But Michael and Isaac were good, and also Esther and Judith were good. And they are good. When they come for feasts, they bring me gifts, but Josiah takes them off me to give them to his sons. »

«But they do not want you» replies Judas.

«Now that I am straight and strong they will want me. They are servants! As I said, they could not say to their master: "Take on this diseased cripple". But now they can. »

¹¹«But if you have run away from Josiah, how can they find ^{584. 11} you? » says Bartholomew to make him ponder.

The boy is struck by the just remark and becomes pensive, because his illness has made his mind prematurely thoughtful, just as his face is precociously adult, and he says downheartedly: «That is true! I had not thought of that. »

«Go back there. They will be coming during the next days... »

«There? No. I am not going back there. I don't want to go back there. I would rather kill myself! » He is shaken by a wild fury, then he throws himself on Jesus' knees weeping and says: «Why did You not let me die? »

Martha, who is just coming back with a vase of honey, is surprised at so much desolation, and Bartholomew is distressed at having brought it about and he apologises: «I thought I was giving a good piece of advice. Good for everybody. For the boy, for You, Master, for Lazarus... None of you, and none of us, are in need of fresh hatred... »

«That is true! A real problem! » exclaims Peter, and meditating on the case, he draws his personal conclusions, ending them with his characteristic soft whistling, which expresses his frame of mind when faced with difficult serious problems to be solved.

Some make this, some that proposal. To go to Nahum. To go to Josiah and tell him to send Michael and Isaac to Lazarus, or elsewhere, wherever the boy will be, because it is wise not to have Lazarus hated, more than he already is hated because of his friendship with Jesus. Not to mention anything to anybody and make the boy disappear by entrusting him to some reliable disciple.

Judas of Kerioth does not speak. Nay, he does not seem to be interested in the discussion. He toys with the tassels of his tunic, combing and ruffling them with his fingers.

Jesus does not speak either. He calms and caresses the boy and He raises his head putting the vase of honey in his hands.

584.12 ¹²Shalem is a boy, a poor ten-year old boy who has always suffered, but he is always a boy, even if sorrow has matured him, and upon seeing such a treasure of honey, his last tears change into ecstatic astonishment. Raising his eyes, his only beauty, so brown, large and intelligent as they are, and looking alternately at Jesus and Martha, he asks: «How much may I take? One of these spoons or two?» and he points at the round silver spoon that he slowly dips into the blond honey.

«As much as you want, my boy. As much as you like. You will take the rest later, tomorrow. It's all yours!» says Martha caressing him.

«All mine!!! Oh! I have never had so much honey! All mine! Oh!» And he gratefully presses the vase to his chest, as if it were a treasure.

But he then realises that rather than the vase, it is the love with which it is offered that is precious, and he lays the little vase on Jesus' knees and he lifts his arms as he wants to embrace the neck of Martha, who is bent over him, and kiss her. It is all that his gratitude, all that he can give, a helpless wretch, who has nothing to give.

584.13 ¹³The others stop making plans to watch the scene. And Peter says: «This child is even more unhappy than Marjiam, who at least had the love of his grandfather and of the other peasants! It is true that there are always sorrows greater than the ones we have considered very great!»

«Yes. The abyss of human sorrow has not yet been fathomed. I wonder how many secrets it still conceals... And how many will it still conceal in future ages?» says Bartholomew pensively.

«Then you have no faith in the Gospel! Do you not think that it will change the world? It is stated by the prophets. And the Master repeats it. You are skeptical, Bartholomew» says the Is-carriot with a slight touch of irony.

The Zealot replies to him: «I do not see in what Bartholomew's incredulity consists. The Master's doctrine will give solace to

all misfortunes, it will even modify the cruelty of customs and habits, but it will not eliminate sorrow. It will make it bearable through the divine promises of future joys. In order to abolish sorrow, or at least great part of sorrow, because diseases, deaths and natural cataclysms would still remain, it would be necessary for all men to have the heart that the Christ has, but...»

The Iscariot interrupts him saying: «That in fact must happen. Otherwise to what avail would the Messiah have come to the Earth?»

«Let us say that that should happen. But, tell me, Judas, has that happened among us? We are twelve, and for three years we have lived with Him, we have taken in His doctrine like the air we breathe. So? Are we twelve all saints? What do we do that is different from what Lazarus does, from what Stephen, Nicolaus, Isaac, Manaen, Joseph and Nicodemus, the women and children do? I am speaking of the just people of our Fatherland. All of them, whether they are wise and rich, or poor and ignorant, do what we do: a little good, a little bad, but without renewing themselves completely. Nay, I tell you that many surpass us. Yes. Many followers surpass us, the apostles... And would you expect the whole world to assume hearts like the Christ's, if we, His apostles, have not done so? We have more or less improved ourselves... at least let us hope so, because it is only with difficulty that man knows himself or the brother who lives beside him. The veil of the flesh is too opaque and thick, and the thought of man too carefully avoids being penetrated, for man to understand man. Whether we examine ourselves or other people, we always remain at the surface, both when we examine ourselves, because we do not want to hurt our pride or suffer feeling that we must change, and when we examine other people, because our pride of examiners makes us unjust judges and the pride of the person we scrutinise closes him, as an oyster closes its valves, with regards to what is inside him» says the Zealot.

«You are quite right! Simon, you have really spoken words of wisdom!» says Judas Thaddeus approving. And the others in chorus agree.

¹⁴«Then why did He come, if nothing is to be changed?» replies the Iscariot. 584.14

Jesus begins to speak: «Much will be changed. Not every-

thing. Because also in future there will be against My doctrine what is already active: the hatred of those who do not love the Light. Because against the strength of my followers there will be the power of Satan's followers. How many! In how many appearances! How many new heretical doctrines will always be opposed to my doctrine, which is immutable, because it is perfect! How much sorrow will germinate from them! You do not know the future. You consider great the sorrow now existing in the world... But He Who knows, sees horrors that would not be understood even if I explained them to you... What a tragedy if I had not come! If I had not come to give future generations a code that checks instincts in the better people and contains a promise of future peace! How dreadful it would be if man did not have, through my coming, spiritual elements capable of keeping him "alive" in the life of the spirit and assuring him of a reward!... If I had not come, in the long run, the Earth would have become a huge earthly hell, and the human race would have torn itself to pieces and would have perished cursing the Creator...»

«The Most High has promised* never to send universal punishments again, like the Deluge. A promise of God never fails» says Judas.

«Yes, Judas of Simon. That is true. And never again will the Most High send universal calamities like the Deluge. But men themselves will create scourges that will be more and more dreadful, in comparison with which the deluge and the rain of fire that destroyed** Sodom and Gomorrah are still merciful punishments. Oh!...»

Jesus stands up with a gesture full of anguish and pity for future peoples.

584.15 ¹⁵«All right! You know... But in the meantime what are we going to do for him?» asks the Iscariot pointing at the boy who is enjoying his honey in small quantities and is happy.

«Each day has enough trouble of its own. Tomorrow will tell. It is vain to worry about tomorrow, if we do not even know who will be alive tomorrow.»

«I am not of Your opinion. And I say that we ought to know where we shall go to stay, where we shall consume the Supper.

* has promised, in: Genesis 9,11.15.

** destroyed, as can be read in: Genesis 19,23-25.

So many things. If we go on waiting, the town will be full up. And where shall we go? Not to Gethsemane. Not to Joseph of Seforis. Not to Johanna's. Not to Nike's. Not to Lazarus'. Where then?»

«Where the Father will prepare a shelter for His Word.»

«Do You think that I want to know in order to report it?»

«You say so. I have not said anything. Come, Shalem. My Mother knows about you, but She has not yet seen you. Come, and I will take you to Her.»

«But is Your Mother not well?» asks Thomas.

«No. She is praying. She is in great need of prayer.»

«Yes. She is suffering bitterly. She weeps very much. And Mary has nothing but prayer to console Her. I have always seen Her pray very much. In the moments of deepest grief She lives on prayer, I could say...» explains Mary of Alphaeus, while Jesus goes away holding the boy by the hand and having on the other side Annaleah, whom He has invited to go with Him to Mary.

585. The Sabbath before the entering in Jerusalem.
Judeans and pilgrims in Bethany.
The Sanhedrin has decided.

27th March 1947.

^{585.1} Love and hatred urge many pilgrims who have gathered in Jerusalem, as well as many inhabitants of Jerusalem, to come to Bethany without awaiting that sunset is over. On the contrary, the sun has just begun to set when the first visitors arrive at Lazarus' house. And as Lazarus, when called by the servants, is surprised at such transgression of the Sabbath, because the first to arrive are the best-known among the strictest Judeans, they give him this truly pharisaic answer: «From the Sheep Gate we could no longer see the sun's disc, so we set off, thinking that we would certainly not exceed the prescribed distance before the sun had set behind the Temple domes.»

An ironical smile appears on Lazarus' thin face, because he is healthy and handsome, but he is certainly not fat. And he replies to them kindly, but lightly sarcastically: «And what do you want to see? The Master respects His Sabbath. And He is

resting. And in order to consider that the rest has ended, He is not satisfied with just not seeing the sun's disc, but He waits until the last sunbeam disappears to say: "The Sabbath is over".»

«We know that He is perfect! We know! But if we have made a mistake, that is another reason for seeing Him. Only for a moment, so that He may absolve us.»

«I am sorry, but I cannot. The Master is tired and is resting. I will not disturb Him.»

585.2 ²But more people come, they are pilgrims from everywhere, who beg and insist on seeing Jesus: Hebrews are mingled with Gentiles, and proselytes with the latter. They watch and scan Lazarus, as if he were something unreal. And Lazarus puts up with the annoyance of such unsought celebrity replying patiently to those who ask him questions. But he does not order the servants to open the gate.

«Are you the man raised from the dead?» asks one who, by his appearance, is certainly of mixed race because he has only the typical rather big hooked nose of the Jews, whereas his accent and the style of his garments indicate that he is a foreigner.

«I am, to give glory to God Who raised me from the dead to make me a servant of His Messiah.»

«But was it true death?» ask other people.

«Ask those Jewish notables. They came to my funeral and many were present at my resurrection.»

«But what did you feel? Where were you? What do you remember? When you became alive again, what happened to you? How did He raise you?... Is it not possible to see the sepulchre where you were? What did you die of? Are you really well now? Have you no longer the marks of the sores?»

Lazarus tries to reply to everybody patiently. But if it is easy for him to say that he is really well and that also the marks of the sores have disappeared by now, in the months that have elapsed since he was raised from the dead, he cannot say what he felt and how he was raised. And he replies: «I do not know. I found myself alive in my garden, among my servants and sisters. When I was freed of the shroud I saw the sun, the light, I was hungry, I had some food, I enjoyed life and the great love the Rabbi had for me. Those who were present know the rest better than I do. There

are three over there who are talking. And two there who are just arriving. » (The latter are John and Eleazar, the members of the Sanhedrin, whereas the three talking to one another are two scribes and a Pharisee whom I have in fact seen at Lazarus' resurrection, but whose names I do not remember.)

«They will not speak to us, because we are Gentiles! As you are Judaeans, you can go and ask them... ³And you... show us the ^{585.3} sepulchre where you were. » They could not be more insistent.

Lazarus makes up his mind. He says something to the servants, then he addresses the crowd: «Go along that road that runs between this house and that other one of mine. I will come and meet you take you to the sepulchre, although there is nothing to be seen except an opening in the layer of rock. »

«It does not matter! Let us go! »

«Lazarus! Stop! Can we come as well? Or are we forbidden what strangers are allowed? » asks a scribe.

«No. Archelaus. You may come, if you do not think that you be contaminated by approaching a sepulchre. »

«It will not contaminate us because there is no dead body in it. »

«But there was one for four days. One is considered unclean for much less in Israel! You say that one is unclean when one's garment just grazes someone who has touched a corpse. And my sepulchre still puffs whiffs of death, although it has been open for such a long time. »

«It does not matter. We will purify ourselves. »

Lazarus looks at John and Eleazar, the two Pharisees, and says to them: «Are you coming as well? »

«Yes, we are. »

⁴Lazarus goes quickly towards the side delimited by hedges ^{585.4} as tall and thick as walls, and he opens a gate enclosed in one of them, and he looks along the road leading to Simon's house, beckoning those who are waiting to come forward. He leads them towards the sepulchre. Rose-bushes in bloom are arched over the entrance, but are not sufficient to suppress the horror emanating from an open tomb. On the slanting rock under the flowery arch one can read the words: «Lazarus, come out! »

The evil-minded visitors see them at once and ask immediately: «Why did you have those words carved there? You should not

have done that*!»

«Why? In my house I do what I like, and no one can accuse me of sin if I decided to have fixed on the rock, so that they are indelible, the words of the divine cry that gave life back to me. When I shall be in there, and I shall no longer be able to celebrate the merciful power of the Rabbi, I want the sun to read them still there on the rock, and the plants to learn them from the winds, birds and flowers to caress them, continuing thus on my behalf to bless the cry of the Christ Who raised me from the dead.»

«You are a heathen! You are an impious person! You are cursing our God. You are singing the praises of the witchcraft of Be-elzebub's son. Be careful, Lazarus!»

«I remind you that I am in my house and that you are in my house, and that you have come, without being invited, and for worthless purposes. You are worse than these people, who are heathens, but they recognise a God in the reviver.»

«Anathema! Like Master, like disciple. How horrible! Let us go away from this impure cloaca. Corrupter of Israel, the Sanhedrin will remember your words.»

«And Rome your conspiracies. Get out!» Lazarus, who is always mild, remembers that he is the son of Theophilus, and he drives them away like a pack of dogs.

585.5 ⁵The pilgrims who have come from every country remain and they ask, and look, and implore to see the Christ.

«You will see Him in town. Not now. I cannot.»

«Ah! but is He coming to town? Really? Are you not lying? Is He coming even if they hate Him so much?»

«He is coming. Go now and do not worry. See how peaceful is the house? Not a person to be seen, not a voice to be heard. You have seen what you wanted to see: the man risen again and the place of his burial. Go now. But do not allow your curiosity to be unfruitful. May the fact that you have seen me, the living evidence of the power of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God and Most Holy Messiah, lead you all on His way. Because of this hope I am glad that I was raised from the dead, because I hope that the miracle may rouse the doubtful and convert the heathen, convincing them all that one only is the true God and one only is the true

* You should not have done that, in compliance with the indication of: Leviticus 26.1.

Messiah: Jesus of Nazareth, the holy Master.»

The crowds disperse reluctantly, and if one goes away, ten more come, because new people arrive continuously. But with the help of some servants Lazarus succeeds in pushing everybody out and closing the gates.

⁶He is about to withdraw saying: «Make sure they do not force the gates or climb over them. It will soon be dark and they will go to their sojourns», when he sees Eleazar and John come out from behind a myrtle-bush. «What? I had not seen you and I thought...» 585.6

«Do not send us away. We hid behind thick bushes not to be seen. We must speak to the Master. We came as we are not so suspected as Joseph and Nicodemus are. But we would not like to be seen by anybody, except you and the Master... Are your servants trustworthy?»

«In Lazarus' house the custom is to see and hear only what is pleasing to the landlord, and to know nothing for strangers. But come along this path between two hedges of vegetation darker than a wall.» And he leads them along the path running between the double impenetrable barrier of boxes and laurels. «Wait here. I will bring Jesus.»

«Let no one know!...»

«Be not afraid.»

⁷The wait is a short one. Jesus, all white in His linen tunic, soon appears on the path darkened by the intertwined branches, and Lazarus stops at the end of the path, as if he were on guard, or out of prudence. But Eleazar says to him, or rather beckons to him: «Come here.» Lazarus approaches them while Jesus greets the two who pay their deep respect to Him. 585.7

«Master, and you, Lazarus, listen. As soon as the news spread that You had come and were here, the Sanhedrin met in Caiaphas' house. Everything they do is abusive... And they have decided... Do not entertain illusions, Master! Be wary, Lazarus! Do not let the feigned peace or the apparent somnolence of the Sanhedrin deceive you. It is all pretence, Master. A simulation to attract You and capture You without the crowds getting excited and preparing to defend You. Your fate has been decided and the decree will not be changed. Whether tomorrow or in a year's time it will be accomplished. The Sanhedrin never forgets

its revenges. They wait, they know how to wait for the favourable opportunity, then!... And you, too, Lazarus. They want to get rid of you, capture you and suppress you, because through your fault too many are leaving them to follow the Master. As you said with the right word, you are the evidence of His power. And they want to destroy it. The crowds soon forget, and they are aware of that. Once you and the Rabbi disappear, many passions will die down.»

«No, Eleazar! They will blaze up!» says Jesus.

«Oh! Master! But what will happen if You are dead? To what avail will faith in You blaze up, even if that were to happen, if You are dead? I was hoping to be able to tell You only one happy thing and invite You: my wife will soon give birth to the son who is thriving through Your justice, as You brought peace* again to two stormy hearts. He will be born by Pentecost. I would like to ask You to come and bless him. If You enter under my roof, no misfortune will ever be in it» says John the Pharisee.

«I give you My blessing now...»

«Ah! You do not want to come to me! You do not believe that I am loyal! I am, Master! God sees me!»

«I know. The fact is... that I shall no longer be with you at Pentecost.»

«But the boy will be born in the country-house...»

«I know. But I shall not be there. And yet you, your wife, the unborn child, the children you already have, are blessed by Me. Thank you for coming. Go now. Take them along the path beyond Simon's house. So that they may not be seen... I am going back to the house Peace to you...»

586. The Sabbath before the entering in Jerusalem.
The supper at Bethany. Judas of Kerioth has decided.

28th March 1947.

586.1 ¹Supper has been prepared in the completely white hall where Jesus spoke to the women disciples. The whole white hall is bright and silvery with a nuance not so snow-white and cold,

* brought peace, as narrated in chapter 409.

cast by bundles of branches of apple or pear-trees, or other fruit-trees, as white as snow, but with such a light shade of pink that makes one think of snow lightly touched by the kiss of a remote dawn. They protrude from pot-bellied vases or from slender silver amphorae, on the shelves, chests and dressers placed along the walls of the hall. The flowers shed the typical scent of blossoms of fruit-trees through the hall, the fresh bitterish scent of pure springtime...

Lazarus enters the hall walking beside Jesus. Behind them, in two or larger groups, the apostles. Last are Lazarus' two sisters with Maximinus. I do not see the women disciples. Not even Mary. Perhaps they preferred to remain in Simon's house with the distressed Mother.

The day is turning to twilight. But the last sunbeams are still shining on the rustling leaves of some palm-trees in a group a few metres away from the hall, and on the top of a gigantic laurel on which sparrows are squabbling before going to rest. Beyond the palm-trees and the laurel, beyond the hedges of roses and jasmines and the beds of lilies of the valley, of other flowers and sweet-smelling plants, there is a white spot sprayed with the light green of the early leaves of a group of late pear or apple-trees in the orchard. It looks like a cloud entangled among the branches.

²Jesus passing near an amphora full of branches remarks: 586.2
«They already had the first little fruits. Look! On the tops there are blossoms, whereas farther down the blossoms have fallen off and the ovaries are swelling.»

«Mary wanted to pick them. She took bundles of them also to Your Mother. She got up at dawn, I think, lest another day of sunshine might spoil the delicate corollas. I heard of this destruction only a short while ago. But I was not so angry about it as the peasant servants. Nay, I thought that it was just to offer all the beauties of creation to You, the King of all things.»

Jesus sits down smiling in His place and looks at Mary, who with her sister is getting ready to serve as if she were a maid, bringing the cups of purification and the towels, then pouring wine into chalices and laying the trays of food on the table, as the servants bring them from the kitchen or hand them over after carving them on the sideboards.

Naturally, if the sisters serve all guests courteously, their attention is particularly directed to the two who are dearest to them: Jesus and Lazarus.

586.3 ³At a certain moment Peter, who is eating with relish, says: «Look! I have just notice this! All the dishes are like the ones served in Galilee. I think... Of course! I seem to be at a wedding breakfast. But there is no shortage of wine here as there was at Cana.»

Mary smiles filling the apostle's chalice again with clear amber-coloured wine. But she does not speak.

And Lazarus explains: «And that is in fact what the sisters, and Mary in particular, wanted: to serve a supper that gave the Master the impression of being in His Galilee, a supper that, although imperfect, was to be better, much better than what is customary here...»

«But to make Him feel that, Mary should have been at this table. She was at Cana. The miracle took place through Her» remarks James of Alphaeus.

«That must have been a grand wine!»

«Wine is the symbol of mirth and ought to be the symbol also of fertility, as wine is the juice of the fertile vine. But I do not think that it fecundated very much. Susanna* has no son» says the Iscariot.

«Oh! what a wine it was! It fecundated our spirits...» says John, somewhat dreamy, as he always is when he innerly contemplates the miracles worked by God. And he concludes: «It was worked on behalf of a virgin... and the influence of purity descended upon those who relished it.»

«But do you think that Susanna is a virgin?» asks the Iscariot laughing.

«I did not say that. Virgin is the Mother of the Lord. Virginity emanates from everything accomplished on Her behalf. I always consider how virginal everything is when performed for Mary...» and he dreams again smiling, at I wonder which vision.

«Blessed boy! I think that he does not even remember the world any more, now. Look at him» says Peter pointing at John who, lying on his little bed, and lost in thought, is toying with

* Susanna, now a disciple, is mentioned in 51.1/2 as the bride of the wedding of Cana, to which chapter 52 is dedicated.

little bits of bread forgetting to eat.

Jesus also bends a little to look at John who is at one of the corners of the U-shaped table, thus a little behind the back of the Lord, Who is at the middle of the central side, with His cousin James on His left and Lazarus on His right; after Lazarus there is the Zealot and Maximinus, and after James there is the other James and then Peter. John, instead, is between Andrew and Bartholomew, then there is Thomas, with Judas in front of him, and Philip, Matthew and Thaddeus, who is at the corner, at the beginning of the long central table.

⁴Mary of Lazarus leaves the hall while Martha is putting on the table trays full of early green figs, green fennel stalks, fresh shelled almonds, strawberries or raspberries, I do not know, that look even redder among the pale emerald green of the fennels and of the figs and the white of the almonds, of the little melons or other fruit of the kind... I think they look like the green melons of southern Italy, and golden oranges. 586.4

«These fruits already? I have not seen any ripe ones anywhere» says Peter opening his eyes wide and pointing at the strawberries and the melons.

«Some of them came from the shores beyond Gaza where I have a market garden of these products, and some from the sunny terraces on the house, the nursery for the more delicate plants that need to be protected from frost. A Roman friend taught me how to grow them... The only good thing he taught me...» Lazarus becomes gloomy. Martha sighs... But Lazarus becomes at once the perfect host who does not sadden his guests. «It is a wide spread custom in the villas at Baia and Syracuse and along the Sybaris gulf to cultivate such delights with that method to have them prematurely. Eat them: the last fruits are the oranges from Libya, the earliest the melons of Egypt grown in the solaria and these Latin fruits and the white almonds of our fatherland, the tender broad beans, the digestive stalks tasting of anise...

⁵Martha, have you seen to the boy?» 586.5

«Yes, I have seen to everybody. Mary was deeply moved remembering Egypt...»

«We had some plants in our poor kitchen garden. In dog days it was a great joy to dip the melons into the well of our neighbour, as it was deep and cool, and eat them in the evening... I re-

member... I had a little greedy goat and we had to watch her because she was fond of tender plants and fruits...» Jesus, Who was speaking with His head somewhat lowered, raises it and looks at the palm-trees rustling in the breeze of the evening that is falling and says: «When I see those palm-trees... Every time I see palm-trees I see Egypt again, its yellow sandy soil blown so easily by the wind, and far away the pyramids trembled in the rarefied air... and the tall trunks of the palm-trees... and the house where... But it is no use speaking of them. Each period has its anxiety... And its joy with its anxiety... Lazarus, would you give me some of those fruits? I should like to take them to Mary and Matthias. I do not think that Johanna has any.»

«She has not. She said so yesterday and she intends to plant some at Bether and have solaria built. But I shall not give them to You now. I picked as many as I had and for some days there will be no ripe ones. I will send them to You or send for them by Thursday. We will prepare a lovely basket of them for those children. Is that right, Martha?»

«Yes, brother. And we will add some little lilies of the valley that Johanna likes so much.»

586.6 ¶Mary Magdalene comes back in. She is holding in her hands a thin-necked amphora, ending in a little bill, as pretty as the neck of a bird. The alabaster is of a precious rosy yellow hue, like the complexion of some blondes. The apostles look at her thinking, perhaps, that she is bringing some rare delicacy. But Mary does not go to the centre, inside the U of the table, where her sister is. She goes behind the seat-beds and stops between that of Jesus and Lazarus and that of the two Jameses.

She uncorks the alabaster vase and places her hand under the little bill to receive a few drops of a viscous liquid that flows slowly from the open amphora. A strong smell of tuberose and other essences, a very intense pleasant scent spreads in the hall. But Mary is not satisfied with the little quantity of perfume that flows. She stoops and with a sharp blow she breaks the neck of the amphora against the corner of Jesus' little bed. The thin neck falls on the floor shedding scented drops on the marble pavement. The amphora now has a wide aperture through which plenty unguent flows in thick gushes.

Mary places herself behind Jesus and spreads the thick oil on

her Jesus' hair, she sprinkles all his locks with it, she stretches them and then puts them in order with the comb taken from her own hair, tidying them on the adored head. Jesus' fair-red hair shines now like dark gold and is very bright after the unction. The light of the chandelier, lit by the servants, is reflected on Jesus' fair hair like a beautiful copper-coloured bronze helmet. The scent is exhilarating. Through the nostrils it rises to the head and, spread as it is without restraint, it is so intense that it is almost as exciting as sternutatory powder.

Lazarus, with his head turned around, smiles watching how carefully Mary anoints and arranges Jesus' locks so that His hair may look tidy after the scented massage, while she does not worry about her plaits, which, no longer supported by the wide comb that helps the hairpins to hold them in place, are falling lower and lower on her neck, and are about to loosen completely on her shoulders. Martha also looks at her smiling. The others are talking to one another in low voices with different expressions on their faces.

But Mary is not yet satisfied. There is still plenty of ointment in the broken vase, and Jesus' hair, although thick, is already saturated with it. Mary then repeats the loving gesture of an evening of long ago. She kneels down at the foot of the bed, she unties the buckles of Jesus' sandals and takes them off, and dipping the long fingers of her beautiful hand into the vase, she takes as much ointment as she can and spreads it on His bare feet, toe by toe, then on the soles and heels, then up, on the malleoli, which she uncovers by throwing back His linen tunic, and lastly on the insteps, she delays on the metatarsi, which will be pierced by the dreadful nails, she insists until she finds no more balm in the hollow vase. Then she shatters it on the floor and with her hands now free she removes her big hairpins, she quickly loosens her heavy plaits and with that golden, bright, soft, flowing bundle of hair she removes the excess ointment from Jesus' feet that are dripping balm.

⁷Judas, who so far has been silent watching with lewd envious eyes the beautiful woman and the Master Whose head and feet she was anointing, raises his voice, the only voice of open reproach; some of the others, not all of them, had murmured something or had made gestures of surprise but also calm disapprov-

al. But Judas, who has stood up to have a better view of the ointment spread on Jesus' feet, says with ill grace: «What a useless heathen waste! Why do that? And then we expect the Chiefs of the Sanhedrin not to speak of sin! Those are deeds of a lustful courtesan and they do not become the new life you are leading, woman. They are too strong a recollection of your past!»

The insult is such that everybody is dumbfounded. It is such that everybody stirs, some sit up on the beds, some jump to their feet, everyone looks at Judas, as if he had suddenly become insane.

Martha flares up. Lazarus springs to his feet striking the table with his fist and says: «In my house...», then he looks at Jesus and controls himself.

«Yes. Are you all looking at me? You have all murmured in your hearts. But now that I echoed your words and I openly said what you thought, you are all ready to say that I am wrong. I will repeat what I said. I do not mean that Mary is the Master's lover. But I say that certain actions do not become Him or her. It is an imprudent action. And an unjust one. Yes. Why such waste? If she wanted to destroy the memories of her past, she could have given that vase and ointment to me. It was at least a pound of pure nard! And of high value. I could have sold it for at least three hundred denarii, as that is the price for nard of that quality. And I could have sold the vase, which was beautiful and precious. I would have given the money to the poor who crowd around us. We never have enough. And those asking for alms tomorrow in Jerusalem will be numberless.»

«That is true» say the others assenting. «You could have used a little for the Master and the rest...»

586.8 ⁸Mary of Magdala seems to be deaf. She continues wiping Jesus' feet with her loose hair that now, at its end, is also heavy with the ointment and darker than on the top of her head. Jesus' feet are smooth and soft in their shade of old ivory, as if they were covered with fresh skin. And Mary puts the sandals on the Christ's feet again, kissing each foot before and after putting the sandal on, deaf to everything that is not her love for Jesus.

Jesus defends her laying his hand on her head bent in the last kiss and saying: «Leave her alone. Why are you annoying and upsetting her? You do not realise what she has done. Mary has

accomplished an action that is rightful and good with regards to Me. The poor will always be among you. I am about to go away.

You will always have them, but you will soon not have Me any longer. You will always be able to give alms to the poor. Shortly to Me, to the Son of man among men, it will no longer be possible to give any honour, through the will of men, and because the hour has come. Love is light to her. She feels that I am about to die and she wanted to anticipate the burial anointing of My body.

I tell you solemnly that wherever the Good News is proclaimed, this prophetic action of love of hers will be remembered. All over the world. Throughout ages. I wish God would turn every human being into another Mary who does not value things, who entertains no attachment for anything, who does not cherish the least memory of the past, but destroys and treads on everything that is flesh and world, and breaks and spreads herself, as she did with the nard and the alabaster, on her Lord and out of love for Him.

Do not weep, Mary. In this hour I repeat to you the words I spoke to Simon the Pharisee* and to your sister Martha: "You are forgiven everything, because you have loved completely". You have chosen the better part. And it will not be taken away from you.

Go in peace, My kind little sheep found again. Go in peace. The pastures of love shall be your food forever. Stand up. Kiss also My hands that have absolved and blessed you... How many people these hands of Mine have absolved, blessed, cured, assisted!

And yet I tell you that the people whom I have assisted are preparing torture for these hands...»

⁹There is deathlike silence in the air sultry with the intense scent. Mary, her loose hair clothing her shoulders and veiling her face, kisses the right hand that Jesus offers her and cannot detach her lips from it... 586.9

Martha, deeply moved, approaches her and gathers her loose hair, which she braids caressing her, and then she wipes the tears on her cheeks endeavouring to dry them...

No one feels like eating any more... Christ's words make them pensive.

Judas of Alphaeus is the first to get up. He asks leave to withdraw. His brother James imitates him and Andrew and John fol-

* the words I spoke to Simon the Pharisee, in 236.4; and to your sister Martha, in 377.5.

low suit. The others remain, but they are already standing, intent on purifying their hands in silver basins handed to them by the servants. Mary and Martha do the same with the Master and Lazarus.

586.10 ¹⁰A servant comes in and he bends to speak to Maximinus, who, after listening to him, says: «Master, there are some people who would like to see You. They say that they come from afar. What shall we do?»

Jesus calls Philip, James of Zebedee and Thomas and says to them: «Go, evangelize, cure, act in My name. Tell them that I shall be going up to the Temple tomorrow.»

«Is it wise to tell them that, Lord?» asks Simon Zealot.

«There is no sense in being silent about it, because it is already mentioned in the Holy City, more by enemies than by friends. Go!»

«H'm! As long as friends know... we know. But they do not betray. I do not know how the others can be informed.»

«Among the many friends there are always some enemies, Simon of Jonas. Now the friends are... too many and they are accepted as such too easily. When I think how long I had to wait and pray!... But those were the early days and one was cautious. Then the triumphs dazzled us and we were not longer wary. And that was wrong. But it happens to all winners. Victories prevent one from seeing clearly and enfeeble one's prudence in acting. I am speaking of us disciples, of course, not of the Master. He is perfect. If we had remained only twelve, we should not have to tremble for fear of betrayals!» says Judas of Kerioth lying shamelessly.

It is impossible to describe the glance Christ casts at the perfidious apostle. A glance of Warning and infinite sorrow. But Judas pays no attention to it. He passes by the table to go out... ¹¹Jesus follows him with His eyes and when He sees him go out, He asks him: «Where are you going?»

«Out...» replies Judas evasively.

«Out of this room, or out of the house?»

«Out... So... For a little walk.»

«Do not go, Judas. Stay with Me, with us...»

«Your brothers have gone away with John and Andrew. Why must I not go?»

«You are not going to have a rest as they did...»

Judas does not reply, but he goes out obstinately. Not a word is uttered in the hall. Lazarus and his sisters and the four apostles who have stayed: Peter, Simon, Matthew and Bartholomew, look at one another.

Jesus looks outside. He has got up and has gone to a window to follow Judas' movements and when He sees him go out of the house wearing his mantle and set out towards the gate, which cannot be seen from here, He calls him in a loud voice: «Judas! Wait for Me. I have something to tell you» and He gently frees Himself from Lazarus who, realising that the Master was grieved, had put his arm around His waist embracing Him, and He leaves the hall, joining Judas, who had continued walking although more slowly.

¹²He reaches him at about one third of the distance between the house and the garden wall, near a thicket of plants with thick leaves that look like green baked clay sprayed with clusters of little flowers, and each flower is a small cross with heavy petals as if they were made of light yellow wax, with a strong scent. I do not know their name. He draws him behind the thicket and holding his forearm tight with His hand, He asks him again: «Where are you going, Judas? Please, stay here!»

586.12

«Since You know everything, why do You ask me? What need is there for You to ask, since You can read the hearts of men? You know that I am going to my friends. You do not allow me to go there. They press me to go. And I am going.»

«Your friends! You should say your ruin! That is where you are going. You are going to your true murderers. Don't go, Judas! Don't go! You are going to commit a crime... You...»

«Ah! You are afraid?! Are You afraid at last?! You realise at last that You are a man! You are a man! Nothing more than a man! Because man only is afraid of death. God knows that He cannot die. If You felt that You were God, You would know that You could not die and You would not be afraid. Because now that You feel death close at hand, You are afraid like all men and You are trying with every possible means to avert it and You see danger everywhere and in everything. Where is Your lovely boldness? Where are Your confident protestations that You were happy and thirsting for accomplishing the Sacrifice? There is not

even an echo of them left in Your heart! You thought that this hour would never come, so You feigned power, generosity and You spoke solemn sentences. Go away! You are as bad as those whom You reproach as being hypocrites! You have enticed us and betrayed us: And we had left everything for Your sake! And because of You we are hated! You have brought about our ruin...»

«That is enough. Go! Go away! Not many hours have gone by since you said to Me: "Help me to stay. Defend me!". I have done that. To what avail? Tell Me one thing more, and think about it before telling Me. Is this your sincere will? To go to your friends, to prefer them to Me?»

«Yes. It is. I do not have to think about it, because for a long time I have wanted nothing but that.»

«Then go. God does not do violence to man's will» and Jesus turns His back on him and goes slowly back to the house.

586.13 ¹³When He is close to it He raises His head, attracted by the eyes of Lazarus, who standing where he was before, is looking fixedly at Him. It is a very pale face that endeavours to smile at the faithful friend.

He goes back into the hall where the four apostles are speaking to Maximinus, while Martha and Mary are directing the work of the servants, who are tidying up the hall removing the dishes and table-linen used at the banquet.

Lazarus has gone to the door and once again he has embraced Jesus' waist with his arm, and passing near a servant he says to him: «Bring me the roll that is on the table in my work-room.»

He takes Jesus to one of the wide seats placed in the cavities of the windows, so that He may sit down. But Jesus remains standing, striving to pay attention to what Lazarus is saying to Him... but it is evident that his mind is elsewhere and his heart is grieved, although when He realises that the apostles are watching Him, He smiles to dispel the suspicions of those who have approached Him surrounding Him and are whispering to one another, winking and pointing at the Master.

The servant comes back with the roll and Peter, seeing that the parchments contain things that are higher than what his head can understand, withdraws saying: «Fish do not bite certain baits. It is better to speak with Maximinus of plants and cultivations.»

Martha continues with her work. ¹⁴Maria, although silent, takes part in the conversation of Lazarus, who points out certain passages of the parchments to the Master, saying: «Has this heathen not got a rare foresight? More than many of us. Perhaps... if he had been here, while You are our Master, he would have been one of Your disciples, and one of the best. And he would have understood You as many of us have not been able to understand You. And what a poem would have been inspired to his genius by his admiration for You! Your words gathered and preserved by a spirit that is bright although it belongs to a heathen! Your life described by this open and limpid intellect! We no longer have writers and poets. You were born late. When the selfishness of life and religious-social corruption have extinguished poetry and genius among us. What our wise men and prophets have written about You, without knowing You, has not found an echo in the living voice of one of Your followers. Your favourites, Your faithful followers are mostly people without education. And the others... No. We no longer have any Qohelet to hand down to the crowds Your wisdom and Your figure. We no longer have them because the spirit and will are lacking more than the ability to do so. The humanly more chosen part of Israel is as deaf as a broken trumpet, and it can no longer sing the glories and wonders of God. My worry is that everything may be lost or adulterated, partly through inability, partly through ill-will.»

«That will not happen. When the Spirit of the Lord is settled in hearts, it will repeat My words and explain their meaning. It is the Spirit of God Who speaks through the lips of the Christ. Then... Then it will speak to the spirits directly and will recall My words.»

¹⁵«Oh! I wish that would happen soon! Soon, because they listen so little to Your words and understand them even less. I think that the roaring of the Spirit of God will be as violent as blazing fire to engrave with violence in the minds of men what they would not accept because it was kind and mild. I think that the flaming Spirit will burn the tepid or torpid consciences with its fire, writing Your words on them. The world will have to love You! It is the will of the Most High! But when will it happen?»

«When I shall be consumed in the Sacrifice of love. Then Love will come. It will be like the beautiful flame rising from

the sacrificed Victim. And that flame will never go out, because the Sacrifice will never end. Once it is accomplished, it will last throughout the time of the Earth.»

«But then... You would really have to be sacrificed so that that may happen?»

«It is so.» Jesus makes His usual gesture of adherence to His own destiny. He stretches out His arms with His hands pointed outwards and lowers His head. He then raises it to smile at distressed Lazarus and says: «But the immaterial voice of the Spirit of love will not be so violent as a roar, but it will be as sweet as love, which is as mild as a Nisan breeze and yet is as strong as death. The ineffable ministry of Love! The complement, the completion of My ministry. The perfection of My ministry as Master... I am not afraid, as you are, that anything of what I have given may be lost. On the contrary, I solemnly tell you that beams of light will be cast on My words and you will see their spirit. I am going away serenely because I am entrusting My doctrine to the Holy Spirit and My spirit to My Father.»

586.16 ¹⁶He lowers His head pensively, then, after laying the roll, which gave rise to the conversation, on a kind of tall dresser or chest of ebony, or other dark wood, all inlaid with yellowish ivory, that has been brought by four servants from the next room, and in which Martha is arranging the more valuable tableware, He says: «Lazarus, come outside. I want to speak to you!»

«At once, Lord» and Lazarus gets up from the seat on which he was sitting and follows Jesus into the garden, where it is beginning to get dark, as the last daylight is fading away in the sky, and the early moonlight, which is just beginning to appear, is still too faint.

586.17 ¹⁷Jesus says: «You will put here the vision dated 2nd March 1945: "Farewell to Lazarus", starting from the point*: "Jesus walks beyond the garden where the sepulchre in which Lazarus was buried is".»

* starting from the point... Instead we have indicated the vision from the start, as in 174.10.

587. Farewell to Lazarus.

2nd March 1945.

¹Jesus is at Bethany. It is evening. A peaceful April evening. 587.1
From the wide windows of the dining room one can see Lazarus' garden all in bloom, and beyond it, the orchard that looks like a cloud of light petals. The scent of fresh vegetation, the sweet-sour smell of fruit-tree blossoms, of roses and other flowers, carried into the house by the light evening breeze that makes the door curtains flutter and the lights of the central chandelier flicker, mingles with a strong scent of tuberoses, lilies of the valley and jasmines, mixed in a rare essence, left over from the balm with which Mary of Magdala scented her Jesus, Whose hair still looks dark after the unction. Simon, Peter, Matthew and Benjamin are still in the room. The others are absent and have probably gone out on errands.

Jesus has left the table and is looking at a roll of parchment that Lazarus has shown Him. Mary of Magdala is going round the room... she looks like a butterfly attracted by light. She can do nothing but move around her Jesus. Martha is watching the servants who are removing the wonderful precious dishes lying on the table.

Jesus lays the roll on a tall sideboard of polished black wood inlaid with ivory, and says: «Lazarus, come outside. I must speak to you.»

«At once, Lord», and Lazarus gets up from his chair near the window and follows Jesus into the garden, where the last light of the day is mixing with the first very clear moonlight.

²Jesus walks beyond the garden, where the sepulchre in which Lazarus was buried is and which now displays a large frame of roses, all in bloom, at its empty mouth. Above it, on the slightly inclined rock, is carved: «Lazarus, come out!» 587.2

Jesus stops there. The house can no longer be seen, concealed as it is by trees and hedges. There is dead silence and absolute solitude.

«Lazarus, my friend» asks Jesus standing facing his friend and looking at him with a faint smile on his face, which is very thin and paler than usual. «Lazarus, my friend, do you know who I am?»

«You? You are Jesus of Nazareth, my gentle Jesus, my holy Jesus, my powerful Jesus!»

«That with regards to you. But with regards to the world, who am I?»

«You are the Messiah of Israel.»

«And then?»

«You are the Promised One, the Expected One... But why are You asking me that? Do You doubt my faith?»

«No, Lazarus. But I want to confide a truth to you. Nobody, except my Mother and one of my apostles, is aware of it. My Mother, because She knows everything. An apostle, because he participates in this matter. During these three years I told the others, who are with Me, many times. But their love acted as nepenthes and thwarted the truth I had announced. They could not understand... And it is a good thing that they did not understand, otherwise, to prevent a crime, they would have committed another one. A useless one, because what is to happen would take place just the same, notwithstanding any killing. But I want to tell you.»

«Do You doubt that I do not love You as much as they do? Of what crime are You speaking? What crime is to take place? In the name of God, speak!» Lazarus is excited.

«Yes, I will speak. I do not doubt your love. So much so that I entrust and confide My will to you...»

«Oh! my Jesus! Who is about to die does that! I did it when I realised that You were not coming and that I had to die.»

«And I must die.»

«No!» Lazarus utters another deep groan.

«Do not shout. Let no one hear us. I must speak to you alone.

^{587.3} ³Lazarus, My friend, do you know what is happening this very moment that you are with Me, in the loyal friendship you granted Me from the first moment, and was never upset for any reason? A man, with other men, is negotiating the price of the Lamb. Do you know the name of that Lamb? Its name is Jesus of Nazareth.»

«No! There are enemies, that is true. But no one can sell You! Who? Who is it?»

«One of my apostles. It could but be one of those whom I have disappointed more bitterly and who, tired of waiting, wants to

get rid of He Who by now is nothing but a personal danger. In his way of thinking, he feels that he can gain a good reputation again with the great ones of the world. He will instead be despised both by all good people and by all criminals. He has become tired of Me, of awaiting what he has tried to achieve by every means: human grandeur, which he pursued first in the Temple, then he believed he would attain with the King of Israel, and he is now seeking once again in the Temple and by approaching the Romans... He hopes... But Rome, if she knows how to reward her loyal servants,... knows also how to crush informers with contempt. He is tired of Me, of waiting, of the burden of being good. For those who are wicked, to be, to have to feign to be good, is an overwhelming burden. It can be borne for some time... then... it can no longer be endured... and one gets rid of it to become free. Free? That is what the wicked ones think. That is what he thinks. But it is not freedom. To belong to God is freedom. To be against God is to be in prison with fetters and chains, with loads and lashes, as no galley-slave, as no slave working at constructions ever suffered under the whip of the torturer.»

«Who is it? Tell me. Who is it?»

«It is of no use.»

«Yes, it is... Ah!... It can be but he: the man who has always been a stain in Your group, the man who also a short time ago offended my sister. It is Judas of Kerioth!»

«No. It is Satan. God took flesh in Me: Jesus. Satan has taken flesh in him: Judas of Kerioth. One day... a very remote day... here, in this garden of yours, I comforted the tears and I excused a spirit that had fallen very low. I said that possession is the contagion of Satan who inoculates the human being with his juices and perverts its nature. I said that it is the marriage of a spirit with Satan and animality. But possession is still a trifle as compared with incarnation. I shall be possessed by My saints and they will be possessed by Me. But only in Jesus Christ is God as He is in Heaven, because I am the God Who became Flesh. One only is the divine Incarnation. Likewise Satan, Lucifer, will be in one only, as he is in his kingdom, because Satan is incarnate only in the killer of the Son of God. While I am speaking to you here, he is before the Sanhedrin and is negotiating and is pledging himself to have Me killed. But it is not he, it is Satan. ⁴Listen ^{587.4}

now, Lazarus, My loyal friend. I am going to ask you for some favours. You have never denied Me anything. Your love has been so great that, without going beyond respect, it has always been active beside Me, with countless aids, with so much provident assistance and wise advice that I have always accepted, because I could see in your heart a true desire for My welfare.»

«Oh! my Lord! But it was my joy to devote myself to You! What shall I do now, if I do not have to devote myself to my Master and Lord? You have allowed me to do too little, far too little! My debt to You, Who have restored Mary to my love and honour, and me to life, is such that... Oh! why did You call me back from death to make me live this hour? By now I had overcome all the horror of death and all the anguish of the spirit, frightened by Satan with temptation at the moment of presenting itself to the Eternal Judge, and there was darkness!... What is the matter with You, Jesus? Why are You trembling and growing wanner than You are usually? Your face is paler than this white rose which is languishing in the moonlight. Oh! Master! Your blood and life seem to be forsaking You...»

«I, in fact, look like a man who is dying with his veins cut. The whole of Jerusalem, and I mean "all My enemies among the mighty ones in Israel" have laid their greedy mouths on Me and are sucking My life and My blood. They want to silence the Voice that for three years, while loving them, has tortured them;... because every word of Mine, even if it were a word of love, was a shock inviting their souls to wake up, and they did not want to hear their souls, as they had tied them with their treble sensuality. And not only the great ones... But the whole of Jerusalem is about to rage at the Innocent and ask for His death... and with Jerusalem also Judaea... and with Judaea also Perea, Idumaea, the Decapolis, Galilee, Syrophaenicia... the whole of Israel gathered in Zion for the "Passing" of the Christ from life to death...

^{587.5} «Lazarus, since you died and rose again, tell Me: what is dying? What did you feel? What do you remember?»

«Dying?... I do not remember exactly what it was. My bitter suffering was followed by a great languor... I did not seem to suffer any more and I was only very sleepy... Light and noises were becoming dimmer and dimmer and fainter and fainter and more and more remote... My sisters and Maximinus say that

I was showing signs of sharp suffering... But I do not remember...»

«Of course. The pity of the Father numbs the intellectual senses of dying people, so that only their flesh suffers, as it is to be purified by the pre-purgatory that is agony. But I... And what do you remember of death?»

«Nothing, Master. It is a dark space in my spirit. An empty area. There is an interruption in the course of my life and I do not know how to fill it. I remember nothing. If I looked at the bottom of that black hole that kept me for four days, although it were night and I were a shadow in it, if I could not see, I would feel the humid chill rise from its bowels and blow on my face. It is, after all, a sensation. But if I think of those four days, I have nothing. Nothing. That is the word.»

«Of course. Those who come back cannot tell... The mystery is revealed every time to him who goes in. But I, Lazarus, I know what I shall suffer. I know that I shall suffer in full consciousness. There will be no soothing drink or languor to make My agony less dreadful. I shall feel that I am dying. I already feel it... I am already dying, Lazarus.

Like one suffering from an incurable disease, I have continued to die during these thirty-three years. And death has quickened its pace more and more as time brought Me closer to this hour. At first it was only the death of knowing that I was born to be the Redeemer. Later it was the death of him who sees himself opposed, accused, derided, persecuted, hindered... How tiring! Then... the death of having beside Me, closer and closer, till he was grasping Me as a giant octopus grasps a shipwrecked person, him who is My Traitor. How nauseating! And now I am dying in the torture of having to say "goodbye" to My dearest friends and to My Mother...»

6«Oh! Master! You are weeping?! I know that You wept also in front of my sepulchre, because You loved me. But now... You are weeping again. You are frozen. Your hands are already as cold as those of a corpse. You are suffering... You are suffering too much!...» 587.6

«I am the Man, Lazarus. I am not only the God. I have the sensitivity and affections of man. And My soul is distressed thinking of My Mother... And yet, I tell you, My torture of en-

during to have My Traitor close to Me has become so monstrous, as well as having to bear the satanic hatred of a whole world, and the deafness of those who, if they do not hate, cannot love actively either, because to love actively is to succeed in being what the loved person wants and teaches, whereas here!... Yes, many love Me. But they have remained "what they were". They did not assume another ego for My sake. Do you know who was able, among My most intimate ones, to change nature in order to become of Christ, as Christ wants? One only: your sister Mary. She started from complete perverted animality to arrive at an angelical spirituality. And she achieved that only through the power of love.»

«You redeemed her.»

«I redeemed them all with my word. But she alone changed completely through active love. But I was saying: and my suffering all these things is so monstrous, that I long for nothing but to see everything accomplished. My strength is failing Me... The cross will not be so heavy as this torture of the spirit and of feelings...»

«The cross?! No! Oh! no! It is too atrocious! It is too disgraceful! No!» Lazarus, who for some time has been holding Jesus' cold hands in his own, standing in front of his Master, releases them and collapses on the nearby stone seat and he covers his face with his hands weeping desolately.

⁷Jesus approaches him, lays a hand on the shoulders shaken by sobs, and says: «What? Am I, Who am about to die, to comfort you, who are alive? My friend, I am in need of strength and help. And I am asking them of you. I have but you who can give Me them.

It is better if the others do not know. Because if they knew... Blood would be shed. And I do not want lambs to become wolves, not even for the sake of the Innocent. My Mother... oh! how heart-rending it is to speak of Her!... Mother is already so distressed! She also is dying exhausted... She also has been dying for thirty-three years, and She is now one big sore, like the victim of an atrocious torture. I swear to you that there has been a struggle between My mind and My heart, between love and reason, to decide whether it was just to send Her away, to send Her back to Her house, where She always dreams of the Love that made Her

Mother, where She enjoys the savour of Love's kiss of fire, She starts in the ecstasy of that remembrance, and with the eyes of Her soul She always sees the air breathe gently, stirred by an angelical flash. The news of My Death will reach Galilee almost at the moment in which I will be able to say to Her: "Mother, I am the Conqueror!" But I cannot, no, I cannot do that. Poor Jesus, laden with the sins of the world, needs consolation. And Mother will give Me it. And the even poorer world needs two Victims. Because man sinned with woman; and the Woman must redeem, as the Man redeems. But until the hour is struck, I will smile at My Mother reassuringly...

She trembles... I know. She perceives that the Torture is approaching. I know. And She repels it through natural disgust and holy love, as I repel Death because I am a "living being" who must die. But it would be dreadful if She knew that in five days' time... She would die before that hour, and I want Her to be alive to get strength from Her lips, as I received life from Her womb. And God wants Her to be on my Calvary to mix the water of Her virginal tears with the wine of My divine Blood and celebrate the first Mass. Do you know what Mass will be? You do not know. You cannot know. It will be my death applied forever to the living or suffering mankind. Do not weep, Lazarus. She is strong. She does not weep. She has wept throughout Her life of a Mother. She no longer weeps now. She has crucified Her smile on Her face... Have you noticed what Her face has become like these last days? She crucified Her smile on Her face to comfort Me. I ask you to imitate my Mother.

⁸I could no longer keep my secret all to Myself. I looked around seeking a sincere reliable friend. I met your loyal eyes. I said: "I will confide it to Lazarus." When you had a heavy burden in your heart, I respected your secret and I defended it even against the natural curiosity of hearts. I ask you to have the same respect for mine. Later... after my death, you will make it known. You will mention this conversation. That people may know that Jesus went to His death fully aware of the situation, and to his known tortures He added also this one, that He knew everything, both with regard to people and to his destiny. That it may be known that while He could still have saved Himself, He did not want to, because His infinite love for men desired nothing but to consume

587.8

the sacrifice for them.»

«Oh! save Yourself, Master! Save Yourself! I can let You escape. This very night. Once You did fly to Egypt! Run away now as well. Come, let us go. Let us take Mary and my sisters with us, and let us go. None of my riches attract me, as You know. You are my wealth and Mary's and Martha's. Let us go.»

«Lazarus, I ran away then, because it was not my hour. Now it is the hour. And I am staying.»

«In that case I am coming with You. I will not leave You.»

«No. You will stay here. Since he who is within the distance of a Sabbath walk is allowed to consume the lamb in his house, you will consume your lamb here, as you have always done. But let your sisters come... For My Mother... Oh! what the roses of divine love concealed from You, o Martyr! The abyss! The abyss! And from it are now rising the flames of Hatred and rushing to gnaw at Your heart! The sisters, yes. They are strong and active... and Mother will be agonizing, bent over My dead body. John is not sufficient. John is love. But he is still immature. Oh! He will mature and become a man in the torture of the oncoming days. But the Woman needs women for Her dreadful wounds. Will you let Me have them?»

«I will give You everything, I have always given You everything with joy, and I only regretted that You wanted so little!...»

«As you can see, I have not accepted from anybody else what I consented to have from My friends in Bethany. That is one of the charges made against Me by the unjust man more than once. But here, among you, I found enough to comfort the Man of all His bitterness as a man. At Nazareth it was the God Who found solace near the Unique Delight of God. Here it was the Man. And before going up to My death I thank you, My faithful, loving, kind, thoughtful, reserved, learned, discreet, generous friend. I thank you for everything. And My Father, later, will reward you...»

«I have already had everything through Your love and Mary's redemption.»

587.9 «Oh! no. You are to receive much more. And you will have it. Listen. Do not be so dejected. Pay attention to Me that I may tell you what I want to ask you to do. You will remain here waiting...»

«No, not that. Why Mary and Martha, and not I?»

«Because I do not want you to be corrupted as all men will be corrupted. Jerusalem in the next days will be as corrupt as the air around a putrid carrion that has suddenly been burst by the foot of a heedless passer-by. Infected and infecting. Even people who are not so cruel, even My disciples will be driven mad by its miasmata. They will run away. And where will they go in their bewilderment? They will come to Lazarus. How many times, in these three years, have they come looking for bread, a bed, protection, shelter, and for their Master!... They will come back now. Like sheep dispersed by a wolf that has abducted the shepherd, they will rush to a fold. Gather them. Encourage them. Tell them that I forgive them. I entrust you with the task of forgiving them on My behalf. They will not be able to set their minds at rest for running away. Tell them not to fall into a greater sin by despairing of My forgiveness.»

«Will they all run away?»

«All of them except John.»

«Master. You will not ask me to receive Judas? Let me die tortured, but do not ask me that. Several times my hand, anxious as it was to kill the shame of the family, trembled touching my sword. But I never did it, because I am not a violent man. I was only tempted to do it. But I swear to You that if I see Judas again, I will cut his throat, like a scapegoat.»

«You will never see him again. I swear it to you.»

«Will he run away? It does not matter. I said: "If I see him again". Now I say: "I will get him, even if he were at the world's end, and I will kill him".»

«You must not wish that.»

«I will do it.»

«You will not do it, because you will not be able to go where he is.»

«In the bosom of the Sanhedrin? In the Holy of Holies? I will get him even there and I will kill him.»

«He will not be there.»

«At Herod's? They will kill me, but I will kill him first.»

«He will be with Satan. And you will never be with Satan.

Give up that murderous intent at once, otherwise I will leave, you.»

«Oh! oh!... But... Yes, for You... Oh! Master! Master! Master!»

«Yes. Your Master... You will receive the disciples, you will comfort them. You will lead them once again towards peace. I am the Peace. And also later... Later you will help them. Bethany will always be Bethany, until Hatred rummages in this home of love, thinking that it will put out its flames, whereas it will spread them throughout the world to set it all ablaze. ¹⁰I bless you, Lazarus, for everything you have done and for what you will do...»

«Nothing, nothing. You brought me back from death, and You do not allow me to defend You. So what have I done?»

«You gave Me your houses. See? It was our destiny. The first flat in Zion in a ground belonging to you. And the last one also in one of them. It was My destiny that I should be your Guest. But you could not defend me from death. At the beginning of this conversation I asked you: "Do you know who I am?" Now I reply: "I am the Redeemer." The Redeemer must consume the sacrifice to the final immolation. In any case, believe Me. He Who will be raised on the cross and will be exposed to the eyes and the mockery of the world will not be alive, but dead. I am already dead, killed before and more by lack of love than by torture. And one more thing, My friend.

Tomorrow at dawn I am going to Jerusalem. And you will hear people say that Zion applauded her meek King as a triumpher, as He entered the town riding a little donkey.

Do not let that triumph deceive you and do not let it make you think that the Wisdom now speaking to you was not wise this peaceful evening. Popular favour will vanish faster than a star that furrows the sky and disappears into unknown spaces, and in five days' time, in the evening at this time, My torture will begin with a deceitful kiss that will open the mouths, singing hosannas tomorrow, into a chorus of dreadful curses and cruel condemning voices.

¹¹Yes, at last, o town of Zion, o people of Israel, you will have the Passover Lamb! You will have it in the rite now close at hand. Here it is. It is the Victim that has been prepared for ages. Love procreated it, having prepared an immaculate womb as its nuptial room. And Love consumes it. Here it is. It is the conscious Victim. Not like the lamb that being unaware goes on grazing

in the meadow or with its pink snout presses its mother's round dug, while the butcher is sharpening a knife to slaughter it. But I am the Lamb that consciously says: "Goodbye!" to life, to his Mother, to his friends, and goes to the sacrificer and says: "Here I am!" I am the Food of man. Satan has made men starve and their hunger has never been satisfied. And it cannot be satisfied. One food only can sate it, because it removes their hunger. And here is that food. Here is your bread, man. Here is your wine. Consume your Passover, o Mankind! Cross your sea, reddened by satanic flames. Tinged with My Blood you will cross it, o race of man, preserved from the fire of hell. You can cross it. Heaven, pressed by My desire, is already half-opening the eternal gates. Look, o souls of the dead! Look, of living men! Look, o souls, that will be incorporated in future bodies! Look, o angels of Paradise! Look, o demons of Hell! Look, o Father; look, o Paraclete! The Victim smiles. It no longer weeps...

¹²Everything has been said. Goodbye, my friend. I shall not see you either, before I die. Let us kiss each other goodbye. And do not be doubtful. People will say to you: "He was a madman! He was a demon! A liar! He died while He was saying that He was the Life." Reply to them and particularly to yourself: "He was and is the Truth and the Life. He is the Vanquisher of death. I know. And He cannot be the eternal Dead One. I am waiting for Him. And all the oil in the lamp, that his friend is keeping ready to make light for the world, invited to the wedding of the Triumpher, will not be burnt, before He, the Bridegroom, comes back. And this time it will never be possible to put the light out." Believe that, Lazarus. Obey my wish. Can you hear how this nightingale is singing after being silent because of the outburst of your tears? Do the same. After the inevitable tears shed on the Victim, let your soul sing the unerring song of your faith.

May you be blessed by the Father, by the Son, by the Holy Spirit.»

¹³How much I suffered! The whole night, from 11 o'clock pm. on Thursday 1st March to 5 o'clock Friday morning. I saw Jesus in a state of anguish only a little inferior to that at Gethsemane, particularly when He speaks of His Mother, of the traitor, and shows His repugnance to death. I obeyed Jesus' order to write

this on a separate notebook to have a more detailed Passion. You saw my face this morning... a weak image of what I suffered... and I am not saying anything else, because there are insurmountable aspects of modesty.

588. Judas Iscariot with the heads of the Sinhedrin.

29th March 1947.

588.1

¹Judas arrives at Caiaphas' country house at night. But the moon acts as an accomplice of the murderer, illuminating the road for him. He must be certain that he will find there, in that house outside the walls, those he is looking for, otherwise I think he would have tried to enter the town and he would have gone to the Temple. Instead, he is climbing among the olive-trees of the little hill - without a moment's hesitation. This time he is more certain than the previous time*, because it is night-time, and the darkness and the late hour protect from every possible surprise. The country roads are now deserted, after being busy all day with the crowds of pilgrims going to Jerusalem for Passover. Even poor lepers are now in their caves and are sleeping the sleep of unhappy people, forgetting their fate for a few hours.

Judas is now at the door of the house, which is all white in the moonlight. He knocks: three times, once, three times again, twice... Even the conventional signal is familiar to him! And it must be a sure signal, because the door is half-opened without any check by the door-keeper through the peep-hole in the door Judas steals in and asks the servant porter: «Have the members assembled?»

«Yes, Judas of Kerioth, they have. A full assembly, I might say.»

«Take me there. I have to speak of an important matter. Quick!»

The man locks the door with all the bolts, and precedes him along a semi-dark vestibule, stopping in front of a heavy door, at which he knocks. The murmur of the voices in the closed room stops, and is replaced by the noise of the lock and the squeaking

* than the previous time, that is the one narrated, in 535.6/13.

of the door, which is opened, and a cone of bright light is projected on the dark corridor.

«It's you? Come in!» says the person who opened the door and who is unknown to me.

And Judas goes into the hall, while the man who opened the door locks it again.

²There are signs of surprise or at least of excitement, when they see Judas enter the room. But they greet him all together: «Peace to you, Judas of Simon.» 588.2

«Peace to you, members of the holy Sanhedrin, greets Judas.

«Come forward. What do you want?» they ask him.

«I want to speak to you... of the Christ. It is not possible to go on like this. I can no longer be of any assistance to you, unless you make up your minds to take drastic measures. The man is suspicious by now.»

«Have you given yourself away, you fool?» they exclaim interrupting him.

«No. But you are the fools, as you have made the wrong move by hurrying things in a stupid way. You knew very well that I would serve you! But you did not trust me.»

«You have a weak memory, Judas of Simon! Don't you remember how you parted from us the last time? Who could think that you were loyal to us, when you proclaimed in that way that you could not betray Him?» says Helkai ironically, and he sounds more venomous than ever.

«And do you think that it is easy to get to deceive a friend, the Only One Who really loves me, the Innocent? Do you think it is easy to go so far as to commit a crime?»

Judas is excited.

³They try to calm him down. They coax him. And they allure him, or at least they try to do so, pointing out that he will not commit a crime «but a holy deed for his Fatherland, whom he will spare reprisals from the rulers, who are already giving signs of intolerance because of the continual public commotions and divisions of parties and crowds in a Roman province; and for Mankind, if He is really convinced of the divine nature of the Messiah and of His spiritual mission.» 588.3

Another says: «If what He says is true - far be it from us to believe it - are you not the collaborator of Redemption? Your name

will be associated to His forever, and your Fatherland will number you with her valiant men, and will honour you with the highest dignities. A seat among us is ready for you. You will rise, Judas. You will lay down laws for Israel. Oh! We shall not forget what you have done for the welfare of the holy Temple, of the holy Priesthood; for the protection of the most holy Law; and for the welfare of the whole Nation! All you have to do is to help us, then we swear to you, I swear to you in the name of my powerful father and of Caiaphas, who is now wearing the ephod, you will be the greatest man in Israel. Greater than the tetrarchs, greater than my father, now a High Priest put out of office. Like a king, like a prophet, you will be served and listened to.

And if Jesus of Nazareth should be but a false Messiah, even if He really should not be liable to death because His deeds are not those of a robber, but of a madman, we remind you of the inspired words of the pontiff Caiaphas - you know that he wears the ephod and the rational speaks through divine suggestion and prophesies what is good and what is to be done - Caiaphas, do you remember? Caiaphas said*: "It is better for one man to die for the people, than for the whole Nation to be destroyed." It was a prophetic word.»

«It was really a prophecy. The Most High spoke through the lips of the High Priest. Let him be obeyed!» say all together those dirty puppets, the members of the great council of the Sanhedrin, who already sound theatrical, and look like automata who are to make certain gestures.

588.4 ⁴Judas is influenced, and allured... But there is still a little common sense, if not goodness, in him, and this restrains him from uttering the fatal words.

Surrounding him with respect and feigned affection, they urge him, saying: «Don't you believe us? Look: we are the heads of the twenty-four priestly families, the Elders of the people, the scribes, the greatest Pharisees in Israel, the wise rabbis, the magistrates of the Temple. The cream of Israel is here, around you, ready to acclaim you, and by one consent we say to you: "Do it, because it is a holy deed."»

Judas replies: «And where is Gamaliel? And Joseph and Nic-

* said, in 549.15.

odemus, where are they? And where is Eleazar, Joseph's friend, and where is John of Gaash? I don't see them.»

«Gamaliel has secluded himself to do severe penance. John is with his pregnant wife who is poorly this evening. Eleazar... we do not know why he has not come. But anybody can be seized by a sudden illness, don't you think? With regards to Joseph and Nicodemus, we have not informed them of this secret meeting for your sake, and for the sake of your honour... so that, if our plan should unluckily fail, your name would not be reported to the Master... We are protecting your name. We love you, Judas, the new Maccabee*, saviour of our Fatherland.»

«The Maccabee fought a good battle. I... am betraying.» says Judas.

«Do not consider the details of the action, but the justice of the purpose. ⁵Will you please speak, Sadoc, the golden scribe. Precious words flow from your lips. If Gamaliel is learned, you are wise, because the wisdom of God is on your lips. Speak to this man who still hesitates.»

588.5

That crook Sadoc comes forward followed by a decrepit Hananiah, an emaciated dying fox, beside a shrewd strong cruel jackal.

«Listen, o man of God!» begins Sadoc pompously, assuming an inspired oratorical attitude, his right arm stretched forward in Ciceronian style, his left one engaged in holding up the heap of folds forming his scribe garment. He then raises also his left arm, allowing his monumental garment to spread out untidily, and thus, with his face and arms raised towards the ceiling of the room, he says in a thundering voice: «I say unto you! I say unto you in the Most High Presence of God!»

«Maran Atha**!» they all exclaim, stooping, as if a supreme inspiration bent them, then rising with their arms crossed on their chests.

«I say unto you. It is written in the pages of our history and of our fate! It is written in the signs and figures left by ages! It is

* Maccabee, is Judas Maccabaeus, whose accomplishments are narrated in: 1 Maccabees 3-9', 2 Maccabees 8-15.

** Maran Atha, expression already used in 438.1 (last line) and in 475.6. It will be found also in 639.2.5. According to M.V. (in 475.6) it might mean "Amen". It could also correspond to an Aramaic invocation (from the Greek "Anathema" meaning "O Lord come!", as in: 1 Corinthians 16,22.

written in the rite celebrated uninterruptedly since the night fatal to the Egyptians! It is written in the figure of Isaac! It is written in the figure of Abel! And let what is written come true.»

«Maran Atha!» say the others in a low mournful striking chorus, repeating the previous gestures, their faces oddly illuminated by the light of two chandeliers of pale-violet mica, shedding a phantasmagoric light at the ends of the hall. The assembly of men, almost all dressed in white, with the pale or olive complexions of their race, made even more pale and olive by the diffused light, really looks like a gathering of ghosts.

«The word of God has descended upon the lips of the prophets to approve this decree.

He must die! It is stated!»

«It is stated! Maran Atha!»

«He must die, His destiny is marked!»

«He must die. Maran Atha!»

«His fatal destiny is described to the last detail, and fatality cannot be infringed!»

«Maran Atha!»

«Even the symbolic price to be paid to him who becomes the instrument of God for the fulfillment of the promise is indicated!»

«It is indicated! Maran Atha!»

«As Redeemer, or as false prophet, He must die!»

«He must die! Maran Atha!»

«The hour has come! Jehovah wants it! I can hear His voice! It is shouting: "Let it be accomplished!"

«The Most High has spoken! Let it be accomplished! Let it be accomplished! Maran Atha!»

588.6 ⁶«Let Heaven fortify you as it fortified Jael and Judith, who were women and behaved like heroes; as it fortified Jephthah, who, a father, sacrificed his daughter to his Fatherland; as it fortified David against Goliath*, and do the deed that will make peoples remember Israel forever!»

«May Heaven fortify you. Maran Atha!»

«Be the winner!»

«Be the winner! Maran Atha!»

* as it fortified David against Goliath, as can be read in 1 Samuel 17,32-51.

The clucking senile voice of Hananiah is heard: «He who hesitates over a sacred order is condemned to dishonour and death!»

«Is condemned. Maran Atha!»

«If you do not listen to the voice of the Lord your God, and you do not carry out His order and what He orders you through our words, may all maledictions fall upon you!»

«All the maledictions! Maran Atha!»

«May the Lord strike you with all the Mosaic curses* and may He scatter you among the nations.»

«May He strike and scatter you! Maran Atha!»

Dead silence follows this impressive scene... Everything becomes motionless in frightening stillness.

⁷At last Judas' voice is heard, and it is so changed, that I recognise it with difficulty: «Yes. I will do it. I must do it. And I will do it. The last part of the Mosaic curses is already my share, and I must get rid of it because I have already delayed too long. I am becoming mad, because I have no peace or respite. My heart is frightened, I look bewildered, and my soul is consumed by sadness. I tremble at the idea of being found out and crushed by Him for my double-crossing - because I do not know how much He is aware of my thoughts - I see my life hanging by a thread, and morning and evening I implore to get over with this hour because of the terror that frightens my heart. Because of the horrible task I must perform. Oh! bring this hour forward! Release me from my anguish! Let everything be done. At once! Now! That I may be freed! Let us go!» 588.7

Judas' voice has become firmer and stronger as he speaks. His gestures, previously automatic and insecure, like those of a sleepwalker, have become free and voluntary.

He stands up in all his height, diabolically handsome, and shouts: «Let the ties of a foolish error fall! I am free from fearful subjection, Christ! I am no longer afraid of You and I am handing You to Your enemies! Let us go!» A cry of a victorious demon, and he boldly goes towards the door.

⁸But they stop him: «Wait! Tell us: where is Jesus of Nazareth?» 588.8

«In Lazarus' house. At Bethany.»

* with all the Mosaic curses, which are in: Leviticus 26,14-46', Deuteronomy 28,15-68.

«We cannot enter that house, as it is well provided with faithful servants. It's the house of a favourite of Rome. We should certainly come up against much trouble.»

«Well, we are coming to town at dawn. Place guards on the Bethphage road, stir up a turmoil and capture Him.»

«How do you know that He will come along that road? He may take the other one...»

«No. He told His followers that He will go into town that way, by the Ephraim gate, and to wait for Him near En Rogel. If you capture Him before...»

«We cannot. We would have to go into town with Him among the guards, and all the roads leading to the gates, and all the streets in town are crowded with people from dawn till night. There would be a riot. And that must not happen.»

«He will go up to the Temple. Ask Him to come into one of the halls to question Him. Tell Him to come in the name of the High Priest. He will come, because He has more respect for you than for His own life. Once He is alone with you... you will have the opportunity to take Him to a safe place and to condemn Him at the right moment.»

«There would be a riot just the same. You must have noticed that the crowds are completely won over by Him. And not only the crowds, but also the great ones and the hopes of Israel. Gamaliel is losing his disciples, and so is Jonathan ben Uziel and others among us, and they are all leaving us, seduced by Him. Even the Gentiles venerate Him, or they fear Him, which is also veneration, and they are ready to rebel against us if we ill-treat Him. Among other things, some of the brigands we had hired to act as false disciples and stir up brawls, have been arrested and they have spoken hoping for mercifulness in return for their information, and the Praetor knows... The whole world follows Him, whilst we are concluding nothing. But it is necessary to act subtly, so that the crowds may not become aware of anything.»

«Yes. That is how it must be done. Even Annas recommends that. He says: "It must not happen during the festivities, and there must be no disturbance among the fanatic people." That is what he ordered, and he gave orders that He should be treated with respect in the Temple and elsewhere, and that He should

not be disturbed, in order to deceive Him.»

⁹«So, what do you want to do? I was quite willing tonight, but you are hesitating...» says Judas. ^{588.9}

«Well, you should take us to Him when He is all alone. You are aware of His habits. You wrote to us that He wants you to be closer to Him than anybody else. So you must know what He wants to do. We shall always be ready. When you think that it is the right place and the right moment, come, and we will follow you.»

«Agreed. And what retribution shall I receive?» Judas is now speaking coldly, as if he were dealing with common business.

«What is mentioned by the prophets*, so that we may be faithful to the inspired word: thirty silver pieces...»

«Thirty silver pieces to kill a man, and that Man? The price of a common lamb during these festivities?! You are mad! It is not that I need money. I have plenty. So do not think that you can convince me for greed of money. It is too little to compensate, for my grief in betraying Him Who has always loved me.»

«But we have told you what we will do for you. Glory, honours! What you were hoping to have from Him, and you did not get. We will cure your disappointment. But the price has been fixed by the prophets! Oh! it is a formality! A symbol and nothing else. The rest will follow later...»

«And the money when?»

«The moment you say to us: "Come". Not before. No one pays before taking possession of the goods. Don't you think that is fair?»

«It is fair. But at least treble the amount...»

«No. That is what the prophets said. And that is what has to be done. Oh! we will obey the prophets! We will not omit an iota of what they wrote of Him. Ha! Ha! Ha! We are loyal to the inspired word! Ha! Ha! Ha!» laughs the revolting skeleton of Haniah.

And many join him with mournful, vulgar, false laughter, a true cachination of demons who can but sneer. Because laughter is typical of serene loving spirits, and sneer is peculiar to upset hearts sated with wrath.

* what is mentioned by the prophets, as in: Zechariah 11,12-13.

588.10 ¹⁰«Everything has been said. You may go. We will await dawn to go back to town by different roads. Goodbye. Peace be with you, lost sheep, who are returning to Abraham's flock. Peace to you! Peace to you! And the gratitude of the whole of Israel! Rely on us! A desire of yours is a law to us. May God be with you, as He was with all His more faithful servants! All the blessings on you!»

They take him to the door with embraces and protestations of love... they watch him go away along the half-dark corridor... they listen to the noise of the locks of the door that is opened and
588.11 closed... ¹¹They go back to the hall exulting.

Only two or three voices can be heard, those of the less demonic ones: «And now? How shall we behave with Judas of Simon? We know very well that we cannot give him what we promised, except those miserable thirty silver pieces!... What will he say when he realises that he has been betrayed by us? Shall we not have caused greater damage? Will he not go around telling the people what we have done? We know that he is a man who changes his mind.»

«You are quite simply foolish having such thoughts and worrying thus! It has already been decided what we will do to Judas. It was decided the last time. Don't you remember? And we will not change our minds. After everything is finished with the Christ, Judas shall die. That is settled.»

«But if he should speak before?»

«To whom? To the disciples and to the people, to be stoned? He will not speak. The horror of his deed will gag him...»

«But he may repent in future, he may feel remorse, he may even become mad... Because his remorse, if it should awaken, could only drive him mad...»

«He will not have time. We will see to that before. Everything at the right moment. The Nazarene first, then the man who betrayed Him» says Helkai slowly, in a dreadful tone.

«Yes. And mind! Not a word to those who are absent. They already know too much of our thoughts. I don't trust Joseph and Nicodemus. And I don't rely much on the others.»

«Do you doubt Gamaliel?»

«He has stood aloof from us for many months. He will not take part in our meetings without a personal order from the pon-

tiff. He says that he is writing his work with the assistance of his son. But I am speaking of Eleazar and John.»

«Oh! They have never contradicted us» says at once a member of the Sanhedrin, whom I have seen sometimes with Joseph of Arimathea, but whose name I do not remember.

«Nay! They have not contradicted us enough. Ha! Ha! Ha! And we shall have to watch them! Many snakes have built their nests in the Sanhedrin, I think... Ha! Ha! Ha! But they will be dislodged... Ha! Ha! Ha!» says Hananiah, as he goes, shaking and trembling, leaning on his stick, looking for a comfortable place on one of the low wide seats covered with thick carpets, placed against the walls of the hall, and he lied down happily, and soon falls asleep, with his mouth open, looking ugly in his wicked old age.

They watch him, And Doras, the son of Doras, says: «He has the satisfaction of seeing this day. My father dreamt of it but did not have it. I will carry his spirit in my heart, so that he may be present on the day of the revenge upon the Nazarene, and he may rejoice...»

¹²«Remember that we must be constantly in the Temple, in turns, and many of us in each turn.» 588.12

«We will do that.»

«We will have to give instructions to take Judas of Simon to the High Priest at any time.»

«We will arrange that.»

«And now let us prepare our hearts for the final task.»

«They are already prepared! They are ready!»

«Cunningly.»

«Cunningly.»

«Subtly.»

«Subtly.»

«To avoid all suspicion.»

«To allure every heart.»

«Whatever He may say or do, we shall not react. We will revenge ourselves for everything at one go.»

«We will do that. And it will be cruel vengeance.»

«A thorough one!»

«And dreadful!»

And they sit down trying to rest while waiting for dawn.

588.13 ¹³30th March 1947 (Palm Sunday).

Jesus says: «You will put here the vision: "From Bethany to Jerusalem" (dated 3rd March 1945). And now: look!*

589. From Bethany to Jerusalem, preparing the apostles for the imminent Passion.

3rd March 1945.

589.1 ¹Jesus is walking through orchards and olive-groves all in blossom. Even the silvery leaves of the olive-trees look like flowers, pearly as they are with dew, which shimmers in the first light of dawn as the leaves quiver in a gentle scented breeze. Each leafy branch seems the work of a goldsmith and one looks at them admiring their beauty. The almond-trees, which are all already covered with their green foliage, stand out from the white-rosy masses of the other fruit-trees, and under them the vines show their first tender indented leaves, so shiny and silky that they look like very thin scales of emerald or bits of precious silk. High above, the sky is like deep turquoise, clear, placid, solemn. Songs of birds and scents of flowers everywhere. The fresh air restores and makes people happy. The delight of April is really smiling everywhere.

589.2 ²Jesus is in the middle of His twelve apostles. And He speaks.

«I sent the women ahead because I want to speak to you alone. During the first days that I was with you I said to you, to those who were with Me: "Do not upset My Mother informing Her of the evil deeds against Her Son." Those deeds seemed so serious... Now, you three witnesses of those deeds that were the beginning of the chain by which the Son of man was to be led to death - you, John, you, Simon, and you, Judas of Kerioth - can clearly see that they were comparable with a grain of sand that falls from above, in comparison with the boulder, the boulders, as such are the present deeds. But then, you, My Mother and I were unprepared for human wickedness. In Good as in Evil man does not become supreme all of a sudden. But he rises or sinks by degrees. The same happens in sorrow. Now, you who are good,

* look! this introduces the vision of 30th March 1947 that will be found in the next chapter 590.

have risen in Good and you can realise, without being scandalised as you would have been then, to what point of perversion man can lower himself, when he becomes a demon, just as My Mother and I can bear all the grief coming from man, without dying because of it. We have strengthened our souls. All of us. In Good, in Evil or in Sorrow. And we have not yet reached the summit. We have not yet reached the summit... Oh! if you knew what and how high is the summit of Good, of Evil, of Sorrow! But I repeat to you the words that I spoke then.

Do not repeat to My Mother what the Son of man is about to tell you. She would be grieved too deeply. He who is about to be killed drinks the pitiful mixture that stuns him, enabling him to await the hour of torture, without having to tremble every moment. Your silence will be like the pitiful drink for Her, the Mother of the Redeemer! ³Now I want to explain the meaning of the prophecies* to you, so that nothing may still be obscure to you. And I ask you to be very, very close to Me. During the day I shall belong to everybody. I beg you to be with Me at night, because I want to be with you. I need to feel that I am not alone...» 589.3

Jesus is very sad. The apostles notice it and are worried. They gather around Him. Judas also presses against the Master, as if he were the most affectionate of the disciples.

Jesus caresses them and continues: «In this hour that is still granted to Me, I want to complete the knowledge of the Christ in you. At the beginning I made John, Simon and Judas acquainted with the truth of the prophecies concerning My birth. The prophecies have depicted Me better than the greatest painter could possibly do, from the dawn of My life to its end. Nay, that dawn and end are just the two periods most clearly elucidated by the prophets. Now the Christ Who descended from Heaven, the Just One Whom the clouds rained on the Earth, the sublime Shoot, is about to be killed. Crushed like a citron-tree struck by a thunderbolt. So let us speak of His death. Do not sigh, do not shake your heads. Do not grumble in your hearts, do not curse men. It would serve no purpose.

⁴We are going up to Jerusalem. Passover is now close at hand. 589.4
"This month will be for you the first month of the year". This

* prophecies. Quotations from Exodus 12,1-14.21-22; Isaiah 42,1-9; Zechariah 9,9-10 will follow.

month will be for the world the beginning of a new era. It will never end. In vain now and again man will try to fix new ones. Those who want to establish a new era bearing their idolatrous names, will be struck by lightning. There is but one God in Heaven and one Messiah on the Earth: the Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth. As He gives His whole Self, He can desire everything, and He puts His royal seal not on what is flesh and filth, but on what is time and spirit.

589.5 ⁵“On the tenth day of this month each man must take a lamb, one for each family, one for each household. And if the number of people in the household is not sufficient to consume the whole lamb, a man must join his neighbour’s family, so that they may be able to consume the whole lamb”. Because the sacrifice and the victim must be complete and consumed. Not even a tiny bit of it must be left over. None will be left.

Too many are those who are about to feed on the lamb. A countless number, for a banquet with no time - limit, and no more fire is required to consume the remains, because there are no remains. Those parts that are offered and rejected by hatred will be consumed by the very fire of the Victim, by His love. I love you, men. You, my twelve friends, whom I chose personally, you in whom are the twelve tribes of Israel and the thirteen veins of Mankind. I have gathered everything in you and I see everything gathered in you... Everything.»

«But in the veins of Adam’s body there is also the vein of Cain. None of us has lifted his hand against his companion. So where is Abel?» asks the Iscariot.

«What you said is true. In the veins of Adam’s body there is also the vein of Cain. And I am the Abel, the meek Abel, the shepherd of flocks, pleasant to the Lord because he offered his early fruits and what was faultless, and himself before all his offerings. I love you, men. Even if you do not love Me, I love you. Love hastens and completes the work of the sacrificers.

589.6 ⁶“It must be a lamb without blemish, a male one year old”. There is no time for the Lamb of God. He is. The same on the last day as He was on the first day of this Earth.

He Who is like His Father does not know ageing in His divine nature. And His person knows only one old age and only one tiredness: the disappointment of having come in vain for too

many. When you learn how I was killed - and the eyes that will see their Lord changed into a leper covered with sores are now shining with tears beside Me, and they can no longer see this pleasant hill because tears blind them with their liquid veil - you may say: "He did not die of that. He died because He had been unknown to His dearest ones and He had been rejected by too many men". But if the Son of God has no time-limit, and thus differs from the lamb of the rite, He is equal to it because He is without blemish and a male sacred to the Lord. Yes. In vain the executioners, those who will kill Me with weapons, or with their will or their betrayal, will endeavour to excuse themselves saying: "He was guilty". No one who is sincere can accuse Me of sin. Can you do so? We are facing death. I am. Others also are. Who? Do you want to know who, Peter? Everybody. Death advances hour by hour and snatches those who less expect it. But also those who still have a long life to live, are in front of death every moment, because time is a flash compared with eternity, and because at the hour of death even the longest life is reduced to nothing, and actions dozens and dozens of years old, even those of one's early childhood, come back in crowds saying: "Well, you were doing this yesterday." Yesterday! It is always yesterday when one is dying! And honours and gold for which men long so much are always dust! And the fruit after which one was mad loses all flavour! Women? Money? Power? Science? What is left? Nothing! Only one's conscience and the judgement of God, before Whom goes the conscience, poor and stripped of human protection and wealth, and laden only with its actions.

⁷"Some of the blood must be taken and put on the doorposts and lintel, and the Angel passing over will not strike the houses marked with the blood". Take My blood. Do not put it on dead stones, but on dead hearts. It is the new circumcision. And I circumcise Myself on behalf of the whole world. I do not sacrifice the useless part, but I break off My magnificent, wholesome, pure virility, I sacrifice it completely, and I take My blood from My mutilated limbs and from the opened veins and I draw rings of salvation on Mankind, rings of eternal nuptials with God Who is in Heaven, with the Father Who is waiting, and I say: "See. Now You can no longer reject them, because You would reject Your blood".

589.7

"And Moses said: '...and then dip a spray of hyssop in the blood and sprinkle the doorposts'". So is the blood not sufficient? It is not. Your repentance is to be joined to My blood. Without bitter beneficial repentance, I shall have died for you in vain.

That is the first word in the Book about the Redeeming Lamb. But the Book is strewn with it. As at each new sunrise the blossoms become thicker and thicker on these branches, so, as a new year follows an old one and the time of Redemption draws near, then blossoming becomes more and more luxuriant.

589.8 ⁸And now with Zechariah I say to you, to you in Jerusalem: "Here is the King Who comes full of meekness riding on a donkey and colt. He is poor." But He will disperse the mighty ones who oppress men. He is meek, and yet His arm raised to bless will defeat the demon and death. "He will announce peace, because He is the King of peace." Although crucified, He will stretch His domination from sea to sea. "He Who does not shout, Who does not break, Who does not put out those who are not light but smoke, those who are not strength but weakness, those who deserve all reproach, He will do justice according to truth." Your Messiah, o city of Zion, your Messiah, o people of the Lord, your Messiah, o people of the Earth.

"Without being sad or turbulent", and you can see how there is not in Me the resentful sadness of the defeated, or the rancorous sorrow of the perverted, but only the seriousness of one who sees to what extent the possession of Satan in men can go, and you see how for three years I have incessantly stretched out My hands inviting everybody to love, and My hands will be stretched out again and they will be wounded, although I could reduce My enemies to ashes and disperse them with a simple act of My will! "Without being sad or turbulent I will be successful in establishing My Kingdom." That Kingdom of Christ in which is the salvation of the world.

The Eternal Lord My Father says to Me: "I have called You, I have taken You by the hand, I have appointed You alliance between peoples and God, I have made You the light of the nations." And I have been light. Light to open the eyes of the blind, word to give speech to the deaf, key to open the underground prisons of those who were in the darkness of error.

589.9 ⁹And now, I Who am all that, am going to my death. I will en-

ter the darkness of death.

Death, do you understand?... The first things announced, are now being fulfilled, I also say with the prophet. I will tell you the rest before the Demon separates us.

There is Zion over there. Go and get the donkey and the colt. Say to the man: "Rabbi Jesus needs them." And tell my Mother that I am about to arrive. She is up there, on that slope, with the Maries. She is waiting for Me. It is My human triumph... Let it be Her triumph. Always joined together. Oh! joined!...

And who is the heart of a hyena that with his claw tears the heart of a mother's heart: Me, her Son? A man? No. Every man is born of a woman. And by instinct and moral consideration he cannot be pitiless towards a mother, because he thinks of "his own". So it is not a man. Who, then? A demon. But can a demon offend the Victress? He must touch Her to offend Her. And Satan cannot bear the virginal light of the Rose of God. So? Whom do you say it is? Are you not speaking? Then I will tell you. The most cunning demon has blended with the most corrupt man, and like the poison enclosed in the teeth of an asp, the demon is closed in him who can approach the Woman and thus bite Her treacherously. Cursed be the hybrid monster that is Satan and is man! Shall I curse it? No. It is not the word of a Redeemer. Then I say to the soul of this hybrid monster what I said* to Jerusalem, the monstrous city of God and of Satan: "Oh, if in this hour still granted to you, you could come to the Saviour! " There is no love greater than Mine! Neither is there a greater power. Also My Father agrees if I say: "I want", and I can speak but compassionate words for those who have fallen and stretch their arms towards Me from their abyss. O soul of the greatest sinner, your Saviour on the threshold of death bends over your abyss and invites you to take His hand. My death will not be avoided... But you... but you... would be saved, you whom I still love, and the soul of your Friend would not be horrified at the thought that He is aware of the horror of death and of such death through the deed of his friend...»

Jesus is silent... exhausted...

¹⁰The apostles whisper to one another and they ask: «But who ^{589.10}

* I said, in 590.8, a vision given on 30th July 1944, which will be part of the next chapter.

is He speaking of? Who is it?»

And Judas, lying shamelessly, says: «It is certainly one of the false Pharisees... I think it must be Joseph or Nicodemus, or Chuza and Manaen... Every man is anxious to save his life and his property... I know that Herod... And I know that the Sanhedrin. He trusted them too much! You know that even yesterday they were not present?! They haven't the courage to face Him...»

Jesus does not hear him. He has gone ahead and has joined His Mother, Who is with the Maries and with Martha and Susanna. Only Johanna of Chuza is absent from the group of the pious women.

590. Tears over Jerusalem. The triumphal entrance into the Holy city. The death of Annaleah.

30th March 1947.

590.1 ¹Jesus embraces with His arm the shoulders of His Mother, Who has stood up when John and James of Alphaeus have reached Her to say to Her: «Your Son is coming», and then they have come back to join their companions who are proceeding slowly, talking, while Thomas and Andrew have rushed towards Bethphage to look for the donkey and the colt and take them to Jesus.

In the meantime Jesus is speaking to the women. «Here we are near the city. I advise you to go. And go without being afraid. Enter the town before I do. All the shepherds and the most faithful disciples are near En Rogel. They have been told to escort and protect you.»

«The fact is that... We have spoken to Aser of Nazareth and Abel of Bethlehem in Galilee and also to Solomon. They had come as far as here to watch for Your arrival.

The crowd is preparing a great celebration. And we wanted to see... See how the tops of the olive trees are shaken? It is not the wind that is shaking them thus. But it is the people who are gathering branches to spread them on the road and to protect You from the sun. And over there?! Look over there, they are stripping the palm-trees of their fan-shaped leaves. They look like clusters and they are men who have climbed up the trunks to

gather more and more... And, on the slopes, You can see children bending to pick flowers. And the women certainly strip gardens of corollas and scented herbs to strew Your way with flowers. We wanted to see... and imitate the gesture of Mary of Lazarus, who picked up all the flowers pressed by Your feet when You went into Lazarus' gardens» says imploringly Mary of Clopas on behalf of them all.

Jesus caresses the cheek of His old relative, who looks like a little girl anxious to see a show, and He says to her: «You would not be able to see anything among the large crowd. Go on, to Lazarus' house, the one whose keeper is Matthias. I shall be passing there and you will see Me from on high.»

«Son... and are You going all alone? Can I not be near You?» asks Mary, raising Her very sad face and staring with Her sky-blue eyes at Her meek Son.

«I would beg You to remain hidden. Like the dove in the cleft of a rock*. Rather than Your presence, My beloved Mother, I need Your prayer!»

«If so, Son, we will all pray for You.»

«Yes. And after you have seen Him pass by, you will come with me to my mansion in Zion. And I will send servants to the Temple, with instructions to follow the Master all the time, so that they may bring us His orders and His news, says Mary of Lazarus resolutely, always quick in realising what is the best thing to do and to do it without delay.

«You are right, sister. Although it grieves me not to follow Him, I understand that it is a just order. In any case Lazarus told us not to contradict the Master in anything, and to obey Him even in the least matters. And we will do that.»

«Go, then. See? The roads are getting busy. The apostles are about to join Me. Go. Peace be with you. I will make you come when I think it is a suitable moment. Goodbye, Mother. Peace to you. God is with us.» He kisses Her and dismisses Her.

And the obedient women disciples go away quickly.

²The ten apostles join Jesus. «Have You sent them ahead?»

590.2

«Yes, I have. They will see My entry from a house.»

«From which house?» asks Judas of Kerioth.

* the dove in the cleft of a rock, as in: Song of Songs 2,14.

«Eh! the friendly houses are so many now!» says Philip.

«Not from Annaleah's?» says the Iscariot insisting.

Jesus replies in the negatively and He sets out towards Bethphage, which is not far.

He is near the village when the two apostles, who had been sent to get the donkey and the colt, come back. They shout: «We found what You told us and we would have brought the animals. But the owner wanted to groom them and adorn them with the best trappings to honour You. And the disciples, with those who have spent the night in the streets of Bethany to honour You, wish to have the honour of bringing them to You, and we agreed. We thought that their love deserved a reward.»

«You did the right thing. Let us go on in the meantime.»

«Are there many disciples?» asks Bartholomew.

«Oh! a great crowd. It is impossible to pass along the streets in Bethphage. That is why I told Isaac to take the donkey to Cleanthes, the cheese-monger» replies Thomas.

«You acted rightly. Let us go as far as that rising of the hill, and we shall wait a little in the shade of those trees.»

They go to the place pointed out by Jesus.

«But we are going farther away! You are going beyond Bethphage passing around the back!» exclaims the Iscariot.

«And if I want to do so, who can forbid Me? Am I perhaps already a prisoner and not allowed to go where I want? Or is it urgent that I should be so, and is anybody afraid that I may avoid being captured? And if I should decide to go away along safer routes, is there anybody who could prevent Me from doing so?» Jesus darts a glance at the Traitor, who dare no longer open his mouth and shrugs his shoulders, as if to say: «Do as You like.»

They go, in fact, around the back of the little village, I should say a suburb of the town, as its western side is really not far from the town, being part of the slopes of the Mount of Olives, which surrounds the eastern side of Jerusalem. Farther down, between the slopes and the town, the Kidron is shining in the April sunshine.

Jesus sits down in the green silent place and concentrates on His thoughts. He then stands up and goes towards the rising, stopping just at its edge.

³Jesus says: «You will put here the vision of 31st July 1944: “Jesus weeps over Jerusalem”, from the sentence that I gave you as the beginning of the vision.» He then resumes showing me the phases of his triumphal entry. 590.3

30th July 1944.

⁴I do not know how I shall manage to write because I am suffering so much from heart trouble that I can hardly sit up. But it cannot be helped. I must write what I see. 590.4

The Gospel of today, the ninth Sunday after Pentecost, is illustrated to me.

From a hill near Jerusalem Jesus looks at the town stretched at His feet. It is not a very high hill. At the most it is like the large square of S. Miniato on the mountain, at Florence; but it is sufficient for the eye to dominate the extent of houses and streets, that go up and down the small ground elevations forming Jerusalem. If one refers to the lowest level of the town, this hill is certainly much higher than Calvary, but it is closer to the walls than the latter. It really begins just outside the walls and rises steeply on their side, whereas on the other side it descends gently towards a very green country that stretches eastwards. At least I think it is eastwards, if I am judging rightly according to sunlight.

Jesus and His apostles are sitting under a group of trees, in the shade. They are resting after a long walk. Then Jesus stands up, He leaves the clearing where they were sitting and He goes towards the hillock and stops just at its edge. His tall person stands out clearly in the empty space around Him. He looks even taller as He stands upright, all alone. His arms are folded across His chest, on His blue mantle, and He looks around very seriously.

The apostles watch Him. But they leave Him alone, they neither move nor speak. They must think that He has moved aside to pray.

But Jesus is not praying. After looking for a long time at the town, at each district, at each hillock, at each detail, at times letting His eyes dwell upon this or that point, at times watching less insistently, Jesus begins to weep without sobbing or making any noise. Tears fill His eyes, then gush forth and stream down. His cheeks and fall... Silent very sad tears. The tears of a

man who knows that he must weep, all alone, without hoping to be consoled or understood by anybody. Tears brought about by grief that cannot be cancelled and must be suffered absolutely.

590.5 ⁵Because of his position John's brother is the first to notice those tears and he tells the others, who look at one another and are seized with astonishment.

«None of us has done anything wrong» says one, and another: «The crowds did not insult us either. Among them nobody was hostile to Him.» «Why is He weeping, then?» asks the oldest of them all.

Peter and John stand up together and they approach the Master. They think that the only thing to be done is to make Him feel that they love Him and ask Him what the matter is with Him. «Master, are You weeping?» asks John laying his fair-haired head on the shoulder of Jesus, Who is taller than he is by a neck and a head. And Peter, laying his hand around Jesus' waist, almost embracing Him to draw Him to himself, says to Him: «What is grieving You, Jesus? Tell us who love You.»

Jesus rests his cheek on John's fair-haired head and opening out his arms, He passes his arm around Peter's shoulder. The three of them are thus embraced to one another in such a loving posture. But tears continue to drop.

John feels them run down through his hair and he asks once again: «Why are You weeping, Master? Are we perhaps the cause of your sorrow?»

The other apostles have gathered around the loving group and are anxiously awaiting a reply.

«No» says Jesus. «You are not. You are my friends and friendship, when it is sincere, is a balm and a smile, never tears.

590.6 ⁸I would like you to remain my friends forever. Even now that we shall enter into the corruption, that ferments and contaminates those who are not resolutely willing to remain honest.»

«Where are we going, Master? Are we not going to Jerusalem? The crowds have already greeted You joyfully. Do You want to disappoint them? Are we going to Samaria to work some miracle? Just now that Passover is close at hand?» The questions are asked by several of the apostles at the same time.

Jesus raises his hands imposing silence and then with His right one He points to the town. A wide gesture like that of a man

sowing seeds ahead of himself. And He says: «That is the Corruption. We are going into Jerusalem. We are going there. And only the Most High knows how I would like to sanctify the town taking there the Holiness that comes from Heaven. I would like to resanctify it, as it should be the Holy City. But I shall not be able to do anything for it. It is corrupt, and will remain corrupt. And the streams of holiness that gush from the living Temple, and will gush even more in the next few days to the extent of leaving it lifeless, will not be sufficient to redeem it. Samaria and the heathen world will come to the Holy One. The temples of the true God will be erected on the false temples. The hearts of the Gentiles will worship the Christ. But this people, this town will always be hostile to Him, and their hatred will lead them to the greatest sin. ⁷That must happen. But woe to those who will be the instruments of that crime. Woe!...» Jesus stares at Judas, who is almost in front of Him. 590.7

«That will never happen to us. We are Your apostles and we believe in You, and we are ready to die for You.» Judas lies shamelessly and meets Jesus' eye without embarrassment. The others join in protesting.

Jesus replies to all of them, avoiding to reply to Judas directly.

«Heaven forbid you are not so. But you are still very weak, and temptation may make you like those who hate Me. Pray fervently and watch diligently over yourselves.

Satan is aware that he is about to be defeated and he wants to avenge himself by tearing you away from Me. Satan is around us all. He is around Me to prevent Me from doing the will of my Father and from fulfilling my mission. And he is around you to make you his servants. Be vigilant. Within those walls Satan will take those who are not strong. He will take him whose election will be his curse, because he used his election for a human purpose. I chose you for the Kingdom of Heaven, not for that of the world. Bear that in mind.

⁸And you, o city, that want your ruin and over which I am shedding tears, be aware that your Christ is praying for your redemption. Oh! if at least in this hour still left to you, you came to Him Who would be your peace! If in this hour you understood the Love passing through you and you divested yourself of the hatred that makes you blind and insane, and cruel against your- 590.8

self and your welfare! But the day will come when you will remember this hour! But it will be too late to weep and repent! The Love will have passed and disappeared from your streets, and the Hatred that you preferred will remain. And Hatred will be on you and on your children. Because one has what one wanted, and hatred is paid with hatred. And then it will not be the hatred of the strong against the defenceless, but it will be hatred against hatred, thus war and death.

Surrounded by trenches and armed men, you will languish before being destroyed, and you will see your children killed by weapons and famine, and the survivors taken prisoners and derided, and you will ask for mercy, but will never find it, because you refused to acknowledge your Salvation. I am weeping, My friends, because I have the heart of a man, and the ruin of My fatherland makes Me shed tears. But it is just that this takes place because within those walls corruption exceeds all limits and draws the punishment of God. Woe betide the citizens who bring about the ruin of their fatherland! Woe betide the leaders who are the main cause of it! Woe betide those who should be saints to guide the others to be honest and instead they desecrate the House of their ministry and themselves! Come. My action will be of no avail. But let us make the Light shine once again in the Darkness!»

And Jesus goes down followed by His apostles. He walks fast along the road with a serious countenance, I would say, almost looking sullen. He speaks no more. He goes into a little house at the foot of the hill, and I see nothing else.

590.9 ⁹Jesus says:

«The scene described by Luke seems incoherent, almost illogical. I feel sorry for the misfortunes of a guilty town, but I do not feel sorry for the habits of that town. No. I am not able, I cannot feel sorry for them, because it is just those habits that bring about their misfortunes; and seeing them makes my sorrow deeper. My anger with the desecrators of the Temple is the logical consequence of my meditation on the forthcoming misfortunes of Jerusalem.

It is always the profanation of the cult of God, of the Law of God that provokes the punishments of Heaven. By turning the

House of God into a robbers' den, those worthless priests and those worthless believers (only such by name) were drawing malediction and death on all the people. It is useless to give this or that name to the misfortunes that make a people suffer. Look for the right name in this: "Punishment for living like brutes." God withdraws and Evil advances. That is the result of a national way of living undeserving to be named Christian.

As in the past, also now, in the short period of this century, I have not ceased shaking and warning people by means of prodigies. But as in the past, I did nothing but draw mockery, indifference and hatred upon Myself and My means. But individuals and nations ought to bear in mind that they weep in vain, when beforehand they did not want to acknowledge their salvation. In vain they invoke Me when, while I was with them, they drove Me away with a sacrilegious war that starting from individual consciences, devoted to Evil, spread throughout the Nation. Fatherlands are not so much saved with weapons as they are by means of a form of life that may attract protection from Heaven.

Rest, little John. And make sure you are always faithful to your election. Go in peace.»

How tired I am! I am really exhausted...

[30th March 1947]

¹⁰Jesus has hardly had time to enter into the house blessing its inhabitants, when the joyful sound of harness-bells and jubilant voices are heard. And immediately afterwards the lean wan face of Isaac appears in the opening of the door, and the faithful shepherd enters and prostrates himself before his Lord Jesus. 590.10

Many faces are crowding in the frame of the wide-open door, and many more can be seen behind them... They push and throng, wishing to come forward... Some women shout, some of the children cry, caught as they are in the crowd, while the others shout greetings and joyful exclamations: «This is a happy day which brings You back to us! Peace to You, Lord! We welcome You, Master, as You have come back to reward our loyalty.»

Jesus stands up and makes a gesture meaning that He is going to speak. Everybody becomes silent and Jesus' voice is heard clearly. «Peace to you! Do not press together.

We shall now go up to the Temple. I have come to stay with

you. Peace! Peace! Do not hurt yourselves. Make way, My beloved friends! Let Me come out and follow Me, because we shall enter into the Holy City together.»

590.11 ¹¹Willy-nilly the people obey, and they open out a little so that Jesus can come out and mount the little donkey. In fact Jesus points to the little colt, which had never been ridden before, as His mount, and then some rich pilgrims, who elbow their way through the crowd, lay their sumptuous mantles on its back, and one man kneels down with one knee on the ground and the other placed as a step for the Lord, Who sits on the back of the colt. And the journey begins with Peter walking on one side of the Master and Isaac on the other, holding the reins of the unbroken animal, which proceeds calmly, as if it were accustomed to that task, without becoming restive or being frightened by the flowers that, thrown as they are towards Jesus, often strike the eyes or the soft muzzle of the little colt, that is not even scared by the branches of olive-trees and palm leaves shaken in front of and around it, or are thrown on the ground to form a carpet with the flowers. It is not even frightened by the shouts of «Hosanna, Son of David!», that are becoming louder and louder as the crowd becomes larger and larger with the arrival of newcomers.

It is not easy to pass through Bethphage, along its narrow twisted streets, and mothers are compelled to take their children in their arms, and men have to protect their women from being pushed too violently, and some fathers carry their little sons astride their shoulders, so that they are above the crowd, while the shrill voices of the children sound like the bleatings of lambs or the screeching of swallows, while with their little hands they throw the flowers and leaves of olive-trees, offered to them by their mothers, as well as kisses, to mild Jesus... After leaving the narrow passage of the little suburb, the procession stretches out in an orderly manner, and many volunteers go ahead leading the way and keeping it clear, and others follow them strewing the ground with branches. And when a man throws his mantle on the road as a carpet, hundreds of people imitate him. Thus the central part of the road is a multicoloured strip of garments spread on the ground and once Jesus passes by, they are picked up and carried ahead with many more, while flowers, branches and palm-leaves are waved and thrown, and louder cries are ut-

tered around and in honour of the King of Israel, of the Son of David and His Kingdom!

¹²The soldiers on duty at the gate come out to see what is happening. But it is not a sedition and they move to one side, leaning on their lances, and looking amazed or ironical they watch the strange procession of this King Who is riding the colt of a donkey, and is as handsome as a god, as humble as the poorest of men, meek, blessing... surrounded by women and children and by disarmed men shouting: «Peace! Peace!», of this King Who, before entering the town, stops for a moment near the sepulchres of the lepers at Hinnom and Siloam (I think I am mentioning the correct names of these places, where I have seen lepers being cured miraculously on other occasions) and pressing on the only stirrup in which His foot is resting, as He is sitting side-saddle on the donkey, but not astride it, He stands up, stretches out His arms, shouting in the direction of those dreadful slopes (where frightened faces and bodies appear, looking towards Jesus, and they utter the plaintive cry of lepers: «We are infected!» to send away some imprudent people who, in order to see Jesus better, would climb even the contaminated and infected terraces): «Let those who have faith in Me invoke My Name and receive health from it!» and setting out again He blesses them and He says to Judas: «You will buy food for the lepers and take it to them with Simon before it gets dark.»

590.12

¹³When the procession enters under the vault of the Siloam Gate and then, like a torrent, pours into the town through the Ophel suburb - where every terrace has become a little airy square crowded with people singing hosannas, throwing flowers and pouring perfumes in the street, trying to throw them on the Master, and the air is filled with the scent of flowers crushed under the feet of the crowds and with essences that spread in the air before falling among the dust of the street - the cheers of the crowd seem to increase and become louder, as if each person shouted in a bugle-horn, because the many archivolts, of which Jerusalem is full, amplify them with continuous echoes.

590.13

I can hear them shout, and I think they mean what the Evangelists say*: «Shalem, Shalem melchil!» (or malchit: I am try-

* say, in: Matthew 21,9; Mark 11,9-10; Luk 19,37-38; John 12,12-13.

ing to give the sound of the words, but it is difficult, because they have aspirations which we do not have). A continuous howl, like the roar of a stormy sea, in which the loud noise of a billow pounding on beaches and cliffs has not yet dropped, when another breaker collects it and raises it with a fresh roar, without ever stopping. I am deafened by it! Perfumes, scents, shouts, waving of branches and garments, colours, cries... It is a bewildering scene.

590.14 ¹⁴I see the people in the crowd getting mixed up continuously, and known faces appear and disappear: all the disciples from all the places in Palestine, all the followers... I see Jairus for a moment, and Jaia, the youth from Pella (I think), who was blind like his mother and was cured by Jesus, I see Joachim from Bozrah and the peasant from the plain of Sharon with his brothers, I see lonely old Matthias from a place near the Jordan, on the eastern bank, where Jesus took shelter when the place was all flooded, I see Zacchaeus with his converted friends, I see old John from Nob with almost all the citizens, I see the husband of Sarah from Juttah... But who can cope with faces and names, if it is a kaleidoscope of known and unknown faces, seen several times or only once?... Now there is the face of the little shepherd brought from Enon. And, near him, is the disciple from Korazim who did not bury his father to follow Jesus; and close to him, for a moment, the father and mother of Benjamin from Capernaum with their son, who almost falls under the hooves of the little donkey when he throws himself forward to receive a caress from Jesus.

590.15 ¹⁵And - unfortunately - there are faces of Pharisees and scribes, livid with rage because of this triumph, and they overbearingly elbow their way through the circle of love that is pressing around Jesus and they shout to Him: «Make these mad people keep quiet! Make them reason! Hosannas are to be sung to God only. Tell them to be quiet!»

And Jesus replies to them kindly: «Even if I told them to be silent and they obeyed Me, the stones would extol the wonders of the Word of God.»

In fact the people - in addition to shouting: «Hosanna, hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna to Him and to His Kingdom! God is with us! The Immanuel has come. The Kingdom of the Christ of the

Lord has come! Hosanna! Hosanna from the Earth to the highest Heaven! Peace! Peace, my King! Peace and blessings to You, holy King! Peace and glory in Heaven and on the Earth! Glory to God for His Christ! Peace to the men who know how to welcome Him.

Peace on Earth to men of goodwill and glory in the highest Heaven, because the hour of the Lord has come» (and this last cry is uttered by the whole group of the shepherds who are repeating the Christmas song) - in addition to these uninterrupted cries, the people of Palestine inform the pilgrims from the Diaspora of the miracles they have seen, and to those who do not know what is happening, because they are strangers passing by chance through the town and ask: «But who is He? What is happening?»

They reply: «He is Jesus! Jesus, the Master from Nazareth in Galilee! The Prophet! The Messiah of the Lord! The Promised, the Holy Messiah!»

From a house, which has just been left behind as in so much confusion the procession is moving very slowly, comes out a group of strong young men carrying above their heads copper braziers full of charcoal and incense, which burn spreading clouds of scented smoke. Their gesture is well liked, and many run ahead or return to their houses, to get fire and scented resins to burn and thus pay homage to the Christ.

¹⁶Annaleah's house appears. The terrace is decked with vines the new leaves of which are quivering in the mild April wind, and along the street side there is a full row of girls dressed in white and wearing white veils, in the middle of them there is Annaleah, with baskets of plucked petals of roses and lilies of the valley, that are already flying about in the air. 590.16

«The virgins of Israel are greeting You, Lord!» says John, who has pushed through the crowd and is now beside Jesus, drawing His attention to the garland of purity, which is leaning out of the parapet smiling and strewing the street with petals as red as blood and with lilies of the valley as white as pearls.

Jesus draws rein for a moment and stops the colt. He looks up and raises His hand to bless that virginity in love with Him to the extent of forgoing all other earthly love.

And Annaleah leaning forward shouts: «I have seen Your triumph, my Lord! Take my life for Your universal glorification!»

and with a very loud cry, as Jesus passes close to her house and proceeds, she greets Him: «Jesus!»

And another but different cry exceeds the clamour of the crowds. But although the people hear it, they do not stop. It is a torrent of enthusiasm, a torrent of delirious people that cannot stop. And while the last waves of this torrent are still outside the gate, the first ones are already beginning to climb the slopes leading to the Temple.

590.17 ¹⁷«Your Mother!» shouts Peter, pointing at a house almost at the corner of a street that leads up to the Moriah and along which the procession begins to pass. And Jesus looks up to smile at His Mother, Who is up there among the faithful women.

The obstacle of a large caravan stops the procession a few metres after it has passed the house. And while Jesus stops with the others, caressing the children that mothers hold up to Him, a man rushes towards Him, elbowing his way through the crowd and shouting: «Let me pass! A woman has just died. A young girl. All of a sudden. Her mother is invoking the Master. Let me pass! He already saved her once!»

The people make room and the man runs towards Jesus and says: «Master, Eliza's daughter is dead. She greeted You with that cry, then she bent backwards saying: "I am happy" and she took her last breath. Her heart was overwhelmed by the great joy in seeing Your triumph. Her mother saw me on the terrace of the house next to hers and she sent for me. Come, Master!»

«Dead! Annaleah dead! Was she not healthy, blooming and happy up to yesterday?»

The apostles and the shepherds throng together excitedly. Everybody saw her yesterday in perfect good health. Only a little while ago they saw her rosy and smiling... They cannot understand such a misfortune... They ask questions, they inquire about details... I don't know. You have all heard her words. She spoke in a loud voice, sure of herself.

Then I saw her lean backwards, and she was whiter than her dress and I heard her mother shout... I know nothing else.»

590.18 ¹⁸«Do not be excited. She is not dead. A flower fell and the angels of God picked it up to take it to Abraham's bosom. The lily of the Earth will soon open happily in Paradise, ignoring the horror of the world forever. Man, tell Eliza not to weep over the lot

of her daughter. Tell her that she was granted a great grace by God, and that in six days' time she will understand what grace God granted her daughter. Do not weep. Let no one weep. Her triumph is even greater than Mine, because the angels are escorting the virgin to lead her to the peace of the just. And it is an eternal triumph that will increase in degree without ever knowing failure. I solemnly tell you that you have reason to weep over yourselves, not over Annaleah. Let us go.» And He repeats to the apostles and to those around Him: «A flower has fallen. It lay down in peace and the angels picked it up. Blessed is the girl pure in flesh and heart, because she will soon see God.»

«But how did it happen, what did she die of, Lord?» asks Peter who cannot believe it.

«Of love. Of ecstasy. Of infinite joy. A happy death!»

Those who are far ahead are unaware, those who are far behind are also unaware. So the hosannas continue even if here, around Jesus, people have become pensively silent.

It is John who breaks the silence saying: «Oh! I should like to have the same lot before the future hours!»

«I, too» says Isaac. «I should like to see the face of the girl who died of love for You...»

«I beg you to sacrifice your wishes to Me. I need you near Me...»

«We will not leave You, Lord. But is there no consolation for that mother?» asks Nathanael.

«I will see to that...»

¹⁹They are at the gates of the enclosure of the Temple. Jesus ^{590.19} dismounts from the little donkey that is taken into custody by a man from Bethphage.

It is necessary to bear in mind that Jesus did not stop at the first gate of the Temple, but He went round the enclosure, and He stopped only at the northern side, near the Antonia. That is where He dismounted and went into the Temple, as if He wished to let people see that He was not hiding from the ruling powers, feeling that He had always behaved in an innocent way.

The first court of the Temple shows the usual uproar of moneychangers and vendors of doves, sparrows and lambs, with the only difference that the vendors have been left alone, because everybody has gone to see Jesus. And Jesus enters, solemn

in His purple garment, and He looks around at the market and at a group of Pharisees and scribes, who are watching Him from a porch.

His eyes are flashing with anger. He rushes to the centre of the court. An unexpected leap that looks like a flight. The flight of a flame, because His garment is as bright as a flame in the sunshine flooding the court. And in His voice as powerful as thunder He says: «Away from the house of My Father! This is no place for usury or markets. It is written*: “My house will be called the house of prayer.” So why have you turned into a robbers’ den this house, in which the Name of the Lord is invoked? Go away! Leave My House clean. That it may not happen to you, that instead of using ropes, I may strike you with the thunderbolts of heavenly wrath. Go away! Get out, you thieves, swindlers, lewd people, murderers, impious persons, idolaters of the worst idolatry, that of one’s proud ego, corrupters and liars. Out! Get out! Or the Most High God, I warn you, will sweep away this place for good and will take vengeance upon all the people.»

He does not repeat the lashing of the last time**, but seeing that the merchants and money-changers are slow in obeying, He goes to the nearest bench and turns it over spreading scales and money on the ground.

The vendors and money-changers make haste and carry out Jesus’ order, after witnessing the first example. And Jesus shouts after them: «And how many times shall I have to say that this must not be a place of filth, but a place of prayer?» And He looks at those of the Temple who, obeying the orders of the Pontiff, do not make any gesture of reprisal.

590.20 ²⁰After cleansing the court, Jesus goes towards the porches where blind, paralytic, mute, crippled and other sick people are gathered and are invoking Him at the top of their voices.

«What do you want Me to do for you?»

«My sight, Lord! My limbs! That my son may speak! That my wife may recover her health. We believe in You, Son of God!»

«May God hear you. Rise and sing hosannas to the Lord!»

He does not cure the many sick people one by one. But He makes a wide gesture with His hand, and grace and health de-

* It is written, in: *Isaiah 56,7, Jeremiah 7,11.*

** the last time, in the first year of public life, in 53.4.

scend from it upon the poor wretches, who stand up completely cured with cries of joy that mingle with those of the many children, who are pressing against Him repeating: «Glory, glory to the Son of David! Hosanna to Jesus of Nazareth, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords!»

Some Pharisees, with feigned deference, shout to Him: «Master, do You hear them? These children are saying what is not to be said. Reproach them! That they may keep quiet!»

«Why? The king prophet, the king of My stock, did he not say*: “You made the perfect praise flow from the mouths of children and sucklings to confuse Your enemies”? Have you not read these words of the psalmist? Let children sing My praises. They are prompted to sing them by their angels, who see My Father incessantly and are aware of His secrets, which they suggest to these innocents. And now let Me go and pray the Lord» and, passing in front of the people, He goes into the court of Israel to pray... Later, coming out through another gate, going along the Sheep Pool, He leaves the town and goes back to the hills of the Mount of Olives.

²¹The apostles are full of enthusiasm... The triumph has given them confidence, they have completely forgotten all the terror that the words of the Master had aroused in them... They are speaking of everything... They are dying to have news of Anna-leah. 590.21

With difficulty Jesus prevents them from going, assuring them that He will provide and He knows how to do so... They turn a deaf ear to every divine advice... They are truly men, and a cry of hosanna makes them forget everything... Jesus speaks to Mary of Magdala’s servants, who had joined Him at the Temple, and then He dismisses them...

«And where are we going now?» asks Philip.

«To Mark of Jonas’ house?» says John.

«No. To the field of the Galileans. Perhaps My brothers have come and I should like to greet them» says Jesus.

«You will be able to do that tomorrow» Thaddeus points out to Him.

«It is better to do things while they can be done. Let us go to

* say, in: Psalm 8,3.

the Galileans. They will be pleased to see us. You will have news of your families. I shall see the children...»

«And what about this evening? Where shall we sleep? In town? Where? Where Your Mother is? Or at Johanna's?» asks Judas Iscariot.

«I do not know. Certainly not in town. Perhaps under some Galilean tent again...»

«But why?»

«Because I am the Galilean and I love my Fatherland. Let us go.»

They set out again, going up towards the field of the Galileans, which is on the Mount of Olives towards Bethany, and is all covered with white tents shining in the pleasant April sun.

590.22 ²²Jesus says: «My patient secretary, put here the vision: "The evening of Palm Sunday" (4th March 1945), and may My peace be with you.»

591. The evening at the Gethsemane. The apostles brought back to reality after the elation of the triumph.

4th March 1945.

591.1 ¹Jesus is with His apostles in the peace of the Garden of the Mount of Olives. It is evening. A tepid evening with a full moon. They are sitting on the natural seats that are the terraces of the olive-grove, on the first ones, which face the glade situated at the beginning of Gethsemane. The Kidron is gurgling among its stones and seems to be talking to itself. One can hear only the song of an odd nightingale or feel the breath of the breeze. Nothing else.

Jesus is speaking.

«After the triumph of this morning your spirits are quite different. What shall I say? That your minds are relieved? Oh! yes! From a human point of view they are relieved.

You entered the town trembling because of my words. Each of you seemed to fear that hired ruffians on the other side of the walls were ready to attack him and take him prisoner.

591.2 ²In every man there is another man who reveals himself in the

most dangerous hours.

There is the hero, who in the hours of greater danger emerges from the meek type of man that the world had always known him to be and had considered unimportant, the hero who faces a struggle saying: "Here I am", who says to the enemy, to an overbearing opponent: "Compete with me". And there is the saint who, while the others run away, struck with terror before wild people looking for victims, says: "Take me as a hostage and for your sacrifice. I will pay on behalf of everybody."

And there is the cynic who avails himself of the general misfortune and laughs over the bodies of the victims. There is the traitor, who has a courage of his own, that of evil. The traitor who is the amalgamation of the cynic with the coward, and that is also a category that reveals itself in dangerous hours. Because they cynically take advantage of a misfortune and in a cowardly way they join the stronger party, daring to face the scorn of enemies and the curses of the forlorn, provided they make a profit. Lastly there is the most widespread type, the coward who in the dangerous hour can but repent of having made known that he belonged to a party and to a man, now struck with anathema, and runs away... Such a coward is not so criminal as the cynic or so revolting as the traitor. But he always shows the imperfection of his spiritual structure. You... are such. Do not say that you are not. I can read consciences.

³This morning you were thinking among yourselves: "What will happen to us? Are we going to our death as well?" And your lower part was moaning: "When ever!..." Yes. 591.3

But have I ever deceived you? With My first words I spoke to you of persecutions and death. And when one of you, through excess of admiration, wanted to see Me and introduce Me as a king, as one of the poor kings of the Earth, always a poor king even if the king and restorer of the kingdom of Israel, I immediately corrected the error and I said: "I am king of the spirit. I offer hardships, sacrifices, sorrows. I have nothing else. I have nothing else here on the Earth. But after My death and your death in My faith, I will give you an eternal Kingdom, the Kingdom of Heaven." Did I perhaps say something different to you? No. You say I did not.

And then you also said: "This is all we want: we want to be

with You, and to be treated, to suffer like You, for You." Yes. That is what you said. And you were sincere.

Because you were reasoning like children, like thoughtless children. You thought that it was easy for you to follow Me, and you were so full of the treble sensuality that you could not admit that what I was mentioning to you was true. You thought: "He is the Son of God. He is saying that to test our love. No man will be able to strike Him. Since He works miracles, He will be able to work a great one for Himself!" And each of you would add: "I cannot believe that He may be betrayed, captured, killed." Your human faith in My power was so strong that you went to the extent of not having faith in My words, the true, spiritual, holy and sanctifying Faith.

"He Who works miracles will certainly work one in His own favour!" you were saying.

I will work not one, but many more. And two of them will be such as no mind of man can possibly imagine. They will be such as only the believers in the Lord can acknowledge. All other people, to the end of time, will say: "Impossible!" And even after my death I shall be the object of contradiction for many.

591.4 ⁴On a mild spring morning from a mountain I announced the various beatitudes. There is still another one: "Blessed are those who can believe without seeing." Going through Palestine I have already said: "Blessed are those who listen to the word of God and keep it", and also: "Blessed are those who do the will of God" and I said many more, because in the house of My Father many are the joys awaiting saints. But there is also this one. Oh! Blessed are those who will believe without seeing with the eyes of their bodies! They will be so holy that, although on the Earth, they already see God, the God hidden in the Mystery of love.

But after being with Me for three years, you have not yet arrived at that faith. And you believe only what you see. So, as from this morning, after the triumph, you are saying: "It is just what we said. He is triumphing. And we with Him." And, like birds that are fledging again after their feathers have been torn off by some cruel person, you are flying off, beside yourselves with joy, sure of yourselves, free from the constraints that My words had put in your hearts. Are you more relieved also in your spirits? No, your spirits are even less relieved. Because you are even less pre-

pared for the impending hour. You have drunk the hosannas like a strong agreeable wine. And you are inebriated with it. Is an inebriated man ever strong? The little hand of a child is sufficient to make him stagger and fall. That is what you are like. And the sight of hired ruffians will be enough to make you run away like timid gazelles, which see the sharp muzzle of a jackal appear near the rock of a mountain and, as fast as the wind, they scatter through the solitude of the desert.

⁵Oh! make sure you do not die of dreadful thirst in that burning arena, which is the world without God! My dear friends, do not say* what Isaiah says referring to this false and dangerous state of your spirits. Do not say: "He speaks of nothing but conspiracies. But there is nothing to fear, nothing to be afraid of. We must not be afraid of what He prophesies to us. Israel loves Him. And we have seen that." How often the delicate bare foot of a little boy treads on the grass of a flowery meadow, picking flowers to take them to his mother, and he thinks that he will find only stems and flowers, and instead he lays his heel on the head of a snake, and is bitten by it and dies! The flowers were concealing the snake. Also this morning... that happened also this morning! I am the Condemned man crowned with roses. Roses!... How long do roses last? What is left of them once their corollas shed their snow-white scented petals? Thorns.

I - Isaiah said so - shall be for you, and with you I say that I shall be the sanctuary for the world, but also the stumbling-stone, the chief culprit, the snare and ruin for Israel and the Earth. I will sanctify those who have goodwill and I will overthrow and crush those who have an evil will. The angels do not speak false words or words that last a short time. They come from God, Who is Truth and is Eternal, and what they say is the truth and their words are immutable. They said: "Peace to men of goodwill". Then, o Earth, Your Saviour was born. Now your Redeemer is going to His death. But to have peace from God, that is, sanctification and glory, it is necessary to have "goodwill".

Useless is My birth, useless My death for those who do not have that goodwill. My crying and My death rattle, My first step and the last one, the wound of My circumcision and that of My

* say, in: Isaiah 8,12-16 for the following quotations also.

consummation, will have been of no avail if in you, if in men, there is not the goodwill to redeem and sanctify yourselves. And I say to you: A very large number of people will stumble against Me, whilst I am placed as a supporting pillar, and not as a snare for man, and they will fall because, being inebriated with pride, lust and avarice, they will be entrapped in the net of their own sins, caught and handed over to Satan. Keep these words in your hearts and seal them for future disciples.

591.6 ⁶Let us go. The Stone is rising. Another step forward. Upon the mountain. It must shine on the summit because He is the Sun, the Light, the East. And the Sun shines on summits. It must be on the mountain, because the true Temple is to be seen from all over the world. And I am building it by Myself with the living Stone of My sacrificed Body. I will cement its parts with the lime made with sweat and blood. And I shall be on My throne clothed in bright purple, wearing a new crown, and those who are far away will come to Me, they will work in My Temple, around it. I am the base and the summit. But all around, the abode will expand wider and wider. And I will shape My stones and form My handicraftsman Myself, As I was worked on with a chisel by My Father, by Love, by man and by Hatred, so I will work on them. After the wickedness of the Earth has been removed in only one day, the seven eyes will come to the stone of the eternal Priest to see God, and the seven fountains will flow to defeat Satan's fire.

Satan... Judas, let us go. And remember that time is running short and the Lamb is to be handed over by Thursday evening.»

592. Holy Monday. Comfort to the mother of Annaleah. The meeting with the roman soldier Vitale. The unfruitful fig-tree and the parable of the evil vine-dressers. The questions on Jesus' authority and on John's baptism.

31st March 1947.

592.1 ¹Jesus comes out early from the tent of a Galilean, on the tableland on the Mount of Olives, where many Galileans gather on the occasion of solemn festivities. The Field is all asleep, lit up by the moon that is setting slowly, enveloping tents; trees and

slopes, and the town asleep down there at the bottom, in a white-silvery light...

Jesus passes resolutely and silently among the tents, and once He is out of the Field, He goes down fast along the steep slopes towards Gethsemane, He passes through it, comes out of it, He crosses the little bridge over the Kidron, a silver ribbon singing to the moon, He arrives at the Gate watched over by legionaries. This night watch at the closed Gates is probably a precautionary measure of the Proconsul. The soldiers, four in all, are speaking sitting on large stones placed as seats against the massive wall, and they are warming themselves at a little fire of dry twigs that casts a reddish light on the shining loricas and stern helmets, under which appear faces so different, in their Italic features, from those of the Hebrews.

«Who is there!» asks the first one who sees Jesus' tall figure appear from behind the corner of a little house near the Gate, and he grasps a sharp-pointed spear that was leaning against the nearby wall, and he stands in the prescribed attitude, imitated by the others. And without giving Jesus time to reply he says: «No one is allowed to come in. Don't you know that this is the end of the second watch?»

«I am Jesus of Nazareth. My mother is in town, I am going to Her.»

«Oh the Man Who brought back from the dead the man of Bethany! By Jove! I shall see him at last!» And he approaches Him looking at Him curiously, walking around Him, as if he wished to make sure that it is not something unreal, something strange, but a man like everybody else. And he says so: «Oh! My goodness! He is as handsome as Apollo, but He is made exactly like us! And he has neither baton, nor cap, nor any sign of His power!» He is perplexed. Jesus looks at him patiently, smiling gently.

The others, who are not so curious - they have probably already seen Jesus on other occasions - say: «It would have been a good thing if He had been there half way through the first watch, when the beautiful girl, who died this morning, was taken to her sepulchre. We would have seen her rise...»

Jesus kindly repeats: «May I go to my Mother?»

The four soldiers pull themselves together. The senior says:

«Actually, according to instructions, we should not let anybody pass. But You would pass just the same. He who forces the doors of Hades, can easily force the gates of a closed town. And You are not a man who will provoke rebellions. So the prohibition does not apply to You. Try not to be seen by the patrol in town. Open the gate, Marcus Gratus. And You, go in noiselessly. We are soldiers and we must obey...»

«Be not afraid. Your kindness will not become a punishment for you.»

One of the legionaries cautiously opens the wicket-door within the huge main door and says: «Be quick. The second watch ends shortly and we shall be replaced by the guards.»

«Peace be with you.»

«We are warriors...»

«The peace I give lasts also in wartime, because it is the peace of the soul.»

And Jesus enters the dark arch opened in the thick wall. He passes silently before the guard-room, through the door of which comes the flickering light of an oil lamp, hanging from a hook of the low ceiling, and which allows one to see the bodies of soldiers sleeping on mats laid on the floor, all wrapped in their mantles, with their weapons beside them.

592.2 ²Jesus is in town by now... and I lose sight of Him, while I watch two of the previous soldiers go back in, after watching to see whether Jesus had gone away, before waking the sleeping soldiers for the change.

«He can no longer be seen... I wonder what he meant by those words. I should have liked to know» says the younger one.

«You should have asked Him. He does not despise us. He is the only Jew who does not look down on us and does not annoy us in any way» replies the other one, who is in full manhood.

«I did not dare. How could I, a peasant from Benevento, speak to a man Who is said to be God?»

«A god riding a donkey? Ha! Ha! If He were as drunk as Bacchus, He might do that. But He is not drunk. I don't think He even drinks honeyed wine. Don't you see how wan and lean He is?»

«And yet the Hebrews...»

«They do drink, although they pretend they don't And ine-

briated with the strong wines of this land and with their strong drinks, they have seen god in a man. Believe me. The gods are idle stories. Olympus is empty and the Earth has none.»

« If they heard you...»

«Are you still childish to the extent of not being a candidate and not knowing that Caesar himself does not believe in the gods, neither do the pontifices, the augurs, the haruspices, the Arval brethren, the vestal virgins, or anybody else?»

«Why then...?»

«Why the rites? Because people like them, they are useful to the priest and Caesar avails himself of them to be obeyed, as if he were an earthly god held by the hand by the Olympian gods. But the first not to believe are those whom we venerate as ministers of the gods. I am pyrrhonian. I have traveled around the world. I have had many experiences. My hair has become grey at my temples and my way of thinking has matured. My personal code consists of three sentences. To love Rome, the only goddess and the only certainty, to the extent of sacrificing my life for her. To believe nothing, because everything around us is an illusion, with the exception of our sacred immortal Fatherland. We must doubt even ourselves, because it is not certain whether we live.

Senses and reason are not sufficient to make us know for certain that we have succeeded in knowing the Truth and to live and to die are of the same value, because we do not know what it is to live and what is to die» he says, affecting the philosophic skepticism of a superior mind...

The other one looks at Him doubtfully. He then says: «I, instead, believe. And I should like to know... To learn from that man who has just gone by. He certainly knows the Truth. Something strange emanates from Him. It is a light that penetrates you!»

«May Aesculapius save you! You are ill! You came up to town from the valley only a short time ago, and those who make that journey and are not acclimatised to these surroundings become easily feverish. Your mind is wandering. Come. Only warm wine with spices can make you sweat the poison of Jordan fever...» and he pushes him towards the guard-room.

But the other one frees himself saying: «I am not ill. I don't want any warm spiced wine. I want to watch over there, beyond

the walls (he points at the inner side of the walls) and wait for the man who said He is Jesus.»

«If you don't mind waiting... I am going to wake up the men for the change. Goodbye...»

And he goes into the guard-room noisily, awaking his companions and shouting: «Your time is up. Come on, you lazy idlers! I am tired!...» He yawns noisily and curses, because they have let the fire go out and they have drunk all the warm wine «so necessary to dry the Palestinian dew...»

The other one, the young legionary, leaning against the wall, illuminated lightly by the moon from the west, is waiting for Jesus to retrace His steps. The stars are watching over his hope...

592.3 ³In the meantime Jesus has arrived at Lazarus' house on the hill of Zion and knocks at the door. Levi opens it to Him.

«You, Master?! The ladies are sleeping. Why did You not send a servant, if You needed something?»

«They would not have let him pass.»

«Ah! that is true! But how did You pass?»

«I am Jesus of Nazareth. And the legionaries let Me pass. But it is not to be divulged, Levi.»

«I will not mention it... They are better than many of us!»

«Take Me where my Mother is sleeping and do not wake anybody else in the house.»

«As You wish, Lord. Lazarus has ordered all the managers of his houses to obey You in everything without any discussion or delay. It was just after dawn when a servant, many servants took his order to all the houses. *Obey and be quiet.* We will do that. You gave our master back to us...»

The man trots ahead of Jesus along the corridors, as wide as galleries, of Lazarus' wonderful mansion on the hill of Zion, and the light he is carrying in his hands illuminates in a fantastic manner the furniture and tapestry adorning the wide corridors.

The man stops at a closed door saying: «Your Mother is in there.»

«You may go.»

«And what about the light? Do You not want it? I can go back without it. I know the house very well. I was born here.»

«Leave it. And do not take the key out of the door. I am going out at once.»

«You know where to find me. I will lock it as a precaution. But I shall be ready to open the door for You as soon as You come.»

⁴Jesus remains alone. He knocks lightly, such a light knock that only one wide awake can hear it. 592.4

There is a noise in the room, as of a chair being moved, and a light shuffling of feet, and a low subdued voice asks: «Who is knocking?»

«It is I, Mother. Open the door.» The door is opened at once. Only the moonlight illuminates the quiet room and spreads its rays on an untouched bed. A chair is near the window wide open on the mystery of the night.

«Were You not sleeping yet? It is late!»

«I was praying... Come, Son. Sit here where I was» and She points at the chair near the window.

«I cannot stop. I have come to get You and go to Eliza at Ophel. Annaleah is dead. Did You not know?»

«No. Nobody... When, Jesus?»

«After I passed.»

«After You passed*! So You were the liberating Angel for her?! The Earth was such a prison for her! Happy girl! I wish I were in her place! Did she die... of a natural death? I mean: not by a misfortune?»

«She died of the joy of loving. I was told when I was already on the slope of the Temple. Come with Me, Mother. We are not afraid of profaning ourselves to comfort a mother who held in her arms her daughter who died of supernatural joy... Our first virgin! The one who came to You at Nazareth, to see Me and ask Me to give her this joy... Remote peaceful days.»

«The other day she was singing like a blackcap in love and she kissed Me saying: "I am happy!", and she was eager to hear everything about You. How God formed You. How He chose Me. And My first throbs of a consecrated virgin... Now I understand... ⁵I am ready, Son.» 592.5

Mary, while speaking, has put up her plaits that were hanging down her shoulders, making her look like a young girl, and She has put on her veil and mantle.

They go out making the least possible noise. Levi is already

* passed, it is said with reference to: Exodus 12,12-13.

near the main door. He explains why saying: «I preferred so... Because of my wife... Women are curious. She would have asked me dozens of questions. Instead she does not know...»

He opens the door and is about to close it. Jesus says: «I will bring my Mother back during this watch.»

«I shall be watching here. Do not be afraid.»

«Peace to you.»

They go along the silent empty streets, from which the moonlight is slowly withdrawing, while it still shines on the tops of the tall houses on the hill of Zion. It is brighter in the suburb of Ophel where the modest houses are lower.

592.6 ⁶Here is Annaleah's house, Closed, dark, silent. Some withered flowers are still lying on the two steps of the house. Perhaps they were thrown by the virgin before she died, or they fell off her coffin... Jesus knocks at the door. He knocks again...

The noise of a window opened on the upper part of the building. A dejected voice asks: «Who is knocking?»

«Mary and Jesus of Nazareth» replies Mary. «Oh! I am coming!...»

A short wait, then the noise of the sliding bars. The door is opened showing the worn out face of Eliza, who is holding on with difficulty the door-post, and when Mary going in stretches her arms towards her, she collapses on her breast, sobbing faintly like one who has wept so much as to have no tears or voice left.

Jesus closes the door patiently waiting for His Mother to soothe so much grief. There is a room close to the door. They go into it and Jesus takes the lamp that Eliza had laid on the floor of the entrance before opening the door. The tears of the mother seem to be endless. She speaks to Mary sobbing hoarsely. A mother is speaking, the Mother... Jesus, standing to against a wall, is silent...

592.7 ⁷Eliza cannot resign herself to that death, that happened so... And in her grief she blames Samuel, the perjurious fiance, for it: «That cursed man broke her heart! She never said anything, But I wonder for how long she had been suffering! And in her joy, in shouting, her heart broke. May he be cursed forever.»

«No, My dear. No. Do not curse, It is not so. God loved her so much that He wanted her in His peace. But even if she had died because of Samuel - it is not so, but let us suppose so for a mo-

ment - consider what a joyful death she had, and say that the wicked deed brought about a happy death for her.»

«I no longer have her! She is dead! She is dead! You do not know what it is to lose a daughter! Twice I have tasted that sorrow. Because I was already weeping over her, as she was as good as dead, when Your Son cured her. But now... But now... He did not come back! He did not have mercy... I have lost her! Lost! My child is already in her grave! Do You know what it means to see a son in the throes of death? To know that he must die? To see him dead, when one thought he had recovered and was strong? You do not know. You cannot say anything... She was as beautiful as a rose that had just opened in the early sunshine, when she was adorning herself this morning. She had wanted to adorn herself with the dress I had made for her wedding. She was also intending to crown herself as a bride. Then she preferred to undo the garland, that was ready, and pluck the flowers to throw them to Your Son, and she sang! She sang! Her voice filled the house. She was as graceful as springtime. Joy made her eyes shine like stars, and her parted lips showing her white teeth were a delicate pomegranate red, and her cheeks were as rosy and fresh as spring roses adorned with dew. And she became as white as a lily that had just opened. And she bent on my breast like a broken stem...

Not another word! Not a sigh! No longer colourful. Not a glance. As placid and beautiful as an angel of God, but lifeless. ^{592.8}As You are rejoicing in the triumph of Your Son, and He is healthy and strong, You do not know what my grief is like Why did He not come back? In what had she displeased Him, and I with her, that He did not hear my prayer?»

«Eliza! Eliza! Do not say... Grief is making you blind and deaf. Eliza, you are not aware of My suffering. And you do not know what a deep sea my suffering will become. You saw she was placid and beautiful when she relaxed in peace. In your arms. I... I have been contemplating my Child for over thirty years and, beyond the smooth clean body that I contemplate and caress, I see the wounds of the Man of sorrows that my Son will be. You who say that I do not know what it is to see a son go to his death twice, and to die once and remain thus in peace, do you know what it means to a mother to see such a vision for so many years? My Son! Here He is. He is already dressed in red, as if He were

coming out of a bath of blood. And soon, before long, the face of your daughter will not yet have become dark in her serious, and I shall see Him dressed it: the purple of His innocent Blood. Of the Blood that I gave Him. And while you received your daughter on your heart, do you know what my sorrow will be like, seeing my Son die like a criminal on a cross of wood? Look at Him, the Saviour of everybody! In their spirits and in their flesh. Because the flesh of those saved by Him will be incorrupt and blessed in His Kingdom. And look at Me! Look at this Mother Who continually accompanies and takes Her Son to the Sacrifice! Oh! I would not hold Him back one step! I can understand you, poor mother. But try and understand my heart! Do not hate My Son. Annaleah would not have been able to put up with the agony of her Lord. And her Lord made her blessed in an hour of jubilation.»

592.9 ⁹Eliza has stopped weeping upon hearing this revelation. She stares at Mary, Whose pale face of a martyr is wet with silent tears, she looks at Jesus, Who is looking at her pitifully... and she kneels at Jesus' feet moaning: «But she is dead! She is dead, Lord! Like a lily, a broken lily. The poets say* that You take delight in lilies! Oh! really, You, born of the lily-Mary, often come down among flowery flower-beds, and You turn purple roses into snow-white lilies, and You pick them removing them from the world. Why? Why, Lord? Is it not fair that a mother should enjoy the rose born of her? Why extinguish its purple in the cold whiteness of death of a lily?»

«Lilies! They will be the symbol of those women who love Me as my Mother loved God. The snow-white flower-bed of the Divine King.»

«But we mothers shall weep. We mothers have a right to our children. Why deprive them of life?»

«I do not mean that, woman. The daughters will remain, but consecrated to the King, like the virgins in the palaces of Solomon. Remember the Song... And they will be spouses, the beloved, on the Earth and in Heaven.»

«But my daughter is dead! She is dead!» And she resumes weeping in a heart-rending manner.

«I am the Resurrection and Life. Who believes in Me, even

* The poets say, perhaps referring to: Song of Songs 2,1-2.16; 6,2-3. Farther down Jesus probably refers to: Song of Songs 6,8-9; 8,4.

if he dies, will live, and I solemnly tell you that he will never die. Your daughter is living. She will live forever because she believed in Life. My Death will be complete Life for her. She was aware of the Joy of living in Me before being aware of the grief of seeing Me torn away from life. Your sorrow makes you blind and deaf, as my mother rightly says. You will soon be repeating the word I sent you this morning: "Her death was really a grace of God." Believe Me, woman. Horror is hanging over this place. And the day will come when mothers who have been struck like you, will say: "Praised be God Who spared our children these days." And the mothers who have not been struck will cry to Heaven: "Why, o God, did You not kill your children before this hour?" Believe Me, woman.

Believe my words. Do not raise between Annaleah and yourself the real barrier that separates people, that of the difference of faith. See? I could have refrained from coming. You know how much I am hated. Do not let the triumph of one hour deceive you!... Every corner may conceal a trap for Me. And I have come alone, at night, to console you and speak these words to you. I pity the sorrow of a mother. But I have come to say these words to you for the peace of your soul. Peace be with you! Peace!»

«Give me it, Lord! I cannot! In my grief I cannot set my mind at rest. But You, Who give life back to the dead and health to the dying, give peace to the heart of a mother torn by grief.»

«Let it be so, woman. Peace to you.» He imposes His hands on her, blessing her and praying silently over her. Mary has also knelt down beside Eliza, embracing her with Her arm.

¹⁰«Goodbye, Eliza, I am going...»

592.10

«Shall we not meet again, Lord? I shall not leave my house for many days, and You will be going away after the Passover festivities. You... are still part of my daughter somehow... because Annaleah... because Annaleah lived in You and for You.» She weeps. More calmly, but how much she weeps! Jesus looks at her... He caresses her grey-haired head and He says to her: «You will see Me again.»

«When?»

«In eight nights' time as from tonight.»

«And will You comfort me again? Will You bless me to give strength?»

«My heart will bless you with all the fullness of my love for those who love Me. Come, Mother.»

«Son, if You will allow Me, I should like to remain a little long with this mother.

Sorrow is a billow that comes back again, after He Who gives peace has gone away... I will come back at the first hour. I am not afraid to come by Myself. You know that.

And You know that I would pass through a whole enemy army to console a brother of Mine in God.»

«As You wish. I am going. God be with you.»

He goes out silently, closing the door of the room and that the house.

592.11 ¹¹He goes back to the walls, to the Gate of Ephraim, or the Stercoral or Dung Gate, because I have heard several times these two Gates, which are close to each other, mentioned with these three names, perhaps because one opens on the Jericho road, which is at the bottom, a road that takes one to Ephraim, and the other is close to the Hinnom valley, where the rubbish of the town is burnt, and they are so alike that I confuse them.

It is just beginning to dawn on the eastern side of the sky, which however, is still crowded with stars. The streets are enveloped in a dim light that is more tedious than the darkness of the night, that was moderated by the white light of the moon. But the Roman soldier has good sight, and as soon as he sees Jesus advancing towards the Gate, he goes to meet Him.

«Hail. I have been waiting for You...» He stops hesitating.

«Speak up without any fear. What do you want of Me?»

«To know. You said: "The peace that I give lasts also in war-time because it is the peace of the soul." I should like to know what peace it is, and what is the soul. How can a man, who is at war, be at peace. The temple of Peace is closed when Janus' is opened. The two things cannot be together in the world.»

He is speaking leaning against the low greenish wall of a kitchen garden, in a lane as narrow as a path running through fields, among poor houses, a damp, gloomy, dark lane. Apart from a glimmer showing the burnished helmet, nothing else can be noticed of the two who are speaking. The shadow envelopes their faces and bodies in complete darkness.

Jesus' voice sounds mild and bright because of His joy in

throwing a seed of light into the heathen. «It is true, peace and war cannot be together in the world. One excludes the other. But in a warrior there can be peace even if he is ordered to fight in a war. My peace can be in him. Because my peace comes from Heaven and it is not upset by the rumble of war or the ferocity of massacres. A divine thing, it invades the divine thing that man has within himself, and is named soul.»

«Divine? In me? Caesar is divine. I am the son of peasants. Now I am a private soldier. If I am valiant, I may become a centurion. But not divine.»

«There is a divine part in you. It is the soul. It comes from God. From the true God. So it is divine, a living gem in man, and it nourishes itself and lives with divine things: faith, peace, truth. War does not upset it. Persecutions do not injure it. Death does not kill it. Evil only, doing what is ugly, wounds or kills it, and also deprives it of the peace that I grant. Because evil separates man from God.»

«And what is evil?»

¹²«To be in heathenism and worship idols when the goodness of the true God has made one know that there is the true God. Not to love one's father, mother, brothers and one's neighbour. To steal, to kill, to be rebellious, to be lustful, to be false. That is evil.»

«Ah! then I cannot have Your peace! I am a soldier and I am ordered to kill. So there is no salvation for us?!»

«Be as just in wartime as you are in peace-time. Do your duty without cruelty and without avidity. While fighting and conquering, consider that your enemy is like you, and that every town has mothers and girls like your mother and your sisters, and be brave without being a brute. You will not move away from justice and peace, and My peace will remain in you.»

«And then?»

«And then? What do you mean?»

«After my death? What will happen to the good I have done and to the soul, that You say does not die if one does not do evil things?»

«It lives. It lives adorned with the good it has done, in a joyful peace, greater than the one any man enjoys on the Earth.»

«So in Palestine only one person had done good! I see.»

«Who?»

«Lazarus of Bethany. His soul did not die!»

«Truly, he is a just man. But many are like him, and they die without being raised from the dead, but their souls live in the true God. Because the soul has another abode, in the Kingdom of God. And those who believe in Me will enter into that Kingdom.»

«Even I, a Roman?»

«You as well, if you believe in the Truth.»

«What is the Truth?»

«I am the Truth and the Way to go to the Truth, and I am the Life and I give the Life, because those who accept the Truth accept the Life.»

592.13 ¹³The young soldier is pensive..., silent... Then he raises his face. The still pure face of a young man, and he smiles, a limpid, serene smile. He says: «I will try to remember all this and to learn even more. I like it...»

«What is your name?»

«Vital. From Benevento. From the countryside of that town.»

«I will remember your name. Make your spirit really vital by nourishing it with the Truth. Goodbye. The Gate is being open I am leaving the town.»

«Hail!»

Jesus goes quickly to the Gate and hastens along the road leading to the Kidron and to Gethsemane and thence to the Field of Galileans.

592.14 ¹⁴Among the olive-trees of the mountain He meets with Judas Kerioth, who is also going up fast towards the Field, which is awaking. Judas makes a gesture as if he were frightened finding himself in front of Jesus. Jesus looks at him fixedly, without speaking.

«I went to take food to the lepers. But... I found two at Hinnom, five at Siloam. The others, cured. They are still there, but they are cured so well that they asked me to inform the priest. I had gone down at daybreak, to be free later. It will cause a stir. Such a large number of lepers cured at the same time after You blessed them in the presence of so many people!»

Jesus does not speak. He lets him speak... He does not say: «You did the right thing», or anything else concerning Judas'

action on the miracle, but stopping suddenly and staring at the apostle He asks him: «Well? The fact that I left you freedom and money, what change has it made?»

«What do You mean?»

«This: I am asking you whether you have sanctified yourself since I gave you back freedom and money. And you understand Me... Ah! Judas! Bear it in mind! Always bear it in mind: you are the one whom I loved more than anybody else, receiving from you less love than all the others have given Me. Nay, I received hatred greater, because it is the hatred of one whom I treated as a friend, than the fiercest hatred of the fiercest Pharisee. And remember also this: that not even now I hate you, but as far as the Son of man is concerned. I forgive you. Go, now. Nothing more is to be said between you and Me. Everything has already been done...».

Judas would like to say something, but Jesus with an authoritative gesture beckons to him to go on... And Judas, his head lowered like a defeated man, goes on...

¹⁵At the boundary of the Field of the Galileans, the apostles ^{592.15} and Lazarus' two servants are ready.

«Where have You been, Master? And you, Judas? Were you together?»

Jesus prevents Judas' reply saying: «I had something to say to some hearts. Judas went to the lepers... But they are all cured, except seven.»

«Oh! why did you go? I wanted to come, too!» says the Zealot.

«To be free now to come with us. Let us go. We shall enter into town by the Sheep Gate. Let us make haste» says Jesus again.

¹⁶He is the first to set out, passing through the olive-groves ^{592.16} that take one from the Field, situated almost half-way between Bethany and Jerusalem, to the other little bridge that spans the Kidron near the Sheep Gate.

Some houses of peasants are scattered along the slopes, and almost at the bottom, near the water of the torrent, a ruffled fig-tree dangles over the stream. Jesus heads towards it and He searches among the large thick leaves to see whether there are any ripe figs. But the fig-tree is nothing but leaves, many useless leaves, but there is not one fruit on its branches.

«You are like many hearts in Israel. You are neither kind nor

pitiful to the Son of man. May you never bear fruit again and may no one ever eat of your fruit in future» says Jesus.

The apostles look at one another. They are surprised at Jesus' anger at the barren tree, which is probably a wild one. But they do not say anything. Only later, after crossing the Kidron, Peter asks Him: «Where did You eat?»

«Nowhere.»

«Oh! Then You are hungry! There is a shepherd over there pasturing some goats. I will go and ask for some milk for You. I will not be long» and he strides away and comes back cautiously with an old bowl full of milk.

Jesus drinks it and with a caress He hands the bowl back to the young shepherd who had come with Peter...

592.17

¹⁷They enter into the town and go up to the Temple and, after worshipping the Lord, Jesus goes back to the court where the rabbis teach.

People crowd around Him, and a mother, who has come from Cintium, shows Him her little boy whom a disease, I think, has made blind. His eyes are white, as if he had a large cataract over his pupil or a leucoma. Jesus cures him touching his eyes lightly with his fingers. And He immediately begins to speak: «A man bought a piece of ground and planted a vineyard in it, he built a house for the husbandmen, a tower for the caretakers, wine-cellar and places where to press the grapes, and he leased it to tenants whom he trusted. Then he went abroad. When the time came that the vineyard could bear fruit, as the vines had grown to the extent of being fruit-bearing, the owner of the vineyard sent his servants to the tenants to collect the profit of the harvest. But the tenants surrounded the servants and they beat some, they stoned some with heavy stones wounding them seriously, and they killed some of them. Those who had survived and had gone back to the landowner, told him what had happened to them. The owner cured and comforted them and sent more servants, this time a larger number. And the tenants dealt with them as they had done with the previous ones. Then the owner of the vineyard said: "I will send my son to them. They will certainly respect my heir." But the tenants, when they saw him come and they realised that he was the heir, said to one another: "Come. Let us gather together in a large number. Let us take him out, to a re-

mote place, and kill him. His inheritance will be left to us. " And, receiving him with hypocritical honours, they gathered around him as if they wished to give a hearty welcome, then, after kissing him, they tied him, they gave him a good thrashing, and with endless mocking words they took him to the place of torture and killed him. Now tell Me. That father and owner, who one day will realise that his son and heir to his property is not coming back, and he finds out that his servant-tenants, to whom he had given his land to cultivate in his name enjoying a fair share of it and giving what was fair to their master are the murderers of his son, what will he do? » and Jesus' sapphire eyes, as bright as if they were lit by the sun, flash on the people present, and particularly on the groups of the more influential Judaeans, Pharisees and scribes, scattered among the crowd.

No one speaks.

«So, speak up! At least you, rabbis of Israel. Speak the word of justice to convince the people to be just. I might speak a word that is not good, according to your minds. So I ask you to speak, so that the people may not be led into error. »

The scribes are compelled to reply and they say: «He will punish the wicked men with a cruel death and will give the vineyard to other tenants, so that they may cultivate it in an honest manner, giving him the fruit of land entrusted to them. »

«What you said is correct. In the Scriptures it is written*: "The stone rejected by the builders has become the keystone. This is the work of the Lord and it is wonderful to see. " Therefore, as it is written thus, and you know, and you rightly judge that those tenants who killed the son and heir of the owner of the vineyard should be punished in a cruel manner and the vineyard should be given to other tenants to be cultivated in an honest way, well, that is why I say to you: "The Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and will be given to people to make it yield fruit. And he who falls against this stone will break in pieces, and he upon whom the stone falls, will be crushed". »

¹⁸The chief priests, the Pharisees and scribes, with a real-
ly... heroic attitude, do not react. So powerful is the eagerness

592. 18

* it is written, in: Psalm 118, 22-23.

to reach one's aim! On past occasions they at least opposed Him, whereas today, when the Lord Jesus openly tells them that their power will be taken away from them, they do not abuse Him, they do not react violently against Him, they do not threaten Him, behaving like false patient lambs, that under the hypocritical appearance of meekness conceal the unchangeable hearts of wolves.

They just approach Him, as He has resumed walking backwards and forwards, listening to this one and that one of the many pilgrims who have gathered in the wide court, many of whom ask Him for advice for cases concerning their souls or family or social situations, and they wait to be able to say something to Him after hearing Him give His opinion to a man on a complicated matter of inheritance, which has brought about discord and ill-feeling among several heirs, because of a son their father had to a maidservant of the household and whom he adopted. The legitimate sons do not want the illegitimate one to stay with them, neither do they wish to have him joint heir in the sharing of houses and fields, as they do not want to have anything further to do with him. But they do not know how to settle the matter, because their father before dying made them swear that, as he had always divided the bread among the illegitimate son and the legitimate ones in equal parts, so they had to share out the inheritance in equal measure with him.

Jesus says to the man who is consulting Him on behalf of his three brothers: «Each of you should give up a piece of ground and sell it, in order to put together the money equivalent to one fifth of the total patrimony, and give it to the illegitimate son saying: "Here is your share. You are not being cheated out of what belongs to you, neither have we wronged our father's will. Go and God be with you." And give plentifully, even more than the exact value of his share. Do so in the presence of just witnesses, and no one on the Earth or beyond the Earth will be able to utter a word of reproach or give rise to a scandal. And there will be peace among you and in you, as you will not feel remorse for disobeying your father, and you will not have with you him who, although really innocent, upsets you more than if he were a highwayman placed among you.»

The man says: «The illegitimate son really upset the peace of our family, he ruined the health of my mother who died of grief, and usurped a place that did not belong to him.»

Man, he is not guilty, but he who procreated him is to be blamed. He did not ask to be born and bear the mark of illegitimacy. It was the covetousness of your father who begot him to hand him over sorrow and to grieve you. Be therefore just towards the innocent man who is already painfully expiating a sin that is not his. Do not let the spirit of your father be anathema to you. God has judged him. Your curses are not required. Always honour your father, even if he is guilty, not for himself, but because he represented your God on the Earth, as he created you by God's decree and because he is the lord of your house. Parents come immediately after God. Remember the Decalogue. And do not sin. Go in peace.»

¹⁹The priests and scribes approach Him then to question Him: 592.19
«We heard You. What You said is right. Not even Solomon could have given a wiser piece of advice. But since You work wonders You give advice such as only the wise king could give, tell us what authority have You to do such things? Whence does such power come to You?»

Jesus stares at them. He is neither aggressive nor contemptuous but He is very imposing. He says: «I also have a question to ask you, and if you reply to Me, I will tell you by which authority I, a poor man without authority of offices - because that is what you mean - do these things. Tell Me: where did John's baptism come from? From Heaven or from the man who administered it? Reply to me By which authority did John administer it as a purifying rite prepare you for the coming of the Messiah, if John was even poorer and less learned than I am, and he had no office whatsoever as he lived in the desert since his childhood?»

The scribes and priests consult with one another. The people press around them, with wide-open eyes and pricked up ears, ready to protest if the scribes disqualify the Baptist and offend the Master, and to acclaim if they are defeated by the question of the divinely wise Rabbi of Nazareth. The dead silence of this crowd awaiting the reply is striking. It is so profound that the breathing and whispering of the priests and scribes can be heard, as they speak to one another almost without uttering words, and

in the meantime they glance at the people, whose feelings they realise are ready to explode.

At last they make up their minds and they reply. They turn towards the Christ Who, leaning against a column, His arms folded across His chest, scans their faces without ever losing sight of them, and they say: «Master, we do not know by which authority John did that or where his baptism came from. No one ever thought of asking the Baptist while he was alive, and he never mentioned it of his own accord.»

«And neither will I tell you by which authority I do such things.» And He turns his back to them calling the Twelve, and pushing his way through the cheering crowd, He leaves the Temple.

592.20 ²⁰When they are already out, beyond the Probatrica, as they came out on that side, Bartholomew says to Him: «Your enemies have become very prudent. Perhaps they are converting to the Lord Who sent You and will recognise You as the holy Messiah.»

«That is true. They did not discuss Your question or Your reply. ...» says Matthew.

«Let it be so. It is beautiful that Jerusalem should turn to the Lord her God» says Bartholomew again.

«Do not delude yourselves! That part of Jerusalem will never converted. They did not reply in a different manner because they were afraid of the crowd. I read their thoughts even if I could not hear their subdued words.»

«And what were they saying?» asks Peter.

«They were saying this. I want you to be acquainted with what they said, that you may know them thoroughly and you may give future disciples and exact description of the hearts of men in my days. They did not reply, not because they are turning to the Lord. But because they said to one another: "If we reply: 'The baptism of John came from Heaven', the Rabbi will say to us: 'Then why did you not believe what came from Heaven and was meant as a preparation for the Messianic time?'; and if we say: 'From man', then the crowds will turn against us saying: 'Then why do you not believe what our prophet John said of Jesus of Nazareth?' So it is better to say: 'We do not know.'" That is what they were saying. Not because they were being converted to God, but out of mean calculation and because they did not

want to have to admit with their own lips that I am the Christ and I do what I do because I am the Lamb of God of Whom the Precursor spoke. And neither did I wish to say by what authority I do the things I do. I have already said it many times within those walls and all over Palestine and my miracles speak even more than my words. Now I will no longer say it with my words. I will let the prophets and my Father and the signs of Heaven speak. Because the time has come when all the signs will be given. Those mentioned by the prophets and indicated by the symbols of our history, and those which I announced: the sign of Jonah; do you remember that day at Kedesh? It is the sign that Gamaliel is awaiting. You, Stephen, and you, Hermas, and you, Barnabas, who have left your companions to follow Me today, have certainly heard the rabbi speak of that sign several times. Well, the sign will soon be given.»

He goes away up through the olive-groves on the mountain, followed by his apostles and by many of his seventy-two disciples, beside others who, like Joseph Barnabas, follow Him to hear Him speak again.

²¹Jesus says: «You will put here the second part of the Monday, that is, the speeches delivered to My apostles during the night (vision of 6th March 1945).» ^{592.21}

593. Monday night at Gethsemane with the apostles.

6th March 1945.

¹In the evening, Jesus is still in the olive-grove. He is with His apostles. And He speaks again. ^{593.1}

«And another day has gone by. Now it is night-time and then tomorrow, and then the day after tomorrow, and then the Passover supper.»

«The women will also be there this year. Where are we having it?» asks Philip.

«And we have not made any arrangement yet, and the town is full beyond measure. The whole of Israel, including even the remotest proselyte, seems to have come to the rite» says Bartholomew.

Jesus looks at him and, as if He were reciting a psalm, He says*: «Gather together, make haste, come from everywhere to my victim whom I am immolating for you, to the great Victim immolated on the mountains of Israel, to eat its Flesh, to drink its Blood.»

593.2 ²«But which victim? Which? You look like one suffering from a fixed mad idea. You speak of nothing but death... and You grieve us» says Bartholomew passionately.

Jesus looks at him again, diverting his attention from Simon, who bends over James of Alphaeus and Peter chatting with them, and He says:

«What? Are you asking Me? You are not one of these little ones, who to be learned must receive the septiform light. You were already expert in the Scriptures before I called you by means of Philip, that mild spring morning. My springtime. And yet, you ask Me which is the victim immolated on the mountains, the one to which everybody will come to feed on? And you say that I am mad with a fixed idea because I speak of death? Oh! Bart! Like the cry of the watchmen, in your darkness that never opened to light, I uttered the announcing cry once, twice, three times. But you never wanted to understand. You suffered at the moment because of it, then... like children you soon forgot the words of death and you joyfully went back to your work, sure of yourselves and full of hope that your words and Mine would convince the world more and more to follow and love its Redeemer.

593.3 No. ³Only after the Earth has sinned against Me - and bear in mind that these are words of the Lord to His prophet - only afterwards, the people, and not only this one in particular, but the great people of Adam, will begin to moan saying: "Let us go to the Lord. He Who hurt us, will cure us." And the world of the Redeemed will say: "After two days, that is, two periods of eternity, during which he will have left us at the mercy of the Enemy, who will have struck and killed us with all kinds of weapons, as we struck the Holy One and killed Him - and we strike and kill Him, because there will always be the race of Cains who with blasphemy and evil deeds will kill the Son of God, the Redeem-

* says, taking from Ezekiel 39,17. Later on he will refer to: Ezekiel 14,12-13; Daniel 7; Hosea 6,1-6; 8,11-14; Malachi 1,10-11; 2,3-6 and will prelude to Apocalypse 11,15-17.

er, shooting mortal arrows not at His eternal glorified Person, but at their souls ransomed by Him, killing them, and therefore killing Him through their souls - only after these two periods the third day will come, and we shall rise from the dead in His presence in the Kingdom of Christ on the Earth and we shall live before Him in the triumph of the spirit. We shall know Him, we shall learn to know the Lord to be ready, by means of this true knowledge of God, to fight the last battle that Lucifer will join with man before the blast of the angel of the seventh trumpet, that will open the blissful chorus of the saints of God, with the number perfected forever - it will never be possible to add either the youngest baby or the oldest man to the number - the chorus that will sing: 'The poor kingdom of the Earth is over. The world with all its inhabitants has been passed in review before the conquering Judge. And the elect are now in the hands of our Lord and of His Christ, and He is our King forever. Praised be the Almighty Lord God Who is, Who was and Who will be, because He has taken His great power and has entered into possession of His Kingdom'".

Oh! who among you will be able to remember the words of this prophecy, already resounding in the words of Daniel, in a muted tone, and now roared by the voice of the Wise One before the astounded world and before you, who are more astounded than the world?! "The coming of the King - the world will continue, moaning in its wounds and enclosed in its sepulchre, evil in life and wicked in death, closed by its sevenfold vice and by its infinite heresies, the agonising spirit of the world closed with its last efforts within the organism, having died of leprosy because of all its errors - the coming of the King is prepared like that of dawn and will come to us like the rain in springtime and in autumn." Dawn is preceded and prepared by night. This is the night. The present one.

⁴And what must I do for you, Ephraim? What must I do for you, Judah?... Simon, Bart, Judas, and you, My cousins, you who are more experienced in the Book, do you recognise these words? They do not come from a mad spirit, but from one who possesses Wisdom and Science. Like a king who calmly opens his coffers, because he knows where a certain gem is, which he is looking for, as he put it in there himself, I quote the prophets. I am the Word.

593.4

For ages I spoke through human lips. And for ages I will speak through human lips. But all the supernatural that has been spoken is My word. Even the most learned and holy man would not be able to rise, with the soul of an eagle, beyond the limits of the blind world, to snatch and utter the eternal mysteries.

The future is "present" only in the Divine Mind. Foolish are those who claim to make prophecies and revelations, without being supported by Our Will. And God soon gives them the lie and strikes them, because only One can say: "I am", and say: "I see", and say: "I know". But when a Will that is not to be measured, that is not to be judged, that is to be accepted with bowed head, without discussion, saying: "Here I am", when such Will says: "Come, rise, hear, see, repeat", then the soul, immersed in the eternal present of its God, called by the Lord to be "voice", sees and trembles, sees and weeps, sees and rejoices; then the soul, called by the Lord to be "word", hears and, thrown into ecstasy or into the perspiration of agony, says the tremendous words of the Eternal God.

Because every word of God is tremendous, as it comes from Him Whose verdict is immutable and Whose Justice is inexorable and is addressed to men, too few of whom deserve love and blessings instead of anathema and conviction. Now this word, that is spoken and despised, is it not the cause of dreadful sin and punishment for those who reject it, after hearing it? It is.

593.5 ⁵And what else must I do for you, o Ephraim, o Judah, o world, that I have not done for you? I came loving you, o My Earth, and My word became a sword for you and it kills you because you loathed it. Oh! World, who kill your Saviour thinking that you are doing a just thing, you are so possessed by Satan that you do not understand any more which is the sacrifice that God exacts, the sacrifice of one's sin and not of an animal immolated and consumed with a foul soul! But what have I told you these last three years? What did I preach? I said: "Know God in His laws and in His nature". And I dried out, like a vase of porous clay exposed to the sun, spreading the vital knowledge of the Law and of God among you. And you have continued to offer holocausts, without ever offering the only necessary one: *the immolation of your evil will to the true God!*

Now the eternal God says to you, city of sin, faithless peo-

pie - and in the hour of the Judgement you will be lashed with a whip that will not be used for Rome and Athens, dull-witted towns that know neither language nor science, but which, when from eternal infants badly looked after by their nurses and being beastlike in their capabilities, will pass into the holy arms of My Church, My only sublime Spouse, by whom numberless children will be borne to Me worthy of the Christ, they will become adult and capable, and will give Me palaces and armies, temples and saints to people Heaven as if they were stars - now the eternal God says to you: "I no longer like you and I will not accept any gift from your hands. It is like dung to Me and I will throw it back on your faces and it will stick to them. I loathe your solemnities which are nothing but outward appearances. I will abolish My covenant with the stock of Aaron and I will give it to the sons of Levi because, here, this is My Levi, and with him I made a covenant of life and peace to last forever, and He was faithful to Me to the end of time, to the point of sacrifice. He had the holy fear of the Father and He trembled with wrath, feeling offended at the mere sound of My offended Name. He spoke the law of truth, and there was no iniquity on His lips, He walked with Me in peace and equity and He deterred many from sin. The time has come when the pure immaculate Host, pleasing to the Lord, will be sacrificed and offered to My Name everywhere, and no longer on the sole altar of Zion, because you do not deserve to offer it."

«Do you recognise the eternal words?»

593.6

«We recognise them, o Lord. And, believe us, we are depressed as if we had been struck. Is it not possible to deviate from our destiny?»

«Do you call it destiny, Bart?»

«I do not know any other name...»

«Atonement. That is the name. You do not offend the Lord, without making amends for the offence. And God the Creator was offended by the First man created. Since then the offence has increased more and more. And neither the water of the Deluge, nor the fire that rained on Sodom and Gomorrah helped to make man holy. Neither the water nor the fire. The Earth is a boundless Sodom in which Lucifer walks freely and as a king.

So let a trinity come to wash it: the fire of love, the water of

sorrow, the blood of the Victim. That is, o Earth, My gift. I have come to give you it. And should I now evade its accomplishment? It is Passover. It is not possible to evade it.»

«Why do You not go to Lazarus'? You would not be fleeing. But You would not be touched there.»

«Simon is right. I beg You, Lord, do that!» shouts Judas Iscariot, throwing himself at Jesus' feet.

At his gesture John begins to shed bitter tears and also His cousins and James and Andrew weep, although they are more composed in their grief.

593.7 ⁷«Do you believe that I am the "Lord"? Look at Me!» and Jesus pierces with His eyes the Iscariot's anguished face. Because he is really distressed, he is not feigning. Perhaps it is the last struggle of his soul with Satan, and he does not succeed in winning. Jesus studies him and follows his struggle as a man of science might study the crisis of a sick person. Then He springs to His feet and so vehemently that Judas, who was leaning on His knees, is pushed back and falls sitting on the ground. Jesus even draws back, looking upset, and He says: «To have Lazarus arrested as well? So, a double prey and double joy. No. Lazarus is kept for the future Christ, for the triumphant Christ. Only one will be cast beyond life and will not come back. I will come back. But he will not.

But Lazarus is staying. You, who know so many things, know also that. But those who hope to have double profit capturing the eagle and the eaglet, in their nest and without difficulty, can be sure that the eagle has eyes for everybody, and that out of love for her little one she will go far from the nest, to be captured alone, thus saving it. I am killed by hatred and yet I continue to love. ⁸Go. I am staying here to pray. Never, as in this hour that I am living, have I felt the need to raise My soul to Heaven.»

593.8

«Let me stay with You, Lord» implores John.

«No. You all need a rest. Go.»

«Are You remaining all alone? And if they should harm You? You seem to be suffering, too... I am staying» says Peter.

«You will go with the others. Allow Me to forget men for one hour! Let Me be in touch with the angels of my Father! They will replace my Mother, Who is wasting away with tears and prayer and Whom I cannot overburden with my desolate grief. Go.»

«Are You not going to wish us peace?» asks his cousin Judas.

«You are right. May the peace of the Lord rest upon those who are not disgraceful in his eyes. Goodbye, and climbing a terrace He enters among the densely growing olive trees.

⁹« And yet... what He says is really in the Scripture! And when one hears it from Him, one understands why and for whom it is said» whispers Bartholomew. ^{593.9}

«I told Peter in the autumn of the first year...» says Simon.

«That is true... But... No! While I live, I will not let Him be captured. Tomorrow...» says Peter.

«What are you going to do tomorrow?» asks the Iscariot.

«What am I going to do? I am speaking to myself. These are days of conspiracies. Not even to the air will I confide my thoughts. And you, who are powerful, you have said so many times, why do you not seek protection for Jesus?»

«I will, Peter. I will. But do not be surprised if now and again I am absent. I am working for Him. But don't tell Him.»

«Be sure of that. And may you be blessed. At times I have dis-trusted you, but I apologise to you. I see that at the right moment you are better than we are. You act... I can only speak empty words» says Peter humbly and sincerely. And Judas laughs, being pleased with the praise.

They depart from Gethsemane going towards the road that leads to Jerusalem.

594. Holy Tuesday. Lessons from the withered fig-tree. Questions on the tribute to Caesar and on resurrection.

1st April 1947.

¹They are about to go back into town, always along the same remote path taken the previous morning, as if Jesus did not want to be surrounded by people waiting for Him, before arriving at the Temple, which is soon reached entering the town by the Sheep Gate, which is near the Probatika. But today many of the seventy-two disciples are already waiting for Him beyond the Kidron, before the bridge, and as soon as they see Him appear among the grey-green olive-trees, in His purple garment, they go to meet Him. They gather together and proceed towards the town. ^{594.1}

Peter, who is looking ahead, down the slope, always suspecting to see some evil-minded person appear, among the fresh vegetation of the last slopes sees a mass of withered hanging leaves dangling over the water of the Kidron. The wrinkled dying leaves, already rust-stained here and there, are like those of a plant parched by fire. The breeze blows one off now and again and buries it in the water of the torrent.

«That is the fig-tree of yesterday! The fig-tree that You cursed!» shouts Peter, one hand stretched forward pointing at the withered tree, his head turned back to speak to the Master.

They all rush there, except Jesus, Who comes forward at his usual pace. The apostles inform the disciples of the precedent of what they are looking at, and they all make comments looking at Jesus utterly amazed. They have seen thousands of miracles on men and elements, but this one strikes them more than many others.

594.2 ²Jesus, Who has arrived, smiles watching those amazed timid faces, and He says: «What? Are you so surprised that my word withered a fig-tree? Have you not seen Me raise people from the dead, cure lepers, give sight to blind people, multiply loaves, calm storms, put out fires? And you are surprised that a fig-tree withers?»

«It is not because of the fig-tree. The fact is that yesterday when You cursed it, it was thriving, and now it is withered. Look! As crumbly as dry clay. There is no more sap in its branches. Look. They crumble into dust» and Bartholomew pulverises with his fingers some branches that he has broken off without any effort.

«They have no more sap. You are right. And it is death when there is no more sap, both in a plant and in a nation as well as in a religion, but there is only hard bark and useless foliage: ferocity and hypocritical outward appearance. The white internal sap, full of lymph, corresponds to holiness, to spirituality. The hard bark and useless foliage correspond to mankind devoid of just spiritual life. Woe to those religions that become human because their priests and believers no longer have a vital spirit. Woe to those nations whose leaders are nothing but fierceness and resounding clamour devoid of fruit-bearing ideas! Woe to men who lack the life of the spirit!»

«But, if You said that to the great ones in Israel, although what You say is right, You would not be wise. Do not entertain illusions because they have allowed You to speak so far. You said Yourself that it is not because they are being converted, but that it is done out of calculation. So You had better estimate the value and consequences of Your words as well. Because there is also the wisdom of the world, beside the wisdom of the spirit. And it is necessary to know how to make use of it to our advantage. Because, after all, for the time being we are still in the world, and not in the Kingdom of God» says the Iscariot, without acrimony but in a doctorial tone.

«He is truly wise who can see things without them being altered by his sensuality and by selfish considerations. I will always speak the truth of what I see.»

³«In conclusion did this fig-tree die because You cursed it, or it happened... by chance... or is it a sign... I don't know?» asks Philip. 594.3

«It is everything you said. But what I did, you can do as well, if you succeed in having perfect faith. Have it in the Most High Lord. And when you have it, I solemnly tell you that you will be able to do that and even more. I solemnly tell you that, if one is successful in having perfect trust in the power of prayer and in the goodness of the Lord, one will be able to say to this mountain: "Move away from here and throw yourself into the sea" and if saying so one will not hesitate in one's heart, but will believe that what one orders can take place, what one has said will take place.»

«And we shall look like magicians and we shall be stoned, as is prescribed for those who practise magic. It would be a really foolish miracle, and to our detriment!» says the Iscariot, shaking his head.

«You are foolish, as you do not understand the parable!» retorts the other Judas.

Jesus does not speak to Judas. He speaks to everybody: «And I say to you, and it is an old lesson that I am repeating in this hour: whatever you ask for in your prayer, have faith to obtain it and you will. But if before praying you have a resentment against anybody, first forgive and make peace to have as a friend your Father Who is in Heaven, and Who forgives and assists you so

much, from morning till evening and from sunset to dawn.»

594.4 ⁴They go into the Temple. The soldiers of the Antonia watch them pass by. They go to worship the Lord, then they go back to the court where the rabbis teach.

Before people gather and crowd around Jesus, some saphorim, doctors of Israel and Herodians approach Him, and with false homage, after greeting Him, they say: «Master, we know that You are wise and truthful, and You teach the ways of God without taking into consideration any person or thing, except truth and justice, and You do not mind what people think of You, and You only take care to lead men to Goodness. So tell us: is it lawful to pay the tribute to Caesar, or is it not lawful to do so? What do You think?»

Jesus casts one of His glances of piercing and solemn shrewdness at them, and replies: «Why are you tempting Me hypocritically? And yet some of you know that I am not deceived by hypocritical honours! But show Me a coin, one of those used for the tribute.»

They show Him a coin. He looks at the obverse and reverse of it and, holding it in the palm of his left hand, He strikes it with the forefinger of his right hand saying: «Whose image is this, and what does this inscription say?»

«The image is Caesar's, and the inscription bears his name. The name of Caius Tiberius Caesar, who is now the emperor of Rome.»

«Then give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and give to God what belongs to God» and He turns his back on them after returning the coin to the person who had given it to Him.

594.5 ⁵He listens to this one and that one of the many pilgrims who ask Him questions, He comforts, absolves and cures them. Hours go by.

He comes out of the Temple to go perhaps out of town, to get the food that Lazarus' servants, entrusted with this task, bring Him.

He goes back to the Temple in the afternoon. He is indefatigable. Grace and wisdom flow from His hands laid on sick people, and from His lips as He gives personal advice to the many people who approach Him. He seems to be anxious to comfort and cure everybody, before it is no longer possible for Him to do so.

It is almost sunset and the tired apostles are sitting on the floor under the porch, astonished at the continuous movement of crowds in the courts when Passover is close at hand. Then some rich people approach the untiring Master, they are certainly rich, judging by their pompous garments.

Matthew, who is dozing with one eye open, stands up, rousing the others. He says: «Some Sadducees are going towards the Master. Let us not leave Him all alone, that they may not offend Him or try to harm Him and sneer at Him again.»

They all get up and join the Master gathering around Him. I seem to realise that there have been reprisals when they went to the Temple or when they returned there at the sixth hour.

^{594.6}6The Sadducees, who pay their respects to Jesus bowing even exaggeratedly, say to Him: «Master, You replied so wisely to the Herodians, that we also wish to have a ray of Your light. Listen: Moses said*: "If a man dies childless, his brother must marry the widow, giving offspring to his brother." Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married a virgin, he died without issue, so he left his wife to his brother. Also the second one died without issue, and also the third one who married the widow of the two who had preceded him, and so on down to the seventh. Finally, after being married to all the seven brothers, the woman died. Tell us: at the resurrection of bodies, if it is really true that men resurrect and that our souls outlive us and join our bodies on the last day, forming the living again, which of the seven brothers will have the woman, since all seven of them had her on the Earth?»

«You are wrong. You understand neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. The other life will be quite different from this one, and in the eternal Kingdom there will be no necessities of the flesh as there are here. Because, truly, after the last Judgment bodies will rise from the dead and will be joined to their immortal souls, forming whole beings, as alive, nay, more alive than your person and Mine are now, but no longer subject to the laws and above all to the incentives and abuses that exist now. At the resurrection, men and women will not get married, but will be like the angels of God in Heaven, who do not get married,

* said, in: Deuteronomy 25,5-6.

and yet they live in perfect love, which is divine and spiritual. And with regard to the resurrection of the dead, have you not read how God spoke to Moses from the bush*? What did the Most High say then? "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob." He did not say: "I was", making him understand that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had been, but no longer were. He said: "I am" Because Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are. Immortal. Like all men in their immortal part, while ages last, and later, also in their bodies raised for eternity. They exist, as Moses, the prophets, the just, as unfortunately, Cain exists, and those of the Deluge, and the sodomites and all those who died in mortal sin. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.»

594.7 ⁷«Will You also die and then will you live?» they ask tempting Him. They are already tired of being meek. Their hatred is such that they cannot control themselves.

«I am the Living Being, and my Flesh will not know corruption. The ark was taken away from us, and the present one will also be taken away as a symbol. The Tabernacle was taken away from us, and it will be destroyed. But it will not be possible to take away the true Temple of God and destroy it. When its adversaries think that they have done so, that is the hour when it will be established in the true Jerusalem, in all its glory. Goodbye.»

And He hastens towards the Court of Israel, because the silver tube are calling to the evening sacrifice.

594.8 ⁸Jesus says to me: «As I made you write the words "of my chalice"*** in the vision of John and James' mother who asked for a place for her sons, so I tell you to point out the passage of yesterday's vision: "he who falls against this stone will break in pieces." In translations the word "on" is always used. I said against and not on. And it is a prophecy against the enemies of my Church. Those who oppose It, hurling themselves against It, because It is the Headstone, are crushed. For the last twenty centuries the history of the Earth has confirmed what I said. The persecutors of the Church are crushed as they hurl themselves against the Headstone. But it is also true, and those who think that they are secure from divine punishments, because they be-

* spoke, in: Deuteronomy 25,5-6; from the bush, in: Exodus 3,1-6.

** of My chalice, in 577.11; against this stone, in 592.7.

long to the Church, should bear this in mind, he on whom falls the weight of the condemnation of the Head and Bridegroom of this Bride of Mine, of my mystical Body, will be crushed.

⁹And forestalling an objection of the ever alive scribes and Sadducees, ill disposed to my servants, I say: if in these last visions there are sentences that are not in the Gospels, such as those at the end of today's vision, and of the passage in which I speak of the barren fig-tree, and others as well, those critics ought to remember that the evangelists always belonged to that race and they lived in times when every exaggerated clash might have had violent and harmful repercussions for neophytes. 594.9

Let them read the acts of the apostles again and they will see that the fusion of so many different thoughts was not peaceful, and that while they admired one another, acknowledging one another's merits, they did not lack differences of opinion, because the thoughts of men are various and always imperfect.

And to avoid deeper ruptures between one thought and another, the evangelists, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, in their writings deliberately omitted some sentences that might have hurt the excessive susceptibility of the Hebrews and scandalised the Gentiles, who needed to believe that the Hebrews were perfect, as they were the nucleus from which the Church came, in order not to go away saying: "They are like us". It was just to make known the persecutions of Christ, but not the spiritual diseases of the people of Israel, by now corrupt, particularly in the higher classes. And they veiled them as much as possible.

They should observe how the Gospels become more and more explicit, up to the limpid Gospel of my John, the later they were written after my Ascension to my Father. Only John fully relates even the most painful flaws of the very apostolic group, openly calling Judas a "thief", and he integrally reports the base actions of the Jews (Chapter 6 - feigned will to make Me king, the debates at the Temple, the abandonment by many after the sermon on the Bread of Heaven, Thomas' incredulity). The last survivor, who lived long enough to see the Church already strong, he lifts the veils that the others had not dared to lift.

But now the Spirit of God wants also these words to be known. And the Lord should be blessed for that, because they are so many lights and guides for people with righteous hearts.»

594.10 ¹⁰«You will put here the second part of Tuesday, that is, the teachings to the Twelve at night at Gethsemane.»

595. Tuesday night at Gethsemane with the apostles.

7th March 1945.

595.1 ¹«Today you have heard Gentiles and Judaeans speak. And you have seen how the former bowed to Me and the latter nearly hit Me. You, Peter, almost came to blows, when you saw lambs, rams and bull-calves driven on purpose against Me to make Me fall on the ground among excrement. You, Simon, although you are so wise, opened your mouth to insult the most rancorous members of the Sanhedrin, who rudely bumped into Me saying: "Move aside, You demon, while the messengers of God pass." You, Judas, My cousin, and you, John, My favourite, shouted and protected Me quickly, one from being run over by getting hold of the bridle of the horse, the other by standing in front of Me and receiving the impact of the shaft directed at Me when, with a sneer, Sadoc drove his heavy cart against Me, deliberately, at great speed. I thank you for your love that makes you rise against the offenders of the Defenceless One. But you will see much worse offences and more cruel actions. When this moon is once more smiling in the sky for the second time after this evening, offences, at present verbal, or just outlined if material, will become concrete, thicker than the blossoms which are now on fruit-trees and which are becoming more and more numerous in their haste to blossom.

595.2 ²You have seen - and you were surprised - a barren fig-tree and a whole apple-orchard without blossoms. The fig-tree, like Israel, refused to restore the Son of man and it died in its sin. The apple-orchard, like the Gentiles, is awaiting the hour I mentioned today, to blossom and cancel the last remembrance of human ferocity with the kindness of flowers scattered on the head and under the feet of the Conqueror.»

«Which hour, Master?» asks Matthew. «You have spoken so much and of so many things today! I cannot remember exactly. And I should like to remember everything. Perhaps the hour of Christ's return? Here as well You spoke of branches that become tender and put forth leaves.»

«No!» exclaims Thomas. «The Master is speaking as if this conspiracy awaiting Him is imminent. So, how can everything, that He says will precede His return, happen in a short time? Wars, destructions, slavery, persecutions, the Gospel preached all over the world, desolation of abomination in the house of God, and then earthquakes, plagues, false prophets, signs in the sun and stars... Eh! It will take ages to do all that! The owner of that apple-orchard would be in a nice mess, if his orchard had to wait all that time to blossom!»

«Then he would not eat his apples any more, because I say that it would be the end of the world» comments Bartholomew.

«To bring about the end of the world, only one thought of God would be necessary, and everything would turn into nothingness. So even that apple-orchard might not have to wait long. But, as I said, it will happen. And therefore there will be ages between this one and that one. That is the final triumph and the return of the Christ» explains Jesus.

«So? Which hour?»

«Oh! I know which hour!» says John weeping. «I know the hour. And it will be after your death and resurrection!...» and John embraces Jesus tightly in his arms.

«And are you weeping, if He is going to rise again?» says Judas Iscariot mockingly.

«I am weeping because He must die first. ^{595.3}Don't mock at me, you demon. I know. And I cannot think of that hour.»

«Master, he called me a demon. He has sinned against his companion.»

«Judas, are you sure you do not deserve it? Then do not take offence at his fault. I also have been called a "demon" and I shall be called so again.»

«But You said that he who insults his brother is guilty...»

«Silence. In the presence of death let these hateful accusations, discussions and lies finish at long last. Do not upset who is dying.»

«Forgive me, Jesus» whispers John. «I felt something turn in me at the sound of his laughter... and I could not refrain myself.» Jesus and John are embraced, chest to chest, and John weeps on His heart.

«Do not weep. I understand you. Let Me speak.»

But John does not detach himself from Jesus, not even when He sits down on a large protruding root. He remains with one arm behind his back and one around His chest and his head on his shoulder, and he weeps silently. Only his tears shine in the moonbeam as they fall on Jesus' purple garment and they look like rubies, drops of pale blood struck by light.

595.4 ⁴«Today you have heard Judaeans and Gentiles speak. So you must not be surprised if I say*: "Word of justice has always come from my mouth. And it shall not be revoked." If I say, always with Isaiah, speaking of the Gentiles who will come to Me after I have been raised from the ground: "Before Me every knee shall bend, by Me and in Me every tongue shall swear." And you will not doubt either, after seeing the ways of the Hebrews, that it is easy to say, without fear of being wrong, that all those who rage against Me shall be led to Me, ashamed.

My Father did not make Me his servant only to revive the tribes of Jacob, to convert what is left of Israel: the remnants, but He gave Me as light of the Nations, that I may be the "Saviour" for all the Earth. That is why, in these thirty-three years of exile from Heaven and from my Father's bosom, I have continued to grow in Grace and Wisdom with God and with men, reaching the perfect age, and in these last three years, after burning my soul and my mind with the fire of love and tempering them with the ice of penance, I made "My mouth a sharp sword".

595.5 ⁵The Holy Father, Who is yours and Mine, has so far protected Me in the shade of His hand, because it was not yet the hour of the Expiation. Now He will let Me go. The chosen arrow, the arrow of His divine quiver, after wounding in order to cure, after wounding men to open a breach in their hearts for the Word and the Light of God, is now going fast and unfailingly to wound the Second Person, the Expiator, the Obedient One for all the disobedient Adam... And like a warrior who has been hit, I shall fall, saying with regards to too many people: "In vain have I fatigued for no reason, without achieving anything. I have worn out My strength for nothing." No! No, for the Eternal Lord Who never does anything without a purpose! Be off, Satan, who want Me to give way to dejection and try to make Me disobedient! You came at the beginning of My ministry and you have come at its end.

* said, the start of quotations or allusions referred to: Isaiah 45,23-25; 49,2-6.

Well, here, I am rising (and He really stands up) ready to fight. I will compete with you. And, I swear it to Myself, I will defeat you. It is not pride to say so. It is the truth. The Son of man will be defeated in His flesh by man, the miserable worm that bites and poisons from his putrid filth. But the Son of God, the Second Person of the inexpressible Trinity will not be defeated by Satan. You are Hatred. And you are powerful in your hating and in your tempting. But there will be with Me a strength that escapes you, because you cannot reach it, neither can you block it. The Love is with Me! ^{595.6} I am aware of the unknown torture awaiting Me. Not the one that I will mention to you tomorrow, so that you may know that nothing of what was done or stirred up for Me or around Me, nothing of what was forming in your hearts, was unknown to Me. But the other torture... The one that is given to the Son of Man not by means of lances and clubs, or by means of derision and blows, but by God Himself, and only few people will know how cruel it will be, and even fewer will accept it as possible. But in that torture, in which two will be the main torturers: God with His absence and you, demon, with your presence, the Victim will have the Love with Him. The Love living in the Victim, the main strength of His resistance to the trial, and the Love in the spiritual consoler, who is already flapping his golden wings, full of anxiety to descend and wipe My perspiration, and gathers all the tears of the angels in the heavenly chalice and melts in it the honey of the names of My redeemed and of those who love Me, to mitigate with that potion the great thirst of the Tortured One and His immeasurable bitterness.

And you, demon, shall be defeated. One day, coming out of a possessed man, you said to Me*: "I will wait to defeat You when You are a rag of bleeding flesh." But I reply to you: "You shall not have Me. I will win. My fatigue was a holy one, My case is in the hands of My Father. He defends the work of His Son and will not allow My spirit to deflect." Father, I say to You, I say to You now, for that dreadful hour: "Into Your hands I commit My spirit." ^{595.7} ⁷John, do not leave Me... You, all of you, go. May the peace of the Lord be where Satan is not a guest. Goodbye.»

It all ends.

* you said to Me, in 420.6.

596. Holy Wednesday. The greatest of the commandments. The widow's offering. The reproach against the scribes and the Pharisees. A rest with His Mother and the women disciples. The establishment of the Church. The End of Times.

2nd April 1947.

596.1 ¹Jesus enters into the Temple that is more crowded than on the previous days. He is all dressed in white in His linen garments. It is a sultry day.

He goes to the Court of Israel to worship, followed by a train of people, while other people have already taken the best places under the porches, and the majority are Gentiles who, not being allowed to go beyond the first court, that is the Court of the Gentiles, have taken advantage of the fact that the Hebrews have followed the Christ, to take favourable positions.

But a large group of Pharisees upsets them: they are always arrogant in their behaviour, and they push through the crowd overbearingly to approach Jesus, Who is bent over a sick man. They wait until He has cured him, then they send a scribe to question Him.

Actually they had a short discussion first, because Joel named Alamothe wanted to go to question the Master. But a Pharisee objected and the others supported him saying: «No, we know that you side with the Rabbi, although you do so secretly. Let Uriah go...»

«Not Uriah» says another young scribe, whom I do not know. «Uriah is too harsh in speaking. He would provoke the crowd. I will go.»

And without listening any more to the protests of the others, he approaches the Master, just when Jesus is dismissing the sick man saying to him: «Have faith. You are cured. Your fever and pain will not come back any more.»

596.2 ²«Master, which is the greatest commandment of the Law?»

Jesus, behind Whose back the scribe is standing, turns around and looks at him. A faint luminous smile brightens His face, He then raises His head, as He had bent it because the scribe is short of stature, and further he had bowed to pay his respects to Him. Jesus looks around at the crowd, He stares at the group of Phari-

sees and doctors and He notices the pale face of Joel, who is half hidden behind a big sumptuously dressed Pharisee. His smile brightens. It is like a light that caresses the honest scribe. He then lowers His head looking at his interlocutor and replies to him: «The first* of all the commandments is: "Listen, Israel: the Lord our God is the only Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength." That is the first and greatest commandment. The second** resembles it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." There are no greater commandments than these two. They comprise all the Law and the prophets.»

«Master, You have replied wisely and truthfully. It is so. There is only one God and there is no other god except Him. To love Him with all our hearts, with all our intelligence, with all our souls and all our strength, and to love our neighbour as ourselves is worth much more than any holocaust and sacrifice. I seriously think so when I meditate on David's words***: "Holocausts give You no pleasure; a contrite heart is the sacrifice pleasing to God."»

«You are not far from the Kingdom of God, because you have understood which holocaust is pleasing to God.»

«But which is the most perfect holocaust?» asks the scribe in a low voice, as if he were speaking of a secret.

Jesus beams with love letting this pearl drop into the heart of this man who is opening to His doctrine, to the doctrine of the Kingdom of God, and bending over him He says: «The perfect holocaust is to love, as ourselves, those who persecute us and not bear any grudge. Who does that will possess peace. It is said****: the lowly shall possess the Earth and shall enjoy the abundance of peace. I solemnly tell you that he who can love his enemies reaches perfection and possesses God.»

³The scribe greets Him respectfully and goes back to his group, who reproach him in low voices for praising the Master, and they angrily say to him: «What did you ask Him secretly? Have you been seduced by Him as well?» 596.3

* The first, in: Deuteronomy 6,4-5.

** The second, in: Leviticus 19,18.

*** David's words, that are in: Psalm 51,18-19.

**** It is said, in: Psalm 37,11.

«I heard the Spirit of God speak from His lips.»

«You are silly. Do you perhaps think that He is the Christ?»

«Yes, I do.»

«Truly, before long we shall see the schools of our scribes empty, while they go roving after that Man! But how can you see the Christ in Him?»

«I do not know how. I know that I feel that it is He.»

«You're mad!» And they turn their backs on him worriedly.

Jesus has heard their conversation, and when He sees the Pharisees pass in front of Him in a close group and go away worriedly, He calls them saying: «Listen to Me. I want to ask you something. According to you, what do you think of the Christ? Whose son is He?»

«He will be the son of David» they reply, stressing the words "will be", because they want to make Him understand that, as far as they are concerned, He is not the Christ.

«How, then, does David, inspired by God, call Him "Lord" saying*: "The Lord said to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for You'?" So if David calls the Christ "Lord", how can the Christ be his son?»

As they do not know what to reply to Him, they go away ruminating their poison.

596.4 ⁴Jesus moves away from the place where He was and which is now flooded with sunshine, to go farther on, where the mouths of the Treasury are, near the hall of the Treasury. This side, still in the shade, is occupied by rabbis, who are haranguing with wide gestures addressing their Hebrew audience, which is increasing more and more, as the people pouring in the Temple are increasing continuously, as time passes.

The rabbis are striving to demolish with their speeches the teachings imparted by the Christ during the previous days or that same morning. And the more they see the crowd of believers grow bigger, the more they raise their voices. In fact the place, although very large, is crowded with people coming and going in all directions...

596.5 ⁵Jesus says to me: «Insert here the vision of the widow's mite

* saying, in: Psalm 110,1.

(19th June 1944) corrected as I will point out to you» (as I have already corrected it in the typewritten sheets that I have sent back). Then the vision continues.

19th June 1944.

⁶Only today, and insisently, I see the following vision appear.

596.6

At the beginning I see nothing but courts and porches, which I recognise belong to the Temple, and Jesus, Who looks like an Emperor, so solemn He is in His bright red tunic and darker red mantle, leaning on a huge square pillar supporting an arch of the porch.

He looks fixedly at me. I am fully absorbed in looking at Him, delighting in contemplating Him Whom I had not seen and heard for two days.

The vision thus lasts for a long time. And while it lasts so, I am not writing it, because it is my joy. But now that I see the scene become animated, I understand that there is something else and I write.

The place is getting full of people coming and going in all directions. There are priests and believers, men, women and children. Some are walking, some are standing listening to the doctors, some are dragging little lambs or carrying doves going to other places, perhaps to sacrifice them.

Jesus is leaning on His column and is watching. He does not speak. Twice His apostles ask Him questions, but He shakes His head in denial and does not speak. He is watching very carefully. And according to His countenance, He seems to be judging those He is looking at. His eyes and face remind me of His looks when I saw Him in the vision* of Paradise, judging souls in the particular judgement. Now, of course, He is Jesus, Man; up there He was Jesus Triumphant, so even more imposing. But the changeability of His countenance, that watches fixedly, is the same. He is serious, inquisitive, but if at times He is so severe as to make also the most insolent people tremble, at times He is so kind, and His smiling sadness is such that He seems to be caressing one with His eyes.

⁷He does not seem to be hearing anything. But He must be lis-

596.7

* vision of 25th May 1944 as reported in the volume "The Notebooks. 1944".

tening to everything because, when from a group several metres away, gathered around a doctor, a nasal voice is heard proclaiming: «More than any other commandment this one is valid: what is for the Temple must go to the Temple. The Temple is above one's father and mother and if one wants to give what is superfluous to the glory of the Lord, one can do so and will be blessed for it, because there is no blood or love superior to the Temple», Jesus slowly turns His head round in that direction and looks in a way... that I would not like it to be meant for me.

He seems to be looking at everything in general. But when an old trembling man is on the point of climbing the five steps of a kind of terrace, which is close to Jesus, and which seems to lead to another inner court, and he presses his stick on the floor and almost falls when his foot is caught in his tunic, Jesus stretches out his long arm, grasps him and supports him, and does not leave him until He sees that he is safe. The old man raises his wrinkled face, looks at his tall saviour and whispers a word of blessing, while Jesus smiles at him and caresses his bald head. He then goes back to his column, and departs from it once again to lift a little boy who slips from his mother's hand and falls, weeping, against the first step, just at his feet. He lifts him up, caresses him and comforts him. The boy's embarrassed mother thanks Him. Jesus smiles at her as well, handing the child back to her.

But He does not smile when a conceited Pharisee passes by, or when a group of scribes and others whom I do not know pass near Him. The latter group greet Him gesticulating and bowing. Jesus looks at them so fixedly that He seems to pierce them, He replies to their greetings but without effusion. He is severe. He looks at some length also at a priest who passes by and must be an important person, because the crowd makes room for him and greets him as he struts along. Jesus looks at him in such a way that he, although very proud, lowers his head. He does not greet, but he cannot withstand Jesus' glance.

596.8 ⁸Jesus stops looking at him to watch a poor woman, dressed in dark brown, who is bashfully climbing the steps and goes towards a wall, where there is something like heads of lions or similar animals with open mouths. Many people are going there. But Jesus does not seem to pay attention to them. Now instead

He looks where the woman is going. His eyes look at her compassionately and they shine with kindness when He sees her stretch out a hand and throw something into the stone mouth of one of those lions. And when the woman withdraws passing near Him, He is the first to say: «Peace to you, woman.»

She raises her head, utterly astonished, and remains dumb-founded. «Peace to you» repeats Jesus. «Go, because the Most High blesses you.» The poor soul is enraptured, then she whispers a greeting and goes away.

«She is happy in her unhappiness» says Jesus breaking His silence. «She is now happy because God's blessing is with her.»

⁹«Listen, My friends, and those who are around Me. Do you see that woman? She only gave two small coins, not enough to buy food for one meal for a sparrow kept in a cage, and yet she has given more than all those who have given their offerings to the Treasury of the Temple, since it was opened this morning at dawn. Listen. I have seen large numbers of rich people put in those mouths sums which would feed that woman for a year and clothe her poverty, which is decent only because it is clean. I have seen rich people, who with evident satisfaction have put in there sums that could have fed the poor people of the Holy City for one or more days, and thus make them bless the Lord. But I solemnly tell you that nobody has given more than she did. Her offering is charity. The others are not. Hers is generosity. The others are not. Hers is sacrifice. The others are not. Today that woman will not eat anything, because she has nothing left. She will have to work first to earn some money, to be able to get some bread to appease her hunger. She has no money laid aside, neither has she relatives who can earn money on her behalf. She is all alone. God has taken her relatives, her husband and children, He has taken the little wealth they had left her, and rather than God, men have taken it, those men who with large gestures, see?, are continuing to throw in there their surplus, much of which is extorted through usury from the poor hands of poor and hungry people.

¹⁰They say that there is no blood or love superior to the Temple, and they thus teach people not to love their neighbour. I tell you that above the Temple there is love. The law of God is love and he, who does not take pity on his neighbour, does not love.

Superfluous money, money soiled with usury, with hatred,

596.9

596.10

with hardness, with hypocrisy, sings no praise to God and does not attract heavenly blessings on the donor. God rejects it. It enriches these coffers. But it is not gold for the incense: it is filth that overwhelms you, o ministers, who do not serve God, but your interests; it is a string that strangles you, o doctors, who teach a doctrine that is *yours*; it is poison that corrodes the remains you still have of your souls, o Pharisees. God does not want remains. Be not Cains. God does not want what is the fruit of hardness. God does not want what, raising a weeping voice, says: "I had to appease the hunger of a starving man. But I was prevented from doing so because I had to display my pomp in here. I was to help an old father and a decrepit mother, but I was forbidden, because such help would not have been known to the world, and I must blow my trumpet so that the world may see the donor." No, rabbi, who teach that what is superfluous is to be given to God and that it is lawful to refuse assistance to fathers and mothers to give it to God. The first commandment is: "Love God with all your heart, with your soul, with your intelligence, with your strength." So not what is superfluous, but what is our blood is to be given to Him, by loving to suffer for Him. To suffer. Not to make people suffer. And if it costs to give a lot, because it is unpleasant to deprive oneself of one's riches and the treasure is the heart of man, who is vicious by nature, it is just because it costs, that one must give. Out of justice: because everything one has, one has it through God's goodness. Out of love: because it is a proof of love to love sacrifice in order to give joy to those whom one loves. To suffer for the sake of suffering. But to suffer. I repeat: not to make others suffer. Because the second commandment says: "Love your neighbour as yourself." And the law specifies that, after God, one's parents are the neighbour to whom one is bound to give honour and assistance.

596.11 ¹¹So I solemnly tell you that that poor woman has understood the law better than wise men and she is justified more than anybody else and blessed, because in her poverty she gave God *everything*, whereas you give what is superfluous and you give it to grow in the esteem of men. I know that you hate Me because I speak so. But as long as these lips can speak, they will speak so. You join your hatred for Me to the contempt for the poor woman I am praising. But do not think that with these two stones you will

make a double pedestal for your pride.

They will be the millstone that will crush you. Let us go. Let the vipers bite one another increasing their poison. Let those who are pure, good, humble, contrite, and who wish to know the true face of God, follow Me.»

¹²Jesus says: «And you who are left with nothing, as you have given Me everything, give Me these last two small coins. As compared with the much that you have given, they seem nothing to strangers. But to you, who have but these, they are everything. Put them in the hand of your Lord. And do not weep. Or, at least, do not weep alone. Weep with Me, Who am the only One who can understand you and I understand you without any human fog, which is always an interested veil for the truth.» 596.12

2nd April 1947.

¹³The apostles, disciples and crowd follow Him in a compact group, while He goes back again to the place at the first town walls, a spot almost sheltered by the wall of the Temple enclosure, where it is not so warm, in this very sultry day. As the ground has been roughened by the hooves of animals and is strewn with the stones used by merchants and money-changers to fasten their enclosures and tents, there are no rabbis of Israel there, who did not mind allowing a market to be held in the Temple, but are disgusted at walking in their sandals where the footprints of quadrupeds, which were cleared out from there a few days previously, have been badly cancelled... Jesus is not disgusted and He takes shelter there, surrounded by a large crowd of listeners. But before speaking, He calls the apostles to come close to Him and says to them: «Come and listen carefully. Yesterday you wanted to know many of the things that I will tell you today and that I mentioned vaguely yesterday, when we were resting in Joseph's kitchen garden. So pay attention, because they are important lessons for everybody, and for you in particular, as you are My ministers and continuators.» 596.13

¹⁴Listen. Scribes and Pharisees sat on Moses' chair at the right moment. They were sad days for our Fatherland*. Once the exile 596.14

* sad days for our Fatherland, as can be read in: Ezra 1-10; Nehemiah 1-13; 1 Maccabees 1-2.

in Babylonia was over and the nation had been restored through Cyrus' magnanimity, the leaders of the people felt it necessary to restore also the cult and the knowledge of the Law. Because woe to that people that does not possess them for its defence, guide and support, against the most powerful enemies of a nation, which are the immorality of the citizens, rebellion against leaders, disunion among classes and parties, the sins against God and one's neighbours, irreligiousness, which are all disgregating elements in themselves and because of the punishments they provoke from Heaven!

So scribes or doctors of the Law arose to teach the people who spoke the Chaldean language, the heritage of the sore and weary exile, and thus could no longer understand the Scriptures written in pure Hebrew. They arose to help the priests, insufficient in number to fulfill the task of teaching the crowds. Such laity, learned and devoted to honouring the Lord, by taking the knowledge of God to men and leading men to God, had its reason for existence and it did also some good. Because, all of you must bear this in mind, also those things that, through human weakness, later degenerate, as it happened to this one that became corrupt in the course of time, always have something good and at least an initial reason for existence, whereby the Most High allows them to arise and last until, the measure of degeneration being full, the Most High disperses them.

Then the other sect of the Pharisees arose from the transformation of that of the Hasidaeans, formed to support the Law of Moses and the spirit of independence of our people by means of the most rigid morals and the strictest obedience, when the Hellenistic party - that had risen because of the pressure and seductions that had begun in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes and that soon changed into persecutions against those who did not yield to the pressure of the shrewd king, who more than on his arms relied on the breaking up of the faith in hearts, in order to rule over our Fatherland - was trying to make us slaves.

596.15 ¹⁵Remember also this: be more afraid of easy alliances and of the blandishments of a foreigner than of his legions. Because, while if you are faithful to the laws of God and of your Fatherland you will win, even if you are surrounded by mighty armies, if instead you are corrupted by the subtle poison, given as an

inebriating honey by the stranger who has made his plans concerning you, God will abandon you because of your sins, and you will be defeated and subjected, even if your false ally does not wage a bloody battle with you. Woe to him who is not as vigilant as a sentry and does not repel the subtle snare of a false shrewd neighbour, or ally, or conqueror, who begins his domination over individuals, weakening their hearts and corrupting them with usages and habits that are not ours and are not holy, and consequently make us unpleasant to the Lord! Woe! You must remember the consequences brought about to our Fatherland by the fact that some of her children adopted usages and habits of a foreigner to ingratiate themselves with him and enjoy favours.

It is a good thing to be charitable with everybody, also with peoples who are not of our faith, who have not our customs and who have harmed us throughout ages. But our love for these people, who are always our neighbour, must never make us disown the Law of God and of our Fatherland, for some premeditated benefit extorted from our neighbours. No.

Foreigners despise those who are so servile as to disown the holiest things of their Fatherland. It is not by denying one's Father and Mother - God and the Fatherland - that one achieves respect and freedom.

So it was a good thing that at the right moment the Pharisees should arise to erect a barrier against the filthy overflowing of foreign usages and customs. I repeat: everything that begins and lasts has its reason for existence. And it is to be respected for what it did, if not for what it does. Because, if it is guilty by now, it is not for men to insult it, and even less to strike it. There is who knows how to do it: God and He Whom He sent, and Whose right and duty is to open His mouth and to open your eyes, so that you and they may know the thought of the Most High, and you may act according to justice. I and no one else. I, because I speak by divine mandate. I, because I can speak as I have none of the sins that shock you when you see them committed by scribes and Pharisees, but which you also commit, if you can.»

¹⁶Jesus, Who had begun His speech in a low voice, has gradually raised it, and when uttering these last words, it is as powerful as the blare of a trumpet. 596.16

Hebrews and Gentiles are fully engrossed in listening to Him.

And if the former applaud when Jesus mentions their Fatherland and clearly calls by name those foreigners who subjected them and made them suffer, the latter admire the oratorical form of His speech and they are happy to be present at this oration really worthy of a great orator, as they say to one another.

Jesus lowers His voice again when He resumes speaking: «What I told you is to remind you of the reasons why scribes and Pharisees exist, and how and why they have sat on Moses' chair, and how and why they speak and their words are not vain ones. So do what they say. But do not imitate their actions. Because they say that things are to be done in a certain manner, but they do not do what is to be done. In fact they teach the humane laws of the Pentateuch, then they burden other people with huge, unbearable, inhuman weights, whereas they themselves do not stir a finger even to touch those weights, let alone carry them.

The rule of their life is to be seen, noticed and applauded for their deeds, which they perform in a manner suitable to be seen and thus praised. And they infringe the law of love, because they like to define themselves the distinguished ones and they despise those who do not belong to their sect, and they demand the title of teachers and from their disciples they exact such a cult as they do not give to God. They consider themselves gods because of their wisdom and power, and in the hearts of their disciples they want to be superior to fathers and mothers, and they claim that their doctrine is superior to God's and they insist on its being practised literally, even if it is a manipulation of the true Law, inferior to the same even more than this mountain is to the Great Hermon that dominates the whole of Palestine; and they are heretics, since some believe, as heathens do, in metempsychosis (reincarnation) and fatality, while others deny what the previous ones admit and, in actual fact if not in effect, what God Himself has given as a principle of faith, when He defined Himself the only God to Whom cult is to be given, and when He said that fathers and mothers are second only to God, and as such they are entitled to be obeyed more than a teacher who is not divine.

Because if now I say to you*: "Those who love their fathers and mothers more than they love Me are not suitable for the Kingdom

* I say to you, as in 265.12 and 281.6.

of God", I do not say so to instill indifference towards your relatives into your minds, as you must respect and help them, neither is it lawful to deprive them of assistance saying: "It is money for the Temple", or deny them hospitality saying: "My office forbids me", or to take their lives saying: "I kill you because you love the Master", but I say so that you may love your relatives with just love, that is with love that is patient and strong in its meekness - without hating a relative who sins and gives sorrow, because he does not follow you on the way of Life, that is, on My way - with love that knows how to choose between My law and family selfishness and violence. Love your relatives, obey them in everything that is holy. But be ready to die, not to kill, but I say to die, if they want to persuade you to betray the vocation given you by God, to be citizens of the Kingdom of God, that I have come to establish.

¹⁷Do not imitate scribes and Pharisees, who are divided among themselves, although they feign to be united. You, disciples of the Christ, be really united, each one for all the others, the leaders being kind to the subjects, the subjects being kind to their leaders, all one in love and in the purpose of your union: to conquer My Kingdom and be at My right hand at the eternal Judgement. Remember that a kingdom that is divided is no longer a kingdom and cannot exist. Be therefore united to one another in your love for Me and for My doctrine. Let love and union, equality in garments worn, community of property, brotherliness of hearts be the uniform of the Christian, because that will be the name of My subjects. Everybody for one, one for everybody. Let those who own wealth give humbly. Let those who do not own accept humbly, and let them humbly set forth their needs to their brothers, knowing that they are such; and let brothers kindly listen to the needs of their brothers, feeling that they are such to them.

Remember that your Master was often hungry and cold and He had other numerous necessities and troubles and He, the Word of God, humbly set them forth to men.

Remember that a reward is given to those who are merciful by giving even just a sip of water. Remember that it is better to give than to receive. In these three recollections let the poor find strength to ask without feeling humiliated, remembering that I did so before them, and let them forgive, if they are re-

fused, remembering that many a time the Son of man was denied the place and the food that are given to sheepdogs. And let the rich be generous in giving their riches, considering that the base money, that Satan instigates men to crave for, and is nine tenths of the disasters of the world, if it is given out of love, changes into a heavenly immortal gem.

596.18 ¹⁸Be clothed in your virtues. Let them be manifold but known only to God. Do not behave as the Pharisees who wear the broadest phylacteries and the longest fringes and want the front seats in synagogues and love to be greeted obsequiously in market squares, and want to be called "Rabbis" by the people. One alone is your Master: the Christ. You who in future will be the new doctors, I am referring to you, My apostles and disciples, remember that I alone am your Teacher. And I will be your only Teacher also when I am no longer among you. Because Wisdom alone teaches. So do not allow yourselves to be called teachers, because you are disciples yourselves. Do not pretend to be called fathers and do not call father anyone on the Earth, because only one is the Father of all men: your Father Who is in Heaven. May this truth make you wise by really feeling all like brothers to one another, both those who guide and those who are guided, and so love one another like good brothers. And none of those who guide must allow themselves to be called guides, because only one is your guide: the Christ.

Let the greatest among you be your servant. He who is the servant of the servants of God does not humiliate himself, but he imitates Me, as I was kind and humble, always willing to love those who were My brothers in the flesh of Adam, and to assist them by means of the power that I have as God. Neither by serving men did I humiliate what is divine in Me. Because he is a true king who knows how to dominate not so much men, as the passions of men, first of all foolish pride. Remember: he who humbles himself will be exalted, and he who exalts himself will be humbled.

596.19 ¹⁹The Woman* of Whom the Lord has spoken in the second chapter of Genesis, the Virgin mentioned by Isaiah, the Virgin Mother of the Immanuel, prophesied this truth of the new times,

* The Woman, that is mentioned in Genesis 2,22-23, with even more relevance in Genesis 3,15; the Virgin, mentioned in Isaiah 7,14; prophesied, in 21.5.

when She sang: "He has pulled down princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly." The Wisdom of God spoke through the lips of Her Who was the Mother of Grace and the Throne of Wisdom. And I repeat the inspired words that praised Me joined to the Father and to the Holy Spirit, in Our wonderful works, when, without offence to the Virgin, I, the Man, was being formed in Her womb without ceasing being God. Let them be a guide for those who want to bear the Christ in their hearts and come to the Kingdom of Christ. There will be no Jesus: the Saviour; no Christ: the Lord; and there will be no Kingdom of Heaven for those who are proud, fornicators, idolaters, who worship themselves and their will.

²⁰Therefore woe to you, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, 596.20 who think you can close by means of your unfeasible maxims - if they were confirmed by God, they would really be an unbreakable bolt for most men - who think you can close the Kingdom of Heaven in the face of those men who raise their spirits towards it to find strength in their painful earthly day! Woe to you who do not enter it, who do not want to enter it, because you do not accept the Law of the heavenly Kingdom, and you do not allow other people to enter, while they are in front of that door, which you, intolerant as you are, reinforce with bolts that God did not put there.

Woe to you, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, who swallow the property of widows under the pretext of saying long prayers. Because of that you will receive a severe sentence! Woe to you, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, who travel over sea and land, using up riches that do not belong to you, to make a single proselyte, and when you have him, you make him twice as fit for hell as you are! Woe to you, blind guides, who say: "If a man swears by the Temple, it has no force, but if he swears by the gold of the Temple, then he is bound by his oath." You are foolish and blind! Which is of greater worth? The gold or the Temple that makes the gold sacred? And you say: "If a man swears by the altar, it has no force, but if he swears by the offering on the altar, then his oath is valid and he is bound by it." You blind men! What is greater? The offering, or the altar that makes the offering sacred? Therefore, he who swears by the altar, is swearing by it and by everything on it, and he who swears by the Temple, is swearing by it

and by Him Who dwells in it, and he who swears by Heaven, is swearing by the Throne of God and by Him Who is seated on it.

Woe to you, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, who pay the tithes of mint and rue, of anise and cummin, and then you neglect the weightier matters of the Law: justice, mercy and faith. These are the virtues you should have practised, without neglecting the other minor matters!

You blind guides, you filter your drinks, lest you may become contaminated by swallowing a drowned gnat, but you swallow a camel, without feeling unclean by doing so. Woe to you, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, who wash the outside of cups and dishes, but interiorly you are full of extortion and filth. O blind Pharisee, wash the inside of your cup and dish first, so that also the outside may be clean.

Woe to you, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, who fly in darkness like noctules for your sinful deeds, and at night reach agreements with heathens, robbers and traitors, and then, in the morning, after deleting the signs of your concealed dealings, you go up to the Temple in fine garments.

Woe to you, who teach the laws of charity and justice contained in Leviticus, while you are greedy, thieves, false, slanderers, oppressors, unjust, avengers, haters, and you even overthrow those who annoy you, even if they are of your own blood, and you repudiate the virgin who has become your wife, and you disown the children that you begot of her, because they are invalids, and because you do not like your wife any more, you accuse her of adultery or of an unclean disease, to get rid of her, while you are unclean in your lustful hearts, even if you do not appear to be such in the eyes of the people, who are not aware of your deeds. You are like whitewashed sepulchres that look handsome on the outside, but inside are full of dead men's bones and corruption. The same applies to you. Yes. The same! From the outside you look like honest men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Woe to you, hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, who build magnificent sepulchres for the prophets and decorate the tombs of holy men saying: "Had we lived in our fathers' days, we would never had joined those who shed the blood of the prophets." And so you give evidence against yourselves that you are the sons of

those who murdered your prophets. And you, *moreover*, are finishing the work of your fathers... Serpents, brood of vipers, how can you escape being condemned to Gehenna?

²¹So I, the Word of God, say to you: I, God, *will send* you new prophets and wise men and scribes. Some you will slaughter, some you will crucify, some you will scourge in your law-courts, in your synagogues, outside the walls of your towns, and some you will hunt from town to town, until you draw on yourselves the blood of the just men, that has been shed on the Earth, from the blood of the just Abel* to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachian, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar, because for your own sake he had reminded you of your sin, that you might repent and go back to the Lord. It is so. You hate those who want your welfare and lovingly call you back to the paths of God.

596.21

I solemnly tell you that all that is about to happen, both the crime and its consequences.

I solemnly tell you that all this will be accomplished on this generation.

Oh! Jerusalem! Jerusalem! Jerusalem, you that stone those who have been sent to you and kill your prophets! How often have I longed to gather your children, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you refused! Now listen, Jerusalem! Now listen, you who hate Me and hate everything that comes from God. Now listen, you who love Me and who will be carried away by the punishment laid aside for the persecutors of the Messengers of God. And you also listen to Me, you who do not belong to this people, but who listen to Me just the same, listen and learn Who He is Who is speaking to you and foretells without having to study the flight, the warbling of birds, or celestial phenomena, or the viscera of sacrificed animals, or the fire and smoke of holocausts, because all the future is the present for Him Who is speaking to you. "This House of yours will be left desolate to you. And I say to you, says the Lord, that you shall not see Me any more until you also say**: 'Blessings on Him Who comes in the name of the Lord.' "»

* the blood of the just Abel, in Genesis 4,8, to the blood of Zechariah, in 2 Chronicles 24,20-22. *

** say, as in: Psalm 118,26.

596.22 ²²Jesus is clearly tired and hot, both because of the long thundering speech, and of the sultriness of the windless day. Pressed against the wall by a multitude of people, avidly gazed upon by thousands of people, feeling all the hatred of those who are listening to Him under the porches of the court of the Gentiles, and all the love or at least the admiration surrounding Him, indifferent to the sun blazing down on backs and reddened perspiring faces, He really looks exhausted. He needs solace and He seeks it saying to His apostles and to the seventy-two disciples, who like wedges have opened a passage through the crowd and who are now in the front line, forming a faithful loving barrier around Him: «Let us leave the Temple and go out into the open, among trees. I am in need of shade, silence and fresh air. This place really seems to be already burning with the fire of celestial wrath.»

They elbow their way with difficulty and are thus able to go out through the nearest gate, where Jesus in vain strives to dismiss many people. They want to follow Him at all costs.

596.23 ²³In the meantime the disciples are watching the cube of the Temple shining in the sun, as it is almost midday, and John of Ephesus points out the powerful construction to the Master saying: «Look at the size of the stones and of the construction!»

«And yet not a single stone here will be left on another» replies Jesus.

«No? When? How?» ask many.

But Jesus does not say anything. He goes down the Moriah and quickly leaves the town, passing through Ophel and the Gate of Ephraim or Dung Gate and taking shelter at first in the thick of the King's Gardens, that is until those who, apart from apostles and disciples, have insisted in following Him, go away slowly when Manaen, who has had the heavy gates opened, comes forward imposingly and says to everybody: «Go away. No one can come in here except those whom I allow.»

Shade, silence, scents of flowers, the smell of camphor and cloves, cinnamon, lavender and countless other scented herbs, the gurgling of streams nourished by nearby fountains and cisterns, under galleries of leaves, the warbling of birds make the spot a place of paradisiac rest. The town seems to be miles and miles away, with its narrow streets, dark because of the many archivolts or sunny to the point of dazzling, with its smells and

stenches of sewers, which are not always clean, and of streets along which too many quadrupeds pass to be clean, particularly the less important ones.

²⁴The guardian of the Gardens must know Jesus* very well, because he greets Him with respect and familiarity at the same time, and Jesus asks after his wife and children. 596.24

The man would like to give Jesus hospitality in his house, but the Master prefers the fresh restful peace of the large King's Garden, a real park of delight. And before the two untiring and very loyal servants of Lazarus go away to get the basket of food-stuffs, Jesus says to them: «Tell your mistresses to come. We shall stay here for a few hours with My Mother and the faithful women disciples. And it will be so pleasant...»

«You are very tired, Master! One can tell from Your face» remarks Manaen.

«Yes. So much so that I did not have enough strength to go farther.»

«But I offered You these gardens several times during the past days. You know how pleased I am to be able to offer You peace and solace!»

«I know, Manaen.»

«And yesterday You wanted to go to that sad place! Its neighbourhood is so arid and it is so strangely bare of vegetation this year! And it is so close to that sad gate!»

«I wanted to satisfy my apostles. They are like little boys, after all. Grown up boys. See how happily they are refreshing themselves!... They have immediately forgotten what is being plotted against Me beyond those walls...»

«And they have forgotten that You are so depressed... But I do not think there is any sound reason to be frightened. The place seemed more dangerous on other occasions.»

Jesus looks at him and is silent. How often in these last days have I seen Jesus look and be silent thus! Then Jesus becomes intent in watching the apostles and disciples, who have taken off their headgear, mantles and sandals, cooling their faces and limbs in the fresh rivulets, imitated by many of the seventy-two disciples, who, actually, I think are now many more, and who, all

* must know Jesus, since he had a leg healed by Him, in 488.5.

united in the fraternity of ideals, are lying down, resting here and there, a little aside, to let Jesus rest peacefully.

Manaen also withdraws leaving Him alone. Everybody respects the rest of the Master, Who is very tired and has taken shelter under a very thick pergola of a jasmine in bloom, shaped like a bower and isolated by a ring of water that flows gurgling in a little canal over which grass and flowers hang. A real peaceful refuge that is reached by means of a little bridge two palms wide and four long, the railings of which are all covered with a garland of jasmine corollas.

596.25 ²⁵The servants come back and they have increased in number, because Martha wanted to provide for all the servants of the Lord, and they say that the women will be coming shortly.

Jesus sends for Peter and says to him: «With My brother James bless, offer and hand out the food as I do.»

«I will hand it out, but I will not bless it. It is for You to offer and bless it, not for me.»

«When you were the head of your companions and were far away from Me, did you not do it?»

«Yes, I did. But then I was compelled to do it. Now You are with us, and it is for You to bless it. I think that everything tastes better when You offer it for us and hand it out...» and the faithful Simon embraces his Jesus, Who is sitting looking very tired in the shade, and he bends his head over His shoulder, happy to be able to clasp and kiss Him thus...

Jesus stands up and pleases him. He goes towards the disciples, He offers, blesses, hands out the food, He watches them eat gladly and says to them: «Afterwards you may sleep, rest while there is time, so that later you may keep awake and pray when you need to do so, and fatigue and tiredness may not overburden your eyes and spirit with sleepiness, when it will be necessary for you to be ready and wide-awake.»

«Are You not staying with us? Are You not eating?»

«Let Me rest. That is all I need. Eat, eat!» He caresses the ones whom He finds on His way and goes back to His place...

596.26 ²⁶Kind and gentle is the arrival of the Mother near Her Son. Mary comes forward without hesitating, because Manaen, who being less tired than the others, has been watching at the gate, points out to Her the place where is Jesus. The other women dis-

ciples, all the Hebrew ones are there, and of the Romans only Valeria is present, stop for a little while and are silent in order not to awake the disciples who are sleeping in the shade of the leafy trees, like sheep lying on the grass at midday.

Mary goes under the jasmine pergola without making the little wooden bridge or the gravel on the ground creak, and even more cautiously She approaches Her Son, Who, overcome by weariness, has fallen asleep with his head on the stone table placed there, his left arm used as a cushion under his face covered by his hair. Mary sits patiently near her exhausted Son. And She contemplates Him... so intently... and a sorrowful loving smile appears on Her lips, while tears silently fall on Her lap; but if Her lips are closed and silent, Her heart is praying with all the strength She possesses, and the power of that prayer and of its inspiration are revealed by the attitude of her hands joined on her lap, held tight with fingers interlaced in order not to tremble, and yet are shaken by a light tremor. Hands that are disjoined only to drive away a fly that insistently wants to alight on Her sleeping Son and might awake Him.

It is the Mother Who is watching Her Son. The last sleep of her Son She can watch. And if the face of the Mother, on this Wednesday before Passover, is different from that of the Mother at the Birth of the Lord, because grief makes it pale and disfigures its features, the mild loving purity of Her glance, the anxious care is the same as She had when, bending over the manger in Bethlehem, with Her love She protected the first uncomfortable sleep of her Child.

Jesus moves, and Mary quickly wipes Her eyes, so that Her Son may not see Her tears. But Jesus has not wakened. He has only changed the position of His face, turning it round to the other side, and Mary resumes Her immobility and Her watching.

²⁷But something breaks Mary's heart: She hears Her Jesus weep in His sleep and whisper the name of Judas, with an indistinct murmur, as He speaks with His mouth pressed against His arm and garment... 596.27

Mary stands up, She approaches Her Son and bends over Him, She follows His vague whispering, with Her hands pressed against Her heart. Jesus' speech, although broken but not to the extent that one cannot follow it, makes Her understand that He

is dreaming, and is dreaming once again the present, the past and then also the future, until He awakes with a jerk, as if He wanted to escape something horrible. But He finds the breast of His Mother, the arms of His Mother, the smile of His Mother, the gentle voice of his Mother, Her kiss, Her caress, the light touch of Her veil, with which She had wiped Her face to dry tears and perspiration, while She says to Him: «You were in an uncomfortable position, and You were dreaming... You are wet with perspiration and tired, Son.» And She tidies His ruffled hair, She dries His face and kisses Him, embracing Him with Her arm, holding Him to Her heart as She can no longer take Him in Her lap, as when He was a baby.

Jesus smiles at Her saying: «You are always the Mother. The one who comforts. The one who rewards for everything. My Mother!»

He makes Her sit close to Him laying His hand on Her knees, and Mary takes His long hand, so gentle and yet so strong, the hand of a handicraftsman, in Her small ones, She caresses its fingers and the back of it, smoothing the veins which had swollen while hanging in His sleep. And She tries to distract His attention...

596.28 28«We have come. We are all here. Also Valeria. The others are at the Antonia. Claudia wanted them, "as she is very sad" said her freedwoman. She says, I do not know why, that she has a presentiment of much weeping. Superstitions!... God only knows what will happen...»

«Where are the women disciples?»

«Over there, at the entrance of the Gardens. Martha wanted to prepare refreshing and nourishing food and drinks, considering how exhausted You are. But I, look, You always liked this, and I brought it to You. My share. It has a nicer taste because it was made by Your Mother.» She shows Him some honey and a bun on which She spreads it handing it to Her Son and saying: «As we used to do at Nazareth, when You rested during the hottest hours, and then You awoke feeling hot, and I used to come from the cool grotto with this refreshment...» She stops because Her voice trembles.

Her Son looks at Her and then says: «And when there was Joseph, You brought refreshments for two and the cool water of the

porous jar that You kept in running water to make it cooler and it was made even more so by the stems of wild mint that You put in it. How much mint there was there, under the olive-trees! And how many bees on the mint flowers! Our honey always tasted a little of that scent...» He is pensive... He remembers...

«We have seen Alphaeus, You know? Joseph was delayed because one of his sons was not too well. But he will certainly be here tomorrow with Simon. Salome of Simon is looking after our house and Mary's.»

²⁹«Mother, when You are all alone, who will You stay with?»

596.29

«With whomsoever You will tell Me, Son. I obeyed You, Son, before having You. I will continue doing so after You have left Me.» Her voice trembles, but a heroic smile is on Her lips.

«You know how to obey. How restful it is to be with You! Because, see, Mother? The world cannot understand, but I find complete rest with obedient people... Yes. God rests with the obedient. God would not have had to suffer, to toil, if disobedience had not come to the world. Everything happened because man did not obey. That is why there is sorrow in the world... That is the reason for Our grief.»

«And also for Our peace, Jesus. Because we know that our obedience comforts the Eternal Father. Oh! for Me in particular, what that thought is! I, a creature, have been granted to console my Creator!»

«Oh! Joy of God! You do not know, o joy of Ours, what Your word means to us! It exceeds the harmony of the Celestial Chorus!... Blessed! Blessed You are, as You teach Me the last obedience, and by this thought of Yours You make it pleasant for Me to accomplish it!»

«You do not need to be taught by Me, my Jesus. I have learned everything from You.»

«Jesus of Mary of Nazareth, the Man, has learned everything from You.»

«It was Your light that emanated from Me. The Light that You are and that came from the Eternal Light, annihilated in human appearance... ³⁰Johanna's brothers informed Me of the speech You delivered. They were enraptured with admiration. You uttered bitter words against the Pharisees...»

596.30

«It is the hour of supreme truths, Mother. They remain dead

truths to them. But they will be living truths for the others. And with love and severity I must fight the last battle to snatch them from Evil.»

«That is true. They told Me that Gamaliel, who was with other people in one of the halls in the porches, said at the end, while many were upset: “When one does not want to be reproached, one acts righteously” and he went away after that remark.»

«I am glad that the rabbi heard Me. Who told You?»

«Lazarus did. And he was told by Eleazar, who was in the hall with other people.

Lazarus came at midday. He greeted us and went away again without listening to his sisters who wanted to keep him until sunset. He told them to send John, or somebody else, to get those fruits and flowers, which are just perfect.»

«I will send John tomorrow.»

«Lazarus comes every day. But Mary gets angry because she says that he seems an apparition. He goes up to the Temple, he comes, gives orders and leaves again.»

596.31 «Lazarus also knows how to obey. I told him to behave so, because they are lying in wait for him as well. But don't tell his sisters. Nothing will happen to him. ³¹And now let us go to the women disciples.»

«Do not move. I will call them. The disciples are all asleep...»

«And we will let them sleep. They do not sleep much at night, because I teach them in the peace of Gethsemane.»

Mary goes out and comes back with the women, who seem to have got rid of their weight, so light are their steps. They greet Him with deep respect. Only Mary of Clopas is well known.

And from a large bag Martha takes out a small porous amphora, while from another vase, which is also porous, Mary takes fresh fruit that came from Bethany, and lays it on the table beside what her sister has prepared, that is a crisp appetising grilled dove, and she begs Jesus to accept it saying: «Eat it. It is nourishing. I prepared it myself.»

Johanna instead has brought some rose-vinegar. She explains: «It is so refreshing in these first warm days. My husband also makes use of it when he is tired after long rides.»

«We have nothing» say Mary Salome, Mary Clopas, Susanna and Eliza apologising.

And Nike and Valeria in turn say: «Neither have we. We did not know that we had to come.»

«You have given Me all your hearts. That is enough for Me. And you will still give Me...»

He takes some food, but above all He drinks the cool honied water that Martha pours out for Him from the porous amphora and He eats the fresh fruit, a real refreshment for the Tired One.

The women disciples do not speak much. They look at Him while He takes some refreshments. In their eyes there is love and anxiety. And all of a sudden Eliza begins to weep, and she apologises saying: «I do not know. My heart is burdened with sadness...»

«All our hearts are. Even Claudia in her palace...» says Valeria.

«I wish it were already Pentecost, whispers Salome.

«1, instead, would like to stop the time at this hour» says Mary of Magdala.

«You would be selfish, Mary» replies Jesus.

«Why, Rabboni?»

«Because you would like the joy of your redemption exclusively for yourself. There are millions of people who are awaiting this hour, or who will be redeemed because of this hour.»

«That is true. I was not thinking of that...» she lowers her head, biting her lips to conceal the tears in her eyes and the trembling of her lips. But she is always the brave struggler, and she says: «If You come tomorrow, You will be able to put on the tunic You sent me. It is fresh and clean, worthy of the Passover supper.»

«I will come... ³²Have you nothing to tell Me? You are silent and distressed. Am I no longer Jesus?...» He smiles at the women encouragingly. 596.32

«Oh! You are! But You are so great these days that I can no longer see You as the little boy I used to carry in my arms!» exclaims Mary of Alphaeus.

«Neither can I see You as the simple rabbi who used to come into my kitchen looking for John and James» says Salome.

«And I have always known You so: the King of my soul!» Proclaims Mary of Magdala.

And Johanna meekly and gently says: «And I, too: divine,

since the dream in which You appeared to me, when I was dying, to call me to the Life.»

«Lord, You have given us everything. Everything!» says with a sigh Eliza, who has collected herself.

«And you have given Me everything.»

«Too little!» they all reply.

«The possibility of giving will not come to an end after this hour. It will cease only when you are with Me in My Kingdom. My faithful women disciples. You will not sit at My side, on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel, but you will sing hosannas with the angels, forming a chorus of honour for My Mother, and then, as now, the heart of the Christ will find its joy in contemplating you.»

«I am young! Long will be the time to ascend to Your Kingdom. Happy Annaleah!» says Susanna.

«I am old, and happy to be so. I hope my death is near» says Eliza.

«I have my sons... I would like to serve these servants of God!» says Mary of Clopas with a sigh.

«Do not forget us, Lord!» says the Magdalene with restrained anxiety, I would say with a cry of her soul, so much does her voice quiver, even more than a cry, although it is kept low in order not to awake those who are sleeping.

«I will not forget you. I will come. You, Johanna, know that I can come even if I am far away... The others must believe that. And I will leave something to you... a mystery that will keep Me in you and you in Me, until we are united again, you and I, in the Kingdom of God.

596.33 ³³Go now. You may say that I have not told you much, that it was almost useless to make you come for so little. But I wanted to have around Me hearts that have loved Me without selfishness. For my sake: for Jesus. Not for the future King of Israel people have dreamt of. Go. And may you be blessed once more. Also the other women disciples, who are not here, but think of Me with love: Anne, Myrtha, Anastasica, Naomi, and the far away Syn-tyche, and Photinai, and Aglae and Sarah, Marcella, Philip's daughters, Mirjiam of Jairus, the virgins, the redeemed women, the wives, the mothers who have come to Me, who have been sisters and mothers to Me, better, oh! much better than the best

men!... All of them! I bless them all. Grace begins already to descend, grace and forgiveness, on woman, through this blessing of Mine. Go...»

He dismisses them holding back His Mother, to whom He says: «Before evening I shall be at Lazarus' mansion. I need to see You again. John will be with Me. But I only want You, Mother, and the other Maries, Martha and Susanna. I am so tired...»

«We shall be the only ones. Goodbye, Son...»

They kiss each other and part... Mary goes away slowly. She turns around before going out. She turns around before leaving the little bridge. She turns again, as long as She can see Jesus... She seems unable to depart from Him...

³⁴Jesus is alone once again. He gets up and goes out. He goes and calls John, who is sleeping lying on his face among the flowers, like a little boy, and He hands him the small amphora with the rose vinegar that Johanna brought Him, saying to him: «We shall go to My Mother this evening. But only the two of us.» 596.34

«I understand. Did they come?»

«Yes, they did. I preferred not to awake you...»

«You did the right thing. Your joy must have been greater. They know how to love you better than we do...» says John consolately.

«Come with Me.» John follows Him. «What is the matter with you?» Jesus asks him, when they are once again in the green dim-light of the pergola, where there are still some remains of food.

«Master, we are very bad. All of us. There is no obedience in us... and no desire to be with You. Also Peter and Simon have gone away. I don't know where. And so Judas found the opportunity to be quarrelsome.»

«Has Judas also gone away?»

«No, Lord. He has not. He says he has no need to go away, that he has no accomplices in our intrigues to try and get protection for You. But if I went to Annas, if others have gone to the Galileans residing here, it was not for an evil purpose!... And I do not think that Simon of Jonas and Simon Zealot are men capable of underhand intrigues...»

«Never mind. In fact Judas does not need to go while you are resting. He knows when and where to go to accomplish what he has to do.»

«Then why does he speak so? It is not nice, in the presence of the disciples!»

596.35 «It is not nice. But it is so. ³⁵Cheer up, My lamb.»

«I, Your lamb? There is no other Lamb but You!»

«Yes. You. I, the Lamb of God, and you, the lamb of the Lamb of God.»

«Oh!!! You already told me this word on another occasion, it was the first days I was with you. There were only the two of us, as now, among the green vegetation, as now, and in the fine season.» John rejoices at the recollection. And he whispers: «I am always, I am still the lamb of the Lamb of God...»

Jesus caresses him. And He offers him some of the grilled dove, left on the table on a sheet of parchment that had wrapped it. He then opens some juicy figs for him and offers them to him, happy to see him eat them.

Jesus has sat sideways on the edge of the table and looks at John so intensely that the latter asks: «Why are You looking at me thus? Because I am eating like a glutton?»

«No. Because you are like a child... Oh! My beloved! How much I love you because of your heart!» and Jesus bends to kiss the fairhaired head of the apostle and says to him: «Remain thus, always thus, with your heart without pride and malice. Thus, also in the hours of unchecked ferocity. Do not imitate those who sin, My child.»

596.36 ³⁶John is seized with his worry again and he says: «But I cannot believe that Simon and Peter...»

«You would really make a mistake if you thought they were sinners. Drink this. It is a good fresh drink. Martha prepared it... Now you are feeling better. I am sure that you had not finished your meal...»

«That is true. I had begun to weep. Because, as long as the world hates us, one can understand. But that one of us should insinuate...»

«Forget about it. You and I know that Simon and the Zealot are two honest men. And that is enough. And, unfortunately, you know that Judas is a sinner. But keep silent about it. But when many lustra have gone by and it is just to reveal how deep My grief was, then you will tell also what I suffered because of the deeds of that man, in addition to those of that apostle. Let us go.

It is time to leave this place and go towards the Field of the Gali-leans and...»

«Are we staying there also tonight? And are we going to Gethsemane first? Judas wanted to know. He says he is tired of being out in the dew, with little and uncomfortable rest.»

«It will soon be over. But I will not tell Judas what I intend doing...»

«You are not obliged. It is You Who have to guide us, and not we who have to guide You.» John is so far from betraying that he does not even understand the reason of prudence why Jesus for some days has never mentioned what He intends doing.

³⁷They are now among the sleeping disciples. They call them. 596.37
They awake. Manaen, who has accomplished his task, apologises to the Master for not being able to stay, and not being able to be with Him at the Temple the following day, as he has to remain at the palace. And in saying so he stares at Peter and Simon, who have in the meantime come back, and Peter nods quickly, as if to say: «I have understood.»

They come out of the Gardens. It is still warm and the sun is still shining. But the evening breeze already mitigates the heat and blows some little clouds in the clear sky.

They go up towards Siloam, avoiding the places of the lepers, but Simon goes to them to take the remains of their meal to the few who are still left there and who did not believe in Jesus.

³⁸Matthias, the former shepherd, approaches Jesus and asks: 596.38
«My Lord and Master, my companions and I have pondered a lot on Your words, until we were overcome by tiredness, and we fell asleep before solving the problem we had set to ourselves. And now we are more stupid than before. If we have correctly understood Your speeches of these last days, You have foretold that many things will be changed although the Law remains unchanged, and that a New Temple will have to be erected, with new prophets, wise men and scribes, that they will give battle to it, and that it will not die, whereas this one, always if we have understood correctly, is destined to perish.»

«It is destined to perish. Remember Daniel's prophecy*...»

«But how shall we, poor and few as we are, be able to rebuild

* prophecy, that is in: Daniel 9,20-27.

it, if the kings found it difficult to build this one? Where shall we erect it? Not here, because You say that this place will remain deserted until they bless You as the messenger sent by God.»

«It is so.»

«Not in Your Kingdom. We are convinced that Your Kingdom is spiritual. So, how and where shall we establish it? Yesterday You said that the true Temple - and is that one not the true Temple? - that the true Temple, when they think that they have destroyed it, will then ascend triumphantly to the true Jerusalem. Where is it? We are very confused.»

«It is so. Let the enemies destroy the true Temple. In three days I will raise it up and it will experience no more ambushes as it will ascend where man can no longer harm.

596.39³⁹With regards to the Kingdom of God, it is in you and wherever there are men who believe in Me. Scattered at present, it will spread all over the Earth in the course of ages. Then eternal, united, perfect in Heaven. The new Temple will be built there, in the Kingdom of God, that is, where there are spirits who accept My doctrine, the doctrine of the Kingdom of God, and put its precepts into practice.

How will it be erected if you are poor and few? Oh! No money or power is really required to erect the building of the new abode of God. Neither for the individual nor for the collective one. The Kingdom of God is in you. And the union of all those who have the Kingdom of God in themselves, of all those who have God in themselves - God: Grace; God: Life; God: Light; God: Charity - will form the great Kingdom of God on the Earth, the new Jerusalem that will spread all over the world and, complete and perfect, without faults, without shadows, will live forever in Heaven.

How will you manage to build Temple and town? Oh! not you, but God will build these new places. You have only to give Him your goodwill. Goodwill is to remain in Me. Goodwill is to live my doctrine. Goodwill is to be united. So united to Me as to form only one body that is nourished by only one humour in all its parts, even in the smallest ones. Only one edifice that rests only on one base and is held together by a mystic cohesion. But as without the help of the Father, Whom I taught you to pray and Whom I will pray for you before I die, you would not be able to be in Charity, in Truth, in Life, that is still in Me and with Me

in God the Father and in God Love, because we are only one Divinity, because of that I tell you to have God in you in order to be able to be the Temple that will know no end. You would not be able to do it by yourselves. If God does not build, and He cannot build where He cannot dwell, in vain men busy themselves in building and rebuilding.

⁴⁰The new Temple, my Church, will rise only when your hearts give hospitality to God, and He with you, living stones, will build his Church.» 596.40

«But did You not say that Simon of Jonas is its Head, the Stone on which Your Church will be built? And have You not made us also understand that You are its corner-stone? So who is its head? Does this Church exist or not?» says the Iscariot interrupting.

«I am the mystical Head. Peter is the visible head. Because I am going back to the Father leaving you Life, Light, Grace by means of my Word, of my suffering, of the Paraclete, Who will be the friend of those who are faithful to Me. I am one thing with my Church, my spiritual body, of which I am the head.

The head contains the brain or mind. The mind is the seat of knowledge, the brain directs the movements of the limbs with its immaterial orders, which are more efficient than any other incentive in making the limbs move. Look at a dead man, whose brain is dead. Is there any movement in his limbs? Look at one who is completely stupid. Is he not perhaps so inert that he is not capable of having those rudimentary instinctive emotions that the lowest animal, the worm we tread on when walking, has? Observe a man whose limbs, one or more of them, have lost contact with the brain by paralysis. Can he move the part that no longer has any vital link with his head? But if the mind directs with its immaterial orders, it is the other organs - eyes, ears, tongue, nose, skin - that transmit sensations to the mind, and it is the other parts of the body that perform and have performed what the mind, informed by the organs, which are as material and visible as the intellect is invisible, orders. Could I get you to sit on the slope of this mountain without saying to you: "Sit down"? Even if I think that I want you to sit down, you do not know until I express my thought in words and I utter them using my tongue and lips. I could sit down Myself, if I only thought of it because I feel that my legs are tired, but if they refused to bend and sit Me

down? The mind needs organs and limbs to accomplish and have accomplished the operations that the thought thinks of.

So in the spiritual body that is my Church, I shall be the Intellect, that is, the head, the seat of the intellect; Peter and his collaborators will be those who watch the reactions and perceive the sensations and transmit them to the mind, so that I may illuminate and direct what is to be done for the welfare of the whole body and then, as they are enlightened and guided by my order, they may speak and guide the other parts of the body. The hand that wards off an object that can damage the body and drives away what, being corrupt, may corrupt; the foot that steps over an obstacle, without knocking against it and falling and being hurt, have received an order to do so from the part that directs. The boy, or also the man, who is saved from a danger, or makes any kind of gain - education, good business, marriage, good alliance through a good piece of advice he received, for a word spoken - it is through that piece of advice and that word that he is not hurt or he makes a profit. It will be the same in the Church. The head, and the heads, led by the Divine Thought and enlightened by the Divine Light and instructed by the Eternal Word, give orders and advice, and the members will act, receiving spiritual health and gain.

596.41 ⁴¹My Church already exists, because it has its supernatural Head and its divine Head and it has its members: the disciples. Still small a germ being formed - perfect only in the Head directing it, imperfect in the rest, which needs the touch of God to be perfect and some time to grow. But I solemnly tell you that it already exists, and that it is holy on account of Him Who is its Head and of the goodwill of the just members composing it. It is holy and invincible. Hell, consisting of demons and men-demons, will hurl itself against it thousands of times and will fight it in thousands of ways, but it will not prevail. The edifice will be unshakeable.

But the building is not made with only one stone. Look at the Temple, over there, large, beautiful in the setting sun. Is it made with only one stone? It is a complex of stones forming a harmonious whole. We say: the Temple. That is, one unit. But this unit is made with the many stones that have composed and formed it. It would have been useless to lay the foundations, if they were not

to support the walls and the roof, if no walls were to be raised on them. And it would have been impossible to raise walls and support the roof, if first they had not laid solid foundations, proportioned to such a huge mass. So with this interdependence of parts, also the new Temple will rise. In the course of ages, you will build it, laying it on the foundations that I have given it, and which are perfect, for its massive size. You will build it under the direction of God, with the good things used to raise it: the spirits in which God dwells.

With God in your hearts, to make them polished flawless stones for the new Temple. With His Kingdom established with its laws in your spirits. Otherwise you would be badly-baked bricks, worm-eaten wood, chipped cracked stones that do not last, and are rejected by the builder, if he is wary, or they do not hold out, they cave in, making a part collapse if the builder, the builders appointed by the Father to the construction of the Temple, are idolatrous builders, who are proud in their hearts but do not watch over or work hard on the building that is rising, and neglect the materials used to make it.

Idolatrous builders, idolatrous guardians, idolatrous keepers, thieves! Robbers of the trust in God, of the esteem of men, robbers full of pride, who are pleased to have the possibility of making a profit and of having large stocks of materials, but they do not watch whether they are good or of inferior quality, the cause of ruin.

⁴²You, new priests and scribes of the new Temple, listen. Woe to you and to those who after you will become idolatrous and will not watch and look after themselves and the other believers, to examine and test the good quality of the stones and timber, without trusting appearances, and will bring about ruin by allowing inferior quality, or even harmful materials to be used for the Temple, scandalising and causing disaster. Woe to you if you will allow unsafe, curved walls to be erected, full of large fissures and that will collapse easily, as they are not balanced on solid perfect foundations. The disaster would not come from God, the Founder of the Church, but from you, and you would be responsible for it before God and men.

Care, attention, insight, prudence! The stone, the brick, the weak beam, which would be ruinous in a main wall, can serve

596.42

for parts of minor importance, and serve well. That is how you must be able to choose. With charity in order not to disgust the weak parts, with firmness not to disgust God and ruin His Edifice. And if you become aware that a stone, already laid to support a main corner, is not good or is not balanced, be brave, bold, and remove it from that place, mortify it by squaring it with the chisel of holy zeal. If it howls with pain, it does not matter. It will bless you later, in the course of ages, because you saved it. Move it, appoint it to another office. Do not be afraid to send it away altogether, if you see that it is the cause of scandal and ruin and rebels against your work. Few stones are better than a pile of pebbles. Do not be in a hurry. God is never in a hurry, but what He creates is eternal, because it is well thought over before being carried out. Even if it is not eternal, it will last to the end of time. Look at the Universe. For ages, for thousands of centuries it is as God made it through subsequent operations. Imitate the Lord. Be as perfect as your Father. Keep His Law and His Kingdom in you and you will not be unsuccessful.

But if you were not so, the building would collapse, you would have toiled in vain to erect it. It would collapse and only the cornerstone and the foundations would be left... That is what will happen to that one!... I solemnly tell you that that is what will happen to it. And that will be the fate of yours, if you put in it what is in this one: parts diseased with pride, avidity, sin, lust. As that pavilion of clouds, so gracefully beautiful, was blown away and dispersed by a breath of wind, while it seemed to be settling on the top of that mountain, likewise, at a gust of a wind of supernatural and human punishment, will tumble the buildings that are holy by name...»

596.43 ⁴³Jesus is silent and pensive. He resumes speaking only to say: «Let us sit down here and rest a little.»

They sit down on a slope of the Mount of Olives, in front of the Temple kissed by the setting sun. Jesus looks fixedly at that place and sorrowfully. The others are proud of its beauty, but a veil of worry, left by the words of the Master, is spread on their pride. And if that beauty should really perish?...

Peter and John speak to each other and then they whisper something to James of Alphaeus and Andrew, who nod assent. Then Peter addresses the Master saying: «Let us go aside and ex-

plain to us when Your prophecy on the destruction of the Temple will take place. Daniel mentions it, but if things were as he says and as You say, the Temple would have but a few more hours. But we do not see any armies or preparations for war. So when will it happen? Which will be the sign of it? You have come. You say that You are about to go away. And yet it is known that it will only happen when You are among men. So, will You come back? When will You come back? Tell us, so that we may know...»

«It is not necessary to go aside. See? The most faithful disciples have remained, those who will be of great help to you twelve. They may hear the words that I will speak to you. Come near Me, all of you.» He shouts the last words to gather them all.

The disciples scattered on the slope come near the others, they form a compact group around the main one of Jesus and the apostles and they listen.

⁴⁴«Take care that no one deceives you in future. I am the Christ and there will be no other Christs. So, when many will come and say to you: "I am the Christ" and they will deceive many, do not believe those words, even if they are accompanied by wonders. 596.44

Satan, the father of falsehood and the protector of liars, assists his servants and followers with false wonders, which, however, can be recognised as not being good ones, because they are always joined to fear, perturbation and falsehood. You know the wonders of God: they give holy peace, joy, health, faith, and they lead to holy desires and deeds. The others do not. So ponder on the forms and consequences of the wonders you may see in future, performed by the false Christs and by all those who will clothe themselves in the garments of saviours of peoples, whereas they are wild beasts who ruin them.

You will hear also, and you will see people speak of wars and rumours of wars and they will say to you: "These are the signs of the end." Do not be upset. It will not be the end. All this must happen before the end, but it is not the end yet. People will rise against people, kingdom against kingdom, nation against nation, continent against continent, and plagues, famines and earthquakes will follow in many places. But this is only the beginning of the birth pangs. Then they will bring affliction upon you and will kill you, accusing you of being guilty of their suffering, and hoping to get out of it by persecuting and destroying my servants.

Men will always accuse the innocent of being the cause of the evil that they, sinners, procure for themselves. They accuse God Himself, Perfect Innocence and Supreme Goodness, of being the cause of their suffering, and they will do the same with you, and you will be hated on account of My Name. It is Satan who instigates them. And many will be scandalised and they will betray and hate one another. It is still Satan who instigates them. And many false prophets will arise, who will deceive many. And Satan is still the true author of so much evil. And with the increase of lawlessness, love in many men will grow cold. But those who stand firm to the end will be saved. And first this Good News of the Kingdom of God is to be preached all over the world, as a witness to all the nations. Then the end will come. The return to the Christ of Israel who will accept Him and the preaching of my Doctrine to all the world.

596.45 ⁴⁵And then another sign. A sign for the end of the Temple and for the end of the World. When you see the abomination of the desolation prophesied by Daniel - let those who are listening to Me understand properly and let those who read the Prophet read between the lines - then those who are in Judaea must escape to the mountains, those who are on the terrace must not come down to collect what is in their houses, and those who are in the fields must not come back home to fetch their cloaks, but they must flee without turning back, otherwise it may happen that they will no longer be able to do so, and while running away they must not even turn around to look, in order not to keep the horrible sight in their hearts, and thus go mad. Woe to those with child and to those giving suck in those days! And woe if you have to escape on a Sabbath! The flight would not be sufficient to save you without sinning. So pray that it may not happen in winter or on a Sabbath, because then the tribulation will be so great as it has never been from the beginning of the world until now, nor will ever be alike again, because it will be the end. And if those days were not shortened for the sake of those who are chosen, no one would be saved, because the satan-men will enter into an alliance with hell to torture men.

And even then, in order to corrupt and mislead those who have remained faithful to the Lord, some people will arise and say: "The Christ is there, the Christ is here. He is in that place.

There He is." Do not believe them. Let no one believe them, for false Christs and false prophets will arise and produce great signs and portents, enough to deceive even the chosen, if it were possible, and they will speak doctrines that are apparently so comforting and good as to deceive even the best ones, if the Spirit of God were not with them enlightening them on the truth and the satanic origin of such portents and doctrines. I am telling you. I am foretelling it, so that you may know how to behave. But do not be afraid of falling. If you remain in the Lord, you will not be led into temptation and ruin. Remember what I told you*: "I have given you the power to walk on snakes and scorpions, and of all the power of the Enemy nothing will harm you, because everything will be subjected to you." But I also remind you that, in order to achieve this, you must have God within you, and you must rejoice, not because you control the powers of Evil and poisonous things, but because your names are written in Heaven.

⁴⁶Remain in God and in His truth. I am the Truth and I teach the truth. So I repeat to you once again: whatever they may say about Me, do not believe it. I alone have spoken the truth. I alone tell you that the Christ will come, but when it is the end. So, if they say to you: "He is in the desert", do not go. If they say to you: "He is in that house", do not listen to them. Because in His second coming the Son of man will be like lightning striking in the east and flashing as far as the west, in a shorter time than a blink. And He will glide over the great Body, suddenly turned into a Corpse, followed by His shining angels, and He will judge. Wherever the corpse is, there will the eagles gather. And immediately after the distress of those last days, as you have been told - I am speaking of the end of time and of the world and of the resurrection of the bones, of which the prophets speak** - the sun will be darkened, and the moon will shed no more light, and the stars will fall from the sky like grapes from a bunch that is too ripe and is shaken by a gale, and the powers of Heaven will be shaken.

And then in the darkened vault of heaven the dazzling sign of the Son of Man will appear, and all the nations of the Earth will weep, and men will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of

* I told you, in 280.2.

** the prophets speak, as in: Ezekiel 37,1-14.

heaven with great power and glory. And He will order His angels to reap the corn and gather the grapes, and to separate the darnel from the corn, and to throw the grapes into the vat, because the time of the great harvest of Adam's seed has come, and there will be no more need to keep small bunches or seeds, because the human race will never be perpetuated again on the dead Earth. And He will order His angels to gather the chosen with loud trumpets from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to another, so that they may be beside the Divine Judge to judge with Him the last living men and those who have been raised from the dead.

596.47 ⁴⁷Learn the similitude from the fig-tree: when you see its twigs grow supple and put forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So, when you see all these things, know that the Christ is about to come. I solemnly tell you: *this generation that did not want Me* will not pass away, before all this takes place. My word does not pass. What I have said will take place. The hearts and minds of men may change, but my word does not change.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. But as for the day and the exact hour, nobody knows them, not even the angels of the Lord, only the Father knows them.

596.48 ⁴⁸As it was in the, days of Noah, so it will be when the Son of man comes. In the days before the Flood, men were eating, drinking, taking wives, taking husbands, without worrying about the sign, right up to the day Noah went into the ark and the cataracts of heaven were opened and the Flood swept all living beings and things away. It will be like this also for the coming of the Son of man. Then two men will be close to each other in the field, and one will be taken and the other will be left, and two women will be at the millstone grinding, and one will be taken and one left by the enemies in the Fatherland, and even more by the angels who will be separating the good seed from the darnel, and they will have no time to prepare for the judgement of the Christ.

So be awake because you do not know at what time your Lord will come. Consider this: if the head of a family knew at what time a burglar would come, he would stay awake and would not let his house be robbed. So be vigilant and pray, being always prepared for the coming, without letting your hearts become sluggish through all kinds of abuse and intemperance, and your

spirits be dull and distracted from the things of Heaven by excessive care for the things of the Earth, so that death may not take you all of a sudden, when you are not prepared. Because, bear this in mind, each one of you must die. All men, once they are born, must die, and this death and subsequent judgement is a particular coming of the Christ and its universal repetition will take place at the solemn coming of the Son of man.

⁴⁹What will happen to that faithful and prudent servant, appointed by his master to give food to the servants in his absence? His lot will be a happy one if his master comes back suddenly and finds him doing his duty with diligence, justice and love. I tell you solemnly that he will say to him: "Come, good faithful servant. You have deserved my reward. Here, administer all my property." But if he seemed good and faithful, but was not, and if interiorly he was as bad as he was hypocritical exteriorly, and once the master has left, he says to himself: "The master will come back late! Let us have a good time", and he begins to beat and ill-treat his fellow servants, cutting down their food and everything else to have more money to spend with revellers and drunkards, what will happen? The master will come back all of a sudden, when the servant does not expect him, and his wrong-doing will be found out, his position and money will taken off him, and he will be led where justice wants. And there will he remain. 596.49

And the same will happen to the unrepentant sinner, who does not think that death can be close at hand, as his judgement can be near, and he enjoys himself and abuses saying: "Later I will repent". I tell you solemnly that he will not have time to do so, and he will be condemned to be forever where there is dreadful horror, where there is only blasphemy and weeping and torture, and he will come out only for the final Judgement, when he will be re clothed with the flesh raised from the dead, to present himself entire at the final Judgement, as he was entire when he sinned in the time of his earthly life, and in body and soul he will present himself to Jesus Judge, Whom he did not want as his Saviour.

⁵⁰They will all be gathered there before the Son of man. An infinite multitude of bodies, given back by the land and by the sea and recomposed after being ashes for such a long time. And 596.50

the souls in their bodies. To each flesh returned to the skeletons will correspond its own soul that once animated it. And they will stand before the Son of man, splendid in His divine Majesty, sitting on His throne of glory supported by His angels.

And He will separate men from men, placing the good on one side and the bad on the other, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the kids, and He will place the sheep on His right, and the goats on His left. And in a gentle voice and with a benign appearance he will say to those who look at Him with all the love of their hearts, and are peaceful and beautiful, shining with the glorious beauty of their holy bodies: "Come, you who have been blessed by My Father, take possession of the Kingdom prepared for you since the origin of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink, I was a pilgrim and you gave Me hospitality, I was naked and you clothed Me, sick and you visited Me, in prison and you came to comfort Me."

And the just will ask Him: "Lord, when did we see You hungry and we fed You, thirsty and we gave You drink? When did we see You a pilgrim and we welcomed You, naked and we clothed You? When did we see You sick and in prison and we came to visit You?"

And the King of kings will say to them: "I tell you solemnly: when you did one of these things to one of the least of My brothers, you did it to Me."

He will then address those who are on His left hand and will say to them, looking very severe, and His eyes will be like flashes of lightning striking the reprobates, and in His voice the wrath of God will thunder: "Go away from here! Away from Me, with your curse upon you! Go to the eternal fire prepared by the fury of God for the devil and the angels of darkness and for those who have listened to their voices of treble obscene lechery. I was hungry and you did not give Me any food, I was thirsty and you did not quench My thirst, I was naked and you did not clothe Me, I was a pilgrim and you rejected Me, I was sick and in prison and you did not visit Me. Because you had but one law: the pleasure of your own egos."

And they will say to Him: "When did we see You hungry, thirsty, naked, pilgrim, sick, in prison? Really, we never met You. We did not exist, when You were on the Earth."

And He will reply to them: "That is true. You never met Me. Because you did not exist when I was on the Earth. But you were acquainted with My word and you had among you people who were hungry, thirsty, naked, ill, in prison. Why did you not do to them what you would have perhaps done to Me? Because no one says that those, who had Me among them, were merciful to the Son of man. Do you not know that I am in my brothers, and that where one of them suffers, I am there, and that what you have not done to one of the least of My brothers, you have refused it to Me, the First-Born of men? Go and burn in your own selfishness. Go and be enveloped in darkness and ice, because you were darkness and ice yourselves, though you knew where the Light and the Fire of Love were." And they will go to the eternal torture, whereas the just will enter eternal life.

Those are the future things...

⁵¹Go now. And do not part from one another. I am going with John, and I shall be with you half through the first watch, for supper, and then we shall go to our teaching.» 596.51

«Also this evening? Shall we be doing that every evening? I am aching all over because of the dew. Would it not be better to go to some hospitable house now? Always under tents! Always watching at night, when it is cold and damp...» says Judas complaining.

«It is the last night. Tomorrow... it will be different.»

«Ah! I thought You wanted to go to Gethsemane every night.

But if it is the last one...»

«I did not say that, Judas. I said that it will be the last night to spend all together at the Field of the Galileans. Tomorrow we will prepare for Passover and will consume the lamb, then I will go by Myself to Gethsemane to pray. And you can do what you like.»

«But shall we not come with You, Lord! When have we ever wanted to leave You?» asks Peter.

«You should be quiet, because you are culpable. You and the Zealot do nothing but flutter here and there as soon as the Master does not see you. I have been keeping an eye on you. At the Temple... on the day... in the tents up there...» says the Iscariot, happy to denounce them.

«That is enough! If they do that, they are doing the right

thing. But do not leave Me alone... I beg you...»

«Lord, we are not doing anything wrong. Believe me. Our deeds are known to God, and His eyes do not turn away from them in disgust» says the Zealot.

«I know. But it is useless. And what is useless may always become harmful. Be together as much as possible.»

He then says to Matthew: «My good reporter, you will repeat to them the parable of the ten wise virgins and the ten foolish ones, and that of the master who gives some talents to his three servants to make them bear interests, and two earn twice as much and the sluggard hides it in the ground. Do you remember?»

«Yes, my Lord, very well.»

«Repeat them, then, because not everybody knows them. And also those who know them will be pleased to hear them again. You can while away the time so, in wise conversation, until I come back. Stay awake! Be vigilant! Keep your spirits awake. Those parables are also appropriate to what I have said. Good-bye. Peace be with you.»

He takes John by the hand and goes away with him towards the town... The others set out towards the Fields of the Galileans.

596.52 ⁵²Jesus says: «You will put here the second part of the very toilsome Wednesday before Passover. Night (1945). Remember to mark in red the passages that I told you.

Those little words throw light. A lot of light for those who can see it.»

597. Wednesday night at Gethsemane with the apostles.

8th March 1945.

597.1 ⁴«I said to you: "Be careful, be awake and pray that your eyes may not become heavy with sleep." But I see that your tired eyes are trying to close and yOur bodies, even against your will, are anxious to find positions to rest. You are right, My poor friends! Your Master has exacted quite a lot of you these last few days, and you are so tired. But in a few hours, by now only few, you will

be happy that you have not lost even one moment of My attention for you. You will be glad that you have not refused anything to your Jesus. In any case, this is the last time that I speak to you of sad things. Tomorrow I will speak to you of love and I will work a miracle of total love for you. Prepare yourselves through a great purification to receive it. Oh! how much more it agrees with My Ego to speak of love than to speak of punishment! How pleasant it is for Me to say: "I love you. Do come. Throughout My life I have dreamt of this hour!" But it is love to speak also of death. It is love because death, for those who love you, is the supreme proof of love. It is love, because preparing dear friends for a misfortune is providence of affection that wants them ready and not dismayed at that hour. It is love, because confiding a secret is proof of holding in high esteem those to whom it is confided. ²I know that you have harassed John with questions to learn what I said to him when I remained alone with him. And you did not believe that no word was spoken. But it is so. It was enough for Me to have someone near Me...» 597.2

«Then, why he and not somebody else?» asks the Iscariot, and he does so in an arrogant indignant tone.

Also Peter, and with him Thomas and Philip say: «Yes. Why he and not the others?»

Jesus replies to the Iscariot: «Would you have liked to be the one? Are you worthy of it?»

³It was a fresh clear morning in the month of Adar... I was an unknown wayfarer on the road near the river... Tired, covered with dust, pale with fasting, with an unkempt beard and broken sandals, I looked like a beggar on the roads of the world... He saw Me... and he recognised Me as the one on whom the Dove of the eternal fire had alighted. In that first transfiguration of Mine, an atom of my divine brightness must have revealed itself. 597.3

The eyes of the Baptist, opened by Penance, and those preserved angelic by Purity, saw what the others did not see. And the pure eyes took that vision into the tabernacle of the heart, and closed it in there, like a pearl in a coffer... When almost after two months* those eyes looked up at the worn-out wayfarer, his soul recognised Me... I was his love.

* after two months, as it has already been clarified in 47.10.

His first and only love. The first and only love is never forgotten. The soul feels it coming, even if it had gone away, it feels it coming from remote distances, and leaps for joy, and awakes the mind, which arouses the flesh, so that they all may take part in the banquet of joy in meeting again and loving each other. And his trembling lips said to Me: "I greet You, Lamb of God." Oh! faith of the pure, how great you are! How you overcome all obstacles! He did not know my Name. Who was I? Where was I coming from? What was I doing? Was I rich? Was I poor? Was I wise? Was I ignorant? Of what avail to faith is it to know all that? Does it increase or diminish through knowledge? He believed what the Precursor had told him. Like a star that by order of the Creator transmigrates from one sky to another, he had parted from his sky, the Baptist, from his constellation, and had come towards his new sky, the Christ, in the constellation of the Lamb. And he is not the biggest star but he is the purest and the most beautiful one in the constellation of love.

Three years have gone by since then. Large and small stars joined my constellation and then they departed from it. Some fell and died. Others have become smoky because of heavy vapours. But he has remained fixed with his pure light near the Pole-star.

597.4 ⁴Let Me look at his light. Two will be the lights in the darkness of the Christ: Mary and John. But it will be almost impossible for Me to see them, so deep will be My sorrow. Let Me impress in My eyes these four irises that are strips of sky between fair eyelashes, to take with Me, where no one will be able to come, a remembrance of purity. All the sins! Everything on the shoulders of the Man! Oh! Oh! this drop of purity!... My Mother! John! And I!... The three ship wrecked persons emerging from the shipwreck of mankind in the sea of Sin!

597.5 ⁵It will be the hour in which I, the offspring of David's stock, will say, moaning with David's ancient sigh*: "My God, turn to look at Me. Why have You deserted Me? The shouts of the crimes that I have taken upon Myself on behalf of everybody are driving Me away from You... I am a worm, no longer a man, the dishonour of mankind, the refuse of the populace."

* ancient sigh it is the beginning of a sequence of quotations and allusions that refer to: Psalm 22,2.7.13-19, Isaiah 50,6; 53; 63,3.

And listen to Isaiah: "I abandoned my body to those who struck Me, my cheeks to those who tore at my beard, I did not remove My face from those who insulted Me and covered Me with spittle."

Listen to David again: "Many bull-calves have surrounded Me, many bulls have assailed Me. Their jaws are agape to tear Me to pieces, like lions tearing and roaring. I am like water that is draining away."

And Isaiah completes: "I dyed my garments Myself." Oh! I am dyeing my garments Myself, not with my anger, but with My sorrow and my love for you. Like the two flat stones of the press, they squeeze Me and My Blood. I am like the pressed bunch of grapes, that was beautiful when it entered the press, and afterwards it is pulp squashed without juice and beauty.

And I say with David, my heart "is like wax and melts within My chest". Oh! perfect Heart of the Son of man, what are you becoming now? You are like the heart that a long life of revelry has exhausted and enervated. All My vigour has withered. My tongue is sticking to My palate because of fever, heat and agony. And death is advancing in its suffocating blinding ashes. And there is no mercy either! "A pack of hounds surrounds Me and bites Me. They bite Me where I am wounded and blows strike Me where I have been bitten. No part of my body is without pain. My bones creak as they are dislocated through beastly stretching. I do not know where to lay my body. The dreadful crown is a ring of iron that penetrates my head. I am hanging from My pierced hands and feet. Raised up as I am, I show my body to the world and everybody can count my bones" ...»

«Be quiet! Be quiet!» says John sobbing.

597.6

«Say no more! You make us suffer the throes of death!» say His cousins imploringly.

Andrew does not speak, but with his head between his knees he is weeping silently. Simon is livid. Peter and James of Zebedee seem to be tortured. Philip, Thomas and Bartholomew look like three stone statues representing anguish.

Judas Iscariot is a gruesome demoniac masque. He looks like a damned person who at last realises what he has done. With his mouth open to utter a cry that howls inside him but is stifled in his throat, his eyes wide open and frightened like those of a

madman, his cheeks sallow under the brownish veil of his shaven beard, his hair unkempt as he ruffles it now and again with his hand, wet with perspiration and cold, he seems to be on the point of fainting.

Matthew, raising his eyes, so far lowered, to seek some assistance in his torture, sees him and says: «Judas! Are you not well?... Master, Judas is suffering!»

«And I, too» says Christ. «But I am suffering with peace. Become spirits to be able to bear this hour. Anyone who is “flesh” cannot live it without becoming mad...»

597.7 ⁷Once again David speaks, who sees the tortures of his Christ: “They are not yet satisfied and they look at Me, they laugh scornfully at Me and they divide My garments among them and cast lots for My tunic. I am the Evil-doer. It is their right.”

Oh! Earth, look at your Christ! Recognise Him, although He is so consumed. Listen, remember the words of Isaiah and understand why, the great why, He became so, and man was able to kill the Word of the Father, reducing Him to such a state. “He is without beauty and splendour. We saw Him. He was not handsome. And we did not love Him. Despised like the last of men, He, the Man of sorrows and accustomed to suffering, had His face concealed. He was despised and we took no account of Him.” This masque of one who is tortured was His beauty as Redeemer. But you, foolish Earth, preferred His serene face!

“He really took our sufferings upon Himself, He bore our sorrows. And we looked at Him as if He were a leper, as one cursed by God and despised. He, instead, was injured because of our wickedness. The punishment reserved for us, the punishment that gives us back peace with God, has fallen upon Him. Through His wounds we are healed. We had all gone astray like sheep. Each had deviated from the straight path and the Lord burdened Him with the sins of all of us.”

597.8 ⁸Those who think that they have done good to themselves and to Israel should undeceive themselves. And likewise those who think they have been stronger than God. And also those who think that they do not have to expiate this sin, only because I voluntarily allow them to kill Me. I am fulfilling My holy task, My perfect obedience to the Father. But that does not exclude their obedience to Satan and their wicked task.

Yes, o Earth, your Redeemer has been sacrificed because He wanted it. "He never opened His mouth to utter a word of prayer and thus be spared or a word to curse His murderers. Like a sheep He let Himself be led to the slaughter-house to be killed, like a lamb that is dumb before its shearers."

"After being captured and condemned He was raised. He will have no offspring. Like a tree He was cut off from the land of the living. God has struck Him for the sins of His people. Will no one of His generation on His Earth pity Him? Will the man cut off from the Earth have no children?"

⁹Oh! I am replying to you, o prophet of your Christ. If my people will have no pity on the innocent Man killed, the angels of the heavenly people will pity Him. If his virility will have no children in a human way, because his Nature could not find union with a mortal body, He will indeed have children, and many of them, according to a procreation that will bring life not from animal flesh and blood, but from divine love and Blood, a procreation of the spirit whereby eternal will be its offspring. 597.9

And I will also explain to you, o world, that do not understand the prophet, who are the wicked placed at His tomb, and the rich man at his death. Consider, o world, whether even one of His murderers had peace and a long life! He, the Living One, will soon leave death. But, like leaves that the autumn wind lays one by one in the hollow of a furrow after detaching them with repeated gusts, they will soon be laid one by one in the ignoble tomb that had been decreed for Him; and one who lived for gold, if it were lawful to put an unclean man where the Holy One was, could be laid where there will still be the dampness brought about by the numerous wounds of the Victim sacrificed on the mountain. As He was accused although He was innocent, God avenges Him, because there was never perjury in His mouth, or iniquity in His heart.

¹⁰He was consumed by pain. But once consumption has taken place and His life has been taken for the sacrifice of expiation, His glory will begin with future generations. All the desires and the Holy wills of God on His behalf will be accomplished. Because of all the anxiety of His soul, He will see the glory of the true people of God and will be happy. His heavenly doctrine, which He will seal with his Blood, will be the justification of 597.10

many of the best ones, and He will take upon Himself the wickedness of sinners. And that is why this unknown King, Whom the wicked mocked at and the best ones did not understand, will have a large multitude, o Earth. And with His followers He will divide the spoils of the defeated. He will divide the spoils of strong men, the only Judge of the three kingdoms and of the Kingdom.

He has deserved everything, because He gave everything. Everything will be delivered to Him, because He delivered Himself to death and was numbered with criminals, He Who was without sin. Without any other sin except perfect love and infinite goodness. Two sins that the world does not forgive, such a love and goodness that urged Him to take upon Himself the sins of many, of the whole world, and to pray for sinners. For all sinners. Also for those through whom He was put to death.

597.11 ¹¹I have finished. I have nothing else to say. Everything has been said of what I wanted to tell you of the Messianic prophecies. I have explained them all to you, from my birth to my death, so that you may know Me and have no doubts, and may have no excuses for your sin.

597.12 ¹²And now let us pray together. This is the last evening we can pray thus, all united like grapes to the bunch supporting them. Come. Let us pray.

“Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on Earth as it is done in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.”

“Hallowed be Thy Name.” Father, I have hallowed it. Have mercy on Your Son.

“Thy Kingdom come.” I am dying in order to establish it. Have mercy on Me.

“Thy will be done.” Support my weakness, You Who created the flesh of man and clothed Your Word with it, that I may obey You down here as I have always obeyed You in Heaven. Have mercy on the Son of man.

“Give us our Bread”... A bread for the soul. A bread not of this Earth. I do not ask it for Myself. I need only Your spiritual comfort. But I, the Beggar, stretch out My hand for them. Before

long it will be pierced and nailed, and it will no longer be able to make a gesture of love. But it can still do it now. Father, grant Me to give them the Bread that daily fortifies the weakness of the poor children of Adam. They are weak, Father, they are inferior, because they do not have the Bread that is strength, the angelical Bread that spiritualises man and leads him to be deified in Us.

“Forgive us our trespasses”...»

Jesus Who has spoken standing and has prayed with His arms stretched out, now kneels down and raises his arms and face to Heaven. A face made wan by the effort of the supplication and by the kiss of the moon, furrowed by silent tears.

«Forgive Your Son, o Father, if I wronged You in any way. I may also seem imperfect to Your Perfection, I, Your Christ, burdened by flesh. To men... no. My conscious intellect assures Me that I have done everything for them. But forgive Your Jesus... I also forgive. I forgive, that You may forgive Me. How much I have to forgive! How much!... And yet I forgive. Those who are present here, the disciples who are absent, those whose hearts are deaf, My enemies, mockers, traitors, killers, decides... Here. I have forgiven the whole of Mankind. With regards to Me, o Father, consider remitted all debts of man to the Man. I am dying in order to give Your Kingdom to everybody, and I do not want the sin against the Love incarnate to be imputed to them as condemnation. No? Are You saying no? It is My grief. This “no” is pouring the first sip of the bitter chalice into My heart. But Father, Whom I have always obeyed, I say to You: “Thy will be done”.

“Lead us not into temptation”. Oh! if You want, You can drive the demon away from us! He is the temptation that incites flesh, minds, hearts. He is the Seducer. Turn him away, Father! Your archangel in our favour! To put to flight him who lays snares for us from our birth to our death!... Oh! Holy Father, have mercy on Your children!

“Deliver us, deliver us from evil!” You can. We are weeping here... Heaven is so beautiful and we are afraid of losing it. You say: “My Blood cannot lose it”. But I want You to see the Man in Me, the Firstborn of men. I am their brother. I pray for them and with them. Father, mercy! Oh! mercy!...»

¹³Jesus bends with his face on the ground. He then stands up. 597.13
«Let us go. Let us say goodbye to one another this evening. It

will no longer be possible tomorrow evening. We shall be too upset. And there is no love where there is perturbation. Let us kiss one another with the kiss of peace. Tomorrow... tomorrow each of you will belong to himself... This evening we can still be one for all and all for one.»

And He kisses them, one by one, beginning from Peter, then Matthew, Simon, Thomas, Philip, Bartholomew, the Iscariot, his two cousins, James of Zebedee, Andrew and last John, on whom He leans while leaving Gethsemane.

598. Holy Thursday. Preparations for the Passover Supper.
The voice of the Father. The sign agreed with the Traitor.
Respects paid by the notables.

3rd April 1947.

598.1 ¹It is morning again. So serene! So joyful! Even the rare clouds that yesterday were wandering slowly in the cobalt-blue sky are no longer there. Neither is there the heavy sultriness that was so oppressive yesterday. A light breeze blows gently on people's faces. And it carries the scent of flowers, of hay, of pure air. And it gently moves the leaves of the olive-trees. It seems anxious to let people admire the silver shade of the small lanceolate leaves, to shed tiny white scented flowers on the steps of Christ, on His fair-haired head, to kiss Him, to refresh Him - because each tiny calyx has its very small dew-drop - to kiss Him, to refresh Him, then die before seeing the impending horror. And the grass on the hillocks bows shaking the bellflowers, the corollas, the little palms of thousands of flowers. The large wild ox-eye daisies, stars with golden hearts, are standing high up on their stems as if to kiss the hand that will soon be pierced, and the small daisies and the wild camomile kiss His generous feet, which will stop walking for the good of men only when they are nailed to give an even greater good, and the brier-roses smell sweetly, and the hawthorn, which no longer has any flowers, moves its indented leaves. It seems to be saying: «No, no» to those who will use it to torture the Redeemer. And «no» say the reeds of the Kidron. They do not want to strike either, and their will of little things does not want to harm the Lord. And per-

haps also the stones on the slopes are happy to be out of town, in the olive-grove, because being there, they will not hurt the Martyr. And the thin rosy convolvuli, which Jesus loved so much, are weeping, as well as the corymbs of the snow-white acacias, similar to clusters of butterflies pressing against one stem, perhaps they are thinking: «We shall never see Him again.» And the myosotes, so slender and pure, drop their corollas when touched by the purple mantle that Jesus is wearing again. It must be beautiful to die being struck by something that belongs to Jesus. All the flowers, also a lost lily of the valley, which perhaps fell there by accident and came up among the protruding roots of an olive-tree, is happy to be seen and picked by Thomas and offered to the Lord... And happy are the thousand birds among the branches to greet Him with joyful songs. Oh! the birds that He always loved do not curse Him! Even a small herd of sheep seem to be wishing to greet Him, although they are sad, having been deprived of their little ones that have been sold for the Passover sacrifice. It is the lament of mothers resounding in the air, as they bleat calling their little ones that will never come back, and they come to rub against Jesus, looking at Him with their meek eyes.

²The sight of the sheep reminds the apostles of the rite and when they are almost at Gethsemane, they ask Jesus: «Where shall we go to consume the Passover? Which place are You choosing? Tell us and we will go and prepare everything.» 598.2

And Judas of Kerioth says: «Give me Your orders and I will go.»

«Peter. John. Listen to Me.»

The two, who were a little ahead, approach Jesus Who has called them.

«Go ahead and enter the town by the Dung Gate. As soon as you go in, you will meet a man who is coming back from En Rogel with a pitcher of that good water. Follow him until he goes into a house. You will say to him who is in it: "The Master says: 'Where is the room where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?'" He will show you a large supper-room, which is ready. Prepare everything there. Go quickly and then join us at the Temple.»

The two go away in a hurry.

Jesus instead proceeds slowly. The morning is still cool, and only the first pilgrims appear on the roads leading into town.

They cross the little Kidron bridge that is before Gethsemane and enter the town. The gates are no longer watched by legionaries, probably because of a counter-order by Pilate, who has been reassured by the lack of disputes concerning Jesus. There is in fact absolute tranquillity everywhere.

598.3 ³Oh! no one can deny that the Judaeans have been able to control themselves! No one has molested the Master or His disciples. Behaving respectfully if not affectionately, and as well-mannered people, they have always greeted Him, even the most rancorous members of the Sanhedrin. Also yesterday's reproof was borne with incomparable patience. And as Caiaphas' country house is close to that gate, just now a large group of Pharisees and scribes passes by coming from it, and among them there is the son of Annas with Helkai, Doras and Sadoc. And bending their backs covered with wide mantles they pay their respects among the fluttering of garments, fringes and bulky headgear. Jesus greets them and passes by, regal in His red woollen tunic and His mantle of a darker shade, the headgear of Syntyche in His hand, while the sun turns His copper-red hair into a golden wreath and a shining veil reaching down to His shoulders.

After He has passed the backs straighten up and the faces appear: those of furious hyenas.

Judas of Kerioth, who was always looking around with his treacherous face, moves to the roadside under the pretext of tying his sandal and, I can see him very well, beckons to those men to wait for him... He lets the group of Jesus and His disciples go ahead, always busy at the buckle of his sandal to strike an attitude; he then passes quickly close to the scribes and Pharisees and whispers: «At the Beautiful Gate. About the sixth hour. One of you.» and he darts away quickly, joining his companions. Frank, impudently frank!...

598.4 ⁴They go up to the Temple. Only few Jews as yet. But many Gentiles. Jesus goes to worship the Lord. He then comes back and He tells Simon and Bartholomew to buy the lamb getting the money from Judas of Kerioth.

«I could have done it!» says Judas.

«You will have other things to do. You know that. There is that widow to whom the offering of Mary of Lazarus is to be taken, informing her that after the festivities she should go to

Bethany, to Lazarus. Do you know where she lives? Have you understood?»

«Yes, I know! Zacharias, who knows her well, showed me the place.» And he adds: «I am very glad to go. Not so much because of the journey, as because of the lamb. When have I to go?»

«Later. I shall not stop long here. I will rest today, as I want to be fit for this evening and for My night prayer.»

«All right.»

Well, I wonder: Jesus, Who in the past days has said nothing about His intentions in order not to let Judas have any details, why does He now say, why does He repeat what He will do during the night? Has His Passion already begun with the blindness of foresight, or has this foresight increased so much that He can read in the books of Heaven that that is «the night» and that therefore it is necessary to make it known to him who is waiting to know, so that he may hand Him over to his enemies, or has He always known that his immolation is to begin that night? I cannot give any answer. Jesus does not give me any reply. And I remain with my queries, while I watch Jesus Who is curing the last sick people. The last ones... Tomorrow, in a few hours, He will no longer be able... The Earth will be bereft of its powerful Healer of bodies. But the Victim, from His scaffold, will begin the series, uninterrupted for twenty centuries, of His spiritual healings.

⁵Today I am contemplating rather than describing. My Lord makes me project my spiritual sight from what I see happening in the last day of Christ's freedom, to what it will be throughout ages... Today I am contemplating the feelings, the thoughts of the Master rather than what is happening around Him. I am already in the distressing understanding of His torture at Gethsemane. ... 598.5

⁶As usual Jesus is overwhelmed by the crowd that has increased and consists now mainly of Hebrews, who forget to hasten to the place where lambs are sacrificed, anxious as they are to approach Jesus, the Lamb of God, Who is about to be immolated. 598.6

And the people go on asking questions and they want further explanations.

Many are Hebrews who have come from the Diaspora, and

having heard people speak of the reputation of the Christ, of the Galilean Prophet, of the Rabbi of Nazareth, they are curious to hear Him speak and are anxious to get rid of every possible doubt. And they push through the crowd and they implore those from Palestine saying: «You always have Him with you. You know who He is. You can hear His words whenever you wish. We have come from afar and we shall be departing immediately after satisfying the precept. Let us go to Him!» The crowd gives way with difficulty to make room for them. And they approach Jesus and watch Him with curiosity. They talk in low voices to one another, group by group.

Jesus observes them, even if at the same time He listens to a group of people who have come from Perea. Then, after dismissing the latter group of people, who have given him money for the poor, as many people do, and He has handed it to Judas as usual, He begins to speak.

598.7 7«You are all of the same religion, but of different places of origin, and many of those who are present here are wondering: "Who is this man who is called the Nazarene?", and their hopes clash with their doubts. Listen*: It is said of Me: "A shoot will spring from the stock of Jesse, a flower will come from this root and the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon Him. He will not judge by what appears to the eyes, He will give no verdict on hearsay, but He will judge the wretched with integrity, He will take up the cudgels for the lowly. The shoot of the root of Jesse, placed as a signal among nations, will be implored by peoples and His sepulchre will be glorious. After hoisting a flag for the nations, He will gather together the refugees of Israel, He will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four corners of the Earth." It is said of Me: "Here is the Lord God coming with power, His arm will triumph. He carries with Him His prize, His work is before His eyes. Like a shepherd he will pasture his flock." It is said of Me: "Here is My Servant with Whom I will stay, in Whom My soul delights. I have endowed Him with My spirit. He will bring

* Listen. This is the beginning of another series of quotations, textual or para-phrased that refer to (in biblical progression): Psalm 78,23-25; Isaiah 9,5; 11,4,10-12; 40,10-11; 42,1-7; 50,6; 53,2-12; 55,1-3; 61,1-2; 63,1; Ezekiel 34,11,16; 47,1-12; Daniel 9,24-27; Hosea 14,2; Micah 5,3-4; Zechariah 9,9-10. The last of the prophets, alluded to in 598.9 is John the Baptist. The prophecies that are alluded to in 598.17 are those of: Isaiah 7,14; Micah 5,1.

justice to the nations. He will not shout, He will not break the crushed reed, He will not put out the smoky wick, He will do justice according to truth. Without being sad or turbulent, He will succeed in establishing justice on the Earth, and the islands will await His law."

It is said of Me: "I, the Lord, have called You in justice, I have taken You by the hand, I have preserved You, I have appointed You as covenant of the people and light of the nations, to open the eyes of the blind, to free captives from prison and those who lie in darkness from the dungeon."

It is said of Me: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to announce the Good News to the meek, to cure those whose hearts are broken, to preach liberty to slaves, freedom to prisoners, to preach the year of grace of the Lord."

It is said of Me: "He is the Strong one, He will feed His flock with the power of the Lord, with the majesty of the name of the Lord His God. They will be converted to Him, because as from now He will be glorified to the utmost limits of the world."

It is said of Me: "I will go and look for my sheep Myself. I will look for the lost ones, I will bring back those that have been driven away, I will bind those with fractures, I will nourish the weak ones, I will watch over the ones that are fat and strong, I will pasture them with justice."

It is said: "He is the Prince of peace and will be the peace."

It is said: "Here comes your King, the Just One, the Saviour. He is poor, He is riding a little donkey. He will announce peace to the nations. His dominion will be from sea to sea, to the utmost limits of the Earth.

It is said: "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people, for your holy city, so that prevarication may be removed, sin may come to an end, wickedness may be canceled, eternal justice may come, visions and prophecies may be fulfilled, and the Holy of Holies may be anointed. After seven plus sixty-two the Christ will come. After sixty two He will be killed. After one week He will confirm the will, but in the middle of the week victims and sacrifices will stop, and the abomination of desolation will be in the Temple, and it will last until the end of time."

⁸So will there be a shortage of victims in these days? Will ^{598.8}

the altar have no victim? It will have the great Victim. Here, the prophet sees it: "Who is this coming with garments stained with crimson? He is handsome in His garment and He marches in the fullness of His strength." And He Who is poor, how did He dye His garment with purple? Here, the prophet explains it: "I abandoned my body to those who struck Me, my cheeks to those who tore at my beard, I did not turn my face away from those who insulted Me. My handsomeness and my splendour were lost, and men no longer loved Me. Men have despised Me and considered Me the last one! The man of sorrows, my face will be veiled and scorned and they will regard Me as a leper, whereas on behalf of everybody I shall be covered with sores and put to death.

Here is the Victim. Be not afraid, Israel! Be not afraid. The Passover Lamb is not unavailable! Be not afraid, o Earth! Be not afraid. Here is the Saviour. Like a sheep He will be led to the slaughter-house, because He wanted that, and He did not open His mouth to curse those who are killing Him. After being condemned He will be raised and consumed in pain, with His limbs dislocated, His bones uncovered, His feet and hands pierced. But after the anguish through which He will justify many, He will possess multitudes because, after delivering His life to death for the salvation of the world, He will rise from the dead and will rule the Earth, He will nourish peoples with the waters seen by Ezekiel, flowing out of the true Temple that, even if it is knocked down, will rise again through its own strength, and with the wine by which also the snow-white garment of the spotless Lamb has been dyed purple, and with the Bread descended from Heaven."

598.9 ⁹You who are thirsty, come to the waters! You who are hungry, take your nourishment! You who are worn out and you, sick people, drink My wine! Come, you who have no money, you who are in bad health, come! And you who are in Darkness! And you who are dead, come! I am Riches and Health. I am Light and Life. Come, you who are looking for the Way! Come, you who are seeking the Truth! I am Way and Truth! Do not be afraid of not being able to consume the Lamb because there are no really holy victims in this desecrated Temple. You will all be able to eat of the Lamb of God, Who has come to take away the sins of the world, as the last of the prophets of My people said of Me. Of that people

whom I ask: My people, what have I done to you? In what have I grieved you? What else could I have given you more than what I gave you? I taught your minds, I cured your sick people, I helped your poor people, I satisfied the hunger of your crowds, I loved you in your children, I forgave and prayed for you. I loved you to the extent of Sacrifice. And what are you preparing for your Lord? One hour, the last one, is given to you, My people, My regal and holy town. Come back in this hour to the Lord your God!»

598.10

¹⁰«He has spoken true words!»

«That is what is said! And He really does what is said!»

«Like a shepherd He has taken care of everybody!»

«As if we were stray sheep, sick, in darkness, He has come to lead us to the right way, to cure our souls and bodies, to enlighten us.»

«All the peoples really go to Him. Look over there, at those Gentiles, how admired they are!»

«He has preached peace.»

«He has given love.»

«I do not understand what He says about the sacrifice. He speaks as if He had to be killed.»

«It is so, if He is the Man seen by the prophets, the Saviour.»

«And He speaks as if all the people had to ill-treat Him. That will never happen. The people, we, love Him.»

«He is our friend. We will defend Him.»

«He is a Galilean, and we Galileans will give our lives for Him.»

«He is of David's stock, and we men of Judaea will raise our hands to defend Him.»

«And we, whom He loved as He loved you, we from Hauran, from Perea, from the Decapolis, shall we ever forget Him? We will all defend Him.»

These are the voices of the crowd, which by now is very numerous. How transient are human intentions! Judging by the position of the sun I think it must be about nine o'clock am. our time. Twenty-four hours later these people will have been round the Martyr for many hours, to torture Him with their hatred and blows, and shouting they will request His death. Few, very few, too few among the thousands of people who are crowding from every part of Palestine and farther away, and who have received

light, health, wisdom, forgiveness from Christ, will be those who not only will not try to tear Him away from His enemies, because their small number compared with the multitude of the strikers prevents them, but will not even be able to comfort Him giving Him a proof of their love by following Him with a friendly attitude. The praises, assents and admired comments spread through the large court, like waves that from the open sea go far to die on the beach.

598.11 ¹¹Some scribes, Judaeans and Pharisees try to counteract the enthusiasm of the people as well as the ferment of the people against the enemies of the Christ saying: «He is raving. His tiredness is so great and makes Him delirious. He mistakes honours for persecutions. His words have torrents of His usual wisdom, but mixed with delirious sentences. No one wants to hurt Him. We have understood. We have understood who He is...»

But the people are doubtful about such a great change of humour and some rebel against them saying: «He cured my insane son. I know what madness is. One who is mad does not speak like that!»

And another one says: «Let them say. They are vipers who are afraid that the club of the people may break their backs. They sing the sweet song of the nightingale in order to deceive us, but, if you listen carefully, there is the hiss of the snake in it.»

And also another one: «Sentries of the people of Christ, look out! When the enemy caresses, he has a dagger concealed in his sleeve, and he stretches out his hand to strike. Keep your eyes open and your hearts ready! Jackals cannot become meek lambs.»

«You are right: the owl lures and enchants simple little birds with the immobility of its body and with the false joy of its greeting. It laughs and invites with its cry, but it is ready to devour.»

And so forth, from group to group.

598.12 ¹²But there are also some Gentiles, who have been constant and more and more numerous in listening to the Master during the days of the festivity. They are always at the edge of the crowd, because the Hebrew-Palestinian exclusivism is strong and repels them pretending the places closest to the Master, so they wish to approach Him and speak to Him.

A large group of them casts glances at Philip, who has been pushed into a corner by the crowd. They approach him saying:

«Sir, we wish to see Jesus, your Master, at close quarters, and speak to Him at least once.»

Philip stands on the tips of his toes to see whether there is any apostle closer to the Lord. He sees Andrew and after calling him, he shouts: «There are some Gentiles here who would like to greet the Master. Ask Him whether He will receive them.»

Andrew, a few metres away from Jesus, squeezed in the crowd, pushes his way through the crowd, working generously with his elbows without regard and shouting: «Make way! Make way, I say. I must go to the Master.» He reaches Him and informs Him of the wish of the Gentiles.

«Take them to that corner. I will come to them.»

And while Jesus tries to pass through the crowd, John, who has just come back with Peter, struggles to make way for Him and is assisted in doing so by Peter, Judas Thaddeus, James of Zebedee and Thomas, who leaves the group of his relatives that he met in the crowd in order to help his companions.

¹³Jesus is where the Gentiles already are and they greet Him. 598.13
«Peace be with you. What do you want of Me?»

«To see You and speak to You. Your words have upset us. We have always been wanting to speak to You to tell You that Your word affects us. But we were waiting for a suitable moment to do so. Today... You are speaking of death... We are afraid that we shall not be able to speak to You any more, if we do not take advantage of this hour. But is it possible that the Hebrews may kill their best son? We are Gentiles, and we have received no favour from Your hand. Your word was unknown to us. We have heard people speak of You vaguely. But we had never seen You or approached You. And yet, as You can see, we pay homage to You. It is the whole world that honours You with us.»

«Yes, the hour has come when the Son of man is to be glorified by men and by spirits.»

Now the crowd is around Jesus once again but with the difference that the Gentiles are in the first row and the others behind.

«But if it is the hour of Your glorification, You will not die, as You say, or as we have understood. Because it is not a glorification to die in that way. How will You be able to gather the world under Your sceptre, if You die before doing so? If Your arm is immobilised by death, how will it be able to triumph and gather

peoples together?»

«By dying, I give life. By dying, I build. By dying, I create the new People. It is through sacrifice that one gains victory. I solemnly tell you that if the wheat grain that has fallen on the ground does not die, it remains unfruitful. If instead it dies, then it yields a rich harvest. He who loves his life will lose it. He who hates his life in this world, will save it for the eternal life. It is My duty to die to give this eternal life to all those who follow Me to serve the Truth. Let those who want to serve Me come: the places in my kingdom are not limited to this or that people. Let whoever wants to serve Me come and follow Me, and where I am, My servant will be there as well. And he who serves Me will be honoured by My Father, the Only, True God, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, the Creator of everything that exists, the Thought, Word, Love, Life, Way, Truth; Father, Son, Holy Spirit, One being Trine, Trine being One, Only, True God. ^{598.14}But now My soul is upset. And what shall I say? Shall I perhaps say: “Father save Me from this hour”? No. Because I have come for this: to arrive at this hour. So I will say: “Father, glorify Your Name!”.

Jesus stretches out His arms crosswise, a purple cross against the white marbles of the porch and He raises His head, offering Himself, praying, ascending with His soul to the Father.

And a voice, louder than thunder, immaterial in as much it is not like any human voice, but very sensible to all ears, fills the clear sky of the beautiful April day and vibrates, more powerful than the chord of a gigantic organ, in a very beautiful tonality, and proclaims: «I have glorified Him and I will glorify Him again!»

The people have been frightened. That voice, so powerful that the soil and what is on it vibrated because of it, that mysterious voice, different from any other, coming from an unknown source, that voice that fills everything, from north to south, from east to west, terrorises the Hebrews and amazes the heathens. The former, when possible, throw themselves on the ground, murmuring in their fear: «We shall die now! We have heard the voice of Heaven. An angel has spoken to Him!» and they beat their breasts awaiting death. The latter shout: «A peal of thunder! A rumbling roar! Let us run away! The Earth has roared! It has quaked!» But it is impossible to run away in the throng that

increases with those who from outside the walls of the Temple rush inside shouting: «Have mercy on us! Let us run! This is a holy place. The mountain where the altar of God rises will not split!» So they all remain where they were, where the crowd and fear block them.

¹⁵Priests, scribes, Pharisees, Levites, magistrates, who were scattered in the meanders of the Temple, rush to its terraces. They are excited and dumbfounded. But of all of them only Gamaliel with his son comes down among the people in the courts. Jesus sees him passing by, all white in his linen garment, which is so white that it gleams even in the strong sun shining on it. 598.15

Jesus, looking at Gamaliel, but as if He were speaking to everybody, raises His voice saying: «Not for Me, but for you, has this voice come from Heaven.»

Gamaliel stops, turns around, and with the glances of his very deep dark eyes - which the habit of being a master worshipped like a demigod has involuntarily made as hard as those of predators - he pierces through the sapphire, limpid, majestically mild eyes of Jesus...

And Jesus resumes: «The judgement of this world takes place now. Now the Prince of Darkness is about to be driven out. And when I have been lifted up, I will draw everybody to Myself, because that is how the Son of man will save.»

¹⁶«We have learnt from the books of the Law that the Christ lives forever. And You say that You are the Christ and You say that You must die. And You also say that You are the Son of man and that You will save, being lifted up. So who are You? The Son of man or the Christ? And who is the Son of man?» ask the crowds, who are taking heart again. 598.16

«They are only one person. Open your eyes to the Light. Only for a short time the Light will still be with you. Walk towards the Truth while you have the Light among you, that you may not be overtaken by darkness. Those who walk in darkness do not know where they will end up. While you have the Light among you, believe in It, to be the children of the Light.» He becomes silent.

The crowd is perplexed and divided. Some go away shaking their heads. Some watch the attitude of the main dignitaries: Pharisees, chiefs of the priests, scribes... and particularly of Gamaliel, and they regulate their conduct on that attitude. And

others nod assent and bow to Jesus clearly meaning: «We believe! We honour You for what You are.» But they dare not side openly with Him. They are afraid of the vigilant eyes of Christ's enemies, of the mighty ones, who are watching them from the high terraces dominating the splendid porches surrounding the courts of the Temple.

598.17 ¹⁷Also Gamaliel, after remaining pensive for some minutes, and he seems to be questioning the marbles of the pavement for answers to his inward questions, sets out again towards the exit, after shaking his head and shoulders, as if to express disappointment or scorn... and he passes straight in front of Jesus, without looking at Him any more.

Jesus, instead, looks at him compassionately... and he raises His voice again, very loudly - it sounds like the blare of a trumpet - to overcome every noise and be heard by the great scribe who is going away disappointed. He seems to be speaking to everybody, but it is clear that He is speaking for him alone.

He says in a very loud voice: «He who believes in Me, does not really believe in Me, but in Him Who sent Me, and he who sees Me, sees Him Who sent Me. And He is indeed the God of Israel! Because there is no other God but He.

That is why I say: if you cannot believe in Me as the man who is said to be the son of Joseph of David and the son of Mary, of the stock of David, of the Virgin seen by the Prophet, born at Bethlehem, as is announced by the prophecies, preceded by the Baptist, as also has been said for ages, believe at least the voice of your God Who has spoken to you from Heaven. Believe in Me as the Son of this God of Israel. Because if you do not believe in Him Who has spoken to you from Heaven, you do not offend Me, but your God Whose Son I am.

Do not remain in darkness! I have come as Light to the world, so that he who believes in Me may not remain in darkness. Do not create remorse for yourselves, as you might not be able to appease your minds when I have gone back whence I came, and they would be a severe punishment of God for your stubbornness. I am willing to forgive, while I am among you, until judgement is passed, and as far as I am concerned, I wish to forgive. But the mind of the Father is different from Mine. Because I am Mercy and He is Justice.

I solemnly tell you that if a man listens to My words and does not comply with them. I will not judge him. I did not come to the world to judge it, but to save it. But if I do not judge, I solemnly tell you that there is who will judge you by your actions. My Father, Who sent Me, will judge those who reject His Word. Yes, he who despises Me and does not acknowledge the Word of God, and does not receive the words of the Word, well, he has who will judge him: the very word that I have announced will judge him on the last day.

It is said: God is not to be scoffed at. And the God scoffed at will be terrible with those who considered Him mad and mendacious.

Bear in mind, all of you, that the words you heard Me utter, come from God. Because I have not spoken on My own account, but the Father Who sent Me, prescribed what I must say and of what I have to speak. And I obey His order, because I know that His commandment is just. Each command of God is eternal life. And I, your Master, set for you the example of obedience to all commands of God. You may rest assured that the things I told you and I am telling you, I said them and I am saying them as My Father told Me to say them to you. And My Father is the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob; the God of Moses, of the patriarchs and of the prophets, the God of Israel, your God.»

Words of light that fall into the darkness that is already growing darker in hearts!

Gamaliel, who had stopped once again, his head bowed, resumes walking... Others follow him shaking their heads or sneering...

¹⁸Jesus also goes away... But first He says to Judas: «Go where you have to go», and to the others: «Each of you is free to go where you have or you wish to go. Let the shepherd disciples remain with Me.»

598.18

«Oh! take me also with You, Lord!» says Stephen.

«Come...» They part.

I do not know where Jesus goes. But I know where Judas of Kerioth goes. He goes to the Beautiful Gate climbing the several steps that from the Court of the Gentiles lead to that of the women, and after going across it, climbing more steps at the end of it, he casts a glance at the Court of the Hebrews, and stamps his feet

angrily, as he does not find the person he is looking for.

He goes back. He sees one of the Temple guards. He calls him. With his usual haughtiness he says to him: «Go to Eleazar ben Annas. Tell him to come to the Beautiful Gate immediately. Judas of Simon is waiting for him for serious matters.»

He leans against a column and waits. Shortly afterwards Eleazar, the son of Annas, Helkai, Simon, Doras, Cornelius, Sadoc, Nahum and others arrive with much fluttering of garments.

Judas speaks in a low but excited voice: «This evening! After supper. At Gethsemane. Come there and get Him. Give me the money.»

«No. We will give you it when you call for us this evening. We do not trust you! We want you to stay with us. You never know!» says Elkai with a sneer. The others nod assent in chorus.

Judas flares up in a temper at the insinuation. He swears: «I swear by Jehovah that I am telling the truth!»

Sadoc replies to him: «All right. But it is better to do it this way. Come when it is time, take those who are charged to capture Him and go with them, lest the stupid guards may arrest Lazarus by chance and may create a lot of trouble. By means of a signal you will point out the man to them... You must understand! By night... there will not be much light... the guards will be tired, sleepy... But if you guide them!... Well! What do you say?» The perfidious Sadoc addresses his companions saying: «As a signal I would suggest a kiss. A kiss! The best signal to point out the betrayed friend. Ha! Ha!»

They all laugh. A chorus of sneering demons.

Judas is furious. But he does not withdraw. He will not withdraw any more. He suffers because they sneer at him, not because of what he is about to do. So much so that he says: «But remember that I want the money counted in the purse before going out from here with the guards.»

«You will have it! You will have it! We will give you also the purse, so that you may keep those coins as a relic of your love. Ha! Ha! Ha! Goodbye, snake!»

Judas is livid. He is already livid. Never again will he lose that colour and that expression of desperate terror. On the contrary, it will grow more and more by the hour, until it becomes unsustainable when he is hanging from the tree... He runs away...

¹⁹Jesus has taken shelter in the garden of a friendly house. A quiet garden of the first houses in Zion. It is surrounded by high ancient walls. It is silent and cool, covered as it is with the quivering leaves of old trees. Not far away the voice of a woman is singing a sweet lullaby. 598.19

Some hours must have gone by, because Lazarus' servants, who have come back after going I do not know where, say: «Your disciples are already in the house where the supper is being prepared, and John, after coming with us to take the fruit to Johanna of Chuza's children, has gone to get the women and take them to Joseph of Alphaeus, who arrived only today, when his mother no longer hoped to see him, and then, from there to the house of the supper, because night is falling.»

«We shall go as well. It is supper time...» Jesus stands up and puts on His mantle.

«Master, there are some people out there. Wealthy people. They would like to speak to You without being seen by the Pharisees» says a servant.

«Let them come in. Esther will not object. Is that right, woman?» says Jesus, addressing a woman of ripe age who is coming to greet Him.

«No, Master. My house is Yours, as You know. You have made use of it for too short a time!»

«Sufficiently long as to say to My heart: it was a friendly house.» He says to the servant: «Bring in those who are waiting.»

²⁰About thirty dignified looking people come in. They greet Him. One of them speaks on behalf of everybody: «Master, Your words have shaken us. We have heard the voice of God in You. But they say that we are foolish, because we believe in You. So what shall we do?» 598.20

«He who believes in Me does not believe Me, but believes in Him Who sent Me, and Whose most holy voice you have heard today. He who sees Me does not see Me, but sees Him Who sent Me, because I am one thing with My Father. That is why I say to you that you must believe in order not to offend God, Who is your Father and Mine, and loves you to the extent of sacrificing His Only-Begotten for you. Because, if hearts doubt whether I am the Christ, there is no doubt that God is in Heaven. And the voice of God, Whom I called Father today in the Temple, asking Him to

glorify His Name, has replied to Him Who was calling Him Father, without saying that He is a "liar or blasphemer" as many say. God has confirmed who I am. I am His Light. I am the Light that has come to the world. I have come as Light to the world, so that he who believes in Me may not remain in Darkness. If a man listens to My words, and then does not comply with them, I will not judge him. I have not come to judge the world, but to save the world. He who despises Me and does not accept My words, has who will judge him.

It is the word announced by Me that will judge him on the last day. Because it was wise, perfect, kind, simple, as God is. Because that Word is God. It is not I, Jesus of Nazareth, called the son of Joseph, a carpenter of the stock of David, and the son of Mary, a Hebrew girl, a virgin of the stock of David, married to Joseph, it is not I Who has spoken. No, I have not spoken on My own account. But it is My Father, He Who is in Heaven and His name is Jehovah, Who spoke today, He Who sent Me, and He told Me what I must say and of what I must speak. And I know that in His commandment there is eternal life. So the things I say, I say them as the Father said them to Me, and there is Life in them. That is why I say to you: listen to them. Put them into practice and you will have Life. Because my word is Life. And he who accepts it, accepts at the same time with Me, also the Father of Heaven Who sent Me to give you the Life. And he who has God in himself, has the Life in himself. ²¹Go. May peace come to you and remain with you.»

He blesses and dismisses them. He blesses also the disciples. He keeps only Isaac and Stephen. He kisses and dismisses the others. And when they have gone, He is the last to go out, with the two and He goes with them, along the most solitary and already dark lanes, to the house of the Last Supper. And when He arrives there, He embraces and blesses Isaac and Stephen with particular fondness, He kisses them, He blesses them once again, He watches them go away, then He knocks at the door and goes in...

^{598.22} ²²Jesus says: «You will put here the visions of the farewell to My Mother, of the Supper-room and of the Supper. And now let the two of us, you and I, make the true Passover commemoration. Come...»

599. Arrival at the Supper-room. Jesus' farewell to His Mother.

17th February 1944.

¹I see the Supper-room where the Passover is to be consumed, ^{599.1}
I can see it distinctly. I could enumerate all the rough spots on
the walls and the cracks in the floor.

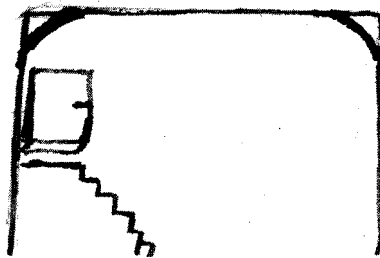
It is a large room that is not perfectly square, but it is some-
what rectangular. The difference between the longer side and
the shorter one is, at the most, a metre or a little more. The ceil-
ing is low. Perhaps it appears to be so, because the height of the
room does not correspond to its size. It is slightly vaulted, that is,
the two shorter walls do not form a right angle with the ceiling,
but it is roundish (like this):

In the two shorter walls there are two large low windows, fac-
ing each other. I cannot see what they look onto, a court-yard or
a street, because the shutters are closed. I said: shutters. I do not
know whether it is the right word. They are window coverings
made of boards and they are firmly closed by iron bars across
them.

The floor is made of large square bricks of baked clay discol-
oured by age. From the centre of the ceiling hangs a multi-arm
oil lamp.

In one of the two longer walls there is no opening, in the other,
instead, there is a small door in one corner and it is reached by
means of a small staircase of six steps with no bannisters, end-
ing on a landing of one square metre. On the landing and against
the wall there is another step, at whose level the door opens. I do
not know whether I have made myself clear.

The walls are just white-
washed without decorations or
borders. In the centre of the room
there is a long rectangular ta-
ble, very long as compared to its
width, it is placed parallel to the
long walls and is made of very
plain wood. Along the long walls
there are some seats. Against



the short walls, under the window, on one side there is a kind of

chest with some basins and amphorae on it, and under the other window there is a long low sideboard, on top of which there is nothing at present.

599.2 ²And that is the description of the room in which Passover will be consumed. I have seen it distinctly all day long, in fact I have been able to count the steps and observe all the details. And now that it is getting dark, my Jesus is taking me to the rest of the contemplation.

I see that the large room leads, by means of the six-step staircase, to a dark vestibule on the left side of which, with respect to me, there is a door that opens onto the street; the door is wide, low and very solid, reinforced with metal studs and bars. Facing the little door that leads from the Supper-room into the vestibule, there is another door that opens onto another room, which is not so large. I would say that the Supper-room has been obtained from the difference in level between the ground and the rest of the house and the street, it is like a basement, a sort of cellar that has been cleaned up or adapted, but is still sunken for a good metre in the ground, probably to heighten it and proportion it to its vastness.

In the room that I see now, there is Mary with other women. I recognise the Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, Judas and Simon. They seem to have just arrived, led by John, as they take off their mantles and lay them folded on the stools scattered about the room, while they greet the apostle, who goes away, and a woman and a man, who have rushed there upon their arrival, and I am under the impression that they are the owners of the house and disciples or sympathisers of the Nazarene, because they are full of attention for and of respectful familiarity with Mary. She is wearing a deep blue dress, a deep indigo blue. On Her head She has a white veil that appears when She takes Her mantle off, as it covers also Her head. She looks worn out and aged. She is very sad, although She smiles kindly. She is very pale. Also Her movements are tired and hesitating, like those of a person engrossed in thought.

599.3 ³Through the door left ajar I can see the landlord coming and going in the vestibule and in the upper-room, which he illuminates completely lighting the remaining flames of the large oil lamp. He then goes to the main door and opens it and Jesus comes

in with the apostles. I can see that it is getting dark, because the shadows of the night are already descending in the street closed between high houses.

He is with all the apostles. He addresses the landlord with His usual greeting: «Peace to this house», and then, while the apostles go down into the Supper-room, He enters the room where Mary is. The pious women greet Him with deep respect and then go away, closing the door and leaving Mother and Son free.

Jesus embraces His Mother and kisses Her forehead. Mary first kisses the hand of Her Son and then His right cheek. Jesus makes Mary sit down and sits beside Her, they are sitting on two stools close to each other. He makes Her sit down, taking Her to the stools, holding Her by the hand, and He continues to hold Her hand also when She has sat down.

Jesus is also engrossed in thought and sad, although He strives to smile.

Mary studies His expression anxiously. Poor Mother, Who through grace and love realises what this hour means! Painful spasms appear across Mary's face and Her eyes dilate at an interior vision of deep grief. But She does not make a scene. She is as solemn as Her Son.

⁴He speaks to Her. He greets Her and implores Her to pray for Him. 599.4

«Mother, I have come to get strength and comfort from You. I am like a little baby, Mother, who needs the heart of his mother for his grief, and his mother's breast for his strength. In this hour I have become Your little Jesus of a long time ago. I am not the Master, Mother. I am only Your Son, as in Nazareth when I was a little boy, as in Nazareth before departing from My private life. I have but You. Men, at the present moment, are not friendly with and loyal to Your Jesus. They are not even brave in doing good. Only the wicked are constant and strong in doing evil. But You are faithful to Me and You are My strength, Mother, in this hour. Support Me with Your love and Your prayers. Among those who more or less love Me, You are the only one who knows how to pray in this hour. You know how to pray and to understand. The others are concerned with the festivity, they are engrossed in joyful thoughts, or in criminal thoughts, while I am suffering from so many things. Many things will die after this hour, and

among them their humanity, and they will be able to be worthy of Me, all of them, except him who got lost and whom no power can bring back at least to repentance. But for the time being they are unconscious men who do not perceive that I am dying, while they are rejoicing thinking that My triumph is more than ever close at hand. The hosannas of a few days ago have intoxicated them. Mother, I have come for this hour and from a supernatural point of view it is a joy to see it arrive. But My Ego is also afraid of it, because this chalice bears the name of betrayal, abjuration, ferocity, blasphemy, abandonment. Support Me, Mother. As when with Your prayers You drew the Spirit of God upon Yourself, and through it You gave the world the One Expected by peoples, draw now upon Your Son the strength that may help Me to accomplish the deed for which I came. Mother, goodbye. Bless Me, Mother; also on behalf of the Father. And forgive everybody. Let us forgive together, as from this moment, let us forgive those who torture us.»

599.5 ⁵While speaking, Jesus has slid down on His knees at the feet of his Mother and He looks at her embracing her by the waist.

Mary weeps silently, Her face slightly raised for an internal prayer to God. Tears stream down Her pale cheeks and fall on her lap and on the head of Jesus, Who then rests it on Her heart. Then Mary lays her hand on Jesus' head, as if She wished to bless Him, She then bends, kisses his hair and caresses it, She caresses his shoulders and arms, She takes his face in her hands and turns it towards Herself, She presses it to her heart. She kisses Him again, shedding tears, on his forehead, His cheeks, His sorrowful eyes, She cuddles that poor tired head, as if He were a baby, as I saw Her lull the divine New-born in the Grotto. But She does not sing, now. She only says: «Son! Jesus! My Jesus!» but in such a voice that breaks my heart.

Then Jesus stands up. He adjusts His mantle, remains standing in front of His Mother, Who is still weeping, and He blesses Her. Then He heads towards the door. Before going out He says to Her: «Mother, I will come again before consuming my Passover. Pray while waiting for Me.» And He goes out.

600. The Last Supper.

9th March 1945.

¹The suffering of Maundy Thursday is beginning.

600.1

The apostles, there are ten of them, are bustling about preparing the Supper-room.

Judas, who has climbed on the table, is watching whether there is oil in all the lamps of the big chandelier that looks like the corolla of a double fuchsia, because its stem is surrounded by five lamps in small vessels similar to petals, and under them,



there is another circle or crown of small flames, and finally, there are three thin lamps hanging from tiny chains resembling the pistils of the bright flower. (And please do not laugh at my drawing.) He then jumps down on the floor and helps Andrew to lay the tableware in an artistic style on the table, on which a very fine table-cloth has been spread.

I hear Andrew say: «What a wonderful linen tablecloth!»

And the Iscariot says: «One of Lazarus' best ones. Martha insisted in bringing it.»

«And what about these chalices and these amphorae?» remarks Thomas, who has poured some wine into the precious amphorae and is admiring them, looking at himself in their slim bellies, and he caresses the chiselled handles with the eye of a connoisseur.

«Phew! I wonder how much they are worth!» exclaims Judas Iscariot.

«It is worked by hammer. My father would go mad for it. Silver and gold-foils are shaped easily when heated. But done with such craft... Everything can be spoiled in a moment. One wrong blow is enough. It takes strength and a light hand at the same time. See the handles? They have been shaped out of the block. They are not soldered. Things for rich people... Just consider that all the filings and cast-off parts are lost. I don't know whether you understand me.»

«Phew! I understand you very well. In short, it is like sculpture.»

«Exactly.»

They all admire and then go back to their work. Some ar-

range the seats, some prepare the sideboards.

600.2 ²Peter and Simon come in together.

«Oh! You have come at last! Where have you been again? After you came with the Master and us, you ran away again» says the Iscariot.

«We had another errand before supper-time» replies Simon briefly.

«Are you suffering from depression?»

«I think there is every reason to be so, considering what we have heard these past days, and from those lips that we have never found to be false.»

«And with that stench of... Well, be quiet, Peter» grumbles Peter between his teeth.

«And you as well!... You seem to have gone mad for some time. Your face is like that of a wild rabbit that realises it is being chased by a jackal» replies Judas Iscariot.

«And your face is like the snout of a weasel. You have not been very handsome either, these last few days. You look in such a way... You are even cross-eyed... What do you expect or do you hope to see? You seem to be self-confident, you want to appear so, but you look like one who is afraid» retorts Peter.

«Oh! With regards to being afraid!... You are not a hero either!»

«None of us is, Judas. You have the name of the Maccabee, but you are not such. I, with my name, say "God grants graces", but I swear to you that I tremble like a man who knows that he brings misfortune and above all that he has lost God's favour. Simon of Jonah, renamed "the stone", is now as soft as wax near a fire. He no longer gets the weather-gauge of his own free-will. And yet I have never seen him frightened in the most violent storms! Matthew, Bart and Philip look like sleep-walkers. My brother and Andrew do nothing but sigh. The two cousins, who are grieved because of their family ties and of their love for the Master, look at them. They already look like old men. Thomas has lost his cheerfulness. And Simon seems to have become again the exhausted leper of three years ago, so much is he worn out by grief, I would say that he is worn away, deathly pale, dejected» John replies to him.

600.3 ³«Yes. He has influenced us all with His melancholy» remarks

the Iscariot.

«My cousin Jesus, my Master and Lord and yours, is and is not melancholy. If you mean, by that word, that He is sad because He is being excessively grieved by the whole of Israel, as we are aware, and because of the other hidden sorrow that He alone sees, I say to you: "You are right." But if you use that word to say that He is mad, I forbid you to do so» says James of Alphaeus.

«And is a fixed melancholy idea not madness? I have studied also profane matters and I know. He has given too much of Himself. Now He is mentally tired.»

«Which means insane. Is that right?» asks the other cousin Judas, who is apparently calm.

«Exactly! How right was your father, a man of blessed memory, whom you resemble so much in justice and wisdom! Jesus, the sad destiny of an illustrious family now too old and struck by psychic senility, has always had a disposition to this illness. Mild at first, then more and more aggressive. You have seen how He attacked Pharisees and scribes, Sadducees and Herodians. He has made His life impossible, like a road strewn with quartz splinters. And He spread them Himself. We... we have loved Him so much that our love veiled our eyes. But those who did not love Him in an idolatrous manner - your father, your brother Joseph and at first also Simon - saw right... When we heard their words we should have opened our eyes. Instead we were all enticed by His meek charm of a sick person. And now... Who knows!»

Judas Thaddeus, who is as tall as the Iscariot, and is standing just in front of him and seems to be listening to him peacefully, has an outburst of rage and, with a mighty backhanded blow, knocks Judas down with his back on one of the seats, and with anger repressed in his voice, bending over the face of the coward who does not react, as he is probably afraid that Thaddeus may be aware of his crime, he whispers: «This is for His insanity, you reptile! And only because He is in the other room, and this is Passover evening, I will not strangle you. But remember this, and remember it carefully! If any evil befalls Him, and He is not there to check my strength, no one will save you. The halter is as good as around your neck, and these strong honest hands of mine, the hands of a Galilean artisan and of a descendant of Goliath's slinger, will do the job for you. Get up, you spineless deb-

auchee! And watch how you behave.»

Judas stands up, he is livid, but does not react in the least. And, what amazes me, no one reacts to the new gesture of Thaddeus. On the contrary!... It is obvious that they all approve of it.

600.4 ⁴The room has just become calm again when Jesus come in. He appears on the threshold of the little door, through which His tall person can just pass, He sets foot on the small landing, and with His meek sad smile He says, opening His arms: «Peace be with You.» His voice is tired, like that of one who is languishing physically and morally.

He comes down. He caresses the fair-haired head of John, who has rushed towards Him. He smiles at His cousin Judas, as if He did not know anything, and He says to His other cousin: «Your mother asks you to be kind to Joseph. He asked the women after you and Me a little while ago. I am sorry I have not greeted him.»

«You will do it tomorrow.»

«Tomorrow?... I shall always have time to see him... Oh! Peter! We shall be together for a little while at last! Since yesterday you seem a will-o'-the-wisp. I see you, then I no longer see you. Today I can almost say that I lost you. And you, too, Simon.»

«Our hair, which is more white than dark, can assure You that we were not absent craving for flesh» says Simon gravely.

«Although... at all ages it is possible to suffer from that hunger... The old! Worse than the young...» says the Iscariot offensively.

Simon looks at him and is about to reply. But Jesus also looks at him and says: «Have you a tooth ache? Your right cheek is swollen and red.»

«Yes, it is aching. But it is not worth worrying about.»

The others do not say anything, and the matter dies away.

600.5 ⁵«Have you done everything that was to be done? You, Matthew? And you, Andrew? And you, Judas, have you seen to the offer for the Temple?»

Both the first two and the Iscariot say: «Everything You said was to be done today, has been done. Do not worry.»

«I took the early fruits of Lazarus to Johanna of Chuza. For the children. They said to me: "Those apples were better!" They had the savour of hunger, those ones! And they were Your apples» says John smiling and dreaming.

Jesus also smiles at the recollection... I have seen Nicodemus and Joseph» says Thomas.

«You have seen them? Did you speak to them?» asks the Iscariot with excessive interest.

«Yes, I did. What's strange about it? Joseph is a good customer of my father.»

«You never mentioned it before... That is why I was amazed!...» Judas tries to make up for the impression, he had given previously, of his worry about Thomas' meeting with Joseph and Nicodemus.

«It seems strange to me that they have not come to venerate You. They did not, neither did Chuza, nor Manaen... None of...»

But the Iscariot laughs sneeringly, interrupting Bartholomew, and he says: «The crocodile hides itself at the right moment.»

«What do you mean? What are you insinuating?» asks Simon aggressively as never before.

«Peace, peace! What is the matter with you? It is Passover evening! We have never had such a worthy display for the consumption of the lamb. So let us consume the supper in the spirit of peace. I see that I have upset you considerably with my instructions of these last evenings. But, see? I have finished! Now I will not upset you any more. Not everything has been said of what refers to Me, but only the essential part. The rest... you will understand later. You will be told... Yes. There will come Who will tell you! ^{600.6}John, go with Judas and somebody else to get the basins for the purification. And then let us sit at the table.» Jesus is heartrendingly kind.

John with Andrew, Judas Thaddeus with James, bring the large basin, they pour water into it and offer the towel to Jesus and to their companions, who do the same for them.

The basin (which is a metal wash-hand-basin) is placed in a corner.

«And now to your seats. I here, and here (at His right side) John, and on the other side My faithful James. The first two disciples. After John My strong Stone, and after James he who is like the air. He is never noticed, but is always present and comforting: Andrew.

Beside him, my cousin James. You are not sorry, my kind brother, if I give the first place to the first ones? You are the

nephew of the Just One, whose spirit palpitates and quivers over Me this evening, more than ever. Have peace, father of my childish weakness, oak-tree in whose shadow the Mother and Son had solace! Have peace!... Beside Peter, Simon... Simon, come here a moment. I want to fix my eyes on your loyal face. Later I shall not see you well, because others will cover your honest face. Thank you Simon, for everything» and He kisses him.

Simon, when he is left free, goes to his seat, covering his face with his hands for a moment, with a gesture of distress.

«Facing Simon, my Bart. Two honest wise men reflecting each other. They match very well. And beside him, you, Judas, my brother. So I can see you... and I seem to be at Nazareth... when some festivity gathered us all together round one table... Also at Cana... Do you remember? We were together. A party... a wedding party... the first miracle... water turned into wine... Also today a festivity... and also today there will be a miracle... the wine will change its nature and will be...»

Jesus becomes engrossed in His thoughts, His head lowered and isolated in His secret world. The others look at Him and do not speak.

He raises His head again and stares at Judas Iscariot, to whom He says: «You will sit in front of Me.»

«So much You love me? More than Simon, since You always want me in front of You?»

«So much. As you said.»

«Why, Master?»

«Because you are the one who has done more than everybody for this hour.»

Judas casts an ever-changing glance at the Master and at his companions. At Jesus with ironical commiseration, at the others with an air of triumph.

«And near you, on one side Matthew, on the other Thomas.»

«So, Matthew on my left and Thomas on my right side.»

«As you wish, as you like» says Matthew. «It is enough for me to have my Saviour in front of me.»

«Last, Philip. Now, see? Who is not beside Me in the place of honour, has the honour of being in front of Me.»

600.7 ⁷Jesus, standing in His place, pours wine into the large chalice placed in front of Him (they all have tall chalices, but He has

a much larger one, in addition to one like those of the others. It must be the ritual chalice). He pours wine into it, He raises it, He offers it and lays it on the table.

Then all together they ask in the tone of a psalm: «Why this ceremony?» A formal question, obviously, a ritual one.

To which Jesus, as head of the family, replies: «This day reminds us of our liberation from Egypt. Blessed be Jehovah Who created the fruit of the vineyard.»

He takes a sip of the wine He has offered and passes the chalice to the others. He then offers the bread, He breaks it into morsels and hands it round with the herbs dipped in the reddish sauce contained in four sauce-boats.

When this part of the meal is over, they sing some psalms, all together.

The large tray with the roasted lamb is brought from the side-board to the table and placed in front of Jesus.

Peter, who acts as... first voice of the chorus, if you wish so, asks: «Why this lamb, as it is?»

«In remembrance of the time when Israel was saved through the sacrificial lamb. No first-born died where the blood shone on doorposts and lintels. And afterwards, while the whole of Egypt, from the royal palace to hovels, was mourning the dead first-born males, the Hebrews, led by Moses, moved towards the land of liberation and of the promise. With their sides girded, their feet shod, the pilgrim's staffs in their hands, the people of Abraham started off promptly, singing hymns of joy.»

They all stand up and intone: «When Israel came out of Egypt and the house of Jacob from a barbarous people, Judah became his sanctuary» etc. (if I have found the right one, it is psalm 113*).

Jesus now cuts the lamb, He pours wine into the chalice again, and He passes it round after drinking of it. Then they sing also: «Children, praise the Lord, blessed be the Name of the Eternal now and forever throughout ages. From east to west it is to be praised» etc. (but I cannot find it).

Jesus hands out the portions, ensuring that everybody is well served, just like a father of a family among his children who are all dear to him. He is solemn, somewhat sad, when He says: «I

* it is psalm 113, according to vulgate. In the neo-vulgate it became Psalm 114, as in the original Hebrew. What is said afterwards is the current Psalm 113.

have longed to eat this Passover with you. It has been the desire of my desires since, from eternity, I was "the Saviour". I knew that this hour precedes that one. And the joy of giving Myself, brought this relief, in advance, to my suffering... I have longed to eat this Passover with you, because never again shall I taste the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God has come. Then I will sit again with the elect at the Banquet of the Lamb, for the wedding of the Living Ones with the Living One. But only those who have been lowly and pure in heart, as I am, will come to it.»

600.8 ⁸«Master, a short while ago You said that he who has not the honour of the seat, has that of being in front of You. So, how can we know who is the first among us?» asks Bartholomew.

«Everybody and nobody. Once*... we were coming back and we were tired and... nauseated at the bitter hatred of the Pharisees. But you were not so tired as to be prevented from discussing among yourselves who was the greatest... A little boy ran up to Me... a little friend of Mine... And his innocence mitigated My disgust for so many things. Your obstinate humanity not being the last. Where are you now, little Benjamin gifted with the wise reply, that came to you from Heaven because, as you were an angel, the Spirit spoke to you? Then I said to you: "If anyone wants to be the first, he must be the last and the servant of everybody." And I gave you the wise boy as an example. Now I say to you: "The kings of nations dominate them. And although the peoples oppressed hate them, they acclaim them and kings are called 'Benefactors', 'Fathers of the Fatherland'. But hatred smoulders under the false homage." But do not let it be so with you. The greatest must be like the smallest, the head like him who serves. Who is in fact greater? He who sits at the table, or he who serves? It is he who sits at the table. And yet I serve you. And before long I will serve you even more. You are the ones who have been with Me in my trials. And I will arrange a place for you in my kingdom, in the same manner as I shall be King in it according to the will of the Father, that you may eat and drink at my eternal table and you may sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. You have remained with Me in My trials... This is the only thing that makes you great in the eyes of the Father.»

* Once..., in 352.5/14.

«And what about those who will come? Will they have no place in the Kingdom? We alone?»

«Oh! How many princes in my House! All those who have been faithful to the Christ in the trials of life, will be princes in My Kingdom. Because those who have persevered to the end in the martyrdom of life will be like you, who have remained with Me in My trials. I identify Myself with those who believe in Me. The Sorrow that I embrace for you and for all men, I give it as insignia to those who are particularly chosen. He who is faithful to Me in Sorrow will be one of my souls in bliss, my beloved.»

⁹«We have persevered until the end.»

600.9

«Do you think so, Peter? And I tell you that the hour of trial is still to come. Simon, Simon of Jonas, Satan has asked to sift you all like wheat. I have prayed for you, that your faith may not vacillate. When you have recovered, strengthen your brothers.»

«I know that I am a sinner. But I will be faithful to You until death. I do not have that sin and I will never have it.»

«Do not be proud, my Peter. This hour will change an infinite number of things, which previously were so and will now be different. How many!... They bring and impose new necessities. You are aware of that. I have always said to you, even when we were going along remote places infested by highwaymen: "Be not afraid. No evil will befall us, because the angels of the Lord are with us. Do not worry about anything." Do you remember when I used to say to you: "Do not worry about what you must eat and about your clothes. The Father knows what we need"? I also used to say to you: "Man is much more than a sparrow and a flower that today is grass and tomorrow is hay. And yet the Father takes care both of the flower and of the little bird. So can you doubt that He will not take care of you?" I also used to say: "Give to anyone who asks, and if anyone offends you, offer him the other cheek as well." I also used to say: "Take no bag or stick". Because I taught love and trust. But now... Now the times have changed. Now I say to you: "Have you ever been short of anything so far? Have you ever been offended?"»

«Nothing, Master. You alone were offended.»

«So you can see that my word was true. But now the angels have all been recalled by their Lord. It is the hour of demons... Wrapping themselves with their golden wings the Angels of the

Lord are covering their eyes. They regret that the colour of their wings is not a gloomy one, because it is time of mourning, of cruel sacrilegious mourning... There are no angels on the Earth this evening. They are near the throne of God, to drown the blasphemies of the decide world and the weeping of the Innocent.

And we are alone... You and I: alone. And the demons are the masters of the hour. So we shall now take the appearances and the measures of poor men who do not trust and do not love. Now, he who has a purse should take also a haversack, he who has no sword should sell his cloak and buy one. Because this also is said* of Me in the Scriptures and must be fulfilled: "He has been counted among the wicked." Truly everything that concerns Me has its purpose.»

600.10 ¹⁰Simon, who has got up and gone to the chest where he put his rich mantle - because this evening they are all wearing their best clothes, and so on their sumptuous belts they are carrying daggers, damaskened but very short ones, more like knives than daggers - takes two swords, two real, long, slightly bent swords and returning to Jesus with them he says: «Peter and I have armed ourselves this evening. We have these, but the others have only short daggers.»

Jesus takes the swords, examines them, He unsheathes one of them and tests its edge on His nail. It is a strange sight, and even more strangely impressive to see that cruel weapon in Jesus' hands.

«Who gave them to you?» asks the Iscariot, while Jesus is examining them and is silent.

And Judas seem to be on tenter-hooks... «Who? I remind you that my father was a noble and mighty man.»

«But Peter...»

«So? Since when have I to give an account of the presents that I want to give my friends?»

Jesus raises His head after sheathing the sword again. He hands it back to the Zealot.

«All right. They are enough. You did well in taking them.

600.11 ¹¹But now, before drinking the third chalice, wait a moment. I told you that the greatest is the same as the smallest and that

* is said, in: Isaiah 53,12.

I am acting as a servant at this table, and I will serve you even more. So far I have given you food. A service for your bodies. Now I want to give you food for your spirits. It is not a dish of the ancient rite. It belongs to the new rite. I wanted to be baptised before being the "Master". That baptism was sufficient to spread the Word. Now His Blood will be shed. Another ablution is required for you, although you have been purified by the Baptist, in his days, and also today in the Temple. But it is not yet sufficient. Come, that I may purify you. Interrupt your meal. There is something more elevated and necessary than the food given to the stomach to fill it, even if it is holy food as the present one of the Passover rite. And it is a pure spirit, ready to receive the gift of Heaven, which is already descending to make its throne in you and give you the Life. To give the Life to those who are pure.»

Jesus stands up, He makes John stand up to come out of his place more easily, He goes to the chest and takes off his red tunic and folds it placing it on His mantle, which is there already folded, He girds Himself with a large towel and He goes towards another basin, which is empty and clean. He pours some water into it, He takes it to the middle of the room, near the table, and puts it on a stool. The apostles look at Him dumbfounded.

«Are you not asking Me what I am doing?»

«We do not know. I tell You that we are already purified» replies Peter.

«And I repeat to you that it does not matter. My purification will serve him, who is already pure, to become purer.»

He kneels down. He unties the Iscariot's sandals and washes his feet, one at a time. It is easy to do so, because the couches are made in such a way that the feet are in the outer side. Judas is astonished and does not say anything. Only when Jesus, before putting the sandal on the left foot and getting up, makes the gesture of kissing his right foot, that has already been shod, Judas withdraws his foot violently and with the sole strikes the divine mouth. He does so unintentionally. It is not a strong blow. But it grieves me so much. Jesus smiles, and to the apostle who asks Him: «Did I hurt You? I did not intend to... Forgive me», He says: «No, my friend. You did it without malice and it does not hurt.» Judas looks at Him... A worried elusive look...

Jesus passes on to Thomas, then to Philip... He goes round

the narrow side of the table and arrives at His cousin James. He washes his feet and when getting up He kisses him on his forehead. He passes on to Andrew, who blushes with shame and makes efforts not to weep, He washes his feet and kisses him like a baby. Then there is James of Zebedee, who goes on grumbling: «Oh! Master! Master! Master! You are lowering Yourself, my sublime Master!» John has already untied his sandals and while Jesus is bent drying his feet, he kisses His head.

But Peter!... It is not easy to convince him to submit to the rite! «You want to wash my feet? Do not even think about it! As long as I live, I will never allow You to do that. I am a worm, You are God. Each to his own place.»

«You cannot understand now what I am doing. Later you will understand. Let Me do it.»

«You can do anything You like, Master. Do You want to cut my neck? Do so. But You will never wash my feet.»

«Oh! My Simon! Do you not know that if I do not wash you, you will take no part in My Kingdom? Simon, Simon! You are in need of this water for your soul and for the long journey you have to take. Do you not want to come with Me? If I do not wash you, you will not come to My Kingdom.»

«Oh! my blessed Lord! Then, wash all my body! Feet, hands and head!»

«Anyone who, like you, has had a bath, needs only to have his feet washed, as he is completely pure. The feet... Man walks with his feet on filth. And it would not be much either, because, as I told you*, it is not what enters and comes out with food that dirties, and it is not what settles on his feet on the roads that contaminates man. But it is what smoulders and matures in his heart and comes out from it, which contaminates his actions and limbs. And the feet of a man with an impure spirit go to orgies, to lust, to illicit business, to crimes... Therefore, among the various parts of the body they are the ones that have much to be purified... with the eyes and mouth... Oh! man! man! A perfect being for one day: the first one! And then so corrupted by the Seducer! And there was no malice in you, man, no sin!... And now? You are all malice and sin, and there is no part in you that does not sin!»

* I told you, in 300.9, 301.6, 567.22.

Jesus has washed Peter's feet, He kisses them, and Peter weeps and takes Jesus' two hands in his own big ones and he rubs them against his eyes and then kisses them.

Simon also has taken off his sandals, and without one word he lets Jesus wash his feet. Then, when Jesus is about to pass on to Bartholomew, Simon kneels down and kisses His feet saying: «Cleanse me from the leprosy of sin, as You cleansed me from the leprosy of my body, that I may not be confused in the hour of judgement, my Saviour!»

«Be not afraid, Simon. You will come to the heavenly City as white as mountain snow.»

«And what about me, Lord? What are You going to say to Your old Bart? You saw me in the shade of the fig-tree and You read my heart. And now what do You see, and where do You see me? Reassure a poor old man, who is afraid he may not have strength and time to become what You want him to be.» Bartholomew is deeply moved.

«You must not be afraid either. I then said: "Here is a true Israelite in whom there is no deceit." Now I say: "Here is a true Christian worthy of the Christ." Where do I see you? On an eternal throne, dressed in purple. I shall always be with you.»

It is Judas Thaddeus' turn. When he sees Jesus at his feet, he cannot control himself, he rests his head on his arm laid on the table and weeps.

«Do not weep, My sweet brother. You are now like one who must endure the extirpation of a nerve and you think that you will not be able to stand it. But it will be a short pain. Then... oh! you will be happy, because you love Me. Your name is Judas. And you are like our great Judas*: like a giant. You are the one who protects. Your actions are those of a lion and of a young roaring lion. You will rouse the impious who will withdraw when you face them, and the wicked will be terrified. I know. Be brave. An eternal union will strengthen and make perfect our kinship in Heaven.» He kisses his forehead as well, as He did for His other cousin.

«I am a sinner, Master. Not me...»

«You were a sinner, Matthew. You are now the Apostle. You

* our great Judas, that is Judas Maccabaeus, celebrated in 1 Maccabees 3,1-9.

are one of my "voices". I bless you. How far have these feet walked to come more and more forward, towards God... Your soul urged them and they left every way that was not my way. Proceed. Do you know where the path ends? On the bosom of your Father and Mine.»

Jesus has finished. He takes the towel off and washes His hands in clean water, He puts His clothes on, goes back to His seat, and while sitting down He says: «You are now pure, but not all of you. Only those who wanted to be so.»

He stares at Judas of Kerieth, who feigns he does not hear Him, intent as he is on explaining to his companion Matthew how his father decided to send him to Jerusalem.

A useless conversation, the only purpose of which is to give an attitude to Judas, who, however bold, must feel ill at ease.

600.12 ¹²Jesus pours wine into the common chalice for the third time. He drinks and makes the others drink. He then intones, and the others sing in chorus: «I love because the Lord hears the voice of my prayer, because He turns His ear towards me. I will invoke Him throughout my life. The throes of death had surrounded me» etc. (Psalm 114,1 think*).

A moment's pause. He then resumes singing: «I had faith, that is why I spoke. But I was deeply humiliated. And in my dismay I said: "Every man is untruthful"» He looks fixedly at Judas.

My Jesus' voice, which is tired this evening, regains vigour when He exclaims: «The death of holy people is precious in the eyes of God» and «You have broken my chains. I will sacrifice a victim of praise to You invoking the name of the Lord» etc. (Psalm 115).

Another short pause and He then resumes: «Praise the Lord, all nations, praise Him, all peoples. Because His mercy has been asserted upon us and the truth of the Lord lasts forever.»

Another short pause and then a long hymn: «Sing praises to the Lord because He is good, because His mercy lasts forever...»

Judas of Kerieth sings so much out of tune, that twice Thomas brings him back into tune with his powerful loud baritone voice and stares at him. The others also look at him, because he is gen-

* I think. According to the numbering of the neo-vulgate, the following Psalm are proclaimed in this order: Psalm 116 (which includes 114 and 115 of the vulgate), Psalm 117, Psalm 118 (long hymn), and (the endless) Psalm 119.

erally in tune, and I have had the impression that he is proud of his voice as he is of everything else. But this evening! Certain sentences upset him so much that he sings false notes, and certain glances of Jesus underlining those sentences have the same effect. One of them is: «It is better to confide in the Lord than to confide in man.» Another one is: «When I was pushed, I staggered and was about to fall. But the Lord supported me.» Another is: «I shall not die, I shall live and narrate the deeds of the Lord.» And finally, these two, that I am going to relate now, strangle the Traitor's voice in his throat: «The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone» and «Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord!»

When the psalm is over, while Jesus is cutting and handing the lamb round again, Matthew asks Judas of Kerioth: «Are you not feeling well?»

«No. Leave me alone. Don't worry about me.»

Matthew shrugs his shoulders.

John, who has heard, says: «The Master is not well either. What is the matter with You, my Jesus? Your voice is weak, like the voice of a sick person or of one who has wept much» and he embraces Him, resting his head on Jesus' chest.

«He has only spoken a lot, as I have only walked a lot and got cold» says Judas nervously.

And Jesus, without replying to him, says to John: «You know Me by now... and you know what makes Me tired...»

¹³The lamb is almost consumed.

600.13

Jesus, Who has eaten very little, and has only had a sip of wine at each chalice, but to compensate for that, has drunk a lot of water, as if He were feverish, resumes speaking: «I want you to understand My gesture of a short while ago. I told you that the first is like the last, and that I am going to give you a food that is not corporeal. I have given you a nourishment of humbleness, for your spirits. You call Me: Master and Lord. You are right, because so I am. So if I have washed your feet you should wash each other's feet. I have given you an example, so that you may do what I have done. I tell you solemnly: no servant is greater than his master, no apostle is greater than He Who appointed him. Try to understand these things. Then, if you understand them and put them into practice, you will be blessed. But not all

of you will be blessed. I know you. I know whom I chose. I am not speaking of everybody in the same way. But I say what is true. On the other hand, what has been written* concerning Me, is to be fulfilled: "He who eats the bread with Me, rebels against Me." I am telling you everything before it happens, that you may have no doubts about Me. When everything has been accomplished, you will believe even more that I am I. He who receives Me, receives Him Who sent Me: the Holy Father Who is in Heaven; and he who receives those whom I send, will receive Me. Because I am with the Father and you are with Me... But now let us finish the rite.»

He pours more wine into the common chalice and before drinking of it and letting the others drink, He stands up, and everybody stands up with Him, and He sings one of the previous psalms again: «I had faith and that is why I spoke...» and then He sings a psalm that never comes to an end. Beautiful... but eternal! I think I have found it, by its beginning and its length, as psalm 118. They sing it as follows. They sing one part in chorus. Then, in turns, one recites a couplet, and the others in chorus sing another part, and so forth till the end. No wonder they are thirsty at the end!

600.14 ¹⁴Jesus sits down. He does not lie down. He sits as we do. And He says: «Now that the old rite has been accomplished, I will celebrate the new one. I have promised you a miracle of love. It is time to work it. That is why I have longed for this Passover. From now on this is the Victim that will be consumed in a perpetual rite of love. My beloved friends, I have loved you throughout the whole life of the Earth. I have loved you for the whole eternity, My children. And I want to love you till the end. There is nothing greater than this. Bear that in mind. I am going away. But we shall remain forever united through the miracle that I will now work.»

Jesus takes a loaf still entire and places it on the chalice that has been filled. He blesses and offers both, He then breaks the bread and takes thirteen morsels of it, and gives one to each apostle saying: «Take this and eat it. This is my Body. Do this in remembrance of Me, Who is going away.» He gives the chalice

* written, in: Psalm 41,10.

and says: «Take this and drink it. This is My Blood. This is the chalice of the new alliance in my Blood and through my Blood, that will be shed for you, to remit your sins and give you Life. Do this in remembrance of Me.»

Jesus is very sad. There is no smile, no trace of light, no colour on His face. It is already an agonizing face. The apostles look at Him utterly anguished.

¹⁵Jesus stands up saying: «Do not move. I shall be back at once.» ^{600.15}

He takes the thirteenth morsel of bread and the chalice, and He goes out of the Supper-room.

«He is going to His Mother» whispers John.

And Judas Thaddeus says with a sigh: «Poor woman!»

Peter asks in a very low voice: «Do you think She knows?»

«She knows everything. She has always been aware of everything.»

They all speak in very low voices, as if they were in front of a corpse.

«But do you think that really...» asks Thomas, who does not want to believe yet.

«And do you doubt it? It is His hour» replies James of Zebedee.

«May God grant us strength to be faithful» says the Zealot.

«Oh! I...» says Peter who is about to speak. But John, who is on the look-out, says: «Silence! He is here.»

Jesus comes back in. He has the empty chalice in His hands.

Only at its bottom there is a trace of wine, and in the light of the chandelier it looks just like blood.

Judas Iscariot, in front of whom is the chalice, looks at it as if he were enchanted, then he averts his eyes. Jesus watches him and shudders, and John, leaning as he is on His chest, feels it. «Why not say so! You are shivering...» he exclaims.

«No. I am not shivering because I am feverish... ¹⁶I have told you everything, and I have given you everything. I could not have given you anything else. I have given you Myself.» ^{600.16}

He makes His usual kind gesture with His hands, which, previously joined, now separate and stretch out, while He bows His head as if He wished to say: «Excuse Me if I cannot give you more. It is so.»

«I have told you everything and I have given you everything. And I repeat. The new rite has been accomplished. Do this in remembrance of Me. I have washed your feet to teach you to be humble and pure like your Master. Because I solemnly tell you that disciples must be like their Master. Remember that, bear it in mind. Also when you are in high offices, remember that. There is no disciple greater than his Master. As I washed you, do the same to one another. That is, love one another like brothers, helping and respecting one another, setting an example to one another. And be pure, to be worthy of eating the living Bread that descended from Heaven, and have the strength, in yourselves and through It, to be My disciples in the hostile world that will hate you because of My Name. But one of you is not pure. One of you will betray Me. My Spirit is deeply perturbed by that... The hand of him who will betray Me is here with Me on this table, and neither My love, nor My Body and Blood, nor My word make him mend his ways and repent. I would forgive him going to my death also on his behalf.»

The disciples cast terrified glances at one another. They scrutinise one another suspiciously.

Peter stares at the Iscariot in a revival of all his doubts. Judas Thaddeus in turn jumps to his feet to look at the Iscariot above Matthew's body.

But the Iscariot is so sure of himself! In turn he looks at Matthew, as if he suspected him. He then looks fixedly at Jesus and smiling he asks: «Is it I perhaps?» He seems to be the one who is most certain of his honesty and to say so, not to let the conversation drop.

Jesus repeats His gesture saying: «You are saying so, Judas of Simon, not I. You are saying so. I have not mentioned your name. Why are you accusing yourself? Ask your internal warner, your conscience of a man, the conscience that God the Father gave you that you might behave as a man, and listen whether it accuses you. You will be the first to know. But if it reassures you, why do you utter a word and speak of a deed that is anathema even to mention or to think of as a joke?»

Jesus is speaking calmly. He seems to be supporting a proposed thesis as a learned man may do with his pupils. The confusion is great, but Jesus' calm appeases it.

¹⁷But Peter, who is the most suspicious of Judas - perhaps Thaddeus also is so, but he does not look so, disarmed as he is by the Iscariot's easy manners - plucks John's sleeve, and when John, who has pressed against Jesus upon hearing Him speak of betrayal, turns around, he whispers to him: «Ask Him who it is.»

John takes his previous position again, he only raises his head slightly, as if he wanted to kiss Jesus, and in the meantime he whispers in His ear: «Master, who is it?»

And Jesus in a very low voice, kissing him, in His turn, on his head, says: «It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread dipped in the dish.»

And taking another entire loaf, not the remains of the one used for the Eucharist, He detaches a large morsel, He dips it into the lamb's sauce left in the tray, and says: «Take it, Judas. You like this.»

«Thank You, Master. I do like it» and unaware of what that morsel is, he eats it, while John, horrified, closes even his eyes not to see the horrid smile of the Iscariot, as he bites the accusing bread with his strong teeth.

«Well. Now that I have made you happy, go» says Jesus to Judas. «Everything has been accomplished, here (He lays much stress on the word). What is still left to be done elsewhere, do it quickly, Judas of Simon.»

«I will obey You at once, Master. Then I will join You at Gethsemane. You are going there, are You not? As usual?»

«Yes... I am going there... as usual.»

«What has he got to do?» asks Peter. «Is he going by himself?»

«I am not a baby» says Judas scoffingly, as he puts on his mantle.

«Let him go. He and I know what must be done» says Jesus.

«Yes, Master.» Peter is silent. Perhaps he thinks he has committed a sin suspecting his companion. Resting his forehead on the palm of his hand, he becomes pensive.

Jesus presses John to His heart and whispers again through his hair: «Say nothing to Peter for the time being. It would be a useless scandal.»

«Goodbye, Master. Goodbye, friends» says Judas greeting them.

«Goodbye» replies Jesus.

And Peter says: «Goodbye, boy.»

John, his head almost on Jesus' lap, whispers: «Satan!» Jesus alone hears him and sighs.

Everything comes to an end here, but Jesus says: «I am interrupting the vision out of pity for you. I will give you the end of the Supper later.»

600.18 ¹⁸(the Supper continues)

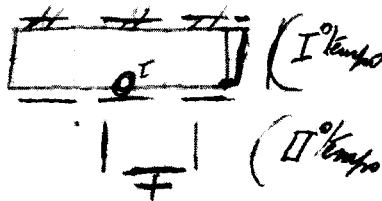
There are a few moments of dead silence. Jesus has lowered His head, caressing John's fair hair mechanically.

Then He rouses Himself. He raises His head, He looks around, and He smiles in such a way that encourages the disciples. He says: «Let us leave the table and sit all close to one another, like many children around their father.»

They take the couches that were behind the table (those of Jesus, John, James, Peter, Simon, Andrew and His cousin James) and they put them on the other side.

Jesus sits on His own, still between James and John. But when He sees that Andrew is about to sit in the place left by the Iscariot, He shouts: «No, not there.» An impulsive shout, that His great prudence does not succeed in preventing. He then modifies His expression saying: «We do not need so much room. If we sit down, we can stay only on these. They are enough. I want you to be very close to Me.»

Now, with regards to the table, this is how they are seated:



they are placed in a U shaped position, with Jesus in the centre facing the table, now empty and Judas' place in front of Him.

James of Zebedee calls Peter saying: «Sit here. I will sit on this little stool, at Jesus' feet.»

«May God bless you, James! I wanted it so much!» says Peter and he presses against his Master, Who is now squeezed by John

and Peter, with James at His feet.

Jesus smiles and says: «I see that the word spoken earlier is beginning to work. Good brothers love one another. James, I also say to you: “May God bless you.” Also this action of yours will not be forgotten by the Eternal, and you will find it up there.

¹⁹I can obtain everything I ask for. You have seen that. A desire of Mine was sufficient for the Father to allow His Son to give Himself in Food to man. The Son of man has been glorified by what has happened now, because the miracle that is possible only to God’s friends is a witness of power. The greater the miracle, the surer and deeper is this divine friendship. This is a miracle that, because of its form, duration and nature, and of the extremes and limits it attains, is so great that a greater one cannot possibly exist. I tell you: it is so powerful, supernatural, inconceivable by proud men, that only very few will understand it as it is to be understood, and many will deny it. So what shall I say? Condemn them? No. I will say: have mercy on them! But the greater the miracle, the greater the glory of its author. It is God Himself Who says: “See, My beloved wanted it, had it, and I granted it, because great is His grace in My eyes.” And here He says: “His grace has no limits, as infinite is the miracle performed by Him.” The glory that from God comes to the author of the miracle is the same as the glory that from the author returns to the Father. Because every supernatural glory, as it comes from God, returns to its source. And the glory of God, although it is already infinite, increases and shines more and more through the glory of His saints. So I say: as the Son of man has been glorified by God, so God has been glorified by the Son of man. I have glorified God in Myself. In His turn, God will glorify His Son in Himself. He will glorify Him shortly.

600.19

²⁰Exult, o spiritual Essence of the Second Person, Who are going back to Your See! Exult, o Body Who are going to ascend again after such a long exile in degradation.

600.20

And not Adam’s Paradise, but the sublime Paradise of the Father is about to be given to You as Your abode. If it has been said* that the amazing order of God, given through the lips of a man, stopped the sun, what will happen among the stars when they

* it as been said, in: Joshua 10,12-14.

see the wonder of the Body of the Man ascend and sit at the right hand of the Father in the Perfection of His glorified being?

My little children, I will remain with you for a short time. And afterwards you will be looking for Me as orphans look for their dead parent. And weeping, you will go about speaking of Him and in vain you will knock at His silent tomb, and you will also knock at the blue gates of Heaven, with your souls elevated in suppliant search for love, saying: "Where is our Jesus? We want Him. Without Him there is no more light in the world, no joy, no love. Either give Him back to us, or let us come in. We want to be where He is." But for the time being you cannot come where I am going. To the Judaeans also I said*: "Later you will look for Me, but you cannot come where I am going." I say the same to you.

600.21 ²¹Think of my Mother... Neither can She come where I am going. And yet, I left the Father to come to Her and become Jesus in Her immaculate womb. And yet, I came from the Inviolable Woman in the bright ecstasy of my Birthday. And I was nourished with her love, that became milk. I am made of purity and love, because Mary nourished Me with Her virginity fecundated by the perfect Love Who lives in Heaven. And yet, I have grown up through her, costing her fatigue and tears... And yet, I ask of Her such heroism as no one has ever accomplished, and in comparison with which the heroism of Judith and that of Jael are the heroisms of poor women quarrelling with the rival at the village fountain. And yet, no one loves Me as She does. And, notwithstanding all that, I will leave Her and go where She will come only after a long time. The commandment I give you: "Sanctify yourselves year by year, month by month, day by day, hour by hour, to be able to come to Me when it is your hour" does not apply to Her. She is full of grace and holiness. She is the creature who has had everything and has given everything. There is nothing to be added or to be taken away. She is the most holy witness of what God can do.

600.22 ²²But in order to be sure that you are able to join Me and to forget the grief in mourning the separation from your Jesus, I give you a new commandment. And it is: love one another. As I have loved you, you must love one another. By this love it will be

* To the Judaeans also I said, in 488.2.

known that you are My disciples. When a father has many sons, how does one know that they are such? Not so much by their physical appearance - because there are men who are in everything like another man, with whom there is no blood-tie and they are not even of the same country - as by their common love for the family, for their father and for one another. And even when the father dies, a good family does not break up, because one is their blood and it is the same they had from the seed of their father, and it ties in knots that not even death loosens, because love is stronger than death. Now, if you love one another after I have left you, everybody will acknowledge you as My children, and therefore as my disciples, and as brothers to one another, having had only one father.»

²³«Lord, but where are You going?» asks Peter.

600.23

«I am going where at present you cannot follow Me. But you will follow Me later.»

«And why not now? I have always followed You since You said to me: "Follow Me." I left everything without regret... Now, to go away without Your poor Simon, leaving me without You, Who are everything to me, after that for Your sake I left the little property I had previously, is not fair or nice of You. Are You going to Your death? All right. I will come as well. We shall go to the next world together. But I will have defended You before that. I am ready to give my life for You.»

«You will give your life for Me? Now? Not now. I solemnly - oh! I do solemnly tell you - before the cock crows, you will have disowned Me three times. This is the first watch. Then the second will come... and then the third. Before the cock crows loudly, you will have disowned your Lord three times.»

«Impossible, Master! I believe everything You say, but not that. I am sure of myself.»

«Now, at present you are sure. Because you still have Me. You have God with you.»

Before long, the Incarnate God will be caught, and you will no longer have Him. And Satan, after making you heavy - your very certainty is a trick of Satan, ballast to weigh you down - will frighten you. He will insinuate to you: "God does not exist. I do." And as you will still be able to reason, although made dull by fear, you will understand that, when Satan is the master

of the hour, Good is dead and Evil is active, the spirit is dejected and the human is triumphant. You will then be like warriors without a leader, chased by the enemy, and in the dismay of being defeated you will bow your necks to the conqueror, and in order not to be killed you will disown the fallen hero.

600.24 ²⁴But, please do not let your hearts be upset. Believe in God. And believe also in Me. Believe in Me, against all appearances. Let him who remains and him who runs away believe in My mercy and in the Father's. Both he who is silent and he who moves his lips to say: "I do not know Him." And likewise believe in My forgiveness. And believe that, whatever your actions may be in future, in Good and in my Doctrine, consequently in my Church, they will give you equal places in Heaven.

In the house of my Father there are many abodes. If it were not so, I would have told you. Because I am going ahead, to prepare a place for you. Do good fathers not do likewise when they have to take their little children elsewhere? They go ahead, they prepare the house, the furnishings, the provisions. They then go back to get their dearest ones. They do so out of love, so that the little ones may lack nothing and may not be uncomfortable in the new place.

I do the same and for the same reason. I am going now. And when I have prepared a place for each of you in the celestial Jerusalem, I will come again and take you with Me so that you may be where I am, where there is no death or mourning, no tears, no shouting, no hunger, no pain, no darkness, no parching thirst, but only light, peace, happiness and singing. Oh! song of the Highest Heavens when the twelve chosen ones will sit on thrones with the twelve patriarchs of the tribes of Israel and in the ardour of the fire of spiritual love, standing upright over the sea of beatitude, they will sing the eternal song accompanied by the arpeggio of the eternal alleluia of the angelical host...

600.25 ²⁵I want you to be where I shall be. And you know where I am going and you know the way.»

«But, Lord! We know nothing. You are not telling us where You are going. How can we know the way to be taken to come towards you and curtail the wait?» asks Thomas.

«I am the Way, the Truth, the Life. You have heard Me say so and explain it several times, and really some people, who did

not even know that there is a God, have walked ahead, along my way, and they are already ahead of you. Oh! where are you, lost sheep of God, brought back to the fold by Me? And where are you, whose soul has been raised?»

«Who? Of whom are you speaking? Of Mary of Lazarus? She is in the other room, with Your Mother. Do You want her? Or do You want Johanna? She is certainly in her mansion, but if You wish so, we will go and call her for You...»

«No. Not them... I am thinking of the one who will be revealed only in Heaven... and of Photinai... They found Me. And they have never left my way again. To one I pointed out the Father as the true God and the Spirit as a Levite in this individual adoration. To the other, who did not even know she had a soul, I said: "My name is Saviour, I save whoever has the goodwill to be saved. I am the One Who looks for those who are lost, I give Life, Truth and Purity. Those who look for Me, will find Me." And they both found God... I bless you, weak Eves who have become stronger than Judith... I am coming, I am coming where you are... You comfort Me... May you be blessed!...»

²⁶«Show us the Father, Lord, and we shall be equal to them» 600.26
says Philip.

«I have been with all of you for such a long time, and you, Philip, still do not know Me? He who sees Me, sees the Father. So, how can you say: "Let us see the Father"? Can you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you, I do not say them by Myself. It is the Father, living in Me, Who accomplishes all my work. And do you, all of you, not believe that I am in the Father and He is in Me? What must I say to make you believe? If you do not believe my words, believe at least in my deeds. And I say to you and I truly say to you: he who believes in Me will perform the deeds that I do, and will perform even greater ones, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask of the Father in My name, I will do it, so that the Father may be glorified in His Son. And I will do anything you ask in behalf of my Name. My Name is known for what it really is, only to Me and to the Father Who generated Me and to the Spirit Who proceeds from Our love. And everything is possible to that Name. He who thinks of My Name with love, loves Me and obtains.

But it is not sufficient to love Me. It is necessary to keep My commandments in order to have true love. Feelings are testified by deeds. And because of your love I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, so that He may remain with you forever, One against Whom Satan and the World cannot act cruelly, the Spirit of Truth, Whom the world cannot receive or strike, because it cannot see Him and does not know Him. The world will deride Him, but He is so sublime that derision will not be able to offend Him, while being so merciful as to exceed all limits, He will always be with those who love Him, even if they are poor and weak. You will know Him, because He already dwells with you and will soon be in you.

600.27 ²⁷I will not leave you orphans. I have already told you that I will come back to you.

But I will come before it is time to come to take You and go to my Kingdom. I will come to you. Before long the world will no longer see Me. But you see Me and will see Me. Because I live and you live. Because I will live and you will live. On that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you are in Me and I in you. Because he, who accepts My precepts and observes them, loves Me, and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father and will possess God, because God is love, and he who loves has God in himself. And I will love Him, because I shall see God in him, and I will show Myself to him, making him acquainted with the secrets of My love, of My wisdom, of My Incarnate Divinity. They will be My returns among the children of man, whom I love notwithstanding that they are weak and even hostile. But these will be only weak. And I will fortify them; I will say to them: "Rise!", I will say: "Come out!", I will say: "Follow Me", I will say: "Listen", I will say: "Write"... and you are among them.»

«Why, Lord, are You showing Yourself to us and not to the world?» asks Judas Thaddeus.

«Because you love Me and you keep my words. He who does that will be loved by my Father, and we shall come to him and make our home with him, in him. Whereas he who does not love Me, does not keep my words and acts according to the flesh and the world. Now remember that what I said to you is not the word of Jesus of Nazareth, but it is the word of the Father, because I am the Word of the Father Who sent Me. I told you these things,

speaking to you thus, because I want to prepare you Myself for the complete possession of the Truth and Wisdom. But you cannot yet understand or remember. But when the Comforter, the Holy Spirit Whom the Father will send to you in My name, comes to you, then you will be able to understand, and He will teach you everything, and He will remind you of what I told you.

²⁸I leave you my peace. I give you my peace. I give it to you not as the world gives it. 600.28

And not even as I have given it to you so far: the blessed greeting of the Blessed One to the blessed ones. The peace I am giving you now is more profound. In this farewell I communicate Myself, My Spirit of peace to you, as I communicated My Body and My Blood to you, so that you may have strength for the imminent battle. Satan and the world are stirring up a war against your Jesus. It is their hour. Have Peace within you, My Spirit, which is spirit of peace, because I am the King of peace. Have it so that you may not be too forlorn. He who suffers with the peace of God within himself, suffers, but does not blaspheme and does not despair.

Do not weep. You have also heard Me say: "I am going to the Father and then I will come back." If you loved Me beyond the flesh, you would rejoice, because I am going to the Father after such a long exile... I am going to Him Who is greater than I am and Who loves Me. I have told you now, before it takes place, as I informed you of all the sufferings of the Redeemer, before going to them, so that, when everything is fulfilled, you may believe more and more in Me. Do not be so upset! Do not be frightened. Your hearts are in need of balance...

²⁹I have not much more time to speak to you... but I have so much to say! Now that I have come to the end of My evangelization, I feel that I have not said anything yet, and that there is still so much to be done. Your mood increases My feeling. So, what shall I say? That I failed in My task? Or that you are so hard-hearted that My work has been of no avail? Shall I be in doubt about you? No. I rely on God and I entrust you, My beloved ones, to Him. He will complete the work of His Word. I am not like a father who dies without having any other light but the human one. I hope in God. And, although within Myself I feel the urgency of all the advice, of which I see you are in need, and I realise 600.29

that time flies, I am going towards my destiny with a quiet mind. I know that the dew is about to descend on the seeds sown in you and it will make all of them spring up, then the sun of the Paraclete will come and they will become mighty trees. The prince of this world, with whom I have nothing to do, is about to come. And if it were not for the purpose of redemption, he would not have had any power over Me. But that is happening so that the world may know that I love My Father and I love Him so much that I will obey Him even to death, and I will, therefore, do what He ordered Me to do.

600. 30 ³⁰It is time to go. Stand up. And listen to my last words. I am the true Vine. The Father is the Vinedresser. Every branch that bears no fruit He cuts, and the one that does bear fruit He prunes, to make it bear even more. You are already purified by My word. Remain in Me and I will remain in you to continue to be so. The branch cut off from the vine cannot bear fruit. The same applies to you, if you do not remain in Me. I am the Vine and you are the branches. Whoever remains united to Me bears fruit in plenty. But if one is cut off, one becomes a dry branch and is thrown on the fire and burns there. Because, if you are not united to Me, you can do nothing. So remain in Me and let my words remain in you, then ask for whatever you want, and it will be done to you. My Father will always be the more glorified, the more you bear fruit and are my disciples.

600. 31 ³¹As the Father has loved Me, so I have loved you. Remain in My love that saves. By loving Me you will be obedient, and obedience increases mutual love. Do not say that I am repeating Myself. I am aware of your weakness. And I want you to be saved. I have told you this so that the joy I wanted to give you may be in you and may be complete.

Love one another, love one another! This is my new commandment. Love one another more than each of you loves himself. There is no greater love than that of a man who lays down his life for his friends. You are my friends and I will lay down my life for you. Do what I teach and order you to do.

I will no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know what his master does, whereas you know what I do. You know everything about Me. I have made known to you not only Myself, but also the Father and the Paraclete, and everything I

heard from God. You did not choose yourselves. But I chose you and I elected you, so that you may go among peoples and you may bear fruit in yourselves and in the hearts of those who are evangelized, and your fruit may remain, and the Father may give you everything you will ask of Him in My name.

³²Do not say: "So, if You chose us, why did You choose a betrayer. If You know everything, why did You do that?" Do not even ask who he is. He is not a man. He is Satan. I said so to My faithful friend and I let My beloved son say so. He is Satan. If Satan, the eternal mimic of God, had not become incarnate in human flesh, this possessed man could not have escaped My power of Jesus. I said: "possessed". No. He is much more: he is annihilated in Satan.» 600.32

«Since You have driven demons away, why did you not free him?» asks James of Alphaeus.

«Are you asking that for your own sake, fearing that you are the one? Be not afraid of that.»

«I, then?»

«I?»

«I?»

«Be quiet. I am not mentioning that name. I am being merciful, do likewise.»

«But why did You not defeat him? Could You not do that?»

«I could. But in order to prevent Satan from taking bodily form to kill Me, I should have had to exterminate the human race before Redemption. So what would I have redeemed?»

«Tell me, Lord, tell me!» Peter has fallen on his knees and he shakes Jesus frenetically as if he were a prey to frenzy. «Is it I? Is it I? Shall I examine my own conscience? I do not think so. But You... You said that I will disown You... And I am quivering... Oh! how horrible if it is I!...»

«No, Simon of Jonah. It is not you.»

«Why are You depriving me of my name "Peter"? So am I Simon again? See? You are saying so!... It is I! But how could I? Tell me tell me, all of you When was it that I became a traitor?... Simon?... John?... Tell me!»

«Peter, Peter, Peter! I am calling you Simon because I am thinking of our first meeting, when you were Simon. And I am thinking how you have always been loyal since the first moment.

It is not you. I, the Truth, am telling you.»

«Who, then?»

«It is Judas of Kerioth! Have you not yet understood that?» shouts Thaddeus, who can no longer restrain himself.

«Why did you not tell me before? Why?» shouts Peter as well.

«Silence. It is Satan. He has no other name. Where are you going, Peter?»

«To look for him.»

«Leave that mantle and that weapon at once. Or shall I drive you away and curse you?»

«No, no! Oh! my Lord! But I... but I... Have I become delirious, have I? Oh! Oh!» Peter has thrown himself on the ground and is weeping at Jesus' feet.

600.33 33«I give you My commandment: love and forgive one another. Have you understood? Even if in the world there is hatred, let only love be in you. For everybody. How many traitors you will find on your way! But you must not hate them and return evil for evil.

Otherwise the Father will hate you. I have been hated and betrayed, long before you.

And yet, as you can see, I do not hate. The world cannot love what is different from it.

Therefore it will not love you. If you belonged to it, it would love you; but you are not of the world, as I took you away from the world. And that is why you are hated.

I said to you: a servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted Me, they will persecute you as well. If they have listened to Me, they will listen to you, too. But they will do everything because of My Name, since they do not know, they do not want to know Him Who sent Me. If I had not come and I had not spoken, they would not be guilty. But now their sin has no excuse. They have seen my deeds, they have heard my words, and yet they have hated Me, and the Father with Me. Because the Father and I are one Unit only with the Love. But it was written*: "You hated me for no reason." But when the Comforter comes, the Spirit of Truth Who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me, and you also will witness for Me, because you have been with Me since the beginning.

* it was written, in: Psalms 35,19; 69,5.

I am telling you this so that, when the hour comes, you may not be depressed and scandalised. The time is about to come when they will expel you from synagogues, and those who kill you will think that they are doing a holy duty for God. They have not known either the Father or Me. That is their excuse. I have not told you these things so extensively, before this hour, because you were just like new-born babies. But the mother is now leaving you. I am going away. You must become accustomed to other food. I want you to know.

³⁴Not one of you has asked Me again: "Where are You going?" Sadness is making you dumb. And yet My going away is a good thing also for you. Otherwise the Comforter will not come. I will send Him to you. And when He has come, through the wisdom and the words, the deeds and the heroism that He will infuse into You, He will convince the world of its deicide sin, and of justice with regards to My holiness. And a clear cut will divide the world into reprobates, enemies of God, and believers. The latter will be more or less holy, according to their will. But judgement will be passed on the prince of the world and his servants. I cannot tell you more, because you are not yet able to understand. 600.34

But He, the Paraclete, will give you the whole Truth, because He will not speak as from Himself. But He will tell you everything He heard from the Mind of God and will announce the future to you. He will take what comes from Me, that is, what is still of the Father, and will tell you.

There is still a short time to see one another. Then you will no longer see Me. And then a short time later you will see Me.

³⁵You are grumbling among yourselves and in your hearts. Listen to a parable. The last one of your Master. 600.35

When a woman has conceived and the hour of delivery comes, she is in great distress, because she suffers and groans. But when her little child is born and she presses it to her heart, all her pain comes to an end and her sorrow changes into joy, because a man has come into the world.

The same applies to you. You will weep and the world will laugh at you. But later your sorrow will change into joy. A joy that the world will never know. You are sad now.

But when you see Me again, your hearts will be filled with a

joy of which no one will ever be able to deprive you. Such a full joy, that it will obliterate every need of yours to ask for anything for your minds, hearts and bodies. You will feed on seeing Me again, and you will forget everything else. And just from that moment you will be able to ask for anything in My name, and it will be given to you by the Father, so that your joy may be greater and greater. Ask, do ask. And you will receive.

The time is coming when I shall be able to speak to you of the Father in plain words.

That will happen because you will have been faithful in the trial and everything will have been overcome. So your love will be perfect, as it will have given you strength in the trial. And what you are short of, I will add it for you, taking it from My immense treasure and saying: "Father, as You can see, they have loved Me believing that I came from You." Having descended into the world, now I leave it and I am going to the Father, and I will pray for you.»

600.36 ³⁶«Oh! now You are explaining things clearly. Now we know what You mean and that You know everything and that You give answers without being questioned by anybody.

You really come from God!»

«Do you believe now? At the last hour? I have spoken to You for three years! But the Bread that is God and the Wine that is Blood that did not come from man is already working in you, and is giving you the first thrill of deification. You will become gods if you persevere in my love and in my possession. Not as Satan said to Adam and Eve, but as I say to you. It is the true fruit of the tree of Good and of Life. Evil is defeated in him who feeds on it, and Death is dead. He who eats of it will live forever and will become "god" in the Kingdom of God. You will be gods if you remain in Me. And yet now... although you have this Bread and this Blood in yourselves, as the hour is coming in which you will be scattered, you will go away on your own account and will leave Me all alone... But I am not alone. I have the Father with Me. Father, Father! Do not abandon Me! I have told you everything... To give you peace. My peace. You will still have trouble. But have faith. I have conquered the world.»

600.37 ³⁷Jesus stands up, He opens His arms out crosswise and with His face shining brightly He says the sublime prayer to the Fa-

ther. John quotes it integrally*.

The apostles are shedding tears more or less openly and noisily. As a last thing, they sing a hymn.

³⁸Jesus blesses them. He then says to them: «Let us put on our mantles now. And let us go. Andrew, tell the owner of the house to leave everything as it is, as I want that. 600.38

Tomorrow... you will be pleased see this place again.» Jesus looks at it. He seems to be blessing walls, furniture, everything. He then puts on His mantle and sets out, followed by the disciples. Beside Him there is John on whom He leans.

«Are you not saying goodbye to Your Mother?» Zebedee's son asks Him.

«No. Everything has already been done. Furthermore, make no noise.»

Simon, who has lit a torch at the chandelier, illuminates the wide corridor that leads to the door. Peter opens the main door cautiously and they all go out into the street, and then, working a gadget, they close the door from outside. And they start off.

[17th February 1944]

³⁹Jesus says: «In addition to the consideration on the love of a God Who becomes Food for men, four main teachings stand out from the episode of the Supper. 600.39

The First: the necessity for all the children of God to obey the Law.

The Law prescribed that a lamb was to be consumed at Pass-over according to the ritual given to Moses by the Most High, and I, the true Son of the true God, did not consider Myself exempted, because of my divine quality, from the Law. I was on the Earth: Man among men and the Master of men. I had, therefore, to do My duty towards God as and better than anybody else. Divine favours do not dispense from being obedient and from making an effort towards a greater and greater holiness. If you compare the most sublime holiness with divine perfection, you will always find it full of defects, and consequently it is obliged to strive to eliminate them and achieve a degree of perfection as similar as possible to God's.

* quotes it integrally, in its Gospel: John 17.

600.40 ⁴⁰The second: the power of Mary's prayer.

I was God Who had become Flesh. A Flesh, that being without stain, had the spiritual strength of dominating the flesh. And I do not refuse, on the contrary I implore the help of the Full of Grace, Who in that hour of expiation would have also found Heaven closed over Her head, that is true, but not to the extent that She should not succeed in detaching an angel from it, since She is the Queen of angels, to console Her Son. Oh! Not for Herself, poor Mother! She also has tasted the bitter abandonment by the Father, but by means of that suffering offered for Redemption, She obtained and made it possible for Me to overcome the anguish of the Garden of Olives and to bring the Passion to completion in all its multiform bitterness, each of which aimed at cleansing a form and a means of sin.

600.41 ⁴¹The third: self-control and endurance of offences, the sublime charitable attitude towards all offences, as can be possessed only by those who make the Law of Charity the life of their lives, as I had proclaimed. And I had not only proclaimed it, but I had really practised it.

You cannot imagine what it was for Me to have the Traitor at My table, to have to give Myself to him, and humiliate Myself before him, to have to share with him the ritual chalice, and put My lips where he had put his, and make my Mother do the same. Your doctors have discussed and still discuss the rapidity of My end and they say it originated in a heart lesion brought about by the blows of the scourging. Yes, my heart was injured also by those blows. But it had already been damaged at the Supper. I was heart-broken by the effort of having to endure the Traitor at my side. It was at the Supper that I began to die physically. What followed was only an increase of an already existing agony.

What I was able to do, I did it because I was all one with the Love. Also when the God-Love withdrew from Me, I was able to be love, because I had lived of love during my thirty-three years. It is not possible to reach perfection, as is required to forgive and put up with our offender, if one has not acquired the habit of love. I had acquired it, and I was able to forgive and bear that masterpiece of an Offender, which was Judas.

600.42 ⁴²The fourth: the more one is worthy of receiving a Sacrament, the greater is its effect.

That is: if one has become worthy of it through persevering goodwill, that subdues the flesh and makes the spirit sovereign, mastering concupiscences, directing one's being towards virtues, bending it like a bow towards the perfection and above all of Love.

Because, when you love, you are inclined to make the person you love happy. John, who loved Me as nobody else did, and who was pure, received the utmost transformation from the Sacrament. He began as from that moment to be the eagle, that is accustomed to soaring easily in the High Heaven of God and staring at the eternal Sun. But woe to him who receives the Sacrament without being worthy of it, and who, on the contrary, has increased his human unworthiness with mortal sins. Then instead of being the germ of preservation and life, it becomes the germ of corruption and death.

Death of the spirit and decomposition of the flesh, whereby it "bursts", as Peter says* with regards to Judas. It does not shed blood, the vital liquid always beautiful in its purple hue, but its entrails burst out, blackened by lechery, rotteness pouring out of the decomposed body, as out of the carrion of an unclean animal, a disgusting sight for passers-by.

The death of the profaner of the Sacrament is always the death of a desperate person who, therefore, does not know the placid passing away peculiar to those who are in grace, or the heroic death of the victim who suffers intensely but looks fixedly at Heaven and feels certain peace in the soul. The death of one in despair is marked dreadful contortions and terror, it is a horrible convulsion of the soul already gripped by the hand of Satan, who chokes it to detach From the body and suffocates it with his nauseating breath. That is the difference between those who pass away after being nourished with love, faith, hope and every other virtue and heavenly doctrine and with the angelical Bread that accompanies them with its fruit - better still if with its real presence - in the last journey, and those who pass away, after the life of a brute, with the death of a brute that Grace and the Sacrament cannot comfort. The former is the serene end of a saint, to whom death opens the eternal Kingdom. The latter

* as Peter says, in: Acts 1,18.

is the frightful fall of a damned soul, that feels it is falling into eternal death and in a moment knows what it wanted to lose and for which it can no longer find any remedy.

Acquisition and joy for the former; despoilment and terror for the latter.

This is what you give yourselves, according to whether you believe and love, or you do not believe and you deride my gift. And it is the lesson of this contemplation.»